

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE  
AND FISHERIES AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup>  
MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

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**Director General of IICA, Dr. Chelston Braithwaite**

**Director General Elect of the Institute Dr. Victor Villalobos**

**Distinguished Ministerial Colleagues and Heads of Delegation**

**Representatives of Regional and International Organizations**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**We are at the verge of concluding a very exciting Week of  
Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas which comprised:**

- (i) The 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Hemispheric Forum of  
Ministerial Delegates (GRICA) which convened on  
Monday and Tuesday;**
- (ii) The 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural  
life, which concluded yesterday;**
- (iii) The Private Sector Dialogue held on Tuesday;**

- (iv) An Exhibition on Agriculture which has been visited by hundreds of students and guests of the hotel and delegates; and**
  
- (v) The 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), which we are concluding today.**

**We can all feel a sense of pride and accomplishment that we were able to adopt as Ministers, the Hemispheric Agreement Jamaica 2009, based on consensus among all 33 countries represented here, on the strategic actions we must pursue to build agriculture and enrich and reinvigorate rural life in the Hemisphere. Based on the numerous presentations by experts, and incisive interventions by you delegates, I have no doubt that we are all seized of the urgency for action to reform the agricultural sector, as a driver for food security, economic development, and rural renewal and prosperity. We must now take ownership of this Hemispheric Agenda 2010-2011, and move forward with enthusiasm and commitment to implement it. Our success will be measured not only by an increase in the contribution of agriculture to GDP, but more so by the reductions of poverty and hunger and the reinvigoration of rural life. We must follow up individually in our countries and collectively through IICA engage our international partners, in a partnership for implementation.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, here in the IABA we have dealt with critical issues to do with the management of IICA and have passed numerous Resolutions related to its budget and work programme over the next two (2) years. Significantly, we have elected a new Director General to lead the charge of repositioning agriculture in the Hemisphere, as a key driver of economic growth and rural prosperity. I would like on your behalf to congratulate Dr. Victor Villalobos, the Director General elect, even as we charge him to take up the baton and run his lap of the relay with great vigour, vision and fixity of purpose. As Chairman of the IABA, over the next two (2) years, I pledge my own support to the Director General elect, to shape a new IICA, equipped to take on this enormous challenge of ensuring food security for our Hemisphere.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, as we welcome our new Director General, I also pay homage to Dr. Chelston Braithwaite, for his outstanding leadership of the Institution and his persistent and strong advocacy for agriculture. It is our hope that your skills, expertise and huge experience will still be available to the Hemisphere.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, it was a great week, and it is a very great pleasure for Jamaica to host you. We hope you will find**

**some time to explore the beauty and magic of this great country. May this Ministerial Meeting in Jamaica be a new beginning for the new agriculture that not only secures the health and nutrition of our Hemisphere, but serves as a driver for rural prosperity and the elimination of poverty.**

**Thank you.**