



OAS ANTIGUA & BARBUDA NEWSLETTER

Vol. V No. 1

January - March 2008

A publication of the Office of the OAS General Secretariat in Antigua & Barbuda

ANTIGUAN PRODUCE SHOWCASED IN INNOVATIVE CUISINE

“...we have to look at targeting the local farmers to increase their output of local production and we are of the view that this can be done very successfully.”

Hon. Joanne Massiah, Acting Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Marine Resources & Agro-Industry



L: Seated Hon. Joanne Massiah & Director Jennifer Maynard; standing Project Coordinator Roberta Williams, Chefs Dr. Carol Silkes & Colleen Simpson, Agricultural Officer Sereno Benjamin Middle: Local dishes R: Coordinator Williams & Dr. Carol Silkes (Photos: Calvin Grigg)

As Caribbean countries grapple with issues of food security and costs, the OAS project ***Agriculture and Tourism Linkages and Agri-Tourism***, being executed by the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Centre, is providing assistance to Antigua & Barbuda to increase local food production and use. Government and private sector officials, hoteliers, chefs, farmers, culinary arts students, media personnel and other stakeholders recently had an opportunity to sample a number of innovative recipes. The food-tasting event, held at the Antigua Hospitality Training Institute, on March 14, featured local dishes using fresh farm produce, prepared by Dr. Carol Silkes, Culinary Expert at Purdue University in the U.S, in collaboration with a group of chefs from the Institute.

The goal of the project is to increase the local trade between hotels, restaurants and local farmers. Among the expected outcomes is the increase of local produce and decrease of imports; increased use of local foods in hotels and restaurants; and the development of farm visits by tourists as a produce promotional incentive. Speaking recently on the topic ***Strengthening Our Food-Producing Capacity***, Acting Minister of Agriculture the Honourable Joanne Massiah expressed her optimism, stating, “...we have to look at targeting the local farmers to increase their output of local produce and we are of the view that this can be done very successfully.” During her stint in Antigua & Barbuda, Project Consultant Dr. Silkes worked with local chefs to deconstruct local recipes and reconstruct them as upscale meals for the tourist industry. Minister Massiah, Director of Agriculture Jennifer Maynard, Project Coordinator Roberta Williams, and OAS Representative Cecily Norris all expressed their delight with the exciting array of dishes such as Golden Apple/Pineapple Salsa, Cassava-crust Shrimp, Scrambled Eggs & Shad, Plantain & Saltfish Cakes, and Passion Fruit & Ginger-Glazed Sweet Potatoes. These will go into a book of local recipes and food history of Antigua & Barbuda, spearheaded by local Chef Colleen Simpson.

SECRETARY GENERAL MAKES OFFICIAL VISITS TO ST. LUCIA AND GRENADA

In February, OAS Secretary General, H.E. Jose Miguel Insulza, traveled to the Caribbean on two official visits. In St. Lucia, as a special guest of Prime Minister the Honourable Stephenson King, he participated in that country's 29th anniversary of Independence. Speaking at an official ceremony to mark the occasion on February 22, the Secretary General observed: "Saint Lucia feels like a much older society than its twenty-nine years. Its democracy is stable, its institutions are strong and its people are prospering." He further suggested that the upcoming 30th anniversary would be a good opportunity for the country "to reflect on the challenges facing the Caribbean region, which include meeting the expectations of the young people, mitigating and responding to natural disasters, addressing the scourge of crime and violence and alleviating poverty." While in Saint Lucia, Insulza had the opportunity to meet and interact with the Prime Minister and members of his administration, Governor General Dame Pearlette Louisy and leader of the Opposition, Dr. Kenny Anthony. He also toured the country, where he was given a first-hand look at some of the projects the OAS has funded over the years.

The Secretary General also paid a two-day visit to Grenada. During his stay, he met with Governor General Sir Daniel Williams, Prime Minister the Hon. Keith Mitchell, Foreign Minister Hon. Elvin Nimrod, the Leader and representatives of the Parliamentary Opposition Party, and visited the Cabinet of Grenada during one of its regular sittings. He also met and held preliminary talks with the Supervisor of Elections. The meeting with Prime Minister Mitchell focused on information technology/technical assistance to the Parliamentary Elections Office, preparations for a robust Electoral Observation Mission, support for the creation of a Commission of Public Integrity and an Ombudsman's Office in Grenada, and continued offers of on-line training for professionals. Prior to his departure, the Secretary General held a press conference, where he characterized the progress made since Hurricane Ivan in 2004 in restoring the country to its former self as "impressive."

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION CONCLUDES 131ST PERIOD OF SESSIONS



Concluding its 131st period of sessions held at OAS Headquarters, March 3-14, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) hailed the peaceful resolution of tensions that had arisen in the Andean region in early March, recalling that peace is essential and necessary for the enjoyment of human rights. The Commission expressed its concern, in view of troubling information received during the hearings, about grave situations involving human rights violations in the region: the continued decline of citizen insecurity; discrimination suffered by Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples, by poor people and women; the deterioration of economic, social, and cultural rights; grave obstacles to access to justice; difficulties in exercising freedom of expression; the persistent use of military justice for crimes that should be handled by civilian courts; and the impact the region's growing environmental deterioration has on human rights. It vowed to follow these issues closely. The Commission also expressed satisfaction over the spirit of cooperation demonstrated by the States, petitioners and civil society organizations, which made it possible to hold 36 important public and private hearings with full participation, during which several States, including Argentina, Bolivia and Panama, invited the IACHR to conduct visits. In addition, the Commission held 33 working meetings on pending petitions and cases, many of which produced significant advances. A Memorandum of Commitment was signed concerning the situation of captive communities in Bolivia, and progress was made toward reaching a friendly settlement in cases in Bolivia, Chile, and Mexico. Antiguan Commissioner Sir Clare Roberts traveled to Washington to participate in the sessions. (Photo: www.oas.org)

CIM HONOURS WOMEN ON 80TH ANNIVERSARY

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) celebrated its 80th anniversary in February. A Specialized Organization of the OAS, CIM is the principal forum for generating hemispheric policy to advance women's rights and gender equality. Established in 1928, CIM was the first intergovernmental agency in the world created expressly to ensure recognition of women's civil and political rights.

As part of the anniversary celebration, CIM honoured a number of women in OAS political and technical bodies for their leadership, in a ceremony at OAS Headquarters on March 11. The group included the female OAS Representatives: Juliet Mallet-Phillip, The Bahamas, Joan Neil, Jamaica, Bertha Santoscoy, Peru, Melene Glynn, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Cecily Norris, Antigua & Barbuda.

H.E. Deborah-Mae Lovell, Antigua's Permanent Representative to the OAS, was honoured for her advocacy on behalf of women and youth of the Americas. The awardees received personalized crystal weights. Expressing her pleasure at being recognized by CIM, Ambassador Lovell noted that Antigua & Barbuda was the only country in the hemisphere that currently has a female Ambassador, OAS Representative and CIM President. (Photo courtesy: www.antiguabarbuda.gov.ag)



ASG Albert Ramdin & Antiguan Perm. Rep. Deborah-Mae Lovell

CARIBBEAN PRIME MINISTERS VISIT OAS HEADQUARTERS

Three recently elected Caribbean Prime Ministers visited OAS Headquarters in March. Prime Minister Hon. Hubert Ingraham of the Bahamas met with Secretary General H.E. José Miguel Insulza on March 19. They reviewed the situation of Haiti and OAS programs there, in particular those concerned with institutional strengthening and capacity-building. Insulza lauded the role of the Bahamas, represented by its Permanent Representative H.E. Cornelius Smith, in promoting political and social stability in Haiti and actively participating in the Commission that went to Ecuador and Colombia March 8 -12.



On March 20, on his first official visit to the OAS since his election to the position in February, Prime Minister Hon. Dean Barrow of Belize reviewed a range of hemispheric and international issues with the Secretary General, as well as OAS programs and projects being undertaken in Belize. Particular reference was made to OAS programs concerned with the social agenda, tourism, trade, and strengthening of governance and democratic institutions. Prime Minister Barrow

stressed his country's appreciation of the engagement by the OAS in helping find a way forward towards resolution of the Belize-Guatemala territorial conflict.

The Secretary General also welcomed Prime Minister Hon. David Thompson of Barbados to OAS Headquarters on March 20. During the courtesy visit, the Prime Minister exchanged ideas with Insulza and with OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin on a wide range of hemispheric issues. They discussed the progress achieved in relation to the free trade agreements being negotiated in the region. In this regard, Insulza underscored the value of these agreements and the benefits they will bring to the people. The newly elected Prime Minister was accompanied on the visit by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Christopher Peter Sinckler and the Permanent Representative of Barbados to the OAS, H.E. Michael King. (Photos: www.oas.org)



OAS SCHOLARS - WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Featuring the achievements of OAS Scholarship recipients

Ato Lewis, Senior Environment Officer



One of Antigua & Barbuda's young, talented achievers is Ato Jamal Lewis, Senior Environment Officer at the Environment Division in Antigua & Barbuda's Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture & the Environment.

In his formative years, Ato recorded exemplary performances at the Foundation Mixed Primary School and at the Antigua Grammar School (1990-1995), before going on to the Antigua State College. He was awarded a National Board of Education Scholarship to attend the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus, Jamaica. He graduated in 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree (Honours) in Geography. His research paper addressed *Impacts of the Environment on Tourism in Runaway Bay and Dickenson Bay, Antigua*. On his return to Antigua & Barbuda, he was appointed as an Environment Officer in the Public Service. His duties included serving as Secretary of the Technical Advisory Committee for the National Biosafety Framework and responsibility for issues relating to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES). Ato was the recipient of an OAS Academic Studies Scholarship Program to pursue a Post-Graduate degree in 2003. He graduated from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, Massachusetts, U.S.A., in 2005 with a Master of Arts (MA) Degree in Sustainable International Development. His research topic was: *Disaster Vulnerability and Resilience in Small Island Developing States*. Among his other publications/presentations are: *Historical Development of Benchmarks and Indicators of Land Degradation and Drought in the Caribbean* and more recently a Case Study: *Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean on the Establishment of Synergies Frameworks towards the Effective Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements*.

On his return home in 2005, Ato was promoted to his current position of Senior Environment Officer. He served as Secretary of the National Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) Task Force and as officer responsible for administrative management of the National BCH project (2006-2007). He did a five-month attachment at the Antigua & Barbuda Permanent Mission to the UN, September 2007-January 2008, in preparation for and support of the country's Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China. Since his return, he has acted as Chief Environment Officer, in the absence of the incumbent. He is presently Project Coordinator for the National Self-Assessment toward the elaboration of the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC. He also serves as an Alternate Member of the UNFCCC Compliance Committee and as an Executive Board Member of the Antigua & Barbuda Waste Recycling Centre, a project of the Rotary Club Antigua Sundown.

An aficionado of culture, Ato is particularly fond of music in its many forms. He feels that there is still much academic work that needs to be done to enhance Caribbean culture and sees similarities in the problems existing in the realms of culture and sustainable development. He is convinced that the Caribbean needs to significantly improve its baseline data collection and work actively to develop and enhance its environment, culture and societies overall, through investment in and development of its people. The OAS is proud to have contributed to Ato's professional development and we wish him continued success in achieving his life goals. (Photo courtesy A. J. Lewis)

OAS 2008 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Ten Antiguan nationals were awarded scholarships for tertiary level studies under the **OAS 2008/2009 Academic Studies Program**. Women dominated the awards, receiving nine of the ten scholarships, including all seven at the Graduate level. Six recipients are being enrolled under the OAS-placed mechanism in universities with which the OAS has a relationship, to pursue studies leading to a Master's degree: Ms. Violet Lake, Hotel/Motel Administration/Management; Ms. Renee Baltimore, Computer Science; Ms. Jenny Bridge Cedeno, Banking and Finance; Ms. Shenneth Phillips, International Transport; Ms. Janice Michael, Business Administration, Management and Operations; and Ms. Amanda Martin, Accounting. Under the Self-placed mechanism, Ms. Paula Skerritt, a Graduate awardee, will pursue a Master's degree in Food, Nutrition and related Services in a Distance Education program with the Michigan State University.

Three persons received awards to complete their studies at the Undergraduate level leading to a Bachelor's degree: Joseph Burnette, in Fine Arts and Art Studies; Kadine Gumbs, in Chemistry, at Midwestern State University in the US; and Cosria Farrell in Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods at University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. This represents the largest number of OAS scholarships ever received by Antigua & Barbuda in any one year since the program was initiated here in 1983. Over the past 25 years, some 143 Antiguan nationals have been granted awards at the Graduate and Undergraduate levels under the organization's Academic Studies Program, the largest of its kind in the hemisphere. The OAS Human Development Program also features multiple scholarships for short-term professional development in various fields and provides interest-free student loans under the Leo Rowe Fund. Detailed information on these programs is available at www.educoas.org

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CICTE CRISIS MANAGEMENT TRAINING



The Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) continued its collaboration with the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to provide training for OAS member states with a workshop on Crisis Management Training, in Antigua & Barbuda, January 28 to February 1, Organized by the Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, the five-day workshop focused on Aviation Security and involved some 20 participants, drawn from airport security, customs, immigration, the police force and fire department, Antigua & Barbuda Airport Authority (ABAA), Antigua &

Barbuda Defence Force and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The training session was facilitated by TSA Capacity Development Specialist Mr. Hank Morse and International Trainer Mr. William Sweet of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and was designed to prepare officials in management techniques for national crises, particularly in the event of aviation security breaches, terrorist attacks or accidents.

At the Opening Ceremony, chaired by ABAA Director of Operations Mr. Edward Gilkes, the Hon. Harold Lovell, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture & the Environment, delivered the feature address, in which he stressed the importance of security to the tourism sector. In her remarks, OAS National Liaison Officer, Ms. Almira Henry urged participants to share knowledge gained from the workshop with their colleagues. Commenting on the training, ABAA CEO Ken Hurst further emphasized how crucial such exercises were, in view of the overwhelming value of the aircraft at the airport. "We are part of that one [global] village and hence, we have to conform to the international standards that are out there," noted ABAA Director of Operations Gilkes. At the conclusion of the training exercise, certificates were distributed to the participants by the Permanent Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Ms. Sharon Peters. (Photos: Calvin Grigg)



L to R: Ms. Almira Henry, OAS/ONE, Police participant receives certificate from Ms. Sharon Peters, PS/Tourism & Civil Aviation.

RCMP INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAM

Antiguan Police Officer, Jermaine Anthony, assigned to the Office of National Drug and Money-Laundering Control Policy (ONDCP), attended the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) International Observer Attachment Program (IOAP) in Vancouver, Canada, March 3-14. The long-standing program of collaboration, which provides support for the OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), brings foreign drug investigators to Canada for instruction and hands-on exposure to Canadian methods for conducting drug investigations. The program's objectives are to expose drug control law enforcement officers to new techniques and methods, strengthen the capacity of officers to fulfill their responsibilities and to promote international and inter-agency cooperation and information exchange among officers from participating member states. Following exposure to the innovations through a seminar in the first week, the participating Police Officers were attached to police stations in the second week for hands-on experience.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH WORKSHOP

The Department of Labour in Antigua & Barbuda staged a workshop on *Occupational Safety & Health* on January 15-17, 2008 at the Antigua & Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute. The workshop was part of an activity of the OAS Caribbean multinational project, *Enhancement of the Labour Inspection Function in Selected Countries*, coordinated by Trinidad & Tobago. Other participating countries are Barbados, Belize and Dominica. At the Opening Ceremony, participants were welcomed by Ms. Vanessa Nicholas, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour. Labour Commissioner Mr. Hesketh Williams, who chaired the proceedings, expressed his pleasure at receiving OAS funds to conduct the workshop, noting that "health and safety have been a neglected entity in the industrial relations climate of Antigua & Barbuda." OAS Representative Cecily Norris noted that an assessment had identified Occupational Safety & Health as a critical area for Antigua & Barbuda, and observed that "A safe and healthy work environment is a fundamental labour standard...which not only impacts on productivity in the individual workplace, but has implications for the economy as a whole."



Delivering the feature address, Labour Minister, the Hon. Jacqui Quinn Leandro recalled that three tragic workplace accidents had occurred in Antigua & Barbuda over the past three years. Stressing the significance of the training, she noted: "The fact that we have started 2008 with this initiative indicates the level of seriousness and commitment of having this matter fulsomely addressed..." She announced the intention of the Ministry to present to the Office of the Attorney General, before the end of 2008, a draft of a new Occupational Safety and Health Act, more detailed and comprehensive than

existing legislation. Remarks were also made by the Secretary of the Employers' Federation, the Trade Union Congress President and Deputy Health Inspector. The 3-day workshop, attended by 25 local inspectors, addressed policy issues; planning and conducting inspections; quality control and assurance; labour inspection in agriculture and construction; office safety; fire safety; hazardous chemical substances; and new hazards and challenges, among other areas. (Photos: Calvin Grigg)



L to R: Henderson Bass, Secty/Employers' Fed, Vanessa Nicholas, PS/Labour, Labour Commissioner Hesketh Williams



FEATURED PROJECT
Go Creative


Top (L) *Liberta Junior Sec: Energy Conversion* (R): *St. John's Catholic Primary: Green Power* Middle (L): *Kids Unlimited: Home Security System* (R) *St. Nicholas Primary: Symbiosis* Bottom: *Go Creative camp: students & teachers*

Go Creative is a multinational project being implemented by the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST) and the Trinidadian National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology (NIHERST) with funding from the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI). Its general objective is "to arouse and develop in youngsters the qualities, abilities and skills for applying creative thinking processes to the development of innovative solutions to problems encountered in life. Along with Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent & the Grenadines are the beneficiary countries. The 3-year project targets young people in the region in the 7-17 years age group and involves Creativity Camps for Youngsters and Young Inventors' Competitions.

Students in Antigua & Barbuda had the opportunity to start honing their creative skills in the annual National Science Fair 2008 held at the Multipurpose Centre at Perry Bay, St. John's, March 11-13. Organized by the Association for Science & Technology Education of Antigua & Barbuda (OSTEAB) and sponsored by Antigua Computer Technology Co. Ltd (ACT), the Fair attracted exhibits from primary and secondary schools.

A Go Creative Camp followed closely on the Science Fair, spearheaded by local Project Coordinator and Science Education Officer Mr. Earl Skerritt. The camps comprise a program of fun, hands-on activities for stimulating creative thinking. In Antigua, some 20 Science teachers were initially brought together for training as national facilitators in creative thinking and problem solving/generating ideas; design and planning; building prototypes; and marketing and entrepreneurship. The facilitators are expected to serve as mentors for the participants of the national competition and the Caribbean Young Inventors' Competition. Sessions for students followed in Antigua and in Barbuda and among the topics covered were Introduction to Technopreneurship, Solar Energy, and Movement through Water, while skits and drama were among the tools used for creative expression. The activities also included prototype refinement and development. NIHERST's *Go Creative Exhibition*, <http://www.gocreativett.org/> serves as a teaching and motivational tool for the Go Creative Camps.

The *Caribbean Young Inventors' Competition* will challenge secondary students (12-17 years), to come up with a creative solution and develop a prototype of their ideas. Following their national competitions, winners are expected to compete in a regional championship. (Photos: Calvin Grigg)

OAS REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO HAITI

In fulfillment of an OAS General Assembly mandate, a delegation from the Permanent Council conducted a mission to Haiti in mid-February. The delegation was jointly headed by Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Albert Ramdin and Permanent Council Chairman, Ambassador Cornelius Smith of The Bahamas, and included eight Permanent Representatives of other member states. They held high-level meetings with President Préval; Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis; the Presidents of both Chambers of Parliament; Representatives of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP); political parties; the Haitian private sector; organizations of the civil society and partners of the international community. Reporting to the Council on March 12, Ramdin noted signs of improvement in the working relationship and climate among the institutions of the state, and in the security climate, and efforts by President René Préval to put together an inclusive government and to consult with social partners. According to Ambassador Ramdin, the visit had reaffirmed the commitment of the OAS and revitalized its engagement with the government and with the people. He said the OAS delegation had expressed its willingness to support the constitutional reform process initiated by the government and urged the international community to do more to support development in Haiti. He suggested that the government of Haiti could also do more with its own resources to alleviate poverty and start the process of modernizing the country.

Addressing a protocolary session of the Permanent Council, called in his honor on March 28, visiting Haitian Prime Minister Jacques-Édouard Alexis touted his government's initiatives to reform the police force and the justice system, "with special emphasis on training, professionalization, discipline and development of a police force that works closely with the community." Alexis also staunchly defended Haiti against characterizations from certain quarters that it is "a country wracked by instability and descending into chaos and anarchy." However, he acknowledged job-creation through large-scale investment as a major challenge while the government seeks to consolidate the gains of the past two years.

OAS APPROVES FUNDING FOR 100 PROJECTS FOR 2008/2009

The Management Board of the OAS Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development approved the execution of 100 projects to be financed in 2008/2009 by the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI) to the tune of US\$7.5 million. FEMCIDI is a grant fund that finances technical cooperation projects presented by the Member States, primarily directed toward promoting the human capacity development of their citizens and the strengthening of government institutions. Its priority areas of action are education, sustainable development and environment, democracy, social development and the creation of productive employment, culture, science and technology, economic integration and trade, and tourism. Projects adhere to the guidelines defined in the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Integral Development, which recognizes the need to combat poverty and inequality as a common and shared responsibility of the Member States and as an essential factor in the promotion and consolidation of democracy in the continent. Two new projects presented by Antigua & Barbuda were approved: (1) ***Supporting Our Caribbean Enterprises (SOURCE)***, a multinational, 3-year tourism project to be executed by the OAS Department of Trade, Tourism & Competitiveness (DTTC) was allocated US\$116,389 for the first year; (2) ***Regional Network of Women in Politics: Promoting the Participation of Women in Politics for Good Governance and Democracy***, a multinational, 4-year project to be executed by the Caribbean Institute of Women in Politics, was granted US\$101,000 for the first year. A national, continuation project, ***Integrated Management Plan for Codrington Lagoon***, being executed by the Environment Division, Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture and the Environment was granted US\$71,075 for its second year of execution.

SPECIAL FEATURE
IICA Celebrates 20 years in Antigua & Barbuda


Top (L to R): Ministers Hon. Joanne Massiah, Hon. Charlesworth Samuel IICA Tech. Specialist, Julie-Ann Laudat, IICA ECS Rep. Una-May Gordon.
Middle: (L) OAS Rep/A&B Cecily Norris receives plaque. **(R)** Audience
Bottom: 2007 Most Outstanding Agro-Processors pose with IICA officials

Chaired by the current Technical Specialist, Ms. Julie-Ann Laudat, the ceremony at the Heritage Hotel was attended by the late Hon. Charlesworth Samuel, former Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries & Agro-Industry, Minister of State, Hon. Joanne Massiah, officials and stakeholders in the agricultural sector. Addressing the audience, Ms. Una-May Gordon, IICA Representative to the Eastern Caribbean States (ECS), observed that the role of IICA has changed over the years from merely offering technical assistance to a more project developmental role. She noted that in 2007, IICA had launched an initiative targeting youth leaders to take the sector forward and that the goal in the coming years was to institute the necessary reforms in Ministries of Agriculture across the region. In her remarks, Minister Massiah pledged the Ministry's support to IICA in the pursuit of its goals. She presented IICA's 2007 Most Outstanding Agro-Processors Awards to the six successful women in first, second and third places and three individual categories. First place in the competition, held during the 2007 Mango Fest, was captured by Rosie McMaster of Susie's Hot Sauce, which has attained regional recognition. Special awards were distributed by the ECS Representative to organizations in appreciation for their collaboration with IICA over the years. Local Representative Cecily Norris accepted a plaque on behalf of the OAS. (Photos courtesy IICA Antigua)

■ The Office of the OAS deeply regrets the passing of the former Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries & Agro-Industry, the Hon. Charlesworth Samuel, on January 31, 2008 and wishes to acknowledge the sterling contribution he made to agricultural development in Antigua & Barbuda.

The Office of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) marked its 20th anniversary of operations in Antigua & Barbuda with an Awards Ceremony on January 14, 2008. Established in 1987 when Antigua & Barbuda became a member of IICA, the office initially shared space with the OAS Office at its former Factory Road location. The IICA office was later relocated to individual quarters at Fort Road and Luther George Place, where it remained until its recent move to the Bencorps Building on Independence Drive. A specialized agency of the Inter-American system, IICA's mission is to support member states in their pursuit of progress and prosperity "through the modernization of the rural sector, the promotion of food security and the development of an agricultural sector that is competitive, technologically prepared, environmentally managed and socially equitable..."

OAS NEWS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL ATTENDS 2009 SUMMIT LAUNCH

OAS Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Albert Ramdin attended the official launch of the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, Trinidad, on February 26. Scheduled for 2009 in Port of Spain, it will be the first one to be held in the Caribbean. In his address, Trinidadian Prime Minister Hon. Patrick Manning indicated that Trinidad “would do its best to ensure that Caribbean concerns were fully aired in the deliberations of the Summit.” The launch was followed by the 41st meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), February 28-29, which brought together national summit coordinators, representatives of member states, multilateral institutions, and the media, and focused on the main themes of the Summit: human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability. Addressing the SIRG, Ambassador Ramdin acknowledged how much the hemisphere has changed since the first Summit in Miami in 1994, citing the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and democratic governance, among other factors. He stressed that the Summit must help to establish a new hemispheric agenda and “make a real difference in the lives of the peoples of the Americas.” Ambassador Ramdin used the occasion to announce the appointment of Mr. David Morris as the new Director of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, and Mr. Riyad Insanally as the new OAS Representative in Trinidad, effective April 1.

OAS DEFUSES TENSIONS IN ECUADOR/COLOMBIA SITUATION

Moving swiftly to address the crisis resulting from the March 1 incursion of Colombian troops into Ecuadorian territory, a Special Session of the OAS Permanent Council approved a resolution on March 5 containing agreement principles to clear the way for bringing Ecuador and Colombia closer together. The Council also named a Commission headed by the OAS Secretary General to visit both nations and convened a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Americas, to study the situation. The Secretary General reported to the 25th Special Assembly of Foreign Ministers convened on March 17, following the March 10 visit of the *ad hoc* Commission to the Angostura, Colombian-Ecuadorian zone where the events took place. After some 15 hours of intensive discussion, the Assembly concluded with consensus on a resolution, which rejected the incursion as “a clear violation of Articles 19 and 21 of the OAS Charter,” took note of Colombia’s “full apology” and instructed OAS Secretary General, H.E. José Miguel Insulza, to use his good offices to implement a mechanism to restore a climate of confidence between Ecuador and Colombia.

OAS LECTURE SERIES



Former Vice President of Guatemala, Eduardo Stein, headlined the 26th OAS conference in the Lecture Series of the Americas, at OAS headquarters on March 25, on the topic: ***Political Strategy for Good Governance: The Importance of Regional Context***. He noted that although the region has made progress in democracy and governance, corruption, crime and inequality remain major challenges. He explained that while democracy helps to improve the lives of people, the responsibility to find agreeable solutions will be as much the product of good governance as it is the result of active participation by citizens. Underscoring the important role of international organizations like the OAS in strengthening good governance in member states, Stein argued that, “governance questions have been viewed definitely as domestic, internal issues that are basically the internal responsibility of each state and its democratically elected government. But matters of governance must increasingly be viewed and negotiated within the regional context.” He cited the fight against transnational organized crime as a clear example of the constructive role of regional cooperation in strengthening institutions and governance. (Photo: www.oas.org)

ABOUT THE MEMBER STATES – The Bahamas (Home of the Permanent Council Chair)



National Flag

Geography: Officially named The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, this Caribbean archipelago of some 700 islands and 2,400 cays is located in the North Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Florida and northeast of Cuba. The westernmost Bimini islands lie about 97km (60 miles) off Miami. The country has a land area of 10,070 square km and its terrain consists mainly of long, flat coral formations, with many cave systems both above ground and underwater. The highest point is Mount Alvernia on Cat Island, rising to 63m. The Bahamas enjoys a tropical marine climate with lower rainfall than other Caribbean islands. The capital, Nassau, is located on New Providence Island, where over half of the population resides.

History: Arawak Indians, known as Lucayans inhabited the islands when Christopher Columbus arrived in the New World in 1492 and made his first landing, possibly on San Salvador. The first permanent European settlement was made by the British on Eleuthera and New Providence in 1647. The early settlements were frequently attacked by the Spanish and the islands served as a haven for pirates and buccaneers. After the 1776 American Revolution, the islands became a refuge for American colonists loyal to Britain, who imported African slaves to provide labour. The Bahamas became a British colony in 1787. In 1964, internal autonomy was granted by Britain. Led by Lynden Pindling, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) gained control of government in 1967. Independence was achieved in 1973 with Pindling as its first Prime Minister. He continued to hold power throughout the 70s and 80s, but his support was eventually eroded by chronic unemployment and allegations of corruption. In 1992, the Free National Movement (FNM) won the parliamentary elections and its leader, Hubert Ingraham served as Prime Minister until 2002 when the PLP regained power under the leadership of Perry Christie. In 2007, the government reverted to the control of Ingraham and the FNM.

Population: The Bahamian population of 305,655 (July 2007 est.) comprises 85% blacks, 12% whites and 3% Asian and Hispanic. The official language is English.

Government: The Bahamas is a constitutional parliamentary democracy. Its bi-cameral Parliament consists of the Senate with 16 seats, whose members are appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition to serve five-year terms; and the House of Assembly with 41 seats, whose members are elected by direct popular vote for five-year terms. Queen Elizabeth II, the Head of State since 1952, is represented by a Governor General, H.E. Arthur D. Hanna, since February 2006. The Executive comprises the Prime Minister (Head of Government), Hubert A. Ingraham, since May 2007, and the Cabinet, appointed by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Economy: One of the wealthiest Caribbean countries, the Bahamas has a thriving economy fuelled by tourism and international banking. Endowed with a year-round pleasant climate, numerous beautiful beaches and proximity to North America, it attracts thousands of tourists annually. The tourism sector accounts for some 60% of GDP and employs about 50% of the labour force.

International Relations: The Bahamas is a member of CARICOM, the Commonwealth, the OAS, the United Nations (UN) and their agencies. H.E. Cornelius Smith is the Permanent Representative to the OAS and was Chairman of the OAS Permanent Council, January-March 2008. (See p. 12).

OAS Antigua & Barbuda Office

Organization of American States (OAS) Antigua & Barbuda Office
P.O. Box 897

Radio Range, St. John's
Antigua & Barbuda, W.I.

Tel: (268) 462 1284

Fax: (268) 462 3543

E-mail: oas.orgab@candw.ag

OAS Representative: Ms. Cecily A. Norris; Administrative Technician:
Ms. Geraldine Whyte; Clerk/Chauffeur: Mr. Calvin Grigg



Chair of the OAS Permanent Council, January-March 2008

H.E. Cornelius A. Smith, Permanent Representative of The Bahamas to the OAS, assumed office as Chair of the Permanent Council for the rotating three-month term in January, 2008.

Outgoing Chairman H.E. Rodolfo Hugo Gil, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the OAS, handed over the gavel during a brief ceremony on January 2, 2008. Using the occasion to reaffirm his country's "steadfast commitment to the Organization's vital role in the preservation and strengthening of democracy in the Caribbean and the Americas," Ambassador Smith said that, during its leadership of the Permanent Council, The Bahamas would further emphasize the core OAS principles of "supporting and promoting good governance, democratic values, respect for law and order and the protection of human rights." He gave the "unequivocal pledge" of the Bahamas to help promote the principles of democracy and human rights, multidimensional security and integral development as the pillars of the OAS.

Vice-Chair for the period is H.E. Aristides Royo, Permanent Representative of Panama to the OAS. (Photo: www.oas.org)



Paul Browne retires

After twenty-seven (27) years of distinguished service to the Organization, Mr. Paul Browne, OAS Representative in Dominica, retired from office at the end of February. The multi-talented and energetic Jamaican was instrumental in channeling numerous significant OAS projects and programs to Dominica and was highly esteemed by the Dominican Government, the local community and the Diplomatic Corps. Paul filled the gap between departing and newly appointed Representatives in several Caribbean countries. He served as Interim Director in Antigua & Barbuda, prior to the appointment of a new Director in 1997. The second longest serving OAS Representative, Paul was highly respected by his colleagues, and generously shared his extensive experience in the OAS and the Caribbean Diplomatic Service with them. The Representative and staff of the OAS Antigua & Barbuda Office acknowledge Paul's invaluable assistance over the years and extend best wishes for a happy retirement.

OAS MEMBER STATES

Antigua & Barbuda	Dominica	Panama
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Paraguay
The Bahamas	Ecuador	Peru
Barbados	El Salvador	St. Kitts & Nevis
Belize	Grenada	St. Lucia
Bolivia	Guatemala	St. Vincent & the Grenadines
Brazil	Guyana	Suriname
Canada	Haiti	Trinidad & Tobago
Chile	Honduras	United States
Colombia	Jamaica	Uruguay
Costa Rica	Mexico	Venezuela
Cuba	Nicaragua	

OAS PERMANENT OBSERVERS

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Yemen, and Yugoslavia

General Secretariat of the OAS

1889 F Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20006, U.S.A.

Tel: (202) 458 0000

Website: www.oas.org

Secretary General: H.E. Jose Miguel Insulza (Chile)

Assistant Secretary General: Ambassador Albert Ramdin (Suriname)

Permanent Mission of Antigua & Barbuda to the OAS

3216 New Mexico Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20016, U.S.A.

Tel: (202) 362 5122/5166/5211

Fax: (202) 362 5225

E-mail: embantbar@aol.com

Permanent Representative: H.E. Ms.

Deborah-Mae Lovell

Alternate Representative: Ms. Ann-Marie Layne