ANOTHER URGENT APPEAL FROM GRENA DA FOR REGION TO EMBRACE ICT

ST. GEORGE'S, GRENA DA, JUNE 15, 2011 For the second time in a month, a senior Grenada government official has appealed to the region to “fully embrace” Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool for the development of the Caribbean region.

Minister for Finance and Acting Prime Minister, Hon. V. Nazim Burke this morning told participants attending the UNESCO Building Caribbean Knowledge Societies Conference at the Grenadian by Rex Resorts, in St. George, that ICT will empower all citizens of the Caribbean Community to improve their “quality of life and achieve their full potential.”

“There is little doubt that Information Communication Technology acts as a vehicle in bringing services to our people where ever they are. These services include e-banking, e-government, e-learning and a gamut of people-centered interactions. Even more importantly, ICT brings with it a myriad of opportunities for employment creation, innovation and entrepreneurship hitherto unimaginable in our region,” the Acting Prime Minister declared.

The two day conference brings together policy makers, ICT experts, civil society representatives, international organizations and other industry leaders to identify the issues and concerns that hinder the region from utilizing ICT to meet the stated objective of developing “knowledge societies.”

This conference comes on the heels of the May 24-27 thirty sixth meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development on Information and Communications Technologies, which discussed the draft Regional Digital Development Strategy and the Draft Regional Implementation Plan for adoption by CARICOM member states.

Minister Burke challenged the meeting to find ways of utilizing Information and Communication Technology to “build a society, in which all our people can access, create, utilize, share and disseminate information and knowledge. “

He noted that while the region has already conceptualized its own Knowledge Network, there is an urgent need to make it operational, with the implementation of CARIBNET in the CARICOM region and OECS Knowledge Network at the sub-regionally level.

For more information contact: PRESS SECRETARY - Richard Simon
“From all indicators, this region is yet to fully embrace the platform created by the ICT revolution. For us in Grenada, we see no meaningful option or alternative,’’ the Finance Minister stated, noting that the government views ICT as a “transformational sector.”

He outlined a number of steps government has taken that will help to move the sector forward.

Among those measures are the establishment of an ICT Center of Excellence and Innovation, an agreement with the World Bank for Grenada to serve as the pilot in the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (CARCIP) under which Grenada will complete the establishment of its national ICT backbone and the establishment of Grenada’s own Internet Exchange Point (IXP).

The Acting Prime Minister said the government is also pushing ahead with plans, announced in its 2011 budget, for the establishment of a new public-private partnership to provide managed IT services, IT infrastructure management, managed network security services, connectivity solutions, data centre services and the programme management of telephony services.

“We cannot and must not wait to be pulled along, kicking and screaming, by the forces of globalization and international competition. ICT and its related benefits have been with us for far too long, for our small countries to lose this opportunity for forward movement,” the Acting Prime Minister told the audience.

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