



THE AGENCY FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

P.O Box 608, Kingstown, St Vincent and The Grenadines

Tel: (784) 456-1600, Fax (784) 456-2430

Email: apisvg2023@gmail.com

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Venezuela & Guyana sign joint peace Declaration of Argyle

Following a series of meetings on Thursday, December 14, 2023 at the Argyle International Airport, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, His Excellency Nicolas Maduro and the President of The Co-operative Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Mohamed Irfaan Ali signed an 11-point peace declaration to relax tensions over the Essequibo border controversy.

The Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace Between Guyana and Venezuela demonstrates that all parties attending the meeting reiterated their commitment to Latin America and the Caribbean remaining a Zone of Peace. Both leaders signed the declaration in which they agreed not to use force to settle the border dispute, and to meet three months later in Brazil for further discussions on the issue.

The meetings were organized by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, in his capacity as the Pro Tempore President of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States - CELAC, of which both the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Cooperative Republic of Guyana are members.

Following the meetings, the declaration was read to the media in both English and Spanish.

Dr. Gonsalves read the declaration in English, which reads as follows:

On Thursday, December 14, 2023, in Argyle, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and His Excellency Nicolas

Maduro, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela held discussions on matters consequential to the territory in dispute between their two countries.

These discussions were facilitated by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Pro-Tempore President of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Dr. The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, and the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica and Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit. Prime Ministers Gonsalves and Skerrit, together with H.E. Mr. Celso Amorim, Special Adviser and Personal Envoy of H.E. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, acted as principal Interlocutors.

Also present were Honourable Prime Ministers of the Caribbean Community, namely: the Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister of The Bahamas; the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados; the Honourable Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada; the Honourable Philip J. Pierre, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia; Honourable Terrence Drew of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Dr. The Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Attending as Observers on behalf of His Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations were Their Excellencies Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Miroslav Jenca, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Political and Peace building Affairs.

In addition, His Excellency Alvaro Leyva Durán, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia and Mr. Gerardo Torres Zelaya, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Honduras, in his capacity as CELAC Troika, also participated.

All parties attending the meeting at Argyle, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterated their commitment to Latin America and the Caribbean remaining a Zone of Peace.

Guyana and Venezuela declared as follows:

1. Agreed that Guyana and Venezuela, directly or indirectly, will not threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances, including those consequential to any existing controversies between the two States.

2. Agreed that any controversies between the two States will be resolved in accordance with international law, including the Geneva Agreement dated February 17, 1966.

3. Committed to the pursuance of good neighborliness, peaceful coexistence, and the unity of Latin America and the Caribbean.

4. Noted Guyana's assertion that it is committed to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice for the resolution of the border controversy. Noted Venezuela's assertion of its lack of consent and lack of recognition of the International Court of Justice and its jurisdiction in the border controversy.

5. Agreed to continue dialogue on any other pending matters of mutual importance to the two countries.

6. Agreed that both States will refrain, whether by words or deeds, from escalating any conflict or disagreement arising from any controversy between them. The two States will cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground conducive to tension between them. In the event of such an incident the two States will immediately communicate with one another, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), and the President of Brazil to contain, reverse and prevent its recurrence.

7. Agreed to establish immediately a joint commission of the Foreign Ministers and technical persons from the two States to address matters as mutually agreed. An update from this joint commission will be submitted to the Presidents of Guyana and Venezuela within three months.

8. Both States agreed that Prime Minister Ralph E. Gonsalves, the Pro-Tempore President of CELAC, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, the incumbent CARICOM Chairman, and President

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil will remain seized of the matter as Interlocutors and the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres as Observer, with the ongoing concurrence of Presidents Irfaan Ali and Nicolas Maduro. For the avoidance of doubt, Prime Minister Gonsalves' role will continue even after Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ceases to be the Pro-Tempore President of CELAC, within the framework of the CELAC Troika plus one; and Prime Minister Skerrit's role will continue as a member of the CARICOM Bureau.

9. Both States agreed to meet again in Brazil, within the next three months, or at another agreed time, to consider any matter with implications for the territory in dispute, including the above mentioned update of the joint commission.

10. We express our appreciation to Prime Ministers Gonsalves and Skerrit, to President Lula and his Personal Envoy Celso Amorim, to all other CARICOM Prime Ministers present, to the officials of the CARICOM Secretariat, to the CELAC Troika and to the Head of the CELAC PTP Secretariat in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency Dr. Douglas Slater, for their respective roles in making this meeting a success.

11. We express our appreciation to the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for their kind facilitation and hospitality at this meeting.