



Senior legal specialist at the OAS/Department of Sustainable Development, Claudia de Windt telling regional participants at the workshop about the importance of a legal framework for disaster preparedness and response.

IMPROVED RELIEF RESPONSE

By Shawn Cumberbatch

EFFORTS are on to strengthen the ability of Barbados and other countries in this part of the world to respond to natural disasters.

A new Caribbean emergency legislation project being funded by the World Bank, which is partnering with the Organisation of American States (OAS), CARICOM Secretariat and regional countries, will seek to boost the legal framework, thereby making it easier for Governments to make quick decisions when disaster strikes.

Speaking at the opening of a regional workshop for the project at the Accra Beach Resort and Hotel yesterday, senior legal specialist at the OAS/Department of Sustainable Development, Claudia de Windt, told

participants officials discovered that no country in the Western Hemisphere "has a comprehensive legal framework for natural disasters on the preparedness side or on the response side".

"The issues that are at the heart of this project are very complex and not having an existing framework or a parametre to look at makes it even more complex. ...that's also part of the reason why all of you are here, because we were trying in the absence of expertise or a framework in the area to gather together a select group of people that could address the different cross cutting issues that we were going to be addressing, either from a financial perspective, from a disaster perspective or from a legal perspective," she said.

She explained that the

main objective of the project was to "build the capacity to enhance legal institutional frameworks related to emergency management, but the idea is to focus on state of emergency and also on project appropriation and execution".

"And why are we looking specifically at those issues? First of all it is to respond to some of the challenges that member states are facing in appropriating and assigning resources for planning, and also to make these issues related to prevention, to take preventative measures such as paying for premiums of insurance and reinsurance," she said.

"And this is how the World Bank's interest into this project came about because they were launching this facility for the

RELIEF on Page 7

(BAS),

OAS, World Bank launch the 'Caribbean Emergency Legislation Project'

THE Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) of the General Secretariat of the Organisation of American States (OAS), with the support of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), today (Monday, January 12) launched the Caribbean Emergency Legislation Project (CELP), and held the project's First Steering Committee Meeting in Bridgetown, Barbados.

The CELP will assess current legal and institutional frameworks applicable under a state of emergency in the Dominican Republic and eleven CARICOM member countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago; with the objective of providing a set of recommendations for the implementation of clear and transparent procedures for natural disaster response in the Caribbean.

In furthering the project's objective, a Steering Committee has been established to provide policy advice on meeting the priorities of the project. The Committee is comprised of high level natural disaster, legal, and budget experts from across the Caribbean who represent various government agencies and institutions including the: CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, OECS Secretariat, Offices of Disaster Preparedness and Management, Ministries of Finance, University of the West Indies, and Caribbean Development Bank.

During the meeting, the project methodology was formally introduced and discussed by the Steering Committee members. In his opening remarks, Cletus Springer, Director of the OAS/DSD, highlighted the relevance of the project in addressing legal issues related to natural disasters with an integrated approach, and in engaging key stakeholders.