

**REMARKS BY PHILIP A W WILLIAMS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CARIBBEAN EXPORT DEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
AT  
THE OPENING OF  
THE CHINA - CARIBBEAN BUSINESS DIALOGUE**

**Hilton Hotel  
Barbados  
Wednesday, August 5, 2009**

**His Excellency Mr. Qiang Wei, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Barbados, Mr. Songgen Dong, Vice Chairman, China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and Head of Delegation, Other Members of the Chinese Delegation, Caribbean participants in the Dialogue, Specially invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Welcome to this China - Caribbean Business Dialogue. We are delighted to have been requested by CCPIT to partner with them in hosting this meeting. This is particularly pleasant for me on the personal level, because it affords me an opportunity to continue contact with CCPIT, of which I was first made directly aware in 1999. In September of that year, I met a similar delegation from CCPIT at the World Chambers Congress in Marseilles. This was the first World Congress of Chambers of Commerce and also the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Marseilles Chamber which was the very first Chamber of Commerce in the World.

In my role as a Senior Adviser at the International Trade Centre in Geneva, I was also privileged to work with CCPIT in organizing the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Trade Promotion Organisations in Beijing in 2002. This event which attracted over 300 participants coincided with the celebration of CCPIT's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for which there was a much larger event culminating with a banquet in the Great Hall of the People for over 2000 guests.

In February 2006, I attended a conference in Sanya, Hainan Province. Sanya is a city on an island in the South China Sea. Sanya has double the population of Barbados, but like Barbados is a tourist destination, with fine beaches and a year round warm climate. It has now hosted several of the Miss World Beauty contests and is particularly attractive to visitors from nearby Hong Kong, from northern China and for Russians escaping their harsh winters.

So much for reminiscences. As a fast growing world power, China is very much on the agenda of all serious business people. I gather that a few regional businesses have already made some progress in this vast market and a few youthful entrepreneurs who travelled to China as students appear to have decided to stay on to pursue business opportunities. At the official level, a growing number of the 15 member states of CARIFORUM have established business relationships with China and some have set up or, like Barbados, are in the process of establishing a national diplomatic presence in the country.

This Dialogue is I believe Caribbean Export's first significant contact with the Chinese market. Given China's importance to the future of the Region, the Agency has welcomed CCPIT's invitation to sign an Agreement of Cooperation with it. We believe that this is an important first step to developing a process for regular exchange of information and specific trade and investment promotion activities. At a working session in our office yesterday, we have already started to map out a programme of research, business

meetings and promotional activities, which we hope to further expand on and implement in the coming months.

We hope to work with CCPIT and a regional member state, not yet identified, to organise the 3<sup>rd</sup> China - Caribbean Business Forum in 2010. This follows earlier Economic and Trade Cooperation fora in Jamaica in 2005 and China in 2007. Within our trade and investment mandate, Caribbean Export will also work with the CARICOM Secretariat to contribute to the success of the Caribbean presence at the Shanghai World Expo in China next year.

We are very aware of the challenges of small countries seeking to do business with a large country like China, but I was reminded yesterday by Mr. Dong that China also has many small companies. As members of the CSME, recent signatories of the Economic Partnership Agreement and with geographic proximity to both North and South America, the Region offers access to large markets, some on our doorstep.

Our meeting today offers an important opportunity for the region to take another step in defining our relationship with China and agreeing some concrete actions to realise the real potential which we know must exist for both parties to this exciting new relationship.

Welcome! I look forward to a rewarding day's discussions.