COMPETITIVENESS CRITICAL TO REGION - CARICOM SECRETARY-GENERAL

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana) Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General H.E. Edwin Carrington reiterated Thursday that competitiveness was critical to the survival of the Region and must be the underlying theme of the Conference on the Caribbean.

The Secretary General was responding to questions from the media during a press briefing on 14 June on the Conference to be held in Washington DC 19-21 June.

“If we have not laid the foundation to enhance our competitiveness, we would not have moved very far, because as we all know, political preferences are out. At the end of the day, policies would be influenced by interests, but if you are competitive, if you can hold your own in any market, then you have a chance of surviving and even prospering.

“And that to me is one of the messages I hope we leave Washington with: that competitiveness is the name of the game and that we are on the road to achieving that,” the Secretary General said.

The Private Sector Dialogue, the Experts Forum and the Diaspora Forum, he added, must all point to that issue of competitiveness under a chapeau of policy initiatives jointly agreed to that would stimulate the Region towards more competitive production.

On 19 June, the first day of the three-day Conference, there will be a Joint Session of Experts Forum and Private Sector Dialogue at the World Bank under the themes 'International Competitiveness of Caribbean Countries' and 'Energy for Competitiveness'. The topic of Competitiveness will be explored again during the Private Sector Forum at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) on Wednesday 20 June. A range of issues will be discussed at that meeting under the theme 'US-Caribbean Trade: Opportunities for Growth'.

According to Ambassador Ellsworth John, Chairman of the Caucus of Ambassadors in Washington, as part of the dialogue on the private sector, the Region “will be looking at mechanisms for funding
entrepreneurs, both in the Region and for persons in the Diaspora who are interested in investing in the Caribbean."

Discussions will also be held on eliminating the trade barriers between the US and the Caribbean. The private sector forum will provide an opportunity for the Regional policy makers to interact with the Diaspora who are interested in becoming more involved in the Region, he said.