



ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

STATEMENT ON THE DIALOGUE AND PEACE BETWEEN GUYANA AND VENEZUELA

We, the Catholic bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, have been following closely, with pastoral concern, the developments on the Guyana-Venezuela border issue. Notwithstanding the historical nature of this geo-political matter, recent events such as the Essequibo Consultative Referendum in Venezuela and the resulting public rhetoric between the presidents of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have caused heightened security uneasiness in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Furthermore, we thankfully note the fruitful results of the dialogue between the two presidents, facilitated by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Thursday, December 14, 2023. We are even more pleased that both presidents, in a Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace, have committed to ensuring that Latin America and the Caribbean remain a zone of peace and are open to further dialogue on the matter.

We know this matter is before the International Court of Justice, a competent juridical institution recognized by a significant portion of the international community. In the interest of justice, keeping with the Church's social teachings, and faithful to the Gospel, we believe that it would be in the best interest of the people of Venezuela and Guyana to trust this process.

We pray that this situation does not escalate into conflict and share their view that peace is built through the rule of law and dialogue. As shepherds responsible for the promulgation of the Gospel and the oversight over God's people in our respective dioceses, we think it would be most fitting for the bishops to offer our people words of assurance and encouragement to our political leaders to seek the way forward with dialogue and law.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, intercede on our behalf for a safe, just, and peaceful region.

SIGNED:

1. Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon, Port of Spain (President)
2. Bishop John Persaud, Mandeville and Montego Bay (Vice President)
3. Bishop Robert Llanos, St. John's, Basseterre (Treasurer)
4. Archbishop Patrick Pinder, Nassau
5. Archbishop Gabriel Malzaire, Castries, Roseau
6. Archbishop Kenneth Richards, Kingston
7. Archbishop David Macaire, O.P., St. Pierre & Fort-de-France
8. Bishop Francis Alleyne, OSB, Georgetown
9. Bishop Neil Scantlebury, Bridgetown

10. Bishop Gerard County, C.S.Sp., Kingstown
11. Bishop Karel Choennie, Paramaribo
12. Bishop Lawrence Nicasio, Belize City & Belmopan
13. Bishop Clyde Harvey, St. George's-in-Grenada
14. Bishop Luis Secco, Willemstad
15. Bishop Wieslaw Spiewak, C.R., Hamilton
16. Bishop Alain Ransay, Cayenne
17. Bishop Philippe Guiougou, Basse-Terre and Pointe-à-Pitre