



CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government Update

6 March 2026

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update on my recent attendance at the **50th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**, held in St. Kitts and Nevis, held from the 24th to the 27th of February 2026.

This milestone summit, themed "*Beyond Words: Action Today for a Thriving, Sustainable CARICOM*," was historic not only for this milestone of the 50th such meeting of Caribbean leaders, but for achieving a rare full attendance of all Member States and Associate Members.

Enhancing Our Regional Standing

Mister Speaker, the Cayman Islands has held Associate Member status in CARICOM since 2002. While we are not a full voting member, our presence at this table is imperative. Attendance underscores this Government's commitment to our **2026-2028 Broad Outcomes**, specifically our mandate to enhance overseas relations and build a "modern, innovative Cayman" that does not exist in isolation.

The Value of In-Person Diplomacy

In an era of digital connectivity, one might ask why in-person attendance remains beneficial, if not I daresay necessary. Mister Speaker, the benefits of physical presence at this level of diplomacy cannot be overstated.



- 1. Face-to-Face Engagement with Caribbean Community Leaders and Global Partners:** This summit facilitated the high-level engagement between regional leaders and international leaders, including the **U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio**. Being physically present allowed the Cayman Islands to hear discourse first-hand and participate in face-to-face discussions on regional security, illicit trafficking, and the evolving geopolitical dynamics—issues that have a direct impact on our own borders and responsibilities.
- 2. The "Corridor Conversations":** The most critical diplomatic breakthroughs often occur during the "Caucus" Sessions and informal breaks. These private dialogues provide an opportunity to deepen personal relations between leaders and thereby build support and solidarity on a range of matters related to our unique socio-economic interests in a way that is **impossible** via a video-call screen.
- 3. Bolster Common Understanding of Common Challenges:** By engaging with our neighbours (who we share fascinating, intertwined bonds of history, heritage and family with), we gain a greater understanding of our challenges and share intelligence and learnings on how to address pressing matters including cross-border illicit activity, cost-of-living, food security, financial services standards, tourism and trade links, as well as capital project finance. As we face shared threats and opportunities, the partnerships forged at CARICOM ensures the Cayman Islands are relevant to, and part of, the regional framework and fellowship.



Conclusion

Mister Speaker, I wish to go on record to thank our host nation, the government and gracious people of the incredibly beautiful islands of St Kitts and Nevis, for their exceptional hospitality under the leadership of current Chair of the Conference of Heads of Government Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Terrence Drew.

Prime Minister Drew expertly navigated us through what was a very ambitious agenda. I also wish to acknowledge his diplomacy and regard for the Overseas Territories as he ensured that as Associate Members, we were included in meaningful discussions and vibrant activities.

Mister Speaker, building a stronger Cayman means being an active participant in the community of countries. By engaging at the highest level, we ensure that the Cayman Islands is not just a spectator but a solid contributor to the Caribbean community's collective future.

During my travel, the **Hon. Deputy Premier** served as Acting Premier, and the **Hon. Minister for Planning** acted as Deputy Premier, and I thank them both and the rest of the NCFC Caucus for their continued dedication to the home front while our beloved Islands were represented abroad.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.