



PRESS RELEASE

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CARIFORUM DG Wraps Up Official Visit to the Dominican Republic

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana) The Director-General of the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM) Directorate, Mr Ivan Ogando Lora, has just completed an official visit to the Dominican Republic. Mr Ogando's trip to this CARIFORUM State came against the backdrop of its assumption of the Chairmanship of CARIFORUM from 1 July 2012, a position it will hold until 30 June 2013. The visit, which took place from 3-4 September, was mounted on behalf of the Secretary-General of CARIFORUM Ambassador Irwin La Rocque.

Mr Ogando was accompanied by senior aides including Mr Branford Isaacs Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU).

Mr Ogando and his delegation met with top level Government Officials on key strategic and operational issues relating to EPA implementation and the task ahead including the Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Carlos Morales Troncoso and the Minister of Trade and Industry H.E. José Del Castillo Saviñón. Meetings were also held with Vice-Minister for Trade Negotiations Mr César Dargam, the new National Authorizing Officer, Mr Antonio Vargas, and the Deputy Director of Customs, Mr Eduardo Rodriguez.

Mr Ogando pointed out that "the Dominican Republic has assumed the Chairmanship of the regional bloc at a crucial juncture, coming as it does ahead of pivotal meetings of two Joint CARIFORUM-EU Institutions under the EPA. As such, the aim of the visit of my team and I to the Dominican Republic was to have an exchange of views on a range of matters of which the Region is seized going into the aforementioned meetings and the top priorities with respect to issues that are to be taken up in the agendas of those meetings." He described the meetings with authorities in the Dominican Republic as "having touched on and advanced the Region's positions with respect to a range of pressing matters." Mr Ogando underscored that, "on the whole, the meetings were very productive and cordial. The authorities in the Dominican Republic reaffirmed their commitment to playing their part in enhancing regional cooperation and coordination, within the framework of CARIFORUM."

The visit was propitious because a new administration has come to power in that country. It was also timely from the standpoint of recent developments in and milestones on the horizon in respect of EPA implementation.

On 27 September the Second Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Trade and Development Committee (TDC) will be convened in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, followed on 26 October by the Second Meeting of the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council (JC) to be held in Brussels. The JC is the highest Institution, which meets at Ministerial level. It is vested with responsibility to supervise the implementation of the EPA. TDC meetings of Officials of both

the CARIFORUM and EU sides take place prior to the JC, so as to prepare the ground for meetings of the latter.

The fifteen signatory Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (CARIFORUM) States to the EPA are the independent CARICOM Member States and the Dominican Republic.

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