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**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE KAMLA PERSAD BISSESSAR
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE SIXTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia
April 15, 2012

Your Excellency, President Juan Manuel Santos, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to your good self and to the People of the Republic of Colombia for your warm hospitality.

Fellow Heads of State and Governments and their delegations.

My brothers, sisters, family all of the Americas.

I hope that my country's active participation in the technical preparations for this Summit has convinced you that, as former hosts, we are committed to lending support to your efforts to make this Cartagena Summit a success.

I also wish to give the assurance that at the national level we will make every effort to ensure that the decisions arrived at this summit will not be mere words but will be implemented with urgency and vigour.

Trinidad and Tobago - Turning fifty (50)

This year my country celebrates Golden Jubilee of Independence as Jamaica during this last 50 years we have demonstrated our commitment to democracy and rule of law consistent with the fundamental tenets of the OAS and to which all the Leaders of the Americas recommitted in the Declaration of Port of Spain at the 5th Summit of the Americas held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.

Successes

Over these fifty years, we have demonstrated to the world our successes. Our sons and daughters have excelled in every sphere of activity on the world stage be it business, sport, literature, academia, fashion, arts and entertainment. We enjoy political and economic stability, a highly educated workforce, an open industrialized economy, religious and cultural diversity, as our anthem says here every creed and race finds an equal place, an ideal geographic location as the gateway to north, central and south America from the old world to the new. Above all we enjoy the warmth of our people in Trinidad and Tobago.

Partnerships

And how have we been able to achieve this, thru partnerships in the Americas, traditionally with Canada, CARICOM and the United States - we are most appreciative for the cooperation of the support of these partners and as we continue to build bridges with neighbours in Latin America.

And let not our differences divide us ...and in this regard I make a plea we make that we do not see the CARICOM and the Caribbean as an appendance for we hear about Latin America AND the Caribbean and must give due recognition to each of our countries.

A partnership is like a marriage I am not of the view we should badger as we forge a way for prosperity and let not our differences divide us.

Why are we here today - ... I have listened to many of the Leaders speak, indeed I have read about your development - .you too have had your successes for which we congratulate you.

Purpose for us being here today

What are we doing here? What do, all of us hope to achieve? The theme of the Summit informs us. Namely, 'Connecting the Americas, Partnering for Prosperity". I therefore see this Summit as an opportunity for all of us, Heads of State and Government to recommit ourselves to the vision of a hemispheric partnership based on the integration of all of our peoples. The responsibility is great, but as partners and we bear it together. As partners, we should endeavour strategically and purposefully towards prosperity - lasting prosperity for all citizens of the Americas.

This is indeed the decade of the Americas and it is incumbent on us to chart a course of action that will make our region one of hope and affluence where our citizens enjoy all the benefits that accrue from enlightened leadership, good governance buttressed by well thought out policies.

I therefore join with President Santos in reiterating that: "this is the decade of the Americas."

For us it represents a golden opportunity to achieve the effective cooperation that will bring our peoples the social and economic prosperity for which they yearn....each country has strengths of their own, but together we can be a great force to reckon with."

Fundamentally, we all want the same things. How can do we sustain this positive momentum, in what ways, what are the priority issues.

Food, clothing, shelter, and above all security of life, limb and property.

Excellencies, as the lead CARICOM Head of Government on Security, the issue of transnational organized crime holds particular significance for me. We must act decisively on crime and violence in ways that make a difference. We know that the criminal elements operating in the Americas are very organized, in some instances to the extent that their resources exceed in number and sophistication the resources of the State.

Citizen Security/Crime Fighting

Whilst there are many issues challenging the Americas citizen safety and security are fundamental rights deserving our priority attention. Why do I say this - ...because if you are dead,

man, woman or child, then prosperity, food, clothing, shelter will mean nothing, it will be are totally worthless.

Crime security and safety is one of the major challenges facing our countries today, this is multifaceted, transnational pandemic requiring collective effort, we must be our brother's keeper, no one country can do it alone and indeed I take inspiration from my country's own motto "Together We Aspire, Together we Achieve". The fight against crime has to holistic, encompassing strategies for prevention, detection, conviction and rehabilitation.

Prevention - Social Inclusion, Poverty Eradication, Education and ICT

Excellencies, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty must be among our top priorities from the preventative strategy. Attending to the needs of historically disadvantaged groups in our society requires very deliberate policy intervention.

Women Empowerment

Our context here in the Americas has changed considerably since the leaders of the Hemisphere were last gathered together in this forum. We can now boast of having not one (1), not two (2), but five (5) female Heads of State and Government in the Americas. Presidents: Chinchilla, Fernandez and Rouseff, Prime Minister Simpson-Miller, I salute you.

In my own country as well, I continue to advocate for greater involvement of women in all areas of national development. Last year, I campaigned vigorously for greater participation in political decision making by women and with the help of several women leaders we mounted a major meeting on the margins of United Nations General Assembly. I am enthused by the fact that President Dilma Rouseff will facilitate another meeting on the margins of Rio + 20 in Brazil later this year.

Governments of Canada and the United States of America

I wish to thank the governments of Canada and the United States for their support in several initiatives in the CARICOM with respect to citizen safety and security. With respect institutional capacity building programmes assistance has been provide in the following areas:

- Illicit Drugs
- Corruption
- Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling
- Money Laundering and Proceed of Crime
- Security System Reform

RIBIN -- Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network

I want to thank to the people and government of Canada for their fight against crime in my country. Today we welcome the commitment of President Obama for his pledge of increasing the United States commitment to more than \$130 million US dollars to the Americas for supporting citizen security and safety.

It is my respectful view that President Obama fully understands that the war on crime in one of our nations is a war on crime in every of the nation of the Americas. Indeed the safety and security of citizens of the United States as of all our nations is dependent on the efforts of all the nations of the Americas.

Call to Arms

How then as partners do we intensify our war on crime to ensure citizen security and safety? We have identified comprises four functional areas: prevention, detection, conviction and rehabilitation. I respectfully suggest we establish a joint action task force comprising technical representatives of each or nations to consider and report on best practices in each of these functional areas and propose a template for cooperation and collaboration to ensure the necessary policy formulation and implementation in the fight against crime for a safer Americas.

As I close I say more action less talk, we must not only talk the talk, we must walk the walk. And so I say with respect to citizen security and security this is a call to action.

I thank you.