



PRESS RELEASE

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NO: 130/2014

DATE: 27 May 2014

Citizens need statistics to hold governments accountable – PM Mitchell tells High Level Forum

(*CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana*) Citizens of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) need appropriate statistics to hold their “governments and all serious stakeholders, accountable”, the Prime Minister of Grenada said Monday.

Delivering the keynote address at the opening of the one-day Second High Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics in Grenada, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell stressed that statistics was not only important for policy-makers.

“... the role of statistics in development is not only for our governments to monitor, but also to drive the development outcomes that statistics measure through the voices of the people of our Region,” he said.

He added that development was about empowering citizens, through avenues such as education and skills development or health care. It was also through statistics that people are informed about their reality and results of actions taken by the people or by governments.

The Prime Minister called for the development of appropriate data and the timely dissemination of information products which citizens of the Region could consume. In the process, he said, they would become more enlightened and empowered to play their specific roles in nation-building.

Regional approach

Dr. Mitchell also advocated for the acceleration of a regional approach to the further development of statistics and urged participants to use him as an advocate. The regional approach was recommended against the background of the current international environment, stretched public resources, dwindling grant resources, and the inability of national statistics systems to overcome challenges they encounter. Given those realities, he said there must be an investment in regional approaches to help to optimise scarce public resources. Every development dollar must count, he said.

“In our Region, the free movement of people—and of minds—has to be encouraged and entrenched in the sharing of best practices as we confront the enormous challenges we face. Statistical development should not be static or isolated within individual countries because the development of statistics is essential to Regional and national advancement, he said.

For this reason, he added, the High Level Forum was important and must help with the roadmap for the statistical development in the Region.

“I am pleased that part of the focus of this meeting is to ensure that the Regional Statistical Work Programme is aligned with the strategic objectives currently being pursued by countries. I want to encourage you to continue along this path as this approach will allow us to build on each other’s strengths, and tap into the regional support and guidance needed for successful execution of our strategies,” Prime Minister Mitchell said.

Another speaker at the opening ceremony, Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, also stressed the importance of improving the collaboration among CARICOM Member States. While efforts were made and results were noticeable in the field of statistics across the Region, it was imperative to “do more and do it fast”, said the Deputy Secretariat Manager, Organisation for Economic Development (OECD), Partnership in Statistics for development in the Twenty-First Century (PARIS21).

She added that a CARICOM Strategy for the development of statistics needed to be pursued and the Forum was a good advocate for the support of the overall development processes to achieve the statistics goals that the Region set itself.

The Forum was organized by the CARICOM Secretariat with support from its international and regional development partners such as PARIS21, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Barbados, and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The first Forum was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.