

Salutations

Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen

I bring you greetings on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary General, the Right Hon. Don McKinnon and the newly appointed Director of Youth Affairs, Dr. Fatiha Serour.

Today, Caribbean Youth Day is indeed an occasion to celebrate and pay tribute to the many young persons throughout the Caribbean who despite many challenges continue to make significant contributions to the sustainable development of their communities and societies.

However even as we pay tribute to these nation builders we remind mindful of the fact that the Caribbean like many other Commonwealth countries is caught in a struggle to effectively address the many youth development challenges, some which have undermined the basic tenets of our traditional modes of socialization and indeed poses a grave danger to the economic, social and even political stability of the Caribbean region.

Indeed in many of our societies there appears to be a prevailing climate of hopelessness and despair.

It is this prevailing climate which dictates, that now, more than ever before Government, the youth movement, corporate sector, development organizations and civil society in general must engage in the building of sustainable partnerships to formulate, support and implement sustainable youth development policies and strategies.

Over the last thirty years the Commonwealth Youth Programme has engaged Governments and the Youth movement in a very successful partnership to help advance the regional youth development agenda. Together we have provided the Caribbean with hundreds of trained youth development workers. CYP has also made significant

contributions to youth empowerment through appropriate advocacy initiatives, youth entrepreneurship programmes and the provision of capacity building opportunities for youth leaders and youth development professionals.

MR. CHAIRMAN

I have highlighted some of the contributions made by the CYP not because I feel persuaded by an obligation to show slate but rather it is to assure you, that in this your hour of need, when the Caribbean is faced with ever more complex youth development challenges the Commonwealth Youth Programme remains steadfast in its commitment to build even stronger bonds of partnership with all youth development stakeholders in the search for more effective strategies for sustainable youth development.

One of the philosophical pillars of the CYP youth development strategy is that of an **evidenced based** approach to youth work. It is our firm belief that youth development programmes and strategies are irrelevant and insignificant if these are merely driven by myths and misinformation. The experience of your very own Youth Affairs Division here in Barbados confirms the significance and indeed correctness of formulating youth development policies, strategies and programmes on the basis of sound empirical data and facts.

However developing an evidenced based approach to youth work requires the emergence of a culture or better yet an ethos of credible research into youth development issues and challenges.

Yet we are mindful of the fact that the findings of such research activities assume real value only when these influence public policy, public debate and discourse.

It is for this reason we at the CYP have embarked on the publication of a quarterly Journal “**CARIBBEAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.**” The main purpose of this organ

is to provide space for persons engaged in research on youth development issues to publish their findings and to help influence the policy development environment.

The Regional Youth development lecture series we launch today is yet another tool to stimulate more research, informed public debate and discourse on youth development challenges and issues. It is our sincere hope that this initiative will help ignite the development of a more progressive policy environment and contribute to the much needed transformation of the regional youth development landscape.

I wish to thank the government and people of Barbados, in particular the Honourable Minister of Youth, the Director of Youth Affairs and his colleagues and indeed Dr. Ivan Henry, today's guest speaker for their support in making this venture a reality.

May you all be showered with divine blessings on this Caribbean Youth Day 2006.

ONE LOVE