

**PRESS RELEASE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING OF
CARICOM STAKEHOLDERS ON THE PROPOSALS FOR THE REFORM OF
THE EU SUGAR REGIME, 28-29 SEPTEMBER 2004, GEORGETOWN,
GUYANA**

A Meeting of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Stakeholders on the Proposals for the Reform of the European Union (EU) Sugar Regime was held in Georgetown, Guyana on 28-29 September 2004 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary-General, CARICOM. The Meeting was attended by Government Ministers and other Senior Officials, representatives of regional organisations, industry representatives and representatives of Cane Farmers and Sugar Workers.

The Meeting was convened as mandated by CARICOM Heads of Government who, in July 2004, had rejected the European Commission's (EC's) proposals and had agreed that the Region should develop a common CARICOM position and plan of action in light of the potentially devastating impact of the proposals to effect dramatic cuts in the preferential price for sugar from CARICOM and other sugar producers in the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Group of Countries (ACP). These proposals currently envisage a savage cut in the preferential price in two phases over three years, beginning in July 2005. If allowed to go forward unopposed, they would entail a loss of income of about US\$180 million in the first three years, with a recurring loss of US\$ 90 million annually thereafter.

In the process of developing the CARICOM strategy, the Meeting received an overview of the status of the regional sugar industry prepared by representatives of the Sugar Association of the Caribbean (SAC) and industry representatives from Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, they outlined the status of their programmes and plans which include restructuring, modernisation and diversification, especially in relation to exploiting the sugar-cane plant for energy and other uses and adding value by sugar refining. Representatives also considered technical presentations on developments in the EU and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and their implications for CARICOM sugar-producing countries and for the Community, in general.

The Meeting agreed to sensitise stakeholders and the public as a whole - both within and outside the Region - to the gravity of the threat posed by the European Commission's proposals for reform of the EU Sugar regime.

The Meeting agreed on a common CARICOM position and an Action Plan encompassing the following principles:

1. Rejection of the EU's proposals as they stand and initiating a policy of structured engagement with the EU and European Commission to insist on the special legal status of the Sugar Protocol and to safeguard its benefits.

2. Factoring the Region's unified response into the formulation of a common ACP policy with regard to the proposed changes. In this respect, the Region will be fully represented at an ACP Workshop to develop a response to the EC's Communication on EU Sugar reform, to be held in Brussels, Belgium on 4-6 October 2004.

3. A programme for diplomatic lobbying and meetings with EU member states, the European Parliament, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders such as cane refiners and beet sugar producers. In this regard, CARICOM Ministers would be participating in a joint ACP lobbying mission to Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom on 10-14 October 2004.

4. Education and mobilisation of the Caribbean diaspora in the United Kingdom in support of the regional position.

Source: <http://www.caricom.org/>