

MESSAGE BY THE HON. MINISTER OF FINANCE, DR. ASHNI SINGH,
ON THE OBSERVANCE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY, 2011

Tomorrow, Saturday 15th October, marks the anniversary date for the celebration of **Caribbean Statistics Day**. Because this year the anniversary date falls on Saturday it is the decision of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians to hold observances here in Guyana and throughout the region for Caribbean Statistics Day, 2011, **today Friday 14th October**, which is the last working day for all National Statistical Offices throughout the Region, prior to the anniversary date. Indeed today marks the third annual observance of this signal event and I am particularly pleased to have been associated with all three (3) annual observances from the initial observance in 2009 through to today's event, in my capacity as Minister with portfolio responsibility for Statistics. Last year in fact witnessed the dual observance of both the second Caribbean Statistics Day as well as the first World Statistics Day, which was a truly global event celebrated in over one hundred and thirty countries and areas, and whereas based on the sentiments expressed by Member countries the United Nations Statistical Commission decided that the latter event would henceforth be observed at wider intervals of time, Caribbean Statistics Day is now formally established as an annual event in the Statistical and national Calendars of all member countries of Caricom and the wider Caribbean region.

The theme for this year's observance as notified by the Caricom Secretariat is 'Recognizing the essential role of Statistics in the development of the Caribbean Community'. I consider that this is a most relevant and pertinent theme for this year's observance. The Government of Guyana has been a strident advocate for regional integration and has been unswerving in its commitments towards a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). It is no coincidence therefore that Guyana has been one of the first signatories to and participants in the major pillar of a CSME – namely a Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). And just as Government unswervingly supports and identifies with the mega-symbols of Caribbean integration, it has systematically supported the smaller but no less important instruments and entities of Caribbean community, development and integration, and I say without hesitation that one of the key instruments and areas of Caribbean development and ultimate integration has been and must continue to be the area of Statistics, both national and regional, as manifested by the commendable work of our National Statistical Offices and the Caricom Secretariat.

Here in Guyana, my portfolio responsibility for Statistics over the past five (5) years has afforded me the opportunity to observe at close range the performances and outputs

of the staff of the Bureau of Statistics. Both I and Government commit to and practice an evidence-based approach to policy and decision making, and whether it is in the area of macro-economy – the GDP and performance growth, inflation and prices, trade and the balance of payments or the social statistics - population and quality of life, particularly the MDGs and Poverty Measures, the work and output of the Bureau has been central to Government's reports, analyses and decision making. In fact just under two (2) months' ago I delivered my half-year Report on the Economy to the Parliament, as well as reported to the Nation on the progress made in the reduction of Poverty and the attainment of the other MDGs by 2015. I dare say that the central contribution of the Bureau in providing the quality data for these Reports is self-evident in the scope and quality of these Reports.

But more importantly I have come to realize and acknowledge that the area of Statistics is one unquestionable area of regional networking, cooperation and standardization of methods and progress in the whole context of the regional commitment towards an eventual total integration of policy and economies. I have noted for example how the present round of Population and Housing Censuses has been the catalyst for a standardised approach to training for all regional statistical offices organized by the Caricom Secretariat and sister regional organizations such as UNECLAC, and even though only Guyana and Suriname remain to execute their Censuses next year in 2012, the fact that both have been included in all ongoing training for countries that have already executed their Censuses, ensures that when Guyana and Suriname execute their Censuses and contribute their country data to the regional pool of data, Governments throughout the region can compare with confidence the dynamics of the population and other Key economic and social indicators of their respective countries with those of other countries of the region, steered in the confidence that all countries adopted a common standard, methodology and measure in the collection and compilation of their data. Needless to say for Regional Analysis, a regional data set of common quality and comparability would be assured.

I am aware that in just one (1) week hence the Directors and Chief Statisticians of Caricom and the wider Caribbean community are scheduled to meet in Belize for the meetings of the Advisory Group on Statistics, the annual meetings of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians and the Regional Census Co-ordinating Committee. These will be followed by the meetings/workshops for Directors and their National Accountants on the developments in the framework for the System of National Accounts, a predominant factor in the continued development of all offices of the region to more comprehensively measure our economies and determine the levels of growth based on an agreed and common international and regional framework or standard. UNECLAC is also planning a developmental workshop on Poverty Measurement for all countries. I commend the Caricom Secretariat and sister Regional

Agencies on the sustaining of these initiatives which portray one common factor – the continued development of the technical capacities of our National Statistical Offices for the common progress of our Region.

During this week as part of the observances leading to Caribbean Statistics Day 2011, the Bureau conducted several outreach exercises to our schools in several regions and hosted a Quiz for some of our schools. I do feel that working with the Education System and advertising Statistics to the impressionable minds of our young population is one sure way of ensuring both the sustaining and growth of the culture of statistics here in Guyana and through the process of integration throughout our Caribbean Region as a whole.

Once again I commend and congratulate the Chief Statistician and his staff, the staff of all Statistical Units, on the observance of Caribbean Statistics Day 2011 and with Government's continued support I look forward to the observance assuming greater regional proportions in the years to come. I also commend the new Secretary General of the Caricom Secretariat who will be overseeing his first observance of Caribbean Statistics Day and I take this opportunity to commend him and the staff of the Caricom Secretariat for their continued coordinative role in the development of all regional statistical offices and ensuring that statistics continues to grow as one of the lead elements in the integration and growth of this region.

Dr. Ashni Singh

Minister of Finance
With Responsibility for Statistics