



REMARKS DELIVERED BY

COLONEL RODNEY SMART, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (AG.)

OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MANAGEMENT

OPENING

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE CHANGE INTO DISASTER

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR THE CARIBBEAN REGION

TRAINERS WORKSHOP

CASCADIA HOTEL, ST ANN'S, TRINIDAD, W.I.

TUESDAY JANUARY 25, 2011

Thank you Ms. Alleyne

- **Facilitators from CANARI**
 - **Representatives of CDEMA**
 - **Representatives of Regional Disaster Management Offices**
 - **Other Workshop Participants**
-

Good morning! On behalf of CDEMA and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management and members of the T&T delegation, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all and to give a special welcome to all first time and returning visitors to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I hope that your stay with us will be a rewarding and beautiful experience.

On September 29, 2010 at a United Nations Inter-Ministerial Meeting in New York, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon opined, *“we must not delay. If we are too slow to adapt to climate change, we risk making disasters even more catastrophic than they need to be. We must draw on the Hyogo Framework for Action and disaster risk reduction knowledge to protect the world’s most vulnerable populations against climate change.”* It is his opinion and the opinion of many individuals, that any unnecessary

procrastination of climate change adaptation can have further disastrous consequences for not only the entire world, but for our individual regions. We must delay no longer, in offering protection to our citizenry against the implications of this phenomenon known as climate change!

Globally, we have seen many climate related hazard impacts. The *La Niña* factor, the overwhelming challenges of the floods in Brazil, Australia and Sri Lanka coupled with the fact that 2010 (tied with 2005 and 1998) as the warmest year on record, are all vivid examples of this phenomenon. Regionally, we saw and experienced firsthand the effects of Hurricane Tomas, tropical storms and unusually heavy rainfall with subsequent flooding. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, while we have escaped the ravages of a Hurricane in 2010, we definitely can easily remember our experiences of significantly high levels of water from short but intense periods of rainfall.

All these hazard impacts have caused immense human suffering and substantial damage to sustainable development. Climatic conditions and a variety of disasters are changing our world and so, we have to adapt to these changes by making our communities and cities (more) resilient against these undesirable phenomena.

The term “Climate Change” has been used by scientists since the 19th Century and although, to this day, its existence is still being denied by some

scientists, we at the ODPM firmly believe that its effects are real and the threat it poses, is a very real one!

The implications of *Climate Change* on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean have been recognised by both international and regional bodies. Internationally, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its *Fourth Assessment Report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, stated quite unequivocally that “Small islands, whether located in the tropics or higher latitudes, have characteristics which make them especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, sea-level rise and extreme events.” Furthermore, scientists have predicted that sea level rise alone is expected to exacerbate inundation, storm surge, erosion and other coastal hazards, thus threatening vital infrastructure, settlements and facilities that support the livelihood of island communities. Locally, the view on climate change is no different.

As a nation, and as CDEMA affirms, our commitment in this battle against Climate Change is strengthening. Internationally, legislative instruments dedicated to decreasing the levels of greenhouse gases are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. Trinidad and Tobago is a ratified signatory to both! Seen as another imperative step in reducing “the most serious threat to sustainable

development,” a *Draft Climate Change Policy* was produced in 2010, with the aim to, “provide policy guidance for the development of an appropriate administrative and legislative framework, in harmony with other sectoral policies, for the pursuance of a low carbon development path for Trinidad and Tobago.”

As a region, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) has affirmed that “Global Climate Change is the most serious threat to sustainable development facing CARICOM States.” It is against this backdrop that you are here today participants. As you are aware, CDEMA partnered with the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) to implement the *Mainstreaming Climate Change into Disaster Risk Management for the Caribbean Region project*. The project is in direct alignment with the Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy and Programming Framework, Priority Outcome Four (4) which promotes “the enhancement of community resilience in CDEMA states and territories to mitigate and respond to the adverse effects of climate change and disasters.” This project manifested itself in various forms, which included the inception of CDEMA’s, “Development of a Model Community-Based Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Programme.” In this regard, the community of Mayaro in South East Trinidad was chosen for the Pilot

Programme given the level of coastal erosion that the area has experienced in recent times. The main weapon of choice was educating community members to this threat. The principal aim of that programme was to allow residents to have a more *hands on approach* and voice, in the mitigation measures utilised to diminish climate change impacts.

Therefore, when CDEMA approached the ODPM to co-host this workshop, we willingly accepted, recognising that this project will redound to the benefit of us all, here in Trinidad and Tobago and the entire region. This *Training of Facilitators Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Sub-Regional Workshop*, which will commence today, takes the CDEMA initiative one step further i.e. to mitigating the effects of climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's session is expected to be dynamic and very interactive. Therefore I ask you to ensure that open dialogue takes place so that when you leave here on Thursday, all doubts and issues will be clarified. Remember, after this session, it is your job to ensure that we build capacity in our communities to adapt to climate change and by extension, reduce the risks of disasters.

It is my sincere desire that after this informative workshop, you will have a better understanding of climate change , what it means to disaster risk reduction and an increased sense of empowerment.

In closing, I leave you with an interesting quote that I found, “*We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors; we borrow it from our Children.*”

Have an enjoyable session and for you visiting our shores, a taste of T&T!

Thank you.