

**OPENING STATEMENT
ANTHONY PETER GONZALES
CRNM WTO DIRECTOR**

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON CERTAIN TOPICAL ISSUES
IN REGARD TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FOR
COUNTRIES OF THE CARIBBEAN**

SAINT LUCIA, 3-5 NOVEMBER 2004

***SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PETRUS COMPTON, MINISTER FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND CIVIL AVIATION,
GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA***

***MRS. JAYASHREE WATAL, COUNSELLOR, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
DIVISION, WTO***

MR. ARTURO VERA AGUIRRE, REPRESENTATIVE OF IADB/INTAL

***DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES AND OFFICIALS, LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN,***

On behalf of the CRNM, I wish first of all welcome all the participants and extend our gratitude to the Government of St Lucia for hosting this Regional Workshop. I would also like to thank the organizers and sponsors, the WTO Secretariat, INTAL, IDB and CARICOM Secretariat for this initiative as well as their commitment in general to this region.

This Workshop is part of a series of similar workshops to assist the region in its preparations and participation in international trade negotiations. In view of the depth and breath of negotiations in three arenas –FTAA, WTO and ACP-EU not to mention the bilateral ones- the demand for trained personnel has been growing especially in the specialized areas as Intellectual Property.

Many of these areas, as you would notice, with Intellectual Property have their own dynamism and are generating new knowledge areas which require constant training and re-training.

Under the CARICOM Single market and Economy, CARICOM is committed to the establishment of regional administration for copyright, patents and trademarks and the strengthening of intellectual property

regimes. Member states are therefore called upon to harmonize intellectual property laws and administrative practices.

The case for harmonization of legislation and to support regional co-operation in the exchange information, development of policy, and participation in the activities of international organizations, such as the WTO and the WIPO, is also based on the relative scarcity of expertise in the region in intellectual property rights.

The implementation of WTO TRIPS obligations in the CARICOM states has also placed demands for regional training. One of the most interesting observations made in this regard was that commitments under the WTO TRIPS Agreement have led to a convergence of intellectual property laws in the region. This convergence, combined with the scarce resources available for intellectual property rights administration and enforcement, strongly suggest that regional activities, of which training is one, should replace exclusively national activities wherever possible.

Quite apart from the idea that training activities for a range of personnel could also be carried out most effectively at the regional level, this region has therefore had no choice but to place greater priority on regional training. In the CRNM we see the benefit of this in terms of expanding the cadre of trade specialists and trade negotiators as a result of these training activities.

CRNM views this event as more than just a training exercise. It is also regarded as a form of regional consultations on a number of important policy issues under negotiation in the field of intellectual property in the WTO. Our participation in these negotiations will no doubt benefit from the information that will be provided at this event and from the exchange of views that will take place among countries of the region.

CRNM also welcomes another important objective of this workshop which is provide information that will assist the countries of the region in implementing and making effective use of the mechanism set out in the Decision on Paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. The successful implementation of this mechanism is dependent on regional action such as in patents and it is refreshing to note that not long after the hard battle to get this decision the region is moving to cast it in concrete.

The task on building negotiating and implementation skills in Intellectual Property is a long term one. It requires staying the course and sustaining action over a long period to achieve the level of human resources needed to respond to the challenges.

We are confident in the RNM that with the support of the WTO, IDB and INTAL we can respond to these challenges. Their support for an event like this is thus deeply appreciated by us as small countries lacking all the necessary human and financial means to tackle the tasks at hand.

The topics you have chosen for this workshop such as Patent and other provisions of the TRIPS Agreement relevant to public health; the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, and Biotechnology/Biodiversity/Traditional Knowledge are no doubt very pertinent to the region and do occupy a priority spot in our negotiations and implementation schedules.

I am convinced therefore that an opportunity will be provided to us to deepen our knowledge of these complex matters and this will rebound to our benefit as you will be able to participate more effectively in the negotiations ahead and thus act in the best interests of the region.

It is therefore on this optimistic note that I would like to wish you all the best in your deliberations and thank you for your kind attention.