

**STATEMENT BY HON. HENRY B. JEFFREY
CARICOM MINISTERIAL SPOKESPERSON ON SUGAR ON THE RECENTLY
CONCLUDED 4TH MEETING OF CARICOM SUGAR STAKEHOLDERS,
JANUARY 11-12, 2007, GEORGETOWN**

The overwhelming conclusion of the meeting is that the sugar industry must seek to reform itself into the sugar cane industry and all countries present at the meeting were making efforts in that direction. Sugar production and the need to improve cultivation and production methods while adding value, perhaps by refining, packaging, etc. to the basic product remain important. However, more emphasis was now being paid to the alternative use of the sugar cane e.g. in the form of rum, ethanol and energy production.

As Stakeholders, we are concerned about the continuing loss of European Community Sugar Protocol quotas to the region, which over the years amounted to some 45,000 tons or about \$20000000. There was a distinct determination that the present 15,000 to quota which has been relinquished by St. Kitts Nevis as a result of its cessation of sugar production, should remain in the Region.

Stakeholders also felt that the resources provided by the European Commission, as a part of its accompanying measures to restructure the sugar industry as a result of the European Union sugar reform, are insufficient. But even more alarming is the subjectivist nature of projects and process to which these funds are to be applied and the untimeliness of their disbursement.

The meeting also discussed and looked favourably on the current negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement. However, the consensus was that at least all the benefits and guarantees of the present Sugar Protocol must be maintained for CARICOM in a completed agreement for it to be acceptable.

Representation on these and other matters will be made to the European Commission.