

CARICOM Leaders and Haiti's Minister of the Interior Agree that Collaboration is Key to a Stronger Caribbean

Capacity building, best-practice sharing and job creating opportunities are addressed with CARICOM leaders during two-day mission to Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Feb. 14, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- In meeting with the President of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Mr. Desire Delano Bouterse and the Bureau of Heads of Government during CARICOM's two-day mission to Haiti, Haiti's Minister of the Interior, Thierry Mayard-Paul stressed that Haiti is charting a new course for sustainable economic development.

"We are focusing our efforts on investment and job creation, particularly in Haiti's heartland," he said, articulating the Martelly administration's new vision for Haiti. "We understand that the key to driving sustainable development in Haiti is to map it throughout our entire nation and then drive it through local initiatives and decentralized cooperation."

CARICOM leaders are in Haiti to forge stronger ties and closer cooperation between the 14 member states while exploring ways to strengthen Haiti's participation in the organization. Under discussion is the adoption of French as an official and working language for the organization.

After thanking CARICOM members for their ongoing support of Haiti since the 2010 earthquake, Mayard-Paul emphasized that his nation is progressing in its recovery efforts, saying, "President Martelly's new vision for Haiti is to build a socially just, economically free, and politically independent nation that does not end with reconstruction but rather, begins with renovation. This is aligned with the administration's vision for decentralization and job creation through investment."

Stressing the fact that Haiti offers an energetic and willing workforce, Mayard-Paul said, "It is clear that what Haitians want and need is jobs that will restore their dignity. We are therefore looking forward to working in close collaboration with our CARICOM neighbors to promote opportunities that reflect our communities' most pressing priorities - jobs. We also seek to share those best practices that are yielding results for other member nations."

The Minister pointed to collaboration in Civil Protection activities, such as disaster preparedness and relief. "All of our nations are in geographic locations that make us vulnerable to the variances of nature," he said. "Therefore, we welcome best-practice sharing focused on institutional capacity building for preparedness and response, and equipment that will allow us to react more quickly and effectively."

In encouraging investments from CARICOM nations, the Minister highlighted the myriad of investment opportunities waiting in Haiti's heartland, especially in social infrastructure initiatives that enable communities to generate jobs and sustainable development. "With so many great opportunities in agriculture, tourism, infrastructure development and other sectors, we would be looking to CARICOM to help steer investments and contributions in these areas," he said.

"Additionally, as part of CSME [Single Market Economy of the Caribbean], we should be looking at standards that will facilitate the export of Haitian products to our Caribbean neighbors."

The Haitian minister asked for closer collaboration on cultural exchange activities and cited the possibility of establishing a Caribbean Youth Parliament or Organization that seeks to build lasting relationships among the future leaders of the Caribbean. "Caribbean universities could also embark on region-wide research related to the environment, the economy and social integration. The idea is that future leaders have a common understanding and culture that will facilitate a common market," he said.

Overall, the Ministry of the Interior identified 40 key projects pertaining to meeting the needs of Haiti's population outside the capital of Port-au-Prince, telling CARICOM representatives, "We would welcome the opportunity to present and discuss them with you. Our brother nations of CARICOM have been of great support to us since the earthquake and we are grateful."

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