APPENDIX I:

STATEMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PRIME MINISTER AT FORMAL OPENING OF FOURTH CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN GOVERNMENTS, BRIDGETOWN, 23RD OCTOBER, 1967

Your Excellency, Fellow Prime Ministers and Premiers, Distinguished Guests,

I am very happy to be once more in Barbados which has always been for me a pleasant and hospitable country.

I recall the last occasion on which I was in Barbados when the Heads of Governments of all the Commonwealth Caribbean countries met last year in order to prepare for the Canada-West Indies Conference.

Although the personnel is very largely the same, this Conference should be sharply distinguished from last year's. Then we met to concert our position on the Canada-West Indies talks which took place in July of 1966. That meeting was an ad hoc one specially called for a specific purpose. Now, we are meeting to agree upon the economic future of the Caribbean, this occasion being the continuation of the series of annual meetings of Heads of Commonwealth Caribbean Governments. This time our meeting includes a much larger number of Heads of Governments than in previous Heads of Governments' Conferences reflecting the recent constitutional advances of the Associated States whose Premiers I wish to heartily congratulate on their new status. I look forward to the Heads of the New Governments here represented achieving a more advanced constitutional status for their countries in the near future. It is only right and proper that this and future Conferences of Heads of West Indian Governments should include the Heads of all the Governments in the Region.

Last year's ad hoc Conference was extremely successful - as indeed was the subsequent Canada-West Indies Conference held in Ottawa. If this Conference is not successful, the lesson will be clear: West Indian Governments will co-operate only when it is necessary to present a temporarily unified front to seek certain advantages from a big country. At this Conference we are on our own dealing with our own problems and I do hope that we will be no less successful on this occasion than we were on the last.

I feel sanguine, Mr. Chairman, that under your wise and experienced guidance the results of this Conference will fulfil the high hopes being entertained of it by all the peoples of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

We have all the ingredients for a successful Conference - the presence of all the political leaders of the region, the studies of the University economists, the concrete resolutions passed by West Indian officials in Guyana and, not least, a general awareness that time is not on the side of the West Indies.

I need not, Mr. Chairman, state Trinidad and Tobago's position on Caribbean Economic Co-operation. The facts are well-known and the record is clear. We stand ready to support any reasonable proposals for Caribbean Economic Co-operation which would clearly lead to the ultimate goal of the Caribbean Economic Community. Once we recognise the Caribbean Economic Community as the goal, everything else will fall into place - whether it be the freeing of trade, the financing of regional development, the creation of common institutions, the provision of intra-Caribbean technical and economic assistance or indeed the development of regional air transport facilities.

Thank you, Your Excellency.

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