FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARICOM IMPACS wishes to advise that Mr. Francis Forbes has been tasked by the Council of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) to perform the duties of Interim Executive Director.

Recognizing the importance of honest and open dialogue, Forbes has decided that among his first tasks would be that of updating IMPACS principal stakeholder, the Caribbean Community as to where the Agency is, and the direction it will take over the coming weeks.

IMPACS, established on 6th July 2006 at the Twenty-seventh Meeting of the Conference of Heads held in St. Kitts, is designated as an Institution of the Community.

Its responsibilities include:

1. Implementation of the regional crime and security agenda;
2. Development and implementation of projects;
3. Research, evaluation, monitoring and analysis of crime and security issues;
4. Centralization and dissemination of information; and
5. The regional liaison with the CARICOM Standing Committees on crime and security.

In 2007, the Conference of Heads took a decision which resulted in the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC) and Joint Regional Communications Centre (JRCC) becoming sub-agencies of IMPACS. The Agency reports to the Council of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) while a Management Committee comprising Permanent Secretaries from a maximum of seven (7) member
states is responsible for general management (administration and finance) and oversight of IMPACS and its sub-agencies.

The Agency is staffed by personnel from CARICOM Member States, many of whom are serving or retired law enforcement, military and border security officers who are dedicated and fully committed, to providing maximum support towards securing the Region and ultimately individual CARICOM States.

Its mandate requires that it maintains a relationship with, and coordinate meetings of Standing Committees of Commissioners of Police, Military Chiefs, Chiefs of Immigration, Comptrollers of Customs and Heads of Intelligence and Financial Crimes Investigation Units. The Agency maintains contact with Interpol via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which has resulted in several dangerous regional and international criminals being arrested as they attempted to enter through the borders of Member States. There is also contact with the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the FBI and Scotland Yard in the continuous fight against Transnational Organized Crime. IMPACS also receives crime statistics from Member States and international sources which are then analyzed and regional crime trends are identified and shared in return. This supports law enforcement efforts against the illicit trafficking in drugs, guns and ammunition as well as “people trafficking and smuggling”.

Certain recent events have understandably been quite distressing to the hardworking and committed employees of the Agency. Unfortunately, in this environment, mothers, fathers, children and other relatives have also been and continue to be negatively affected, and in some instances deeply traumatized by these events.

The media like IMPACS also have a duty to the people of this Region to do whatever is necessary in ensuring transparency without endangering security. The Interim Executive Director wishes to also indicate that his early commitment, therefore, is to engage in honest dialogue with the media in recognition of the important
role it plays in informing and educating our main stakeholders, the people of this CARICOM.

The Agency as a regional security institution operates within a context of trust. One of its daily responsibilities is handling matters of a sensitive nature and information owned by individual law enforcement agencies. Unfortunately, this often brings with it a burden in terms of striking a balance between that which may be put in the public purview as opposed to what cannot be disseminated for public consumption in the interest of security and public safety. It is the intention of the Interim Executive Director, however to enhance communication with the media in the weeks ahead by the most appropriate means. Hopefully a partnership of trust will develop over time and work in the interest of our main stakeholder, the everyday CARICOM man and woman.

Current investigations into certain management functions at IMPACS will continue in the weeks ahead commencing with a Special Purpose Audit which will review current systems at the Agency. This exercise is fully supported by IMPACS Management Team and Forbes has given an undertaking to remain committed to ensuring that whatever defects are identified will be dealt with expeditiously and effectively.

IMPACS also wishes to indicate that in the face of the ensuing audit, it will not lose focus of its mandate and will assiduously pursue a number of current projects aimed at making the region safer and more secure. IMPACS remains committed to working with international partners on important projects which include the reduction in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), enhancing the capacity of forensic science laboratories to support criminal investigations, witness protection and training for law enforcement and border security officials.

In concluding, IMPACS, through its Interim Executive Director wishes to congratulate the men and women of all levels at Headquarters and its sub-agencies the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre and the Joint Regional Communications Centre for continuing to maintain focus and commitment during this very challenging period.
Ultimately everyone has a responsibility to execute their functions in enhancing security to the best of their ability. IMPACS will do so with transparency being mindful of, and without endangering security, in fulfilling its obligations to the leadership and people of CARICOM.

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