FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2011

EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS NETWORK IN CARIBBEAN

Using technology, Caribbean member states will be better able to enhance their global competitiveness. The Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network, CKLN, an inter-governmental Agency of CARICOM, secured a grant of Euro 10 million from the European Union to develop a broadband fiber optic network, called C@ribNET. The network will be configured to connect tertiary institutions, hospitals, schools, government agencies and CARICOM institutions together, within the Caribbean and will enable Caribbean citizens to upgrade and diversify their skills and knowledge through greater regional collaboration and connectivity.

At the recent official contract signing with LIME to lease the fibre for C@ribNET, Mr. Robert Baldwin, First Counsellor of the European delegation to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean noted that the EU has provided similar support to the development of the Red CLARA and GEANT networks, respectively in Latin America and in Europe, the latter, he explained, serves Europe’s research and education community, connecting over 30 million researchers, spanning 34 European countries.

One of the aims of CKLN, Mr. Baldwin said, was not just to set up such a dedicated knowledge learning network in the Caribbean, but to also link up with similar networks on other continents and “the contract for bandwidth and services that is being signed with LIME foresees just that.” It is increasingly evident, he emphasised, that the Caribbean region needs to connect to all its neighbours and especially improve links to the west and south.

It is important that C@ribNET not only serve to the Anglophone countries the EU Representative said, noting that CARIFORUM has encouraged the inclusion of the Dominican Republic and Haiti in the network and that discussions are also ongoing with the French Overseas Departments to see how best to link them with the network.

Through C@ribNET, institutions and countries will have access to a myriad of high-quality global knowledge, learning and networking services. It is anticipated that C@ribNET would also provide the capacity to assist existing national and regional agencies in boosting their knowledge bases to sit on the new interconnected platform. In other cases C@ribNET could work with tertiary institutions to bring their library
collections into the digital age, commencing with original works (dissertations, papers, research reports, and primary data).

He suggested that a portal, such as Caribbean Digital Archives could house declassified information from the respective national archives and a strategic business partnership could be formed with similar online portals to provide access to a global audience. Valuable and previously untapped income could then accrue to national archives to boost their work, thereby reducing the financial strain on the national purse. As another example, the network could facilitate remote access to specialised equipment at other universities on the network.

Mr. Baldwin was emphatic that since research serves as the catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship and can be seen as a critical crosscutting issue for improved global competitiveness, energies should be placed on developing of a pervasive research culture that leverages the intellectual and technical capacities within the region, and complements them with access to global colleagues and resources.

For further information, contact:

Ms. Colleen Wint-Smith  
Communications, Promotion and Advocacy Specialist, CKLN  
Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network  
Mutual Trans Nemwil Office Complex,  
The Villa, St. George’s,  
Grenada  
West Indies.  
P.O. Box 1431  
Tel: 473-439-6396  
Fax: 473-439-6419  
Mobile: 876-370-3628  
Email: colleen.wintsmith@ckln.org  
Website: www.ckln.org

OR  
Mr. Stephen L. Boyce,  
Project Officer,  
Delegation of European Union to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean  
Palm Beach Corporate Centre  
Hastings  
Christ Church, BB 15156

Mailing: P.O. Box 654C  
Bridgetown, BB11000  
Barbados  
Tel: (246) 434-8537  
Fax: (246) 427-8687  
Email: stephen.boyce@eeas.europa.eu  
Website: http://www.delbrb.ec.europa.eu