

**STATEMENT FROM THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) TO
THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY, GENEVA,
DECEMBER 10-12, 2003**

**BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY- GENERAL OF THE CARIBBEAN
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The 15 Member States and 5 Associated States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), welcome this summit process of global dialogue and action with a view to removing inequality and closing the digital divide. Collectively too, we commend the efforts that have guided this foundation phase to Geneva today.

CARICOM, at its highest level of policy-making, has recognized that as smaller economies at varying levels of development, its prevailing strategies to evolve a vibrant trade organisation would significantly benefit from the leverage of Information and Communication Technologies. As a tool for economic and social development, these ICTs can be pressed into service to increase competitiveness, hone the regional service industries, and equip the member countries to seize market opportunities offered by e-commerce. ICTs especially promise advantage to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which characterize typical CARICOM business, and effective incubation of creative industries towards the creation of wealth.

We encourage the active pursuit of an information society that is grounded in shared, cross-sectoral goals of knowledge, peace, empowerment and social transformation. This must include healthy living, life-long learning, and media freedoms, particularly the delivery of public information and the generation of wholesome content. To realize these overarching objectives,

our countries have identified education and the development of export-oriented service industries as immediate priorities.

CARICOM, like the rest of the world, recognizes the challenges created by the rapidly changing global environment and has sought a regional approach that would focus on an informed, cohesive and connected Caribbean Community and address issues of assessment, implementation and resourcing, but first and foremost, public education and sensitisation. Formal adoption of a Declaration of Principles and a **CARICOM ICT Connectivity Agenda** was affirmation by CARICOM Heads of Government of the commitment to move towards a Caribbean Information Society.

The CARICOM Agenda sets out four basic approaches: the formulation of policies, legal and regulatory reform, E-assessments, and demonopolisation of telecommunications. Its focus rests on two main pillars. The first is global development, **minimizing the digital divide** and accepting the WSIS process as the highest authority of principles on ICT development. The other is **trade**, namely the removal of restrictions within a single economic space in CARICOM, and expanding that space beyond geographic definition through simultaneous external negotiations in principal theatres (WTO, FTAA, and EU) and ongoing bilateral engagements.

In all our endeavours, CARICOM recognizes equitable, affordable universal access, completion of infrastructures, and entrepreneurship as essential issues for smaller economies such as our countries. This would be supported by contribution to global standards, legal and regulatory development, including intellectual property rights, instruments of competition and security, e-governance, training, trade related spectrum management and technology transfer on the most favorable terms. Emphasis is also being placed on gender implications and vulnerable sectors.

We see the importance of sound research and development, institutional strengthening and a regime of human resource development that at once support and maintain the knowledge process. We therefore hope to engage our educational institutions as key partners to create more opportunities for information sharing.

With the involvement of all the stakeholders, the private sector, civil society, communities and groups in special circumstances, the Caribbean Community is committed to keeping human development as its central focus as we move toward the creation of a Caribbean Information Society built on our unique experiences and culture.

CARICOM Secretariat
December 2003