

# Towards a more united Caribbean

By **PIERRE-RICHARD CASIMIR**

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF HAITI



**PIERRE-RICHARD CASIMIR**

was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Haiti by his predecessor, now Prime Minister, Laurent Lamothe on 17 August 2012. A former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Haitian Consul General in Montreal, Mr Casimir is a strong advocate of his predecessor's policy of 'business diplomacy' as the best means of meeting the demands of Haiti's reconstruction and development. In his acceptance speech Mr Casimir pledged to consolidate Haiti's relations with her traditional friends, whilst seeking to diversify the country's partnerships, particularly among South American nations.

Haiti is especially proud to have organised and to be hosting the Fifth Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) from 23 to 26 April 2013. For Haiti, the host country, this Summit is a special and exciting occasion, and it also highlights the historical ties linking the peoples of the Greater Caribbean.

This summit will bring several regional Heads of State and Government and more than thirty delegations from all ACS member states to Haitian soil. It will show the whole world that Haitian diplomacy is firmly on the road to achieving its fullest potential. It has been shrewdly and intelligently conducted by the President of the Republic, HE Michel Joseph Martelly, and applied with resolve and enthusiasm by HE Prime Minister Laurent S. Lamothe and his government. Henceforth, Haitian diplomacy will seek to be one of the major gateways for business in the region.

The organisation of this Summit of the Association of Caribbean States by the Government of Haiti is an extension of the resounding success of the CARICOM summit held in Haiti just two months ago. With this solemn expression by the States of the Greater Caribbean, Haitian diplomacy must be engraved in the region's history as a decidedly open and dynamic diplomacy, well anchored in its geographical space. By organising this summit, Haiti also plans to fully play its role as an actor in a global context marked by increased inter-dependence and co-operation between peoples.

This Fifth ACS Summit is therefore fundamentally strategic in scope, not only for Haiti, but also for the other Caribbean States, and particularly for the region as a whole. Hence the main theme on which the group will reflect during this summit: "Revitalising the vision of the Association of Caribbean States for a stronger and more united Greater Caribbean". This stronger and more united Caribbean that we all hope for will not be truly strong without unity that is enriched by our diversity.

The challenges to successful regional integration are legion. They cannot be faced unless we combine all our efforts and our wills for joint action based on a common vision. In this context, this Summit is an occasion for the representatives of the 25 member states and 4 associate members of the Association to assess the organisation, and envisage reforms to be implemented so as to adapt them to the needs of the

moment with a view to strengthening dialogue, co-ordination and co-operation between the States and Territories of the Greater Caribbean.

This Summit is also an excellent opportunity to join our efforts around the major issues which concern us all, such as: sustainable tourism, the development of trade and investment, air and sea transport in the region, the reduction of vulnerability to natural risks and disasters, and finally how we deal with the recurring issue of the management and protection of the Caribbean Sea. All these matters must be addressed with a view to uniting the Caribbean not only by air and sea, but also within these islands, which move and meet, until they become friends living in harmony.

Apart from these strategic issues, the Summit must also be an opportunity to reflect on the problems faced by our respective societies and on the common aspects of these problems such as climate change, gender equality, the strengthening of governance and the consequences of the economic and financial crisis for our countries.

In order to implement and consolidate the strategic vision which unites us, a joint declaration entitled the Declaration of Haiti, together with the ACS Plan of Action will be adopted at the end of the Summit. These two documents will reflect the Association's renewed vision and its implementation through functional co-operation of human, material and moral resources in the Greater Caribbean.

The Haitian government nurtures great ambitions for the Greater Caribbean. We believe firmly in the vocation of a strong and unified Caribbean in an increasingly multi-polar world. We believe firmly in the vocation of an irresistible attraction for investment in the Caribbean, a place of many paradises. This is why my country's government is confident that the Caribbean can live up to our ambitions. These ambitions are the same ones that motivate the Martelly-Lamothe Government, which follows the slogan "Haiti is open for business." They are the same ambitions that motivate me as Foreign Affairs Minister of Haiti, and in the wake of my illustrious predecessor, to use every means of leveraging business diplomacy to conduct Haiti's external affairs, one of the most fertile areas for development in the region. In Haiti, our ambitions are at the level of the Greater Caribbean.