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# **Update on the Establishment of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)**

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**Submitted by**

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## **Update on the Establishment of Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)**

This review gives an update of activities related to the establishment of CARPHA, since the Twenty-First Intersessional Meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government held in March 2010, and at which the Heads approved the establishment of CARPHA in accordance with the time table recommended by the Fifteenth Special Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) and approved by the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Community Council.

### **Resource Mobilisation**

**Significant steps have been taken in the establishment and the operationalisation of CARPHA's Resource mobilization activities. These have so far resulted in a series of advocacy engagements, a CARPHA Partners Meeting that attracted approximately 70 participants and the process for the development of a Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability Plan by September 2010**

### **Inauguration and composition**

A CARPHA resource mobilization sub-committee recommended by the Special COHSOD (January 2010) was established in March to plan and organize the CARPHA Partners/Donors Meeting; the hosting of which had been previously approved by the Fifteenth Special Meeting of COHSOD (June 2009) and the Eighteenth Caucus of Health Ministers (September 2009).

The sub-committee is chaired by Dr Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat and initially comprised the following persons -

- Dr Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana and Chairman of CARPHA Steering Committee;
- Dr Juan Manuel Sotelo and Mr James Hill, PAHO, Washington, Dr Bernadette Theodore-Gandi , PAHO, Barbados;
- Dr Rudolph Cummings, Dr Joycelyne Clarke-Fletcher and a representative of Resource Mobilization and Technical Assistance Unit, (CARICOM Secretariat);
- Sir George Alleyne, Member of CARPHA Advisory Group;
- Dr Jerome Walcott, CARPHA Project Manager; and
- Subsequently, Mr James Gilbert and Ms Ranu Sharma of the Public Health Agency of Canada were included and representatives from CIDA and CDB were co-opted to provide technical advice.

## **Operationalisation of Activities**

This sub-committee held its first meeting on 16 March and has so far held 10 meetings via teleconference. During this period detailed plans were developed and executed for the hosting of a Partners Meeting on the 14 June. These included the date, location, format, agenda, documentation and logistical and technical matters. As a precursor, an extensive list of possible partners was prepared and a "Save the date Notice" was sent to all of them.

Further, in preparation for the meeting a teleconference was organized by PHAC with representatives of CIDA at which the establishment of CARPHA was discussed and suggestions were made regarding a draft CARPHA framework document prepared by the Project Manager and which would become the main document for the Partners Meeting.

In the period leading up to the meeting, the sub-committee discussed, reviewed and approved the following documents which were distributed to the partners -

1. Invitation letters,
2. CARPHA Overview document,
3. Meeting Agenda,
4. CCHIII summary,
5. Summary of PAHO sub-regional cooperation strategy and
6. The main CARPHA document; **"Supporting the Establishment of the Caribbean Public Health Agency- *Healthier, Happier, Horizons for all*"**.

**These documents, with the exception of the invitation letters are soon to be posted on the CARPHA website as well as on the CARICOM and PAHO websites**

## **Partners Meeting**

This was held at PAHO Headquarters in Washington D.C. on Monday, 14 June 2010. The meeting was chaired by Dr the Hon Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health of Guyana and brought together international delegations from the Governments of USA, Canada, France, UK, Japan and Sweden; global organizations, including the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank; regional organizations like the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Tourism Organization, and others including the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, Dr the Hon Denzil Douglas, CARICOM Lead Head for Human Resources, Health and HIV/AIDS gave the keynote address. He emphasized the commitment of CARICOM Heads of Government to the creation of a new, single, people-focused Public Health Agency that would span the Caribbean and all its residents and visitors. He emphasized how this single voice for Caribbean

public health would assist the international community in working with the Region, and in implementing international health guidelines.

The meeting was also addressed by Dr Mirta Roses, Director of PAHO, who at the outset endorsed the creation of CARPHA; as well as Dr Edward Greene and Ambassador Izben Williams of St Kitts and Nevis. A significant intervention was made by Senator, Hon Ann Peters, Chair of COHSOD via the web cast facility of Elluminate. She underscored the process which involved extensive discussion at the Ministerial and technical levels leading to COHSOD's endorsement of the need for the consolidation of five RHIs into one public health agency.

Later, there were presentations on various aspects of the establishment of CARPHA by Sir George Alleyne, Dr Jerome Walcott and Dr Edward Greene; followed by a presentation on PAHO's sub-regional cooperation strategy by Dr Bernadette Theodore-Gandi.

After the presentations, there was enthusiastic engagement with the partners, followed by the endorsement of CARPHA's establishment by several of them.

In a statement at the end of the meeting, Prime Minister Douglas said it was a "most wonderful experience" and commended the international partners' support for this 'step-change' in public health for the Caribbean Region. He further stated that, "Our partners support this venture enthusiastically, not only institutions that have been working with us, but other agencies".

At the end of the meeting it was agreed that the CARICOM Secretariat would now coordinate the development of a CARPHA resource mobilization and sustainability plan, for presentation to the Caribbean Community Caucus of Ministers of Health for approval at the end of September 2010 and then for dissemination to partners.

In the interim, it was also agreed that the CARICOM Secretariat would engage with the new Government of Trinidad and Tobago regarding the hosting of the main campus in keeping with the agreement of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 2009) and reiterated at the Intersessional Meeting of Heads (March 2010).

### **Status of Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA)**

The latest version of the Draft Agreement, was reviewed by the CARICOM Legal Affairs Committee at its meeting in April, it is currently awaiting the formal approval of Members before submission for the signature of the Heads of Government. Further a meeting was held recently between legal representatives of CARICOM and PAHO to specifically examine the arrangements in respect of the PAHO Centres (CAREC and CFNI).

### **Social Marketing**

New e-bulletins are being produced; one for stakeholders and another directed specifically at RHI staff. The website continues to be upgraded and the documents and presentations from the Partners Meeting will shortly be available on this site. An RHI staff survey is being carried out on-line, involving the RHI staff as part of the social marketing strategy.

## **Sustaining the Advocacy for and Public Dialogue on CARPHA**

### **World Health Assembly**

On Tuesday, 18 May, there was a Caucus of CARICOM Health Ministers and officials who were attending this year's Assembly. At that meeting Ministers were briefed regarding activities related to the establishment of CARPHA and plans for the Partners Meeting; they were encouraged to attend if possible.

The PAHO Director also participated in that meeting and responded to questions regarding PAHO's support for CARPHA. She also spoke about PAHO's sub-regional cooperation strategy. Finally, the Ministers were asked to endeavour to have the IGA approved in their respective countries so that it could be signed at the upcoming Heads of Government meeting.

On the afternoon of Thursday, 20 May, Minister Ramsammy participated in a Roundtable session organised by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The title of the session was "21st Century Approaches to Public Health Governance". In the discussion the Minister spoke extensively about CARPHA and responded to several questions about it; at that event the opportunity was taken to distribute a CARPHA briefing document and a card advertising the Partners Meeting on 14 June 2010.

### **Social Event hosted by the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors to the OAS and PAHO at the Hall of the Heroes, OAS**

This event attracted the participants in the Partners Meeting the Diplomatic Corp in Washington DC, representatives of Senate and Congress and members of the Caribbean Diaspora. The function chaired by Ambassador Izben Williams, Dean of the Diplomatic Corp in Washington DC was addressed by Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of PAHO; Sir George Alleyne, Member of CARPHA Advisory Group, Chancellor UWI and Director Emeritus PAHO and Dr the Hon Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis. It provided an opportunity for sensitizing those present about the proposed new era in public health in the Caribbean.

### **Global Health Council Event**

On the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup> June a special event was organized at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, on the margins of the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Health Conference to inform participants about CARPHA. The event was titled ***"Caribbean Cooperation in Health III and the Creation of the Caribbean Public Health Agency"***.

It was cosponsored by PAHO and the Pan American Health and Education Foundation (PAHEF), the moderator was Dr Edward Kadunc, the President of PAHEF, who gave opening remarks along with Dr Juan Manuel Sotelo. Presentations were made by Dr Edward Greene and Dr Jerome Walcott on CCHIII and CARPHA, while Dr Bernadette Theodore-Gandi spoke about the role of PAHO in the Region.

There was much interest shown in CARPHA by those in attendance, as manifested by the range of questions and the number of persons requesting further information, including several members of the Caribbean Diaspora.