

Caribbean ICT Policy Makers Seminar  
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## **REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN ICT POLICY MAKERS SEMINAR**

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## Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
Session 1: ICT for Development.....	5
Session 2: Public ICT policies: the implementation experience.....	9
Session 3: Selected ICT initiatives: opportunities for participation, cooperation and replication.....	14
Session 4: Regional collaboration for ICT policy planning.....	16
Session 5: Innovative Financing Mechanisms.....	19
Session 6: ECLAC Study on the Caribbean Information Study.....	22
Session 7: Caribbean Information Society – Working groups.....	24
Session 8: Group presentations.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Closure of meeting.....	25
Annex 1: List of Participants .....	26
Annex 2: Programme .....	32

# **REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN ICT POLICY MAKERS SEMINAR**

## **Introduction**

Caribbean policy makers have invested a significant amount of time and financial resources in information and communications technologies (ICT) in response to the prevailing wisdom that these technologies, if deployed strategically, would have a positive impact on human development in the subregion. Available evidence suggests however that return on this investment continues to fall below expectations. There might be several explanations for this, two of which appear to have some validity. The first is that a lack of data and information is making it very difficult for countries to isolate and quantify the contribution which ICT might be making to development. In the absence of verifiable indicators of success, a somewhat pessimistic view is likely to prevail. The second is that there has been a general disconnect between a country's development policy and its ICT strategy. Once this disconnect persists, increasing investment in ICT is less likely to have the expected result.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, with financial support from the United Nations ICT Task Force, and in collaboration with the Government of Barbados and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, convened a seminar for senior technical officers in the public sector, with responsibility for planning, monitoring or otherwise influencing the content of national ICT policies and implementing national ICT strategies to address the issues outlined above. The Seminar was held on 4-5 September 2006 at the Accra Beach Resort in Barbados.

The seminar was a direct response to the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society, the objective of which was to "build an inclusive information society and to put the potential of knowledge and ICTs at the service of development; and to promote the use of information and knowledge for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration".

For the Caribbean, the seminar was a timely and much needed intervention. The seminar provided an opportunity for the region to reassess their approach to policy-making in this strategic area to see whether ICT strategic plans, developed several years ago, were beginning to have the kind of effect that was envisioned during the planning stages.

The fact that it was needed was evident from the response. Originally intended to accommodate 30 participants, the final participant count was 58, drawn mainly from the subregion's public service. There was also high-level representation (permanent secretaries, chief technical officers with responsibility for ICT strategic planning). The list of participants is attached at Annex 1. Feedback obtained via the evaluation forms was largely positive. The enthusiastic response to the announcement of the seminar attested to the need for capacity to be enhanced in this area.

By and large, the objectives of the seminar were achieved, chief among those being the need for participants to position the issue of ICT strategic planning in the context of national development planning; and to share the challenges encountered by countries attempting to implement ICT strategies. Successful experiences in the deployment of ICT solutions were shared as well, and there was discussion on an appropriate regional framework for ICT policy planning and financing. A highlight of the seminar was the presentation of the results of the ECLAC survey of ICT public policies in the subregion.

Despite the number of meetings in the Caribbean that have dealt with issues related to ICTs, there was no previous forum for government personnel that dealt specifically with implementing policies. The meeting recommended that ECLAC continue to support the emergence of a Caribbean Information Society, paying particular attention to the issue of information sharing and data gathering.

### **Objectives and expected outcomes**

The objectives of the two-day seminar were to:

- Promote the formulation of inclusive ICT public policies and examine the linkages between ICT strategies and national development strategies;
- Discuss policy implementation issues and highlight selected successful public sector ICT initiatives in the region, sharing experiences and lessons learned;
- Review the findings of the recently completed ECLAC study on the Caribbean Information Society; and
- Identify strategic priorities for Caribbean countries in the context of E-LAC 2007 and the WSIS Plan of Action

The following outcomes were expected to be achieved by the end of the seminar:

- Improved policy-making capacity in the area of information and communications technology for development (ICT4Dev);
- A repositioning of ICT strategic planning within the framework of national development planning;
- Increased understanding of the context for which ICT policies are being developed;
- Better understanding of the ICT strategies which have worked in the region and why;
- Identification of next steps for Caribbean countries vis à vis WSIS Plan of Action and e-LAC 2007.

The importance of ICT as an enabler of the CARICOM Single Market and the Economy (CSME) was a recurring theme during the opening session.

The seminar was designed to emphasize the fact that a strategic approach to ICT must be contemplated against the overall development context of the Caribbean. The opening session was therefore aimed at reminding participants of the context in which this was being undertaken and why the strategic use of ICT was important to the advancement of the Caribbean and its people.

This message was underscored in the four addresses which were delivered during the opening ceremony.

### **Opening remarks**

The welcome address, delivered by Mr Neil Pierre, Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, focused on the need for the Caribbean to respond fully to the development challenges faced by the region with an alternative ICT-enabled model of development, in which innovation and the empowerment of small and medium enterprises would be a key component.

One critical policy shift that he identified was the need to increase investment in human capital, particularly through investment in education. He also stressed the need to improve the enabling framework by developing appropriate policies, legislation and regulation in order to capitalize on the strengths inherent in ICT and to invest the required financing for this, by refocusing the regional incentive framework for foreign direct investment. In his view, the seminar was an opportunity to focus discussion on some of these critical matters and chart a new way forward. He pledged the readiness of ECLAC to support these efforts in collaboration with other regional partners.

Ambassador Lolita Applewhaite, Deputy Secretary-General of CARICOM delivered the second address. She viewed ICT as an enabler of the CSME and underscored the importance of harmonising actions and policies in respect of ICT if the CSME were to succeed in providing an opportunity for citizens to enjoy a better quality of life. She informed participants that the CARICOM Secretariat was soon to establish a Regional ICT Steering Committee, with wide geographical and institutional representation to begin implementation of a project on the Caribbean Information Society, funded by the European Union (EU). She also informed participants of the comprehensive “ICT for development programme” elaborated and endorsed by Caribbean Heads of Government.

Sir Dwight Venner, Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), addressed the meeting on the subject “Current Human Development Issues and Priorities in the Caribbean”. This was an important context-setting address which drew deliberate attention to the circumstances in which and for which ICT strategies were being developed.

He identified the development challenges as coming from three directions. Internationally, the subregion was affected directly by trends towards globalisation and increased trade liberalisation. This had impacted on its agricultural commodity exports, such as sugar and bananas. He noted that the rise in the price of commodities particularly oil, had affected all but one Caribbean country in a very negative way, posing a serious threat to macroeconomic stability. The volatility of the international financial system also posed a constant threat to the capacity to finance development from external resources, either through currency or direct foreign investment. In addition, the geo-politics of terrorism had put a strain on two major sectors, tourism and offshore finance.

At the regional level he considered two issues of immediate importance - concluding arrangements for the successful implementation of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Economic Union and the CSME; and hosting the Cricket World Cup in 2007. Those events, he opined, were not unrelated since the OECS Economic Union was a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for a successful CSME; and secondly, the Cricket World Cup created an opportunity within a finite time frame to upgrade the infrastructure and improve regional coordination efforts necessary to make the CSME an instrument of development.

At the national level, the fundamental issues of small size and the attendant constraints of economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities manifested themselves in fiscal deficits and high debt to GDP ratios, unemployment, increasing crime and social deviance, HIV/AIDS, and economies that did not respond with flexibility to changes in domestic and international circumstances.

The Governor made the point that the subregion's economic performance lagged behind its social performance, as evidenced by the relatively high ranking of several Caribbean countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), cautioning, that underperformance in the economic arena could pose a real threat to the maintenance of positive social indicators. Development, he added, was about improving the quality of people's lives and expanding their ability to shape their own future. Higher per capita incomes, more equitable educational and job opportunities, better health and nutrition, a cleaner environment, impartial judicial and legal systems, broader political and civil freedom and a richer cultural life were all elements in this formulation.

The achievement of development goals, he noted, would require a vision that must include an accurate estimation of physical, human and capital assets; and an implementation strategy, based on education and integration, since the smaller the population, the more highly trained it must be to accomplish its development goals. "We now have the means through ICT", he concluded, "to communicate intently and effectively and we must use this means to overcome the greatest human development issue we have in the region, that is, the ability to work together for the greater good of the region."

The feature address was delivered by Senator the Honourable Lynette Eastmond, Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development of the Government of Barbados, who complimented ECLAC for taking the initiative to undertake a survey to gather information on the Caribbean's state of readiness to take advantage of ICTs. She urged participants to capitalize on the seminar, at the same time cautioning that while the fact of the seminar being held might be considered a success in and of itself, success required more than that for the people of the region. The outcome must be motivated by the need to lift people out of poverty. What was needed, she added, was "action and implementation and not just talk and talk".

An advocate of the regional approach, the Minister considered ICT the backbone of the emerging CSME. The regional approach was needed, she observed, to develop the required telecommunications infrastructure and more sophisticated financial services, such as merchant accounts and electronic payments facilities.

For its part, the Government of Barbados was determined not only to create the appropriate enabling environment, but also to set the tone by becoming a model user of the new technologies. To this end, a National ICT Plan and an e-government strategy had been drafted. The approach to the development of ICT was premised on the need for businesses to be able to compete successfully in regional and international markets. With this in mind, the government also planned to establish an innovations system which would nurture creative ideas from development to the point of commercialization. A supportive legislative framework which would cover electronic transactions, computer misuse and data protection, and freedom of information were all a part of this suite of legislation. It was the view of the Minister that Caribbean countries could, as a group, take action to provide a strong legal framework to support ICT development since such action would give greater meaning in the context of the CSME.

Speaking further on the issue of government's plans, the Minister told participants that the next wave of development would focus on facilitating online transactions with government through an online government-wide portal, accompanied by a vigorous training programme for all government employees. Computer training would also be provided for all citizens through the Community Technology Programme, and citizens would be able to access the Internet at all district libraries.

The Minister concluded by reminding participants that the assistance of the international community could not, and should not, replace individual efforts. The subregion must learn to help itself: "We are more the same than we are different; we are better off working together than apart; and our instincts should not be to trust those from our colonial past and continue to be suspicious of our own people."

### **Session 1** **ICT for Development**

The following three presentations explored ICT strategic planning in the context of national development planning:

- Towards a Caribbean Information Society: from rhetoric to reality
- Public policies for digital development in Latin America and the Caribbean: paving the way forward
- Addressing human development issues with information and communications technology

The Chair of the session emphasized the importance of "people" in the ICT planning process. He reminded participants that it was the use of technology by people and their acceptance of new processes that determined success or failure of ICT systems. He noted that people typically resisted change, therefore, at the core of any strategic plan must be the leadership skills necessary to gain broad acceptance of new systems that were disruptive of existing ways of doing business.

In the first presentation entitled: "Towards a Caribbean Information Society: from rhetoric to reality", the representative of the University of the West Indies (UWI) sought to

engage participants in the question: “Whose reality counts?” The focus of this presentation was on e-government in the Caribbean, which looked critically at the goals of ICT deployment identified as achieving greater efficiency by the automation of administration functions; providing information for improved decision-making; creating new products and services such as those provided by the offshore sector; informatization - enhancing the role of information and ICTs in decision-making; and empowering communities by providing them with initial education/training.

The presenter contended that there were high expectations for ICT as a vehicle for social transformation, economic development, better service delivery for citizens, and successful participation in a competitive global business environment. He advanced, however, that there should not be an attempt to solve all problems at once since failure was certain to result.

In this presenter’s view, in the Caribbean there was a fascination with the new and with large and complex public sector projects, while simpler more easily conceptualized approaches were ignored and their potential benefits unrecognized. This, he saw, as a tendency to want to leapfrog ICT developments without giving due regard to basic problem-solving.

Archaic regulations also restricted public sector IT professionals from making public statements on subjects for which they had expertise and, as a consequence, governments did not benefit from the lessons learned from failures. Promises of more openness, greater participation, increased accountability and effectiveness did not always materialize. The claims of more client-oriented and responsive government supported by integrated electronic service delivery systems via website or portal were more myth than reality, since ICT use in the public sector merely served to strengthen existing power relationships. The recommended solution was to create basic infrastructure and focus on orienting citizens and businesses to services which were electronic rather than paper based. Governments should encourage the private sector to be partners in this transformation.

In concluding, he cautioned against an indiscriminate belief in the technological revolution as a universal panacea for social change, noting that there were no silver bullets or “one size fits all” approach, since each nation had its own functional, social and administrative objectives. Each nation’s vision would be unique.

This sentiment was underscored in the second presentation, delivered by the representative of ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago, Chile. This presentation focused on public policies and emphasised the role of ICT as an instrument of development and a facilitator of social inclusion. For this to happen, though, usage must be both inclusive and extensive. There must be coherent policies and these policies must be part of a national strategy.

The investment data presented for Latin America revealed a pattern of higher expenditure on ICT for consumption items, government, financial services and industry. There was very low ICT expenditure in the agriculture, mining and construction sectors. The data also suggested that the Caribbean was lagging behind countries in the Southern Cone, Central America and the Andean Pact in almost every indicator of ICT infrastructure, with the single exception of Internet usage. Despite this, however, the number of persons with Internet access and access to

computers was for all of Latin America and the Caribbean was less than 10 per cent, suggesting that many of the services could only be afforded by the richest sectors of society.

Income levels were not the only causes of the significant digital divide. Users of ICT were disproportionately young and well educated. They were also more likely to be male and to be from the non-indigenous sectors of the population. All countries in the region had developed ICT policies. Bearing in mind that ICT was being seen as a tool for regional integration and cooperation, however, the fact that there appeared to be insufficient coordination among countries was cause for some concern.

The presentation drew attention to the differences in digital development between Latin America and the Caribbean, pointing to areas in which Caribbean countries appeared to be ahead of their counterparts in Latin America: digital disaster management, e-education, and digital information for cultural heritage were three of the areas identified. An historic opportunity existed for concerted actions at the regional and national level through eLAC2007 – a regional, intergovernmental mechanism for the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one to which the Caribbean had made commitments at the Regional Ministerial Conference in Bávaro, at the eLAC2007 drafting meeting in Quito in May 2005 and again at the regional preparatory WSIS Ministerial Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2005.

The way forward for eLAC2007 was expected to be the subject of discussion at a meeting in El Salvador in October 2007. Regional cooperation was thought to be useful in the area of harmonizing procedures for data gathering; capacity-building in certain critical areas, strengthening regional initiatives and supporting implementation of national initiatives. But dialogue on these and other issues was needed as a matter of urgency.

The representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat looked at the deployment of ICT entirely from the perspective of human development in the Caribbean, using the Millennium Development Goals as the rationale.

Using data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report specifically as it related to Caribbean and non-Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth, he pointed to a clear correlation between high human development and access to technology. All Commonwealth Caribbean countries were ranked either high or medium in terms of human development with the Caribbean ranked just about average in regional e-government readiness.



## E-Government Readiness Rankings: Caribbean

		<i>Index</i>	<i>Rank in:</i>		<i>Rank</i>
		2005	2005	2004	<i>change</i>
1	Jamaica	0.5064	59	59	0
2	Barbados	0.4920	61	65	4
3	Trinidad and Tobago	0.4768	66	61	-5
4	Bahamas	0.4676	67	62	-5
5	Saint Kitts and Nevis	0.4492	72	72	0
6	Saint Lucia	0.4467	74	64	-10
7	Dominican Republic	0.4076	82	77	-5
8	Antigua and Barbuda	0.4010	86	99	13
9	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0.4001	88	119	31
10	Grenada	0.3879	95	102	7
11	Cuba	0.3700	103	104	1
12	Dominica	0.3334	119	98	-21
	Average	0.4282			

from 'UN 2005 Global e-Government e-Readiness Report'

What then was the role of ICT in a country's human development? ICTs should be used to level the playing field for all. In other words it should be an instrument of social inclusion. ICTs could and should deliver social and economic information to remote areas, and reduce poverty by providing new sources of income and employment, improve the delivery of health and education services, and improve competitiveness.

Governments should also be committed to creating the kind of environment that would promote access and full participation and build public policy based on public consensus. ICT access should be available to the elderly as well as the youth; to men as well as women; to the disabled and to ethnic minorities.

An "Assessment of National ICT Strategic Planning for Commonwealth Countries" (July 2006), suggested that no Caribbean countries could be considered fully mature with respect to ICT strategic planning. Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were advanced, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Grenada and Saint Lucia were progressive, but Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St Kitts and Nevis, and St Vincent and the Grenadines were still in the formative stages. The Caribbean faced a number of challenges in their efforts to deploy ICT solutions. Among them was a lack of information-sharing between ministries and agencies; resistance to change; inadequate physical infrastructure; and lack of sustainability. For the Caribbean, these challenges were exacerbated by a general lack of experience with large integrated ICT implementation; shortage of skilled human resources; inadequate funding; inadequate leadership; weak strategic planning; undue influence of suppliers; and a lack of focus demonstrated by frequently changing priorities.

#### National ICT Strategic Plan:

- Aligned to national vision, goals and objectives
- Has broad national ownership and support
- Exploits strengths of the country and built on best practice
- Is implementable via programmes and projects
- Addresses human resource issues
- Identifies enabling policy requirements
- Quantifies funding needs and sources
- Specifies timelines and milestones
- Quantifies measurable benefits to all stakeholders
- Defines national targets & measures / reports achievements
- Has roles for private sector and civil society

He illustrated this with an evolutionary e-Governance model that traced the transition from simple access to e-mail and internal applications and networks, through public access to information, two-way interaction with citizens, delivery of on-line transactions, e-democracy, all the way to joined-up or fully integrated government services, characterized by one-stop service delivery or, looked at another way, from passive information access to active citizen participation.

It was essential that there be astute, visionary e-leaders with the right mix of technical competence and skills as a communicator, for Caribbean governments to manage the change effort; set priorities within national planning and budget; achieve the much needed integration across ministries; have access to accurate and timely data; retool; and attract and retain staff.

### **Session 2**

#### **Public ICT policies: the implementation experience**

The objective of this session was to provide an opportunity for sharing and discussion of the difficulties encountered during planning and implementation of national ICT strategies so that lessons could be learned from successes as well as from those experiences which proved to be less positive. Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua and Barbuda made presentations at this session.

In his opening remarks, the Chair noted that it was important to have a common understanding of ICT literacy. Traditionally, the digital divide was understood to refer mainly to differences in access to hardware and software and to the Internet. Now, however, the digital divide was influenced by the ability to use digital technology, communication tools, networks, and to manage, interpret and evaluate these tools. Having the technology without cognitive skills and high literacy levels would not decrease the digital divide. Focus therefore needed to be on improving these skills.

The representative of the Central Information Technology Office (CITO) of Jamaica presented his country's experience in national ICT planning. CITO had been mandated by the Government of Jamaica to be a key contributor to the e-enabling and e-readiness of Jamaica. This responsibility entailed championing the national ICT strategic plan and becoming a best practice repository for this area. CITO was also assigned responsibility for setting and monitoring ICT Standards.

As part of its mandate CITO would establish an integrated e-governance framework, produce an up-to-date e-readiness assessment; draft standards for electronic records management and for the development of government websites, and establish GovNet Jamaica, a single communications network. These projects were expected to result in improved and integrated government services.

He spoke about the strengths and weaknesses of the national strategic plans which had been prepared in 2001 and 2002. On the positive side, the early strategies had set the agenda for ICT reform. They had also had the effect of increasing the government's awareness of the issues involved. During this time, too, CITO was created to monitor the implementation of the ICT strategy and update it where necessary, and this period saw the introduction of several useful e-government applications:

- Jamaica Customs
- Trade Facilitation Services
- Inland Revenue Tax Payment
- Office of the Registrar of Companies (ORC)
- National Land Agency e-Land (NLA)
- Registrar General's Department (RGD)
- Management Institute for National Development (MIND) and other UWI and UTECH Distance Learning Implementations
- Online GCT and Tax Filings being introduced
- Significant Current Initiatives in Education, Health, Security, Trade and Revenue

Unfortunately however, the ICT strategy was created in virtual isolation with no real linkages with other government policies. In addition there was no initial benchmarking so there were no measurable targets at which to aim. Several projects were identified but there was little guidance as to which projects should be given priority and which deferred. There was some consultation with stakeholders but this was insufficient and inadequate, so there was very little buy-in as a result. There were also some attempts to develop sectoral ICT strategies but these met with little success.

He also strongly recommended that there was need to:

- Benchmark, study and analyze the global context and best practices
- Target creating a usable national reference point – Public and private sector
- Incorporate stakeholder perspectives and opinions
- Pick critical national clusters or issues (e.g. Barbados chose the nation's health, wealth, security, strength and connectivity)

- Examine the roles of government as:
  - Legislator
  - Policy maker
  - Facilitator
  - Exemplary user
  - Provider of public good for advancing the nation
  - Each requires different objectives, strategies and targets
- Establish mechanisms to link achievements to economic benefits
- Identify feasibility, priorities, risk, and resources
- Create a structure with the power, resources and procedures to implement the strategy


Central Information Technology Office


## Set Overarching Goals and Outcomes – with supporting plans and targets

- **Improved social, economic and political conditions**
- **ICT-savvy society and workforce entrepreneurship**
- **Breakthrough national ICT opportunities**
- **ICT centre of excellence and preferred investment location**
- **Transformed public services:**
  - **Government as an exemplary user**
  - **Joined-up Citizen Centric services**
  - **e-Government applications**
  - **Redesigned and reengineered processes**
- **Strengthened policy, legal and regulatory frameworks (real G2G)**

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In closing, he suggested that there must first be a vision, from which objectives would be derived and strategies developed. Next, overarching goals and outcomes must be set with supporting plans and targets. Jamaica was currently updating its ICT Strategy, a process which should be completed by the end of 2006.

The representative of Trinidad and Tobago began with a snapshot of the objectives of the ICT Strategy, *Fastforward*, and outlined the key programmes and initiatives for which *Fastforward* was responsible. These included activities in support of the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector; implementation of a plan to facilitate affordable broadband access across Trinidad and Tobago; the creation of an e-government portal; nationwide connected public library system and school network; and a programme of legislative reform, aimed at removing barriers to e-commerce and e-government.



### Snapshot of *fastforward* - Stated Objectives

2005	→	Telecommunications Sector opened up to full competition
2006	→	All appropriate Government <u>information</u> available on-line
2008	→	All schools with high-speed computers and Internet access
2008	→	All libraries with up-to-date computers and high-speed Internet access
2008	→	Community Connection Programme in place
2008	→	All appropriate Government <u>services</u> available on-line
2008	→	Over 50% of homes with PCs and Internet access
2008	→	Over 50% of population "regular Internet users"
2008	→	Over 50% of businesses on-line and seeing business benefits

2

He identified several challenges encountered in the implementation of *Fastforward*, but presented the mitigative strategies which were being employed as well. Change management, procurement issues, setting priorities, the issue of centralized versus decentralized models of strategic and operational governance, human capital development, harmonizing and aligning ICT policy with other areas of policy were just some of the challenges encountered.

He suggested that the broad thrust of mitigative strategies should focus on the need to redress any perception of internal and external stakeholders that implementation was stalled. Also, considering the rapid pace of change and innovation in the ICT sector, there was need for a system of self assessment and determination of necessary adjustments to the Strategic Plan for it to remain relevant.

For the final presentation of this session the representative of Antigua and Barbuda shared the vision of that country's ICT policy. This presentation differed from the previous two in that it focused more on the content of the strategy and less on analyzing and critiquing it. This was to be expected since the ICT strategy was relatively new, so it would be early days yet to judge how well it was being implemented. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda had given itself a two-year time frame in which to implement its ICT policy.



## ICT Policy The Vision

- Access by every citizen of Antigua and Barbuda at affordable prices to:
  - ICT Services and the latest in modern communications technology.
- Promote Antigua and Barbuda as a Regional Centre of Information Technology Excellence to support the development of:
  - E-commerce
  - Internet Marketing
  - Internet Gaming
  - Software Development
  - E-education

Ministry of Information,  
Broadcasting & Telecommunications

Essentially, the rationale for the strategy was to ensure that telecommunications arrangements could function as a catalyst for economic growth, with a dynamic ICT industry providing employment opportunities. An independent telecommunications regulatory authority was an important ingredient in the plan which, when implemented, was expected to support e-commerce, Internet marketing, Internet gaming, software development, and e-education.

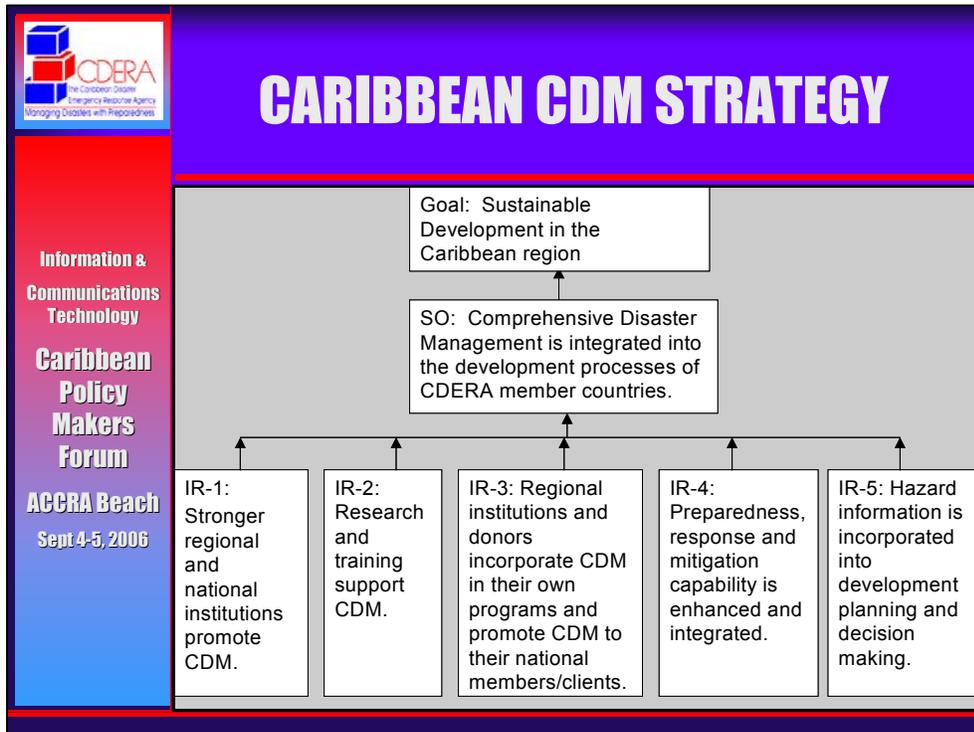
The government's strategy was three-pronged, based on: developing infrastructure; encouraging and actively facilitating competition; and creating the necessary legislation and regulation. An annual ICTFEST was another aspect of the government's strategy aimed at increasing the participation of ordinary citizens. Other plans involved a mobile computer laboratory as well as a network of community access centres, some of which would be based in schools and made accessible to the community during non-school hours.

### Session 3

#### Selected ICT initiatives: opportunities for participation, cooperation and replication

The session, which was chaired by the representative of ECLAC Headquarters, was intended to share success stories in various sectors, with a view to generating discussion and practical offers of cooperation between the countries and institutions represented. Three areas were covered: ICTs in disaster management, presented by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA); CARIBNET, presented by the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN); and the Criminal Justice System of Santo Domingo.

The first presentation sought to highlight the activities of CDERA in mainstreaming ICTs in an effort to ensure that hazard information was incorporated into development planning and decision-making as part of its comprehensive disaster management mechanism (CDM).



ICTs were important in disaster management to catalyze the process of preparedness, response and mitigation; provide access to vital information to citizens during all phases of the disaster cycle; provide decision support systems for planning and policy-making; and to build a network of disaster management practitioners and people through communication networks. The following data resources would form part of the system required to support the CDM:

- Disaster history database
- Database of disaster management plans
- Inventory of legal, administrative and institutional provisions
- Skilled human resources

- Materials
- Infrastructure
- Demographic information
- GIS based information system

The representative of CKLN introduced CARIBNET which was intended to provide cost-effective social connectivity among Caribbean countries and the wider world in support of the subregion's strategic objectives "To enhance its global competitiveness by upgrading and diversifying the skills and knowledge of human resources in the Caribbean through greater regional collaboration and connectivity." Specifically, CARIBnet would:

(a) Be a virtual learning network linking Caribbean institutions of tertiary education and providing cost-effective access to high quality e-learning content and other knowledge resources drawn from the subregion and around the world. The Network would support interactive learning, peer-to-peer exchange and the development of knowledge networks, while reducing the limitations associated with distance and remoteness. Learning offerings made available on the Network will be prioritized to the needs of the Caribbean labour market and the cultural and socio-economic context.

(b) Facilitate the connection of universities and other tertiary institutions in the subregion to the universities in Europe, North America and elsewhere to facilitate research, collaboration and knowledge sharing.

(c) Support the Caribbean integration process by providing an enabling environment, through connectivity, in support of the CSME and strengthening functional cooperation amongst Caribbean member States.

(d) Help to bridge the digital divide in the subregion to achieve enhanced social cohesion.

The representative of the Dominican Republic presented the "*Sistema de Administracion de Informaciones Criminologicas*" (SAIC), an integrated information system developed to assist the administration of criminal justice in that country. SAIC is a powerful law enforcement tool, which was unveiled after several years in the planning, design and testing phase.

In 2006, the Dominican Republic's National Police began providing direct services to citizens via the Internet, including the option of making complaints and initiating requests for police certificates and replacement of lost documents. Additional services were expected to be added in the near future, such as updated information on detainees, traffic accidents and corresponding police acts and stolen vehicles reports.

The information services were supported by a robust hardware and software infrastructure that, at the same time, decentralized the data entering process and aggregated all information collected nationwide in a flexible, redundant and secure database environment. Reports were entered directly into the database by law enforcement officers from local police

stations and even on-duty patrols equipped with wireless notebooks. This allowed police authorities to have updated, information on security events throughout the country.

The project is funded by the Telecommunications Development Fund, and managed by INDOTEL, the national telecommunications authority of the Dominican Republic.



#### **Session 4**

#### **Regional collaboration for ICT policy planning**

This session was devoted to a discussion of issues related to an appropriate regional mechanism for the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action. The focus was the structure and function of eLAC2007, a mechanism coordinated by the Information Society Programme of ECLAC, with financial support from the @LIS project of the EU, ICA-IDRC, UNDP and UN Development Account funds. This presentation was delivered by the representative of the Information Society Programme at ECLAC Headquarters.

He explained that the Caribbean had been involved at each stage of the eLAC process. Fifteen Caribbean countries had participated in the regional ministerial conference of the WSIS in Bávaro in January 2003 and 10 countries had attended the drafting meeting held in Quito, Ecuador, two years later. Subsequently seven Caribbean countries had attended the regional ministerial conference of WSIS in Tunis in Rio de Janeiro in June 2005 where the eLAC2007 Plan of action was adopted.

The Plan of Action set 28 goals - eight of them, results-oriented, measurable goals and the other 18 action-oriented goals consisting of regional studies and projects. The Plan was arranged in the following five areas: access and digital inclusion; capacity building and knowledge creation; public sector transformation and efficiency; policy instruments; and enabling environment.

Since the approval of the Plan of Action, a regional follow-up mechanism was established, centered around the creation of working groups in various specialized areas and a virtual eLAC2007 service platform: <http://www.eLAC2007.info>

By and large, Caribbean countries had not yet been active participants in the eLAC2007 working groups. He therefore sought to explain how the Caribbean might gain more from eLAC 2007 by engaging more fully in the working groups that had been established, and also by coordinating a Caribbean Working Group to promote dialogue on issues of particular importance to the subregion.

### Second Communication of Regional Follow-up Mechanism eLAC2007, July 2006



Countries have created the following Working Groups:

Goal	Activity	Coordinator
5	Telework	Argentina
7	Alternative Technologies	Colombia
8	Software	Brazil
10	Research and educ. networks	Uruguay
13	Creative industries and content	Argentina
15	e-Government	Nicaragua
23	Financing	Argentina
25	Legislative framework	Perú



The representative of the CARICOM Secretariat acknowledged that the subregion faced a digital challenge in her presentation entitled: “A public policy approach to implementing the Caribbean information Society”.

To address these challenges, CARICOM would establish an ICT Steering Committee with appropriate working groups, as the primary regional mechanism for implementing the WSIS Plan of Action. The committee would consist of representatives of member States, regional organizations, the private sector, civil society, the media, youth groups and consumer

bodies. The first consultation of the Steering Committee was expected to take place by the end of November 2006.



**CARICOM digital challenge**

- To address the Region's most pressing development challenges
- to create an adequate environment for better integration of the region
- To improve economic performances and ensure linkages with the global economy
- To create welfare for CARICOM people
- **To contribute to the creation of a sustainable Information Society**
- **To strengthen CARICOM's capacity to participate in the Global Information Society**
- **To bridge the *Digital Divide* and turn it into *Digital Dividend***



Regional projects would be executed by various organizations. Financial resources had been secured from the EU and UNDP for the Caribbean Information Society (CARIB-IS) project, for videoconferencing facilities, and for promoting the connectivity agenda through the Japanese and Italian Governments. However, some gaps and challenges were identified as insufficient capacity, an absence of indicators for measurement and a misallocation of scarce resources.

The representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat described Commonwealth Connects, a programme aimed at bridging the digital divide across the 53 members of the Commonwealth. The programme had five main areas of focus.



## 5 Areas of Focus

- ❖ Building Policy and Regulatory Capacity
- ❖ Modernising Education and Skills Development
- ❖ Entrepreneurship for Poverty Reduction and Wealth Creation
- ❖ Promoting Local Access and Connectivity
- ❖ Regional Networking, Local Content and Knowledge

Participants were advised that they could get involved by:

- Responding to on-going call for projects
- Facilitating access to or provide intellectual property for Portal
- Identifying human resources and software that can be deployed by the programme
- Contributing to the on-line Expert Forums
- Suggesting viable strategies that can be supported by Commonwealth Connects

### **Session 5 Innovative Financing Mechanisms**

Session 5 was devoted to a discussion of innovative approaches to financing ICT strategies in the Caribbean. Much thought had gone into the planning and the naming of this session. It was strongly felt that there was need for the subregion to be more involved in this area. It was not enough for countries to develop strategic plans and passively wait on donor funds to finance same.

The first presentation was delivered by a representative of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) who noted that there was a fair amount of financing available, but that countries needed to be strategic in how they accessed these funds. She stressed the need for approaches to financing that were appropriate to the current state of the countries. Sources of financing that were currently used included off-budget financing, regular budget, special funds, loans, donor contributions, blended funds, private sector financing, multi-donor financing and various combinations of these. She pointed to factors that attracted funding.

## Factors that Attract Funding

- Clear Development Strategy
- Existing Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Alignment to MDGs, WSIS Principles etc.
- National/Regional ICT Strategies
- Attention to Good Governance, Fiscal Management and Disaster Mitigation

She advised participants to: prioritise projects giving high priority to those that would generate revenue to help finance other projects; establish special funds with clear objectives; apply loan financing to projects that could generate revenue to finance debt; and participants were urged to become informed about available financing and use the available facilities effectively. Innovative partnerships, that would facilitate raising funds through bond issues, deferred debt burden arrangements, regional projects and blending of funds were some of the approaches suggested.

In conclusion, she stressed the need to: manage projects effectively in order to achieve objectives; ensure that there was a supporting policy framework in place; insist on good governance practices and prepare project proposals that were aligned to the development goals and the focus areas of the funding agencies.

The second presentation was delivered by the representative of the CTU who suggested that countries should act nationally to redefine the Universal Service Fund. He also explored the issue of financing on the basis of joint action, recommending the establishment of a Caribbean Digital Solidarity Fund managed by the CDB, based on the principles and objectives of the “Geneva Principle”. The Geneva Principle involved a 1 per cent contribution on public ICT procurement contracts, paid by the vendor on his profit margin.

Noting the difficulties that countries and organizations encountered in their effort to access funding from the EU, the suggestion was that these funds should be channelled through the CDB into a Caribbean Digital Solidarity Fund. The funding available through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), he suggested, could continue to be accessed at the national level for smaller projects. These were useful practical suggestions on which the meeting agreed to follow up.

## Caribbean Digital Solidarity Fund (CDSF)

- Adopt the principles and objectives of the “Geneva Principle”
- The fund should be managed by an Independent Authority such as the Caribbean Development Bank
- The Private sector should be encouraged to make annual contributions to the fund
- The Geneva Principle should be applied consistently by all Caribbean countries to ensure a level playing field
- Donor and International funding should be channeled through the CDSF
- Transparent procedures and priorities should be developed and consistently applied for accessing the fund

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The representative of the Inter American Development Bank (IDB) outlined the financing mechanisms available to the region through the Bank, among them, loans and grants to support technical assistance, which could be a very effective tool to develop projects. In addition, the IDB could facilitate connections with other partner institutions. In general, pilot projects were initiated as a first step and this afforded the opportunity for evaluation before full scale projects were undertaken. He cautioned that pilot projects did not provide funds for equipment, while regional projects were encouraged since these fostered integration and could often pave the way for future projects.

A lively discussion was generated going well beyond the scope of financing. The representative of Grenada expressed an interest in finding a source of funding for retrofitting schools in that country. One suggestion was for the setting up of a Digital Development Fund or Universal Service Fund. Emphasis was placed on the need to be innovative and to allow market forces to prevail; to reduce regulation on commercial activities for entry level or grass roots commercial entities. It was important also to involve all stakeholders in discussions.

The discussion highlighted the fact that the cell phone was now the most pervasive technology and that this should be explored as a vehicle for delivering services. As it now stood, cell phone use merely generated profit and had no real influence on development. A policy shift was needed that would encourage investment in Research and Development (R&D), since currently the region generally adopted technology developed elsewhere. It was also suggested that there be an attempt to meet the social development objectives and more appropriate use of ICT to meet these objectives should be explored.

The question of indicators was also raised, the point being made that indicators that were more appropriate to the subregion should be identified. That notwithstanding, there was scope

for increased collaboration between the Caribbean and Latin America since many of the challenges were similar.

### **Session 6** **ECLAC Study on the Caribbean Information Study**

ECLAC conducted a survey of Caribbean countries aimed at documenting and subsequently monitoring public ICT policies in the following areas: policy development; State modernization and e-government; access; supply of goods and services; and public budget expenditure. The results of the survey were presented during this session. Seven countries were studied: Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, Saint Lucia and Grenada. However, the data collected did not permit an in-depth analysis. This, notwithstanding, some interesting findings were unearthed which could provide a road map for future work.

Regarding access and digital inclusion, the survey results suggested that public sector budgeting to promote access and knowledge creation in the Caribbean was significantly underfunded. Only one of the countries sampled had made budgetary provisions to support initiatives to promote universal access. One country had a Universal Service Fund and while this was legislated in another, the provision was yet to be implemented. Broadband service was limited and available at uncompetitive access prices. Moreover, foreign content dominated the high speed Internet environment.

On the issue of knowledge creation, the data revealed that there was insufficient investment in research and development and in science and technology in the Caribbean, with only two countries providing funding to promote developments in the IT industry. There was also limited availability of Caribbean content online. Indications suggested that fear of plagiarism and piracy, the limited ability to facilitate e-commerce and the unavailability of alternative compensation methods prevented content creators from putting material online.

There was very little discourse, and indeed very little understanding of the issues related to Internet governance at the national or regional level and not all countries had complete control over their Top Level Domains (TLD). Those countries that did not have complete control over their TLD relied on the University of Puerto Rico to provide this service.

There was more progress to report in the area of ICT strategy development. Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica and Grenada had all published strategies; Barbados and Saint Lucia were in the process of satisfying that criterion, however, only Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago could indicate that their strategies were supported by budgetary provisions. About half of the countries had established or designated an institution to coordinate ICT policy. Such coordination was important in order to avoid duplication of effort, ensure the efficient allocation of resources and share experiences and lessons learned.

There was widespread competition in the telecommunications sector, however, despite the successful telecommunications reform process and the enactment of new legislation that provides some measure of regulatory independence, concerns remained that regulators were still

susceptible to political influence. Business and commerce was another area in which progress was slow, with merchant banking services limited in some countries and non-existent in others. This meant that revenue from online transactions largely remained outside the region. With respect to e-Government, two-way online transactions were limited by and large and initiatives were often not coordinated or synchronized.

Principal among the findings was the need for the establishment of a unit within the department or agency responsible for ICT to collect, collate and disseminate ICT information for analysis and forecasting. There was also need for deliberate action by the State to assist the economically disadvantaged and differently-abled to access ICT services.

The results of the study also suggested that the way forward should at a minimum enable the availability of reliable qualitative and quantitative information that would facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the benefits and limitations of the Caribbean Information Society. It is only from a position of empirical knowledge that the correct policy initiatives could be formulated for future development of ICT in the subregion and its attendant contribution to human development evaluated.

The study concluded with recommendations that increased funding should be allocated to promote access to ICT services and investment in R&D. Efforts should also be made to link ICT development with public sector reform initiatives; strengthen the relevant legislation; and develop a process for commercializing the use of top level domain names. In addition, e-government facilities must be taken to the next and more interactive level; and since the lack of data was highlighted as a major constraint, the study recommended that the work embarked on with this study should continue and be expanded to include all Caribbean States, noting that a prerequisite to adequate and continuous data collection was the strengthening of capacity at the national level in this regard.

Following the presentation of the report, the methodology used in the conduct of the study was explained by the ECLAC consultant, who undertook the research. The method consisted of a review of existing documents and data, interviews with government stakeholders, missions and field assessments viewed against global trends. The information was analyzed and the findings documented.

## **Session 7**

### **Caribbean Information Society – Working groups**

Following these presentations, participants were divided into the following three groups for the purpose of arriving at recommendations to guide ECLAC future activities in this area:

- Working Group 1: Towards a Regional ICT Policy Framework
- Working Group 2: Indicators and Benchmarking
- Working Group 3: Innovative Financial mechanisms

The recommendations submitted by the Working Groups are summarised below.

## **Session 8**

### **Group presentations**

#### **Group 1 - Recommendations: Towards a Regional ICT Policy Framework**

1. Establishment of an eLAC2007 Working Group on National Strategies, in accordance with Goal 22 of eLAC2007. This Working Groups will be coordinated by Grenada. As with all other eLAC2007 Working Groups, ECLAC would provide the platform and facilitate the activities of this group.
2. Discussions and exploration of topics in this Working Group should benefit from the ECLAC Study on the Caribbean Information Society.
3. Training programme available via distance learning.

#### **Group 2 - Recommendations: Indicators and Benchmarking**

1. Develop a framework to improve data collection capacity in each country – either a Central Statistical Office with ICT data collection capacity or alternatively an ICT division with the capacity to collect and disseminate quality statistics.
2. This framework should be in accordance with the recommendations and input provided by the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC), which is mandated by the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA-ECLAC), with financial assistance from ECLAC, ICA-IDRC and @LIS EU.
3. Identify a contact person in each government to champion the process. This person should also be involved more in the ongoing capacity-building activities of OSILAC.
4. Organize awareness programmes involving policy makers and relevant functionaries
5. Review national/regional/international ICT data models.

### **Group 3 - Recommendations: Innovative Financial mechanisms**

1. Infrastructure: Government should give incentives to the private sector to stimulate investment in ICT infrastructure
2. Enabling environment: Legislation and regulations should not be unnecessarily punitive. Regulations should stimulate, not hinder ICT development. Resources should be sought to finance the establishment of a regional telecommunications regulatory body.
3. Education: Education should be primarily the domain of government whether this is done via loan or through donor involvement. ICT curriculum development should be coordinated and financed at the regional level
4. Capacity building: A blending of donor funds and government budget financing would be the most appropriate formula.
5. Social development: Grants and soft loans would be best to address issues involving the disadvantaged
6. Special Funds: Establishment of a Universal Service Fund or Solidarity Fund should be explored.
7. International cooperation: The work on innovative Financial Mechanisms can be channelled in the eLAC2007 Working Group on Financing (Goal 23), which is coordinated by Argentina and, as with all eLAc2007 Working Groups, is open to the participation of the Caribbean eLAC representatives.

### **Closure of meeting**

Following the presentation of the reports by the three working groups, participants had an opportunity to provide comments and give feedback to the organizers of the seminar. Among the common threads emerging was a strong commitment by participants to the building of a Caribbean Information Society. For this to be achieved there was need to make the most efficient use of the available human and financial resources. In this connection, it was suggested that the private sector was not sufficiently involved in the process and strategies for increasing this involvement should be explored.

The importance of quality data was emphasized. So too was the need for countries to set priorities since scarce resources had to be allocated to the areas of greatest impact. There was an obvious need for ongoing dialogue and, to this end, virtual working groups were to be formed. ECLAC, working closely with CARICOM, had a critical role to play in bringing this about and in achieving convergence in activities between Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brief closing remarks were delivered by the representative of the CARICOM Secretariat and the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development of the Government of Barbados, who chaired the closing session. In delivering the vote of thanks the Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean thanked the Government of Barbados for hosting the seminar and participants for their attendance.

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**Special Guests****Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM)**

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**Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB)**

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Annex 2**PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME****Monday 4 September 2006****9:00 - 10:00 Official Opening**

- Welcome and opening remarks, Neil Pierre, Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
- Remarks by Ambassador Lolita Applewhaite, Deputy Secretary-General, CARICOM Secretariat
- Address by Sir Dwight Venner, Governor, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank: *“Current human development issues and priorities in the Caribbean”*
- Opening address by the Honourable Lynette Eastmond, Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development, Government of Barbados
- Vote of thanks by Ms. Sandra John, Chief, Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre

**10:00 - 10:15 Coffee Break****10:15 - 11:45 Session 1: ICT for Development**

Chair: Mr Phillip Goddard, Government of Barbados

This context setting session will consist of three presentations which will explore ICT strategic planning in the context of national development planning.

- *Towards a Caribbean Information Society* - Stewart Bishop, University of the West Indies (20 minutes)
- *From WSIS to national public policies: regional integration and social cohesion through ICT in Latin America and the Caribbean* (30 minutes)
- *Addressing Caribbean human development issues with Information and Communications Technology*. Commonwealth Secretariat (20 minutes)

**11:45 - 1:00 Session 2: Public ICT Policies: implementation experience**

Chair: Mr Selby Wilson, Caribbean Telecommunications Union

This session will provide an opportunity for frank sharing and discussion of the difficulties encountered during planning and implementation. The objective will be to identify reasons for successes and failures. With a focus on lessons learned.

- *Implementing the ICT Strategy - The Jamaica experience (20 minutes)*
- *Implementing Fast forward - The Trinidad and Tobago experience (20 minutes)*
- *Implementing the ICT Strategy - The Antigua and Barbuda experience(20 minutes)*

**10:00 - 2:15 Lunch****2:15 - 3:45 Session 3: Selected ICT Initiatives (opportunities for participation, cooperation, and or replication)**

Chair: Mr. Joao Carlos Ferraz - ECLAC, Santiago

The focus will be on ICT initiatives and success stories. The session will end with discussion and identification of strategies which contributed to success in these areas.

- CARIBNET
- E-Governance
- Security
- Disasters

**3:45 - 4:00 Coffee Break****4:00 - 5:00 Session 4: Regional Collaboration for ICT Policy Planning**

Chair: Mr. Neil Pierre - ECLAC

Presentations and discussion of issues related to an appropriate regional mechanism for the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action

- *Presentation - E-LAC 2007 Working Groups* - ECLAC, Santiago
- *Presentation* - CARICOM
- *Presentation - Commonwealth connects (7 minutes)* - Commonwealth Secretariat

**Tuesday 5 September 2006**

**9:00 - 10:00 Session 5: Innovative Financing Mechanisms**

Chair: Mr. Phillip Cross - International Telecommunications Union

**Panel: Dr Kathleen Gordon; Mr Selby Wilson**

Existing options for financing ICT for Development Strategies will be explored and creative solutions advanced by panellists and participants

**10:00 - 10:30 *Coffee Break***

**10:30 - 12:00 Session 6: Caribbean Information Society - Status report**

Chair: Ms. Sandra John - ECLAC

ECLAC will present the findings of a recent Caribbean survey of public ICT policies, including an overview of public ICT policies in some Caribbean countries, highlighting strategic opportunities. A discussion will follow during which, countries will have an opportunity to respond to the draft profiles prepared by the ECLAC consultant for Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, St Lucia, Grenada, Suriname and Guyana, suggesting amendments where these might be indicated.

- Report Findings presented by Mr. Neil Pierre
- Survey process and introduction to Country Profiles – Mr. Carlos Miranda, ECLAC Consultant
- Discussion

**12:00 - 2:00 *Lunch***

**2:00 - 4:00 Session 7: Caribbean Information Society - Work Groups**

Discussion of the ECLAC report in three groups to arrive at recommendations:

Group 1: Towards a Regional ICT Policy Framework

Group 2: Caribbean Information Society Observatory

Group 3: Funding Strategies

**4:00-5:00 Session 8: Group presentations**

Each group will present its response to the ECLAC report, making recommendations in the assigned area

**5:00 Closure of Meeting**