

**Visit of Her Majesty Queen Sofia of Spain
to the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus**

17 February 2009

**Welcome Address
by Pro Vice Chancellor and Campus Principal, Professor Clement K. Sankat**

Welcome

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Her Majesty Queen Sofia of Spain and Her Excellency Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards to the St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies. The University of the West Indies is greatly honoured by this visit, particularly as such a momentous occasion comes on the heels of the celebration of our sixtieth anniversary as a regional institution and just ahead of the fiftieth anniversary of the St. Augustine Campus. This visit is not only a testament to the strength of the relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Spain. It is also a recognition of the importance placed by both countries on scholarship and learning in the service of development.

UWI Mandate

The St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies has been a centre of scholarship, research and learning since 1924 when the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture was established here to train agriculturists and foresters from all parts of the world. Since then, we have grown into an internationally-recognized University with six main Faculties and over 15,000 students. With the continued support of the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, the University is working assiduously on further advancing its mandate to be a driving force for the intellectual and human development of the country and region.

Support from Spain

Your Majesty, the University is equally grateful for the support provided by the Government of Spain over the years. The Lectors in Spanish assigned to the Department of Liberal Arts, some of whom are present today, play a critical role in strengthening the Degree programme in Spanish. Moreover, the books, teaching materials, and scholarships for postgraduate degree programmes and research at Spanish universities, provide our students with increased opportunities for knowledge exchange and cultural awareness. We recognize Spain's contribution to the project on Capacity Development in Small Island States, being undertaken by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Consortium of Universities of Small Island Developing States including the University of the Canary Islands. Additionally, we extend our thanks to the Spanish Embassy for its commitment to promoting Spanish literature and for instituting the Prize for Peninsular Spanish Literature.

Need for increased collaboration

As you are aware, Your Majesty, such support and collaboration are fundamental to an academic institution, as we strive to produce graduates of the highest calibre whose research and critical analysis would generate innovative solutions to the myriad challenges that confront our society. Science and technology are priorities for the St. Augustine campus, and we are keen on supporting research in areas such as petroleum and reservoir engineering, agriculture and food science, environmental preservation, tropical medicine and non-communicable diseases. The University continuously encourages collaboration across all academic disciplines and would welcome the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in helping us to meet these goals. We also look forward to working more closely with Spanish Universities on the history of the Spanish Empire in the Americas and with “el Archivo General de Indias en Sevilla” given its vast historical material on Spain's presence in the Americas and the Philippines, dating as far back as the 16th century. We believe that the common historical thread that has been woven between our countries provides not only a unique platform for promoting more active research and teaching of Spanish and Caribbean history, but also an opportunity to support scholarship in this area through the

establishment of a Chair in the History of Spain and the Caribbean, an undertaking which would bring mutual benefits to our academic institutions and students.

Closing

In closing, I would like to reiterate our appreciation to you, your Majesty, for your ongoing support for The University of the West Indies and for taking the time to visit the St. Augustine Campus today. We look forward with anticipation to strengthening and deepening relations with our counterparts in Spain and to opportunities for increased collaboration with them.

Tree Planting & Exhibit

I now invite Your Majesty to plant a tree on the grounds of the Office of the Campus Principal, in commemoration of your visit to the University and as a symbol of solidarity. This will be followed by a guided tour of an exhibition of historical documents from our Rare Books collection, which depicts the economic, social and administrative relations during the years when Trinidad was under Spanish rule.

Distinguidos invitados les agradezco su presencia. Distinguished Guests, I thank you.