



21st February 2025 **Signing of Martinique's** **Accession Agreement** **as an Associate Member** **of CARICOM**

DISCOURSE OF SERGE LETCHIMY
Presidente of the Executive council
of Martinique

*Non Fè'y
épi zot!*

SIGNING OF MARTINIQUE'S ACCESSION AGREEMENT
AS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF CARICOM (*only the spoken word is valid*)

Madam President of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community,

Dear Heads of Government, Prime Ministers,

Dear Mia,

I thank you for allowing me to make this brief statement, and through me, the people of Martinique thank you.

I would like to congratulate you on organizing this remarkable CARICOM summit, whose international and global dimension has been widely recognized.

Today, we are not only sharing a moment of deep emotion but also a historic moment that must be highlighted.

After 389 years, Martinique, through this accession as an associate member of CARICOM, is finally restoring its natural and institutional ties with the Caribbean.

This in no way means that we are closing in on ourselves. On the contrary, we are opening ourselves to the world, carried by the Caribbean strength that now drives us.

We can say it proudly and responsibly : Martinique is finding its way back to its common home, to its brothers and sisters in the Caribbean.

I would like to thank all those, both diplomatically and politically, who contributed to meeting this challenge and achieving this after 15 long years of negotiations.

Our country and the people of Martinique embrace, with dignity and determination, the opening of this new era, this new human, economic, and cultural adventure—one that is more respectful of human rights, more conscious in its relations with the Caribbean, more aware of our geostrategic position between the Americas and Europe, more attuned to our ecological strength, and more deeply convinced of our biological wealth, our ecosystems, and our maritime heritage.

Our land, Martinique, like many Caribbean lands, suffered for centuries from colonization and the barbarity of slavery. As Aimé Césaire once said, it had *"ceased to make love with the sun"*¹

This land, which *"no longer warmed the waters in the hollow of its hand"* which *"no longer rubbed its cheek against tufts of stars,"* had chosen institutional affiliation with France in 1946 and later with Europe. But Martinique and its people have never accepted to abdicate or lose their Caribbean identity, their collective Caribbean personality, their very Caribbean essence.

It is, therefore, with pride that we are once again inhabiting our transboundary maritime basin.

Today, this major step allows us to transcend history and gives us the strength to look toward our future with serenity.

Martinique's presence as an associate member is the result of exemplary activism by many leaders from our various countries to make regional integration a reality. Among these pioneers were a Martiniquais, Clovis Beau-regard; a Barbadian, Grantley Adams ; a Trinidadian, Eric Williams ; another Martiniquais, Aimé Césaire ; and a Saint Lucian, Derek Walcott. I would like to pay tribute to them here for their long pilgrimage—an effort to conquer ourselves by ourselves, at the heart of the Caribbean.

¹ Aimé Césaire : *Tombeau du soleil*

What is the nature of this presence ? It is a clear and unambiguous desire for regional integration—both vertical and horizontal—allowing us to create conditions for commercial, economic, and cultural relations, benefiting from our geostrategic position between three continents: the Americas, Europe, and, in the future, Africa.

I will go even further with audacity. Let us say it plainly: this is about moving past the still-visible traces of the triangular trade to take on a new challenge—that of a Triangle of Progress between the Americas, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Globalization, climate change and its consequences, the power of artificial intelligence, the boldest maritime, aerial, and digital connectivity, trade negotiations, and exchanges must all take place while maintaining the values and ideas that have historically shaped relations between Europe and ACP countries through the Lomé, Cotonou, and Samoa Agreements. These open the possibility of balanced Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

What remains to be done is to enhance the provisions of the Caribbean Protocol of the Samoa Agreements to establish horizontal EPAs, not just vertical ones. I hope that with Martinique's accession to CARICOM, this work will begin.

The outermost regions (RUPs) can then play an essential role in negotiating non-asymmetrical and balanced trade agreements, leading to new customs and tax strategies as allowed by Article 349 of the Lisbon Treaty—including adapting the octroi de mer (dock dues). This would turn our geographical and transboundary area into a place of transformation, production, and innovation, rather than just a space for consumption.

France has played a crucial role in facilitating this accession. I want to acknowledge this step towards genuine territorial diplomacy, promoting economic, cultural, and social relations within transboundary maritime basins beyond Europe.

This marks the opening of an economic emancipation space within the RUP-CARIFORUM relationship. A long journey lies ahead of us, covering areas such as standard equivalence, the use of freight aid for raw material exchanges, and the adaptation of customs regimes (including the octroi de mer) to our realities in order to strengthen regional economic inclusion.

My dear Mia Mottley, my dear brothers and sisters of the Caribbean, this accession sends a powerful message of unity to our youth and to the world.

A new horizon is opening up—one where the Caribbean land can once again *"make love with the sun."*

Thank you.

