



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

OFFICE OF THE CAMPUS PRINCIPAL

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The Association of Universities and Research Institutes of the Caribbean (UNICA)

Annual General Meeting and Conference

'Partnering for Sustainability'

The Institute of Critical Thinking, UWI, St. Augustine

Monday March 15th 2010 9am

Welcome Address

Salutations

- Vice Chancellor of The Universities of the West Indies, Professor E. Nigel Harris
- Pro Vice Chancellors of the University of the West Indies
- Vice President of the University of Puerto Rico (UNICA), Dr. Ibis Aponte-Avellanet
- Distinguished representatives and Leaders of UNICA member institutions
- Colleagues
- Specially invited guests

Good morning.

- It is indeed my pleasure to welcome you to Trinidad and Tobago and to the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies for the UNICA Annual General Meeting and Conference on “Partnership for Sustainability”.
- This year’s meeting is of great significance not only because it will serve to foster greater cooperation among our higher education institutions in the Caribbean, but also given the urgent need to come together, in support of the rehabilitation of Haiti’s tertiary education sector. The University of the West Indies has been working and continues to work assiduously at several levels, on each of our four Campuses, to assist with the recovery efforts in Haiti. Like our UNICA sister institutions, we are committed to this and today’s Conference is absolutely critical in charting our next steps.
- UNICA represents a critical mass of knowledge and expertise on the Caribbean and for the Caribbean. As such, we must capitalize on the potential of such a concentration of human capital to advance the sustainable development of our region. In fact, by taking concrete action in advancing UNICA’s objective to support the regionalization of higher

education in the Caribbean region, we will ensure that our tertiary institutions, both individually and collectively, remain at the forefront of teaching, learning and research and remain relevant to the needs of our respective countries and region.

- In its report on Higher Education in Developing Countries (2000), the World Bank highlighted that:
- “Higher education has never been as important to the future of the developing world as it is right now. It cannot guarantee rapid economic development - but sustained progress is impossible without it.”¹
- Distinguished guests, our current global environment dictates that not only do our institutions need to be vigilant at all times, but we also need to be proactive, organized and able to respond quickly. It is my hope that this Conference will allow us to examine issues related to cooperation, coordination and partnerships, in a broad sense and more specifically, response strategies to assist our sister institutions in Haiti.

¹ Taken from Higher Education in Developing Countries – Peril and Promise. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank Washington DC. 2000. P. 19

- Two years ago our University of the West Indies celebrated its 60th Anniversary. This year the UWI St. Augustine Campus, the second Campus of the UWI to be established (the first of course being the Mona Campus in Jamaica) is celebrating its 50th Anniversary.

- The regional University of the West Indies has become a strong institution because of the sustained support of our regional governments and stakeholders. Our four Campuses work steadfastly and in unison to support our constituent communities and this has made the UWI a robust and identifiable entity for national and regional development in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is quite possible that this model can be extended to the UNICA fraternity, with each entity of this group working in a collective framework for the betterment of the peoples of the wider Caribbean – our French, Spanish, Dutch, and English-speaking countries. It may provide opportunities for our staff and students hitherto unavailable.

- Hence this is an opportunity for UNICA to shape the future for a regional university system for the Caribbean where all can be made stronger and the whole, more far reaching and impacting. However, this will require a

test of our individual and collective will and our ability to be creative and collaborative towards a broader agenda.

- In closing, I would like to thank our Vice Chancellor, Prof. Nigel E. Harris, for his leadership in marshalling the University's efforts to provide assistance to Haiti and for spearheading the organization of this Conference in conjunction with the convening of the UNICA Annual General Meeting in Trinidad. I would also like to thank all of the UNICA representatives for coming, particularly those who came from Haiti. We are truly grateful for your presence given the many challenges you continue to face on the ground. Thanks also to my colleagues who came from Cave Hill, Mona and Open Campuses to participate in the technical discussions and provide support for recovery initiatives in Haiti.
- With regard to the logistics and planning of this Conference and Annual General Meeting, special thanks go to the members of staff in the Vice Chancellor's Office, the Latin America - Caribbean Centre, the Centre for Language Learning, the Marketing and Communications Department and the Office of the Campus Principal for their hard work behind the scenes to make this Conference a success.

- To all of you especially those coming to Trinidad and Tobago and the UWI St. Augustine for the first time, please try to get an opportunity to see a bit of our Campus and our country. If there is anything I can do to facilitate this, please do not hesitate to ask.

- Once again, I thank you.