

For those interested in acquiring substantive knowledge and real-world insight on the coordination of the foreign policies of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

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Webinar

## The Coordination of the Foreign Policies of the Member States of CARICOM: A Contemporary Reappraisal

held via Zoom web conference and featuring a panel of international affairs experts

on

16 November 2021  
9:30am to 12:30pm (AST)

### Concept Note

Article 16 of the *Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy* draws attention, *inter alia*, to the role of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) in "establish[ing] measures to co-ordinate the foreign policies of the Member States of the Community, including proposals for joint representation, and seek[ing] to ensure, as far as practicable, the adoption of Community positions on major hemispheric and international issues."

In recent years, this aspect of the *Revised Treaty* has increasingly come into public view. At times, with regard to foreign policy episodes involving *CARICOM Member States*, it has been scrutinized. Other instances of national-level foreign policy-making and high-profile diplomacy have provided a fillip to the said text of the *Revised Treaty*.

All told, there is **growing public interest** in the real-world application of the aforesaid dimension of the *Revised Treaty*, as well as in associated strategies and policy responses.

With the foregoing in mind, **this webinar**, which the *Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean (DAOC)* will host *via Zoom* on **16 November 2021 from 9:30am to 12:30pm Atlantic Standard Time (AST)**, provides a platform for open / in-depth debate—among a cross-section of stakeholders in the Community and beyond—on contemporary:

1. Issues that encumber what is envisioned *per* the *Revised Treaty* text under reference, paying close attention to the concept and wider context of "**a Community of Sovereign States**"; and
2. Opportunities to live up to the letter and spirit of the text in question, paying close attention to lessons learned, success stories and best practices in respect of leveraging national- and bloc-level foreign policy apparatuses.

Webinar panelists have a depth and breadth of foreign policy and diplomatic experience, such that they can lend keen insight to the aforementioned two-pronged dynamic. For instance, Ambassador Curtis A. Ward is a retired senior Jamaican diplomat. Of note, in an article (entitled '**A Coherent Foreign Policy Defines a Nation's Sovereignty**') he published last year, Ambassador Ward asks some probing questions about and shines a critical light on his country's foreign policy. His commentary—which he will expand on in his webinar presentation—has special resonance in the context of wider salient concerns, as expressed by Sir Shridath Ramphal, who has counselled thusly: "**The Caribbean desperately needs to be active and effective in very many areas of Foreign Policy as an adjunct to its national and regional policies – and it needs to be for reasons of survival.**" Sir Shridath has also stated that

Caribbean diplomacy clearly has two harmonised components: Diplomacy as separate states of course, but Diplomacy also as the collective (however you describe it) that it is. This diplomacy has distinct attributes that derive from the larger policy frameworks that the Region has established – and is constantly, but all too slowly, refining. Yet they are vital institutional arrangements to give effect to the agreed goals of the Caribbean Community. But whatever these arrangements may be, their functioning (like their establishment) will rely on a culture of regionalism – the development of a regional patriotism that enhances national identities.

Ambassador Colin Granderson, another webinar panelist, who is Assistant Secretary-General for Foreign and Community Relations at the CARICOM Secretariat, will help us unpack the complex themes that animate the previously mentioned statement. In tandem, he will examine cooperation writ large *per* Article 16 of the *Revised Treaty* (and its praxis / real-world application) in respect of, *inter alia*, the role of COFCOR in "establish[ing] measures to coordinate the foreign policies of the Member States of the Community, including proposals for joint representation, and seek[ing] to ensure, as far as practicable, the adoption of Community positions on major hemispheric and international issues." That said, Ambassador Granderson will also discuss the COP26 moment, as it were, contending that there is a story to tell in respect of CARICOM coordination in the lead up to and at this major global meeting. In terms of opportunities to live up to the letter and spirit of the Article 16 text in question, regional states' cooperation in respect of multilateral efforts to address the climate crisis is held up as a success story.

Beyond that, there is a lot we can glean in respect of the subject matter of this webinar through heightened awareness of the role of the 'C' in the ACP; i.e. *the Caribbean* in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Once again, we can turn to insight from Sir Shridath, who is said to be "one of the ACP Group's founding fathers." He has often highlighted the link between the consolidation of "the Caribbean's unity ... and mould[ing] the diverse countries of Africa and the Pacific with us into the ACP ..." He ends an important speech, entitled 'Revisiting the Georgetown Agreement', which is a retrospective of the ACP (now the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)), with an especially pertinent message for our purposes. He notes,

[i]n revisiting the Georgetown Agreement, this primacy of institutionalised unity is the lesson I most urge upon you. And upon you who are of this region – the lesson that perhaps none of this could have happened at all, without the beginnings of regional unity here in the Caribbean – and our obligation to return to it.

As Sir Shridath maintains in his landmark publication, there are consequential international affairs-related moments wherein the Caribbean and like-minded states have made important strides in 'Singing From the Same Hymn Sheet'. In this vein, by way of his article published in 2015, Ambassador Dr. Patrick Gomes offers incisive reflections on the then-ACP, contending that the grouping "has social and organisational capital accumulated from a rich experience on trade negotiations with the world's largest bloc of Europe and its 500 million inhabitants." The recently inked post-Cotonou deal, informed by and a product of the All-OACPS/EU level and respective regional protocols, provides rich material for analysis and reflection in keeping with the overarching theme of this webinar. It reveals much about the evolution of OACPS-EU relations, as well as intra-OACPS relations. Ambassador Gomes, a former ACP Secretary-General, will be an invaluable resource to drive the discussion in that regard in his capacity as a webinar panelist.

Ambassador Errol Humphrey and Ambassador Dr. Riyad Insanally will provide added perspective, as webinar panelists, with regard to other policy realms and theatres of diplomacy relevant to this webinar. In the case of Ambassador Humphrey, a former Ambassador of Barbados to the European Union (EU) and individually to a number of EU Member States, he will examine the significance of the UNCTAD 15 moment for Barbados (the host country) and the Caribbean. The fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 15) is historic for more reasons than one, which Ambassador Humphrey will delve into, with special regard to broader themes of coordination at the Caribbean level and beyond. UNCTAD 15 and this quadrennial conference's pre-events elevated the region and its policy agenda. As UNCTAD 15 took place from October 3rd - 7th, Ambassador Humphrey, speaking in his private capacity, will explore some of the possible positive outcomes from the Conference.

For his part, Ambassador Insanally, who has recently stepped down as Ambassador of Guyana to the United States and the Organization of American States (OAS), will look back on his 31 years representing Guyana's interests in regional and multilateral forums, to engage with the wider themes of this webinar. In this respect, he will reflect on lessons learned about the coordination of foreign policy among CARICOM States, drawing on case studies from the CARICOM, ACP and OAS theatres.

Ambassador Dr. June Soomer, this webinar's discussant and a former Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States, will take stock of the respective presentations, laying the groundwork for a panel-wide Q&A session.