



## **Post-Cabinet Statement July 16, 2007**

Good evening. It is once again a pleasure for me to bring the Cabinet briefing to Citizens and residents of our Federation. Cabinet meeting was held at the Cabinet meeting room, Government Headquarters, on Monday July 16th, 2007.

### **Economic and Fiscal Review**

As part of the ongoing assessment of the health of the national economy and the fiscal position of the government, Cabinet received a comprehensive report on the Economic and Fiscal situation of the country for the first quarter of 2007, the report given by the Financial Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and the Permanent Secretary of Sustainable Development.

The report indicated an increase in economic activity for the first quarter of 2007 relative to the previous year and that the growth was attributed to activity in Agriculture, Construction, Distributive trade, Banking, wholesale, retail and government services. The current account balance recorded a surplus of \$5.8 million, and the overall balance and primary balance recorded growth rates of 100.3% and 101.2% respectively. The primary balance exhibited a surplus of \$22.1 million.

During the first quarter of 2007, in relation to Agriculture specifically, food production increased 67.9% or by an estimated \$1.3 million. The increase was related to output in the following crops: sweet potatoes, peanuts, white potatoes, pineapple and cabbage.

The construction sector grew by 2.0% for the quarter under review. This increase is due to winding down construction activities related to CWC2007.



The stock of public sector debt as at the end of the first quarter of 2007 stood at 155.2% of GDP as compared to 164.6% in 2006. Meanwhile the central government debt now stands at 89.3% of GDP as compared to 94.5% of GDP in 2006.

Cabinet expressed pleasure at the positive direction of the growth of the national economy and the improvement in the government's fiscal position. Cabinet therefore articulated its strong resolve to continue to reduce the stock of public debt by making prudent fiscal decisions and by working with regional partners to stay on course with its structural adjustment programme and to set the economy and the fiscal position of the government on an even stronger footing.

#### Land Tax

The government reflected on and discussed the progress of the implementation of the property tax and it wishes to thank all those who have facilitated the work done so far. Property owners are encouraged to consult the Inland Revenue Department to query genuine situations involving their property tax evaluations and are reminded that they can make arrangements with the department for payment of their taxes in installments over a period of time.

#### HIV/AIDS

On the matter of health, Cabinet received an update on the CARICOM/Pan-Caribbean Action Plan for HIV and AIDS action plan (PAN-CAP). PANCAP was established in February 2001 by the CARICOM Heads of State and it aims to scale up the response to HIV/AIDS in the Region. In the update, matters of law, ethics and Human Rights relating



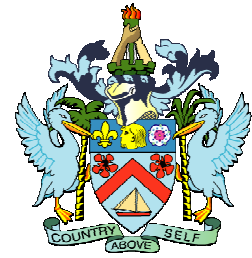
to HIV and AIDS and persons affected by the epidemic were discussed in fair detail. The update comes as phase 3 of the PAN-CAP National Assessment Exercise on HIV/AIDS in the Federation. In phase 4, recommendations for legal and policy reforms will be made to the government in a draft report, after which the National AIDS secretariat will receive a final report, in phase 5. The final report to be submitted by August 10, 2007 will guide the evolution of the national response to HIV/AIDS in the Federation.

Cabinet noted the rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence in the Federation of 1.1% as assessed by the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre, which translates to about 340 persons living with HIV and AIDS. The government in today's meeting resolved to work even more fervently to combat and arrest the epidemic of HIV/AIDS and recognizes the continuing need for a multi-sectoral approach with strong partnerships involving local, regional and international partners.

### Capital Punishment

Today, the Hon Attorney General reported on the matter of capital punishment in the case of Evanson Mitcham. In relation to the matter, following an order by the Governor General for the execution of Mitcham, an application was made for leave to appeal to the Privy Council, which was granted. A conservatory order granting the stay of execution pending the determination of the appeal by the Privy Council was made. A date for the actual appeal will be determined later and the public will be duly informed. The government confirmed its commitment to support the use of capital punishment to punish convicted murderers and to deter criminal activity.

The End



This is the post cabinet briefing for cabinet meeting held today Monday 16th July 2007. I thank you.