



COVID-19

ZERO HOUR: OUR REGION
IN THE FACE OF THE PANDEMIC

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES RENEW
COMMITMENT TO 2030 AGENDA AT
ECLAC WORKSHOP

CLIMATE CHANGE

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO
TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE
CARIBBEAN

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About us

Issued on a monthly basis, The Hummingbird offers strategic insights into the latest projects, publications, technical assistance missions and research carried out by ECLAC Caribbean. In addition to these, sneak previews are provided of the most salient upcoming events, alongside enriching follow-ups to previously covered issues. With a view to featuring a variety of facets of Caribbean life and lifestyle, The Hummingbird also zooms in on cultural activities and landmark occurrences through an eye-opening regional round-up.

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International Days

1 March

Zero Discrimination Day

3 March

World Wildlife Day

8 March

International Women's Day

21 March

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Upcoming Meetings

2 - 27 March

Human Rights Committee, 128th session - Geneva

17 March

International Civil Service Commission, 19th Session - New York



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Posted Mar 10

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Right here. Right now.
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"Everything seems to be one gigantic mistake. We console ourselves by saying that everything has happened as it should not have happened. But it is we who are mistaken, not history. We must learn to look reality in the face; if necessary, we must invent new words and new ideas for these new realities that are challenging us. Thinking is the first obligation of the intelligentsia, and in certain cases it is the only one."

Octavio Paz
The Labyrinth of Solitude



COVID-19 will affect the supply and demand side of the economy through the interruption of production chains and the loss of income and profitability due to higher unemployment and greater difficulties to pay debt service obligations.



ECLAC estimates a contraction of -1.8% in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

Zero Hour: Our Region in the Face of the Pandemic

by Alicia Bárcena Ibarra*

It is true that history recounts the devastating impact of past pandemics, but none of them occurred in such a populated world (with more than 7.7 billion people) or in such an interconnected one, and with a planet that is ailing environmentally. This is the biggest human and health crisis we have ever faced. That assertion must serve as our guiding principle if we are to approach it effectively. It has, of course, profound economic implications, but the center of attention, the focus of public policy decisions, must be on safeguarding one of the most valuable global public goods in existence: people's health and well-being.

With this in mind, it is fitting to mention that Latin America and the Caribbean will be impacted through five main external avenues: a decline in the economic activity of our principal trading partners, especially China; a fall in prices for our commodities; the interruption of global and regional value chains; the steep decline in demand for tourism services, which primarily affects the Caribbean; an increase in risk aversion and the worsening of global financial conditions and capital outflows from the region, with consequent devaluation of our currencies.

The onslaught of COVID-19 came at a bad time. Worldwide, 2019 recorded the worst economic performance of the past decade (2.5% growth in GDP). In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, this performance was even more

dramatic. To find worse growth levels than that recorded in the region in the last seven years, one must look back as far as seven decades.

Just a few months ago, and after ending 2019 with poor regional growth of just 0.1%, ECLAC estimated that 2020 would witness a modest rebound and the growth rate would reach 1.3% of GDP. Today, a conservative estimate – based on data that is still stabilizing – indicates that Latin America and the Caribbean will record negative growth of -1.8% this year, with a probable downward bias.

The effects of this crisis on our main trading partners portend a decline in the value of our region's exports that could reach a magnitude of -10.7%. This scenario involves a significant increase in unemployment as well as a substantial increase in labour market informality.

The consequent effects of negative growth and higher unemployment translate into an increase in poverty and extreme poverty. If the base data is confirmed, then in 2020 the number of poor people would rise from 186 million currently to 220 million, and the Latin American and Caribbean citizens who live in conditions of extreme poverty would rise from 67.5 million to 90.8 million.

This crisis finds us with fragmented health care systems and without universal coverage, where more than 47% of the population

*Executive Secretary of ECLAC

currently has no access to social security. A crisis that is particularly vicious for the 58 million people over 65 years of age in our region.

The challenge is enormous, and it demands that we renew our toolbox. Each country will have to creatively explore and expand the framework of its possible responses, acknowledging that there are no known formulas, while also recognizing that there are some imperative steps to be taken.

In the current situation, it cannot be overlooked that a massive fiscal stimulus is needed to bolster health services and protect income and jobs, among the numerous challenges at hand. The provision of essential goods (medication, food, energy) cannot be disrupted today, and universal access to testing for COVID-19 must be guaranteed along with medical care for all those who need it. Providing our health care systems with the necessary funds is an unavoidable imperative.

When we speak of massive fiscal stimulus, we are also talking about financing the social protection systems that care for the most vulnerable sectors. We are talking about rolling out non-contributory programs such as direct cash transfers, financing for unemployment insurance, and benefits for the underemployed and self-employed.

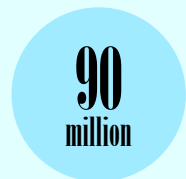
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ECLAC estimates a rise in unemployment by 10% across LAC.



ECLAC estimates a that the number of poor in LAC rising from 185 million to 220 million people.



ECLAC estimates a that the quantity of people living in extreme poverty in LAC could increase from 67.4 million to 90 million.



ECLAC estimates a that the value of LAC's exports to China could drop by as much as 10.7%





Zero Hour: Our Region in the Face of the Pandemic (continued)

ECLAC is estimating that COVID-19 will affect LAC through five channels:

1. Decline in economic activity of main trade partners
2. Drop in commodity prices
3. Interruption of global value chains
4. Lower demand for tourism services
5. Intensification of risk aversion and the worsening of global financial conditions

-10.7%

ECLAC estimates that in 2020, the value of LAC's exports is expected to fall between 4.6% and 10.7%, mainly due to lower prices.

-25%

ECLAC estimates that if a travel ban prompted by the virus were to last for one, two, or three months, tourism activity in the Caribbean, for example, would contract by 8%, 17% or 25%, respectively, in 2020.

Likewise, central banks have to ensure liquidity so the production apparatus can guarantee its continued functioning. These efforts must translate into support for companies with zero-interest loans for paying wages. In addition, companies and households must be aided by the postponement of loan, mortgage and rent payments. Many interventions will be needed to ensure that the chain of payments is not interrupted. Development banks should play a significant role in this.

And, certainly, multilateral financing bodies will have to consider new policies on low-interest loans and offer relief and deferments on current debt servicing to create fiscal space.

It is also urgent that unilateral sanctions and blockades, imposed in the world and in our region, be lifted, because they hamper entire populations' access to goods and services that are indispensable for fighting this health challenge. Today, humanitarian considerations come before any political differences. Health cannot be held hostage to geopolitical quarrels.

This is a complex time, and it comes as our planet is ailing. It is experiencing one of its worst phases in environmental terms, with polluted oceans and rivers, devastated forests, eroded soil, mass extinction of species, and altered climatic cycles. This must be the time to reflect on the unsustainability of the extractivist and unequal development model.

This new health crisis has exposed the fragility of globalization and the development model on which it was based. The breaking of supply chains, the decline in global growth, and the performance of financial markets have exposed the global vulnerability of our economies. In light of the evidence of this crisis, the global community will have to face the fact that globalization did not work as promised and it must be reformed.

The decoupling of financial markets and the real economy's flows must be contained and regulated. International trade is not an inevitable driver of long-term growth without policies for diversifying and transforming production. Inequalities, between countries and within them aggravate the fragility of the global system and must be rolled back.

This pandemic has the potential to transform the geopolitics of globalization, but it is also an opportunity to survey the benefits of multilateral action and make room for needed debate on a new, sustainable and egalitarian development model. Because, "if necessary, we must invent new words and new ideas for these new realities that are challenging us." ■



The focus on resilience building and debt reduction currently enjoys the fullest support and political advocacy of United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who has placed high priority on global initiatives addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation. Furthermore, the initiative's fundamental objective of lightening debt obligation to create the fiscal space for green investment and more focus on sustainable development situates it squarely within the UN's framework for pursuit of Agenda 2030. Championing the Caribbean resilience building initiative as part of a broader global strategy to achieve the SDGs and to address the impact of climate change would therefore serve as a highly valuable mission within the purview of the United Nations.

It was also agreed that further exploration should be pursued towards identifying and attracting financial resources to support resilience building in the three Phase One countries. Towards this end, ECLAC intends to seek limited accreditation with the Green Climate Fund for the benefit of this initiative alone. ■

ECLAC advances debt swap initiative at Antigua and Barbuda meeting

A team from ECLAC Caribbean led by Director Diane Quarless discussed the next steps in operationalizing the ECLAC Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap Initiative, during an expert group meeting (EGM) held in Antigua and Barbuda, at the end of 2019.

The EGM was an opportunity to exchange views on the optimum approach to address the high debt and low growth among countries in the Caribbean, while creating avenues for investment in resilience building through the establishment of a Caribbean Resilience Fund. It was agreed that attention should be given to resolving the debt challenge facing Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, identified for intervention in Phase One of the Initiative.

EGM participants included Government Ministers, Ambassadors, economists and representatives from various financial institutions, who have experience in debt management and debt swaps, as well as in the design and financing of climate adaptation projects. The meeting agreed to a new framework for ECLAC's Initiative, with a view to focusing on resilience building through investment in green industries, and debt reduction.

The representatives from the Phase One countries suggested that the debt reduction aspects should continue to be a prominent feature in any new configuration of the strategy to be adopted, since the lack of fiscal space from debt servicing continues to be a binding constraint.



Caribbean countries renew commitment to
2030 Agenda at ECLAC workshop on

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

*The
Hummingbird*





Four Caribbean countries are among the 50 countries scheduled to present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) on the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which should convene during 2020.

Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago will present their VNRs for the first time at the HLPF, while Belize will present a VNR for the second time.¹

In addition to the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, which presented in 2018, Guyana and Saint Lucia, which presented in 2019, and Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten that presented as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2017, VNR presentations by Caribbean countries this year imply that about a third of Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) member and associate member countries will have made a progress report on their implementation of the SDGs to the HLPF by July 2020.

1. Belize presented their first VNR in 2017, please see link: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/belize>

READ MORE 

Caribbean countries renew commitment to 2030 Agenda at ECLAC workshop on voluntary national reviews

From just one country (Belize) in 2017 to a total of 12 in 2020, the increase in the number of Caribbean countries presenting their VNRs shows the strong and renewed commitment made by the subregion to strengthen its follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This was highlighted during ECLAC's Regional Workshop for Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean presenting their VNRs in 2020, held from 3 to 4 February at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, as part of a series of events and activities to support the countries of the region in this process.

The Regional Workshop, organized by ECLAC with the support of the German Cooperation (BMZ/GIZ) in the framework of their cooperation programme, also featured the

participation of all Latin American countries that will present their VNRs in 2020 – Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Peru -, as well as the UN Resident Coordinators and UN Resident Coordinator Offices from Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Peru. Representatives of civil society organizations and the private sector also participated in the event.

Meeting highlights included a presentation by the Coordinator of ECLAC Caribbean's Statistics and Social Development Unit, Dr. Abdullahi Abdulkadri, who gave an overview of the regional status of SDG measuring and reporting mechanisms, including the data challenges facing national statistical offices and national SDG mechanisms. The main

challenges that Dr. Abdulkadri identified in preparing the VNRs and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda were related to the difficulties in collecting and processing data for SDG indicators, the limited capacity to generate high quality data in a timely manner, and the lack of disaggregated data and data on environmental indicators.

Dr. Abdulkadri also provided suggestions for the second generation of VNRs, which he noted should have substantive information on the progress that countries have made in implementing the SDGs. He suggested that these VNRs could be made more informative by including statistical annexes, as did Jamaica in 2018, and by incorporating GIS-based maps and infographics, among others.



Dr. Abdullahi Abdulkadri (middle) of ECLAC Caribbean listens intently during the VNR workshop in Santiago



[T]his portal will serve as a regional dashboard of progress in the achievement of the SDGs and will facilitate the conduct of comparative analysis on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Alynn Sánchez - Division of Statistics, ECLAC



The workshop also heard from Senior Statistician in the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), Ms. Hope Perkins, who shared the experience of, and lessons learned by her country in preparing and presenting its VNR in 2018. Ms. Perkins used Vision 2030 Jamaica as an example and stressed the importance of establishing an inter-ministerial and bi-partisan institutional mechanism to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the development of a national long-term sustainable development plan. These are crucial element of national ownership to ensure an integrated approach to implementing the Agenda.

Based on her country's good practice of preparing a statistical annex to their VNR,² Perkins recommended that countries' national statistics system be strengthened, including by enhancing their capacity through workshops and technical assistance, and by developing data quality assurance frameworks. In this regard, Jamaica is now finalizing a national online reporting platform to track progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.³

This is well-aligned with the initiative ongoing at ECLAC, which is part of an inter-agency effort with the agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system in the region, to develop a regional portal on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Gateway).⁴ As alluded to in her presentation on the SDG Gateway, Ms. Alynn Sánchez of ECLAC's Statistics Division, stated that this portal will serve as

a regional dashboard of progress in the achievement of the SDGs and will facilitate the conduct of comparative analysis on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The session on implementing the 2030 Agenda and the importance of institutional mechanisms and strategies for implementation was an opportunity for peer learning and sharing of experiences. During the session, Mr. Victor Alegria, Director of the Sustainable Development Unit of the Government of Belize, gave an overview of the state of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country, which included its integration into the long-term national development plan, Horizon 2030, and the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2020, as well as the existence of a mechanism for follow-up and review.

The two-day workshop provided a platform for the participants to address a number of cross-cutting issues. These included a discussion on the key elements that need to be included in the second generation of VNRs. These elements include, but are not limited to, the identification of areas in which external support is necessary to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the interlinkages with other reporting frameworks, such as the human rights national reports, the Nationally Determined Contributions reports to the UNFCCC (Paris Agreement), and other commitments made at the international and regional fora.

Similarly, inclusive multi-stakeholder collaboration with civil society organizations and the private sector for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in the preparation of the VNR was emphasized. The workshop also addressed how to mobilize the required funding to meet the SDGs. Discussions focused on the funding strategies being pursued by each country to close the existing gaps, taking into account an extremely complex political, economic, social and environmental context for the region, encompassing climate-related disasters in the Caribbean with annual costs sometimes exceeding 200% of the GDP in affected countries.

These are compounded by several electoral processes taking place in the region this year, which raise concerns vis-à-vis ensuring continuity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda that goes beyond the electoral cycles of governments and more recently the crisis due to COVID-19 pandemic.

In affirmation of this year's HLPF's theme of "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development," ECLAC will organize series of events and activities aimed to provide comprehensive support to the governments of the region in their preparation for their VNRs and onward, including with online community of practices. ■

2. <https://statinja.gov.jm/pdf/Jamaica%20VNR%20Statistical%20Annex%202018.pdf>

3. <http://www.vision2030.gov.jm/>

4. <https://agenda2030lac.org/>

COVID-19: Caribbean Update

COVID-19, also known as the novel corona virus, has landed in the Caribbean – and is making its presence felt.

In The Bahamas, Minister of Education, Jeffrey Lloyd, announced that despite schools being closed, the Ministry of Education has arranged plans to continue the learning process for students, which includes virtual classrooms.

In Barbados, the current school term will be brought forward to an end Thursday 19 March 2020. In Belize, the Ministry of Education has suspended the 2020 sittings of the Primary School Examination (PSE), scheduled for March 30 and April 30.

The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus will be closed from March 24 to April 5, until further notice.

With regard to vulnerable groups, in Barbados, vulnerable citizens have been promised access to about 0.5 million ml of hand sanitizer free of cost.

In Guyana, Deputy Chairman of the National Toshias Council (NTC), Paul Pierre, is encouraging Indigenous leaders to restrict travel to and from their respective villages in order to prevent an outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease in their communities.

In the Cayman Islands, with further restrictions imposed on bars and

As the subregion braces itself, The Hummingbird brings its readers a quick overview of some – not all – of the latest developments regarding the spread of the virus country by country.

SOCIAL IMPACTS

With regard to schooling, students in primary schools across Antigua and Barbuda may not be able to write the Grade Six National Assessment tests in June, while the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) exams scheduled for May/June could be delayed as a result of the threat of the coronavirus.

restaurants, thousands of expatriate workers have lost their jobs and may be stuck in Cayman as many countries close off their gateways back home. In The Bahamas, the government wants hotel owners to advance unemployment benefits to laid off workers impacted by the tourism shutdown brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hotel companies will be reimbursed by the government.

In Bermuda, a financial safety net of up to \$500 a week will be set up by the Government for people put out of work as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Minister of finance, Camillo Gonsalves, has announced the launch of the Promotion of Youth Microenterprises (PRYME). The government programme offers assistance of up to \$40,000 to young entrepreneurs.

In Curaçao, the government has announced a series of measures, or a so-called solidarity package to mitigate the effect of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

With regard to the economic and financial impacts of the crisis, on the recommendation of the ECCB Board

of Directors, the Monetary Council of the ECCB has approved grant funding, in the sum of EC\$4 million (EC\$500,000 each) to the ECCB Member Governments to help in their fight against the novel coronavirus. The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) has announced that effective immediately most RBC Personal banking clients in the Caribbean will benefit from an automatic three-month payment deferral on credit facilities. Business and Corporate banking clients are also eligible for the relief program, following individual eligibility assessments with an RBC representative. Automatic payment deferrals will be applied as of March 17, 2020 and remain in effect until June 30, 2020, or until further advised.

In Jamaica, amid the national shutdown, the central bank is asking financial companies to hold back on issuing debt in foreign currency, but has otherwise assured them it has measures in place to ensure they have adequate supplies of foreign exchange and Jamaican currency. Meanwhile, Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, announced that Jamaica remains in dialogue with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the European Union (EU), among others to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global industry; while the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis



Management Centre (GTRCM) will be charged with driving the recovery of tourism in Jamaica and elsewhere in the region post-COVID-19.

Regional airline carrier LIAT announced the suspension applies to all flights in and out of Guyana, Trinidad, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Maarten, Grenada, Tortola, and the British Virgin Islands (BVI), effective on March 22. These countries have either closed their borders until further notice to all inbound passengers — whether nationals or non-nationals — or have extended travel restrictions to a number of international countries to mitigate the spread of the virus.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the government has announced a multi-billion-dollar package, including a TT \$1500 monthly payment to unemployed people for the next three months. Government's rescue mission to "keep people alive" amid the COVID-19 threat will be reinforced as of the week starting 30 March, with the start of payout of Income Tax returns to people owed \$20,000 and less. VAT return payments will also begin for small and medium businesses owed \$250,000 and under. Meanwhile, Trinidad-based regional airline Caribbean Airlines is continuing its cargo operations amid coronavirus. The company continues to operate

its cargo freighter flights and ground transport trucking services moving cargo between the United States and the Caribbean. Much of that includes essential services for businesses to ship pharmaceuticals and restock "dwindling" supplies locally.

Air Century announced that due to the closure of the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as a result of the coronavirus, operations to and from the neighboring country were canceled as of Monday, March 16, 2020.

In The Bahamas, Small businesses that may experience hardships due to the coronavirus will be supported by \$20 million in short-term loan support, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Peter Turnquest said on 18 March, the as economy could take billion-dollar hit. Nevertheless, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Peter Turnquest, said that the government is not considering more borrowing to deal with the economic fallout. However, if the falloff in tourism due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic persists into the last three quarters of this year, The Bahamas could see as much as a 26 percent decline in gross domestic product (GDP), an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) paper has revealed. Meanwhile, the government has

allocated \$1.8 million to be used specifically to support COVID-19 measures on the Family Islands.

In Antigua and Barbuda, Minister of Tourism, Charles Fernandez, announced all commercial flights will end and the island will be on lockdown by 29 March. Fernandez also said, "All of the hotels are going to be closed within a matter of days so there is no reason for tourists to come into Antigua". Meanwhile, Acting Director of Agriculture, Mr. Gregory Bailey, said that farmers who have excess lands that are not under production are invited to come on board with the ministry to help craft a strategy to deal with the pending crisis being faced.

In Aruba, the government presented the Fiscal Emergency Plan 2020. The plan is to alleviate the tax burden for the sole purpose of solidarity and the recovery of the Aruban economy following the COVID-19 outbreak.

In Guyana, several oil majors operating offshore Guyana are gearing up to shave billions of dollars off their exploration and production (E&P) budgets. This course of action is in response to the coronavirus outbreak which continues to keep demand on the world market at low levels.



COVID-19: Caribbean Update *(continued)*

POLITICAL IMPACTS

In Antigua and Barbuda, the Barbuda Council has declared that airline passengers are not allowed to enter Barbuda as of the 26th March 2020. In addition, Prime Minister Gaston Browne has announced additional measures to include a 24-hour curfew to fight against COVID-19, commencing one second after midnight on Thursday 2nd April. In The Bahamas, Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis has reinforced the government's decision to close the country's borders to Bahamians, and also the decision to close liquor stores during the national state of emergency. Minnis said that while it is unfortunate that some Bahamians are stuck outside the country, the decision was for the best.

In Jamaica, Prime Minister Andrew Holness has announced that effective, Wednesday, 01 April there will be an all island curfew starting at 8:00 each night and ending at 6:00 am the following day. The curfew imposition will end at 6:00am on Wednesday, 08 April 8.

In Belize, Minister of National Security, Mike Peyrefitte, said that based on the recent surge of violence in

Belize City, the Ministry of National Security has gotten approval from the Governor General to declare a state of emergency. Meanwhile, the candidate for the presidency of Bolivia by the Movement for Socialism (MAS), Luis Arce, confirmed Cuba's willingness to help the country to face COVID-19. In Cuba, the government has ordered the cancellation of massive acts, events and historical commemorations. Meanwhile, A total of 140 health care professionals, including 90 specialist nurses, have arrived in Jamaica from Cuba to help bolster the country's frontline staff in the fight against the Coronavirus disease, while a group of Cuban nurses are due to arrive in T&T shortly to assist local healthcare professionals in the fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

In Puerto Rico, the ruler asked the administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA), Stephen Marshall Dickson, to be able to control air traffic, including the suspension of domestic and international flights for 14 days to Puerto Rico, as a mechanism to control the spread of the coronavirus.

In Guyana, expressing alarm over the "cavalier" approach of some

Guyanese to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the authorities have warned that a lockdown could be imposed to combat the spread of the deadly virus.

The Cayman Islands was put under a 24-hour-a-day curfew on 25 March, from 7pm until 5am. Premier Alden McLaughlin said that the government had been forced to take drastic action because it had been unable to get co-operation from the business community for an order to shut down non-essential businesses.

In St. Kitts and Nevis, Prime Minister and Minister of National Security Dr. the Hon. Timothy Harris has announced a 24-hour curfew — a total lockdown — from 7 p.m. Tuesday 31st March to 6 a.m. Friday 3rd April, in the first instance. "It means that no one except the Security Forces and other Security Personnel, the Health Care Officers, technical emergency officers of utilities including telecoms, and media personnel, will be allowed out of their residences", the Prime Minister explained.

In Curaçao, Prime Minister Eugene Rhuggenaath announced that all shops must be closed at 8pm, except restaurants and BBQ trucks.

Supermarkets, and mini markets must also close at 8pm.

In Saint Lucia, the parliament has approved the Emergency Powers Disaster (COVID-19) Order which gives the government wide-ranging powers as the island face the onslaught of the dreaded coronavirus. There are some 20 clauses in the order. Among them the power to declare an area, place or building a quarantine facility and the power for the Chief Medical Officer to detain someone believed to be infected or contaminated with coronavirus. Meanwhile, to help Saint Lucia enhance its preparedness against the threat of COVID-19, the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) made a donation to the Ministry of Health towards the procurement of part of the necessary Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) suits and medical face masks.

In Grenada, a 24-hour curfew went into effect on 30 March, for one week in the first instance, as government steps up measures to stem the spread of COVID-19. From 7 p.m. today until 7 p.m. on April 6, residents will have to stay at home and will only be allowed to leave to buy food on specific days, or for emergency medical care. ■



FOR MORE INFO AND THE LATEST UPDATES:

Governments' websites on measures taken to fight COVID-19:

- Anguilla: <http://www.gov.ai/covid.php> and <https://beatcovid19.ai/>
- Antigua and Barbuda: https://ab.gov.ag/detail_page.php?page=42
- Aruba: https://www.overheid.aw/news/news_47033/item/crisis-measures-by-the-government-of-aruba-in-connection-with-coronavirus-covid-19_48509.html
- Bahamas: https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/!ut/p/b1/04_Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAfGjzOKNDdx9HR1NL-HzdTQ3MDDxDA3wcA8w9jPy9jYAKIoEKDHAARwNC-sP1o_AqMTGAKs-BjhZ9Hfm6qfkFuhEGWiaMiALGJzU0!/dl4/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/
- Barbados: <http://www.gov.bb/coronavirus>
- Bermuda: <https://www.gov.bm/coronavirus>
- British Virgin Islands: <https://bvi.gov.vg/covid-19>
- Cayman Islands: <http://www.gov.ky/portal/page/portal/cighome/pressroom/archive/March%202020/Coronavirus%20Update%2024%20March%202020>
- Cuba: <https://www.presidencia.gob.cu/es/>
- Curaçao: <https://gobiernu.cw/corona-virus-ultimo-notisianan/>
- Dominica: <http://dominica.gov.dm/corona>
- Dominican Republic: <https://presidencia.gob.do/>
- French Guiana: <http://www.guyane.gouv.fr/Politiques-publiques/Sante/Coronavirus-Covid-19/COVID-19-Points-de-situation/Point-de-situation-n-12-4-nouveaux-cas-Deplacements-interdits-entre-21h00-et-5h00-du-matin>
- Grenada: <https://www.mgovernance.net/moh/covid-19-education-material>
- Guadeloupe: <http://www.guadeloupe.gouv.fr/Politiques-publiques/Risques-naturels-technologiques-et-sanitaires/Securite-sanitaire/Informations-coronavirus/Coronavirus-Une-nouvelle-attestation-de-deplacement-de-rogatoire>
- Guyana: <https://dpi.gov.gy/category/news/government/>
- Jamaica: <https://www.moh.gov.jm/covid-19-update-march-24-2020/>
- Martinique: <http://www.martinique.gouv.fr/Politiques-publiques/Environnement-sante-publique/Sante/COVID-19-informations-recommandations-points-de-situation-attestation-de-deplacement>
- Montserrat: <http://www.gov.ms/latest-on-the-coronavirus/>
- Puerto Rico: <http://www.salud.gov.pr/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>
- Saint Kitts and Nevis: <https://www.gov.kn/>
- Saint Lucia: <http://www.govt.lc/news/statement-on-scale-down-of-non-essential-services> and <http://www.govt.lc/news/covid-19-response-measures>
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: <http://health.gov.vc/health/index.php/c>
- Sint Maarten: <http://www.sintmaartengov.org/government/VSA/Health-Updates/NOVELCORONAVIRUS/Pages/default.aspx>
- Trinidad and Tobago: <http://news.gov.tt/content/trinidad-and-tobago-covid-19-novel-coronavirus-update-47#.Xnum0lhKg2w>
- Turks and Caicos Islands: <https://www.gov.tc/moh/coronavirus/>
- United States Virgin Islands: <https://doh.vi.gov/covid19usvi>



British Heritage specialists describe Nevis' heritage sites as remarkable

Two British World Heritage specialists have referred to the Bath Hotel, Bath Stream and Fort Charles at Bath Village on Nevis as remarkable heritage sites, during a meeting with the Honourable Eric Evelyn, Minister of Culture, and the Honourable Spencer Brand, whose ministry is engaged in the ongoing Restoration Project at Fort Charles.

The specialists, Barry Gamble and Paul Simons were on a 10-day visit to Nevis to assess and assist the Nevis Island Administration (NIA), through the World Heritage Committee, on the way forward with its bid for inscription on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List.

Simons, an architect and specialist in Tourism and World

Management and the Spa Industry, and a first-time visitor to Nevis, gave his first impression of the historical sites. "I have been so impressed being here for the first time to see the Bath Hotel and the thermal springs and then Fort Charles with Barry. What is clear is there is fantastic opportunity here. There are terrific resources here, natural resources and cultural resources and the architectural heritage of the place and we are here to assist," he said.

"We are here to help the Ministers to develop some further capacity for heritage management and protection, and how that can be used for a sustainable future as we go forward. These things will not be achieved overnight. We need a decent long-term plan, a long-term vision to achieve these and I'm sure it's all manageable and

can be achieved with the right partnership approach."

Minister Evelyn explained the two-member team was on Nevis at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture. "We believe with the heritage and history that we have here on the island of Nevis that we can succeed and we think the potential is there and we are pressing forward for UNESCO recognition." ■

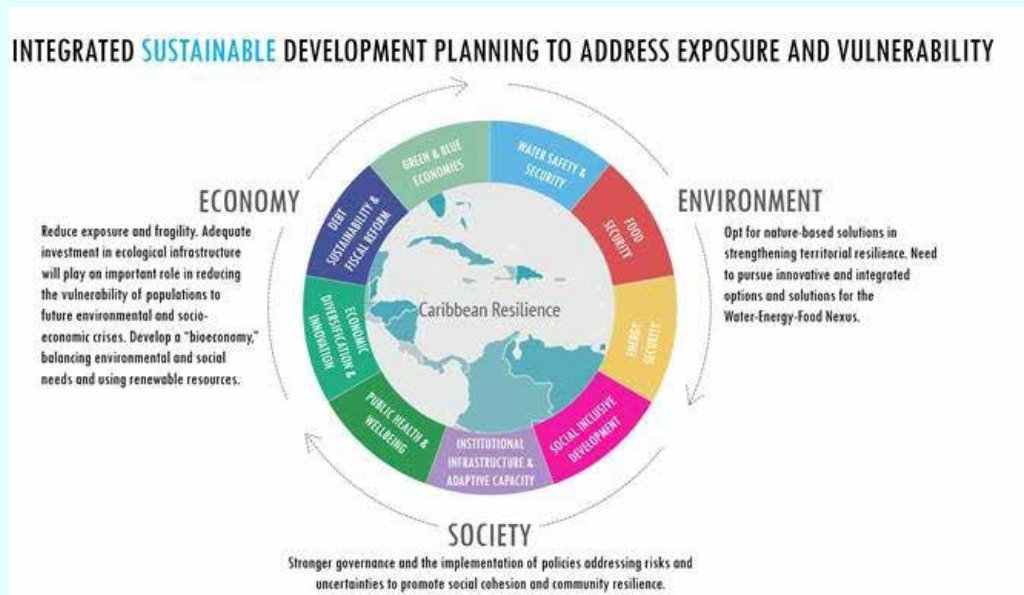
An integrated approach to tackle climate change in the Caribbean

The Caribbean is the second most hazard-prone region in the world due to its extreme vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events. With 84% of its population living near coastlines, the subregion has witnessed forced migration and population displacement caused by catastrophic events.

In an upcoming policy brief entitled 'Planning for resilience: An integrated approach towards tackling climate change in the Caribbean', ECLAC Caribbean discusses how countries have coped with these events, given the capacity constraints. Particular attention is given to the policy coherence gap that exists in relation to planning for resilience in the Caribbean, which results from the fact that strategies for resilience building are developed in silos across sectors. This is further aggravated by outdated statistical regulations, limited coordination among agencies producing official statistics, inadequate financing of the national statistical systems, scarcity of data on the environment and social sector, inefficiencies in data sharing and dissemination, and inadequate capacity to produce SDG-specific data.¹

These challenges are exacerbated in a context in which countries are pursuing fiscal consolidation to address high public debt and decline in foreign direct investment, thus restricting governments' capacity to sustain social spending and invest in adaptive capacity, including resilient infrastructure.

ECLAC's policy brief makes recommendations on building resilience to climate change, addressing overlapping vulnerabilities and promoting multi-sector and



multi-stakeholder collaboration. In particular, the brief highlights the importance of integrating resilience within the planning cycle through the reinforcement of institutional mechanisms for integrated development planning.² It suggests that a critical foundation for resilience building is an appropriate institutional basis, as well as updated policies and strategies promoting integration.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, ECLAC has emphasized the importance of planning as a key tool for promoting coordinated and coherent policies, plans and programmes, stressing that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible, proposing to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development, and require an understanding of the inter-connection between the various goals and targets. The brief explains that strategic integration includes the appointment of resilience focal points in sustainable development ministries and agencies that have specific resilience training and that are tasked with mainstreaming resilience.

The brief concludes that concrete measures to promote resilience must

include mainstreaming disaster risk reduction strategies into each stage of the planning process, making use of existing knowledge and local capacity. Stronger governance, allowing a civic space for purposeful decision-making, participation, accountability and transparency, is also required in the implementation of integrated measures to address Caribbean multidimensional vulnerabilities in the different sectors.

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2019), "Report of the Learning Conference on implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda in the Caribbean Region", (LC/CAR/2019/13), Santiago.

2. ECLAC has been promoting integrated development planning as a key element of national strategy towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Caribbean. The approach aims to synergize the SDGs and the SIDS agenda with national development plans to ensure that countries pursue a comprehensive development strategy that takes into account relevant global development platforms.

For further information, see <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/42709>



Jamaica government to establish Goat Islands wildlife sanctuary

The Government of Jamaica will soon be spending US \$1.9 billion to establish the Goat Island wildlife sanctuary, just off the island's south coast, according to Parliamentary Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister, Senator Robert Morgan.

"This forms part of planned measures to safeguard Jamaica's biodiversity and natural history," Senator Morgan said, during the 2019/20 State of the Nation Debate in February 2020.

He explained that the sanctuary will also provide significant research opportunities for ongoing conservation and natural resources management initiatives.

"We are building out a sanctuary, not just so that people can go and watch animals, but so that we can have scientists go there and study our endemic flora and fauna," he stated.

Meanwhile, given the Jamaican iguana's classification as "critically endangered", there is recognition of the need to do more to ensure the survival of this and other wildlife species existing in Jamaica.

Moreover, Senator Morgan added that, as regards the coney, the West Indian manatee, the crocodile, and endemic plants, birds and other animals, the Government is serious about implementing measures and policies intended to safeguard their natural environment. ■



Trinidad and Tobago urged to ratify Escazú Agreement

Trinidad and Tobago was urged to become a signatory to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), as a first decisive step toward ultimate ratification. This following a seminar hosted by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) on 23 January 2020.

Held at the University of the West Indies, Saint Augustine campus, the seminar was entitled 'Why the Escazú Agreement matters: environmental rights, justice and public participation in the Caribbean'.

Adopted at Escazú, Costa Rica, on 4 March 2018, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean has as its objective the

guarantee of full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation that contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment.

It is the only binding agreement stemming from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the first regional environmental agreement of Latin America and the Caribbean and the first in the world containing specific provisions on environmental human rights defenders.

Representing ECLAC Caribbean at the seminar was Sustainable Development Officer, Artie Dubrie, who explained that

ratifying the Escazú Agreement was important to the Caribbean, as it will serve to strengthen the region's commitment to the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Regional Agreement was opened for the signature of the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on 27 September 2018 at UN headquarters in New York. To date there are 22 signatures and 8 ratifications. To enter into force, the Escazú Agreement requires ratification by 11 States. In the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have ratified this agreement. The Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti and Jamaica are signatories.

For further information on the Escazú including signatures and ratification please visit <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement> ■



Carnival in St Thomas Is Going Virtual

With the Carnival Virgin Islands postponed amid the coronavirus pandemic, the popular Saint Thomas festival is going virtual. That means you can bring the rhythm of one of the Caribbean's hottest carnivals right into your home.

The US Virgin Islands Department of Tourism's Division of Festival has launched what it's calling "Home Wuk," a series of online social gatherings "designed to create a sense of community, camaraderie and a 'virtual' carnival experience.

Carnival Virgin Islands had been scheduled to run from April 3 through May 4.

"We know everyone was looking forward to Carnival, but postponing it was the right thing to do to make sure we help stop the virus from spreading," said Ian Turnbull, Director of the

Division of Festivals. "With the 'Home Wuk' series, we can lift people's spirits and bring the VI Carnival vibe to everyone in the safety of their homes."

The first "Home Wuk" party was held digitally on March 28 on the Division of Festivals' Facebook page, in partnership with Insomniacs J'ouvert Troupe.

It was headlined by USVI native DJ Avalanche.

The nearly 2.5-hour event featured music from across the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean.

It's a clever, creative initiative from the Division of Festivals, which launched last year in a bid to "enhance" the US Virgin Islands' already strong festival ecosystem. ■



ECLAC and CCRIF SPC discuss new areas of cooperation

ECLAC and CCRIF SPC (formerly the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility) continue to support disaster risk reduction and mitigation in the Caribbean. Their effort is aimed at providing support to Caribbean countries in the adoption of policies for disaster risk reduction and mitigation, thereby minimizing the socio-economic, physical and environmental damage caused by natural disasters.

Over the last decade, this inter-agency collaboration has facilitated the completion of several regional studies and capacity building activities on disaster risk management in the Caribbean.

Recently, the Chief Executive Officer of CCRIF SPC, Mr Isaac Anthony, led a mission to Trinidad and Tobago, which included a visit to ECLAC Caribbean's subregional headquarters to discuss potential new areas for cooperation.

ECLAC Caribbean director, Diane Quarless, and members of the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit joined the CCRIF SPC delegation for a discussion on recent developments. These include new parametric insurance products being developed by CCRIF for the Caribbean, such as a drought and agricultural product, as well as one for the electric utilities sector and specially for

transmission and distribution.

The group also discussed the recently launched Caribbean Oceans and Aquaculture Sustainability Facility (COAST). The COAST is a fisheries parametric insurance product, which provides coverage for fisherfolk and other players in the fisheries industry to enable them to recover quickly after weather-related events.

Quarless reiterated that disaster risk management and mitigation continue to be priority areas for the Caribbean region, in keeping with ECLAC's Debt Swap initiative. She recalled the joint Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) trainings conducted in 2017 and 2018, during which Anguilla, The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos benefited from these activities. In particular, the training conducted in The Bahamas proved to be most timely, as "the national capacity built from this training enabled the preparation of a DaLA following Hurricane Dorian's devastating impact in 2019."

The group also discussed potential new areas for partnership in disaster and risk mitigation, including water resources management and new training activities. ■



Uncovering underwater cultural heritage in Caribbean SIDS

Unknown to many in our subregion, there is a wealth of underwater cultural heritage (UCH) to be found beneath the surface of the Caribbean Sea. What is this resource and why is it potentially invaluable treasure for the subregion?

According to the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage,¹ UCH represents all traces of human existence having a cultural, historical or archaeological character which have been partially or totally under water, periodically or continuously for at least 100 years. These would include:

- i. Sites, structures, buildings, artefacts and human remains, together with their archaeological and natural context
- ii. Vessels, aircraft, other vehicles or any part thereof, their cargo or other contents, together with their archaeological and natural context
- iii. Objects of prehistoric character

The seabed of the Caribbean Sea is laden with abandoned shipwrecks,² slave ships,³ historical anchorages,⁴ archaeological sites,⁵ Taino artefacts,⁶ other artefacts⁷ and even the sunken city of Port Royal, in Jamaica. It is an

untapped resource that could provide economic opportunities to advance the sustainable development of the region, while affording citizens and visitors the opportunity to interact with history and appreciate the rich underwater heritage.

Several Caribbean countries have stepped up to the plate to create an enabling environment to preserve, conserve and promote responsible use of UCH sites. Ten countries have ratified the 2001 UCH Convention.⁸ Nonetheless, a regional approach to rolling out the protection, conservation and marketing of UCH is critical for the subregion. ■

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2001). The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

2. Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Haiti, Cayman Islands, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts Nevis, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint Martin, The Dutch Islands, Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago.

3. Turks and Caicos

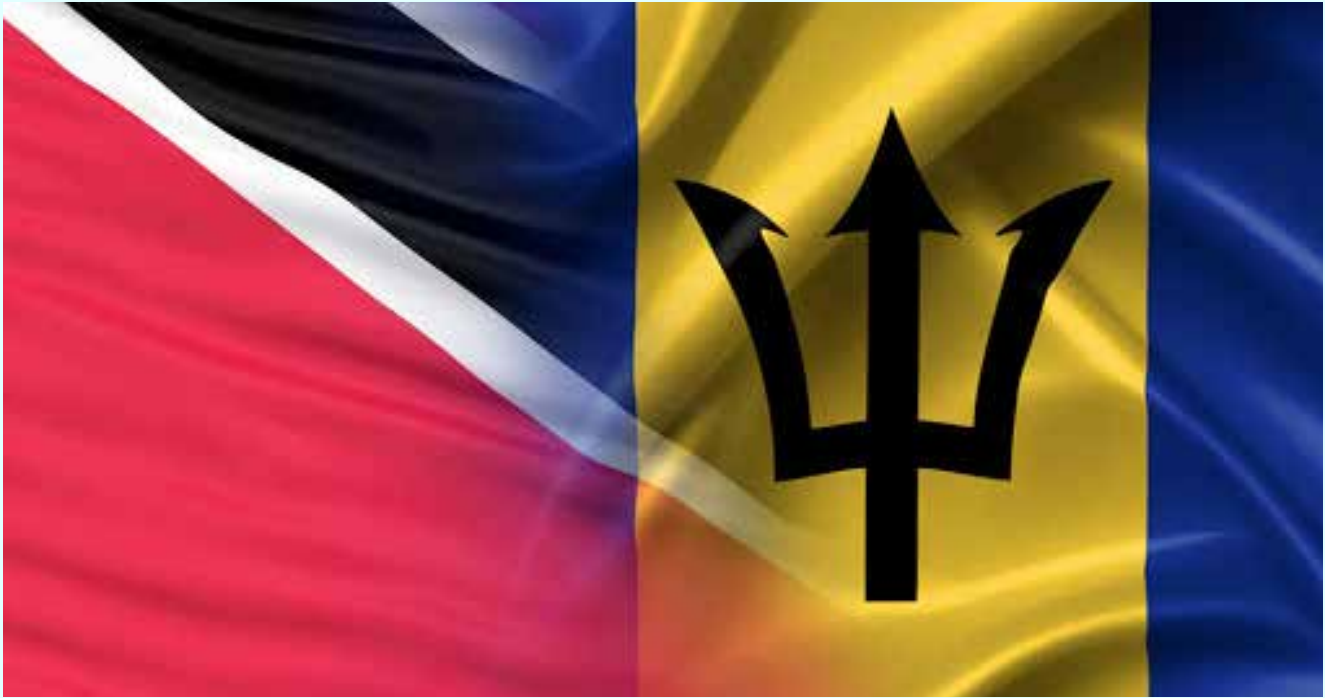
4. Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint Martin

5. The Dutch Islands

6. Dominican Republic

7. Lucayan Paddle, Turks and Caicos

8. Caribbean SIDS that are party to this Convention include: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago



Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago to share embassies

Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago will soon establish some joint diplomatic missions. Speaking at the recent signing of an energy treaty, Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, and Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley, agreed that hard times mean both nations must seek efficiencies by collaborating in as many areas as possible.

PM Rowley affirmed that both nations are stronger together and will cooperate in every possible area, including through the sharing of some missions. "Trinidad and Tobago has a mission in Nigeria. Barbados is about to operationalize its mission in Ghana, where Trinidad and Tobago has significant interests. We also have interests in energy, commerce, culture and diplomacy. Where we have missions in that part of the world, we will enter into a memorandum of understanding to share missions in that country."

"Each country will have a larger number of footprints. Where Trinidad and Tobago is present in Nigeria and Barbados is not, we operationalize that mission as a Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados mission. Where Ghana has a Barbados mission, it will be operationalized as a Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago mission", Rowley further noted.

The Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister also explained that in the mission in Nigeria, a Barbados national will serve under a Trinidad and Tobago

High Commissioner, while in the mission in Ghana, a Trinidad and Tobago official will be second to the Barbados High Commissioner.

"We'll share the cost of the mission and the staff." He also indicated that he expected Barbados will soon share Trinidad and Tobago's mission in South Africa, while Trinidad and Tobago will join the Barbados mission in Kenya.

"Barbados has done a lot of work in recent times to open the door for us in Kenya." Rowley said the two nations will share accommodation, staff, costs and benefits in South Korea. As PM Mottley added, "Dubai", Rowley agreed that he foresaw a shared mission in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

PM Mottley said the initiative was not new, as Barbados and Guyana had shared their London mission in 1966. "There are areas in this global village where we are required to be present but may not have the capacity to go full throttle on our own. It makes sense."

Highlighting that Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados align on many foreign policy issues, PM Mottley said that missions must exist where Caribbean citizens are. Noting that every other person she had met on a recent trip to Trinidad and Tobago had a Bajan name, she hoped the two nations could collaborate more. ■

STATE *of* AFFAIRS



Jamaica

GOVERNMENT AND WORLD BANK AGREEMENT

- Mar 4 -

The Government of Jamaica and the World Bank have signed a US\$40-million loan agreement for implementation of the second phase of the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI-II). The agreement was signed by Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Nigel Clarke; and World Bank Country Director for Caribbean Countries, Tasheen Sayed, during a ceremony held at the Ministry's Heroes Circle offices, on March 3. The objective of the project is to enhance access to markets and to climate-resilience approaches for targeted beneficiaries.

\$25 BILLION STIMULUS PACKAGE

- Mar 18 -

The Government is providing a \$25 billion stimulus package to mitigate against the expected negative impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on the local economy. Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr Nigel Clarke, made a statement to the House of Representatives describing the package as the "largest fiscal stimulus in Jamaica's history".



Barbados

BUSINESSES ASKED TO PARTNER WITH GOVERNMENT

- Mar 4 -

The Barbados Foreign Minister, Senator Jerome Walcott, has challenged businesses to do more to join the country's efforts in achieving the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The senator's request comes as the government prepares for a comprehensive review of its progress thus far in meeting the SDGs. As he promised to include the private sector in the review, Minister Walcott also suggested projects – either driven by business or in partnership with Government – that could be undertaken to enhance the country's development efforts.

\$80 MILLION LOAN FROM IDB

- Mar 26 -

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has made budgetary support available to the Government of Barbados. On March 26, IDB Country Representative, Juan Carlos De La Hoz Viñas, and Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley signed the contract for a US\$80 million policy-based loan (PBL). The loan will provide budgetary support tied to the strengthening of public policies; and will afford the Government the flexibility to focus on priority areas as the country continues efforts to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).



Saint Lucia

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FROM CUBA

- Mar 26 -

The Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Allen Chastanet, has expressed immense thanks to the Government and People of Cuba as a team of 113 Cuban medical professionals arrived in Saint Lucia to strengthen the healthcare system amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Cuban team will be enlisted to assist with the stabilization and initial transitioning phase to a new hospital on the island.

NEW ACCOMODATION TAX

- Mar 31 -

The government of St Lucia plans to introduce a tourist accommodation fee to be used for destination marketing and development. All accommodation providers on the island will be required to collect the charge from guests from April 1, 2020. The fees will be paid by stayovers visitor and collected by accommodation providers who will remit the fees collected to the Government via the Saint Lucia Tourism Authority.

ECLAC CARIBBEAN *Family*

Staff gets self-defense training

The social events committee of ECLAC Caribbean's staff association recently organized a self-defense training session for staff members, based on the Japanese martial art 'Aikido'.

The trainer was Armen Mikayelyan, who has more than 10 years of experience in Aikido and is the holder of a black belt in the martial art.

The free training was practical and customized to each participant, based on their specific area of interest. Mikayelyan guided staff members through self-defense techniques, including when someone is attacking you on the street with a gun or with a knife, or is trying to kidnap you or to attack you while you are in the car.

Here are some photos of staff as they went through the various techniques.

ABOUT AIKIDO

"Aikido can be viewed and practiced as a self-defense art, a conflict resolution art, a (moving) meditation, a method for stress reduction, a way to achieve a healthy and peaceful lifestyle or a path to spiritual growth. Aikido not only imparts the physical benefits of increased power and flexibility, but also leads to a greater feeling of self-confidence. The practical self-defense side of the art is balanced with the spiritual development that results from harmonizing with others." ■





Nutmeg tree grafting for increased productivity in Grenada

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands in collaboration with the Grenada Cooperative Nutmeg Association (GCNA) and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) recommend grafting as an alternative propagation method for the increase in nutmeg productivity.

Nutmeg trees are generally dioecious plants (either male or female reproductive parts) and after propagation by seeds, approximately 50% of the plantings are usually male. The sex of each plant is only known at the time of flowering, which is usually when they are five to seven years old.

Once the plant is declared a male specie, farmers in Grenada in the past would destroy the tree. The new method of grafting is now being recommended to convert the male plant into a productive tree.

According to agricultural instructor, Sherwyn Joseph, the results of grafting should be seen six weeks after the process has been completed.

“With this technique, once we have selected the female plant with the desirable characteristics – large seed, thick mace – we take the budding material from those plants and graft it on to the male plants. After the budding process, it will take about four

to six weeks, and the farmer will have to observe the graft and remove the tape once he realizes that the bud is active. He/she will notice that the bud that grows out, will be a female bud,” Joseph explained.

This grafting technique was developed and tested as part of the European Union-funded Spice Research Project. CARDI representative, Reginald Andall, said this is one of the measures that were agreed upon, as the GCNA asked for assistance in developing Grenada’s Nutmeg Industry. ■



The Dominican Republic has a new solar park

The Dominican Republic has officially opened a major new solar energy park. The new Solar Canoa park, set in Canoa in the western portion of the country, has a capacity of 25 megawatts in its first phase.

It is a significant new green achievement for the Dominican Republic in a country that is increasingly looking to harness renewable energy sources.

It is part of a wider plan by the Dominican Republic's government called the "Plan to Support Renewable Energy Projects," a partnership between the government and its corporation of state electric companies.

Ruben Jimenez, vice president of the Dominican Republic's utility corporation, said the new park would cut more than 21,193 tons of carbon dioxide — and reduce oil consumption by 12,850 barrels each year.

"There is no doubt that we will far exceed our goal of 25% energy production from renewable sources well before the expected date of 2025," Jimenez said. According to Jimenez, the country is already at 22%.



DIANE'S CORNER

The Director's views and thoughts on the occasion of:

International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

25/03



Over four hundred years, more than 15 million men, women and children were trafficked for profit and sold into slavery to finance the industrialization and economic advancement of Europe. The crippling legacy of centuries of enslavement with its attendant de-humanizing ideology of racism and disregard for the human rights of African people, is fundamentally at the core of the contemporary reality of persistent poverty among the majority of people of African descent. Today, on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the United Nations calls on the international community to recall the depravity and dishonour of man's inhumanity to man and to commit to implementing actions of redress.

#DirectorsTake

<http://vrb.al/directors-take>



Beet Banana Boost Smoothie



What you will need:

- 1 small or 1/2 medium beetroot
- 1 banana
- 1/2 cup of frozen mixed berries
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup ice

*Optional honey or brown sugar to sweeten

Method:

1. Wash and peel the beetroot and cut into 1-inch pieces.
2. Peel and chop the banana into small slices.
3. Add all of the ingredients to your blender and combine until smooth.
4. Serve and enjoy!



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