

## **Address to Cohorts 19**

### **The Graduating Class of the Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade, Law, Policy and Services**

**October 22, 2022**

Director of the Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade, Law, Policy and Services, Dr Jan Yves Remy, Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of the UWI Five Island Campus, Professor Densil Williams, Pro Vice Chancellor, Board for Undergraduate Studies, Professor Justin Robinson, Deputy Principal of the UWI, Cave Hill Campus, Professor Winston Moore, Ag Director, School for Graduate Studies and Research, Dr Sherma Roberts, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Troy Lorde, Professor Joel Warrican, Director of the School of Education, former Director of the SRC, Mr Neil Paul and Dr Lystra Fletcher-Paul, lecturers, staff, but especially you the students of Cohorts, 16, 18 and 19, good evening.

First, I want to congratulate all of you on your successful completion of the Masters in International Trade Policy. Secondly, I want to

reassure you, that you are not getting a lecture on your night of celebration. But as brand-new trade specialists, armed with skills, knowledge and perspectives on International Trade and Policy formulation. I want to impress upon you **the urgent need** for you to think about your philosophy of the Caribbean. To inspire you on the vital necessity of having such a philosophy, I will bracket my remarks between insights from the professional life of Sir Alister McIntyre, and recent advice given by the European Union's highest-ranking diplomat, High Representative, Josep Borrell Fontelle to a class of European Union diplomats on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

We in the Caribbean are very fortunate to have a template for regional and international public service in the life of Sir Alister McIntyre. Sir Alister was an exceptional Caribbean man, who in over 50 years of incomparable regional and international public service, delivered a unique blueprint for Caribbean development. This was firmly anchored in a philosophy of indigenous knowledge creation and buttressed by policies, programmes, projects and a visionary, fertile imagination; he intended all of this to deliver the holy grail of Caribbean integration. He believed in the dignity and worth of the

region. Along with the incomparable Sir Shridath Ramphal, he provided the architecture for what we know today as our regional integration movement, and mastered a leading role in establishing the mechanisms to govern and improve Caribbean trade.

As you will discover, if you haven't already, you need a philosophy and deep belief in the sovereignty of the Caribbean to guide you in your professional journey. The issues that will engage you and the organisations where you will work may change, but like Sir Alister, your unwavering commitment to realising the full potential of the peoples and institutions of the Caribbean must remain constant.

Current, pressing challenges include the state of the global economy and its implications for the Caribbean, the Ukrainian war and what that means for the region, the constant threat of climate change and additional threats to our geo-physical spaces and our tourism and agriculture driven economies. These challenges also include gyrating energy costs, the continuing social and economic, but especially trade fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic, and the differing, adverse vulnerabilities women experience with every wave of economic and social turbulence. The region is facing the sobering

realization that we might be looking at a global recession. When we include specific regional challenges such as the adverse effects of crime, moderate to stagnant economic growth, high national debt to GDP ratios, you can see that the work of policy makers and technocrats is very challenging. In spite of all of this, what should remain constant is your belief in the sovereignty of the region. You must remain committed to always working for the social and material improvement of Caribbean peoples and societies, and you must be crystal clear that this archipelago of islands and continental states comprising the Caribbean have every right to be at every global table, at every rendezvous of victory.

Now more than ever you need a philosophical north star to keep you focused on what the region expects of you, especially since others are training their diplomats to contain us.

Throughout his public life Sir Alister remained committed to building resilient, regional institutions, to expanding research on Caribbean economies and societies, to demonstrating internationally the quality and capacity of Caribbean intellectual

expertise, and to have these policies, mechanisms and institutions serve the Caribbean.

As graduates of the SRC, you are now immersed in the intersecting arenas of academic, regional and international public service even if you do not yet embrace it.

You have been exposed to the required skills, that as your career advances, would enable you to undertake complex negotiations and capacity building towards strengthening the institutional architecture of regional and international development institutions that Sir Alister, Sir Shridath Ramphal and others worked tirelessly to bring into being.

You have to learn to network, not only to build your resume' and locate yourself for better career opportunities, but critically, to build bridges of unity and shared, expertise with other Caribbean, Latin American, African, and Asian colleagues and countries of the global South even as you also work with counterparts in the global North. Like Alister McIntyre, you must operationalize a faith in indigenous problem solving of Caribbean challenges, a belief that the Caribbean countries could chart a development path that centres

on the dignity and worth of the labouring classes of the Caribbean. You must learn to work collaboratively with partners of the global South even as you always make a case for what is unique, distinctive and urgent about our relatively small, open economies and rapidly changing societies.

For those of you who want to undertake research, ensure that this is grounded in indigenously generated knowledge designed to inform policies that would transform economies, societies, lives.

Maintain your linkages with your alma mater, The UWI, especially the Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade, Law, Policy and Services. Throughout his life of exceptional public service, Alister McIntyre remained unwavering about building the problem-solving capacity within the University of the West Indies. He fostered a culture of cutting-edge research, and the application of that knowledge to enhancing the social and economic well-being of Caribbean countries and their citizens.

Do not see the Caribbean as a stepping stone to the international arena. Instead think of the Caribbean as the focal point for all you do, so even if or when you gain international experience, you will

remain focused on deploying that to assist the region. As noted by former Jamaican Prime Minister, the Honourable P.J. Patterson, Alister McIntyre, **“made a meaningful difference to the lives of Caribbean people by seeking to instill a sense of confidence in countries of the region to fashion their own global identity and international relations strategies”** (Hunter Medley 2022: c2). As MITP graduates, you have no choice but to continue in that tradition. Working with Sir Shridath Ramphal, and the Honourable P.J. Patterson, and assisted by a seasoned cadre of Caribbean experts, as Secretary General of CARICOM, McIntyre played a leading role, in negotiating the first international trade and economic agreement, the Lome’ Convention, between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries and the European Union. I know you would have studied this, but this excellent achievement must not be confined to the history of post independent trade agreements in the Caribbean. What negotiating strategies did they deploy to succeed? How can you and others strengthen trade negotiations in the Caribbean recognising the operations of trading blocs in 2022 is vastly different to fifty years

ago? The challenges the region face will change, but your commitment to Caribbean excellence should be non-negotiable.

Finally, Sir Alister viewed public service as a moral obligation. He stated, “**my stance has always been that coming from the UWI and later from the CARICOM Secretariat, I had a fundamental obligation to make myself available to all the countries in the region where I had the relevant skills and experiences to contribute to particular issues of problem solving**” (McIntyre 2016: xvi). To emphasise my point that you should be crystal clear about having a philosophy on the Caribbean and the importance of serving the region, I leave you with some comments from the European Union’s top diplomat, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelle, as he delivered remarks at the opening of a pilot programme at the European Diplomatic Academy on October 13 at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. He was advising diplomats on their responsibilities to Europe. He used the metaphor of a garden in which Europe is a beautiful garden, the diplomats in the pilot programme were gardeners and the rest of the world, a jungle. I quote: “**Here, Bruges is a good example of the European Garden. Yes, Europe is a garden.**”



**We have built a garden. Everything works. It is the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion that the humankind has been able to build. . . The rest of the world is not exactly a garden. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden. The gardeners should take care of it, but they will not protect the garden by building walls. . . the gardeners have to go to the jungle. Europeans have to be much more engaged with the rest of the world. Otherwise, the rest of the world will invade us by different ways and means. . . Keep the garden, be good gardeners. But your duty will not be to take care of the garden itself but of the jungle outside.”**

(The Diplomatic Service of the European Union October 2022). I urge you MITP graduates, to protect the Caribbean, our garden, and do all you can to prevent others from treating us as a jungle. Congratulations and remember your mission. Thank you.

Eudine Barriteau

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## References

The Diplomatic Service of the European Union 2022. European Diplomatic Academy: ‘Opening Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the Inauguration of the Pilot Programme’. Bruges, October 13.

Medley, Hunter. 2022. “New book hails former UWI head for role in Caribbean trade.” *The Gleaner*. June 29: P.C2.

McIntyre, Alister, 2016. *The Caribbean and the Wider World: Commentaries on My Life and Career*. The Radcliffe Press: London and New York.

Stavis-Grideff, Matina. 2022. “Crude Comments from Europe’s Top Diplomat Point to Bigger Problems”. *New York Times Online*, October 17.