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OFFICIALS MEET TO CONSULT ON MARKET ACCESS AND AGRICULTURE

***Press Release* CRNM-PR 10/03**

April 25, 2003

CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS – The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM) is convening the Sixth Meeting of the CARICOM Technical Working Group (TWG) on Market Access and Agriculture, from April 30 to May 2, in Barbados.

The meeting is intended to develop CARICOM guidelines for the presentation of revised tariff offers in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by the deadline of June 15, 2003. It will also assess the offers presented to CARICOM by other FTAA countries with a view to identifying the scope of improvements which Member States should request. Recommendations of the TWG will be presented to the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) for consideration and approval.

The TWG will review the decisions of the Thirteenth FTAA Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) meeting on matters under consideration in the Negotiating Group Market Access (NGMA), including the Ad Hoc Group on Rules of Origin, and Negotiating Group Agriculture (NGAG).

The TWG will also review the initial offer presented by CARICOM to the FTAA negotiating process on February 19, 2003. Member States will be invited to review areas for improving the initial CARICOM offer in order to respond to requests for improvements and presentation of a revised CARICOM offer by June 15, 2003.

CARICOM has received offers from all FTAA countries. The TWG will engage in a review of the offers and identification of the scope of improvements, which should be requested. Member States are expected to indicate areas of specific interest regarding products, sectors and specific markets.

In addition, the TWG will advance positions for adoption by CARICOM with respect to the Chapter on Tariffs and Non-Tariff Measures.

Finally, the TWG will be invited to recommend the strategic approach which CARICOM should adopt with respect to the next phase of market access negotiations.

For More Information Contact:

Nand C. Bardouille

Tel: (246) 430-1678

email: nbardouille@sunbeach.net