

**STATEMENT OF DR. THE HONOURABLE KEITH CHRISTOPHER ROWLEY,**

**PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,**

**ON THE ELECTION OF THE NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH**

Over recent months several reports have appeared in the media surrounding the fact that CARICOM Governments have not been able to reach consensus on a single candidate to stand for election to the Office of Secretary General of the Commonwealth. The election to that Office will take place, in caucus, when Commonwealth Heads of Government meet in Valletta, Malta, over the period 27th – 29th November, 2015.

There exists a broadly held view that by virtue of rotation among the geographic regions comprising the Commonwealth, it is the Caribbean's turn to assume the mantle of leadership of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Considering that the African region has endorsed a single candidate, the Caribbean's best chances of prevailing in this contest would be to coalesce around a single strong candidate.

Unfortunately, the situation in our region is quite different, with three Members of the Caribbean Community having mounted candidates, namely, Sir Ronald Sanders of Antigua and Barbuda, Baroness Patricia Scotland of Ashtal, a Dominican - born sitting life Peer in the British House of Lords , on behalf of Dominica and Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development in the former Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

As we enter the period of heightened focus on the detailed preparations for Trinidad and Tobago's participation in the CHOGM, in which we intend to play an active role consistent with our long standing policy of engagement, I consider it appropriate to clarify the position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in this matter.

In that regard, I should like to advise that through the appropriate diplomatic channels, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth has been today advised, by letter, that Trinidad and Tobago has exercised its discretion to formally withdraw its candidature for the Office of Secretary General.

After careful consideration of all pertinent aspects of the matter, it is the decision of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to give its full support to the candidate of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, who we believe is best placed to execute the responsibilities of the

Office of Secretary General in a manner that would be a tribute to the Peoples of the Caribbean Community.

It is our hope that others in our region will in the limited time left, make common cause by unifying our region around Sir Ronald's candidature.