

Trinidad & Tobago Assumes Presidency of The Summit of The Americas Process

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

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Trinidad and Tobago assumed the Presidency of the Summit of the Americas Process today, Wednesday, August 13, and will host the Fifth Summit in 2009. This is the first time that a CARICOM country has held the Presidency and a Summit will be held in the Caribbean.

The transfer of the Presidency from Argentina to Trinidad and Tobago took place this morning at the XLVI Ministerial Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) held at the Headquarters of the Organization of American States in Washington DC.

Trinidad and Tobago was represented at the meeting by Dr. Lenny Saith, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, and Minister of Public Administration and Information, who received the symbol of the transfer of the Presidency - the *Inukshuk* - which represents leadership, friendship and cooperation.

Also attending the meeting were Marina Valère, Trinidad and Tobago Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative to the OAS and Ms. Laura-Marie West, National Coordinator for the Summit Process at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Summits of the Americas bring together the Heads of State and Government to discuss common concerns, seek solutions and develop a shared vision for the future development of the region. Four previous Summits have been held in Florida, (1994), Chile (1998), Canada (2001) and Mar del Plata, Argentina (2005). The mandates of the Summits include a focus on Democracy, Hemispheric Security, Disaster Management, Sustainable Development, Education, Health, Connectivity and Labour.

At this morning's meeting, OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, congratulated Trinidad and Tobago on the assumption of the Presidency and "encouraged all member states to support the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as it embarks upon the work of the next Summit."

In his address Dr. Saith said it was "a special honour and privilege for Trinidad and Tobago to receive the full support of member states for what will undeniably be a challenging but very rewarding undertaking."

He said, "Our country has been an avid proponent of this Summit Process since its inception in December 1994 when the First Summit of the Americas was held in Miami, Florida.

"We have sought to demonstrate our commitment to the Summit process through, but not limited to our offer to host the site of the Headquarters of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); the hosting of the Fourth Meeting of the Ministers of Education in Tobago in August 2005; and the hosting of the XV Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Labour in September 2007 for which preparations are proceeding apace.

"Our nation's developmental agenda also embraces the pan-Caribbean region to which we are irrevocably and solidly committed and in which the development of Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM is intertwined. However, globalization and advances in technology have mandated that Trinidad and Tobago's developmental agenda must also contain a Pan-Americas component reflective of its relationship with the wider hemisphere. It was, therefore, against this background that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Patrick Manning, took the opportunity to offer Trinidad and Tobago as the host of the Fifth Summit of the Americas in 2009, while attending the Mar del Plata Summit."

Minister Saith said "Trinidad and Tobago, motivated by the desire to contribute towards the improvement of the lives of 800 million people living in the Americas, looks forward to facilitating the continuation of the process through the hosting of the 2009 Summit."