

Patterson leads mission to Haiti

CARICOM's Special Representative on Haiti, former Jamaica Prime Minister PJ Patterson, led a team from his office on a one-day mission to the earthquake ravaged country on Thursday (April 15) to further explore ways in which countries in the Community can facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan prepared by the country for the **National Recovery and Development of Haiti** following the earthquake on January 12 which killed more than 230,000 persons and left approximately 1.2 million homeless. The Action Plan was accepted by the international community at a donors meeting in New York on March 31 in which Mr Patterson also participated.

The visit followed discussions at a breakfast meeting in Kingston with representatives of the private sector of Jamaica on April 8 where the Special Representative was keynote speaker. In addition to personnel from the Office of the Special Representative, several representatives of the private sector in Jamaica and from CARICOM-related umbrella organisations accompanied Mr Patterson on the visit.

During a preliminary meeting with President Rene Preval, Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, several cabinet members and other senior Haitian state officials, emphasis was placed on the importance of mounting a strategy in collaboration with CARICOM to ensure that the country could satisfy the demands of the Action Plan and full accountability for resources being put in the Trust Fund. The meeting also agreed that there was urgent need to develop and implement a communication plan. This was seen as a means of engendering national support and promoting transparency in the decisions and actions taken on behalf of the people of Haiti.

Prime Minister Bellerive advised the plenary session that the Haitian government was in the process of adopting a Bill to establish the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC). He explained that the Commission would operate for 18 months and be succeeded by a permanent Haitian Development Agency. In keeping with the Action Plan, the IHRC is designed to provide effective coordination and deployment of resources. It will also respond to concerns about accountability and transparency in order to maximize support provided by international donors. The Commission will be established by way of a Presidential Decree.

The Prime Minister affirmed that since the meeting in New York, all donor countries had been urged to make their pledges a reality. He said that there had been consultations with UN Envoy and IHRC co-chair former US President Bill Clinton on issues related to operationalising the Commission and the Fund, and a level of understanding had been achieved on many of the critical issues.

Mr Patterson agreed with both leaders that Haiti's reconstruction must be pursued in a framework that facilitated Haiti's integration into the CARICOM's Single Market and Economy (CSME).

The meeting underlined a collaborative approach by Haiti and CARICOM on the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure effective representation of Haiti in the series of international meetings being planned by various countries and organisations.

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Caption

1. Members of Jamaica's visiting delegation and President Preval's team posing on a section of the grounds of the Presidential Palace after the meeting.
2. Preval in discussion with visiting delegates. Partly hidden at extreme left, PM Bellerive, PJ Patterson; interpreter at right.