



**REMARKS BY
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
AMBASSADOR IRWIN LAROCQUE
ON THE
OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF STATISTICS - 2013**

**GEORGETOWN, GUYANA
6 March 2013**

Mr. Lennox Benjamin, Chief Statistician, Bureau of Statistics, Guyana and
Members of his staff

Ambassador Robert Kopecky, Head of the EU Delegation to Guyana

Dr. Philomen Harrison and the staff of the Statistics Department

Other staff of the Secretariat

Representatives of the Media

The year 2013 has been designated the International Year of Statistics (Statistics 2013) to be commemorated as a worldwide event by leading statistical organisations which include the International Statistical Institute, the Royal Statistical Society and the American Statistical Association.

This year also marks the 40th Anniversary of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and it is significant that among the major themes of the International Year of Statistics is one that promotes the important role for statistics in guiding the development process. As we are aware, development of our people and our Region is the goal of our integration movement. The rationale behind this year's celebration is based on the powerful and far-reaching effects of statistics on everyone while, at the same time, seeking to address an inherent lack of awareness by many people of how the use of data can improve their lives. We just saw the brief video on the importance of statistics to our lives. Statistics is important in some many ways including in the areas of climate change and global warming where the timely measurements give an indication of what is taking place. Every aspect of our lives is impacted by statistics.

There is no doubt of the critical input of statistics in devising plans for and measuring scientifically the path to sustainable economic and social development. Enabling empirical decision-making in the private and public sectors, monitoring public opinion, keeping abreast of social trends, as well as probably the best known activity, that of population and housing censuses, are means through which statistics can assist in business growth, poverty alleviation, and the engendering of a better quality of life of all our citizens.

The CARICOM Secretariat is pleased to be associated with the celebrations and events that are planned throughout the year in the Community and at the Secretariat to mark this observance, based on the theme “*Statistics in Everyday Life; Let us Educate and Appreciate*”.

The over-riding goals of dedicating an entire year to statistics are to:

- Increase public awareness of the power and far-reaching impact of statistics on all aspects of society;
- Promote and nurture statistics as a profession, especially among young people; and
- Promote creativity and development in the sciences of probability and statistics.

By celebrating statistics, the CARICOM Secretariat aims to promote and increase public awareness through planned activities to help gain a greater

appreciation for the myriad ways that statistics has helped to improve the quality of life and has greatly advanced society.

While educating stakeholders about statistics will be the general thrust of activities to observe the year, added focus will be placed on attracting young people to the career opportunities which it offers. Already, for example, our Statistics Department participated in the Career Day Programme at the University of Guyana. Other facets of our programme for this Year of Statistics will pivot around that core youth cohort and this thrust will be in keeping with the focus of activities to observe the 40th Anniversary of the Community.

It is anticipated that the National Statistical Offices will be among the key organisations leading the promotional efforts in Member States and Associate Members. Today, for example, apart from this joint launch with the Government of Guyana here at the Secretariat Headquarters, there will be activities in The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Montserrat and the Cayman Islands launching their observance of the Year of Statistics. Other Member States are planning to have their launch at the same time as the release of their national census results, a major statistical activity. The University of the West Indies (UWI) is also involved, as its Mona Campus is a partner in the major event in Jamaica.

Let me take this opportunity to recognize and thank our partners who have supported and continue to support the work of Statistics in the Region. These include the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the United Kingdom

Department for International Development (DfID), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other agencies within the UN System, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). I wish to also express my gratitude to the staff of the Regional Statistics Programme for the good work they have been doing. I have personally had to engage Dr. Harrison and her staff at the eleventh and a half hour sometimes and they always respond. I want to commend them for their wonderful job they are doing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by quoting H.G.Wells who said that, ***“Statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write.”*** . Let us during Statistics 2013 try to refocus our thoughts and actions on the importance of numeracy which is one of the keys to unlocking creativity and innovation that is required to advance and reengineer the Community as we commemorate our 40th year.

