

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND INTRODUCTION AND IT'S MY PLEASURE TO WELCOME THE 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON THE CARRIBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

FOR OVER THREE DECADES, THE CARIBBEAN-CENTRAL AMERICAN ACTION HAS HELPED MOVE FORWARD THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN THROUGH ITS PROMOTION OF PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT.

THIS CONFERENCE IS REALLY THE ONLY ANNUAL VENUE THAT FOCUSES ON THIS IMPORTANT REGION SPECIFICALLY, AND AS SUCH, HAS HELPED TO SHAPE THE DEBATE AND INFLUENCE THOUGHT AND POLICY TOWARD THE REGION.

LET ME THANK THE CCAA AND ALL ITS PARTNERS FOR BEING THE VOICE FOR ECONOMIC AGENDAS OF OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN.

[PAUSE]

IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT OF ALL PLACES IN THE UNITED STATES, NONE HAS A DEEPER AND STRONGER AFFINITY AND CONNECTION TO THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA THAN MIAMI.

IN THE FOODS WE EAT, THE MUSIC THAT FILLS OUR STREETS, AND EVEN THE WARM WATERS THAT BATHE OUR SHORES, THE CARIBBEAN BASIN'S INFLUENCE IS DEEPLY FELT.

ONE OF OUR OLDEST NEIGHBORHOODS, COCONUT GROVE, WHICH PREDATES THE INCORPORATION OF MIAMI, WAS SETTLED BY BAHAMIANS...

WE HAVE A LITTLE HAVANA, A LITTLE HAITI, A LITTLE MANAGUA, AND EVERY OTHER "LITTLE" YOU CAN THINK OF...

OUR COUNTY HAS SISTER CITIES AGREEMENTS WITH VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA, TO INCLUDE THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, KINGSTON, LAMENTIN, ST. KITTS & NEVIS ISLANDS, AND THE TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS.

MIAMI IS A CITY WHERE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE FROM HERE, YOU CAN FIND PUPUSAS, GALLO PINTO AND JERK CHICKEN ALL NEXT TO ONE ANOTHER.

OUR COMMUNITY'S OPENNESS HAS MADE US ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE PLACES IN AMERICA, WHERE 60% OF OUR POPULATION IS FOREIGN BORN.

IT'S ALSO TURNED US INTO A COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL HUB NOT ONLY AS THE GATEWAY TO THE CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA, BUT INCREASINGLY TO EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND.

OUR COMMUNITY IS KNOWN AS A COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL HUB, AND WE HAVE DEVELOPED A ROBUST INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TOURISM COMMERCIAL SECTOR.

JUST LAST YEAR ALONE, WE EXCEEDED \$93 BILLION IN TOTAL TRADE AND WE'RE ON PACE FOR ANOTHER RECORD BREAKING YEAR.

MIAMI RANKS THIRD BEHIND LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK IN THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT PARTNERS AND WE HAVE THE LARGEST CONCENTRATION OF FOREIGN BANKS OUTSIDE OF MANHATTAN.

OVER 200 INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES CHOSE TO CONDUCT THEIR BUSINESS FROM MIAMI.

WE'RE HOME TO OVER 100 INTERNATIONAL CONSULATES, TRADE OFFICES AND CHAMBERS THAT SUPPORT THE WORLDWIDE FLOW OF GOODS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

MIAMI'S REAL ESTATE MARKET IS ONE OF THE HOTTEST IN THE WORLD, AND MANY OF THE BUILDINGS YOU SEE AROUND YOU WERE NOT HERE TEN YEARS AGO.

OUR TOP TWO ECONOMIC ENGINES - OUR AIRPORT AND SEAPORT - PROVIDE UNPARALLELED CONNECTIVITY TO ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

M.I.A. HAS ADDED OVER 20 NEW AIRLINES AND NOW CONNECTS OUR COMMUNITY TO OVER 150 DESTINATIONS.

PORT MIAMI HAS A BRAND NEW BILLION DOLLAR PORT TUNNEL...

AND WE WILL SOON COMPLETE A DEEP DREDGE, MAKING IT ONE OF THE FEW PORTS ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD CAPABLE OF SERVICING THE LARGER POST PANAMAX ERA SHIPS.

WE ALSO LEAD IN "NEW ECONOMY" S.T.E.M. SECTORS, SUCH AS HEALTHCARE, AVIATION, AND TECHNOLOGY START-UPS.

FOR EXAMPLE, WE ARE HOME TO BOEING FLIGHT SERVICES, THEIR LARGEST TRAINING CAMPUS IN THE WORLD WHERE AN ESTIMATED 4,500 STUDENTS WILL TRAIN AND GET READY TO COMPETE GLOBALLY FOR JOBS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY.

WE'RE ALSO HOME TO THE FIRST MICROSOFT INNOVATION CENTER IN NORTH AMERICA, AND THE FIRST GOVERNMENT IN FLORIDA TO BE CHOSEN AS TO HOST CODE FOR AMERICA FELLOWS.

ALL OF THIS ACTIVITY COMBINED ALLOWS US TO LEAD THE STATE IN JOB CREATION AND THE GROWTH OF OUR METRO ECONOMY IS GREATER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

IT ALSO MEANS THAT NO MATTER WHAT SECTOR YOU ARE IN, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PROVIDES THE NATURAL LOCATION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GREATEST POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT.

AND THAT LEADS ME TO THE THEME FOR TODAY'S LUNCHEON: "ADVANCING A SHARED AGENDA."

WHETHER ITS ADVANCING FREE TRADE AND THE ADOPTION OF FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS, TO PROVIDING AND DEVELOPING FINANCE SYSTEMS THAT FOSTER FREE TRADE, FROM TECHNOLOGY TO BANKING AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY IS YOUR MEETING PLACE, THE PLACE OF CONNECTION FOR THE CARIBBEAN BASIN REGION.

WE SHARE YOUR AGENDA AND YOUR CONCERNS; WE UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER, BECAUSE ALL OF YOU ARE PART OF MIAMI, AND MIAMI IS PART OF YOU.

THIS IS YOUR HOME.

AS MAYOR, I AM A WILLING PARTNER IN ADVANCING A SHARED AGENDA THAT PROMOTES PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT AND OPPORTUNITY TO ALL OUR COMMUNITIES. AND A SHARED AGENDA THAT ADVANCES PROSPERITY FOR ALL THOSE WE SERVE.

LET ME THANK ALL OF YOU FOR CHOOSING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND I WISH YOU ALL A VERY SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE.

THANK YOU!

