

**Remarks by Mr. Ewout Sandker, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and for the Dutch Overseas Countries and Territories**

**at the**

**Opening Ceremony of the Second High Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics**

**Monday, 26 May 2014, St. George's, Grenada**

Dr. The Right Honourable Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Energy;

Hon. Oliver Joseph, Minister of Economic Development, Planning, Trade and Cooperatives;

Permanent Secretaries of Grenada, of other CARICOM Member States and Associate Members;

Dr. Philomen Harrison, Project Director, Regional Statistics, CARICOM Secretariat;

Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, Deputy Secretariat Manager, Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-First Century (PARIS21) Secretariat;

Mr. Crispin Gregoire, Chief for the Caribbean, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Mr. Mc Donald Thomas, Operations Officer, Social Sector Division, *Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)*;

Mr. Halim Brizan, Director of Statistics, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Finance and Energy, *Grenada*;

Directors of Statistics and Chief Statisticians;

Other high level officials of Grenada and visiting Member States;

Other Representatives of National, Regional and International Organisations;

Other Special invitees;

Staff of the CARICOM Secretariat;

Staff of the Central Statistical Office, Grenada;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

A very warm good morning to you.

The European Union welcomes the invitation to offer a few remarks at this forum having had an established familiarity with CARICOM in the area of Statistics. We have partnered with the Secretariat for almost ten years to support the region in the development, harmonization and dissemination of economic statistical data at both the regional and national levels.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF cycle through the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP), a total financial allocation of €57 Million was allotted (at the regional level).

One of the key projects which emerged from that RIP, in 2007, was a component dedicated to the area of economic statistical data in the eventual sum of €3.74 Million. The component aimed to harmonize interregional statistical infrastructures, assist in the improvement of statistical programming, production and dissemination of key economic statistics and to train staff and use economic statistics for monitoring of the regional

integration process. Independent evaluators rated this component as having attained its expected results and achieved its programme purpose so much so that it benefitted from an additional allocation during the programme.

That programme contributed significantly to the harmonization of intra-regional statistical infrastructure, a help desk was established, organization of databases for the compilation of regional systems of statistics were rationalized, the regional statistical forum was streamlined, merchandise trade statistics were well developed, and stakeholders extended the scope of work from not only economic statistics to also social and environmental statistics.

Such successes did not go unnoticed, and the EU together with CARIFORUM decided to deepen support to the region in the field of statistics under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF Regional Indicative Programme (RIP), by building on previous achievements and filling remaining gaps.

Under the CSME Support programme, a Financing Agreement, signed also in 2013, provides support to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and Economic Integration Programme in the sum of €18 Million. One aspect of this programme is also aimed at strengthening intra-regional statistical systems to produce and disseminate timely, high quality and harmonised statistics for monitoring and establishing the CSME in the sum of €2.125M by further implementation of the Regional Statistics Work Programme (RSWP) through focusing on key areas of statistics.

One of the results to be achieved in this project is in the area of improved production and updating of Economic Statistics (the national accounts estimates by industry, institutional sectors, and by expenditure components; of key short-term indicators and on statistics on trade in services/investment), core Social/Gender statistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) statistics and core Environment statistics.

**The second main result is to improve the use of statistics in policy-making and in the monitoring of the regional integration. Here I wish to spend some time explaining the idea behind this concept, why it is important to invest strategically in statistics and how it could better harness CSME's potential. Two key activities are expected to be carried out, designing a statistical monitoring system for the CSME and provision of assistance and training for the implementation of the statistical monitoring system at the national level.**

These two key activities will support the improvement of the use of statistics in policy making and in monitoring the regional integration process with the design of a statistical monitoring system for the CSME.

This is a topic particularly close to my heart. I've been working on it the first time I was posted in Guyana with the CARICOM Secretariat and I believe that monitoring of both compliance of regional integration commitments at the national level, and secondly, the impact of regional integration activities and processes are absolutely key to the success of the regional integration enterprise.

If you can't measure it; if you don't know the compliance at national levels with different areas of integration, how can you allocate resources in a sensible way? If you don't know, you cannot prioritise. If you don't know what is the impact of the regional integration process, how can you argue that it is a good thing? How can you argue that you should go further and deeper?

In that context, a CSME scoreboard, showing varying levels of implementation of the various Member States, could be something useful, transparently showing where the gaps are.

At the same time, it is of pivotal importance to show the impact, the concrete benefits to the citizens, to the private sector, to the politicians. When you are not yet at the level of a fully integrated market, this can be a challenge. In order to address this, the EU conducted a study in the late 80s that calculated the opportunity cost of not having a fully integrated market in Europe. The results, were impressive, calculating these costs at around 4.5 to 6.5% of the EU's GDP at the time.

The study contributed to a strong push to regional integration and provided a good opportunity for mobilising the private sector in Europe which saw the benefits they were not getting by not having a fully integrated market. It helped provide a powerful economic rationale for the programme to complete of the single market by the end of 1992. Recently, a similar study has been done by the European Parliament, calculating the benefits of a series of further European policy measures in 24 areas (e.g. financial services, fiscal policies, integrated energy markets) at around 800 billion EURO.

Something like this could be done in the Caribbean as well, and we would be happy to provide funding for a study of the cost of not having a fully-fledged CSME.

Thank you for your attention.