

**Introductory address by Antonio Prado, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on the occasion of the lecture presented at ECLAC by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, Winston Dookeran, “Creating New Space for Caribbean Convergence: Integration without Borders”**

**ECLAC, September 4, 2013**

**Santiago de Chile**

Distinguished representatives,

Fellow colleagues at CEPAL,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to introduce to you this morning our distinguished guest, who is of course no stranger here at CEPAL: the Honourable Winston Dookeran, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago.

On behalf of Ms. Alicia Bárcena, I welcome you once again to ECLAC headquarters here in Santiago. Ms. Bárcena unfortunately could not be here today, but has asked me to convey to you her best wishes for a successful visit.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend to your Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago warm congratulations on the fifty-first (51st) anniversary of your Independence, celebrated this past Saturday, 31 August 2013. Trinidad and Tobago continues to be a success story and an example to the region of a country with a strong democratic tradition.

Minister Dookeran has had a long and illustrious career in academia, politics and the public service. Prior to his appointment as Foreign Minister in June 2012, Minister Dookeran served for two years as the Minister of Finance of his Government. Minister Dookeran also spent five years as the Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, and some of you may not know that he worked for a short period as a Senior Economist at the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain. So we are welcoming today a member of the family, who, as our Executive Secretary will attest, is a structuralist in the finest tradition of our institution.

His most recently published work in 2012, entitled "Power, Politics and Performance - A Partnership Approach for The Development of Small States" has received high acclaim as both a visionary and practical assessment of the political and structural reforms that are required to ensure sustainable development in the Caribbean. In it, he famously describes the dissonance between the 'logic of politics and the logic of economics', and the implications of this for development in practice.

Minister Dookeran also has innovative ideas for shaping a dynamic path for Caribbean growth and development, ideas which he has presented to the Caribbean Community in his proposed convergence model for integrated production and trade consolidation. This model is based on the premise that the Caribbean economies are at a crossroads; that the global system of production and distribution has changed, with serious consequences for countries that cannot make the structural transformations necessary for improved competitiveness. Minister Dookeran acknowledges that the challenges are global and that low growth, escalating debt and huge fiscal deficits are persistent problems that most of the countries of the Caribbean are facing.

He argues that despite the daunting circumstances, there is strength in unity, and more importantly, that unity must embrace the whole region of Latin America and the Caribbean. In fact, he has suggested in his proposed model that: “if we are to survive....there exists no alternative option to cooperative effort involving all the nations in the Latin American and Caribbean Region”.

The theme of Minister Dookeran’s presentation this morning is **“Creating New Space for Caribbean Convergence: Integration without Borders”**. I am certain that we will be treated to a rich and enlightening discourse on a strategy for the Caribbean in its pursuit of more effective, more cohesive development by widening and deepening relations with all of Latin America.

Minister Dookeran, it is my pleasure to give you the floor.