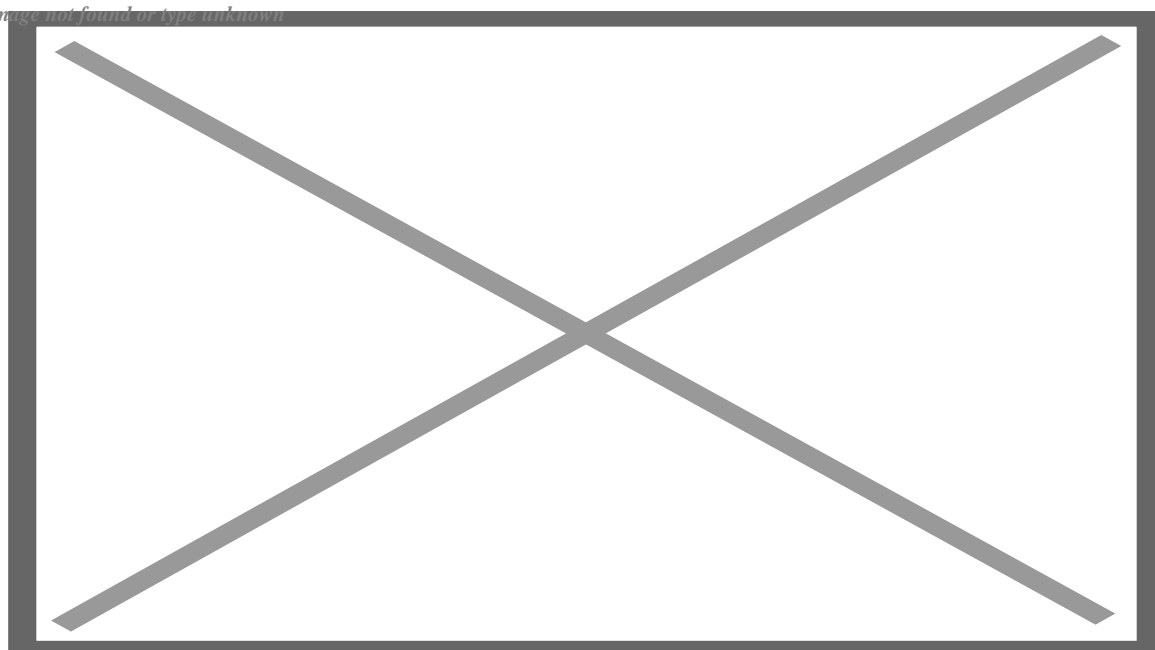


CARICOM advocates strengthening regional integration

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Port of Spain, July 6 (RHC)-- Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne stated during the 45th Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that the need for integration within the region is even greater than in the European Union (EU).

"We recognize that we are all committed to ensuring that we strengthen the integration movement," the premier said during a press conference on the sidelines of the regional summit that culminated that day in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

"Although progress has been slow in some areas, there is no doubt that we have made significant progress in many areas, especially in the areas of function and cooperation," he added.

He highlighted the role of institutions such as the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME), Caribbean Free Trade Association (Carifta), the West Indies Federation, the Caribbean Court of Justice and the Caribbean Public Health Agency.

"I am an eternal optimist when it comes to integration and I am hopeful of a political union in the future," he said. He added that he would like the political union to "be the United States of the Caribbean."

During the closing of the summit, the Prime Minister of Dominica and incoming president of CARICOM, Roosevelt Skerrit, announced that the bloc will allow free movement by early 2024.

The grouping, created with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas on July 4, 1973, includes the Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

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