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RNM-AGCI Trade Seminar Lauded

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CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS – A ‘CARICOM Regional Training Seminar’, entitled: “International Negotiations, Free Trade Agreements and its Impact in Export Promotion: The Chilean Experience”, came to a close today. Convened in Montego Bay, Jamaica, October 20 to 23, it was coordinated by the International Cooperation Agency of Chile (AGCI), in collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM).

The objective of the Seminar was to immerse participants in the technical and policy aspects of commercial/trade policy and the negotiation of trade agreements. The training, under the stewardship of Chilean technical experts and negotiators, was intended as an opportunity for Caribbean negotiators and technocrats to learn from the experience of Chile.

At the opening ceremony, statements were made by: the Deputy Executive-Director of AGCI, Mr. Arturo Vergara Moreno; the Resident Representative of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Mr. Nobuhiro Kumagai; RNM Director-General, Ambassador Dr. Richard Bernal; Senator the Hon. Noel Sloley, representative of the Hon. P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica and Chairman of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on External Economic Negotiations; and, Chilean Ambassador to Jamaica, H.E. Fernando Pardo.

An RNM initiative, the four-day training was attended by senior officials from: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, The Bahamas, and Trinidad & Tobago. Specialists from the RNM, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and CARICOM Secretariats also participated.

Seminar participant, Ms. Cheryl Spencer, Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica, lauded the Chilean training exercise. She characterized the seminar as “having provided remarkable and candid insight into Chile’s trade policy, its guiding methodology, philosophy and strategy”. She opined “what was apparent was the resource persons, some of them Chilean trade negotiators, had a very sound and detailed knowledge of the subject area”. “Chile is truly an innovator in its approach to trade negotiations. I believe participants came away with the feeling that there are important lessons for the region’s approach to negotiations, and consultative processes to that end, that can be drawn from this Seminar”, Ms. Spencer concluded.

According to Ambassador Bernal “we requested this Seminar because 1) Chile has been a leader in the trade liberalization process; 2) while not as small as us, Chile also suffers from asymmetries in trade negotiations - through which parallels can be drawn for the CARICOM region; 3) Chile has a considerable number of bilateral agreements, and as a result substantial negotiating experience; and 4) we wanted CARICOM officials to learn from innovators. In many of the bilateral trade pacts Chile has been involved in, pioneering work has been done in a number of areas, for example, in the area of labour and environment in the US-Chile free trade agreement”.

The RNM chief expressed his gratitude to the Chilean Government, and its partner agencies, for making what he termed as an “historic collaboration” possible. He was particularly appreciative of the efforts of Ambassador Pardo and Mr. Vergara.

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