



**MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL,
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
AMBASSADOR IRWIN LAROCQUE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OBSERVANCE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY
15 OCTOBER 2014**

15 October 2014 marks the Sixth Observance of Caribbean Statistics Day in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The first observance of Caribbean Statistics Day arose out of a decision of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) which agreed to this Day being commemorated on **15 October 2009**, as a mechanism to garner a greater profile for statistics in the Community and promote a culture of evidence-based decision-making in the Region. The commemoration is also a means of recognizing the crucial role of statistics across a wide spectrum of activities – from daily decision-making of individuals, businesses and students to planning, policy-making and research among governments, academia, scientists and other users.

This year's commemoration of Caribbean Statistics Day follows from the conduct of the Second High-Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics in May 2014, and has as its theme: ***“Data Revolution for Sustainable Development in CARICOM – Designing and Operationalising a Framework for Statistics in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”***.

That agenda has already begun to take shape with the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The report of the Panel expressed the intention of finishing the job started through the Millennium Declaration. Further, it called for “a **data revolution** for sustainable development, with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens”. It further emphasized the need to take advantage of new technology, crowd sourcing and improved connectivity to empower people with information on the progress towards targets.

Statistics is a vital part of the development agenda but investment in statistics remains a challenge. The CARICOM Secretariat continues to work with Member States to improve the coverage, reliability and quality of the traditional areas of statistics and to develop frameworks to measure new and emerging issues. That Second High-Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics, referred to earlier, issued a call for commitment by governments of the Community to strengthen the national statistical systems as a key means of sustaining the development and availability of timely, high-quality and relevant statistics for decision-making, and for the empowerment of citizens of the entire region. Among the major issues raised by the Keynote Speaker and host Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell, a number of participants and other contributors at the forum were the following:

- *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has to be the tool that powers the data revolution* that will be used for the sustainable development of regional economies, since ICT had the potency to help countries move forward quickly and effectively through making available timely and high quality data to empower our citizens and make progress towards building resilient and highly adaptable societies;
- Decisions to enable improvements in the lives of our citizens and the mitigating of the challenges of low economic growth, high unemployment particularly among the youth, and the reduction of poverty must be guided by statistics;
- Countries need to ensure that they have a fully-fledged National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) that is aligned with their national economic and social developments plans as well as the inclusion of financing options;
- Investing in regional approaches to building statistical capacity will help to optimise the use of scarce public resources of countries;
- Monitoring of both compliance of regional integration at the national level and of the impact of integration in CARICOM are critical issues that depend on the availability of key statistics.

The demand for statistics is expected to increase in the post-2015 development era and therefore a data revolution will require intensified efforts to address the deficiencies that still exist. Statisticians of the Region must be commended for the strides that they are making to improve statistics including the establishment of the Caribbean Association of Professional Statisticians (CAPS) in May this year, which would redound to the benefit of all the people of CARICOM.

Research and Development and Innovation has been identified as a key area of intervention in all the Strategic Priorities of CARICOM's first ever Five-Year Strategic Plan (2015-2019), which was approved by Heads of Government last July. The role of statistics is therefore fundamental to achieving the goals and objectives of the Plan.

With that in mind, I wish that this year's observance of Statistics Day proves to be a catalyst for the data revolution to aid sustainable development of our Region.