



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Caribbean cooperation a central factor in mitigating COVID-19 crises

Regional experts weigh-in at Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean coronavirus webinar

ST. AUGUSTINE, Trinidad and Tobago. Monday 28th September 2020 – COVID-19 has caused several crises for the Caribbean that go beyond its effects on human health. This was the view of participants of a webinar hosted by The UWI St. Augustine's Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean (DAOC). Titled "The Caribbean and the Coronavirus Crisis: Big Problems for Small States", presenters at the online event determined however that regional cooperation was a central factor in the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) successes in mitigating the pandemic's effects and helping with the region's recovery.

Held on September 22nd, the four-hour, first-of-its-kind webinar was convened by the DAOC in collaboration with institutions at the frontlines of CARICOM's coronavirus response: the CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), Regional Security System (RSS) and Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

"The Diplomatic Academy has recently taken steps to strengthen its role in bringing together academic and policy communities to exchange views on the nexus between the Caribbean and diplomacy," said DAOC Manager Dr. Nand C. Bardouille. "Initiatives such as this webinar enable us to generate knowledge on Caribbean diplomacy and the Caribbean in international affairs, thus providing thought leadership and influencing policy."

Fifty-five participants drawn from a cross section of diplomatic missions, foreign ministries, regional and international organisations, the private sector and academia were on hand for the webinar, which elicited wide-ranging debate and discussion on COVID-19's impact on the Caribbean. COVID-19 was deemed to have caused major hardship for CARICOM. The forum agreed that the silver lining, however, was deft leadership, which boosted regional cooperation. There was wide recognition that shortly following the pandemic's outbreak, CARICOM leaders, policy and state institutions, had recognised COVID-19's health, social and economic implications, and worked in partnership to mitigate the crisis.



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Despite the economic fallout caused by the coronavirus, participants viewed it as the wake-up call CARICOM policymakers needed to reassess national and regional developmental trajectories, as well as the regional integration agenda. Panellists looked specifically at the Caribbean's tourism-dependent economies, which, research shows were impacted by the sector grinding to a halt in the second quarter of 2020. Because of the tourism sector's linkages to other sectors of the economy, some panellists emphasised the wider implications for entire economies.

Participants also looked at the role of international financial institutions and international development partners in contributing to financing responses to the pandemic, stressing the importance and successes of CARICOM health diplomacy in the age of COVID-19. Coronavirus-related effects were also linked to what some panellists characterised as the ever-changing dynamics of Caribbean foreign and security policy issues.

The webinar, which kicked off the DAOC's new webinar series for the 2020/21 academic year, was headlined by a panel of senior officials and experts: Ms. Helen Royer, Director of Human Development and Officer-in-Charge of the Directorate of Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat; Mr. Joseph Cox, Assistant Secretary General, Trade and Economic Integration, CARICOM Secretariat; Ms. Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director (Ag.), CDEMA; Dr. Joy St. John, Executive Director, CARPHA; Lieutenant Colonel Michael Jones, Executive Director (Ag.), CARICOM IMPACS; Captain (N) Errington R. Shurland, Executive Director, RSS; and, Mr. Ian Durant, Director (Ag.), Economics Department, CDB.

The webinar received high praise, with participants attributing its success to the panellists' deep, first-hand knowledge of the effects of COVID-19 and the regional response. They complimented the event's focus on sharing lessons and best practices of CARICOM's coronavirus-related mitigation, as well as its commitment to providing insight into policy responses for recovery.

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About the DAOC

The DAOC is Caribbean's premier professional development-oriented diplomatic studies centre. An integral part of The University of the West Indies' (UWI) Institute of International Relations (IIR), it was established in 2014. The DAOC has a primary teaching mandate in the area of diplomatic studies, offering short, highly specialized training modules in the broad field of diplomatic studies. For Caribbean professionals seeking to expand their capabilities to advance an international career, the DAOC is a trusted educational partner. Combining a world-class suite of curricular offerings, which align with topical policy and learning trends, with a programme of advocacy and partnerships regarding the relationship between diplomacy and the Caribbean, the Diplomatic Academy provides a unique setting for stakeholders to deepen diplomatic skills/knowledge and enhance policy expertise.

The DAOC has yielded substantial and complementary benefit to the IIR, which was established in 1966 by agreement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Switzerland.



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Integral to the DAOC's mission is its commitment to help close human resources capacity gaps in international affairs and diplomacy in the Caribbean, by providing capacity-building and skills development training in diplomacy to up and coming diplomats and to aspiring diplomats from the Caribbean Region. This diplomatic learning and training facility also strengthens the University's capacities for research/analysis, knowledge-sharing, advocacy, and partnerships and dialogue on the relationship between diplomacy and the Caribbean broadly conceived, with the goal of helping to facilitate policy-relevant awareness-raising on international affairs issues of import (and that are topical) to the Region.

The Diplomatic Academy derives its character from its global outlook, real-world impact and Caribbean mindedness which, in sum, constitute The DAOC Advantage™. For more information, please visit: <https://sta.uwi.edu/daoc>.

About The UWI

For more than 70 years The University of the West Indies (The UWI) has provided service and leadership to the Caribbean region and wider world. The UWI evolved from a university college of London in Jamaica with 33 medical students in 1948 to an internationally respected, regional university with near 50,000 students across five campuses: [Cave Hill](#) in Barbados; Five Islands in Antigua and Barbuda; [Mona](#) in Jamaica, [St. Augustine](#) in Trinidad and Tobago; and an Open Campus. *Times Higher Education* has ranked The UWI among the top 1,258 universities in world for 2019, and the 40 best universities in its Latin America Rankings for 2018 and 2019. The UWI is the only Caribbean-based university to make the prestigious lists.

As part of its robust globalization agenda, The UWI has established partnering centres with universities in North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa including the [State University of New York \(SUNY\)-UWI Center for Leadership and Sustainable Development](#); the Canada-Caribbean Studies Institute with Brock University; the Strategic Alliance for Hemispheric Development with Universidad de los Andes (UNIANDES); The UWI-China Institute of Information Technology, the University of Lagos (UNILAG)-UWI Institute of African and Diaspora Studies and the Institute for Global African Affairs with the University of Johannesburg (UJ). The UWI offers over 800 certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate degree options in Food & Agriculture, Engineering, Humanities & Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science & Technology, Social Sciences and Sport. As the region's premier research academy, The UWI's foremost objective is driving the growth and development of the regional economy. For more, visit www.uwi.edu.

(Please note that the proper name of the university is The University of the West Indies, inclusive of "The")

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