

# The Hummingbird



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The ECLAC Port of Spain Newsletter

## ECLAC in the Caribbean

### ECLAC returns Disaster Assessment Services to the Caribbean

ECLAC's newly configured Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit is preparing to offer much-needed assistance in disaster assessment to the Caribbean and, indeed, all of Latin America.

Through this Unit, ECLAC will provide significantly strengthened leadership to the region in disaster assessment and post disaster needs analysis, by providing technical expertise to disaster-affected and disaster-prone countries.

Since 1972, ECLAC has been a pioneer in the field of disaster assessment and in the development and dissemination of the Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) methodology.

Through its DaLA assessments, ECLAC creates a point of departure for national dialogue around disaster risk reduction, vulnerability reduction, sustainable development and adaptation to climate change. The methodology also provides a basis for defining the post-disaster needs for recovery and reconstruction.

Disaster assessment involves investigations in a number of areas,



Natural disasters occur without warning.

including estimation of effects, impacts, financial needs, recovery and reconstruction. The 'damage' of a disaster refers to the effects that it has had on the assets of each sector, expressed in monetary terms.

The 'losses' caused by a disaster relate to the value of goods that go unproduced and services that go unprovided during a period running from the time the disaster occurs until full recovery and reconstruction is achieved.

Examples include a reduction in the size of future harvests because of the flooding of farmland or pro-

longed droughts, a decline in industrial production because of damage to plants, lack of raw materials or inputs such as water and electricity, and revenues forgone by utility firms because their services have been interrupted or reduced.

In order to raise awareness of its renewed capacity to conduct DaLA assessments, ECLAC has outlined some specific initiatives. These include deployment of targeted capacity development sessions, to be held in Latin America, as well as in the Caribbean prior to this year's hurricane season. It is anticipated that in addition to enhancing the skills sets of local experts, these workshops will help cement a network of regional focal points.

To maximise access to the services, ECLAC will utilize the latest Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools, developing an interactive on-line platform, which will include dynamic training courses, interactive resources and a repository of multimedia tools.

### Development of e-government applications in the Caribbean

COUNTRY representatives from several Caribbean governments met recently to discuss the findings of a new study focusing on how e-government systems are being implemented in the region. E-government systems can improve the efficiency of governments and help citizens to more easily perform numerous activities, such as applying for permits or filing taxes.

Hosted by ECLAC's Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre, the meeting brought together participants from the Caribbean Telecommunica-

tions Union, the World Bank, CDEMA, the government of Trinidad and Tobago, and experts from the private sector, to explore how Caribbean countries might benefit from a collaborative approach to the development of e-government services.

Of particular interest in the meeting, was a discussion of lessons learned from the Electronic Government for Regional Integration Project (EGRIP) and the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (CARCIP), two current regional e-

-government projects.

These initiatives demonstrated that regional projects are most likely to be successful when they are driven by response to specific needs expressed by countries.

It was also noted that these projects are best suited to areas where interregional cooperation already exists, such as the EGRIP subproject, which will automate the existing cooperative pharmaceutical purchasing process among OECS countries.

## Jammin' in the Caribbean ... Music festivals you won't want to miss

IN recent years, summer jazz music festivals have become as much a part of the Caribbean travel experience as sea, sun and sand.

But what began with a focus on the mainstream jazz genre has blossomed in recent years to include an ever-expanding array of musical styles and artistes, from R&B to calypso, popular music, dancehall and soca.

This year's Caribbean jazz and music festivals will feature what is likely the most diverse musical presentations yet, with a variety of the most popular Caribbean destinations getting into the act, so to speak.

The performances planned at various Caribbean islands even include a music festival dedicated to



Music fans enjoyed themselves at Tobago Jazz 2014.

blues.

Here are some of the best upcoming music festivals the Caribbean has to offer:

### The Tobago Jazz Experience April 18 – 26 2015

This is a celebration of jazz, along with the indigenous music of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean.

Staying true to its promise of offering "much more than music", the Tobago Jazz Experience incorporates the cultural and historical practices that define the island of Tobago as an ideal tourist destination.

Concerts will be held throughout Tobago, at venues in Spey-side, Signal Hill, Scarborough, Cas-

tara and Pigeon Point Heritage Park.

### Saint Lucia Jazz & Arts Festival April 30 – May 10 2015

At year 24, Saint Lucia Jazz and Arts Festive spans a full 11 days at more than 15 venues featuring some of the best live performances spiced with the celebration of Saint Lucian Arts, culture and cuisine. The rationale is to exploit the opportunities to be derived from the hosting of a prestigious and stellar festival, with the island's burgeoning creative industries sector.

With its beautiful beaches, Saint Lucia is worth a visit even if the Jazz and Arts Festival isn't in full swing. However, every May, this small island turns into a party scene with popular international artistes coming to perform.

Although labelled a jazz fest, the Saint Lucia Festival typically features a wide range of music genres, with its repertoire of Caribbean music providing the local flavour.

Start with Cuban pianists one night, move to Dominican zouk the next and top it off with a Jamaican Reggae act.

Blended into the Festival is Saint Lucia's local arts scene, which offers a great combination of the cultural arts. Wood carvers, painters and jewellery makers sell their products at the exhibits; island chefs cook local dishes like crab back, green banana and salt fish; fashionistas show off their style; and poets and dancers perform in free shows.

### Curacao International Blue Seas Festival May 7 – 9 2015

This inaugural festival is described as a celebration of "traditional and gentrified" jazz music, with concerts taking place at Kleine Werf in downtown Punda.

Scheduled performers include legendary blues guitarist Buddy Guy, the Original Blues Brothers, and new artists Kat Riggins, The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band and More-



Tessanne Chin performs at Reggae Sumfest.

land & Arbuckle.

Nine artists will also offer free concerts on the streets of Blues Village in Willemstad's Pietermaai Smal district.

### Saint Kitts Music Festival June 25-27 2015

Although only 176 sq km, Saint Kitts hosts one of the most desirable outdoor music festivals of the year.

Loaded with star power, yet true to its Caribbean roots, this festival keeps concert-goers up late into the night. R&B, reggae, hip-hop and jazz are the fare, alongside the popular island genres of calypso and soca.

### Reggae Sumfest July 12 – 18 2015

Held in Montego Bay in Jamaica, Reggae Sumfest is known as one of the greatest reggae festivals in the world. Montego Bay boasts white sand beaches and soft shorelines that are perfect for swimming and relaxing.

But in July, beach goers rise to their feet, and locals and tourists alike move their bodies in time to reggae beats, long into the night. Of course, although most come just for the music, there is also the undeniable political awareness brought about by the Rastafarian culture.

## ECLAC in the Caribbean

## Digital currency comes to the Caribbean

FOLLOWING on the heels of two successful meetings facilitated by ECLAC, the Caribbean's first bitcoin and digital exchange company was recently launched in Trinidad and Tobago after two years of planning and development.

This means that people across the region will soon have access to software for buying and selling cryptocurrencies and digital commodities.

The two meetings brought together experts in the field of Digital Currency, to review the opportunities and risks associated with this type of currency. These experts, namely Gabriel Abed and Oliver Gale, addressed the potential impact that digital currencies may have on sectors such as banking, e-commerce and remittance.

In launching the company, Bitt, the two hope very shortly to



Gabriel Abed and Oliver Gale at the ECLAC meeting.

have digital currencies stand side by side with traditional currencies throughout the Caribbean, thereby facilitating financial accessibility to citizens who are not regular banking customers.

Bitt, which is based in Hastings, Barbados, is offering a high tech system that is completely branded, built, designed and managed in the Caribbean – at a fraction

of the cost of the money transfer systems currently used in the region.

They noted that the system is being introduced in response to the need for a better payment system in the region, and to reduce the high costs and red tape associated with traditional electronic payment systems.

Gale and Abed highlighted some challenges in the implementation of the system that they are determined to get over, including lack of e-commerce-supporting legislation, inadequate technical capability and difficulties working with some local banks.

They are optimistic that within a matter of months consumers in several parts of the region will be accessing Bitcoin's fully automated, transferable management ledger.

## ECLAC observes Trinidad and Tobago Disaster Preparedness Exercises

THE Trinidad and Tobago Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) recently carried out its annual exercises to determine the country's preparedness level, in case of a disaster.

Entitled "Exercise Dark Storm 2015", the exercises brought together local, regional and international response agencies. Staff members from ECLAC Port of Spain were invited to attend. The exercise simulated the coordination of humanitarian response operations following the impact of a category 5 hurricane.

Leda Peralta of ECLAC's Sustainable Development and Disaster Assessment Unit noted that ODPM would benefit from having greater legislated authority to enforce

cooperation of other agencies in the country, in both the public and the private sector, in the coordination of planning and response to the threats posed by disasters.

Robert Williams, of ECLAC's Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre, viewed the exercise from the perspective of that unit's ongoing engagement with issues surrounding the use of information and communications technology (ICT) for disaster risk management in the Caribbean region.

He noted that ODPM was making effective use of a number of different software programs, but that overall efficiency was reduced in those cases in which data was not shared among the various information systems in a standardized and seamless

manner.

The ODPM has streamlined its strategies with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA).

The aim of Exercise Dark Storm 2015 was to test the preparedness of the country's National Response Framework when impacted by the natural hazards to which the nation is highly susceptible.

These types of exercises are opportunities to practice, assess and improve emergency response times and on-the-ground operations, while engaging stakeholders and refreshing the concepts and skills learned in training.

## The Regional Roundup

### Turks and Caicos fastest growing tourism destination in the Caribbean

THE Turks and Caicos Islands are being promoted as the fastest-growing tourism destination in the wider Caribbean region in 2014. The destination recorded its largest number of both cruise passenger and stop-over arrivals yet and saw the most growth in stop-over arrivals of all Caribbean destinations.

The destination continued the diversification of its source markets and improved on strengthening its market share in what is considered the typical slower months for the region – August, September, and October.

The tremendous growth in visitor arrivals is attributed to a number of factors, including Mother Nature – for unseasonably cold weather in North America.

Director of Tourism, Ralph Higgs noted, “The accessibility to our destination is perhaps the biggest contributing factor to the exceptional growth experienced in 2014. We have reliable and convenient airlift from most of the major gateways in North America, and we’ve also included additional lift from JFK in New York, and out of Boston’s Logan International Airport.”

Of historical fact, the TCI has maintained double-digit growth even during the recent years of financial downturn. The destination’s strong branding and positioning, as well as the recession-proof clientele that patronizes the Turks and Caicos keeps the destination on track for a steady annual performance.

The island’s Tourist Board’s strategy includes prioritizing the diversification of its source markets and looking closely at markets with opposite seasons to North America.

The destination also seeks to continually strengthen its growth in the summer months. In addition, the TCI is working to expand its hotel product beyond the traditional hub of Providenciales and Grace Bay Beach to the other beautiful islands, as demand for additional accommodation, attractions, and niche offerings has increased.

### The Caribbean’s street food capital

ON the streets of this city, everywhere you look is an artist. And he’s usually called a doubles man.

Every day he makes doubles, the famous fried flatbread sandwich with curried chickpeas, mango, tamarind, and whatever else you dare top it with, just so long as it’s impossibly spicy. It’s a matter of contention as to who’s the best, often the subject of heated dispute.

Doubles are part of the urban landscape in Trinidad’s capital, the way all street food is here. And Port of Spain is the Caribbean’s capital of street food.

The smells and the spices and the flavours are always swirling around. It’s a city almost defined by them. This is a remarkably diverse

place, even a region like the Caribbean; there are tastes from both hemispheres, from Africa, from India, from Europe, from the neighbouring islands.

And the food, the food you find on the street, is the only way to experience that. Sure, it begins with doubles, but after a few bites then you’re on to the roti and then the pholourie and then the corn soup. Then you stop for a bit, because the corn soup is the hottest soup in the world.

But then you try the bakes and the geera chicken and then the pies.

And it goes on and on and then it’s time to go to St James, Port of Spain’s city that never sleeps, where you’ll do all of this again.

### What’s Up ... upcoming events in the Caribbean

WHEN	WHERE	WHAT
01 April	The Bahamas	<a href="#">James Cistern Heritage Homecoming</a>
02-06 April	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	<a href="#">Bequia Easter Regatta</a>
04 April	Guyana	<a href="#">Rupununi Rodeo</a>
04-06 April	Saint Kitts and Nevis	<a href="#">44th Annual Carifta Games</a>
16 April	Cayman Islands	International Fishing Tournament
16-17 April	Saint Lucia	Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee of the RCM for the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy
18 –26 April	Trinidad and Tobago	<a href="#">Tobago Jazz Experience</a>
21 April—05 May	Saint Martin	Dutch Side Carnival
26 April	Jamaica	<a href="#">Westmoreland Curry Festival</a>
29 April—03 May	Guyana	<a href="#">Linden Town Week and Expo</a>
30 April—03 May	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Mayreau Regatta