

# *CARICOM Nations Condemn Violence, Urge Dialogue in Venezuela*

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St. George's, July 6 (RHC)-- At the Heads of State and Government meeting of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, the organization's President has called for a common stance on Venezuela and reaffirmed that the only real solution to the country's political situation is dialogue.

"We must unite to condemn violence, wherever it comes from, and we must not back away from using our close ties to push all parties to adopt the option of dialogue, which will benefit the Venezuelans," said Grenadian Prime Minister and CARICOM President Keith Mitchell.

Mitchell stressed that CARICOM members shouldn't "ignore what is going on in a country with which all of our member states have had strong historic ties," and added that the call to stand in favor of political order, democracy, and human rights should, "inspire us to arrive at a clear stance on this crisis in Venezuela." In this regard, Mitchell echoed the sentiments of other Caribbean nations such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

Heads of state from CARICOM's 15 member countries have convened in Grenada for its 38 Regular Meeting to discuss current issues in the region. The three-day summit wrapped up today, Thursday, at

the Radisson Grenada Beach Resort.

Before the start of the CARICOM summit, Irwin La Rocque, Secretary General of the regional group, acknowledged that Venezuela's political crisis, nor its national constituent assembly, was not on the agenda. He emphasized, however, that heads of state could offer a communiqué about the situation.

Tuesday also marked the 44th anniversary of the founding of CARICOM, and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro took the occasion to congratulate the peoples and governments of the Caribbean.

In a prepared statement, the Venezuelan Head of State emphasized "the ties of friendship and cooperation strengthened by Commander Hugo Chavez Frias and continued by President Nicolas Maduro Moros with the governments and peoples of the Caribbean."

As an observer, "the Venezuelan Government recognizes CARICOM's commendable work in defense of regional peace and security, democracy and the promotion of integration, as well as respect for the principles of international law, sovereignty, non-interference and legal equality of states," the document read.

CARICOM was established in 1973 when the Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed in Trinidad and Tobago. The purpose of the regional, multilateral organization is to promote unity among Caribbean nations.

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