

3rd CDB/IDB Caribbean Regional Civil Society Dialogue
January 24-25, 2006

Welcoming Remarks by Mr. William J. Robinson, IDB Representative

Senator the Honourable Rennie Dumas, Minister of Local Government
Honourable Chief Secretary, Mr. Orville London, Tobago House of Assembly
Honourable Alfred Sears, Minister of Education in The Bahamas
Honourable Winston Dookeran, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Desmond Brunton, Vice President, Operations, Caribbean Development Bank
Mrs. Alicia Ritchie, Operations Manager, Region 3, Inter-American Development Bank
Dr. Ivelaw Griffith, Florida International University
Mr. Steve Reid, St. Kitts Agricultural Youth Forum
Mr. Lucian Isidore, Director, Ministry of Social Transformation, Culture and Local Government
Distinguished Representatives of International Organizations
Distinguished Civil Society Participants, Special Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this meeting of representatives of Civil Society from throughout the Caribbean. The Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank are pleased to jointly sponsor this Dialogue as part of an ongoing effort to put the spotlight on the important role that Civil Society plays in the development process and to seek your views on a number of key development challenges that are facing this region. To help give this dialogue a sense of context I would like to quote the words of Dr. Rex Nettleford, former Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, who framed the importance of Civil Society to our future development in a most thoughtful way. Professor Nettleford observed that quote - nothing short of an expansion of thought embracing a new vision for a groping rainbow world can give us a new sense of self and new ways of knowing, new ways of living. Only this will guarantee us safe conduct into the 3rd millennium – end quote. Well we are six years into the 3rd millennium and I would say our safe conduct is far from assured.

Professor Nettleford's observation, that it is from Civil Society that new expressions and new visions of development must come, is a view that is shared by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank. It is the hope of the organizers of this Dialogue that over the next two days an exchange of views through some presentations and working groups discussions will afford us an opportunity for new views to be articulated and shared, and for new perspectives to be generated. The rainbow of constituencies of Civil Societies from which you, the participants, are drawn is a broad one. We have with us for this Dialogue, representatives from 20 countries in the Caribbean region. In addition Representatives of several multilateral organizations active in the Caribbean are also with us here today. These include the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA), OAS, ILO, ECLAC, FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNDP, UNESCO, CARDI, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), OXFAM, the Regional Negotiation Machinery and the Global Environment Fund (GEF). Let me also acknowledge the participation of the European Union and the Government of Canada represented here today. All of these organizations are respectfully referred to in our Conference outline as "Development Partners" and on behalf of the organizers of this Dialogue I wish to thank them for joining us in this event.

A successful Civil Society Dialogue must incorporate both a readiness to listen and a readiness to exchange views. The Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank are cooperatives whose resources are controlled by the unique partnership of its borrowers and its non-borrowers who equally contribute to their Institutions in order to make them viable and potent catalysts for development. However, increasingly, multi-lateral organizations are recognizing that success comes not only through the engagement of governments from the North and the South but also from the direct participation of Civil Society in the formulation of programmes and in their direct implementation. Tapping into the views of Civil Society is not always easy as every representative government will tell you there are many constituencies, many voices of the citizens, each with different and even at times conflicting points of views and objectives. Good governance is the art of creating a coherent and effective response to these often

disparate voices. The Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank are committed to listening directly to Civil Society and their views as well as relating with Governments, our owners, the private sector and special interest groups in the formulation and delivery of our programmes.

The Conference Agenda before us proposes two major themes upon which you are invited to present your views and, by the end of the Dialogue on Wednesday afternoon, to shape some Recommendations for all of us involved on how sustainable progress in terms of improving regional and national security can be achieved, and also on how the process of participatory governance in our societies can be further strengthened, deepened and made more effective. I want to wish you a stimulating and generative two days as we listen to each other, exchange our views and reach for a synthesis of solutions that can take us forward. These I hope will be the new ways of living, knowing and reflective of a new sense of self that Professor Nettleford has referred us to.

For our Opening Ceremony this morning I will be calling on the special guests seated before us at our head tables. This includes Mr. Desmond Brunton, Vice-President of Operations for the Caribbean Development Bank, Mrs. Alicia Ritchie, the newly appointed Manager for IDB Operations in Region 3 of the Bank which includes the Caribbean, who will also be bringing greetings from the new President of the IDB, Dr. Luis Rodriguez Morena. Also this morning the Honourable Senator Rennie Dumas, Minister of Local Government, Trinidad and Tobago will provide us with the Feature Address and later in the morning, in our second session, we will be hearing from the distinguished Minister of Education from The Bahamas, Honourable Mr. Alfred Sears. I would also like to welcome this morning the presenter for our first session Dr. Ivelaw Griffith. Ladies and gentlemen without further ado I would like to call on Mr. Brunton to give you his welcoming remarks Mr. Brunton.