

MR. P. DESMOND BRUNTON, VICE PRESIDENT (OPERATIONS)
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

ADDRESS AT

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK/INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION DIALOGUE: CSO RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIONS IN
NATIONAL DECISION MAKING

Trinidad Hilton Hotel, January 24-25, 2006

CDB is pleased once again to collaborate with IDB in our mutual quest to strengthen relationships with civil society in the Region and to deepen our understanding of the issues important to this constituency.

Attention was paid in last year's meeting on Strengthening Partnerships for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean. The meeting covered topics related to Participation and Governance, Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building of CSOs, Economic Strategy for Regional Development and Environmental and Vulnerability Issues.

In response to requests at that meeting for greater attention on CSOs participation in national decision making, the theme, "CSO Responsibilities and Actions in National Decision-Making and Development Planning" is selected for this year's meeting, with specific attention being paid to Regional and National Security, and Participatory Governance.

In this theme is the recognition that CSOs are important partners in national development planning, but it is not always clear how CSOs should be engaged in this process and what factors aid or hinder their efforts in doing so. We believe that it is through dialogue – a process of active listening and sharing – that we could improve our insights into these matters, better understand the factors that constitute the goal of national development and be well positioned to respond to the number of challenges that the development process brings. We believe that it is also our responsibility as a regional development bank, within the framework of good governance to not only support the state as our principles, but also the involvement of non-state actors into this process. Indeed, if development is more than increases in GDP, then it is critical that all stakeholders be involved in the process. For if development is also about society in its modest sense, then we must ensure that the whole society makes a contribution. This, in my view, underscores the critical role of civil society (and by extension CSOs) in the development process.

We announced at last year's dialogue that the Bank had adopted a Governance strategy. Since then we have engaged a Consultant to assist with the development of procedures to operationalise the strategy. As part of this exercise, keen consideration is being given to adopting appropriate mechanisms for the Bank to effectively interface with CSOs at the national and regional levels. The development of such mechanisms is likely to be a major challenge as it is being done in a context where the range of CSOs' interest is so broad, their organisational structure so diverse, national coordinating bodies are either absent or weak. Much more work therefore is required in this area, hence the importance of a meeting like this.

Like the previous two, we expect this Dialogue to be a vibrant exchange of ideas and views on matters related to the relationship between CSOs and CDB and CSOs and IDB, but more so, it is an opportunity for us:

- To listen carefully and to learn from your contributions;
- To participate in an honest examination of key development issues; and to obtain workable ideas that could aid the continuous operationalisation of our Governance Strategy; and
- To draw from a source of valuable insights that would place the Bank in a better position to assist CSOs and enhance their contributions to national and regional development.

We are looking forward to this Dialogue and wish us well in all that will be transpired in the next two days.