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**REMARKS BY HONOURABLE KENNY ANTHONY, PRIME MINISTER OF SAINT
LUCIA AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE SIXTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS
Cartagena, Colombia
Saturday, April 14, 2012**

Distinguished President of the Republic of Colombia,
Distinguished President of the United States of America,
Distinguished Prime Minister of Canada,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government of Latin America,
Distinguished Heads of Government of the Caribbean,
Excellencies of the diplomatic corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to be here in this delightful and historic city of Cartagena bordering the Caribbean Sea and facing the countries of the Caribbean. Indeed, it is a most welcoming environment in which to participate in this Sixth Summit of the Americas.

As Summit host, Colombia has reached out to our CARICOM/CARIFORUM Governments for dialogue and proposals on clearly defined areas. I wish to say that we appreciate these efforts.

This Summit now serves as the forum for review of the state of our hemisphere as a whole, at the highest political level. And this is a most opportune time to survey the effects on our countries of today's global environment.

Certain global developments give much cause for concern. But there is reason to believe that they also provide an opportunity for us to pursue a reconstruction of our hemispheric relations that can be beneficial to all member-states, taking into account the ambitions and perspectives of our countries, both large and small.

This Summit also provides us with an opportunity to begin to move further on the road to ensuring that the deliberations that take place in this hemisphere include all our member-states, on terms that respect the sovereignty of each, and the different roads which countries may take towards achieving economic and social development for their citizens.

It is time to heal the wounds of this hemispheric family. This is vital if we are to fully share in the approaches to development that are being pursued in this wide area with all their diversity, in our peoples' pursuit of democratic self-government and economic progress.

Specifically, I call for the resumption of Cuba to its rightful place in hemispheric deliberations and institutions, and in this Summit of the Americas. Our complete unity must be our strength and represent our integrity.

As one who has just been returned to the Government of my country, I recognise a certain impatience among our people that we, as those responsible for governance and progressive national development, should no longer create, or sustain, any artificial impediments to this task. We cannot proclaim the virtues of democracy yet reject its outcomes when it does not please us. Otherwise we denounce the judgment of citizenry who exercised their vote. In a situation of global economic uncertainty in particular, our people anxiously look forward to the decisions of this Summit that can have a positive impact on their lives.

In many parts of our Caribbean there is, today, intense concern about the effects of recession in countries which have hitherto dominated our economies. In that context, as our citizens listen to the statements that we make here today, they will undoubtedly place our words in the context of developments that are becoming enduring challenges in the daily lives of too many of them. They express their concerns as to whether, with diminishing outlets for what they produce, they can have access to the necessary resources for educating their youth, creating new avenues and opportunities for employment, reducing the crime and violence plaguing so many of our communities, and sustaining our efforts towards a better standard of living.

For many years, in the international forums concerned with development, we have stressed the special vulnerabilities that affect countries of our small size, including the dramatic economic consequences that natural disasters can have.

We have for long accepted the advice that forms of economic integration can diminish some of those vulnerabilities, and permit us to develop levels of economic output that can be competitive in today's world. But certainly for us in the Caribbean, progress has, in more recent times, been uneven, anaemic and uncertain in that regard.

In that context we welcome the emphasis being placed on the importance of finding modes of physical integration – integration of the various economic spaces and physical infrastructures of our countries, that can create the appropriate scale for effective international competition.

We recognise the significance of both collective air and sea transportation arrangements for enhancing productivity, particularly for island states. We recognise that the old underpinnings of both our sub-regionally organized agricultural and manufacturing production and trade, and even our sub-regional transportation systems, have withered away in the face of contemporary international economic liberalisation.

We therefore fully subscribe to the view that attempts at new forms of infrastructural integration, whose creation is assisted by hemispheric financial and technical assistance and cooperation, can be effective in our pursuit of reorganised or alternative economic activities.

To that end, we welcome the reference, at the opening of the Foreign Ministers' deliberations, to an agenda "designed to promote the integration of the continent based on infrastructure and the effective use of technology". Our CARICOM states, in their majority island

states, fully support its view. And in the context of our Conference theme, "Connecting the Americas - "Partners for Prosperity", we look forward to further effective cooperation between our countries and between our Caribbean Development Bank and the Inter American Development Bank in this regard.

EXCELLENCIES,

I do not need to emphasise the vulnerabilities that have left us wide open to a variety of natural disasters. The earthquake in Haiti, among other such disasters, including the destruction wreaked on my country by Hurricane Tomas in 2010, reinforce the importance of urgent, but also persistent attention to this issue. In that regard, one of the matters for consideration at this Conference is that of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, and I wish to thank the Government of Colombia for its inclusion.

It also reminds us that we can no longer postpone the active pursuit of work and solutions to related issues that affect us as island states almost silently, but insidiously - rising sea levels and carbon emissions.

We naturally welcome close and continuing cooperation on these issues between our Caribbean regional institutions and the hemispheric institutions. Pursuit of such action falls naturally within the framework of the statement of this country's Foreign Minister, that "Colombia intends to hold a Summit that achieves concrete results".

EXCELLENCIES,

It would be remiss of me if, within the context of the themes proposed for this Conference, I simply made a reference to my Government's approval of the need for continuing consideration of the matters of organised crime, the relationship between such crime and the movement of narcotics through our hemisphere, and their consequent impact on the security of our countries. But I believe that the time has now come for us to go a step further. We must now *collectively* undertake a high-level review of the issue of the now overwhelming consumption of drugs in this hemisphere, and current methods of dealing with it. Increasingly there is a variety of views, some of them far reaching and bold, on how to handle this scourge. Current strategies are simply not working.

But Saint Lucia believes that a deliberate, cooperative effort to fully consider all the various solutions now being proposed by different Governments of the hemisphere, while respecting the sovereignties of all countries, but giving full consideration to all the perspectives, must now be urgently undertaken.

I understand the sensitivities involved here. And I understand the difficulties some countries may presently have in entertaining views about this matter in the context of domestic politics. But it is obvious to many observers that present solutions are not viable. They may seem to succeed in one country, but only, in short order, at the expense of neighbouring countries. We in the small island states are increasingly at the mercy of such approaches.

This issue is, indeed, the fundamental one affecting, today, the wider security of our countries. We know that it is strongly related to the illicit traffic in firearms and ammunition. We feel their effects. And we subscribe to the **Firearms Marking Agreement** intended to partially respond

to them. But I emphasise that we have no real influence on how this scourge is treated before it gets to our shores. Such an approach is increasingly untenable.

I appeal for an approach that recognises the negative effects of connectedness in this field. We are convinced of the need for a cooperative approach, based, as I have proposed, on a comprehensive review of all methods for dealing with resolving this now overwhelming traffic in narcotics, with deliberate tolerance for all objective opinions.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Saint Lucia remains committed to work with this body as we unite our efforts in seeking solutions to common problems in our hemisphere.

My delegation gives full support to the pursuit of the goals outlined in this Summit Declaration. And I hope that, as we return to our countries, our citizens will be persuaded that we have made some further and decisive steps towards confronting the challenges now before us.

I thank you.