

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL



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The entire team at the Secretariat remains committed to supporting our Member States, Regional Institutions, and all stakeholders as we build on the four pillars: economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development and security – to secure a resilient and thriving “Community for All”.

Dr. Carla Barnett
Secretary General - CARICOM

Introduction

2023 was a milestone year for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), with celebrations across our Member States to mark the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Original Treaty of Chaguaramas. We took time to reflect on our significant achievements, and to celebrate the stellar accomplishments of our citizens at home and in the diaspora.

At the same time, we continued strenuous efforts to focus on issues to protect and promote the Region's interests. In this regard, at the 45th Regular Meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in July, Heads of Government took the decision to strengthen trade and economic linkages with non-traditional partners; adopt a more strategic and sustained engagement with traditional hemispheric partners; and strengthen relations with Africa, with a view to deepening integration into the global economy.

The Secretariat continued to coordinate the Community's pursuit of a common external trade policy under the umbrella of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. To further this objective, the 45th Regular Meeting also took the pivotal decision to work towards the free movement of all CARICOM nationals within the Community. To this end, in October 2023 we reconvened the Inter-Governmental Task Force (IGTF) to examine and advance outstanding amendments to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

We also launched the Skilled Workers Programme (SWP) in Guyana in March 2023, where Border Control Officers, CARICOM Youth Ambassadors, High School Teachers and CSME Focal Points participated in work attachments in Member States.

Focus continued on oceans governance, climate diplomacy and the critical need for financing to address the impact of climate change. A Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee was established, comprising Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname, to define the regional

approach for preparations for COP 28. The Secretariat also worked closely with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) to provide the necessary support to Member States.

The Secretariat, the Ministerial Task Force and various regional partners continued implementing programmes to promote, increase visibility and generate stakeholder buy-in for the agriculture initiative, Vision 25 by 2025, as well as other agricultural development initiatives.

This included the 17th staging of the flagship event, Caribbean Week of Agriculture, which was held in The Bahamas from 9-13 October 2023 under the theme 'Accelerating Vision 25 By 2025'.

There were ongoing training and capacity building efforts to develop and implement appropriate sustainable food and nutrition security strategies, and to ensure the integration of young people and women in agriculture.

CARICOM Member States continued to make progress in their digital transformation journey. A key activity was the Cyber Resilience Strategy 2030 Project initiated by CARICOM and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to bolster cybersecurity in the Region.

The CARICOM Digital Skills Taskforce conducted a Digital Skills Webinar Series, which explored education, business, inclusion, and other various topics critical to the development of a robust digital skills ecosystem in the Caribbean.

As efforts continued to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce energy demand, CARICOM Ministers endorsed a Regional Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy. The annual Energy Month activities continued to promote awareness of energy issues in CARICOM, and highlighted the Region's progress towards a clean energy future.

Another regional priority issue, transportation, came under the microscope, as we sought to improve air and maritime connectivity, and to improve standards of compliance and safety. Priority attention continued to be paid to the Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA) which seeks to establish a single market for air transport services within CARICOM.

Based on the lessons learned from the pandemic, there was renewed focus on regional health security and capacity building for prevention, preparedness and response to future emerging and re-emerging epidemics and pandemics. In addition, new priorities emerged. The issue of crime and violence was declared a public health emergency within CARICOM, and the first symposium to advance perspectives and strategies on the issue was held in Trinidad and Tobago in April.

Attention was also focused on people living with disabilities; non-communicable disease management; drug demand reduction; and human resources for the health sector. Work is ongoing to develop policies to strengthen global capacity to prevent and respond to future epidemics and pandemics.

The Secretariat continued to support the implementation of the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative, a collaborative, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls at the global level.

In line with our strategic focus on the young people of the Region, we revised and strengthened the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) and the CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme (CYAP).

During the year, CARICOM maintained active relationships with Third States in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. These engagements aimed to boost CARICOM's global presence, leverage diplomatic relations to advocate for Member States' concerns and to facilitate development cooperation.

The Community also strengthened relations with Member States and third countries through accreditation of plenipotentiary representatives.

We continued our Good Offices' role to support a Haitian-led solution to the multi-dimensional crisis facing the country, including a CARICOM Mission to Haiti in February 2023 as agreed at the 44th Regular Meeting of Heads of Government in The Bahamas, and the appointment of an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to lead consultations.

Efforts were also bolstered with a pledge of support from several Member States to the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission which the UN Security Council approved in October.

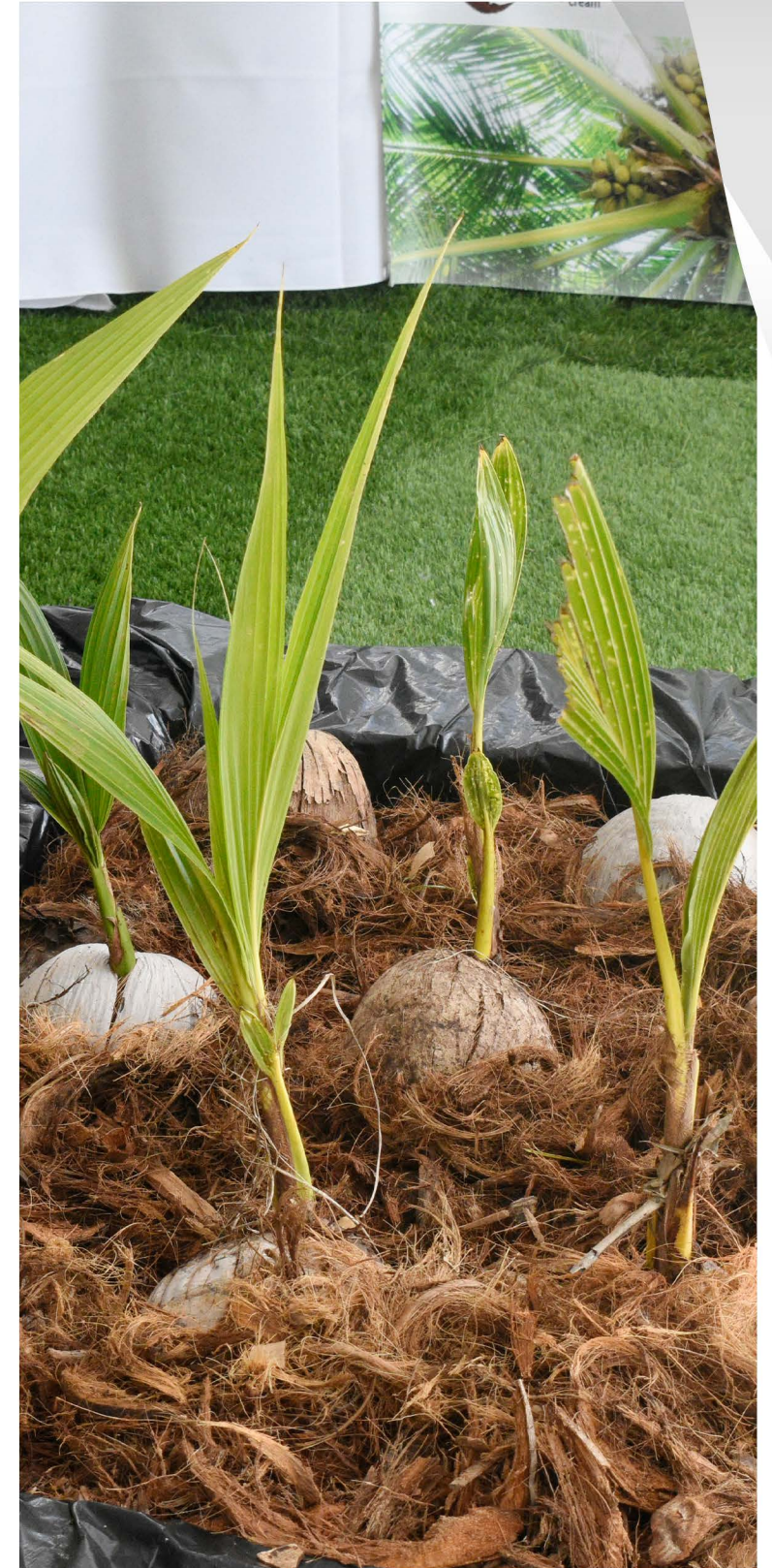
For several initiatives during the year, we benefitted from the support of International Development Partners, including the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and UNESCO. We thank them for their ongoing commitment to our efforts.

We welcomed two new members to the Executive Management Committee, Ms Lisa Shoman, General Counsel, and Ms Elizabeth Solomon, Assistant Secretary General for Foreign and Community Relations.

The Secretariat continued to support the process of consultation and decision-making within CARICOM through effective and efficient conference service support for Community meetings.

The entire team at the Secretariat remains committed to supporting our Member States, Regional Institutions, and all stakeholders as we build on the four pillars-economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development and security – to secure a resilient and thriving "Community for All".

SECTION 1 ECONOMIC INTEGRATION



SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

AGRICULTURAL AND AGRO-INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The implementation of the flagship programme, Vision 25 by 2025, continued to be a key focal area of the Agricultural Development Programme in 2023. The Programme's major initiatives and activities for the year aligned with the Work Plan of the Special Ministerial Taskforce on Food Production and Food Security (MTF) whose mandate is to transform the regional agriculture and food systems.

The priority areas being undertaken in this regard are the removal of non-tariff barriers to intra-regional trade, derisking of the agriculture sector, development of agricultural transportation and logistics, research and development and resource mobilisation.

NON-TARIFF BARRIERS

The Secretariat, in collaboration with regional partners, executed policy actions toward the removal of non-tariff barriers to agricultural trade. The priorities were the implementation of the four policies and guidelines that were approved by the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED).

These were:

- **The Trade in Animals and Animal Products Policy**
- **The Regional Agricultural Health and Food Safety Policy**
- **The Special SPS Guidelines for 19 Agricultural Commodities**
- **The Alternative SPS Settlement Mechanism**

In 2023, in partnership with the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), the Secretariat fulfilled the mandate of the Heads of Government by operationalising these policies and guidelines. Consequently, support committees were established and are now operational.



Member States have begun to adopt the policies in their regional trade activities, which will now pave the way to start reaping the economic benefits from improved intra-regional trade in agricultural commodities.

SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

HONEY

The efforts of the Secretariat and CAHFSA brought the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) closer to resolving the long-standing matter of trade in honey of Community origin between Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada. Trinidad and Tobago informed COTED that it had completed the necessary procedural amendments to its honey legislation, which are before the country's Parliament for approval. Once approved, the amendments will allow for trade and transshipment of honey in Trinidad and Tobago.

PROMOTION, VISIBILITY, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF VISION 25 BY 2025

The Secretariat, the MTF, and various regional partners continued implementing programmes to promote, increase visibility and generate stakeholder buy-in for Vision 25 by 2025, as well as other agricultural development initiatives. During the period under review, some of the activities included workshops, seminars, webinars, speaking engagements, and social media campaigns.

A summary of the outreach and awareness activities are listed below:



SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

FOOD FOR LUNCH WEBINARS

Food for Lunch webinars are focused and engaging conversations that the CARICOM Secretariat introduced in April 2023 to raise awareness of the Region's aspirations for food and nutrition security among CARICOM citizens. These webinars feature discussions with a variety of stakeholders in the agriculture industry.

To guarantee the inclusion of comprehensive perspectives on the Region's agriculture sector, the workshops highlight various women in agriculture, Members States, and agricultural businesses. Three sessions were held in 2023 and were widely publicised across the Secretariat's social media platforms.

More than 600 persons viewed the webinars that were held under the following topics:

Regional Economic Opportunities within the 25 by 2025 | 21 April 2023

This session advocated for greater youth engagement in agriculture and highlighted opportunities in agriculture as a career and investment opportunity. Loans from commercial banks which are available to small, medium, and large agriculture businesses throughout the Region, were also highlighted.

What does the 25 by 2025 mean to every CARICOM citizen? | 21 July 2023

This session provided participants with a summary of the major support programmes being implemented by Members States to increase local production and reduce the food imports of their country. Agricultural areas for investment were also identified by Member States.

The panel also highlighted the importance of women in agriculture, engagement, and dialogue and collaboration between the public/ private sector to sustain development.

Regional Producers' Advancements towards achieving 25 by 2025 | 17 November 2023

Highlights of this session included practices used to reduce food loss, recommendations on how to increase the participation of women and youth in agriculture, the effects of climate change on production and productivity, and recommendations on possible technologies which Member States can adopt to become more resilient to climate change and other natural hazards.



SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

25 BY 2025 PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

At the start of the reporting period, a 25 by 2025 promotional video was created with the financial support of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The video was placed on the Secretariat's **YouTube Channel** and shared with all regional institutions and development partners for wider dissemination.



SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN: AGRICARIB WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE

The AgriCarib website, which serves as a repository for the Vision 25 by 2025 activities within Member States, underwent a complete transformation with support from IICA. The website's objective is to promote and highlight the Vision 25 by 2025 initiative and regional agricultural trade by adding an agricultural marketing platform system. Important regional documents, information, and regional statistical data are also stored and accessible on the website.

CARIBBEAN WEEK OF AGRICULTURE 2023

Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) is the premier event on the regional agricultural calendar. The CWA is a forum for key regional decision-makers in the public and the private sectors to highlight the importance of agriculture and rural life to the economic, social, and environmental stability of our Member States.

It also allows major stakeholders in agriculture and related sectors to forge a common vision for the development of agriculture and the enhancement of rural life. The 17th edition of the CWA was held in The Bahamas from 9-13 October 2023, under the theme 'Accelerating Vision 25 by 2025'.

SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE 2023 EDITION OF CWA WERE AS FOLLOWS:

1.

Promoting the Regional Food System Agenda and particularly programmes to accelerate the 25 by 2025 programme.

2.

Presenting potential investors and other stakeholders with new and emerging opportunities in CARICOM agriculture, including technological and logistical solutions.

3.

Promoting specific regional agricultural enterprises and products.

4.

Business to Business and Government to Business engagements with private sector players.

5.

Matching bankable agricultural projects with available private and public financing.

6.

Addressing crosscutting issues such as climate change, access to finance and other emerging threats to agricultural development in the Region.

7.

Assessing the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy and the National Food Security Plan against what has been done to achieve the 25 by 2025 mandate.



SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

During the week, more than forty (40) technical events and engagements comprising workshops, seminars, webinars, and meetings that addressed key matters related to animal and plant health, food safety, fisheries, research, innovation, transportation, digitisation, youth and women, climate change and trade facilitation, were convened.

An Agricultural Trade Show and Expo with thirty-five (35) exhibitors was held during the week. Over three hundred (300) participants were registered on the official website for CWA 2023. The number of participants increased via daily walk-ins of more than 150 persons, in addition to virtual participation.

Through the hosting of CWA 2023, over US\$900,000 was raised in cash and in-kind contribution. A CWA magazine was also developed, and an impactful social media campaign was launched to advertise CWA 2024. The CWA videos can also be accessed [here](#).

TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

In 2023, the Secretariat collaborated with regional partners, and development agencies to address the challenges in the transportation sector. To this end, two studies were commissioned: one led by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the other by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

The study titled *'Intra-Regional Agricultural Trade in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean: An Operational Model for Agri-Food Corridors'*, supported by the USAID, aimed at developing an operational model for the establishment of agri-food corridors between the Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) CARICOM Member States.

The operational model was intended to provide a practical guide for action to remove barriers and enable intra-regional agricultural trade based on feedback from a wide range of private and public sector stakeholders operating in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, and Suriname.

The study focused on perishables, specifically fruits and vegetables; nonperishables, especially grain; and agricultural inputs, especially fertilizer.

The FAO and the CDB commissioned the second transportation study titled *'The establishment of a Maritime Service to Improve Agrifood Trade and Food Security between Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and Barbados'*. This study was intended to provide the beneficiary governments and the CDB with the necessary knowledge and analysis of measures to create an enabling environment for agrifood trade, improve food security, and inform financing needs for agri-cargo services among Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago.

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE

During the year under review, the Secretariat continued its work to identify definitive agricultural insurance solutions for the sector. A study titled “**Agricultural Insurance Feasibility Study in the Caribbean**” and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission for the Eastern and Southern Caribbean (USAID/ESC) was completed. Through this study, emphasis was placed on the status of agricultural insurance in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean, with a focus on Grenada and Guyana, to determine the feasibility of insurance models for the Caribbean.

The study identified CARICOM as an effective intergovernmental organization promoting economic integration and cooperation among its Member States. It proposed that CARICOM considers initiating a regional agricultural insurance programme for the entire Caribbean Region, which will address the varying needs of each Member State. The study further suggested that a regional agricultural insurance programme can be implemented through the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), a multi-country risk pool that was established in 2007 and offers parametric insurance instruments to Caribbean and Central American governments to manage.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Training and Capacity-building

The Secretariat completed the following training and capacity-building activities in 2023:

● CARICOM/FAO Agricultural Trade Training

With assistance from the FAO, CARICOM conducted two virtual courses. The first, ‘**Agriculture in International Trade Agreements (AITA)**’, was held in April 2023 and addressed the treatment of agriculture in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and regional trade agreements (RTAs). Its aim was to support policy makers to develop and implement appropriate agricultural development and food security strategies. The course attracted more than 150 participants.

● CARICOM/FAO Trade, food Security and Nutrition

More than 200 persons participated in the second training session, ‘Trade, Food Security and Nutrition’ which was held in July. Through this session, participants received fundamental concepts, highlighting the unique implications of agriculture trade to small scale actors in the Region.

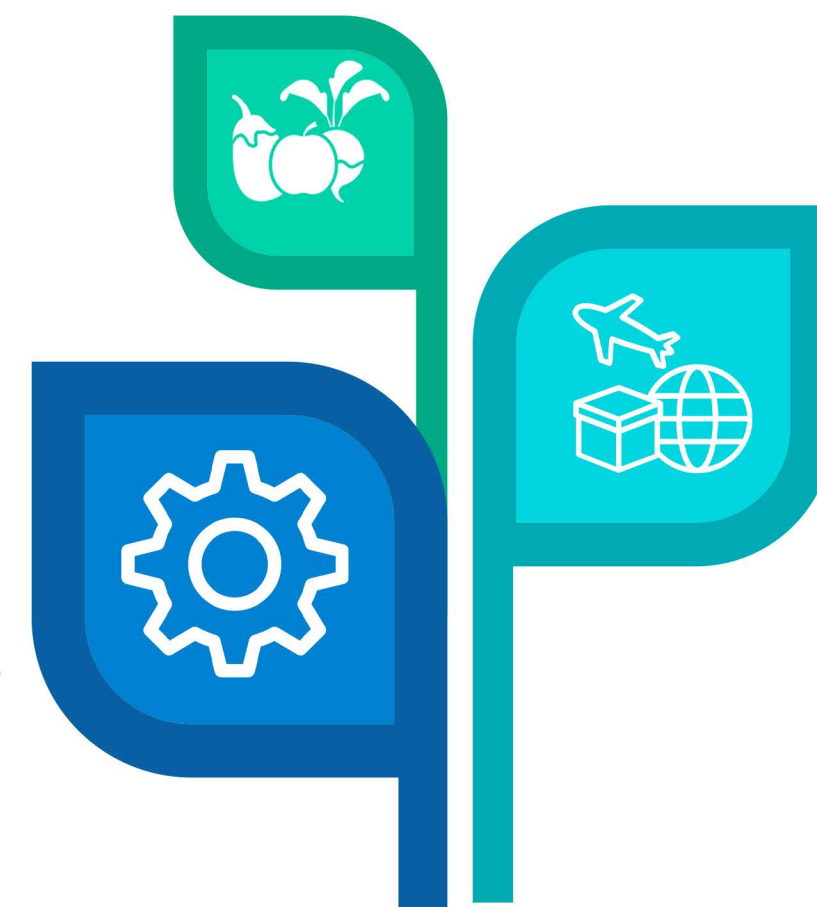
NEW DONOR-SUPPORTED PROJECTS

USAID CAPA Programme

The USAID-funded US\$5M Caribbean Agriculture Productivity Improvement Activity (CAPA) implemented by Improving Economies for Stronger Communities (IESC) is a project focused on enhancing food security by increasing productivity, building the capacity of buyers and input suppliers, strengthening relationships with farmers, and improving farm-level extension systems.

The project aims to:

- increase smallholder marketed production of fruits and vegetables accordingly. Dominica - dasheen, sweet potato and passion fruit; Guyana - cherry, coconut and turmeric; St. Vincent and The Grenadines - banana, plantain, dasheen, sweet potato, bell pepper, cauliflower, kale, lettuce, tomato.
- improve domestic and regional market linkages for smallholder farmers.
- strengthen public/private sector extension skills, capacity, and systems to transfer best practices to smallholder farmers.



CARICOM/New Zealand Project BOOST: Women and Youth in Agriculture Project

The Secretariat and the New Zealand Government negotiated a regional food security project entitled, ‘**CARICOM BOOST: Women and Youth in Agriculture**’, in support of the Community’s Vision 25 by 2025 Food and Nutrition Security initiative. The project is valued at US\$1.6M over a two-year period.

SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The objective of the project is to build capacity and capability in ten CARICOM Member States namely Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname, through investment in climate-smart infrastructure such as shade houses and cool storage, and training programmes of 47 clusters of women and youth interested in agriculture and agribusiness development. Through the programme, local Ministries of Agriculture, regional partners in development, and other stakeholders will also be engaged.

YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

The Youth Advisory Body (YAB) was established on 27 January 2023 with active participation of youth representatives from the following Member States: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Suriname. A key activity under the YAB's workplan was the development of a Regional Youth Strategy. The members developed a draft strategy which was presented at the CARICOM/FAO Youth in Agriculture Forum held in October 2023 during the Caribbean Week of Agriculture.



WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME/ CARICOM SURVEYS ON FOOD SECURITY

The Secretariat and the World Food Programme continue to collaborate to conduct food security and livelihoods assessments in the region, post COVID-19. The Sixth (6th) Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey was conducted in 2023 to receive data on people's livelihoods, access to markets and food security, and provide snapshots of these impacts over time.

The survey results have been used to inform decision-making by governments and development partners in the Region.

While global food prices have been slowly decreasing since March 2022, the following were noted:

- food inflation remains high in some countries in the Caribbean
- food consumption and diets deteriorated with 37% of respondents skipping meals or eating less than usual
- the highest proportion of respondents were purchasing cheaper or less preferred foods (62%) and smaller quantities than usual (57%).

More details on the survey results can be found at

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/caribbean-food-security-livelihoods-survey-may-2023>

SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, the Secretariat concentrated on advancing oceans governance, climate diplomacy and climate finance.

OCEANS GOVERNANCE

Negotiations for the internationally binding agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of Marine Biological Diversity (BBNJ) of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction in 2023, were successfully completed. Treaty negotiations concluded on 4 March 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The United Nations General Assembly approved the Treaty in June 2023 and opened it for signature in September that year.

CARICOM Member States were actively engaged from the onset of the negotiations of the provisions of the Treaty which aim for better governance of the high seas, including a more integrated approach to the regulation and the capacity to benefit sustainably from the marine resources.

The Community's strong negotiating team comprised representatives from CARICOM countries both from Permanent Missions to the United Nations and capitals supported by scientific and legal experts drawn from the regional institutions (the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and The University of the West Indies) with the CARICOM Secretariat providing technical, logistical and administrative support.

Belize was the Overall CARICOM Lead and facilitated discussions on Marine Genetic Resources, including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits. Jamaica was responsible for institutional arrangements and also facilitated discussions on cross-cutting issues; Trinidad and Tobago covered environmental impact assessment; Belize, CARICOM's technical coordinator, was also responsible for area-based

management tools, including marine protected areas; Barbados was the Overall CARICOM Team Lead and covered marine genetics resources; Guyana covered financial resources and mechanisms; and Saint Lucia led on capacity-building and transfer of marine technology.

Professor David Berry of The University of The West Indies (UWI) was the CARICOM Expert supporting in the areas of area-based management tools and institutional arrangements, while Professor Judith Gobin also of The UWI was another CARICOM Expert on the team.

At the conclusion of negotiations, the Secretariat was mandated in May, by the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR), and in June, by the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) to:

“... establish a Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group to support follow-up including, raising awareness and outreach and preparing the Region to participate in the First Conference of the Parties.”

In fulfilment of the mandate, the Secretariat initiated steps to secure membership of the Advisory Group and secured technical support from the Pew Charitable Trust to convene its first meeting to support ratification of the Treaty and participation in COP 1 of the Treaty. The meeting was held in December 2023, in hybrid format.



The CARICOM negotiating team and other partners in New York.

CLIMATE DIPLOMACY AND CLIMATE FINANCE

The Secretariat worked closely with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) to provide support and coordination to Member States in preparation for the historic COP28 which completed the first global stocktake (GST) on progress to achieve the Paris Agreement goals.

The main activities for which support was provided included:

- The Second (2nd) Caribbean SIDS High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change that was held 28 – 29 September 2023 in St. George's, Grenada. Seven CARICOM Heads of Government and the CARICOM Secretary-General attended the Dialogue.
- The One Hundred and Tenth (110th) Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) - Environment and Sustainable Development (Ministerial Caucus) that was convened on 10 November 2023, prior to departure of CARICOM delegations to COP 28. At the COTED, the Ministers approved the regional negotiating briefs, priorities and red lines.

COP 28 also allowed the Secretary-General to undertake a full programme of bilateral meetings including engagements with the Secretary-General of the Pacific Island Forum and the Sasakawa Foundation.

CARIBBEAN HUB, PROGRAMME FOR CAPACITY-BUILDING RELATED TO MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS (MEAS) IN AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES (ACP-MEAS)

In the year under review, the first draft CARICOM Biodiversity Strategy was updated to align it with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Strategy (KMGBS) and the CARICOM Environment and Natural Resources Policy Framework, including the development of short and long-term targets (2023-2030) for biodiversity in the Caribbean.

A scoping study was also done to identify ways of enhancing capacity development and the implementation of the KMGBS in the areas of knowledge management, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfers in the ACP regions.

As part of efforts to combat pollution in the Region, Technical Guidelines and a Practitioners' Handbook highlighting regional best practices in the management of plastic waste in the Caribbean were developed.



Red Mangrove - The Bahamas Protected Areas Fund (BPAF)

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (ICT4D)

In 2023, CARICOM Member States continued to make progress in their digital transformation journey, with significant advancement being made in the implementation of the CARICOM Single ICT Space Vision and Roadmap.

CARICOM SINGLE ICT SPACE

ICT Sector Gap Analysis

In recognition of the importance of aligning digital strategies and fostering collaboration, the Secretariat mobilised resources to support key initiatives. Funding from the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) facilitated the commencement of the ICT Sector Gap Analysis. The Secretariat contracted Technopolis France and Technopolis Belgium to assess the ICT Sector in the Community, and held inception and other meetings associated with the project. The consultancy delivered a preliminary assessment and began virtual consultations. The preliminary assessment highlighted areas where significant disparities exist such as the lack of critical legislation in some Member States and Associate Members.

CARICOM Cyber Resilience Strategy 2030 Project

CARICOM and USAID initiated the Cyber Resilience Strategy 2030 Project to bolster cybersecurity in the Region. Led by Cambridge Global Advisors, the project is intended to enhance resilience against cyber threats through collaboration and strategic partnerships. The Secretariat chairs the Steering Committee and the meeting of National Focal Points which convened in December 2023 to provide an overview of the project, oversee project implementation and advance regional cybersecurity efforts.



CARICOM GIRLS IN ICT PARTNERSHIP

The CARICOM Girls in ICT Partnership planned and executed a number of activities in the year under review. In collaboration with the Restore A Sense of I Can International organisation, the Partnership hosted the 2023 International Girls in ICT Day celebration on 27 April. The international theme of the event was ‘Digital Skills for Life’ while the regional theme was ‘Caribbean Girls in ICT and the Boys Who Support Them’. The event featured speakers from across the Community who delved into topical issues and presented engaging sessions aimed at raising awareness of the vast possibilities that ICTS offer and encouraging young girls to pursue careers in ICT fields. The virtual event attracted approximately 27,000 people, comprising students, teachers, parents, and guardians.

From September to November 2023, the Partnership continued to implement its Action Plan through the execution of an informative webinar series that focused on highlighting the diverse opportunities available to women and girls in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEM/STEAM) fields. Bestselling author, Tiffani Teachey launched the series which was delivered weekly from 15 September to 24 November. Twenty-three STEM/STEAM CARICOM professionals participated in the series which was held under the theme ‘Empowering Young Women in the Digital Age’.

Some of the topics that were covered included: Navigating STEM Success - Insights from a Senior Project Manager's Journey; Empowering the Future: AI, Technology, and the Power of Girls in STEM/STEAM; and The role of a Forensic Odontologist in the new Guyana. The sessions provided real-world examples of professionals working in the STEM/STEAM fields, and clear education guidance that was aimed at piquing interest and encouraging the pursuit of a related education path.

CARICOM DIGITAL SKILLS TASKFORCE

During the reporting period, the CARICOM Digital Skills Taskforce conducted a Digital Skills Webinar Series, which explored various topics critical to the development of a robust digital skills ecosystem in the Caribbean: Education, Business and Inclusion. Some of the topics covered by the webinar included enhancing educational curricula to incorporate digital literacy, leveraging digital tools for business growth and innovation, and advocating for inclusive digital solutions to bridge the digital divide.

CAPACITY BUILDING - ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In 2023, the Secretariat hosted a lunchtime webinar for the Secretariat's Staff that explored the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI).



ENERGY

During the period under review, work advanced on the sustainable and secure energy development of the Caribbean Community.

REGIONAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) STRATEGY

CARICOM Minsters, who hold responsibility for energy, met in a special session of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (107th Special COTED – Energy) in April 2023 and endorsed a Regional Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy. The overarching aim of the strategy is to deliver intelligent, modern, affordable, clean, efficient and safe mobility solutions for CARICOM citizens and businesses, through the electrification of surface transportation within the Community.

The Ministers also agreed that government vehicles should lead by example in the electrification efforts, which should result in an increase in the overall number of electric vehicles in use. The Meeting also encouraged Member States to develop national strategies by the first quarter of 2024. The electrification of the transport sector in the Caribbean region will reduce energy demand, particularly for imported diesel and gasoline, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from this sector.

CARICOM ENERGY MONTH



The annual CARICOM Energy Month (CEM) was held in November under the theme Accelerating Innovation - Driving Electrification. Some of the main activities conducted to commemorate CEM include:

Caribbean Sustainable Energy Forum (CSEF) 8 was held in Kingston, Jamaica. This forum was coordinated by the CARICOM Secretariat and the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) and was co-hosted by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Jamaica Electric Vehicle Association. Stakeholders from across CARICOM, international experts and thought leaders discussed realistic and practical opportunities, pathways, and approaches to innovatively manage an accelerated transition to sustainable energy use within the transport sector.

SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

In collaboration with CCREEE and the Jamaica Electric Vehicle Association, and with support from the Caribbean Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, New Energy Events, and Tropical Mobility, the Secretariat organised the Ev-lution IV Exhibition in Kingston, Jamaica, as a side event during CSEF 8.

The CEM Kilo Walk took place on November 18 in Georgetown, Guyana, as a joint initiative by the Secretariat, CCREEE, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA). This 5K walk aimed to raise awareness about sustainable energy opportunities, principles, and practices among the public.

Notable participants included Hon. Brigadier General (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, Prime Minister of Guyana; Dr. Armstrong Alexis, CARICOM Deputy Secretary-General; Mr. Joseph Cox, CARICOM Assistant Secretary General for Economic Integration, Innovation, and Development; Dr. Devon Gardner, Head of Technical Programmes at CCREEE; Dr. Mahender Sharma, Head of the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA); various members of the diplomatic corps; and staff from the CARICOM Secretariat, CCREEE, and GEA.

CARICOM W.I.S.E. (WOMEN IN SUSTAINABLE ENERGY)

CARICOM W.I.S.E. is a key event of CARICOM Energy Month, that recognizes and honors the contributions of women in the sustainable energy sector. This initiative celebrates women who are policymakers, innovators, business leaders, and thought leaders in the energy transition at various levels—community, national, regional, or international. Coordinated by the Secretariat, the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE), and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the 2023 awards invited nominations across five categories:

- Business, Entrepreneurship, Finance
- Social Impact, Community & Advocacy
- Policy and Regulations
- Utilities & Industry
- Youth Leader (Under 35)

The honorees were recognised at the 16th Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum, held in Miami, Florida, from April 24-26, 2024. The award recipients included:



Additionally, Dr. Indra Haraksingh of Trinidad and Tobago received a Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Regional Electric Vehicle Strategy was approved at the 107th Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on Energy.

SECTION 1 – ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

BUILDING ENERGY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat continued to maximise the use of its state-of-the-art Building Energy Management System (BEMS) which tracks the energy that is supplied and used by the national grid and from the Solar Photovoltaic Power Generation Plant located on the compound. This has resulted in reduced reliance on the national grid for power supply to the Secretariat building.

In October 2023, the Secretariat welcomed a new Programme Manager, Energy.



TRANSPORTATION

In 2023, priority attention continued to be paid to the Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA) which seeks to establish a single market for air transport services within CARICOM. A MASA operationalisation plan was developed for the approval of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on Transportation. Moreover, efforts continued to ensure that the Agreement was in force in Member States. By December 2023, the MASA was in force in 12 Member States: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

During the year, continued attention was given to monitoring the Strengthening of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCA) Project. The Project addressed the results of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programmes and sought to raise safety standards and advance the development of conditions for a single security check for direct transit passengers on multi-stop intra-Community flights.

Other significant areas in which monitoring continued in 2023 were the functional cooperation agreements undertaken with international and regional organisations to advance the transportation sector, as well as the programmes undertaken by ICAO to assist those Member States and regulators to improve their records and standards of compliance.

Work continued to advance the Norwegian-funded Carib-SMART Programme of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for CARICOM Member States. The programme aims to develop and address legal, policy and institutional reform, and to address the gaps in existing legislation and common challenges that may hinder the successful implementation of IMO Instruments in the Community.

The Secretariat also participated in two Technical Working Groups led by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) with respect to two transportation initiatives which had their origin in a decision of the Conference of Heads of Government, held in Paramaribo, Suriname in July 2022. Working groups were created to provide oversight for:

- Establishment of a **Maritime Cargo Service** among Barbados, Grenada, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago for which the CDB provided US\$236,399 in grant funding to undertake the study. The objective of the study was to provide the beneficiary Governments and CDB with an analysis of measures required to create an enabling environment for the agri-food trade, improve food security and inform financing of agri-cargo service among Barbados, Grenada, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

- An interim solution to the current aviation constraints facing the sub-region through a project titled – **Emergency Support for Sub-Regional Air Transportation**. CDB provided US\$350,000 in grant funding to undertake this project.

SERVICES

In 2022, the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) - Services approved the first ever Regional SWOT of the Services Sector and four regional strategies and implementation plans for: **i.** Professional Services, **ii.** the Single Registration of Professionals, **iii.** Postal and Courier Services and, **iv.** Tourism Services.

During the period under review, the work focused on building consensus for the proposed regulatory framework for professionals, finalising for approval, the Implementation Plan for the Postal and Courier Services strategy and strengthening the data collection and dissemination infrastructure for national accounts and trade in Services Statistics.

With regard to the consensus building efforts, consultations were requested by both national and regional professional bodies. Professionals from two new sub-sectors - spa and wellness; and medical technologists - sought to be included in the proposed framework. In this regard, the spa and wellness stakeholders of Belize and the executive of the Caribbean Association of Medical Technologists were engaged.

The engineers of The Bahamas were also engaged on the Draft Professionals Bill and the Draft Caribbean Community (Single Registration of Professionals) Act. The Heads of Services Units in three Member States (Barbados, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago) were engaged to facilitate the consensus building at the national level. The internal collaboration among the various directorates dealing with services sector development was strengthened in 2023.

At the end of 2023, the revision of the Draft Professionals Bill and the Draft Caribbean Community (Single Registration of Professionals) Act were further advanced.

With regard to Postal and Courier Services, the Draft Implementation Plan for the Regional Postal and Courier Services Strategy was also revised under the oversight of a technical committee established by the Caribbean Council of Ministers responsible for Postal Affairs. The technical committee met twice during the latter half of 2023 and completed the First Revision of the draft Implementation Plan to assist micro and small enterprises within the Community in the areas of trade facilitation and financial inclusion using the postal network within the Community.

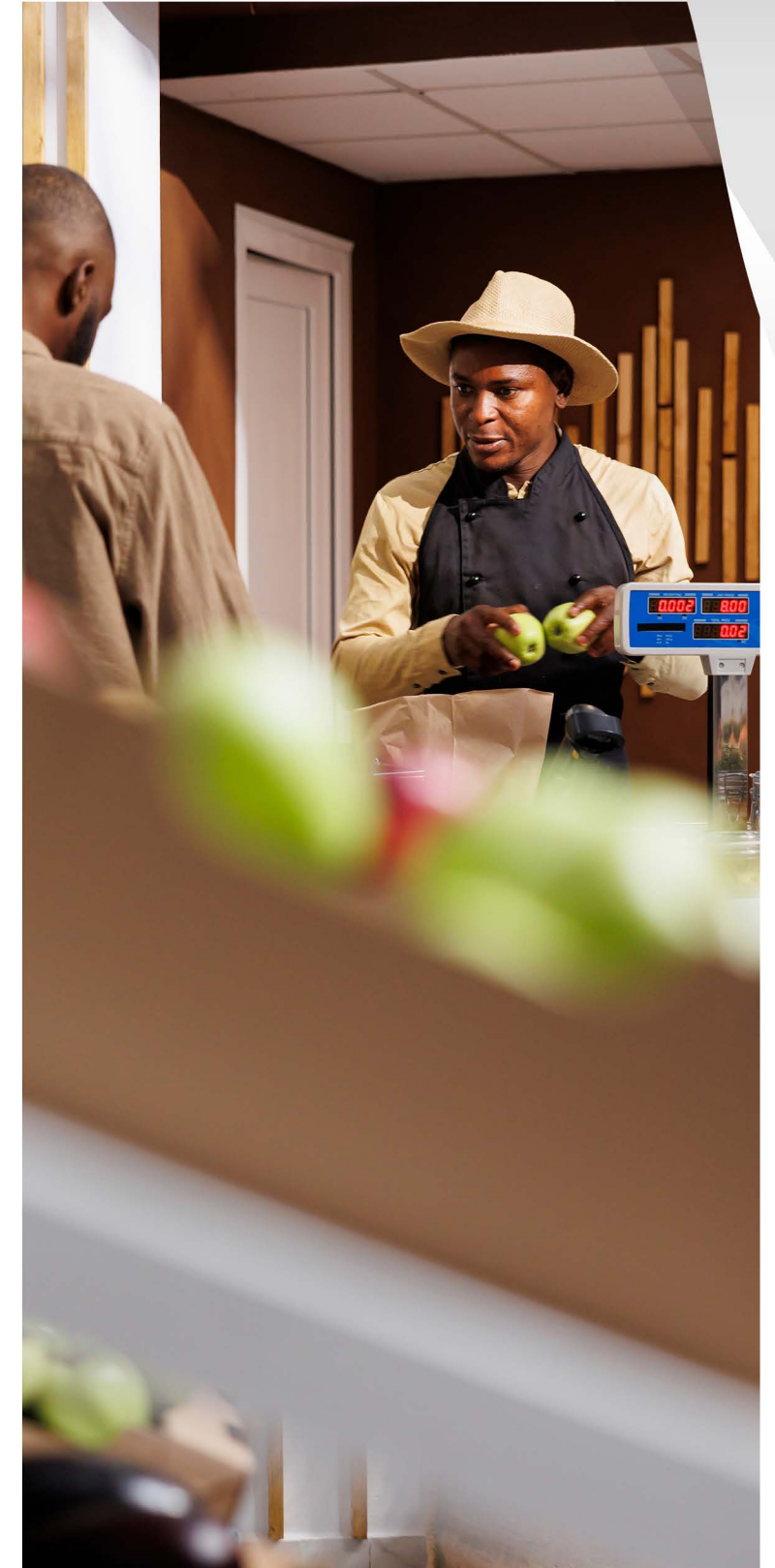
The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was also engaged to foster greater collaboration on the development of a regional database on micro and small enterprises. In addition, a pilot project initiated by the Caribbean Postal Union in collaboration with the Universal Postal Union, commenced on Electronic Advanced Data (EAD) in three Member States – Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia.

Inter-agency networking was strengthened among the CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Postal Union, and the Universal Postal Union, resulting in the preparation of a draft MOU to facilitate the implementation of the regional Postal and Courier Services Strategy.

Within the Secretariat, there was collaboration on two projects dealing with National Accounts, Tourism Satellite Accounts and Trade on Services Statistics. Consequently, two consultancies commenced with AAM Management Consulting (TISS) and GOPA Luxembourg (National Accounts and Tourism Satellite Accounts), facilitated by inputs from the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC) and the OECS Commission.

SECTION 2

CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND TRADE



DIRECTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S EXTERNAL TRADE POLICY

The Secretariat continued to coordinate the Community's pursuit of a common external trade policy with a view to increasing the integration of Member States into the global economy.

Acting on the recommendations of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on External Negotiations (PMSC-EN) and the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), the Secretariat, in 2023, received guidance from the Conference of Heads of Government, on the direction of the Community's external trade policy. The Conference decided that the Community should continually assess its trade performance and readiness to undertake market access commitments with external trade partners.

This readiness assessment, which includes a diagnostic test of the Community's trade performance, was launched in December 2023 and will be a key focus of the work in 2024. The Conference also provided guidance on the Community's overall trade agenda and more strategic use of its existing bilateral trade agreements and arrangements, with a view to enhancing its trade performance.

ENGAGEMENT AT THE MULTILATERAL LEVEL

During the period under review, the Secretariat continued to support the Community's implementation of outcomes from the Twelfth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC12) held in June 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland and began coordinating the Community's preparations for the Thirteenth Conference, scheduled for February 2024 in Abu Dhabi. In particular, the Secretariat provided technical support to the Community's engagement in the second wave of fisheries subsidies negotiations, continued negotiations on agriculture reform, discussions on WTO reform and dedicated discussions under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce.

The Secretariat provided technical support to the advocacy of the Community and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Group for a framework within UNCTAD to support SIDS. This advocacy was instrumental in the development of an UNCTAD Strategy to Support SIDS, including an UNCTAD Trust Fund for SIDS. The Secretariat also continued developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNCTAD Secretariat, which would provide a structured framework for collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

Enhancing Bilateral Trading Arrangements

The Secretariat continued to support the Community's efforts to update its existing trade agreements with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly with the aim of completing the negotiations in relation to the Agreement on Trade, Economic and Technical Co-operation between CARICOM and Colombia

Completion of the negotiations with Colombia was hindered by challenges with the national consultative process in some Member States as they sought to develop their expanded market access offers. It is anticipated that final national positions will be completed early in 2024 and the Community will be able to re-engage with Colombia.

The delay in completing the negotiations with Colombia has had a cumulative effect on the Community's efforts to update its trade agreements with Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, both of which are to be addressed when the negotiations with Colombia have been completed.

The Community's engagement with the United States advanced through the Trade and Investment Council (TIC) under the CARICOM-US Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The Ninth Meeting of the TIC was held in October 2023 and mapped out a schedule of frequent and sustained engagement until 2026, including with other US government agencies, where relevant. Additionally, there was an agreement to develop a Joint Work Programme on Trade in Services, a long-standing request from the Community.

It was also agreed to jointly explore ways in which the Community could increase its effective utilisation of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to share best practices on export promotion and on business-to-business engagement among CARICOM and US firms.

The Secretariat also continued to support the Community's efforts to strengthen trade and economic cooperation with Canada through engagement in the CARICOM-Canada Foreign Ministers' Group and lent support to the Community in its implementation and review of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union. During the reporting period, the Secretariat supported the Community's efforts to enhance trade and economic relations with Africa. In that regard, the Secretariat and the African Union Commission had follow-up exchanges regarding enhanced trade and economic relations between the regions. Further collaboration towards the Third Africa Caribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF) is to continue in 2024.

COORDINATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRADE FACILITATION MEASURES

Building on the successes from 2022, the Secretariat continued to coordinate and support regional implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by CARICOM WTO Members, through collaboration with UNCTAD, World Bank Group, World Trade Organization Secretariat, Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC) and the United States Agency for International Development.

Regional capacity building initiatives prioritised the digitalization of trade procedures in order to enhance regional trade performance and build competitiveness. Specifically, the Secretariat collaborated with UNCTAD to implement its web-based trade facilitation reform tracker for the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to build awareness about the Digital Standards Initiative and the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records.

Consistent with the mandate of Heads of Government for the Community to prioritise co-operation on trade facilitation under its arrangements with bilateral trading partners, collaboration was established with the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) to promote intra-regional co-operation in the framework of the CARICOM-SICA Plan of Action.

CUSTOMS & TRADE POLICY

● Comprehensive Review of the CET and Rules of Origin

In the first half of 2023, discussions advanced regarding the revision of the CARICOM Common External Tariff and the attendant Rules of Origin. The discussions focused on the general rules of interpretation, schedule of rates of the Common External Tariff of the Caribbean Community, the rules regarding Community origin and the product specific rules of origin. It was envisioned that a final face-to-face meeting in Georgetown, Guyana would lead to the conclusion of the review process for presentation to the COTED in November 2023.

However, at the in-person meeting held in October 2023, there was a need for deeper reflection on some issues. Additional concepts were introduced where Member States sought to improve the efficacy and the efficiency of the CET and Rules of Origin. Consequently, the Working Groups requested and received the approval of COTED for an extension of time to allow Member States and other stakeholders to complete the remaining work to review the CET and Rules of Origin for presentation to the Fifty-Eighth Meeting of the COTED in May 2024.

● Implementation of a Tools of Trade procedure

COTED mandated the Customs Committee to develop a tools of trade procedure in keeping with the Protocol on Contingent Rights of the CSME. Draft terms of reference for a consultancy for the execution of the work were completed during the first quarter of 2023.

● Simplified customs procedure

Additionally, COTED mandated the Customs Committee to develop a simplified customs procedure in keeping with the Protocol on Contingent Rights of the CSME. Draft terms of reference for the consultancy were completed in the first quarter of 2023.

● Implementation of the CARICOM Interactive Marketplace and Suspension Procedure (CIMSuPro)

CIMSuPro was launched in 2022 as a platform to link regional producers and purchasers and support the operation of the suspension and safeguard regimes. One hundred (100) entities out of an estimated one thousand (1,000) regional entities have registered their products. The Secretariat plans to begin a regional outreach programme in Member States to promote the use of the platform and encourage further registration of products on the CIMSuPro. In advance of this outreach programme, the Secretariat and the developers will review and update the platform to ensure that its security and operational efficacy are optimised.

● Reports of Suspensions of the CET and Safeguard Certificates granted by the Secretary-General at Meetings of the COTED

During the period 1 January to 31 December 2023, under the provisions of Articles 83 and 84 of the Revised Treaty, the Secretary-General processed two-hundred and fifteen (215) requests to suspend the CET and sixty-four (64) requests to invoke the Safeguard Mechanism. These requests were received from ten (10) Member States that participate in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The full list is highlighted below:

Requests from Member States processed 1 January to 31 December 2023

Country	Suspensions	Safeguards
Barbados	24	1
Dominica	1	—
Guyana	25	—
Grenada	1	—
Jamaica	67	24
St Lucia	2	2
St Vincent and the Grenadines	1	—
St Kitts and Nevis	1	—
Suriname	21	—
Trinidad and Tobago	72	37
TOTAL	215	64

● Member States’ compliance with provisions of the Revised Treaty and decisions of the COTED

The Secretariat continues to monitor compliance with the provisions of the Revised Treaty. In this regard, complaints of the breaches in the application of Common External Tariff (CET) by Member States were presented to and discussed at the Fifty- Sixth and Fifty- Seventh Meetings of the Council for Trade and Economic Development in June 2023 and November 2023, respectively. As at 30 December 2023, the out-standing compliance issues were the non-application of the CET for soap by two Member States, the non-application of the CET on the Family Shopping List of items by one Member State, and the non-appli-cation of the CET on condensed milk by six Member States.

CARICOM SINGLE MARKET

The Secretary-General reconvened the Inter-Governmental Task Force (IGTF) in October 2023 to examine outstanding amendments to the Revised Treaty arising from Decisions already taken by the Conference as well as the Decision of the 45th Regular Meeting of the Conference with respect to free movement of all CARICOM nationals by 31 March 2024. The IGTF’s recommendations were incorporated in a draft Protocol of Amendment to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas for consideration by the Conference of Heads of Government.

• Drafts of model harmonised companies’, partnerships and insolvency laws to support the establishment and operation of businesses in the Community, as well as to facilitate the mutual recognition of companies, were presented for review and inputs to Registrars of Companies, Supervisors of Insolvency and senior officials of the Legal Affairs Committee.

The pieces of draft model legislation were developed through a consultancy managed and supervised by the Secretariat and undertaken by the British Institute for International and Comparative Law under the 11th EDF, Strengthening the Framework for CARICOM Integration and Cooperation Processes (SFCICP) Programme.

• The Secretary-General launched the Skilled Workers Programme (SWP) in Guyana in March 2023. This Programme entailed work attachments in Member States for Border Control Officers, CARICOM Youth Ambassadors, High School Teachers and CSME Focal Points. The launch coincided with the commencement of the High School Teacher attachments to secondary schools for two weeks in Member States across the Region.

• The SWP continued with the attachments of 13 CSME Focal Points hosted in Belize, Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago between October and December of 2023.

• The first Meeting of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) on Public Procurement was held in September 2023, paving the way for the establishment of the structure, as required under Article 30 of the Protocol on Public Procurement, to oversee implementation of the Community Public Protocol Regime.

• The draft Framework Cooperation Agreements to guide cooperation and collaboration among National Competition Authorities and Sector Regulators in Member States were reviewed in August 2023, to support Member States in meeting their obligations under Article 170 (2) of the RTC to have national competition capacity to implement the rules of competition in the Community.

• The Conference of Heads of Government approved amendment of the RTC to include Merger Review Regulations based on an approved policy. Eight Member States had approved the policy by the end of 2023.

• The Task Force to consider the feasibility of a single/unique identifier to support the portability of Social Security was launched in October 2023.



SECTION 3

HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD) EDUCATION

Status of Implementing the CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy (C-HRD 2030 S)

The CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy (C-HRD 2030S) seeks to ensure the alignment and harmonisation of standards, policies and procedures operating in all Member States, to guarantee that the free movement of persons and skills regimes are made operable within the Community.

During the period under review, work advanced on a situational analysis report on indicators for Phase II to determine the Region's readiness to report on Phase III of the Regional Action Plan (RAP). Regional targets and benchmarks for Phases II and III have been determined through collaboration with the Regional Network of Planning Officers.



CDB/CARICOM/OECS Model Learning Recovery and Enhancement Programme (Let's REAP) for Caribbean Schools

The CDB, in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat and the OECS Commission, prepared a Regional Model Learning Recovery and Enhancement Programme (Let's REAP) for Caribbean Schools, which was launched in June 2022. The programme seeks to provide school leaders and teachers across the Region with a roadmap to bridge the learning gaps that emerged or worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The training targeted 15,000 educators (teachers, principals, and Ministry of Education officials) from August 2022 to March 2024 and covered three (3) core areas of Let's REAP: Building Communities of Practice focused on student learning; Assessment and Differentiated Instruction; and Leadership for Learning.

Of the 3000 educators registered at the end of Cohort I, 1104 completed the training and received certification from The University of the West Indies (UWI).



A sample of the "Let's REAP" awareness materials.

SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CARICOM/UNICEF SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE (HRD COMPONENT)

The Secretariat continued to support the implementation of the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative, a collaborative, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls at the global level. To date, the following products have been developed:

- (a) **Draft Standards for the education sector to support the Essential Services package in response to and mitigation of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Violence Against Children (VAC);**
- (b) **Draft Whole of Education Approach (WEOA).**

During the period under review, UNICEF engaged Chief Education Officers and Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) personnel in a validation and capacity-building exercise in Trinidad and Tobago on the use of the products in September 2023.



Digitalisation of TVET

In the reporting period, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA), designed and submitted the Digitalisation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Delivery project in response to the Call for Proposals Trilateral Technical Cooperation between the Brazilian Cooperation Agency ("Agência Brasileira de Cooperação" - ABC), European Union (EU) and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Secretariat secured €700,000 in technical support from the Trilateral Technical Cooperation. The Digitalisation of the TVET Delivery Project is a crucial element of the CARICOM Human Resource Development (HRD) 2030 Strategy, which was approved by CARICOM Member States in 2017.

Caribbean Association of Training Authorities (CANTA)

The Secretariat continued to support the efforts of CANTA in developing the human resources in Member States with 21st-century competencies in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This initiative will drive the social and economic development of the Region and help equip the workforce with the necessary skills to compete in the global market.

To support the development of the TVET infrastructure and increase the employability of citizens and the creation of a better-educated workforce, CANTA has been developing the CANTA Quality Assurance and Guidelines to award Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs), Guidelines for the Development and Review of Regional Occupational Standards and CANTA's Revised Constitution and newly developed and revised occupational standards (approximately 100).



SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

In May 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that COVID-19 was no longer a public health emergency of international concern. Consequently, there was a global shift in focus from response to recovery.

Within the Caribbean Region, regional health priorities were paramount. The Secretariat continued to implement the Caribbean Cooperation for Health Phase IV (CCH IV); the Pétion-Ville Declaration on Persons Living with Disabilities; Non-Communicable diseases (NCDs); drug demand reduction and, human resources for health.

Based on the lessons learned from the pandemic, there was a renewed focus on regional health security and capacity building for prevention, preparedness and response to future emerging and re-emerging epidemics and pandemics. New priorities emerged as the issue of crime and violence was declared a public health emergency within CARICOM.

Emerging from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Following the reclassification and downgrade of COVID-19, previously imposed travel and health restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus were gradually lifted. The focus shifted towards preventing future epidemics and pandemics, as well as building capacity at regional and national levels to prevent, prepare and respond to these events, and disasters given the impact of climate change.

To this end, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) was awarded funding from the first round of funding resources from the **Pandemic Fund** to support initiatives to strengthen laboratory services, surveillance and, human resource capacities for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response at a regional level. In addition, Suriname was also able to secure funding from the Pandemic Fund to support similar initiatives at a national level.

At the international level, work is ongoing to develop policies to strengthen global capacity to prevent and respond to future epidemics and pandemics. The negotiation of the **WHO convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response** (WHO CA+), and the negotiations on amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 are among the most notable international policy initiatives resulting from the challenges faced in coordinating the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Caribbean Cooperation for Health Phase IV (CCH IV)

The Caribbean Cooperation for Health Phase (CCH) IV will conclude in 2024. The CCH IV Steering Committee Meeting met on 8 September 2023 and placed significant emphasis on evaluating the implementation of the programme and planning for the development of CCH V. During the meeting, the committee discussed the accomplishments and obstacles encountered during the implementation phase of CCH IV and deliberated on the priorities and regional public goods that should take priority for the upcoming iteration.

SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

During the period, CARPHA launched a logo competition to develop a CCH IV logo. This initiative was endorsed by the Forty-Fifth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) – Health. The logo is intended to promote brand identity, public recognition, and increased awareness of CCH. In addition, CARPHA developed a website to raise awareness of the CCH IV and regional public goods.

The Caribbean is the sub-region with the highest Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) mortality rates within the Region. There have been initiatives to address this rise in the NCD burden and the Caribbean Region has made progress in NCD prevention and control since the 2007 Port of Spain Declaration.

During the Sixth (6th) CARICOM Joint Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) and COHSOD, CARICOM Member States agreed to collaborate to prohibit the production, importation, distribution, sale, and use of Partially Hydrogenated Oils (PHOs) in oils, fats, and foods for human consumption by 31 December 2025.

The Commonwealth Secretariat committed to provide funds for a consultancy to assist in drafting policies and legislation aimed at reducing the consumption of trans fatty acids and sweetened beverages.



Caribbean Moves Initiative

Caribbean Moves was endorsed by CARICOM leaders in 2018, against the backdrop of NCDs, accounting for 70 percent of all deaths in the region. To launch this initiative, CARPHA oversaw the implementation of a grant entitled the ‘Development of Caribbean Moves: An Initiative’ which included the development of a comprehensive framework and implementation plan for the Caribbean Moves initiative in Member States.

Two regional consultations were held during the reporting period to present significant components of the proposed Caribbean Moves Framework and provide an overview of the proposed governance structure, gain stakeholder input and buy-in, and collaboratively develop an implementation plan. The consultancy is scheduled to end in January 2024.



HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH (HRH)

Human Resources for Health Caribbean Commission

During the reporting period, two meetings of the Human Resources for Health Caribbean Commission (HRH-CC) were convened. Work continued to implement the National Health Workforce Accounts within Member States, and policies to strengthen human resource capacities in the Region. The Secretariat also participated in HRH Information Systems meeting to discuss Member States’ issues and draft proposals for a way forward.

CASMET Proposal for Regional Certification Examination for Medical Laboratory Professionals

The Caribbean Association of Medical Technologists (CASMET) engaged the CARICOM Secretariat to provide technical and advocacy support to encourage the certification and/or registration of all practising Clinical Laboratory Professionals. The Secretariat facilitated a meeting with CARPHA, Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and PAHO to discuss the alignment of this request to regional priorities.

The proposal to establish a regional certification examination for laboratory professionals is aligned with priority areas supporting health systems strengthening, human resources for health and the single registration of CARICOM professionals.

A technical working group (TWG) convened a series of virtual meetings led by CASMET to develop Terms of Reference (TORs) for CASMET, and a comprehensive plan to establish the regional certification exam with clear timeframes for rollout.



WORK OF THE REGIONAL NURSING BODY

Regional Examination for Nurse Registration (RENr)

The Government of Japan committed to providing financial resources to support the assessment of the CXC-managed RENr. The project proposal was approved with a budget of USD29,892.00 under the 2023 Government Contribution of the Japan-CARICOM Friend and Cooperation Fund (JCFCF).

In addition, a standardised clinical assessment tool (CAT) is being tested by Member States to incorporate the tool as a standard aspect of the examination.

At the Fiftieth AGM of the Regional Nursing Body (RNB), it was agreed that all Member States which have not yet been able to test the CAT, would do so by December 2023 and submit a report to the CARICOM Secretariat and CXC.



Participants of the 50th Annual General Meeting of the Regional Nursing Body, 18-20 July 2023

The Harmonisation of Midwifery Education

The RNB further sought to harmonise the education, training and practice of midwives among CARICOM Member States. At the Fiftieth AGM of the RNB, it was also agreed that a special sub-committee would be formed to develop a position paper and terms of reference (TOR) to approach PAHO/WHO for technical support for a consultancy to provide effective leadership, coordination and technical services to support the strengthening of Midwifery Education, Training, and Regulation in the Region. In initial discussions, PAHO/WHO indicated the availability of funding if the proposal was submitted by September 2023.

VIRTUAL COURSES TO BUILD HEALTH SECTOR CAPACITY

In November 2023, the Secretariat joined delegates from the Americas to launch three new courses aimed at strengthening the skills of health personnel to address violence against women and girls. The courses, which are available publicly in the PAHO Virtual Campus for Public Health, comprise training on the Medico-Legal, Response to Intimate Partner Violence and, Sexual Violence; health care for survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence; and training on strengthening the regional health sector capacity to prevent and respond to violence against women in the Caribbean.

This launch was hosted in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund with the support of the Canadian Government and the Spotlight Initiative

DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION

In March 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Organization of American States (OAS) and the CARICOM Secretariat to address drug demand reduction in the CARICOM region. Following the XXIV Meeting of CICAD's Demand Reduction Experts Group held in Panama in September 2023, the OAS hosted the 2023 Meeting of the Caribbean Advisory Council on Drug Demand Reduction of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). The CARICOM Secretariat participated in both Meetings.

At the 2023 Meeting of the Caribbean Advisory Council on Drug Demand Reduction of CICAD, CARICOM Member States presented their current work, achievements, and challenges in addressing drug demand reduction at a national level. CARICOM also highlighted the main elements of the MOU. It was agreed that a meeting would be held between the OAS-CICAD and CARICOM to discuss what initiatives could be executed under the MOU within the first quarter of 2024.

CRIME AND VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE



CARICOM Leaders and CARICOM Secretary-General during the Regional Symposium on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue, Trinidad and Tobago, 17 April 2023

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, convened a Regional Symposium on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue on 17 – 18 April 2023 to address the issue of crime and violence within the Caribbean Region. Following the symposium, the Heads of Government issued two Declarations from which a five pillar Consolidated Framework was derived. The Framework outlines the actions, lead and supporting agencies, and time frames for intersectoral cooperation actions to mitigate the escalating violence.

The framework was presented to the Fiftieth Annual General Meeting of the Regional Nursing Body (RNB) and circulated to the members of the RNB for input. Following the meeting a recommendation was made to convene a Technical Working Group (TWG) led by Chief Medical Officers, to develop for a Logic Model using the Public Health Approach in support of the Framework. The work of the TWG, will be supported by PAHO/WHO.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS EMANATING FROM THE REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CRIME AND VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

A Project Partnership Agreement was signed in September 2023 by CARPHA, CARICOM IMPACS, The University of the West Indies - George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Center (GA-CDRC) and Small Arms Survey (SAS) to support the coordination and implementation of additional research-associated activities that will lead to the strengthening of the Research and Policy Perspectives under the framework's pillar.

This project is entitled *“Pathway to Policy: Integrating Security and Public Health Responses to Firearms Trafficking and Violence in the Caribbean”* and is funded by the German Government. Deliverables for this project include the funding of a senior officer to be based at CARPHA, who will also support CARICOM IMPACS. A Steering Committee, comprising key experts in Criminology, Health and Law among others was scheduled to meet in November to frame the specific elements of the research.

THE PÉTION-VILLE DECLARATION ON PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

At the Thirty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government in Trinidad and Tobago in July 2013, the Conference mandated that priority attention be given to the concerns of persons with disabilities in the Caribbean Community. In light of this decision, a high-level Ministerial Meeting was held in Haiti to address the concerns of people with disabilities in the Community. The Declaration of Pétion-Ville, which provided a roadmap for a more inclusive Community, was a major outcome of this Conference. During the reporting period, the Caribbean Court of Justice sought the input of the Special Rapporteur and CARICOM on a draft policy to improve access to justice and provide accommodations to persons with disabilities.

CARPHA EXECUTED PROJECTS



Progress continued with projects implemented by the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) namely the Health Systems Strengthening for CARICOM Member States to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Other Emerging and Re-emerging Threats, funded by Spain and Strengthening Health Systems in CARICOM to Address Infectious Diseases, funded by the Republic of Korea. Both projects are scheduled to end in 2024.

● Immunisation

One of the key factors contributing to the success of the immunisation programme in the Caribbean is the estimated 100% national funding provided by the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI). This funding enabled the Region to maintain high vaccination coverage rates and ensure that all children have access to lifesaving vaccines.



Additionally, over 50% of countries in the Region have vaccination laws in place, which mandate that children receive certain vaccines before attending school, thus further strengthening the Region's immunisation efforts. Due to these efforts, the Caribbean has seen a significant reduction in childhood mortality and morbidity rates, with fewer children suffering from vaccine-preventable diseases. Low vaccination coverage rates, compounded by vaccine hesitancy during the COVID-19 pandemic, increased the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.

With this awareness, at the Twenty-Ninth Special Meeting in Nassau, Bahamas on 26 April 2023, the COHSOD (Health), made a commitment to strengthen the National Immunisation Programmes of the Caribbean through political visibility and sustainable financing. Through regional efforts to address vaccine hesitancy and prevent the resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as education and other communication strategies, coverage for routine childhood immunisation has improved.

These efforts helped to underscore the need to achieve 95% coverage of childhood vaccines, improve active surveillance for vaccine-preventable diseases, and promote the value of vaccines to build confidence among health providers, the media, and the public.

Additionally, there was a focus on developing a holistic electronic information system for immunisation and strengthening the legislative framework supporting immunisation.



COHSOD (Health) at the Twenty-Ninth Special Meeting in Nassau, Bahamas, 26 April 2023

SUMMARY OF CARICOM HEALTH-RELATED PROJECTS

CARICOM-SPAIN PROJECT OUTPUTS	CARICOM-KOREA PROJECT OUTPUTS
Development of a website to promote work of the CARICOM-SPAIN Project and CCH-IV.	Training and field work of two cohorts undertaking Caribbean Regional Field Epidemiology Laboratory Training Program CR-FELTP II (Intermediate), from at least six (6) CARPHA Member States.
CCH IV logo competition conducted by CARPHA.	Signing of a Germfree annual maintenance contract to ensure that BSL3 is certified and available to perform tests for infectious diseases. CARPHA staff trained in BSL-3 maintenance.
Procurement of essential materials, personal protective equipment (PPE) and reagents to support the work of the public health laboratory.	Purchase of KingFisher™ Flex Purification System completed with installation completed. Reagents were also purchased.
Procurement of laptops for project implementation.	Two cohorts of Member States received IATA Training. Report submitted.
In country-visit to St. Vincent and the Grenadines to capture best practices and lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.	A draft Communication and Visibility plan was developed.

PAN-CARIBBEAN PARTNERSHIP AGAINST HIV AND AIDS (PANCAP)



Status of HIV in the Caribbean

According to the UNAIDS 2022 Global AIDS Update, the adult HIV prevalence is 1.2 with an estimated 330,000 People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in the Caribbean. There has been moderate progress in both prevention and treatment in the Caribbean.

The annual number of new HIV infections among adults in the Caribbean declined by 15% since 2010, and deaths from AIDS-related illness fell by 53%. Since 2010, antiretroviral therapy coverage has increased from 19% to 63% among men, and from 21% to 74% among women. Coverage in 2022 continued to be much lower among children (39%) across the region.

Great strides continue to be made in the Caribbean toward eliminating mother-to-child HIV transmission. Coverage of programmes to prevent vertical transmission of HIV rose from 45% to 65% between 2010 and 2022. Nine (9) Caribbean countries and territories have received the dual certification for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and Syphilis.

These include Cuba in 2015; Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and Saint Kitts and Nevis in 2017; the Commonwealth of Dominica in 2021 and Belize in 2023. Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are on track for validation in 2024.

Knowledge Management

- Certificate courses University of Washington

PANCAP is a certified site for the University of Washington's ten-week online certificate courses for participants in the Region. This capacity-building initiative started in 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of 2023, 499 clinical practitioners, national AIDS programme managers, representatives of civil society, academics and other stakeholders successfully completed courses. Many of the participants are Government employees. The results of a survey on the programme revealed that most participants believed that the courses were designed to meet their knowledge needs and will enhance their work performance.

Hon. Dr Frank Anthony, Guyana's Minister of Health (centre), with participants of the University of Washington certificate courses and officials from the Ministry of Health (Guyana) and PANCAP.



STRENGTHENING PREVENTION SERVICES IN THE REGION

PANCAP, PAHO and the OECS facilitated regional training on the scale-up of essential prevention and treatment services in the Caribbean, 28-30 March 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago.

Participants included HIV clinical practitioners (doctors and nurses) from the public and health care sectors and National AIDS Programme Managers.

Fifty-three persons from Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, participated in the training.



Participants during the Regional Workshop to Scale-up Essential Prevention and Treatment Services for Key Populations in the Caribbean - Towards AIDS Elimination by 2030

In collaboration with the PAHO Caribbean Regional Sub-Office, USAID and UNAIDS, the Regional Workshop and Share Fair to “Scale-up Essential Prevention and Treatment Services for Key Populations in the Caribbean - Towards AIDS Elimination by 2030” was convened from 28- 30 March 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago.

The key outcomes of the meeting included the development of the draft policy for HIV Self-Testing (HIVST) for adaptation and integration into the national testing policy for several countries in the Region. The draft regional framework to support the scale-up of essential and differentiated services for HIV prevention (PrEP and HIVST) and care and treatment (scale-up transition to DTG, advanced HIV disease and HIVDR) was also finalized and disseminated to countries



Participants during the Regional Workshop and Share Fair to “Scale-up Essential Prevention and Treatment Services for Key Populations in the Caribbean - Towards AIDS Elimination by 2030”

During the period under review, PANCAP hosted a regional training for HIV clinicians on opportunistic infections in PLHIV on 24-25 August 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago. Participants benefitted from presentations on the status of the HIV response in the Caribbean and updates on the treatment of HIV. Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of specific opportunistic diseases were discussed.

These included HPV and related anal and cervical cancers, TB/HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and fungal infections- histoplasmosis and cryptococcal meningitis. Participants from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago formed the cohort. An end-of-training survey report showed that 100% of respondents agreed that they had gained new knowledge which they would apply and share.

Under the Multi-country Global Fund (GF) Grant Project for the Caribbean, a policy brief was developed based on the draft assessment report to estimate key populations (i.e. men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender and Female Sex Workers) requiring pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and prepare to roll out PrEP plan through a mapping of costing exercises. This was presented to the Council for Health and Social Development (COHSOD) - Health in September 2023. This policy brief addressed the planning, costing, and funding gaps and estimates to scale up differentiated care of key populations and PLHIV at the national and regional levels.

DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL MIGRATION POLICY

In the third quarter of 2023, a region-wide survey was conducted with support from the United States Department of State and the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The survey determined national and regional priorities regarding migration management and validated findings were presented at a workshop in August 2023.

Participants in the Advancing a Regional Approach to a Migration Policy workshop, 24 and 25 August 2023 (Barbados), represented the International Organization for Migration (IOM), CARICOM Secretariat, CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), CARICOM Standing Committee of Chiefs of Immigration (CICC), Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Caribbean Development Fund(CDF), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Government of Barbados, the Government of the United States, Canadian High Commission, Delegation of the European Union, and several United Nations Agencies.



Subsequently, a technical workshop was held in Barbados on 1-3 October 2023, while the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee was convened in the margins. Consequently, the multidisciplinary Steering Committee/Technical team has been tasked with preparing and delivering draft documents on the processes, procedures as well as the requirements, timetable, and recommendations for the development of a Migration Policy along with an outline for its strategic implementation.

SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

During the workshop, which was supported with funding from the European Union, training on the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration and its implementation was provided for officials representing the United Nations, CARICOM and other international institutions in the Caribbean. It should be noted that most CARICOM States voted in favour of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in the United Nations General Assembly. To date, all CARICOM Member States have expressed support for the GCM and its 23 objectives, particularly Objective 23: ***Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.***

FIGHT AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING IN FIREARMS

The threat posed by the illicit trade in firearms in the Caribbean Region remains very high, and in many countries, the acquisition of and use of high-powered weapons has increased. With the operational establishment of the Crime Gun Intelligence Unit (CGIU) in June 2023, there has been an increase in information and intelligence sharing between the authorities in CARICOM Member States and in the United States of America. The establishment of trends through this information sharing has led to more awareness by authorities of traffickers' ***modus operandi.***

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In the sphere of community development, the Secretariat focused on issues related to the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) and the review of project proposals for funding under the project Creative Caribbean: An Ecosystem of 'Play' for Growth and Development. This is a collaborative project that brings together UNESCO, the CARICOM Secretariat, and The University of the West Indies, with funding from the European Union and the Organisation of ACP States.

The overarching goal of the project, which has a budget of €3 million, is to foster economic, human, and social development in 14 CARICOM states and the Dominican Republic through the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs).

The project promotes cultural economy growth by subgrating to projects that promote, job creation, production and distribution of cultural goods and services, improved market access, and policy support, thereby reducing their dependency on international financing.

The CARICOM Reparations Commission met quarterly and participated in the ACCRA Reparations Conference in Ghana, held in November 2023. Disbursements were made to 25 grantees from 10 countries under the Creative Caribbean Project.

With regard to matters of gender, the Secretariat collaborated with several UN agencies to conclude implementation of the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Programme by the end of December 2023. Highlights of these activities included capacity building of parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organisations to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the implementation of a women's economic empowerment programme for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). There was also significant progress towards finalising the CARICOM Regional Gender Equality Strategy with Member States.



Ministers responsible for gender affairs and equality from CARICOM Member States and Associate Members and other regional stakeholders at the Forty-Sixth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) – Gender

SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Under the ambit of sport, the Secretariat expended significant efforts to coordinate the special Fiftieth Anniversary CARICOM 10 K Road Race, which was successfully executed in Trinidad and Tobago in July 2023, and on operationalising the CARICOM-FIFA Memorandum of Understanding.



Winners of the CARICOM Road Races pose with CARICOM Chair, Government Ministers of Trinidad and Tobago, CARICOM SG and other officials

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Secretariat focused on revising and strengthening the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan (CYDAP) and the CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme (CYAP), through partnerships with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Partnerships with UNESCO were also pursued to advance Work Programme priorities. Preparations were advanced for the launch of the Young Professionals Programme, which aims to equip young professionals with practical skills relevant to the implementation of CSME in Member States.

● Caribbean Youth Day Summit

The Annual Caribbean Youth Summit was held 22-25 November 2023, under the theme "Securing our Future: Youth Co-Creating a Peaceful and Sustainable Caribbean Community." It was organized in collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Youth Council under the UN/EU-funded Regional Spotlight Initiative.

The Summit attracted 125 participants over the four-day period, averaging 75 persons per day. Various categories of young people and critical stakeholders from across the Region convened in Jamaica. They shared ideas, experiences, and good practices to develop solutions to address gender-based violence, and cross-cutting issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

A guide for strengthening the partnership to actualise these theoretical propositions was also developed.



Participants during the Caribbean Youth Summit 2023

SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

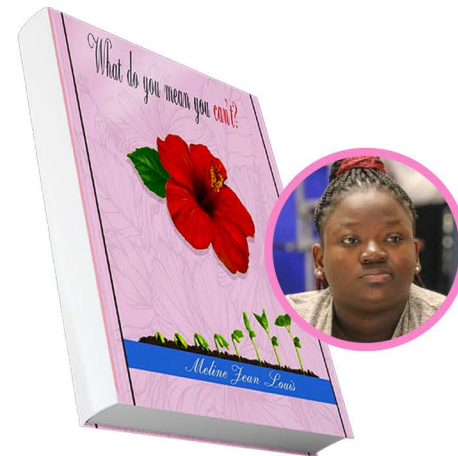
The Summit promoted intergenerational and interagency dialogues, including with representatives of government and international development partners. This interaction supported the design of an integrated Roadmap that identifies the strategies and actions to address regional and national issues associated with peace, security and safety for youth, and generate positive social and gender norm changes to prevent violence. In their evaluation of the Summit, participants reported satisfaction with the outcomes and indicated a collective desire for future Summits that provide the same learning and networking opportunities.

● Aspiring Youth Empowerment Programme (AYEP)

The Aspiring Youth Empowerment Programme (AYEP) was implemented in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat from July to November 2023. Through the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat, a consultant was hired to execute the programme. Due to resource constraints, 225 applicants were accepted for the programme's real-time delivery.

The remaining applicants were offered an online pre-recorded training facility, from which they were able to pose questions and receive support.

The Commonwealth Academy Learning Platform, which facilitated an interactive real-time exchange and supported the learning needs of the participants, was used to host the programme. Sixty participants completed the real-time exchange delivery.



AYEP beneficiary Meline Jean Louis became a published author after completing the programme.

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

● CICAD

The Secretariat partnered with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) to host an event aimed at empowering young individuals to create impactful drug prevention strategies for their communities across the Caribbean. The workshop targeted three representatives per country in thirteen Member States. Participants were educated on substance use prevention and effective prevention methods. The young people were also charged with implementing their projects at the national level.

The top three projects, which came from Suriname, Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, were awarded a grant to support their implementation. Additional training of CARICOM Youth Ambassadors was conducted from 6-20 November 2023 to build their competencies in designing projects with drug prevention strategies.



SECTION 3 – HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

● Mental Health Capacity

Through a partnership with UNICEF, a mental health survey was relaunched on 10 October 2023, to capture data on general well-being, anxiety, depression and support systems available to youth in their respective countries.

Collaboration with PAHO continued to discuss expanding the Mental Health First Aid project to include PAHO's established Mental Health Curriculum. A Terms of Reference was developed to procure the services of a consultant who will be responsible for modifying the PAHO curriculum to create a CARICOM/PAHO curriculum to meet the skills needs of the youth workers and leaders across the Member States.

Funding will be provided through the PAHO Climate Change and Health Agreement to support the programme's implementation in the first quarter of 2024.



A sample of the awareness materials used for the Mental health Survey.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAMME

The Young Professionals Programme – Extended Work Attachment aims to train and equip young professionals with practical skills that will assist Member States in implementing the CSME regime and the decisions of the Organs and Bodies. The programme will identify some of our most talented young people in the Region and provide mechanisms to foster an appreciation of CARICOM, regionalism and most importantly, CSME.

CARICOM YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME (CYAP)

The CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme (CYAP) continues to promote regional integration and empower youth. There is active participation in the programme from 14 Member States and Associate Member States.

In celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the CYAP, each CYA interviewed former CYAs for leadership motivation. This initiative also helped to promote the CYAP. Interviews culminated in September 2023 to be published in the first quarter of 2024.

The CYAs continued to serve on specific committees and working groups for projects undertaken within the CARICOM Secretariat. These included a presentation by Renee Atwell, CYA, Trinidad and Tobago at the opening of the Forty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM. Ms. Atwell was also a panellist at the Regional Symposium on Violence as a Public Health Issue: The Crime Challenge and a panellist at the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF).

Other CYAs conducted presentations at the CARICOM Digital Skills Task Force, 13th Conference of Women Parliamentarians of the Caribbean Americas and Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Some also served on the CARICOM Girls in ICT Steering Committee, Commonwealth Youth Council (lead for strategic drafting and planning committee), T.A. Marryshow Community College Board of Directors and the CARICOM Girls in ICT Partnership STEM/STEAM Career Webinar Series.

LIST OF CYAs IN 2023



- Mr. Esquire Henry
- Ms. Pia Nichols



- Mr. Shakeem Howell
- Ms. Ashley Lashley



- Mr. Kenroy Simpson Cal
- Ms. Marissa Yasmin Cervantes



- Mr. Joshua Jeremiah Andall
- Ms. Jozel Normeka Neckles



- Mr. Odane Brooks
- Ms. Christal Parris - Campbell



- Mr. Oswen O. Carty
- Ms. Tiffannie A.E Skerritt
- Mr. Joel Jean-Charles



- Ms. Melanie Yael Lubin



- Mr. Jalen Monzac
- Ms. Iana Franks



- Ms. Aurie Nyanna Tamia
- Mr. Deane Timothy Gellizeau



- Ms. Fay King
- Mr. Matai Zamuel



- Ms. Renee Atwell
- Mr. Keigon Denoon



- Ms. Tiffany Moore
- Mr. Dominik Richardson



- Mr. Chad Anthony Powell Jr.
- Ms. Vanessa Burke



- Mr. Andy Missick
- Ms. Arielle Neely

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH PROJECT

The CYAP collaborated with PAHO to promote the Region's Climate Change and Health agenda. The theme focused on **“Youth Empowerment and Participation: Strengthening Climate Resilient Health Systems in the Caribbean.”**

Three Climate Change and Health Projects were initiated under the 1st Cohort of CYAs, from St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos (Projects 1 to 3). Projects completed in the last quarter were:

Reduce Methane Emission through Household Waste Management (St. Kitts and Nevis)

This project was a six-month engagement that aimed to increase awareness and implementation of household waste management techniques among youth to reduce methane emissions and the effects of climate change. The project helped 20 youth participants develop an understanding and increase their knowledge of composting biodegradable materials techniques.



A sample of a composting box created by the St Kitts and Nevis youth advocates.

The Eco Restorers Project

The Eco Restorers Project was a six-week recycling entrepreneurship incubator which allowed young climate change advocates to learn about the recycling process, how it helps to mitigate the effects of climate change and how recycled products can be converted into sustainable business ideas. This project partnered with a local recycling company, Recycling Waste and Logistics Limited, to allow twenty participants aged 18-25 to benefit from an enriching practical entrepreneurial incubator experience. An award was presented to the participant with the most outstanding business proposal.



1) Eco Restorers in Trinidad and Tobago
2) Eco Restorers in Trinidad and Tobago brainstorming ways to recycle discarded materials

SECTION 6

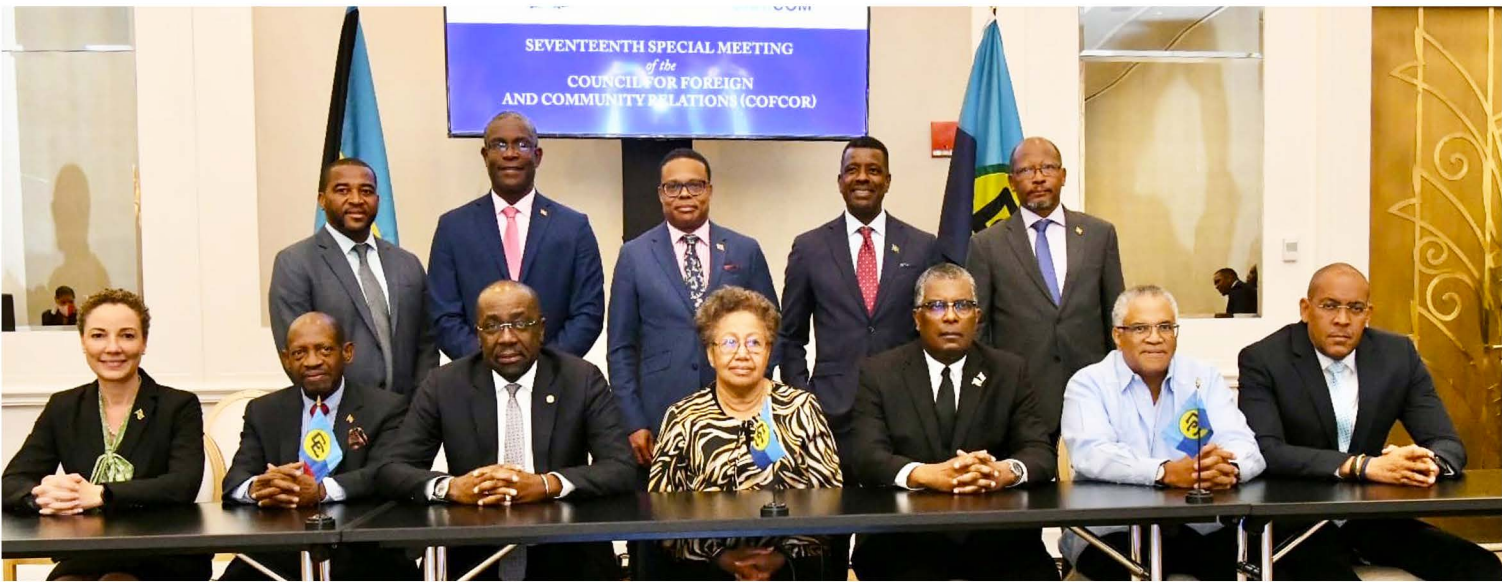
FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION



SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS (COFCOR)

The Fiftieth (50th) Anniversary of the Signing of the Original Treaty of Chaguaramas provided increased opportunities for engagements with a range of Third States and other development partners.



FAMILY PHOTO TO MARK THE 17TH MEETING OF THE COFCOR, THE BAHAMAS

In February 2023, the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) held its Seventeenth (17th) Special Meeting in The Bahamas, where it engaged with representatives from the United States of America, the Republic of Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



FAMILY PHOTO TO MARK THE 26TH MEETING OF COFCOR, JAMAICA

During the Twenty-Sixth (26th) COFCOR meeting in Jamaica in May, foreign ministers agreed to establish a Working Group to guide the selection of CARICOM candidatures and to standardise CARICOM’s approach for international positions. COFCOR discussed the Bridgetown Initiative proposed by Barbados as a tool for the global financial system to support developing nations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the debt crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the climate crisis.

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND
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The three-pronged approach to financing development proposes funding for reconstruction after a climate related disaster, increasing multilateral loans to governments, activating private sector reserves for climate mitigation, and emergency liquidity.

COFCOR acknowledged the importance of the initiative and encouraged Member States to keep advocating for changes to the international financial architecture that are consistent with the tenets of the Barbados Initiative.



CARICOM SG delivering remarks at the 26th Meeting of COFCOR, Jamaica

A discussion on CARICOM relations with the Dominican Republic (DR) concluded with an agreement to review the Community's stance toward the DR considering its interest in restoring and strengthening political dialogue with the Community and its apparent willingness to soften the policy of denationalisation of Haitian descent and Haitian migrants.

The foreign ministers met with representatives from Spain, Japan, and Slovenia. Spain was represented by the Secretary of State for Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spanish Language in the World who was also the Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain. Foreign Ministers commended Spain's chairmanship of the Council of the European Union and emphasised the importance of a more structured approach to the CARICOM-Spain partnership. Concerns about climate change, access to concessional funding, blacklisting, and the country's bid to host World Expo 2027, the EU-CELAC July 2023 Summit, were also discussed.

Foreign Ministers welcomed His Excellency Takei Shunsuke, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and expressed satisfaction with the strong CARICOM-Japan relationship. The two sides committed to enhance cooperation in peace, security, sustainable development, education, health, energy security, trade and investment.

They also highlighted, the CARICOM-Japan Year of Friendship 2024 as a key opportunity for cultural exchange, noting it marked 10 years since the pronouncement of the first CARICOM-Japan Year of Friendship in 2014.

COFCOR welcomed the presentation of the Logo to be used for the various exchanges, cultural and anniversary-related events in CARICOM countries and Japan in 2024.

They also highlighted, the CARICOM-Japan Year of Friendship 2024 as a key opportunity for cultural exchange, marking the 10th anniversary of the first such year in 2014.

COFCOR also welcomed the new logo for the 2024 events.

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND
FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Slovenia's Special Envoy made a presentation to the ministers, during which the goal to strengthen Slovenia's ties with CARICOM was outlined. CARICOM's support for the country's bid for a non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council in 2024–2025 was also requested.

On the multilateral front, the approval of the updated CARICOM-Central America Integration System (SICA) Action Plan, which outlines the areas for cooperative action on foreign policy coordination, human resource development, health, poverty reduction, the environment, and natural disasters, was welcomed at the meeting of COFCOR in Jamaica in May.



A light moment with Foreign Ministers from L-R: Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and Antigua and Barbuda

The foreign ministers were updated on various United Nations (UN) initiatives, including the UN Security Council Reform, Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), UN Convention on the Law of the Sea's International Legal Binding Instrument, and advancements within the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.



CARICOM SG AND CARICOM FOREIGN MINISTERS PARTICIPATING IN A TREE PLANTING EXERCISE DURING THE 26TH COFCOR

Regarding the Organization of American States, foreign ministers acknowledged that The Bahamas would host the IV Meeting on Sustainable Development in October 2023 and pledged to actively participate.

Regarding the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), COFCOR reaffirmed its support for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as President Pro Tempore of CELAC from 2023 to 2024 and received an update on the CELAC Programme of Action for 2023.

COFCOR hailed Suriname's chairmanship of the ACS Ministerial Council for 2023-2024 and expressed its support. They also received a report on the Ninth Summit of ACS Heads of State and Government, which was held in Guatemala under the theme **“Innovating Integration via Sustainable Development of the Greater Caribbean”**.

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

RELATIONS WITH THIRD STATES AND GROUPS OF STATES

During the reporting period, CARICOM maintained active relationships with Third States in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. These engagements aimed to boost CARICOM's global presence, leverage diplomatic relations to advocate for Member States' concerns and to facilitate development cooperation.

● Africa

In 2023, Heads of Government met with Rwanda's President, His Excellency Paul Kagame, and Prof. Benedict Okey Oramah, President of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank). CARICOM engaged Prof. Oramah during the Conference's 44th Regular Meeting in The Bahamas in February of that year.

Afreximbank's suite of services to the Community, as well as its involvement in aiding Member States to secure essential supplies of COVID-19 vaccinations through the African Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP), received special recognition from Heads of Government, who also took note of the Partnership Agreement between CARICOM Member States and Afreximbank, which established a framework for collaboration aimed at enhancing trade and investment ties between Africa and the CARICOM Member States. Heads of Government encouraged Member States that had not yet signed and/or ratified the Bank's Partnership Agreement to do so as soon as possible.

President Kagame was a distinguished guest at the 45th Regular Meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government, which commemorated the Community's Fiftieth Anniversary in July in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Rwandan President congratulated CARICOM on its Jubilee and noted that the Community's achievements and influence are long-lasting and appreciated. CARICOM and Rwanda agreed to strengthen their collaboration with President Kagame, and identified transportation, telecommunications, and regional security as potential areas of bilateral cooperation. CARICOM Heads of Government expressed gratitude for Rwanda's willingness to help Haiti.

The second Africaribbean Trade and Investment Forum took place in Guyana in October 2023. The CARICOM Secretary-General addressed the Forum, highlighting the growing commercial cooperation between the Caribbean Region and Africa, which has been supported by Afreximbank since the first Forum in Barbados. As CARICOM-Africa relations improve, research into the feasibility of a Pan-African payment and settlement system as a method of intra-regional payments in the Caribbean continued. The Community also advocated for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Upscaling Engagement between the CARICOM Secretariat and the African Union Secretariat, to establish a formal mechanism for dialogue.



Rwanda's President, His Excellency Paul Kagame addressing CARICOM



CARICOM SG delivering remarks at the 2nd AfriCaribbean Investment Forum, Guyana

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

HIGHLIGHTS OF CARICOM'S RELATIONS WITH ASIAN COUNTRIES

● India

The fourth CARICOM-India Forum was held in April in Guyana. There, CARICOM foreign ministers and India's Minister of External Affairs, the Hon. Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, agreed to strengthen collaboration in areas such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, technology, energy, health, and development financing. A decision was made to hold a meeting of the CARICOM-India Joint Commission by the end of 2024 to deepen mechanisms of collaboration.

● China

China was represented at the Community's Fiftieth Anniversary commemorative event in Trinidad and Tobago in July by Assistant Minister, Her Excellency Hua Chunying, who praised CARICOM for its distinctive and increasingly important role on the international scene in protecting Member States' interests. The Minister indicated that China intends to increase its contribution to disaster prevention in the Region to USD1 million through the China-Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Fund.

Later in the year, China provided a USD100,000 grant to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to strengthen its capacity for disaster relief, prevention, and reduction. The funding was part of the larger USD1M support package China's Assistant Minister Chunying announced in July.

● Korea

In February 2023, CARICOM foreign ministers met with a Korean envoy ahead of the 44th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government in The Bahamas. They discussed the CARICOM-Korea High-Level Partnership Forum, Korea's plans to increase its annual contribution to the Korea-CARICOM Fund, and the expansion of CARICOM-Korea cooperation in climate change, food security, information and communication technology (ICT), energy security, and healthcare. Korea also sought CARICOM's support for its bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Busan.

In July, CARICOM Heads of Government welcomed Korea's Prime Minister, H.E. Han Duck-soo as a special guest to the Conference's 45th Regular Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago.

Heads of Government thanked Korea for its ongoing efforts to strengthen ties with CARICOM and welcomed the Prime Minister's invitation to expand collaboration in climate change, marine environment, food security, renewable energy, innovation, and digitalisation in both the public and private sectors.

Following Korea's promise to CARICOM foreign ministers in February to strengthen the Korea-CARICOM Fund, the Prime Minister announced a USD3M increase to the Fund in 2024.



Korea's Prime Minister, H.E. Han Duck-soo addressing CARICOM

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The Thirteenth High-Level Forum on the Korea-Caribbean Partnership took place in October in Seoul, Korea, where the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish the Korea-Caribbean Joint Ocean Research Centre. The MoU is aimed at strengthening collaboration in marine science and technology between Korea and the Greater Caribbean.

● Japan

CARICOM and Japan maintained close ties during the reporting period through initiatives including the CARICOM Secretariat's Solar Photovoltaic Power Generation project. In March 2023, the implementing partners of the project, the governments of Japan and Guyana, the CARICOM Secretariat and the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA), signed the soft component completion certification following a month-long training programme of the Secretariat's Maintenance and Information Staff.

This training provided deeper understanding on how to run and maintain a Building Energy Management System (BEMS). The BEMS facilitates tracking energy supplied and consumed from the national grid and the Solar Photovoltaic Power Generation Plant, which was constructed on the grounds of the CARICOM Secretariat with funding from the Government of Japan.

CARICOM Foreign Ministers met with Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Takei Shunsuke, during the Council of Foreign Ministers' Twenty-Sixth Meeting in Jamaica in May 2023. Both sides expressed satisfaction with CARICOM-Japan relationship and pledged to strengthen it even further. They addressed the CARICOM-Japan Year of Friendship 2024, seeing it as an excellent opportunity for cultural exchange and strengthening the CARICOM-Japan cooperation.

During the meeting, Japan unveiled the logo that will be utilised for the Friendship Year activities. In November, the Japanese government approved a project developed by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency entitled Advancement of the Regional Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (MHEWS) Programme for Enhanced Disaster Management in CDEMA Participating States. The project aims to improve disaster protection systems and networks in CARICOM Member States.

● United Arab Emirates

CARICOM and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) deepened their growing friendship in February 2023 through discussions which centred on the UAE's hosting of the Twenty-Eighth (28th) Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change. During an engagement at the Council for Foreign Ministers' Seventeenth Special Meeting in The Bahamas, the UAE signaled its willingness to advance CARICOM's concerns on climate finance, mitigation and adaptation, and loss and damage, at COP 28 in December 2023.

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

CARICOM and the UAE continued discussions in July, when CARICOM Heads of Government held a virtual exchange with H.E. Dr. Ahmed Al Jaber, President-designate of COP28, during the Forty-Fifth (45th) Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government. Dr. Jaber stated that his presidency would prioritise an action-oriented, consensus-driven approach to climate change mitigation to safeguard the environment and improve food security. The Heads of Government applauded the decision to advocate for donor nations to meet their climate finance pledges and for large industrial countries to maintain carbon emission reduction targets.

The inaugural Saudi Arabia-CARICOM Summit, held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on November 16, 2023, was co-chaired by His Royal Highness of Saudi Arabia His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Dominica's Prime Minister, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit with the participation of Heads of States and Government of CARICOM and the CARICOM Secretary-General.

The Community and Saudi Arabia exchanged views on issues of common interest and ways to expand and advance their partnership. They committed to promoting peace, security, and sustainable development, exploring cooperation in areas such as education, health, and energy security, and strengthening trade and investment relations. CARICOM affirmed support for Saudi Arabia's bid to host Expo 2030 and both sides emphasised the importance of cultural exchange and dialogue to foster mutual understanding and respect.

CARICOM and Saudi Arabia agreed pursue cooperation on circular agriculture, climate action, and the promotion of equitable climate financing for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Community welcomed Saudi Arabia's Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) and its announcement to establish and host a dedicated MGI Secretariat and allocate US \$2.5 billion to support MGI projects and governance. Heads of Government also supported the establishment of an international water organization in Riyadh and endorsed Saudi Arabia's bid to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup. Both parties committed to hosting the next Saudi Arabia-CARICOM Summit in 2026.

EUROPE

● The European Union

During the year under review, there was continued cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the Community. A CARICOM Skilled Workers Attachment Programme was implemented in March with assistance from the EU to enable secondary school teachers, border control officers, CARICOM Youth Ambassadors, and CSME Focal Points to engage in work attachments in different CARICOM countries. The participants were exposed to best practices for the implementation of CSME administrative procedures that they might use in their home countries. Her Excellency Malgorzata Wasilewska, the EU's Ambassador to CARICOM, emphasised the organisation's ongoing commitment to the Community, during the opening event.

The European Union also provided funding for justice and legal sector projects, through the Eleventh European Development Fund (11th EDF). In March, the CCJ and the CARICOM Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to upgrade the ICT infrastructure in the CCJ courtroom to improve the court user experience for litigants and attorneys. Funding for the project is through the EDF.

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

● Azerbaijan

In February, the Council of foreign ministers met with Azerbaijan in its capacity as chair of the Non-Aligned Movement. The two sides addressed plans for the NAM Contact Group on Post-Pandemic Recovery Summit, which was held in Azerbaijan in March. CARICOM Foreign Ministers also acknowledged Azerbaijan's commitment to set up a fund to help Small Island Developing States recover from the pandemic.

● United Kingdom

During the reporting period, CARICOM and the United Kingdom maintained a positive relationship. In March 2023, the CARICOM Secretary-General met with Hon. David Rutley, the UK Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Americas and the Caribbean, in Guyana.



THE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE CARICOM SG AND HON. DAVID RUTLEY

The Secretary-General stressed the significance of the international community making stronger commitments to reverse the effects of global warming on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). She emphasised the importance of SIDS accessing concessional development finance depending on their specific circumstances. She also urged the UK to assist CARICOM's efforts to persuade international financial institutions (IFIs) to review their graduation policy, which excludes small and middle-income nations from concessional funding based on flawed criteria.

At the Eleventh UK-Caribbean Forum in Jamaica in May 2023, CARICOM foreign ministers met with their counterparts from the Dominican Republic and Cuba as well as the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, the Rt. Hon. James Cleverly. Deeper cooperation between the UK and the Caribbean was discussed during the meeting, which was co-chaired by the UK Foreign Secretary and Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith, Jamaican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

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Topics covered included trade in goods and services, financing for development, climate change and environment, immigration and Windrush, food security, health and education, the situation in Haiti, and security cooperation. They also discussed the implementation of the Tenth UK-Caribbean Forum Action Plan.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Caribbean Community and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland signed a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Establishment of a Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism. The CARICOM Secretary-General signed for the Community and the UK Foreign Secretary signed for the United Kingdom.



Family photo to mark the 11th UK-Caribbean Forum

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The CARICOM Secretary-General met with His Excellency Luis Abinader, the President of the Dominican Republic, during his visit to Guyana in June 2023. In their discussions they noted the situation in Haiti, the CELAC-EU Summit, the developing bilateral ties between the Dominican Republic and CARICOM Member States as well as cooperation within CARIFORUM.

CARICOM continued to leverage international opportunities to press for the lifting of Cuba's trade embargo. Heads of Government used their platforms at the Seventy-Eighth (78th) Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September to call for the lifting of the unacceptable embargo on Cuba, emphasising that the economic and political aggression against the country, and its designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, must end.



CARICOM SG (L) interacting with President of the Dominican Republic (R)

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

HIGHLIGHTS OF CARICOM'S RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA

● CARICOM and USA

CARICOM-USA ties remained strong during the reporting period through political, ministerial, and official dialogue. Foreign Ministers engaged representatives of the USA on discussions including the Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis (PACC 2030) Action Committees, during the Seventeenth Special Meeting of COFCOR in February. Both sides agreed that four committees which were tasked with coordinating cooperation on Development Financing, Facilitating Clean Energy Project Development and Investment, Food Security and Enhancing Local Capacity for Climate Adaptation and Resilience, and Deepening Collaboration, would be combined into three Action Committees. These were Energy Security, Access to Finance, and Food Security, allowing for more concentrated debates on those topics on the Draft Action Plan to progress the goals within those areas.



U.S. Vice President (L), and Chairman of CARICOM (R)

The Heads hailed the engagement as a helpful platform for meaningful conversation on PACC 2030, firearm trafficking, the situation in Haiti, international financial architecture reform, and hemispheric issues such as the United States' sanctions on Venezuela.

The Heads of Government acknowledged the progress made by the High-Level Committee on Food Security and emphasised the importance of taking accelerated action in keeping with CARICOM's vision to reduce the regional food import bill by 25% by 2025.

CARICOM acknowledged the United States' expressed commitment to increase resources to combat firearm trafficking and underscored the need for the United States to step up measures to manage porous borders and share intelligence to help combat the proliferation of firearms in the Caribbean.



U.S. - CARIBBEAN LEADERS MEETING

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

In July, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and U.S. Minority Leader Congressman Hakeem Jeffries led a bi-partisan group to the commemorative event to mark the Fiftieth (50th) Anniversary of the Signing of the Original Treaty of Chaguaramas in Trinidad and Tobago.



U.S. Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, addressing CARICOM



U.S. Minority Leader Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, addressing CARICOM

The high-ranking US government officials congratulated CARICOM on its 50-year unity and outlined how the US has supported the Community over the years.

After a four-year break, the CARICOM-US Trade and Investment Council (TIC) reconvened in Guyana in October 2023 to renew discussions on bilateral trade issues, including the Caribbean Basin Initiative Trade Preference Programmes. The meeting was co-chaired by His Excellency Felix Gregoire, Ambassador of Dominica to CARICOM; and Ambassador Jayme White, Deputy US Trade Representative. Several CARICOM Member States, including Belize, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, were present at the meeting.

The United States was represented by officials from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Commerce. The discussions centred on agricultural sustainability and food security, labor, effective regulatory practices, trade in services, intellectual property, trade facilitation, and transportation.

In November, the Third Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Community - USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean Mission Strategic Partnership Review was conducted in a hybrid format to review progress and set new targets for the Regional Development Objectives Grant Agreement (RDOAG) 2020-2025. The discussions focused on collaboration on resilience (climate action and energy), youth, ICTs and cybersecurity, economic recovery, food security, and health.

SECTION 4 – FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AND FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

● Canada

In February, the Conference of Heads of Government welcomed Canada's Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, to the Conference's Forty-Fourth Regular Meeting in The Bahamas. The leaders discussed the situation in Haiti, climate change and climate financing, trade, enhanced people-to-people contact, and regional security, among other topics. The Canadian Prime Minister unveiled a new \$44.8 million financial effort to address the Caribbean's climate issue. The fund is expected to support projects led by organisations such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (5Cs) and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund that aim to improve marine and coastal ecosystem management, increase water security, and assist Caribbean countries in dealing with the effects of climate change.



CANADA'S PRIME MINISTER (3RD FROM L) INTERACTING WITH CARICOM HEADS

On the trade front, Prime Minister Trudeau stated that Canada intends to renew a waiver from the World Trade Organization that allows goods from the Region to enter Canada duty-free after 2023, through the CARIBAN programme. CARICOM Heads of Government emphasised the importance of enhanced people-to-people exchange between CARICOM and Canada, including the reinstatement of visa-free travel. In response, Prime Minister Trudeau stated that Canada intends to make it easier for trustworthy visitors from CARICOM and other regional countries to travel.

In July 2023, Canadian officials attended the Community's Fiftieth Anniversary celebration of the signing of the Original Treaty of Chaguaramas in Trinidad and Tobago. Hon. Maninder Sidhu, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade, and Economic Development of Canada, paid tribute on Canada's behalf, noting that the country remains a trusted partner in efforts to combat climate change through coordinated support to action for climate financing, adaptation, mitigation, and resilience as well as clean energy transition and climate-smart agriculture.

As natural hemispheric allies with robust and long-lasting foundations built on deep people-to-people, historical and cultural ties, and mutual respect, CARICOM and Canada established a new Strategic Partnership to deepen cooperation in trade, development, health, the environment, defense, and finance, among other sectors. The Strategic Partnership was signed in October 2023 during the first CARICOM-Canada Summit held in Canada.

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It is intended to function as a permanent joint mechanism for regular discussion and ad hoc consultations on issues of mutual interest. Additionally, it aims to strengthen the current partnership between Canada and CARICOM by organising frequent meetings at the Heads of Government, ministerial, and senior official levels.

MULTILATERAL AND HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS

● United Nations

Heads of Government and foreign ministers used the Seventy-Eighth (78th) Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to strengthen diplomatic relations with members of the global community. Heads of Government addressed the General Assembly, focusing on climate change, a balanced approach to net zero carbon emissions, sustainable development, food security, health, peace and security, and development financing.



H.E. Dennis Francis addressing the UNGA

The Community welcomed the appointment of Trinidad and Tobago-born H.E. Dennis Francis as President of the UNGA for the fiscal year 2024-2025.

In his address to the General Assembly, Ambassador Francis delivered an emotional plea for the global community to assess progress and identify remaining hurdles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS

In January 2023, CARICOM attended the Seventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Summit, convened by His Excellency Dr Alberto Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic and outgoing President Pro Tempore of CELAC, focused on strengthening CELAC and promoting long-term growth in the Latin American and Caribbean subregions. The areas of discussion included post-pandemic economic recovery, food and energy security; science, technology, and innovation for social inclusion; digital transformation; environmental cooperation, migration, and health.

CARICOM took part in various Association of Caribbean States (ACS) events, including the Seventh (7th) International Cooperation Conference of the ACS in Guatemala in May of that year. The meeting focused on ways to strengthen integration in the Greater Caribbean Region in climate change, transportation, trade, tourism, and disaster risk reduction. In July, H.E. Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Business, and International Cooperation of the Republic of Suriname, and Chairman of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) Ministerial Council, presided over the first Policy Meeting of the ACS-CARICOM-SELA-SICA in Trinidad and Tobago under the theme 'Coordinating Cooperation to Achieve Synergy and Impact'. The event was attended by the CARICOM Secretary-General who emphasised the need for increased technical collaboration across the Secretariats.

SECTION 5 COMMUNITY RELATIONS



GOVERNANCE - STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

50th Anniversary Celebrations

The Jubilee Anniversary of the signing of the Original Treaty of Chaguaramas was celebrated in the reporting period under the theme, 50 Years Strong: A Solid Foundation to Build On. During the celebrations, the Community reflected on the seminal achievements of regional integration and recommitted to the vision set out by the Founding Fathers for a united and prosperous Community.



Raising of the Flags of CARICOM Member States, Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago

On 4 July 2023, CARICOM Heads of Government journeyed to Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago, the birthplace of the signing of the Original Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973.

Heads of Government conducted a Fiftieth Anniversary Ceremonial Event which featured a flag-raising ceremony, remarks from the Conference Chair, Host Prime Minister, and the Dean of CARICOM’s Youth Ambassadors.

The Heads of Government also signed a document which was deposited in a time capsule to be opened when the Community celebrates its centenary.



The Time Capsule Plaque



Tree planting to mark the 50th Anniversary of CARICOM



Flags raised in uniformity

Preceding the jubilee anniversary, a logo designed by Jamaican creative Andre Bartley was selected as the winning entry in a Logo Competition for CARICOM’s 50th anniversary. Bartley’s logo design was selected by a regional judging panel from a field of 40 entries. It branded all communication products and events which celebrated CARICOM’s fiftieth anniversary.



The logo showcased the numeral 50, wrapped with a ribbon of the CARICOM flags and included the 50th anniversary slogan. Describing the creative process, Mr Bartley said the logo symbolised unity represented by the flow of the ribbon that was intended to convey Member States united through the 50 years.

CARICOM’s jubilee anniversary coincided with the Forty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government. The opening ceremony in Trinidad and Tobago also served as the official launch of the Fiftieth anniversary celebrations. CARICOM Secretary-General, Dr Carla Barnett opened the meeting and highlighted the Community’s milestone achievements. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the leaders who laid the foundation for integration, and emphasised the importance of youth involvement in the integration process.

Incoming Chair of the Conference of Heads of Government, the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister of Dominica; Host Prime Minister, Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; Outgoing Chairman of the Conference, the Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister of The Bahamas; and United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency Antonio Guterres, also addressed the Conference.



FAMILY PHOTO TO MARK THE 45TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE

The three Prime Ministers spoke about CARICOM’s significance, the resilience of the people of the Region, and the need for collective action to advance the integration process. The Chair noted that the 50th anniversary offered an opportunity to make transformative decisions to shape the future of the Community for the next 50 years. He highlighted reviving the Single Domestic Space that once allowed citizens to traverse freely across the Region, regional air travel, and support to Haiti as critical next steps for the Community.

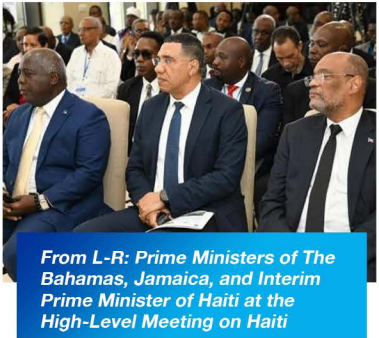
Dr the Hon. Keith Rowley observed that CARICOM had charted its destiny and was working diligently to serve the people of the Community. While at times, the going may be slow or the outcome may not have been readily apparent, Prime Minister Rowley said CARICOM continues to build on the strong foundation laid 50 years ago.

Immediate Past Chair, the Hon. Philip Davis, noted that during his tenure, regional cooperation was demonstrated through strong support from the Community for the Bridgetown Initiative; efforts to address crime and violence and the illegal trafficking of guns into the Region; as well as a regional response to mitigate the effects of climate change. His Excellency Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, who was a Special Guest at the Meeting, congratulated CARICOM on its 50th Anniversary. He recognised the Region’s efforts to extend its Good Offices to Haiti, as well as its leadership on climate action and the plight of Small Island and Low-lying Coastal Developing States, the international financial infrastructure, and financing for development.

As Heads of Government pursued the Founding Father’s vision for a united and prosperous Community, they took pivotal decisions to work toward the free movement of all CARICOM nationals with the Community at the Forty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Conference. Heads of Government also agreed to advance measures to bring the regional capital market into being, with appropriate amendments made to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Support to Haiti

The Community continued the good offices' role to support a Haitian-led solution to the multi-dimensional crisis facing the country. In February 2023, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, led a CARICOM Special Mission to Haiti for a one-day working visit. The mission engaged with Haitian officials including interim Prime Minister of Haiti, His Excellency Dr. Ariel Henry, the Director General of the Haitian National Police and representatives of the High Transition Council, Political Accords, Political Parties, Civil Society, Religious Groups, and the Private Sector.



From L-R: Prime Ministers of The Bahamas, Jamaica, and Interim Prime Minister of Haiti at the High-Level Meeting on Haiti

The mission was the first opportunity for CARICOM officials to observe the situation on the ground and directly engage stakeholders in the continuing search for a solution to the ongoing situation in Haiti which was characterised by instability and destabilising gang violence. To continue CARICOM’s good offices’ role, Heads of Government appointed the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) in May 2023 comprising former prime ministers Perry Christie of The Bahamas, Bruce Golding of Jamaica, and Kenny Anthony of Saint Lucia.

The group was appointed to, inter alia, accompany Haitian stakeholders in their efforts to reach a political agreement for a path to general elections and support CARICOM advocacy for international support to Haiti.

A pivotal first meeting between the EPG and a group of Haitian stakeholders was held in Kingston, Jamaica in June 2023. An agreement was reached on the idea of a Presidential Council to facilitate the balance of power in the transitional governance of the country. Five consultations were held with stakeholders, yielding a Framework Agreement on a Transitional Governance arrangement toward free and fair elections. On the security front, the year under review saw commitments from regional and international partners for a Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2699 (2023) on 2 October 2023 authorizing a multinational security mission to Haiti.

CARICOM advocated for the international community’s assistance to return Haiti to peace and security. CARICOM also expressed strong support for upholding the core tenets of international law including the respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, most notably in the Guyana-Venezuela boundary dispute.

In December, in Argyle, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Presidents Dr. Irfaan Ali of Guyana and Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela held discussions on matters consequential to the territory in dispute between their two countries. The meeting was facilitated by Prime Ministers; Dr. Ralph Gonsalves and Roosevelt Skerit, with other Caribbean leaders and international observers, including representatives from the UN and CELAC, also in attendance.

All parties at the meeting reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace. Guyana and Venezuela agreed not to threaten or use force against each other, regardless of any existing disputes. During the reporting period, the Community also reiterated its unequivocal support for Belize’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, amid the territorial claim by the Republic of Guatemala against Belize.

LEGAL SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

The Secretariat represented the Community at the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in the following cases:

- DCP Successors Limited and the State of Jamaica and the Caribbean Community

A. LEGAL INSTRUMENTS SIGNED/RATIFIED DURING THE YEAR 2023

The following Instruments were signed/ratified/acceded to by Member States in 2023:

- Protocol to Amend Article 32 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

o Signed by: Guyana on 6 January 2023

o Signed by Trinidad and Tobago on 17 February 2023

- Protocol to Amend the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy to Allow for Enhanced Cooperation among Member States and to Address Related Issues

o Signed by: Guyana on 5 January 2023

o Signed by Trinidad and Tobago on 17 February 2023

- Amendment to Annex III of the Agreement relating to the Operation of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF)

o Signed by: Trinidad and Tobago on 5 July 2023

- Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Accreditation Agency for Education and Training

o Signed by Haiti on 17 February 2023

B. AGREEMENTS RATIFIED

- Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA)

o Ratified by: Suriname (10 August 2023)

- Protocol to Amend the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy to Allow for Enhanced Cooperation among Member States and to Address Related Issues

o Ratified by: St. Kitts and Nevis on 27 April 2023

- Protocol on Contingent Rights

o Ratified by Guyana on 8 November 2023

- Agreement on the Return or Sharing of Recovered Assets

o Ratified by Belize on 9 November 2023

- Protocol to amend Article 83 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy

o Ratified by Trinidad and Tobago on 17 February 2023

o Ratified by St. Kitts and Nevis on 27 April 2023

- Amendment to Annex III of the Agreement relating to the Operation of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF)

o Ratified by: Trinidad and Tobago on 5 July 2023

C. AGREEMENTS ACCEDED TO:

- Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)

o *Acceded to by Montserrat on 2 November 2023*

D. AGREEMENTS/MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (202

- Memorandum of Understanding between the General Secretariat of the Organisation of American States and the Caribbean Community - 13 March 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland acting through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (“FCDO”) – 14 March 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding with the Caribbean Court of Justice – Governing the Implementation of the Project: Support to the Effective Administration of Criminal Justice Systems in the Caribbean – 2 March 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Concerning the Establishment of A Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism – 18 May 2023
- Memorandum of Understanding with the Caribbean Agency for Justice Solutions (CAJS) on Technological and Development Cooperation – 20 April 2023
- Development Cooperation Arrangement (2023-2027) with the Government of New Zealand – 6 June 2023
- Grant Agreement between CARICOM and the Government of Indonesia for Capacity Building on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaption to Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Central American Integration System (SICA) Member States – June 2023

Ambassadors Accredited to the Community

During the reporting period, the Community strengthened relations with Member States and third countries through the accreditation of plenipotentiary representatives. These were **H.E. Larry Vaughan of St. Kitts and Nevis**; **H.E. Dr Christophe Eick of the Federal Republic of Germany**; **H.E. Theodore N. Tsakiris of the Hellenic Republic (Greece)**; **H.E. Dr Amit S. Telang of the Republic of India**; **H.E. Mr Itai Bardov of the State of Israel**; **H.E. Mr Rytis Paulauskas of the Republic of Lithuania**; **H.E. Mr Mauricio Vizcaíno Crespo of the United Mexican States (Mexico)**; **H.E. Mr Gilles Roduit of Switzerland**; and **H.E. Nicole D. Theriot of the United States of America**.



SECTION 6

CARIBBEAN FORUM OF AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES



The Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States (CARIFORUM), comprises Caribbean States which are members of the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). The CARIFORUM Directorate has four (4) broad focal areas:

	Policy and political dialogue with the EU in the context of their shared commitment to global peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This is manifested in bi-regional policy and political dialogue and collaboration on matters of mutual interest in global fora.
	Development Cooperation with the EU and with the UK.
	Trade, with the EU and its Member States within the framework of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement and with the UK under the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement.
	Regional integration.

The Secretary-General of CARICOM also serves as the Secretary-General of CARIFORUM. The Secretariat headed by a Director-General, supports the Secretary-General. During 2023, the CARIFORUM Directorate continued to address each area of its mandate. Some of the major achievements were as follows:

Policy and Political Dialogue

- CARIFORUM-EU Mini-Summit, 17 July 2023, Brussels.**
- The engagement focused on:**
- Climate change and financing the Bridgetown Initiative
 - Food crisis ● The situation in Haiti
 - CARIFORUM-EU relations cooperation and coordination
 - Blacklisting ● Market access challenges

- Bi-lateral meetings held between the Secretary General of CARIFORUM and high-level EU representatives.** Ms. Helena König, Deputy Secretary General for Economic and Global Issues of the European External Action Service on 15 March 2023 and with Ms. Myriam Ferran, Deputy Director for International Partnerships on 23 November 2023.
- Two Meetings of the Council of Ministers of CARIFORUM.** The Council of Ministers of CARIFORUM met in July and December 2023. Matters relating to the operations of CARIFORUM, implementation of the Post-Cotonou Agreement, the operationalisation of the Caribbean-EU Regional Protocol and participation in the joint bodies, formed part of the agenda.

Development Cooperation

- Post-Cotonou Programming** - CARIFORUM Senior Officials and National Focal Points engaged in discussions focused on the establishment of a Coordinating Mechanism for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).
- Funding and Research Opportunities** - States and regional entities were provided with information to access funding under the ADELANTE Triangular Cooperation Window European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean 2021- 2024.
- Two (2) information sessions to promote opportunities for research cooperation between the EU and CARIFORUM were held on 28 June 2023 and 13 September 2023. The sessions especially focused on the European Commission’s Horizon Europe Programme.
- Support for Regional Crime and Security Initiatives** - An IT Equipment Needs Assessment for the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) was completed in November 2023. The recommendations will guide the implementation of the Procurement Component of the 11th EDF Support to the effective administration of criminal justice systems in the Caribbean.
- Management of the €331.95 million 11th European Development Fund (EDF) Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP)** - The 11th CRIP addresses three (3) focal areas namely:
- Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration.
 - Climate Change, Disaster Management, Environment and Sustainable Energy.
 - Crime and Security.
- Twenty-seven (27) projects/sub-projects are managed by the Directorate to ensure achievement of the expected results.

- New Regional Programmes** – Support was provided for the following three (3) programmes under the Caribbean Regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (CRMIP) 2021-2027 for the 2024 Action Plan:
- EU Business Development Programme (2024-2028) EUR 5 million
 - Support to the Implementation of the EPA (2024-2028) - EUR 15 million
 - Pharmaceutical Manufacturing and Strengthening of the Health System - EUR 5 million.
- Launch of the EU-CARIFORUM Food Security Programme - EUR 19 million** This programme seeks to improve the resilience and sustainability of food systems in the Caribbean by promoting food and nutrition security, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations.
- This supports the commitment to reduce the Caribbean’s food import bill by 25% by 2025. The launch took place on 23 November 2023.
- €5 million Legal Drafting Capacity Building** – Commencement of studies in the CARIFORUM Legislative Drafting and International Trade Professional Development Microprogram in collaboration with the University of Ottawa under the Capacity Building in Legal Drafting Project.
- Signature of the Samoa Agreement.** This Agreement was officially signed on 15 November 2023 by the EU and its Member States and some OACPS members. Provisional application commenced on 1 January 2024.

Support to address Sargassum in the Region. Consultations were held with the EU with the aim of identifying key areas for cooperation regarding the implementation of strategies to manage the massive arrival of sargassum in the Region. Resources were reallocated from the contingencies of the 11th EDF Wider Caribbean Cooperation Programme to address this issue.

International Trade

Market Analysis Support (With ITC under the CARIFORUM-UKTP Programme) – The skills of local institutions and the private sector to identify market opportunities and conditions continued to be enhanced with the support of the CARIFORUM-UK Programme, coordinated by the Secretariat.

Refresher training was provided at the regional level on the effective utilization of the tools and the complementary benefits derived from the leveraging of multiple tools, targeting the private sector as well. Tutorial videos remain available on the CARIFORUM website to support the use of the tool.

Support to enhance the legal and policy frameworks of CARIFORUM States – A Manual on Distinctiveness and Types of Marks was prepared for CARIFORUM States through a series of workshops and other information-gathering efforts.

It can be used as an extension of WIPO's Trademark Manual to increase transparency, legal certainty and predictability for the benefit of CARIFORUM States. Legal drafting support was also provided to drafts bills that support the exploitation of IP benefits in specific States.

Operationalisation of the CARIFORUM-United Kingdom (UK) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) – Support was provided for the implementation of the CARIFORUM-UK EPA through a Technical Assistance (TA) Project under the UK Trade Partnership Programme. The First Meeting of the Joint CARIFORUM-UK Council was held on 19 December 2023.

Institutional Strengthening for Intellectual Property Offices – Offices with responsibility for Intellectual Property in CARIFORUM States benefitted from strengthened technical capacities and skills on trademark-related areas, with specific emphasis on legal matters and accreditation.

Given the capacity and resource constraints faced when providing services to meet the changing needs of the private sector, continued training of administrators in the IP system is essential. Consequently, the technical capacities and skills of CARIFORUM IPOs on trademark examination were strengthened.

Origin-Linked Products (OLP) Mentorship Programme – The comprehensive Mentorship Programme developed as part of the CarIPI Project and coordinated by the Secretariat, continued to yield significant benefits and opportunities for CARIFORUM States in 2023.

This Programme, which provides in-person technical expertise to a range of producer groups across CARIFORUM, facilitated field missions to select CARIFORUM States to assist producers in devising IP strategies to secure certifications for their GIs, certification marks or collective marks, a further layer of support to compound the initiatives and expertise provided to date.

Awareness Raising of the Contribution of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to Economic and Social Development – Through this activity, business support organizations (BSOs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were targeted through a range of initiatives under the CarIPI Project, coordinated by the Secretariat, to gain a competitive edge through building, protecting and managing their value chains using intellectual property rights, both at the state and regional levels.

A broad approach to raising awareness was also adopted, namely the launch of the IP in Schools Project, designed to reinforce the positive perception of how IP rights can be used to generate value and improve livelihoods in all sectors of the economy. Other CARIFORUM interventions supported by the CarIPI Project can be reviewed at <https://internationalipcooperation.eu/en/caripi/activities>

Regional Integration

Relations with FCORs, OCTs, DFA and Collectivities – Continued support was provided to the INTERREG Caribbean. Monitoring and Technical Committee Rules of Procedures and Criteria for the selection of projects were finalised. Discussions on a CARIFORUM - INTERREG Proposal aimed at strengthening and deepening wider Caribbean cooperation advanced.

Consultations were also undertaken with Martinique's Advisor for External Action and Territorial Diplomacy to prepare a proposal outlining initiatives aimed at providing a better understanding of the provisions for the FCORs and OCTs in the Caribbean.

Comprehensive Review of the Operations of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) – The review of the operations of the Agreement was conducted to determine, inter alia, its impact, status of implementation and costs and consequences of implementation.

Joint technical work with the European Commission progressed toward the finalisation of the Joint Five-Year Review Report. Technical level engagements continue as the two parties endeavor toward a conclusion of the exercise.

Operation of a Regional Technical Cooperation Facility – This Facility seeks to address issues hampering the successful implementation of the Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP) as it relates to Wider Caribbean Cooperation and Integration. It also seeks to advance cooperation activities among CARIFORUM States through improved capacity building, improved intra-CARIFORUM and Wider Caribbean cooperation, activities in support of CARICOM/CARIFORUM/FCORs/OCTs cooperation, and support intra-CARIFORUM cooperation.

Possible support available under the programme was highlighted at a Kick-off Meeting held on 4 August 2023.

Communication and Visibility

Significant effort has been made to enhance the visibility and raise awareness of the CARIFORUM-EU partnership and development cooperation. With a steadily growing social media following, CARIFORUM citizens are informed of the Directorate’s work and of opportunities that can benefit them. Information Notices are distributed bi-monthly to key stakeholders to support their approaches to leveraging trade with the EU.

Information was also shared on key subjects and events including the signing of the Samoa Agreement, 11th EDF Technical Cooperation Facility (TCF) and Caribbean Cooperation Facility Projects, Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), Horizon 2024 Info Day, capacity building opportunities for enterprises in IP and Legal Drafting, benefits of CRMIP (2021-2027) financed by the European Union, and highlights of the 11th EDF CRIP. Work and memorabilia produced by CARIFORUM were also branded.

For more information on CARIFORUM: <https://twitter.com/CariforumE>; <https://www.facebook.com/CariforumEu/>; <https://www.linkedin.com/company/cariforumeuepa>.



SECTION 7 REGIONAL STATISTICS PROGRAMME



SECTION 7 – REGIONAL STATISTICS PROGRAMME

“Building Resilience in the Caribbean Community”

REGIONAL STATISTICS PROGRAMME

● CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS)

The Secretariat made significant strides in 2023 to enhance statistical capacity and collaboration across the Region, under the aegis of the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS). Success was recorded in advancing the monitoring and evaluation frameworks, census strategies, support to Member States, and collaboration with international development partners.

During the period under review, the Secretariat achieved a major milestone with the advancement of the monitoring and evaluation framework including a compliance scorecard for the RSDS. This framework, which is critical to track progress and ensure alignment with regional statistical goals, was presented to the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) at its Forty-Eighth meeting in The Bahamas in October 2023.

● 2020 Round of Population and Housing Census

During the reporting period, the Secretariat conducted activities to implement the regional strategy for the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Census. These included assessing the progress of the census and related activities under the Regional Census Coordinating Committee; procuring census-related equipment and software through funding by International Development Partners; and upgrading the Census e-Portal to enhance access to census information.

Additionally, the Secretariat initiated work on the preparation of a consultancy, supported by the 11th EDF, to strengthen capacity in census data processing, cleaning, analysis, and dissemination, incorporating Geographic Information System (GIS) and infographics. Several projects were also advanced to enhance regional statistics, covering areas such as National Accounts, Trade in Services, the development of a Central Repository, and an electronic platform for training - the Electronic CARICOM Institute for Statistics Training and Research (e-Cistar).

● Support to Member States

A significant number of projects were initiated and completed to enhance statistics, covering areas such as National Accounts, Trade in Services, the development of a Central Repository, and an electronic platform for training, the Electronic CARICOM Institute for Statistics Training and Research (e-Cistar).

During the year, efforts were also focused on developing Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in various statistical areas, with five Centres established in Belize, Suriname, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago. These CoEs provide technical assistance to other countries. Additionally, through the support of the Project for the Regional Advancement of Statistics in the Caribbean (PRASC) and the 11th EDF, computer hardware and software for CoEs were procured.

SECTION 7 – REGIONAL STATISTICS PROGRAMME

“Building Resilience in the Caribbean Community”

APPROVAL OF THE CARICOM GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS ON THE COLLECTION AND USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AS THE REGIONAL STANDARD FOR THE COLLECTION OF VAWG ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

The CARICOM Guidelines and Protocols on the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women and girls was endorsed as the regional standard for the collection of VAWG Administrative Data by the Forty-Eighth (48th) Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) in October 2023.



Mr. Halim Brizan, RSP Director, (3rd from left) at the workshop on Standards for the management of Violence Against Women and Girls Administrative Data

The Secretariat, one of the coordinators of the workshop, approved the CARICOM Agreed Minimum Standards for the Management of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Administrative Data. The other workshop partner was the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean on the Regional Spotlight Initiative Project.

The Spotlight Initiative Project also facilitated the enhancement of skills for producing, managing, and utilising VAWG data by expanding CARICOM's pool of experts. This included training for conducting prevalence surveys, implementing standards, collecting qualitative data, and using data to inform policy and research.

Work also progressed on a project to design and assess the Regional Statistics Programme and provide recommendations for a structured, sustainable and strategic approach to its institutional enhancements.

The support from these projects came from the EU through the 11th EDF, UNWomen, CDB, PRASC and various UN organisations and specialised agencies.

SECTION 7 – REGIONAL STATISTICS PROGRAMME

“Building Resilience in the Caribbean Community”

STATISTICAL ADVOCACY

The Secretariat continued to observe Caribbean Statistics Day on 15 October by raising awareness of the importance of statistics in the development of the Region.

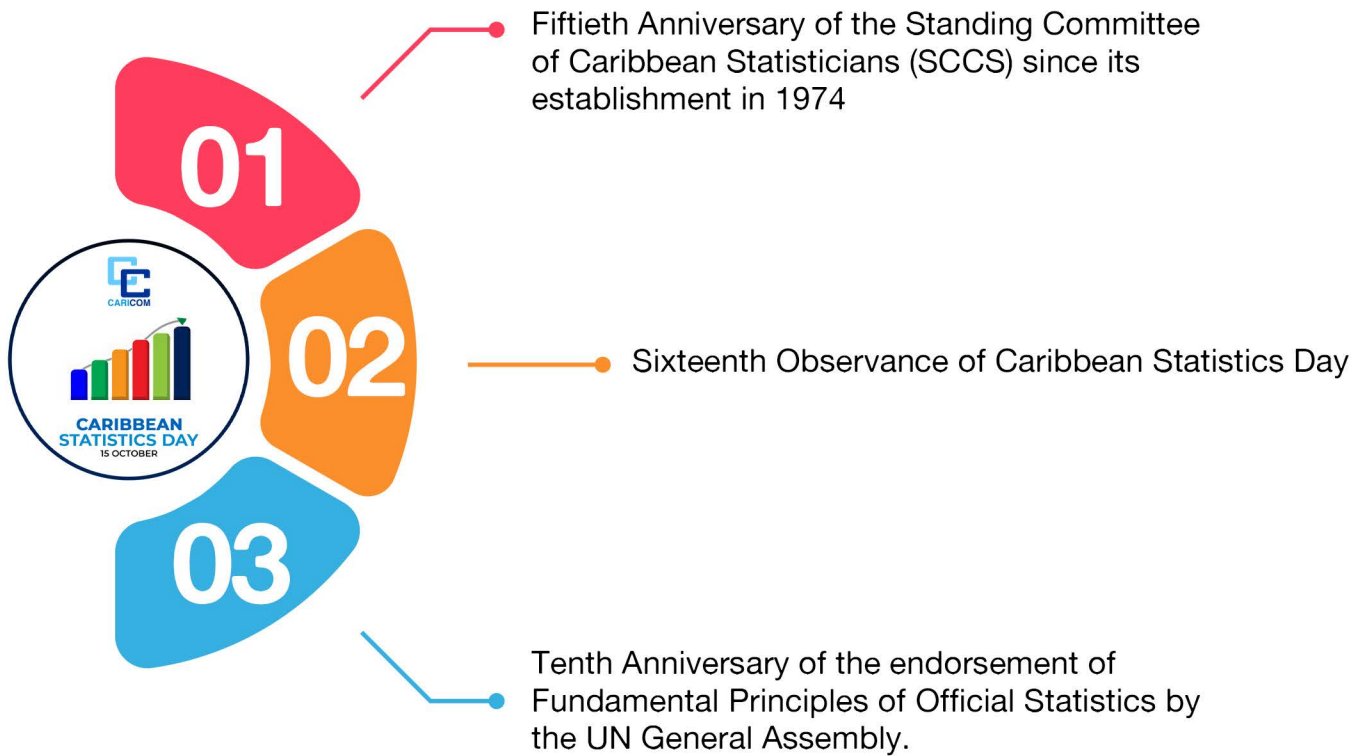
The theme for the observance in 2023 was ‘One Voice, One CARICOM, Everyone Counts’. Some of the activities to commemorate this occasion included school visits, radio shows, quiz competitions at the CARICOM Secretariat, and messages from the Secretary-General and other officials.



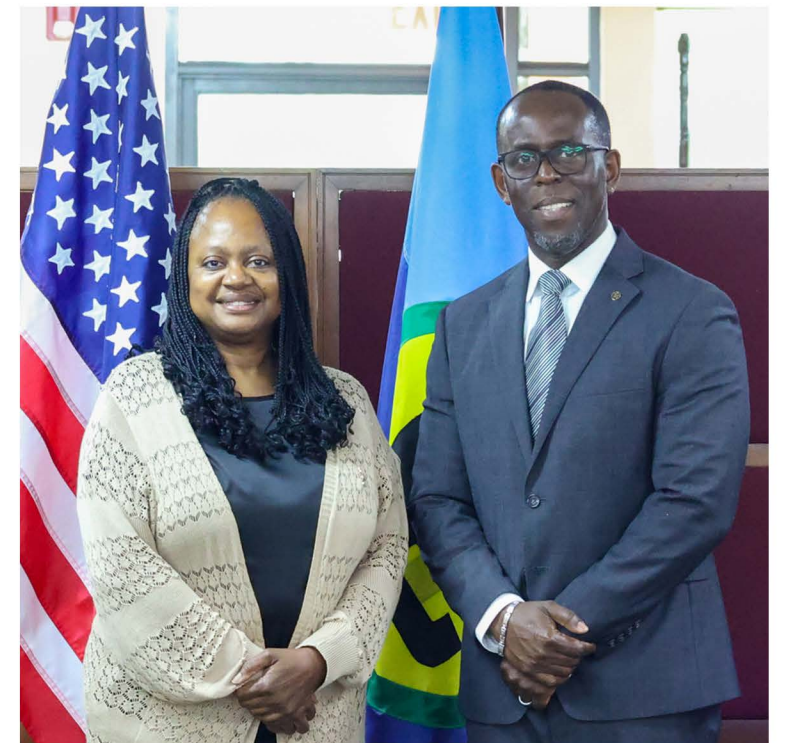
Faustina Wiggins and Reanata Ramsey (first and second from right) of the Regional Statistics Programme join partners at a prize-giving ceremony to observe Caribbean Statistics Day 2023

YEAR OF STATISTICS

The Forty-Eighth (48th) SCCS in October 2023 endorsed the recommendation by the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics to observe a Year of Statistics in 2024 and host the fourth High Level Forum on Statistics. Some of the milestones which will be observed include:



SECTION 8 OPERATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT



PROJECT MANAGEMENT - A NEW OUTLOOK

The Secretariat embarked on a drive targeting Directors/Programme Managers and other technical leads of the various Directorates/Departments/Units to enhance project delivery and implementation rates across the Organisation. This approach uses an appropriately developed framework that allows for the proper designing, planning, execution and close out of the programmes/ projects aligned to international best practices and standards.

By prioritising continuous improvement, a determination was made that focused Project Management development and support within the existing structure of the Secretariat would allow for a process of improving the efficiency in the management of the Secretariat’s projects, to deliver the intended results for the benefit of the people of the Caribbean Community.

During the reporting period, the Secretariat also began deploying appropriate Project Management methodology, tools, and templates by reviewing the existing policies, processes, and procedures regarding the approval and implementation of projects. The development, customisation and adoption of a Project Management framework and the appropriate tools and templates relevant to the Secretariat’s projects was deemed necessary, since experience has shown where there is consistency in the application and utilisation of established Project Management approaches, measureable improvements are achieved.

To this end, the Secretariat conducted pilot programmes, which included a series of training sessions with six (6) Units, between July and September of the year under review.

From October to December, seven (7) successive review rounds were held with the Departments/Units on the success of the new approach. The participants represented the Procurement, Audit, Strategic Management and Finance Units; all key partners in the governance and oversight of projects.

Other participants were Technical Officers in the Directorates.

The Secretariat developed and published a blog series aimed at reinforcing concepts and increasing project management awareness and capacity among programme managers and technical leads.

These efforts were intended to encourage the adoption of best practices in programme project management, using customised PM tools and templates geared at reorienting their thoughts regarding the intricacies of project delivery with the aim of enhancing the implementation deficit.

The blogs focused on:

- 1

PROJECT SCOPING
- 2

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION
- 3

COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT
- 4

DEVELOPING A WBS
- 5

SCHEDULE MANAGEMENT
- 6

COST MANAGEMENT
- 7

RISK MANAGEMENT
- 8

PROJECT CLOSE OUT
- 9

PROJECT REPORTING

Short animated videos will be produced from the published blogs.

CONFERENCE SERVICES

The Secretariat continued to support the process of consultation and decision-making within CARICOM through the provision of effective and efficient conference service support for Community meetings. Services included preparation and dissemination of documentation, meeting administration and logistics, rapporteurial support as well as unofficial translations for short documents.

Approximately 120 meetings were serviced in 2023 by the Unit. The use of information technology continues to enhance the speed and efficiency of the dissemination of documentation and has significantly reduced the need for printed copies. This approach also provided Member States with a very secure platform to access meeting documentation and other administrative information.

INTEGRATED INFORMATION SYSTEMS

During the period under review, the Secretariat upgraded the servers, storage systems and network switches in the data centers at the offices in Guyana and Barbados. This exercise strengthened the IT infrastructure hardware so that deployed software solutions can be hosted on-site. The security appliances at these offices were replaced and integrated with the endpoint security software to protect the client and server systems from malicious software.

Work continued with the deployment of cloud services for the hosting of websites and web applications. Cloud services were also used as a central repository for source code and the hosting of in-house applications. There was an increased use of cloud software services to improve office productivity, remote work, internal collaboration, and communication.

Further development of the Secretariat’s intranet platform was done to facilitate new staff onboarding, internal communication, the secure sharing of corporate information, and access to computing resources among employees. The Secretariat’s website was also enhanced to provide meeting registration, information, and conference resources. The videoconferencing equipment and facilities at the Secretariat benefited from upgrades which helped to improve the virtual meeting experience and enhance the collaboration with stakeholders on multiple meeting.

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE AND REGISTRY: THE INFORMATION HUB OF CARICOM

During the year under review, 23,307 bibliographic records from the MINISIS database were migrated to an Integrated Library Software, KOHA. This new software will allow staff to easily search and access the Documentation Centre’s collection of books, journals, legislation and reports.

To advance its mandate, the Secretariat provided access to physical and digital resources to benefit staff and the Community. Subscriptions to newspapers and electronic databases such as (EBSCOhost, vLex Justis) were maintained and made available. The repository for Meeting documents of the Secretariat continued to be digitized, archived and managed.

In the reporting period, several physical and digital displays were created as part of the outreach and public awareness initiatives. To commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of CARICOM, an exhibition was curated at the Secretariat. The Secretariat participated in the Fifty-Second Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL) conference, held from June 4th to June 8th, 2023, in Jamaica under the theme "Innovation: Opportunities and Challenges in Libraries, Museums, and Archives of the Caribbean". The Secretariat presented a paper titled "The Role of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAMs) in the Knowledge Economy: A Review".



CARICOM 50TH Anniversary Exhibition mounted at the Secretariat.

The Documentation Centre & Registry is responsible for the administration of the Caribbean Regional ISBN Agency. During the year under review, the agency issued 227 blocks of 10 ISBNs, 9 blocks of 100 ISBNs, 1 block of 1000 ISBNs and 28 single ISBNs. The total earnings of the agency for the period were US\$19,413.00, G\$96,600.00, and BDS\$4,280.00.

To improve the efficiency and operations of the ISBN agency, a new online payment portal has been introduced to facilitate the purchase of ISBNs across the region. This new system has made it possible for customers to make payments online, thereby streamlining the purchasing process and reducing the overall time required to obtain ISBNs.

The Registry's work continued during the period under review through the management of all incoming and outgoing correspondence and packages while maintaining both active and inactive records.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

● Staff Wellbeing

The Secretariat continued to support the full well-being of staff members. This support encompassed both mental and physical health including the provision of first-line counselling as well as virtual and in-person counselling services made available by two qualified Secretariat-appointed Counsellors.

In observance of Caribbean Wellness Day which promotes healthy lifestyles, the Secretariat hosted a Wellness Week in September 2023. This included participation in a Fitness Walk hosted by the Ministry of Health and health screenings which culminated in a Sports Day for staff who were assigned to Houses named after the 4 signatories of the Treaty of Chaguaramas.



The Staff Talent Celebration which was created primarily to tap into the creativity of staff members and foster a holistic approach to staff wellbeing, was held from 20 - 24 November 2023.

This was a resounding success as staff members showcased their culinary, artistic and other creative skills, as well as actively participated in a Talent Show. This culminated with a Games and Karaoke night which was enjoyed by all who attended.

As part of our social responsibility, the Staff Talent Celebration Committee collaborated with the Guyana Animation Network (GAN) and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Club to host Basic Animation and Robotics and Scratch Coding Workshops on Saturday 18 November for 15 children between 11 to 18 years old and two caregivers of the Sophia Care Centre.

A session on Corporate Etiquette and Dress for Success was also conducted for 20 children aged 14 to 20 years from the Sophia Care Centre and the Children and Family Centre along with two caregivers by one of our staff members. The children and caregivers were excited and expressed their gratitude.

As part of its plan of activities, the Committee also collaborated with the CCS Decorating Committee on a Toy and School Supply Drive to bring Christmas Cheer to the children of the Sophia Care Centre and the Children and Family Centre. Staff members gave so generously that we were also able to send Christmas gifts and school supplies to the St John’s Bosco Orphanage in Plaisance for the 46 children there.



Under a Health and Wellness initiative to encourage exercise and healthy eating, several virtual seminars and a market were held throughout the year. Regional health experts presented in the seminars, while the market was held in collaboration with the Guyana Marketing Corporation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana. The initiative is managed by the Office of the Secretary-General.

● Learning and Development

A Training Plan was submitted based on the previously conducted Training Needs Assessment. At least four training initiatives identified by the Plan were executed. In addition, approval was granted for more than thirty-five (35) staff members to participate in six (6) training courses. The programmes are listed below.

- 1. Juntos! Japan Latin America and the Caribbean Exchange Programme
- 2. CDB Procurement Framework Course
- 3. Virtual Records and Information Management
- 4. Strategic Cyber Security Risk Management Fraud Prevention: Best Practices
- 5. ILO Trade Programme on Migration
- 6. Leadership Training

To allow under-graduates and students from tertiary institutions to benefit from on-the-job experience, nine (9) interns were hosted across four (4) Directorates and Programmes/sub-programmes (CSMT, ASU, OGC, EIID). This included included one intern from CCRIF – a Regional Institution.

● Talent Management

Sixteen (16) new employees were hired while twenty-five (25) employees departed the Secretariat.

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

In the fiscal year 2023, the Community Council approved a Combined Member States’ resources Budget of **EC\$56,502,329**, encompassing both (Headquarters and the Office of Trade Negotiations). The International Development Partners’ (IDPs) budget of **EC\$30,822,588** was also approved.

The combined approved Member States’ budget, together with other income of **EC\$1,238,249**, represents total revenue of **EC\$57,740,578** for the year. Other income includes support for administrative expenses from IDPs (such as from management fees on projects funded by development partners, interest, and gains from the disposal of assets).

In addition to the above, the CARICOM Secretariat received revenue of **EC\$23,988,160 (US\$8,829,239.21)** from IDPs.

● Member States Contributions

The Member States Assessed Contribution for the fiscal year 2023 was EC\$56,502,329. A summary is provided in the table below:

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) SECRETARIAT – HEADQUARTERS AND OTN CONTRIBUTION ASSESSMENT

EC DOLLARS

MEMBER STATES	HQ 2023 EC\$	HQ %	OTN 2023 EC\$	OTN %	TOTAL 2023 EC\$
Anguilla	83,121	0.16	-	-	83,121
Antigua & Barbuda	1,028,617	1.98	96,957	2.13	1,125,574
Barbados	3,636,524	7.00	318,639	7.00	3,955,163
Belize	1,293,563	2.49	121,925	2.68	1,415,557
Bermuda	519,503	1.00	-	-	519,503
British Virgin Islands	316,897	0.61	-	-	316,897
Cayman Islands	519,503	1.00	-	-	519,503
Dominica	410,408	0.79	38,259	0.84	448,645
Grenada	742,890	1.43	70,060	1.54	812,990
Guyana	3,636,524	7.00	318,639	7.00	3,955,163
Haiti	3,117,020	6.00	273,119	6.00	3,390,140
Jamaica	10,416,043	20.05	980,534	21.54	11,396,541
Montserrat	46,755	0.09	-	-	46,755
Saint Kitts & Nevis	685,744	1.32	64,229	1.41	749,928
Saint Lucia	1,262,393	2.43	119,048	2.62	1,381,655
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	571,454	1.10	53,845	1.18	625,167
Suriname	3,636,523	7.00	318,639	7.00	3,955,163
The Bahamas	6,800,299	13.09	640,101	14.06	7,440,309
Trinidad & Tobago	12,987,585	25.00	1,137,997	25.00	14,125,582
Turks & Caicos Islands	238,972	0.46	-	-	238,972
TOTAL	51,950,338	100.00	4,551,991	100.00	56,502,329

SECTION 8 - OPERATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT

The actual expenditure from Member States’ resources (Headquarters and OTN) amounted to **EC\$50,002,417** with expenditure from the IDP resources totalling **EC\$20,030,370**.

The table below provides a summary of Approved budget and actual expenditure from Member States’ contributions for the year 2023:

Expenditure Categories	2023	
	Approved Budget - EC\$	Actual Expenditure - EC\$
Head I - Human Resource Costs	44,723,715	40,275,085
Head II - Other Operating Expenses	11,387,114	9,380,784
Head III - Capital Expenditure	391,500	346,548
Total	56,502,329	50,002,417

The Secretariat received an unqualified opinion on its Financial Statements for 2023 from the External Auditors.

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

During the period under review, the Secretariat adopted a multi-pronged, multimedia approach to engage with the citizens and people of the Caribbean Community. To achieve this, tailored and specific public information, public education and social media strategies were adopted. As part of the social media strategy, the Secretariat maximised five (5) of its main social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn and YouTube to engage with followers and stakeholders.



SECTION 8 - OPERATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT

For the reporting period, 4,889 posts (inclusive of stories, videos) were created, curated and shared across all platforms. This was a noticeable increase of 125% from the previous year. Seventeen (17) campaigns were executed, 63 livestreams were completed, 148 videos were posted to YouTube and 110 albums were created using Flickr in 2023.

During the period, 143,031 followers were recorded, a 15% increase from 2022. The number of times our content was seen on the pages (page impressions) was 6,846,780, an increase of 12% from the previous reporting period. A total of 2,478,262 individuals were reached across the five main platforms.



The positive increase in social media engagement may be attributed to the adoption of more strategic, tailored tactics to engage the people of the Community. Another strategy that helped increase engagement was the collaboration with the social media pages of Heads of Government, regional Government Information Service departments, Institutions, government ministries across Member States and Support Experts in the Community. These allowed the CARICOM Secretariat’s platforms to reach wider audiences.

In 2023, the Secretariat continued its engagement with the media through the dispatch of 140 statements, media releases, communiques and advisories, which helped to provide timely and relevant updates on the activities of the Community and the Secretariat. CARICOM Today, the Secretariat’s information platform, played a key role in ensuring that media practitioners were able to access content and current information.

SECTION 8 - OPERATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT

To foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Community and its work, the Secretariat welcomed ninety-eight (98) groups of primary and secondary school students and non-governmental organisations, totaling 5600 individuals, to its Georgetown, Guyana headquarters.



The Community’s golden jubilee celebration was a highlight of the reporting period. For the year-long observance, the Secretariat expended significant effort on a series of activities to mark this significant occasion. Some of these included a 50th anniversary microsite; research, design and production of a series of retrospective posters; production of a 24-page supplement in the Trinidad Guardian to coincide with the 50th celebrations in Trinidad and Tobago; implementation of a special 50th anniversary social media campaign and coordination of a 50th anniversary staff event and exhibition.

Communication support was also provided for the hosting of the Forty-Fourth (44th) and Forty-Fifth (45th) Regular Meetings of the Conference of Heads of Government, Regional Symposium on Crime As A Public Health Issue, CARICOM Youth Summit, and the Caribbean Week of Agriculture 17.

Our internal communication machinery was also active during the reporting period. Six newsletters, 250 blogs and posts to SharePoint were produced. The internal digital screens were highly utilized and served as a critical tool in the internal communication strategy.

This targeted approach helped to improve the internal communication and create greater visibility of the Community’s work among internal stakeholders, thus leading to a more knowledgeable and engaged workforce.



INTERNAL AUDIT

During the year ended 31 December 2023, fourteen (14) assurance audit engagement and four (4) consultancies were executed. Seventeen (94%) were either completed or in progress, while one (6%) was not started.

Audits were conducted in some key and high-risk areas to add value and improve the operations of the organisation. These audits include Human Resource Management, including the use of data analytics in selected areas, operational reviews relating to staff recruitment, procurement, operation of the Solar Photovoltaic Power System, and fuel order system.

Additionally, the Secretariat supported four (4) Community Institutions, helping them to establish their own internal audit function/capacity and strengthen governance and internal controls within the Community. We continue to provide the necessary technical audit assistance, guidance and training to the Institutions to enhance their audit capacity.

The overall implementation rate of audit recommendations of 72% reflected a 5-percentage point improvement when compared with the rate of 67% for the corresponding period in 2022.

APPENDIX 1 - THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) comprises fifteen Member States and five Associate Members. The Member States are: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The Associate Members are: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI).

CARICOM was established on the basis of the (original) Treaty of Chaguaramas, signed on 4 July 1973, in honour of the birthday of Norman Washington Manley, a leading advocate of the West Indies Federation and one of Jamaica's national heroes. The Treaty and its Annex (setting out the details of the Common Market Arrangements) came into effect on 1 August 1973.

In July 2001, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the Establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) was opened for signature at the Twenty-Second Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held in The Bahamas. The Revised Treaty entered into force on 1 January 2006, following the deposit, with the Secretary-General, of the Twelfth Instrument of Ratification by the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica on 8 November 2005. Prior to that, it had been provisionally applied.

The Revised Treaty applies to all CARICOM Member States, except The Bahamas and Montserrat. Through a Special Membership Agreement signed in February 2006, The Bahamas maintains its membership and participation in the Community as it existed immediately prior to the entry into force of the Revised Treaty. At the same time, The Bahamas signed a Special Agreement enabling the entry into force of the Revised Treaty. Montserrat also signed a Special Membership Agreement, as it had not at the time, received the requested Entrustment from the Government of the United Kingdom which would have allowed that Member to sign and ratify the Revised Treaty.

In 2014, the Government of Montserrat received the Entrustments to enable its accession to the Revised Treaty. While its full accession continues to be pursued, Montserrat participates in some areas of the CARICOM Single Market, including the trade regime and elements of the movement of skills regime. Montserrat has also joined critical Community Institutions, such as the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA).

The Republic of Haiti was formally accepted as the fifteenth Member State of CARICOM in July 2002 and became a party to the Revised Treaty in 2008. Haiti has partly implemented the trade regime and efforts continue to fully integrate that country into the CSME arrangements.

The Community has the following objectives as set out in Article 6 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy signed in July 2001:

- A. Improved standards of living and work;
- B. Full employment of labour and other factors of production;
- C. Accelerated, coordinated and sustained economic development and convergence;
- D. Expansion of trade and economic relations with Third States;
- E. Enhanced levels of international competitiveness;
- F. Organisation for increased production and productivity;
- G. The achievement of a greater measure of economic leverage and effectiveness of Member States in dealing with Third States, groups of States and entities of any description;
- H. Enhanced co-ordination of Member States' foreign and (foreign) economic policies;
- I. Enhanced functional cooperation including:
 - (I) More efficient operation of common services and activities for the benefit of its peoples;
 - (II) Accelerated promotion of greater understanding among its peoples and the advancement of their social, cultural and technological development; and
 - (III) Intensified activities in areas such as health, education, transportation and telecommunications.

The Principal Organs of the Community are:

- The Conference of Heads of Government, commonly called 'The Conference'; and
- The Community Council of Ministers commonly called 'The Community Council'

The Conference of Heads of Government is the Supreme Organ of the Community. It consists of the Heads of Government of the Member States. Its role includes:

- Determining and providing policy direction; and
- Final authority for the conclusion of treaties on behalf of the Community and for entering into relationships

The Conference is also responsible for making the financial arrangements to meet the expenses of the Community but has delegated this function to the Community Council.

The Conference seeks to arrive at decisions by consensus. When consensus cannot be achieved, the matter may be put to a vote.

BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE

The Bureau of the Conference consists of the incumbent Chairperson of the Conference, as Chair, as well as the Incoming and Outgoing Chairpersons of the Conference. The Secretary-General serves on the Bureau as an ex officio member.

The decision to create the Bureau of the Conference was taken at the Special Meeting of the Heads of Government in October 1992. It came into operation in December 1992.

The responsibilities of the Bureau are to:

- Initiate proposals;
- Update consensus;
- Facilitate implementation of Community decisions; and
- Provide guidance to the Secretariat on policy issues
- The Community Council of Ministers

The Community Council of Ministers is the second highest Organ of the Community. It consists of Ministers responsible for Community Affairs and any other Minister designated by Member States. It is responsible for:

- the development of Community strategic planning and coordination in the areas of economic integration, human and social development, security, and external relations; and
- reviewing and approving the work programme and budget of the CARICOM Secretariat.

The Community Council also serves as a preparatory body for the meetings of the Conference.

ORGANS AND BODIES

The Principal Organs of the Community are assisted by the following Organs (Ministerial Councils) and Bodies:

- The Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), which promotes trade and economic development of the Community including, among other things, overseeing the operation of the CSME;
- The Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), which promotes human and social development;
- The Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP), which is responsible for economic policy coordination and financial and monetary integration;

- The Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE), which is responsible for coordinating the Community’s response to security threats, to ensure a safe and stable Community; and
- The Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR), which determines relations between the Community and International Organisations and Third States and promotes the development of friendly and mutually beneficial relations among Member States;

The Bodies are:

- The Legal Affairs Committee, comprising Ministers responsible for Legal Affairs and/or Attorneys-General of Member States. The LAC is responsible for providing the Organs and Bodies with advice on treaties, international legal issues, the harmonisation of laws of the Community and other legal matters;
- The Budget Committee, comprising senior officials and responsible for reviewing the draft work programme and budget of the CARICOM Secretariat and for making recommendations to the Community Council; and
- The Committee of Central Bank Governors, comprising the Governors or Heads of the Central Banks or their nominees and responsible for making recommendations to the COFAP on matters related to monetary cooperation, payments arrangements, free movement of capital, integration of capital markets, monetary union and any other related matters referred to it by the Organs of the Community.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

The Secretary-General is the Chief Executive Officer of the Community. He/She is appointed by the Conference of Heads of Government. The Secretary-General serves a five-year term of office. In 2016, in the context of the ongoing reform process, the Conference agreed that there would be a limit of two terms for the Secretaries-General.

The Secretary-General is also head of the CARICOM Secretariat, the principal administrative organ of the Community. The Secretary-General provides political, technical and administrative leadership as well as advice and support for the work of the Principal Organs, Organs and Bodies of the Community and to Member States. He is supported by an Executive Management Team within the CARICOM Secretariat comprising the Deputy Secretary-General; the General-Counsel; the Assistant Secretaries-General responsible for CARICOM Single Market And Trade, Economic Integration, Innovation and Development, Human and Social Development and Foreign and Community Relations.

The Secretary-General also serves as the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States (CARIFORUM) - the grouping comprising the independent CARICOM Member States, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Information about CARIFORUM is provided at Appendix II.

The current Secretary-General is Dr Carla Barnett, a national of Belize. Dr Barnett assumed the Office of Secretary-General in August 2021.

Past Secretaries-General of CARICOM

Name	Period of Service	Nationality
Ambassador Irwin LaRocque	2011 - 2021	Dominica
Amb. Lolita Applewaithe <i>(Acting in position)</i>	1 Jan - 14 Aug 2011	Barbados
Hon. Sir Edwin W. Carrington, OCC	1992 - 2010	Trinidad and Tobago
Mr. Roderick Rainford, OCC	1983 - 1992	Jamaica
Dr Kurleigh King	1979 - 1983	Barbados
Mr Joseph Tyndall <i>(Acting in position)</i>	1977 - 1978	Guyana
Hon. Alister McIntyre, OCC	1974 - 1977	Grenada
Hon. William D. Demas, OCC	1973 - 1974	Trinidad and Tobago

Mr. Fred Cozier, a national of Barbados, was Secretary-General of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA), the predecessor to CARICOM, during the period 1968-1969. He was succeeded by Hon. William Demas, OCC, who served as Secretary- General of CARIFTA from 1970 and oversaw the transition from CARIFTA to CARICOM.

THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) SECRETARIAT

The CARICOM Secretariat is the principal administrative organ of the Caribbean Community. Its Mission is: To provide dynamic leadership and service in partnership with Community Institutions and groups, toward the attainment of a viable, internationally competitive and sustainable Community, with improved quality of life for all.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CARICOM SECRETARIAT:

- Service meetings of the Organs and Bodies of the Community and take appropriate follow-up action to such meetings;
- Initiate, organise and conduct studies on issues for the achievement of the objectives of the Community;
- Provide, on request, services to Member States, on matters relating to the achievement of its objectives;
- Collect, store and disseminate to Member States, information relevant for the achievement of its objectives;
- Assist Community Organs in the development and implementation of proposals and programmes for the achievement of the objectives of the Community;
- Coordinate in relation to the Community, the activities of donor agencies, international, regional and national institutions for the achievement of the objectives of the Community;
- Prepare the draft budget of the Community for examination by the Budget Committee; Provide, on request, technical assistance to national authorities to facilitate implementation of Community decisions;
- Conduct, as mandated, fact-finding missions to Member States; and Initiate or develop proposals for consideration and decision by the Organs to achieve Community objectives.

STRUCTURE OF THE CARICOM SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat has the following Offices and Directorates:

- Office of the Secretary-General
- Office of the Deputy Secretary-General
- Office of the General-Counsel
- Directorate for CARICOM Single Market and Trade
- Directorate for Human and Social Development
- Directorate for Foreign and Community Relations
- Directorate for Economic Integration, Innovation and Development

INSTITUTIONS AND ASSOCIATE INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Community has established the following Institutions and Associate Institutions with specialised functions which contribute to the achievement of its objectives:

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

- Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) <https://cahfsa.org/>
As per Decision of the Twenty-First Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (March 2010, Dominica)
- Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) <http://www.cardi.org/>
As per Article 21 of the Revised Treaty
- Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD) <https://www.caricad.net/>
As per Article 21 of the Revised Treaty
- Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) <https://www.carpha.org/>
As per Decision of the Twenty-First Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (March 2010, Dominica)
- Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS) <http://cassos.org/>
As per Decision of the Twenty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2008, Antigua and Barbuda)
- CARICOM Competition Commission (CCC) <http://www.caricomcompetitioncommission.com/>
As per Articles 171-174 of the Revised Treaty
- Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) <http://www.caribbeanclimate.bz/>
As per Decision of the Thirteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (February 2002, Belize)
- Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) <https://www.cdema.org/>
As per Article 21 of the Revised Treaty (Formerly CDERA)
- CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) <https://www.caricomimpacs.org/>
As per Decision of the Twenty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2005, Saint Lucia)
- CARICOM Development Fund (CDF) <https://caricomdevelopmentfund.org/>
As per Article 158 of the Revised Treaty and the Agreement Relating to the Operations of the CDF signed in July 2008

- Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) <https://www.ccreee.org/>
As per the Thirty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2015, Barbados)
- Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) <http://www.cimh.edu.bb/>
As per Article 21 of the Revised Treaty (Formerly CMI)
- Caribbean Meteorological Organisation (CMO) <http://www.cmo.org.tt/>
As per Article 21 of the Revised Treaty
- Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) <http://crfm.net/>
As per Decision of the Twenty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2003, Jamaica)
- CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) <https://website.crosq.org/>
As per Article 67 of the Revised Treaty and the Agreement Establishing CROSQ
- Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) <https://www.ctu.int/>
Formalised by Decision of the Thirty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2013, Trinidad and Tobago)
- Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) <https://www.cxc.org/>
Formalised by Decision of the Twentieth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (March 2009, Belize)

ASSOCIATE INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

- Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) <https://www.caribank.org/>
As per Article 22 of the Revised Treaty.
- Caribbean Law Institute/Caribbean Law Institute Centre (CLI/CLIC) <https://caricom.org/institutions/caribbean-law-institute-cli-caribbean-law-institute-centre-clic/>
As per Article 22 of the Revised Treaty.
- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission <https://www.oecs.org/>
As per Article 22 of the Revised Treaty.
- With the signature of the Revised Treaty of Basseterre in June 2010 at the 51st Meeting of the OECS Authority, the OECS Secretariat was redesignated the OECS Commission. The Revised Treaty of Basseterre entered into force in January 2011.

- The University of the West Indies (UWI) <http://www.uwi.edu/index.asp>
As per Article 22 of the Revised Treaty.
- University of Guyana (UG) <https://www.uog.edu.gy/>
As per Article 22 of the Revised Treaty.
- Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL)
As per Decision of the Fortieth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2019, Saint Lucia)
- CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) <https://thecpso.org/>
Designated as an Associate Institution of the Community in accordance with Article 22 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (Forty-First Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, 29 October 2020, Video Conference)

THE COMMUNITY ALSO HAS A FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS IN THE REGION:

- Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) <https://www.carib-export.com/>
- Council of Legal Education (CLE) <http://www.clecaribbean.com/>
- Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) <https://www.onecaribbean.org/>

APPENDICES

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
BEEP	Building Energy Efficiency Project
BPR	Business Process Review
BREXIT	Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union
BVI	British Virgin Islands
CAHFSA	Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency
CARDI	Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute
CARIBBEAN EXPORT	Caribbean Export Development Agency
CARICAD	Caribbean Centre for Development Administration
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARICOM IMPACS	CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security CARIFORUM
CARIFESTA	Caribbean Festival of Arts
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CASSOS	Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System
CBSI	Caribbean Basin Security Initiative
CBU	Caribbean Broadcasting Union
CCA	CARICOM Committee of Ambassadors
CCCCC	Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
CCC	CARICOM Competition Commission
CCH	Caribbean Cooperation in Health
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CCRIF	Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility
CCSS	CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CDF	CARICOM Development Fund
CEBO	Creativity for Employment and Business Opportunity
CEM	CARICOM Energy Month
CIMH	Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology
CKLNA	Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network Agency
CLE	Council of Legal Education
CLI/CLIC	Caribbean Law Institute/Caribbean Law Institute Centre
CMO	Caribbean Meteorological Organisation
COFCOR	Council for Foreign and Community Relations
COFAP	Council for Finance and Planning
COHSOD	Council for Human and Social Development
CONSLE	Council for National Security and Law Enforcement
COP	(United Nations) Conference of the Parties
COTED	Council for Trade and Economic Development
CQF	CARICOM Qualifications Framework
CRC	CARICOM Reparations Commission
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
CRIP	Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme
CROSQ	CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality

APPENDICES

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
C-SERMS	Caribbean Sustainable Energy Roadmap and Strategy
CSME	CARICOM Single Market and Economy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organisation
CTU	Caribbean Telecommunications Union
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CWA	Caribbean Week of Agriculture
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
CYA	CARICOM Youth Ambassador
CYAP	CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme
CYDAP	CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan
ECGECW	Every Caribbean Girl, Every Caribbean Woman
EDF	European Development Fund
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFI	International Financial Institution
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
LAC	Legal Affairs Committee
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MASA	Multilateral Air Services Agreement
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
OAS	Organisation of American States
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PANCAP	Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief
PMSC	Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee
RBM	Results-based Management
REEBC	Regional Energy Efficiency Building Code
REETA	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Technical Assistance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

APPENDICES

SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TCI	Turks and Caicos Islands
TOR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UG	University of Guyana
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UWI	University of the West Indies
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation



**CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT
GUYANA 2023**

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