

Remarks on the Handing-Over Ceremony for the CPACC Coastal Resource Information System

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Caribbean states are acutely sensitive to the phenomena of climate change. Global warming, the consequent rising sea levels and surface temperature and changes in wind and ocean currents present serious threats to the small islands and coastal states of our sub-region. Critical areas of Caricom's economic activity, such as tourism and fishing, are centered on its marine resources, while agriculture is dependent on favourable climate conditions. Attrition of our coastal areas, resulting from years of uncontrolled development activities, mismanagement of our ecosystems, improper disposal of waste and often, relentless weather conditions, has increased our vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. Since most of our human settlements are located in coastal areas, property and human lives are at constant risk. In Antigua and Barbuda, growing awareness of the potential problems in this respect has been manifested recently in a variety of public protests.

Today, it is especially gratifying for me to represent the Organization of American States (OAS), which continues to devote considerable resources towards addressing these problems. The four year project, Caribbean: Planning for Adaptation to Global Climate Change (CPACC) had its origins in the 1994 Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados, at which many of the peculiar vulnerabilities faced by the sub-region, including climate change hazards, were ventilated. Implementation was initiated in 1997 with funding for the project provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the World Bank. The Organization of American States (OAS) was designated as the executing agency and a Regional Project Implementing Unit (RPIU) was established at the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED) in Barbados.

The purpose of the project is to support the countries of Caricom in their preparations for coping with the impacts of climate change, through vulnerability assessment, adaptation planning and capacity building. The program includes regional as well as pilot activities undertaken by specific countries.

The OAS continues to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development through the activities of its Unit for Sustainable Development and the Environment (USDE). In July, the Unit handed over the results of the year long USAID/OAS Post Georges Disaster Mitigation Project to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda. In respect of CPACC, the OAS handed over three computer systems in February: one to the Met Office for its participation in the sea level and climate monitoring network and two

to the Fisheries Division, designated as the focal point and national repository for CPACC data and information, with responsibility for the Coastal Resource Inventory System (CRIS).

We are here today to witness the official hand over of that system, one of the major deliverables of the project. Our experts from the Regional Implementing Unit and the Fisheries Department are far more qualified to provide the details on the system. However, this system is critical to the long-term goal of the project, that is the ongoing capacity for effective planning and management in terms of global climate change. I trust that the Fisheries Division and the Development Control Authority (DCA) will make optimum use of it as they continue to play their role in building a sound infrastructure for tourism and in promoting the sustainable development on Antigua and Barbuda. Thank you.