

Statement by the Commonwealth Ministerial Group on the Guyana – Venezuela Border Controversy

The Commonwealth Ministerial Group convened on September 28, 2007 at United Nations Headquarters, New York, to review developments on the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela which arose out of the contention by the latter that the 1899 Award that definitively established the boundary between the two countries is null and void.

Foreign Minister Rudy Insanally briefed the Group on recent welcome developments including the exchange of high-level visits, discussions on greater physical integration under the IIRSA Process, and the Petro Caribe arrangement, which provides petroleum to Guyana under concessionary payment terms. It was noted, however, that Venezuela persisted in its claim and this remained an impediment to Guyana's full development of its territory, including the resources in its territorial sea and exclusive economic zone.

The Ministerial Group noted that both Guyana and Venezuela have reiterated their support for the Good Offices Process of the United Nations Secretary General, in the wake of the death in January 2007 of Mr. Oliver Jackman, Personal Representative of the Secretary General.

In relation to the maritime dispute between Guyana and Suriname, the Ministerial Group welcomed the Award that was handed down on September 20, 2007 by the Arbitral Tribunal constituted pursuant to Article 287, and in accordance with Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which represents a peaceful and definitive settlement of the dispute in accordance with international law.

Minister Insanally expressed the appreciation of the Government and people of Guyana for the steadfast solidarity of the Commonwealth with Guyana in respect of the controversy with Venezuela and with regard to the claims of the Republic of Suriname to Guyana's territory.

The Ministerial Group reiterated its unequivocal support for the maintenance of Guyana's territorial integrity and sovereignty, including its unrestricted right to the development of the entirety of its territory for the benefit of its people.

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