

## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF STATISTICIAN**

Today's observance of the first Caribbean Statistics Day marks another milestone in the ongoing development of national and regional Statistics in all of the Statistical offices of CARICOM and the wider Caribbean region. In my capacity of Chief Statistician, I am pleased that the Bureau of Statistics and the statistical units of the social sector line Ministries are all part of the regional activities which today give tangible recognition to the field of Statistics.

The work of the Bureau of Statistics today is a continuation and expansion of the sterling contributions and efforts made by the former staff members who preceded us during the past fifty-two (52) years that the Bureau has functioned as an established department of Government.

Significant changes and progress have of course been made in the field of Statistics over these past fifty-two (52) years both internationally and here in Guyana. The organization and production of statistics at the time of establishment of the Bureau would have been designed initially as just another tool to support colonial administration. The advent of Independence just under a decade later would have propelled the transformation of the Bureau as the country's Central Statistical Office, into a key agency to support and inform economic development and policy planning, a role that it carries out onto today with an even wider mandate.

Statistics is the mechanism by which events and activities within the diverse aspects of national life are observed, recorded and measured, and from which projections for the future are made. In the capture and recording of data, which constitute some of the core aspects of the Bureau's operations, I consider the co-operation of the public to be paramount whether it is individuals within households, businesses or regulatory agencies. Even though the Bureau operates under the mandate of the Laws of Guyana for purposes of requesting and accessing data, the co-operation of the public in providing accurate and timely data on demand, is even more important and I have found that the more educated the public in the need for and usages of statistics, the greater their co-operation and Statistics Day provides a benchmark for the resuscitation of public knowledge in the area of Statistics.

The Bureau of Statistics has and continues to be a fertile training ground and career path for many young persons and graduates from our tertiary system. Employment at the Bureau has allowed many persons to discover the type of fulfilling career and training opportunities that the Bureau can offer, and it has proved to be an excellent preparation ground also for those who have moved on to career paths in other closely related fields nationally, regionally and internationally and continue to distinguish themselves.

The staff members of the Bureau and the Statistical units of our line Ministries provide the backbone for the production of statistics, and on this signal day I take this opportunity to commend them wholeheartedly for their efforts. The achievements of the Bureau to date have not been without significant challenges and constraints and there will be continue to be areas for improvements. The Bureau of Statistics, like the other offices of the Region, still faces significant challenges on the road ahead. The challenges posed by the economic global-downturn, the fight against HIV-AIDS, policy commitments to eradicate poverty and attain the MDGs, require additional and in some cases new initiatives from the National Statistical Offices.

The Bureau itself is concluding some very important work in the areas of National Accounts and Prices for introduction in 2010 with an accompanying public education programme and the policy discussions propelled by global environmental concerns dictate that for the newyear Environmental Statistics will occupy a heightened profile in the work programme of the Bureau.

I acknowledge the increasing regional coordinative role that has been played in recent years by the Statistics Unit of the Caricom Secretariat, particularly in the areas of staff-training, garnering of international financing and Census co-ordination and support. The latter effort is being currently manifested once again as the Region prepares for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses.

For the Bureau, three (3) factors give particular optimism to meet the anticipated new and/or expanded challenges. The investment in recent years by Government in institutional capacity building in Statistics, the continued development of the statistical units in the Line Ministries, and the ongoing regional networking and support that continue to be provided through the Statistics Unit of the Caricom Secretariat, all combine to provide the confidence to meet the challenges ahead. The area of Statistics over the years has manifested itself as one of the strongest areas of Regional networking, cooperation and development among the statistical offices of the region, and a CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY, celebrated today, symbolizes all of these Regional attributes.

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