

# New diplomacy in action

By H.E. DR FEDERICO CUELLO CAMILO

AMBASSADOR OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



FEDERICO CUELLO is the DR's Ambassador to the UK. His prior Ambassadorial postings include Geneva (1999-2002), Brussels (2005-9) and New York (2009-11). Between 1995-99 he was an Economics Vice-Minister, implementing the WTO agreements, preparing and introducing new legislation on trade, telecommunications, competition policy, consumer protection, copyright and industrial property. He negotiated on these issues in the WTO, the FTAA, the DR-Central America FTA, the CARICOM-DR FTA and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between Caribbean countries and the EU.

Positioning any product in the UK is not a job for the faint hearted. And if the task at hand is to market one's own country, the challenge becomes Herculean. Especially in 2011, a year in which UK tourism to the DR was declining fast, closing the year at 95,000 visitors – down from 260,000 in 2008. Since then it has recovered by a whopping 71 per cent, reaching a healthier 162,000 in 2015.

Our fresh produce needed new distribution networks in the UK's mature and very demanding market of about £10 billion, growing as it was at barely 2 per cent – in a good year. Since then, the total growth of DR exports has exceeded 25 per cent – of which 12 per cent was in 2015 alone. As a result, the UK has become the most important destination for DR exports in the EU – well above the Netherlands and Belgium, which are mostly important entry points into continental Europe.

The UK, with 25 per cent of the EU market in illicit substances, required urgent bilateral cooperation to fight this unfortunate traffic, which has found the DR to be one of many transit points from other producing countries in the Western Hemisphere. Now, seizures have increased dramatically.

The role of the 'new diplomacy' advocated by my Minister of Foreign Affairs was instrumental in all of these achievements.

Working with the DR Tourism Promotion Office in London, new capacity for air travel in both charter and regular flights was achieved, ensuring sufficient availability of seats to facilitate the recovery of UK tourism to the DR. As the Minister of Tourism states elsewhere in this report, UK visitors now arrive to find a more diversified destination, with a greater

availability of up-market hotels and villas.

Tapping into the largest network for fresh produce sales, the Dominican Embassy in London became an active member of the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC), becoming the Guest Country for 2012 and participating since then with the largest stand in the London Produce Show year after year. Most products coming to the UK from the DR are either fair-trade or global-gap compliant. And with direct air and maritime connections, DR products arrive ripe and ready to market, faster than from any other country in the Americas – less than 10 hours by plane and 9 days by vessel.

Working with the DR's British Chamber of Commerce (BritCham), every year we promote all features of Dominican society through a series of events during Dominican Week. Unprecedented connections have been made between importers and exporters, investors and partners, artists and the wider public, allowing us to showcase our creativity, our locational advantages as the emerging logistics hub of the Americas and our diversified and growing economy – the fastest in the Americas and the largest in the Caribbean and Central America, as highlighted by the Governor of the Central Bank in this very issue.

Bilateral mechanisms for achieving all of these outcomes were set by our Foreign Ministers, ensuring clear political priorities in a short but ambitious Memorandum of Understanding.

May this year of Dominican leadership become the year for replicating the DR-UK experience, through the efforts of all our embassies in promoting and achieving deeper and wider regional integration in the Americas; and stronger inter-linkages between

micro, small, medium and global enterprises of our Hemisphere, as proposed by President Danilo Medina in accepting the CELAC Pro-Tempore Presidency.

I am most grateful to FIRST Magazine for working so closely with the DR Embassy in London on this, our third issue together. Adequate positioning the DR in the world – through the UK – requires no less. **F**

Source: Eurostat

