

Caribbean leaders offer mediation in US–Venezuela tensions

The wider Caribbean has offered to become intermediaries between the United States and Venezuela amid their current heightened tensions and the military build-up in the region, which has triggered deep concerns about the threat of war, and has now prompted moves to prevent it.

Dominica's Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerrit, said yesterday that Dominica, Barbados, and the wider Caribbean are offering themselves as intermediaries to bring officials of the US and Venezuela together.

Skerrit made the statement yesterday when he addressed the second day of the Barbados Labour Party's two-day conference in Bridgetown.

On the conference's first day, Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley expressed deep concern about the security buildup in the region and the heightened US–Venezuelan tensions. She made a concerted call for the region to remain a Zone of Peace and strongly urged dialogue to prevent war. Mottley also noted Barbados' location, where a pact had once been signed between the two countries.

Skerrit, in his address to the BLP yesterday, said he had followed Mottley's speech on Saturday and had extracted a portion of her remarks, which he posted to the Caricom Heads of Government chat group yesterday morning.

Skerrit added, "I did so, so that my colleagues could understand that leadership is crucially important today, now more than ever, and we have to be counted. We cannot cower under fear. We have to stand for principle and stand on the shoulders of the sacrifices of our foreparents who fought for our freedom and for our independence, and we must always speak truth to power."

He said Mottley's speech "was absolutely truth to power, representing what this great party and great country stand for, and what our foreparents had fought for, for so many generations."

Skerrit continued, "And so we stand with you on this, and this world, this Caribbean, must continue being a Zone of Peace. We do not want any wars in our region.

"We solve problems by discussions, by dialogue, with diplomacy, and we sometimes have to agree to disagree — but we must do so peacefully and with respect for each other.

"Of course, we in Barbados and Dominica, and indeed the wider Caribbean, offer ourselves as intermediaries so that we can bring the two forces together and let us understand that there can be common sense and agreement, and disagreement — but we have to ensure that we do not have a situation of our region descending into turmoil," he added, thanking Mottley for her strong message to the BLP and "to the world."

He added, "Because if a war breaks out in the Caribbean, we would have some serious challenges in our respective countries."

Skerrit said regional states have an opportunity to prevent this from happening by adding their voices so that reason and common sense prevail. "And let us work out our problems together."

Last week, former T&T prime minister Dr Keith Rowley and ten other former Caricom heads of state have urged adherence to the Caribbean's consistent pattern of refraining from permitting military assets into the region that have the potential to lure the area into conflicts.

The appeal for peace came from former heads of Caricom territories Baldwin Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda), Said Musa and Dean Barrow (Belize), Freundel Stuart (Barbados), Edison James (Dominica), Tillman Thomas (Grenada), Donald Ramotar (Guyana), Bruce Golding and PJ Patterson (Jamaica), and Kenny Anthony (St Lucia).

Caribbean Bishops urge peace in region

The Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC) have expressed deep concern over the recent build-up of naval and military assets in the Southern Caribbean, warning that it could threaten the region's socio-economic, political, and humanitarian stability.

The Bishops warned that the presence of warships and the disruption of marine livelihoods pose immediate threats to regional stability and the welfare of Caribbean peoples. They urged nations to reject aggression and intimidation, emphasising that history shows dialogue and cooperation are the most effective paths forward.