



OFFICE OF TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

## Press Release

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### **CARICOM PREPARES FOR THE FIRST ROUND WITH CANADA**

**CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS** – CARICOM Technical officials have completed their first round of discussions during the meetings of the CARICOM-Canada Negotiations Technical Working Groups. The completion of these meetings was essential to the Region's preparation for the formal commencement of the CARICOM-Canada trade negotiations which is scheduled November 9, 2009. At this early stage of the negotiations, the discussions did not pertain to the entire range of negotiating issues but were limited to Services, Investment and Market Access in Goods and Agriculture. The officials, led by the Lead and Alternate Leads for these negotiating areas, were tasked with the responsibility of articulating both their national offensive and defensive interests in a new trade and development agreement with Canada.

In the two weeks remaining before the beginning of the first Round of negotiations, as the coordinator of the negotiating process, the OTN will coalesce these national positions in order to map out a harmonized position and regional negotiating strategy.

The TWG sessions, which were coordinated by the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN), were convened at the Grand Barbados Hotel, St. Michael Barbados from

October 19, 2009 – October 30, 2009. Participants included the technical designees from Member States as well as representatives of regional commercial and non-commercial non-state actors (NSAs).

On the margins of the TWG meetings, the OTN, led by the Director General, Ambassador Gail Mathurin, also met in consultation with the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL), which was represented by the President of the CCL, Ms. Jacqueline Jack, the General Secretary, Mr. Lincoln Lewis and Trustee, Mr. Joseph Goddard. The consultation was convened in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which was signed on February 12, 2009 between the CCL and the OTN's predecessor, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM).

The consultative exchange, which was held on October 23, 2009, facilitated an opportunity for the OTN to brief the CCL on the Region's preparation for the CARICOM-Canada trade negotiations and for the CCL to share its own related perspectives. The two entities also exchanged ideas and proposals regarding the coordination of a Programme for consultation in the upcoming 2010 financial year.

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