LAUNCH OF WEB VERSION OF SURINFO

Remarks prepared by the Project Director, Regional Statistics CARICOM

Secretariat

On behalf of the Project Director, Regional Statistics, of the Caribbean Community Secretariat, Dr. Philomen Harrison (in absentia because of ongoing events commemorating Caribbean Statistics Day in Georgetown) it gives me great pleasure to deliver these remarks on her behalf on the launch of the Web version of SurInfo, that will now provide decision-makers and the people of Suriname, in the Community and world-over with information on Suriname including core statistics and indicators.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been facilitating the expansion of DevInfo in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) mainly through collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat that has effectively been one of the main champions of the spread of DevInfo over the past nine (9) years in the Region. Some of the DevInfo and related initiatives that the CARICOM Secretariat have participated in or have convened mainly with UNICEF support include the following:

Regional Activities:

- Regional Training on the *Release of DevInfo 4.0*, Panama, August 2004 which focused on training in *DevInfo Database Administration*;
- DevInfo 4.0 *Training of Trainers* Workshop for Latin America and The Caribbean regional teams in, Panama, December 2004;
- Regional *DevInfo 5.0 Training Workshop*, Barbados , September 2006 sponsored by UNICEF;
- Regional *DevInfo 5.0 Training of Trainers* Workshop was conducted by UNICEF in collaboration with CARICOM Secretariat, Barbados, May 2008;
- Review and testing of the new version of DevInfo v6.0 at the *DevInfo 6.0 Master Training*, India, January/February 2009;
- DevInfo *Regional Review Meeting*, Panama, April 2009, which sought to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of DevInfo;

- *Regional Meeting on the Implementation of the DevInfo Dissemination Software in the Region*, Jamaica, January 2009 -   the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was the sponsor of this meeting;

- *DevInfo v6.0/CensusInfo Regional Workshop*, Guyana, October 2009 which was to build capacity in the use of version6.0 and to introduce countries to CensusInfo for the dissemination of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Census. A new partner joined UNICEF, the **United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)**;

- *DevInfo/CensusInfo Regional Workshop*, Guyana, (UNICEF in collaboration with the UNSD) February 2011which reviewed the DevInfo adaptations in Member States with the aim of exploring the feasibility of harmonisation of these adaptations and to advance the process of preparing a CARICOM adaptation of the UNSD Global CensusInfo template;

National Activities:

- **2007- SAINT LUCIA** – launched its desktop version **HelenInfo**. The CARICOM Secretariat had an exchange visit prior to this launch and received and imparted technical assistance. Saint Lucia transformed its adaptation to 6.0 HelenInfo which is online.   Saint Lucia effectively did not require major technical assistance.

- **2007** – **GUYANA** – Three (3) User and Administrative Training Workshops conducted: A Steering Committee was formed for the adaptation of DevInfo and the Desktop version of *GuyDInfo 1.0* was launched in October 2009 and the **web version** was launched in **2013**.

- **2007-2010** – **ST.VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES** – Four (4) User, Administrative and DevInfo Web-adaptation versions 5.0 and 6.0 Training Workshops conducted to the Statistical Office and Government departments. A

Steering Committee was formed for the adaptation of DevInfo; and the Desktop version of **VinInfo1.0** was launched.

- **2007 – 2010**- **DOMINICA** – Three (3) User, Administrative and DevInfo Web-adaptation versions 5.0 and 6.0 Training Workshops conducted to Line Ministries and the Central Statistical Offices. The launch of the Desktop version of **NatureIsleInfo** Adaptation of DevInfo in December 2008.

- **2008 – 2010**- **GRENADA** – Two (2) User, Administrative and DevInfo Web-adaptation versions 5.0 and 6.0 Training Workshops conducted to Line Ministries and the Central Statistical Offices. The launch of the Desktop and web version of **SpiceIsleInfo** took place in October 2010

- **2008 – 2010**- **MONTSERRAT** – Two (2) User, Administrative and DevInfo Web-adaptation Training Workshops conducted at which Line Ministries and the Central Statistics Offices and Government departments sensitized about the use of DevInfo which resulted in the launch of the desktop version of EmeraldInfo in 2011;

- **2009 – 2010**- **ST.KITTS AND NEVIS** – Two (2) User and Administrative Training Workshops conducted also for Line Ministries and the Central Statistical Office were sensitized about the use of DevInfo The desktop version **SKNInfo** was launched in 2011;

- **2010**- **SURINAME** – Two (2) User and Administrative versions 5.0 and 6.0 Training Workshop conducted, the latter being a Train-the-Trainers Workshop: The NSO and Line Ministries were sensitized about the use of DevInfo;
- The General Bureau of Statistics launched their own DevInfo adaptation – **ABSInfo** in May, 2010. In November, 2011, SurInfo 1.0 National Database was launched.

Status of Other Countries:

- 2010- **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**– One (1) User and Administrative Training version 6.0 Workshop conducted for the NSO an line Ministries that were sensitized about the use of DevInfo-creation of the National Database commenced.

- **Barbados** – while not benefitting from in-country technical assistance benefitted from Regional Training Programmes .It created an in-house adaptation BIMInfo

- **Jamaic**a had the in-house expertise, to build and launch Jamstats desktop and then launch it online.

- **Trinidad and Tobago** through a consultancy which supported the regional training was able to create and launch cTTInfo which was launched online with some support from the CARICOM Secretariat.

- **Belize** possessed resident expertise outside of the NSO and Jamaica and the Associate Members did not benefit from in-country support but have made requests for the same

- In 2009/10 the **Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)** also received training through two workshops on Administrative and DevInfo Web-adaptation versions 5.0 and 6.0 which were conducted by the CARICOM Secretariat to the Staff of the OECS.   The launch of the Desktop version of **OECSInfo** took place in October 2009.

- The **CARICOM Secretariat** also developed and launched a web-based version CARICOMInfo (2009) which provides key statistics and indicators for countries across the region.

In some of the support above apart from UNICEF, the UNSD and the CDB- the European Union and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would have made contributions on an individual country basis or at the regional level. The EU and UNDP support included the provision of equipment which is vital for the production and dissemination of statistics.

The main aim of the DevInfo Database Technology is as a tool to present and disseminate Caribbean Specific Indicators such as those relating to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), human development and data from the 2010/2011 Round of Population and Housing Census, the latter through CensusInfo. However DevInfo is not limited to the above datasets and can be usefully used to disseminate economic, environment and other areas of statistics.

In other developments, the CARICOM Secretariat prepared a Draft Guideline document for the Development of a **Regional DevInfo Template** with the main aim of producing **harmonised DevInfo databases**. This initiative recognised the difficulty in combining the various adaptations across countries i.e. there was no harmonised global/regional DevInfo template since adaptations at the country level were possible. In the case of CensusInfo using the global CensusInfo template, a Regional CensusInfo Template was created and it is being tested on a pilot country.

Additionally the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) has recognised the potential of DevInfo for improving data dissemination and reporting by its Borrowing Member Countries (BMCs) on Millennium Development Goals, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and on national and regional development initiatives in general. In a joint CDB-UNICEF project, funding has been provided for capacity-building activities in the Organization for Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat, as well as in Anguilla, Barbados, Grenada, Montserrat and Saint Lucia. The project was launched in participating countries in March 2014.

UNICEF will focus on improving data capture, data analysis and the compilation of indicators within the Ministries and agencies which feed the DevInfo application. UNICEF will provide the computer equipment to critical feeder agencies to facilitate electronic data capture for faster analysis and dissemination. CDB and CARICOM will also address technical challenges to DevInfo implementation through supporting training in DevInfo in each country and regionally. It is anticipated that the CDB will fund the remaining borrowing member countries in a second phase of the project using the lessons learnt from the current project.

It is often stated that, "... **Data that are not used- are useless**.."- the thrust of enabling DevInfo online for access through the worldwide web brings with it demands on the NSOs of the region and their governments to ensure that statistics are timely and reliable. This implies the need for governments to provide core funds to sustain the capacity building processes in countries across the Regions that are being provided directly by development partners or through the CARICOM Secretariat. There is a tremendous increase in the statistics that we are producing now compared to say forty-years ago where the main focus was trade and population- this demand for more data, including greater details and small area data will bring to bear the need for strategic development of the National Statistical System- the NSO and the other producing agencies must step up in filling this demand to enable evidence-based policies and decision-making. Once again on behalf of the Project Director we take this opportunity to thank all our development partners and to congratulate the General Bureau of Statistics, particularly the Director of Statistics Mr. Iwan Sno for his leadership and the Government of Suriname for enabling the launch of SurInfo. It is fitting that this launch is taking place on Caribbean Statistics Day 2014 with a theme that depicts the need for **a Data Revolution** which among things **must empower the people of our Region through the use of statistics**.

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