



ECLAC pledges greater support to Martinique

MARTINIQUE is making significant strides towards expanding its engagement with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters.

In addressing a plenary session of the Regional Council of Martinique, Ms Diane Quarless, Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters, Port of Spain, highlighted multiple areas for strengthened cooperation, starting from energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives.

“Critical to the functioning and growth of a society, access to affordable and reliable energy is necessary for all sectors of the economy if a society is to achieve its social and economic goals”, Ms Quarless stated.

In this regard, Ms Quarless

underscored that the on-going energy project being implemented in Martinique by ECLAC, with funding from the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ) “should be seen as representing the enthusiasm, energy and commitment with which Martinique is embracing its participation in subregional affairs”.

Looking to the future, Ms Quarless stressed the significant potential for Martinique to help strengthen the development and management of alternative energy sources in countries across the Caribbean.

“There is much scope for the further development of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in the Caribbean. We are therefore very excited at the possibility of

this project being extended to include other countries of the Eastern Caribbean”.

Moving beyond the energy sector, many other areas exist for potential collaboration in which Martinique may engage with ECLAC.

In addition to building capacity for data collection and analysis, risk assessment and resilience building, ECLAC is preparing to assess the capacity of Caribbean policy makers to manage their natural resources using quantitative information.

ECLAC is also studying air and maritime networks in the Caribbean and exploring innovative avenues for addressing youth unemployment in the subregion.

Research on ICT for DRM in CARICOM

A JAPANESE delegation of disaster risk management (DRM) experts shared and discussed lessons learned and best practices with team members of ECLAC’s Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre (CKMC), during a two-day meeting held at ECLAC’s subregional headquarters for the Caribbean.

Also present were representatives from the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunication Organizations, the University of the West Indies, Trinidad’s Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, the Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago and Digicel Trinidad and Tobago.



Some of the participants at the recent meeting, along with ECLAC Port of Spain staff members.

The delegation, which included Senior Researchers Hitoshi Sato, Noriko Toyoda and Ms. Monifa Blondell, requested the meeting to discuss potential ways in which the

CKMC and the Japanese government could collaborate on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) use in DRM.

In particular, the delegation sought to learn about the types of information technology used within the region, and to seek out ways in which they may improve communication in the region, by providing advanced forms of technology.

Discussions were moderated by CKMC Chief, Peter Nicholls, and addressed the current system of communication in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider region, employed in disaster response and the post disaster assessment process.

ECLAC in the Caribbean

Digital currency technology ... ECLAC leads the way for the region

RECOGNISED for its ongoing research in the area of digital currency (or virtual currency), ECLAC was recently invited to participate in a discussion on the topic. Associate Information Technology Officer, Robert Williams, made a presentation via WebEx.

Held in London, England on 17 February, the Commonwealth Initiative Virtual Currencies Roundtable meeting, sought to achieve several outcomes, including raising awareness on the trends and vulnerability of virtual currencies, the establishment of a Commonwealth expert working group on the issue and the determination of the type of assistance required by member states.

Mr. Williams provided stakeholders with concrete examples of the benefits of working together to address the issue, within the Caribbean region.

In this regard, ECLAC has undertaken a study entitled "Opportunities and risks associated with the advent of digital currency technology in the Caribbean," which examines how this new technology is likely to affect the Caribbean region.

Following an ECLAC-led expert group meeting held last December, Mr. Williams told the Commonwealth gathering that remittances have been identified as an area where virtual currency technology has the potential to make an important contribution.

Mr. Williams also informed the Commonwealth participants that there is need for legislation in the region that allows overseas transfers through virtual currency to be treated the same way, from a tax perspective, as transfers via Western Union or Money Gram.

*** Note: The ECLAC study on digital currencies is due to be published in the second quarter of this year.**

The Regional Roundup

Montserrat to join global maritime conservation project

PREMIER Donaldson Romeo and minister for agriculture, housing, trade, lands and environment, Claude Hogan, recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Waitt Institute (a non-profit organisation) to include Montserrat in its Blue Halo Initiative for coastal and maritime preservation and fisheries management.

The Blue Halo Initiative is aimed at empowering communities to restore their oceans, and to use ocean resources sustainably, profitably, and enjoyably for present and future generations.

The project, which is already in place in Bermuda and Barbuda, partners with governments, communities, and scientists to create and implement ocean policies, including sustainable fishing practices and comprehensive ocean zoning.

In Montserrat, the Institute and the government work together in

managing coastal waters, resulting in healthier ecosystems, improved fish catch, and strengthened coastal livelihoods.

The project also promotes greater understanding of the threat to the ecosystem, economy, and culture of Montserrat, where fishing and ocean resources to be used in an unsustainable manner.

The government of Montserrat and the Waitt Foundation will collaborate in developing and codifying a sustainable ocean policy for the island, including ocean zoning, sanctuary zones, and fisheries laws and regulations.

Officials of the Waitt Institute work with committed governments and communities who understand the need for, and benefits of, managing fisheries sustainably. They provide the toolkit, and the partner governments provide the political will.

A Major Anniversary for the Caribbean's Oldest Botanical Gardens



The Botanical Gardens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

THEY ARE the oldest botanical gardens, not just in the Caribbean, but in the Western Hemisphere: the Botanical Gardens on the island of Saint Vincent. This year, The Gardens celebrate its 250th anniversary.

"While there are countless sites within Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that have unblemished natural beauty and 'feel good' tranquility, our beloved Botanical Gardens are exceptionally important primarily because they feature various aspects of our country's heritage and history," said Glen Beache, CEO of the SVG Tourism Authority.

"The Gardens remain an intrinsic part of our culture, our people,

and the beauty that makes up our nation. We hope visitors will make it a priority on their list of 'must visit' SVG attractions."

The Gardens first launched a restoration project in February 2012. The Kingstown-area site will mark the 250-year anniversary with celebrations throughout 2015.

The site was first created in 1765 by General Robert Melville, then-Governor of the British Caribbean islands, as a plant breeding centre and as a production facility for medicinal plants.

Six acres of land previously earmarked for military use were set aside for what would become The Gardens.

ECLAC in the Caribbean

Sustainable Development Goals for the Caribbean

ECLAC is exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that best address the needs of the Caribbean within the context of the proposed global goals currently being negotiated for the “Post 2015 Development Agenda”, the platform on which global development will be advanced.

Unlike the case with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), governments have this time taken an active role in identifying the SDGs and designing the post-2015 agenda.

By virtue of this broad participatory process, the SDGs are expected to be driven by priorities collectively derived and agreed on.

The proposed SDGs will be formally adopted by the United Na-

tions Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015, which will also embrace the post 2015 development agenda.

This agreement will represent a fundamental shift in thinking on development issues, since for the first time economic, social and environmental challenges will be addressed in an integrated fashion.

ECLAC’s study will examine the extent to which the Caribbean’s priorities are accommodated in the SDGs, and respond to the Caribbean sustainable development agenda.

Some of the main challenges to the sustainable development of the sub-region are well known; resilience to the threat of climate change, lim-

ited resources to respond to extreme events, low growth and productivity, high youth unemployment, the loss of skills through emigration, low technological capacity, increasing constraints to regional integration, limited resources for social protection and the challenges posed by changing population dynamics such as ageing, and non-communicable diseases.

It will also be important to identify lessons learned in the past. For example, the limited capacity of the region to produce a wide range of data in a timely manner, if not addressed, will pose challenges for accountability in terms of monitoring the SDGs.

Sneak previews

Caribbean experts to discuss Samoa Pathway implementation

CARIBBEAN experts met in Saint Lucia on Sunday 15 March 2015, to discuss strategies for implementing the SIDS Accelerated Modalities for Action (SAMOA) Pathway in the region. Discussions will include consideration of a strategic alignment of the Pathway with the Sustainable Development goals being considered within the framework of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Known as the “SIDS Accelerated Modalities for Action”, the SAMOA Pathway is the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which was held in Apia,

Samoa from 1-4 September 2014. Approved by the United Nations, this intergovernmental agreement serves as the blueprint for the SIDS’ approach to addressing their continuing sustainable development challenges.

The meeting will focus on priority elements in the SAMOA Pathway for the Caribbean, and on a proposal for strategic alignment of the Pathway with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post 2015 Development Agenda, which will be formally approved by the United Nations General Assembly in September this year.

Regional approaches to e-government applications in the Caribbean

COUNTRY representatives from several Caribbean governments discussed the findings of a recent study on how e-government systems are being implemented in the region, at a meeting in Port of Spain hosted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, on 17 March 2015.

Entitled “Regional approaches to e-government application development in the Caribbean”, the meeting will highlight ECLAC’s recommendations on how governments in the Caribbean could harmonise their efforts to acquire and

implement e-government systems.

The recommendations will be based on the findings of the study that was recently carried out in Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

E-government systems can improve the efficiency of governments and help citizens to more easily perform activities such as applying for permits or filing taxes.

Though implementing these systems can be difficult and expensive, this meeting will determine how countries can benefit from working together on such projects.

Sweet Lime

Focus on the ECLAC Family

My first Trini carnival
By Michael Milligan



Michael Milligan (right) and his friend played mas with YUMA.

GOOGLE Trinidad and Tobago, and some of the very first matches are about Carnival. Even before arriving, Trini people I knew began to tell me about the experience.

Living here, not a week went by without locals impressing upon me that Carnival was a unique, mind-blowing orgy of uninhibited pleasure for which nothing in life had – or ever could – prepare me.

The atmosphere of preparation in the country was palpable. Nearly every song I heard on the radio was about Carnival, the inspiration for most Soca music. I was a bit daunted by the great variety and number of fetes, which, in the weeks leading up to Carnival, had multiplied to perhaps six or seven a day. I found these fetes to be a worthwhile experience, each with its own character and each entertaining in its own way.

My favourite fete, of those I attended, was Jamboree. In my Carnival experience, this cooler fete came closest to the spirit of boundless revelry which I had anticipated. People drank freely, and socialized and wined easily with one another.

It was also the only time I've seen Machel Montano perform live, and he easily gave one of the best live musical performances I've ever seen, whipping the crowd up to a jubilant frenzy with the same skill as a religious or political icon.

Fantasy J'ouvert was entertaining. I did quite expect more filth, of both the moral and physical sort. With few exceptions, people seemed to be associating and wining primarily with their friends and were careful not to go beyond their comfort limits. I have heard, though, that other j'ouverts may be conducted more in line with my baser tastes, and will certainly try one next year. Then, there was Carnival itself – mas.

On the first day people came wearing whatever they chose, and costumes were often interesting and adventurous. On the second day,

of course, people wore their band's costumes. I felt people generally were looser and mingling the most on Tuesday afternoon, when alcohol, coupled with the impending end of carnival, spurred people to open themselves to all the joy carnival had to offer.

I also quite enjoyed the amount of street food available during carnival, particularly fried chicken, which I often devoured in quantity, bones and all.

Finally – and this is breaking news – it seems carnival is not quite over after all.

In mid-March, the mas band Tribe will be holding a fete to wrap up Carnival (which it turns out remains very slightly unwrapped), so it's another event that many people no doubt will be looking forward to.

What's Up ... upcoming events in the Caribbean

WHEN	WHERE	WHAT
01-31 March	Barbados	Waterman Festival
03-15 March	Jamaica	Kingston City Run
06-09 March	Belize	La Ruta Maya River Challenge
07-15 March	Cayman Islands	Barcadere Classic
12 March	Trinidad and Tobago	Meeting on Digital Currency
15 March	Monserrat	Saint Patrick Festival
15 March	Saint Lucia	Regional Seminar on implementation of Samoa Pathway
20-26 March	Bermuda	International Film Festival
17 March	Trinidad and Tobago	Meeting on e-government applications
17-18 March	Jamaica	Food Safety and Security Conference
21 March	Trinidad and Tobago	Jazz Artistes on the Greens
27 March	Trinidad and Tobago	Technical meeting on SDGs for the Caribbean
27-29 March	Anguilla	Annual Moonsplash Music Festival
28 March	US Virgin Islands	St John Blues Blowout Festival
30 March—5 April	British Virgin Islands	Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival