

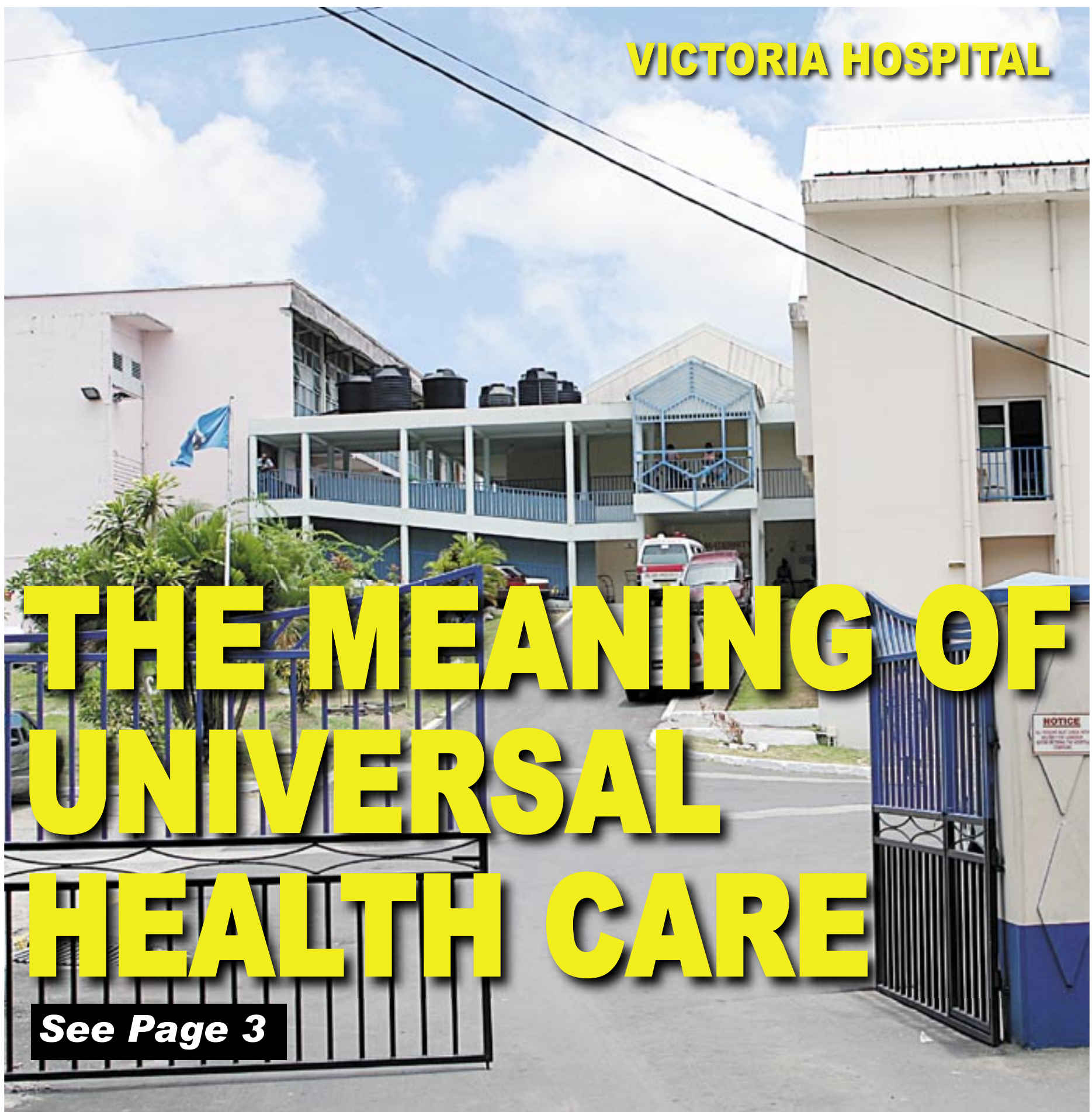


NATIONWIDE

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VICTORIA HOSPITAL



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Every Friday at 6.15 p.m. on **NTN**, Cablevision Channel 2.

Government Notebook
A fresh news package
daily
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Work Begins on State-of-the-Art Forensic Lab



Site of Forensic Lab at La Toc

Work has commenced on the construction of a brand new forensic laboratory for St. Lucia.

The lab is being constructed in the vicinity of the old Female Prison at La Toc, where site preparation works have already begun.

It will be housed in a building with two floors on 8,000 square feet of space and will feature modern, state-of-the-art, scientific equipment for forensic analysis.

The new forensic lab, which will cost some \$3.8 million, is intended to improve the overall forensic capabilities of the

Royal St. Lucia Police Force and assist in the successful prosecution of cases.

It will assist the recently-established Crown Prosecution Service, as it will provide scientific evidence for successful prosecution of criminals.

The forensic lab will also provide scientific analysis of evidence that will bet-

ter help jurors arrive at conclusions.

The Ministry of Justice and the Police Force have already begun a series of joint training modules for senior Crown and Police Prosecutors, as well as Crime Scene for Investigators.

The new Forensic Lab is expected to come on stream later this year.

ONE TEAM FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE FIGHT

A new organization has been born out of the recent hosting of a Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership workshop for agencies involved in substance abuse work in the areas of Health, Education and Enforcement.

The workshop was conducted recently in an attempt to bring all such agencies under one umbrella and to foster closer networking in the field of regulating and preventing substance use or abuse.

Acting Director of the Substance Abuse Advisory Council Secretariat Ms. Elizabeth Wilson says she is optimistic about the future because by the close of the workshop, some giant strides had been accomplished.

“By the end of the workshop what we did was actually form a steering committee. The larger group of over thirty representatives of agencies and some community groups became a network that we named TEAM – an acronym for Together Everyone Achieves More. Establishing that organization was basi-

cally the point of the workshop.”

Along with this achievement Mrs. Wilson said participants of the workshop reached a position that the HEP Approach, which originally is a Canadian strategy, can and will be adopted in Saint Lucia.

The new body has scheduled a meeting for the 4th of April.

Water-craft Operators Called to Comply with Standards

The Ministry of Tourism continues to encourage hoteliers to make use of the services provided by licensed Water-craft Operators within the sector.

Officials are calling for the cooperation of hoteliers in a bid to encourage compliance to set standards by all Water-craft Operators.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism Ms. Maria Fowell says best practices are being encouraged under the guidance of the Water-craft Advisory Committee.

“The Ministry of Tourism in order to encourage the implementation of the water based standards wants to ensure that the hotels are encouraging those persons who have actually done the training and those persons who have been certified to be the ones that are operating within the area of their hotels.”

In light of this, the ministry has developed the Coxswain Certification

Programme in collaboration with the Marine Police. The fourth round of the course began in January with 45 persons and ended in February.

“What tends to happen is that we have water-crafts that in the past have been

licensed and the focus had been on the crafts, as opposed to the persons operating the craft, and it is felt that we should have a number of programmes in place to be able to train and certify those persons that are actually operating the craft.”

The course outline includes relevant topics on the theory of navigation as well as a practical aspect dealing with boat handling, First Aid and CPR training. Other study areas include captain’s responsibilities, basic engineering procedures, and rules of the road.

Officials say by undergoing the formal training, water craft operators including water taxi operators will add value to the service they are offering to the industry.

Transport Board Addresses City Parking Woes

Traffic Management in the city of Castries is said to be one of the most pressing challenges that the Transport Board is continuing to address.

Executive Secretary of the St. Lucia Transport Board Ms. Annette Augustine said Board members are acutely aware of the situation facing motorists. Ms. Augustine says Parking in particular remains a point of concern for the entity which has responsibility for making recommendations to the Head of the Ministry.

“As you would realise most of our problems exists within the city. When you get to the outskirts, it really tends to take care of itself but within the

centre of business, the focus over the years has been on the issue of parking.”

The Board, which has responsibility to make recommendations for traffic management in the city of Castries to the Minister for Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities, says that the issue of parking is one of the most pressing challenges that the Transport Board continues to address.

During a National Television Network discussion with members of the Transport Board, Representative of the Saint Lucia Insurance Council Ms. Arlette Bailey said another concern for the board is the violation of traffic laws.”

“A lot of times the legislation is there; the rules are there for parking. We’ve outlined what the basic rules are, we’ve done a lot in terms of licensing and trying to increase the capabilities of our drivers by insisting on the defensive driving course - that was a major input by the Insurance Council many years ago - but basically all of it comes down to how can we make people do what they know they have to do.”

The Transport Board of the Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities consists of a wide cross section of stakeholders

THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The Task Force charged with establishing St. Lucia's Universal Health Care System on Wednesday held a news conference at Victoria Hospital to brief journalists on the implementation of the UHC. Chairperson of the Task Force, Ms. Emma Hippolyte, Dr. Stephen King, Chief Medical Officer, Mrs. Jenny Fevrier, Hospital Administrator and Mrs. Dawn Byng, UHC Manager fielded the questions on what is going to be a revolutionary development in St. Lucia's Health Sector. The press conference was followed by "a walk-through" of sections of Victoria Hospital to see how the UHC will impact on the hospital.



Members of the UHC Task Force at the press conference: from left Dr. King, Ms Hippolyte, Ms Byng and Mrs. Fevrier

UHC – BETTER HEALTH FOR ALL

By Emma Hippolyte, Chairperson – UHC Taskforce

Universal Health Care (UHC) is now approaching its implementation phase and becoming a reality in St. Lucia. It is universal in the sense that it will provide all St. Lucians – irrespective of their economic status and social standing, equal access to a basket of quality healthcare and services.

UHC is being rolled out at a time when many St. Lucians are expressing a desire for better health services. Access to quality healthcare is the right of all persons. It is the people of St. Lucia who will be the final arbiters of the type of healthcare we as a people receive from our public (and private) health providers.

Generally, there is the tendency to compare the national health services in more advanced countries like the USA, Canada and the UK and the expectation is that UHC in St. Lucia should be similar. It cannot be. The truth is that in each of these countries, while the premise is the same (quality health for all) each country has to put in place a health service that addresses its unique circumstances, health profile and national resources. UHC will be comparable to these countries in the area of

access to care, quality of care and accountability.

Under the UHC plan, the operations of Victoria Hospital will be managed by a board of Directors, instead of the Ministry of Health, as is currently the case. This will allow for more hands-on decision making, organisational restructuring and greater efficiency in responding to public needs instead of having to be filtered through the sometimes long and cumbersome bureaucratic mechanism.

Healthcare in any part of the world is an expensive undertaking and St Lucia is no exception. Therefore, in order to fund the UHC every St. Lucian will contribute to the cost of this service when they purchase consumer goods (except food and clothing). It is the proposal that approximately \$30 million of the \$60 million needed will be raised by government through the imposition of a health and environment levy.

The UHC concept has been widely discussed and debated. We have arrived at this point after engaging the services of reputable local, regional and international experts and through several working committees, each

looking at different aspects of the program. The result is that UHC has allowed us to determine where we presently are, in terms of the delivery and quality standards of healthcare, where we want to get to and what it will take to get us there. In a nutshell, UHC is a good thing for health in St. Lucia.

Of course, all our healthcare problems will not disappear overnight. But, after the start-up issues are sorted out, UHC will give St. Lucians a health service they can proudly embrace. There will definitely be a tremendous improvement in the delivery of service and expanded access to care. UHC will concentrate on secondary and tertiary care while Primary Health Care (the health centres, community hospitals and public health) will remain under the responsibility of central government. It means that the Ministry of Health will focus on Primary Health Care reform simultaneously to the development of the UHC. Town and village hospitals, health centres and clinics – which are grossly under-utilised, will be rationalised, renovated and upgraded. These will be the first point of reference for persons seeking medical attention. This will remove the burden



Ms. Emma Hippolyte

on both our large hospitals to deal with every condition, many of which could be dealt with in the first place by primary health providers.

The idea is to make all health facilities customer service driven institutions and ensure that we achieve "Better Health For All".



Journalists meeting Victoria Hospital personnel and at the press conference

A CALL FOR A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO HAZARD PLANNING

**ADDRESS BY
HON. FERGUSON JOHN
MINISTER FOR PHYSICAL
DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT AND
HOUSING
AT AN OECS
WORKSHOP
ON DISASTER
MITIGATION IN THE
REGION**



**Hon. Theophilus Ferguson John
Minister for Physical Development,
Environment and Housing**

I am very pleased to welcome you to this regional conference to review ongoing disaster mitigation efforts in our region. This is a timely and meaningful activity and I commend the organisers on this event. The vulnerability of Small Island Developing States to disasters both man-made and natural, has again been brought to the forefront given the recent events. With events like Katrina, and the earthquake in Pakistan, within the time span of a few hours the progress and infrastructure that took decades to build can be completely destroyed, setting countries way back in the development process. In addition to interrupting the sustainable development of a country, such events help to continue the vicious cycle of poverty that we constantly try so hard to avoid.

Cognizant of the integral role of disaster management in the continued growth of a country, the region has been making significant strides in this area. A number of countries have been working on developing national disaster mitigation policies and plans. The evidence shows clearly that disaster mitigation is a worthwhile investment. The effort and money put into measures aimed at avoiding or reducing the impact of a disaster often saves

a country several times that amount if the event had occurred in the absence of these measures.

The fact is natural phenomena such as hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are a reality and will occur with various levels of frequency. They are just part of a natural global process that often helps keep our planet in a state of balance. Nevertheless it appears that today our planet seems to be turning on itself, as both the frequency and intensity of disasters have increased. Indeed, the 2005 hurricane season was the busiest ever for this region.

Speaking from an anthropocentric standpoint, natural phenomena are in and of themselves, of little consequence if they do not affect human existence, either directly or indirectly. The actual risk to human populations is combination of the phenomenon and our vulnerability to it. For example, if all of our homes and infrastructure were totally hurricane-proof, then the level of risk to hurricane damage would be significantly lower than it is now.

While natural events will occur, often with limited warning, this does



House damage by Tapion landslide



Landslide at Tapion

not mean that we are totally powerless against these forces of nature. Indeed, even if we accept that we cannot necessarily halt the events themselves we can often take steps to meaningfully respond to them. Our response can be proactive, where we take measures ahead of the event to minimize impact on society or reactive, in which case, we implement measures to recover or rebuild after the event.

If we heed the old adage "A stitch in time saves nine" then the proactive approach is one that we must begin to more fully embrace. Given that no human system is perfect and also that effects vary with event and locus of impact, even if one may favour the anticipatory approach, there is usually a need to undertake some post event response. Be that as it may, the more effective we can be at taking preventive action, the less need there is likely to be for post-event response.

Our presence here today bears testament to the fact that we are prepared to make the proactive approach to disaster

management an integral part of the development process, a part of our every day life. It is not enough to bandy the jargon around and to let the fancy words roll off our tongues. Rather, it is crucial that in our "neck of the woods", we begin to incorporate hazard planning into our day-to-day operations like second nature. We must continue to take relevant existing policies and seek means to integrate the common elements.

We must also do more to utilize Geographic Information Systems and related technologies to help us develop vulnerability maps to plan for the "big ones". Of course, when we have developed these maps, we need to use them. I am of the view that there is need for agencies to work even closer together to address hazard planning. We need to ensure that our physical infrastructure including our transportation systems, and our social and economic infrastructure are competent enough to support disaster management. This will of course require wide spread collabora-

tion. Post-disaster response often sees various agencies being called out into the field, more and more often, according to a coordinated plan. However, the same must apply on the planning side. We need to examine what we can do to build our resilience, reduce our vulnerability and thus lower the level of risk to hazard events.

Based on the Caribbean experience with such events as Hurricane Ivan, it is clear that there are many things we need to do to reduce vulnerability. For one, we need to take measures to ensure that as many property owners as possible are able to construct homes and other buildings which can stand up to natural events. It is often thought that the measures recommended result in additional cost to the builder but there are still some simple low cost measures that can be employed. Such measures must be investigated and information on them must be passed on to the general public and especially the low-income earners who are the most vulnerable during a disaster. Information and public sensitization are therefore a critical part of disaster management. However my challenge to you is that we go even beyond this to ensure that there is buy in and ownership for disaster management at all levels of the society and across all sectors. After all in the area of disasters we are all our "brother's keepers" and whatever we do affect each other.

I have no doubt that you time here will be well spent in work that can be translated into real action on our countries. I wish you a successful conference and I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. Let us all to our part in safeguarding our countries from disasters and promoting our continued growth and development.

ADDRESS BY THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, IGNATIUS JEAN, BAY GARDENS HOTEL, RODNEY BAY, 27 MARCH 2006 REGIONAL MEETING ON MEDIUM TERM FRAMEWORKS FOR GOVERNMENTS AND FAO COLLABORATION IN THE CARICOM-CARIFORUM COUNTRIES, 27 - 31 MARCH 2006, SAINT LUCIA



Hon. Ignatius Jean

It gives me immense pleasure to officially welcome everyone here today, particularly the delegates, specially invited officials and other participants from the various countries and organisations participating in this important regional activity, organized by the FAO Sub-Regional Office and the CARICOM Secretariat.

Moreover, it is a tremendous honour for us in St. Lucia to serve as host to what we consider to be a significant intervention in the quest to upscale and re-position regional agriculture and rural economic development into a more functional role, to effectively address and manage many of the existing and emerging challenges impacting on the stability and quality of life of our peoples.

It is no longer an issue of intellectual speculation that the converging phenomena of intensified globalization and trade liberalization have and continue to challenge our regional governments and peoples to develop innovative strategies, approaches and initiatives that promote sustainable economic and income diversification, poverty reduction, bio- and food security.

A 3-billion dollar and rising regional food import bill; changing preferential trade regime conditions for traditional crops (sugar and bananas, in particular); increasing socio-economic displacement of "primary food producers", and their related vulnerability and social instability; underdeveloped agri-business capacity and market intelligence; limited access to resources and low level of investment in research and development at national, sub-regional and regional levels; praedial larceny, low productivity levels and limited use of proven advanced technologies; and inadequately harmonized, joint and collaborative ac-

tions at Sub-Regional (e.g. ~OECS) and Regional levels (CARICOM ~ CARIFORUM), among others, are all contributing to the complex matrix of issues that must be effectively attended to, if we are to make any meaningful dent in meeting the main development objectives of the United Nations' MDGs.

Under such circumstances failure must not be an option, lest we suffer the unpalatable, but real fear of unsustainable and dysfunctional livelihoods in the region.

To date, at the regional level, within the broad framework of the regional economic integration process and the Regional Agricultural Transformation Programme (RTP), several interventions are being pursued, but driven or co-ordinated by different partnering mechanisms.

For example, we have the "Jagdeo Initiative", the Regional Food Security Programme, the EU-CARICOM/CARIFORUM - EPA discussions and negotiations, other multi- and bi-lateral interventions taking place at the national and regional levels. This week we seek to establish the medium term priorities and strategic bankable initiatives, with focus on collaboration with the FAO.

It is important that due consideration is given to the national and regional co-ordinating frameworks or mechanisms, which are to ensure that all such efforts and interventions are adequately managed and rationalized, thus adding value to the transformation process.

Chair, moreover, in the context of the latter, and with special reference to the OECS sub-Region as one of the more vulnerable areas of the Region, it is critical that some discussions focus on the ways and means of up-scaling agriculture and its inter-sectoral linkages with other economic sectors of the sub-region. Indeed, our efforts at managing change and development of the sector within the OECS ought to view such eventual development in the context of a strengthening OECS economic union framework.

Likewise, there is need to consider the medium term frameworks in the spirit of an increasingly economically integrated region.

These considerations are well within the broad strategy adopted by FAO in 2005, which focuses on advocacy and support, programme targeting, strategic alliances and partnerships and strategic support to national medium term priority frameworks for co-operation. This approach is consistent with the broad stipulations of the Declaration of the World Food Summit -five years later in 2002, which remain relevant to our agenda today.

More importantly as you deliberate, every country and delegation should bear in mind that the initiatives that are prioritized must bring renewed hope to our displaced farmers and vulnerable rural communities. We must seek to engender new hope to break the cycles of hunger, poverty and food insecurity, which violate basic human rights and dignity. Whatever the approach, it ought to be guided by the fundamental principle of teaching our people to fish well, rather than be given a fish.

Indeed, the social and economic cost of not doing enough to effectively manage the challenges of globalization and trade liberalization and their impacts on the rural economy, in an era of declining concessional donor assistance, can be astronomical.

It is useful to note as well that other social and economic supporting mechanisms must be in place to consolidate the expected benefits from targeted programmes. Engagement and partnership-building with the private sector, the youth and civil society, supporting social safety nets for the more marginalized, strengthening of the health care and skills development systems, and the upgrading of socio-economic physical infrastructure are some areas of concern.

Against this background, FAO and the other collaborating partners, national and regional, should be better placed to anticipate and respond in a more proactive manner.

Chair, in the case of St. Lucia, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has developed a ten-year policy and strategic plan 2004 -2014, which shortly will be disseminated for public scrutiny and debate. This plan encapsulates seven (7) broad strategic objectives, ranging from increasing production efficiencies and competitiveness, enhancing bio- and food security to promoting sustainable use and management of the natural resource base. The modernization of the enabling environment to do business, inclusive of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework, also is of paramount importance.

The central role of our youth in this process cannot be over-emphasised. Further, within the umbrella framework and workings of a national agricultural advisory body (NAAC), the Ministry engages a wide cross-section of stakeholders and partners to co-ordinate the continuous review of the policy and strategic plan.

As you deliberate on these issues, I trust that the momentum will be enhanced in identifying innovative solutions and practical mechanisms to address the critical constraints at both the national and regional levels.

At this juncture, I extend my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Graham and her team of the Sub-Regional Office and the Staff of the CARICOM Secretariat for the efforts made in making this regional meeting a reality. It is certainly a timely intervention.

Similarly, I recognize the efforts of the staff of the MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, who assisted in the co-ordination and logistics, and those who will continue to support the activities for the rest of the week.

I am left to officially declare the meeting open and to wish all delegates and participants a productive meeting, while you take time out to imbibe yourself in the hospitality of simply beautiful and sweet "Helen". I thank you.



Flooding in Castries

FAA CATEGORY ONE STATUS FOR OECS WELCOMED



Mr. Herald Wilson



Mr. Rosemond James



Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves

Saint Lucian Mr. Herald Wilson was clearly emotional as he recounted his leadership role in the decade long struggle to achieve the coveted Category One status for the OECS from the United States Federal Aviation Authority (USFAA).

Mr. Wilson was addressing a ceremony on Friday March 24th in Antigua/Barbuda at which the US Ambassador to the OECS Ms Mary Kramer presented the Category one certificate to the OECS Chairman, Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Wilson was the Head of the OECS Directorate of Civil Aviation when the USFAA's downgrade to Category Two was made in 1996 and he led the struggle to meet the many stringent requirements for the return to Category

One for the OECS Member States. Two years ago, as the OECS neared the lift off to Category One, Mr. Wilson was appointed to the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in Montreal, leaving his countryman Mr. Rosemond James to lead the way over the remaining hurdles.

The OECS region has had a category Two rating since 1996 when a USFAA assessment of the then OECS Directorate of Civil Aviation (OECS DCA), identified a number of deficiencies, including outdated legislation, inadequate facilities and lack of technical staff. Since then, wide ranging corrective measures have been taken to deal with the deficiencies. The highlight has been the establishment of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) as a fully autonomous entity,

providing safety oversight and regulating civil aviation in Member States. Other measures included the revamping civil aviation legislation; recruiting technical staff and upgrading the headquarters facilities. After several assessments by, and technical support from the USFAA, the ECCAA was advised on March 3rd 2006 by the US Embassy in Barbados that the OECS had been placed into category One.

The upgraded category One status means OECS registered air operators, such as LIAT and Caribbean Star can seek approval for new services into US territories, including Puerto Rico and St. Croix. They can also enter into code-sharing strategic alliances with counterpart US air carriers. The region would also be able to benefit from any new Open Skies Agreement with the

US. These activities, which would have been restricted under category Two status, have positive implications for the region's vital tourism sector, given their potential for increasing airlift out of the important US market. The timing also fits well with plans by five OECS countries to hold scheduled or warm up matches for cricket world cup 2007, and the decision by OECS governments to implement an OECS Economic Union, beginning with the signing of an Economic Union Treaty in June this year.

The milestone also speaks volumes about the level of aviation safety and security oversight provided by the ECCAA, and demonstrates the effectiveness of the OECS model which other parts of the world, such as Africa have expressed an interest in emulating.

UN Security Council Pledges Support For Haiti

With many of its members represented by Government ministers, the United Nations Security Council, along with Secretary-General Kofi Annan, called for sustained international support to the efforts of Haitian President-elect René Préval to fight instability and poverty in his country, as they warmly welcomed him to their midst.

"We must all reinforce President-elect Préval's efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation," Mr. Annan said. "Haiti's institutions of governance require generous support. So do the people of Haiti, who everyday endure a level of hardship and insecurity that is unacceptable, and also incompatible with the stability of the country."

A statement read out by Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana of Argentina, its March President, the Council encouraged all countries that have contributed police and troop contingents to remain

engaged in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

It also underlined the need for Haiti to proceed with a thorough and comprehensive reform of its national police and its justice system.

Towards reducing extreme poverty and instability, the Council reiterated the need for quick implementation of highly-visible and labour-intensive projects that deliver social services and called for donors to reassess their priorities in a targeted way, working closely with the Government and MINUSTAH.

The Council urged the transitional Government in Haiti, with support from the international community, to ensure the continued credibility of the electoral process in second round of parliamentary elections on 21 April, which will allow the prompt inauguration of Mr. Préval.

For his part, Mr. Préval praised the work of MINUSTAH and the international community in the lead-up to the Janu-



Haitian President elect Rene Preval (L) meets UN Secretary General Kofi Annan

ary elections, and pledged to work with them to create a climate for sane, democratic and participative governance.

"It's an opportunity for me to see the interest that the international community has in Haiti," he said of the Council meeting afterwards at a press conference. "Thirty-five people took the floor in the chamber."

He said it was most important, during the relative calm that has ensued after the elections, that, with the help of the international community, disarmament and reintegration take place and constitutionally-required institutions are created along with a climate conducive to attracting private investment and other partnership.