



**MESSAGE BY  
PRIME MINISTER KEITH MITCHELL  
CARICOM'S LEAD HEAD FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING ICT  
& CARICOM CHAMPION FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS  
On the Occasion of CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY  
October 15, 2020**

Scientific data is increasingly recognised as a critical element in development and the current COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more relevant to sustainable development. Given the magnitude of the pandemic's impact, we are beginning to appreciate in a greater way, the usefulness of timely and relevant statistics.

The data being generated globally on new COVID-19 cases, active cases, deaths, recoveries and tests conducted, allows for the assessment of the direct impact on the health system of the countries and also facilitates useful country comparisons. The availability of such statistics is important in guiding the development and implementation of country policies on international travel to lower the risk of importing positive COVID-19 cases and the potential for local spread of the virus. Ultimately, this data can help protect and save lives.

The data being reported by countries to the World Health Organisation on COVID-19 clearly demonstrates the relevance of the theme for this year's Caribbean and World Statistics Day - **Connecting the World with Data we Can Trust**. In addition, countries have been using statistics to assess the economic impact of the virus and this is now helping to shape policies geared towards recovery and restoration.

As we celebrate Caribbean Statistics Day on October 15, 2020 and World Statistics Day on October 20, it is an opportune time to recognise the work and the unwavering commitment of statisticians who provide us with critical data that fosters better decision-making, even in the midst of a pandemic. Though not essential workers, we acknowledge the essential nature of your jobs. You continue to produce even during this difficult time, adapting your mode of operation to ensure that the collection and compilation of data occurs in a safe and secure environment.

As the CARICOM Champion for Official Statistics, I am aware of the challenges you face with the lack of resources and inadequate investment in statistics. We must, as a region, resolve to change this if we intend to transform and modernise national and regional statistics systems, fill the huge data gap and satisfy the increasing demand for reliable data.

The issues relating to statistics capacity are even more acute for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which are predominantly faced with limited fiscal space and heightened vulnerabilities. I use this occasion to make a clarion call to governments to commit more to finding and allocating the requisite resources to invest in statistics. To the region's development partners, I appeal to you for greater funding and support to complement the limited resources of SIDS, as they pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We encourage development partners to support the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics which was endorsed by all CARICOM leaders. This shared master plan emphasises the importance of statistics as the gateway to building resilience in CARICOM and achieving sustainable development through sound and trusted data. Specifically, support is being sought for the Resource Mobilisation Strategy, one of the accompanying frameworks of the RSDS, agreed to by Heads of Government and which will help secure better development outcomes in CARICOM SIDS, including reporting on the SDGs.

I urge my fellow CARICOM leaders to remain committed to developing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, that are grounded in the regional master plan to help optimise investments in statistics. The international community and the private sector are encouraged to play a greater role in national statistical development by funding elements of these national strategies where available or countries' statistical work programmes.

As we observe Caribbean Statistics Day, it is an opportune time to issue a reminder to statistics agencies - as you continue to produce statistics, you are upholding the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the 10 principles that connect official statisticians across the world in producing data that can be trusted. I also encourage countries to focus on adopting the various internationally accepted statistics standards to ensure that the data produced is of the highest quality and it is comparable internationally.

Let us continue to develop statistics to give us access to high quality data that can inform our overall development strategies.