



ADDRESS

By

MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY

**MAJOR GENERAL (Ret'd)
THE HONOURABLE EDMUND DILLON**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE FORMAL OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE MINISTERS
OF THE AMERICAS (XII CDMA)**

DATE: October 11, 2016

TIME: 9:30 a.m.

VENUE: Hyatt Regency

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Honourable Mr Justice Ivor Archie, Chief Justice of
the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Colleague Ministers of Government,

Esteemed Ministers of Defence and/Security of the
Americas and the other Heads of Delegations

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Other distinguished delegates and Observers, including
the Minister of Defence of Portugal,

Specially invited guests,

Representatives of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,
Buenos Dias,
Bonjour,
Bom Dia,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome the distinguished representatives of thirty-three CDMA Member States to Port of Spain for the 12th Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas. I extend a cordial welcome also to the representatives of International Organizations, Observer countries and Agencies who have joined us for this important meeting. Hosting this conference brings much pride to Trinidad and Tobago and we are indeed appreciative of the opportunity that has been afforded to us to chair the CDMA process.

I am also pleased to welcome you to the Caribbean, for the first CDMA to be hosted in this sub-region. This is the twelfth meeting of this Forum, which was first held in 1995 in Williamsburg, Virginia in the United States of America. Since then the Conference has convened biennially in Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Canada, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Peru. We in the Caribbean therefore welcome the opportunity to receive representatives of the Hemisphere, as well as other regions, as we continue to foster open dialogue,

collaboration and cooperation in addressing the security and defence challenges across the Americas.

The Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas was conceived at a time when the international community recognised the need to rethink its approach to defence and the concept of security. Cognisant of the progressive role of the armed forces in the 21st century, the main aim of the CDMA has been to foster mutual knowledge, analysis, debate and the exchange of ideas and experiences on defence and security. Moreover the multidimensional nature of security threats calls for greater cooperation and integration to enhance defence and security strategic planning.

Twenty-one years on, the relevance of the CDMA forum in addressing critical defence and security matters that affect us individually and as a region, still remains. The role of the armed forces continues to evolve to incorporate countering non-traditional threats, which include the impact of natural disasters and the influence of transnational organised crime and terrorism.

The “Williamsburg Principles”, adopted in 1995, continue to be steady beacons to CDMA members, guiding us to recall at all times, that:

- the preservation of democracy is the basis for ensuring our mutual security;
- military and security forces play a critical role in supporting and defending the legitimate interests of sovereign democratic states;
- our Armed Forces should be subordinate to democratically controlled authority, act within the bounds of national Constitutions, and respect human rights through training and practice;
- we should increase transparency in defence matters through exchanges of information and greater civilian-military dialogue;
- we should set as a goal for the Hemisphere the resolution of outstanding disputes by negotiated settlement and widespread adoption of confidence building measures; and that
- we should promote greater defence co-operation in support of voluntary participation in UN-sanctioned peace-keeping operations, and to co-operate in a supportive role in the fight against narco-terrorism.

These principles are at the very core of our existence and are integral to all that we do as Ministers of Defence in the interest our states. Indeed, these principles have guided Trinidad and Tobago in all that we have done in preparation for this Conference.

Since the assumption of Trinidad and Tobago to the presidency of the Twelfth CDMA in 2014, we have sought to sustain engagement with CDMA members in the inter-sessional period. We have hosted two Ad-Hoc Working group meetings in August 2015 to follow up on mandates coming out of the Eleventh CDMA which was held in Arequipa, Peru.

We brought together defence experts from across the Hemisphere in December 2016 to assist in the definition of the thematic areas of focus for this Twelfth Session. We also met with representatives of Member States both in Washington DC and those resident in Port of Spain, all with a view to advancing work on priority security matters for the Hemisphere.

Earlier this year, the Preparatory Meeting was held in Port of Spain to approve the thematic agenda which will guide our analysis and discussions during the course of this meeting. The foundation for this Conference was therefore laid over the last two years and is the product of our collective commitment and deliberations. Our actions, throughout this period, were underpinned by the principles of democracy, transparency and respect for sovereignty.

As the Pro Tempore President of the Twelfth CDMA, I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the high level of participation and professionalism demonstrated thus far. The contributions of state representatives in the Working Committees that met on yesterday, have been invaluable and I am certain that when we as Ministers sit over the next two days to deliberate on the strategies that can be implemented in this dynamic and increasingly volatile security and defence environment; we will achieve meaningful outcomes. The Declaration of Port of Spain, the outcome document of this Conference, will reflect these deliberations.

The dynamism of the global environment, the unprecedented pace of change, the impact of technology, new theatres of war, and the concomitant volatility occasioned by the convergence of these factors, require no less than our heightened commitment to action, collaboration and co-operation. The safety and security of the citizens of the Hemisphere and the preservation of peaceful societies must continue to be paramount in all that we do.

The theme of the Conference, Strengthening Defence and Security Cooperation in the Hemisphere in an Increasingly Volatile Environment, was proposed by Trinidad and

Tobago in the context of global developments which have redefined the concept of security and which underline the need for enhanced collaboration and a multidimensional response to the myriad challenges threatening our states and citizens.

In elaborating this theme, consideration was also given to the evolving role of the armed forces, environmental protection and resilience and the necessity for a hemispheric defence and security cooperation policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, our proposal to begin the dialogue on the need for an overarching “Hemispheric Security and Defence Cooperation Policy”, was based on the recognition of the increased reliance on the employment of the military for the provision of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance in major incidents that call for sub-regional or collective responses. Such a policy, we believe, will guide the actions and interactions of states on a military to military level as well as a civil to military level. It is our hope that this meeting will stimulate dialogue on the way forward on this matter which we consider to be of significance for the Hemisphere.

As we prepare to engage on these and other issues, I am certain that through our shared values and common

objectives we will make significant progress and produce a constructive and fruitful outcome. I have attended CDMA meetings before this XII Conference in another capacity, as I then wore the hat of Chief of Defence Staff of Trinidad and Tobago's armed forces. I sit now as Minister and so am able to merge two perspectives for the good of this process. Join with me in achieving success.

In closing, allow me to reiterate our pleasure to welcome you all to Port of Spain and to extend every good wish for continued fraternity and partnership and successful deliberations over the next two days.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.