

*45th CARICOM Summit
inaugurated in Trinidad and
Tobago*

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Port of Spain, July 4 (RHC)-- The 45th Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was officially installed this Monday with the participation of regional and world leaders, such as the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres.

During the opening ceremony in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, CARICOM Secretary General, Carla Barnett, highlighted the special character of the organization's summit, which on July 4 celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Barnett underscored the role Caricom has played since then in spearheading the formation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), leading negotiations with Europe on preferential trade agreements, fighting for UN recognition of small island and low-lying coastal developing states (SIDS).

"CARICOM is 50 years strong, and we have a solid foundation to build on" - Dr Carla Barnett, CARICOM SG at the Opening Ceremony of the 45th CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting in POS, Trinidad and Tobago [pic.twitter.com/fnuTMFO2vF](https://www.twitter.com/fnuTMFO2vF)

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"Our leaders are also present at the International Court, prioritizing health and the 2001 Nassau Declaration. No one can question the excellence of the Caribbean Public Health Agency which has an example of leadership in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic," she assured.

Barnett also highlighted the legacy of the so-called founding fathers of CARICOM, such as Arthur Lewis, William Demas, Alister McIntyre and Nita Barrow, and said that "it has demonstrated that with strength and consistency, collaboration and integration can be achieved.

In addressing the challenges, Barnett said there are areas that cry out for improvement such as transportation, free movement of citizens and the nature of crime and insecurity, particularly in Haiti.

"We are dealing with a multi-faceted crisis, crime and security, constitutional and political, humanitarian, in our most populous member state, Haiti. As our Community seeks to assist the Haitian people in finding effective solutions to the crises, we have appointed a Group of Eminent Persons who have begun to facilitate dialogue among key Haitian stakeholders," she said.

The CARICOM Secretary General also recognized the importance of food security, the need to reduce food imports, and the urgency of advancing a digital development strategy to increase productivity and build sustainable livelihoods, especially for the youth. She also highlighted CARICOM's resilience and resolve, despite changing global realities, to stay the course of integration.

During his remarks, Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Keith Rowley reflected on what happened in Chaguaramas on July 4, 1973 and honored the founding fathers who laid the foundations on which the family of nations was built.

"The late Prime Ministers Errol Barrow of Barbados, Forbes Burnham of Guyana, Michael Manley of Jamaica and Dr. Eric Eustace Williams of Trinidad and Tobago, were leaders who understood that our strength as small states lies in our unity," he said.

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