

FROM: Hon Minister of Finance  
Dr. Ashni Singh

### **MESSAGE FOR CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY**

I congratulate the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) for taking the decision at its 33<sup>rd</sup> Meeting held in Barbados in October of 2008, to observe for the first time in the Region, a Caribbean Statistics Day, which is being observed today, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2009, in Guyana and all of the other Member States of CARICOM.

This formal recognition of the value of statistics, here in Guyana and throughout the wider Caribbean, is something that is long overdue, and I commend the initiative of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians to place statistics in the forefront of regional awareness and recognition. It is my unequivocal view that statistics is and will continue to be an indispensable prerequisite to sound decision making at the individual, corporate, sector, national as well as regional and international levels.

Like so many of our key institutions of the Caricom region such as the Courts, the Health and Education Systems and the Public Service Administrations, the establishment and administration of Statistics have evolved from a colonial past and throughout the Member States of Caricom, the national Statistical Offices are defined more by their striking similarities in size, work programmes and outputs, areas of training and challenges faced.

Here in Guyana, the Bureau of Statistics has registered some notable and highly commendable achievements in recent years, not the least among them being the execution of a nationwide Population and Housing Census in 2002, the execution of the nationwide Household Budget Survey in 2005-6, a nationwide Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 2006, and the National Economic Survey of 2008 which served as a fundamental input in the Bureau's current work in progress to rebase the estimates of the country's National Accounts. Like the rebasing exercise, the Bureau is also concluding important work to derive a new basket of goods and services to generate a new series of the Consumer Price Index, based on the national data collected from the aforementioned Household Budget Survey.

These achievements have been recorded despite numerous constraints the foremost among them being the non-compliance with the Statistics Act by some respondents. The importance of submission of data to the Bureau within the time frame requested cannot be overemphasized, as it is the aggregation of activities of all individuals and economic entities which permits the Bureau to generate the type of national socio-economic aggregates which as mentioned before serve to facilitate informed decision making at all levels.

Recognizing the importance of Statistics, our Government has worked assiduously to strengthen the Bureau of Statistics and other Agencies of Government involved in data collection, analysis and dissemination. A more recent manifestation of this commitment has been Government's entering in 2006 into a three-year US\$3.5 million loan agreement with the IDB to support an institutional capacity building in Statistics for both the Bureau of Statistics and the Statistical units of the key social sector line Ministries of Health, Education, Labour, Housing and Water and Home Affairs, many of which have contributed to the observances today to mark Caribbean Statistics Day.

It is now fifty-two (52) years since a Department of Statistics was first established under the Colonial Administration. Today's Bureau of Statistics is now poised, with the support of Government, and expectedly with the wider public understanding and support that will result from the publicity and focus being afforded by the celebration of a Caribbean Statistics Day, to continue and progress in its work as leader of a National Statistical System, in conjunction with the other statistical units in the Ministries earlier named. As stated earlier, the Bureau is about to conclude in the near future some important developmental work as well as, with the other countries of CARICOM, prepare to execute a national Population and Housing Census in 2010, all of which will be further revealed in the near future by way of public education programmes. It is Government's unswerving intention to support and strengthen the Bureau and all other Agencies and statistical units in an era when the challenges of the global economy, the now heightened awareness of the dangers posed by climate change and also the need to track progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and alleviation of Poverty demand the availability of an even wider range of quality statistics.

I am positive that today's observance will serve as a catalyst to further promote the culture of statistics throughout the nation and I once again take this opportunity on behalf of the Government of Guyana to extend to the Chief Statistician and staff of the Bureau of Statistics, the Heads of the Statistical Units of the line Ministries, and all Chief Statisticians and Directors of Statistics of other Caricom countries, best wishes and commendations for the observance of the first CARIBBEAN STATISTICS DAY and to signal my expectation that this event will be henceforth firmly established in the national and regional statistical calendars.

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