

Prime Minister Patterson Urges CARICOM to Establish Governance Structures

KINGSTON(JIS)

Monday, February 13, 2006

Jamaican Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson has said that the area of governance and institutional building must be given priority attention especially in light of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market.

He was speaking yesterday (February 10) at the final press briefing of the 17th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, which was held from February 9 to 10 in Trinidad and Tobago.

Arguing that there could not be a Community where there were no sanctions when decisions were taken, but implementation lagged behind, the Prime Minister said it was time to decide what those institutions would be and how they would be financed and managed.

Mr. Patterson, who was attending his last meeting of Heads pointed the way forward for the negotiating position of the region. He said that the time had come for the region to shift its negotiating posture from the defensive to the offensive and to define its interests based on its needs.

He said that this was necessary given the changes that had occurred in the negotiating arena since 1994. He said that in the present scenario developing countries could only seek to establish voice and presence at the negotiating table by forging strong alliances in areas of commonality, while recognizing that there would be areas of divergence.

The Prime Minister said that the region should be prepared for long negotiations and that it was necessary to give the Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM) legal status. The Governments of Jamaica and Barbados and the CARICOM Secretariat have been given the task of preparing the legal format for the RNM for presentation to the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) in April for CARICOM Heads to consider at their July meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Patterson who is the lead Head for External Negotiations said that the region must continue to be in a state of readiness and to have the

technical capacity and attendance in all of the negotiating fora to ensure that the region's interests were fully protected.

On the matter of Haiti, Mr. Patterson applauded the determination of the Haitian people to have a government chosen that reflected the will of the people. He said that as soon as the election was certified, he would be pleased at the decision of Heads to have Haiti return to the organs of CARICOM.