CARIBBEAN
REGIONAL NEGOTIATING MACHINERY

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CRNM LAUNCHES NEW TRADE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Bridgetown, Barbados, March 2 -- The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) has successfully launched a new trade awareness and education initiative targeting primarily companies engaged in the export of goods and services.

The initiative takes the form of intense two-day training seminars called trade negotiations 'boot camps'. The first in the series was held for the benefit of the Dominica private sector on March 6-7 while the second took place in Antigua and Barbuda on February 13-14.

"These highly interactive sessions are intended to simplify and explain some of the terms and implications of trade agreements, looking specifically at market access, services, trade facilitation," said Lincoln Price, the CRNM's Private Sector Liaison Officer.

"The objective is to train business people in techniques which would enable them to develop position papers to be fed into trade negotiations. We produced two position papers each for Dominica and Antigua on services and trade facilitation and were able to achieve our main objective," he added.

The Caribbean Open Trade Support Programme (COTS) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and private sector organizations in both Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda partnered with the CRNM in bringing off the two workshops. The trade negotiations 'boot camp' initiative falls under a CRNM project supported by the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). It is seeking to increase private sector involvement in the region's external trade negotiations.

Participants ranging from farmers, large drink companies, public relations firms to small herbal producers, were awarded certificates of participation at the end of both workshops. Following a break for Cricket World Cup (CWC) and the summer holidays, the series will resume in September with workshops planned for Suriname and Belize.

"We got an idea of opportunities in other service areas that we can expand into and it is along those lines that we have to try and develop Antigua so that it is not so dependent on one service which is tourism," said Patrick Ryan, head of the Antigua and Barbuda Business Alliance.

He added: "It is just the start of what I hope will be a long relationship with the CRNM. I hope later again this year that we can get another camp here and get more people involved, those who are looking for opportunities."

The CRNM is responsible for coordinating trade policy at the regional level and also representing the Caribbean in some external trade negotiations. It was established by the Governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

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