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OFFICIALS GATHER IN BARBADOS TO STRATEGIZE ON EPAs

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CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS – As part of accelerated preparations for the negotiation of a regional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM) - with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat - will be convening a series of meetings in Barbados during the period April 28 to May 3, 2003. The meetings are as follows:

- * April 28 to May 1 - *Caribbean Trade Experts Meeting;*
- * May 2 – *Meeting of Officials of CARIFORUM ACP States;*
- * May 3 – *Meeting of CARIFORUM Ministers of Trade.*

The Caribbean Trade Experts Meeting will examine a series of RNM commissioned technical studies. The studies cover market access for goods and services; development co-operation and adjustment issues; and, investment.

There are eighteen Experts who have considerable expertise in international trade and are drawn from a wide-band of Caribbean countries.

The objective of the exercise from April 28 to May 1 is to enumerate a series of negotiating positions on EPAs for consideration of Senior Officials and Ministers when they meet in Barbados on May 2 and May 3, respectively.

These series of meetings represent an effort by the RNM to galvanize the Region crafting a *'road-map'* for Phase II Caribbean/EU negotiations and in so doing to draw down on considerable Regional expertise.

The results of these meetings will further shape the Caribbean position in preparation for Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Council of Ministers Meetings in

Brussels from May 14 to 16. In addition, the meetings in Barbados will provide the Region with a clear mandate on Phase II EPA issues.

The Experts Meeting is made possible through funding from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

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