



**FINAL COMMUNIQUE TURKEY-CARICOM HIGH-LEVEL
MEETING
Istanbul, Turkey
22-24 August 2008**

The first high-level meeting between Turkey and the member states of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held from 21 to 23 August 2008 in Istanbul, Turkey, upon the invitation of the Government of Turkey.

Representatives from Turkey and Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname Trinidad and Tobago as well as the CARICOM Secretariat attended the meeting and held discussions on various aspects of the relations between Turkey and the CARICOM countries.

The meeting underscored the evolving nature of today's world politics and economics that brings countries ever closer to each other irrespective of geographical remoteness, and in light of this reality, highlighted the common concerns, expectations and objectives shared by Turkey and the CARICOM countries.

Calling themselves "far neighbours" and stressing the importance of interregional cooperation for promoting stability, security and prosperity, the representatives from Turkey and the CARICOM countries expressed a strong commitment to further enhance and diversify their relations in a mutually beneficial way, taking into account the vast potential that currently exists in economic, political, social and cultural realms.

Recognizing Turkey's increased efforts to expand its bilateral cooperation schemes and have a more active and visible presence at multilateral organizations in the greater Caribbean region in conformity with its "Latin America and the Caribbean Action Plan" launched as early as 1998,

the representatives of the CARICOM countries welcomed the contributions of Turkey as a permanent observer country to both the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Welcoming the initial strides taken in laying out a sound foundation on which the future of relations could be built, the representatives of Turkey and the CARICOM countries agreed to raise their cooperation to a higher level, and to this end, pledged to expedite the process for the signing of the “Agreement for the Establishment of a Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism between Turkey and CARICOM” as proposed by the Government of Turkey, with a view to institutionalizing their relationship.

Recognizing the economic advances made by Turkey and the development efforts undertaken by CARICOM within the framework of its Single Market and Economy and the related CARICOM Development Fund, the meeting first and foremost underlined the importance of making full use of current and emerging trade and investment opportunities with a special emphasis on sectors like tourism, construction, manufacturing, information technologies, environmental protection, transportation industries, health, education and human resource capacity building. CARICOM noted the allocation of funding by Turkey for development projects.

In this regard, the participants stressed the importance of promoting economic relations as well as forging closer ties between their respective business communities so as to enable them to better appreciate the existing opportunities.

Recognizing also the role of social and cultural interaction in fostering closer ties, which then creates an atmosphere conducive to the overall development of their relationship, and encouraged by their peoples' mutually positive perception of their respective countries, the representatives from Turkey and the CARICOM countries pledged to further increase their social and cultural contacts, including through mutual visits, the provision of scholarships, as well as the organization of cultural fairs and exhibits.

Recognizing the ongoing international efforts to reinforce cross cultural dialogue and understanding, Turkey and the Caribbean States underscore the importance of the initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Having then reflected upon the international political and security environment, which poses similar problems and opportunities for their countries, the representatives from Turkey and the CARICOM countries also agreed to step up their political cooperation and consultation with a view to forging joint and thus more effective responses to those common challenges facing them.

In this regard, the participants pointed out global warming, environmental degradation, epidemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, energy deficiency, poverty and food security as some of the most important problems that require prior and joint attention of their countries. They also reaffirmed their determination to strengthen their cooperation in response to natural disasters and acknowledged that the Caribbean region is especially vulnerable to such risks, particularly in view of the negative effects of climate change.

Referring to the crucial importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) so as to attain a broad-based sustainable development and reiterating their firm commitment to continue their individual and joint efforts in this direction, the participants exchanged views and information on various endeavours and projects designed to address this objective.

In that respect, the representatives from CARICOM countries expressed their appreciation for Turkey's national efforts to achieve the MDGs, as well as its increased development assistance to countries in need, including those in the Caribbean region.

The Turkish officials, on the other hand, welcomed the promising steps taken by the CARICOM countries to realize the MDGs, as well as the invaluable contribution that CARICOM is making in this direction through projects like "Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Program, "Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change" and "Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS". The Turkish representatives also reaffirmed their will to continue to contribute to such efforts in the Caribbean region.

Convinced that those efforts towards advancing cooperation among their countries will also contribute to regional and global peace, stability and prosperity, and encouraged by the mutually unswerving commitment to pursue this path as displayed in the meeting, the representatives from Turkey and the CARICOM countries expressed hope that their meeting will be a first step in this direction and that it will soon be followed by the "Turkey-CARICOM Ministerial Forum Meeting" which the Turkish Government has already stated its willingness to host.