

Caribbean Forum to challenge conventional wisdom

Port of Spain, 9 April 2015 - Regional and international leaders will gather in Port of Spain from 5 to 7 May 2015 to tackle challenges to Caribbean development and identify strategies for securing a sustainable future. The *Forum on the Future of the Caribbean* is being co-hosted by The University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with United Nations System and regional inter-governmental partners, and The Commonwealth.

Forum participants - including Caribbean heads of government and policy-makers, civil society and business leaders, and academic experts - will confront existing development paradigms through innovative, disruptive thought. This is aimed at producing models for research, policy development and transformative action to support an equitable, sustainable Caribbean society in the post-2015 period and for generations beyond.

They will challenge each other to consider persistent development problems in new ways and identify approaches directed at widening opportunities and improving living conditions for all Caribbean citizens. Agenda areas of focus include all dimensions of poverty, inequality, and resource mobilization, as well as the specific vulnerabilities of small - often high and middle income - Caribbean States.

Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Honourable Winston Dookeran, in welcoming announcement of the Forum, said:

“Business as usual cannot possibly meet the complex challenges of poverty, inequality and funding we now face in the region. We need disruptive thinking and bold action if we are to create a resilient and international Caribbean future. I believe we need to accelerate regional convergence and new models of diplomacy in a global setting and the Forum provides us a real opportunity to do just that.”

Vice-Chancellor Designate of The University of the West Indies, Sir Hilary Beckles, sees the Forum as an occasion for renewing “our commitment to the fine tradition of public-minded academic research” at The UWI:

“After fifty years of concerted effort Caribbean post-colonial development paradigms have climaxed and yielded poor to moderate results. This Forum is an opportunity for the region to dig in, unearth, and emerge with the energy required to structure new options and different approaches to economic growth and social empowerment.”

UNDP Resident Representative in Trinidad and Tobago, Richard Blewitt, has also expressed enthusiastic support for the Forum, which he is optimistic “will trigger transformative academic research and public policy.”

Amina Mohammed, Special Advisor of the United Nations Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning, is among the prominent speakers to be featured at the Forum. “2015 offers an historic and once-in-a-generation opportunity,” says Ms. Mohammed. “We need

leaders to be courageous and ambitious. I look forward to a robust discussion at the Forum on how to deliver on Caribbean priorities.”

Sessions for the *Forum on the Future of the Caribbean* will convene at both The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, and the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Port of Spain.

For further information please visit <http://caribbeanfutureforum.com/>, e-mail: hmic.tt@undp.org or telephone: (868) 623-7056 ext 256 or 295.