



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO), Chairman, Gervase Warner, Pleased with Exemption for Caribbean from USTR Proposed Fees regarding 'China's Targeting of the Maritime, Logistics and Shipbuilding Sectors'

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - April 19, 2025, On behalf of the regional private sector, the CPSO is grateful for the 'USTR Determination', on 'China-built vessels', published on April 17th, 2025. This Determination, in effect, exempts Caribbean Shipping from the high port fees on China-built vessels, originally proposed by the United States Trade Representative (USTR). As originally proposed by the USTR, these high port fees, in excess of US \$1,000,00000 for each US Port call, would have increased the cost of shipping between the Caribbean and the United States, with crippling consequences for inflation, shortages, delays and other 'supply-chain' disruptions for the people and the economies of CARICOM and the Caribbean.

The CPSO appreciates the 'USTR Determination' and recognizes that this tremendously beneficial outcome is the product of leadership and collaboration among several key private sector stakeholders and the governments of the CARICOM states. We make particular mention, in this regard, of our CARICOM Heads of Government, chaired by Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley. The priority attention given to this issue by the Heads of Government, evidenced by their fervent advocacy at the meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and their communication to President Donald Trump under the pen of Prime Minister Mottley, has been a significant driver of this positive outcome.

The technical leadership and commitment of our CPSO Secretariat, led by one of CARICOM's most competent Economist, Dr Patrick Antoine and his team, and their submissions and oral testimony was a major determinant of the positive USTR outcome. The coordination and advocacy of the CPSO was demonstrated by the record setting 700 plus attendees from multiple industries and countries in the Caribbean on the first coordination call to deal with the issue on March 18th, 2025. Indeed, the two community-wide regional consultations subsequently held to define and refine the regional private sector position for submission to the USTR, were proud moments for the private sector, symbolizing the enormous possibilities for successful outcomes inherent in collective action in pursuit of common goals.

ABOUT THE CPSO

The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) is the most recently accredited Associate Institution of the Caribbean Community. The CPSO is a 'Service Organization' to mobilize and advance private sector participation in CARICOM, with a mandate to contribute to the full implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Membership of the CPSO is comprised of private sector entities operating in the CARICOM space, including Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs). For further information, please contact the CPSO Secretariat at: info@thecpso.org



The CPSO credits the openness and transparency of the USTR and the USTR Panel, comprising various representative from other US Government Departments. The USTR and its Panel were receptive to the issues peculiar to the Caribbean, introduced via the submissions made by and testimony of the CPSO and other Caribbean partners.

The partnership and collaboration with Tropical Shipping's CEO Tim Martin and Jennifer Nugent-Hill, a Director on the CPSO-United States Business Council Executive (CPSO-USBC), has been invaluable. We publicly acknowledge the collaboration with Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), Seaboard Marine, Atlantic Council, Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA), Mr. Darwin Telemaque, CEO of the Antigua Port Authority, Mr. Gerard Bergasse, Regional Manager Tropical Shipping, and the Port Management Association of the Caribbean (PMAC), all of which/whom contributed to the USTR positive determination for the Caribbean.

The positive outcome was facilitated by the seamless coordination efforts of Ambassador Wayne Mc Cook, Assistant Secretary General - CARICOM Single Market and Trade and Dr. Wendell Samuel, CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General (Ag), Economic Integration, Innovation and Development.

We were humbled by the contribution of Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, Representative of United States Virgin Islands, who participated, at short notice, for the entire duration of the briefing meeting with the CPSO, Tropical Shipping and CARICOM Ambassadors. The strategic timing of the questions posed to the Hearings of the U.S. Ways and Means Committee, by Congresswoman Plaskett, was a significant contributor to the USTR outcome.

Profound appreciation is also extended to the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors accredited to the United States for their support.

The CPSO on behalf of the regional private sector advocated for:

- (i) an exemption for 'short Sea' Shipping, defined as vessels plying the route between **2,750 Nautical Miles** of the CARICOM/Caribbean and the Continental United States - the USTR Determination recommended the exemption for **2,000 Nautical Miles** (acceptable to CPSO);

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- (ii) an exemption for vessels carrying less than **55,000 deadweight tons** and less than **4,999 TEU's** – USTR Determination recommended the exemption for **55,000 deadweight tons** and less than **4,000 TEUs** (acceptable to CPSO);
- (iii) an exemption for **specialized cargo, such as energy and chemical products** which may **exceed 55,000 deadweight tons** – USTR Determination proposed exemptions for **individual bulk capacity of 80,000 deadweight tons**; and **exemptions for specialized or special purpose-built vessels for the transport of chemicals substances in bulk or liquid forms** (acceptable to CPSO).

The campaign by the regional private sector and the Community, would have been far more challenging without the overwhelming support of the regional print and electronic media. As Chairman of the CPSO, I convey heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Executive Committee and the 5,500 plus members of the Organization. We at the CPSO anticipate your continued support, even as we direct our focus to other matters critical to the Community, such as the impact of US tariffs on CARICOM trade. Dr. Antoine and his team at the CPSO are also playing an important strategic role with the CARICOM Secretariat on this issue..

To anyone I may have neglected to name and to the People of CARICOM and the Caribbean, the CPSO extends an enormous thank you.

The CPSO is honoured to have been pressed into the service of the people of the Community on such a significant issue, at such a critical time.

Gervase Warner
Chairman
CARICOM Private Sector Organization

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