

Caribbean Private Sector Representatives begin consultations with counterparts In Haiti

Representatives of the Jamaican private sector who accompanied CARICOM Envoy PJ Patterson on a one-day visit to Haiti on March 15, held a luncheon-meeting with their counterparts in that country. The luncheon was hosted by Haiti's Private Sector Economic Forum (PSEF), an organization comprising 12 business associations, and sponsored by Unibank.

The PSEF Chairman Reginald Boulos, in his introduction pointed out that the Haitian private sector was ready to participate in the reconstruction and rebuilding required as a result of the January 12 earthquake. He reported that the private sector had made inputs into the Action Plan for the National Recovery and Development of Haiti, promulgated by the Haitian Government and were supportive of the priority areas for investment as identified in the Plan. These areas were identified as: agriculture, garments and textiles, tourism and related industries, shelter and urban development. He affirmed that there was an existing modern financial sector in Haiti and loans were available from any of the three large international banks in the country – Unibank, Scotiabank and Citibank. He reaffirmed the position that Haiti's private sector would welcome opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with counterparts from other CARICOM member states.

Special Representative P. J. Patterson, who participated in the early part of the discussions, highlighted the special role that the private sector had to play in the reconstruction exercise. He maintained that Haiti and the rest of CARICOM had a unique opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the rebuilding and reconstruction effort. He emphasized, however, that the CARICOM private sector would need to compete against all-comers. In order to be successful, they would have to cooperate, establish alliances and partnerships and draw on the full array of resources in the Region.

The former Prime Minister noted that while the visiting delegation comprised mainly Jamaican organizations, because of the short time – three days - in putting together the mission, he regarded them as representatives of their counterparts across CARICOM. Mr Patterson pointed out that partnerships between Haitian and other CARICOM private sector groups would be beneficial to both parties. It was anticipated that there would soon be visits from the wider CARICOM private sector. Mr Patterson reiterated the importance of having both Haiti and the Caribbean as stakeholders in the rebuilding process.

The Jamaican delegation expressed appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate with their Haitian counterparts on the rebuilding process as laid out in the Action Plan. Sandra Glasgow, Chief Executive Officer of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), invited the Haitians to visit Jamaica to address her Organization. In addition, the representative of the Incorporated Masterbuilders Association of Jamaica, and the Coalition of Caribbean Contractors Association Raymond Cooper, expressed his organization's willingness to share the Jamaican Building Code.

Both parties agreed to maintain contact.

Other Jamaican private sector delegates at the luncheon included: Milton Samuda, President of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce; Omar Azan, President of the Jamaica Manufacturers Association; and Dalma James, President of the Small Business Association.

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