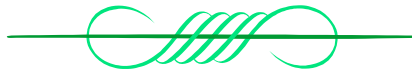


Attachment IV

TO THE

WORKING DOCUMENT
FOR THE

Third Meeting of MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
Information, COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY (ICT)



THE PUBLIC EDUCATION IMPERATIVE

IN RELATION TO

AGENDA ITEM 7.1.5 ENTITLED "draft public education plan

DRAFT PUBLIC EDUCATION PLAN

The Public Education Imperative

Background

The **CARICOM Connectivity Agenda** was borne out of the reality that within the global context, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become pivotal to social and economic development. Indeed ICT is transforming virtually every area of activity that is considered important to nation states.

Connectivity was highlighted by one CARICOM official as a “society’s internal capacity for communication with its global environment through the use of telecommunications and information technologies, and through the products of its content industries”.

The **CARICOM Connectivity Agenda** is a guide to developing policies and programmes for unlocking the enormous benefits of ICTs in the interest of the Community. In this regard, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have acknowledged the role that ICTs must play in advancing the objectives of the Community.

In fulfilment of a mandate from the Heads of Government at their Twenty-Third Meeting in July 2002 at Georgetown, Guyana. That mandate, “**to present the CARICOM ICT/Connectivity Strategy for consideration at its Fourteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting**”, ministers with responsibility for ICTs met in Guyana in 2003 and adopted the **CARICOM Connectivity Agenda** as well as the **Georgetown Declaration**.

The Agenda sets out four basic approaches to reach the intended goal namely:

- The formulation of policies
- Legal and regulatory reform
- E-assessments
- De-monopolisation of telecommunications.

The CARICOM Connectivity Agenda suitably fits into hemispheric and global initiatives, namely the Region’s participation in the processes of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), where the Region is required to make offers in the vital services sector, one which is critical to our economic diversification and future development and linked to developments in ICTs. The ability of the Region to reap the benefits that can be offered by participation the hemispheric and global initiatives is linked to the timely rolling out of the CARICOM Connectivity Agenda.

In this regard the purpose of connectivity is to enable each Member State of the Community to evolve into an information and knowledge-based society, through the acquisition, customising, and utilisation of ICT.

The fact that people are at the core of the **CARICOM Connectivity Agenda** means that people must be brought on board. In this regard, public education is imperative.

The Public Education Goal

In any public education programme, the underlying goals are to impart knowledge with a view to changing behaviour, practice and attitude.

In rolling out the CARICOM Connectivity Agenda, public education is imperative so as to educate persons to the potential of ICTS for enhancing and integrating our societies thereby improving the quality of life for all.

Indeed the Secretariat was mandated in July 2003 to pursue a CARICOM agenda for connectivity which would enable full advantage to be taken of ICTs and content in economic, social, cultural and political development, with the aim of preparing the Region to evolve towards an information society.

Indeed the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) process is recognised, as the highest authority of principles on ICT development must be taken on board in the rolling out of the CARICOM Connectivity Agenda and process of public education.

Objective

Linked to the goal the object of public education is:

To mobilise support for and develop an understanding and importance of the CARICOM Connectivity Agenda which is intended to lead to an improved quality of life for all.

The Public Education Foundation

Research:

Will ensure that the programme as implemented is informed by sound information.

Consultation:

Will ensure that the concerns of the various sectors/stake holders across the Community are captured and addressed.

Development:

Will ensure that messages are crafted, refined and delivered.

Implementation:

Will ensure that approved messages are delivered.

Evaluation:

Will ensure that the direction taken, as guided by research was accurate and that any identified gaps have been filled.

Public Education Delivery Support

The strategy for the delivery of the public education programme should be based on:

- Elements developed at regional level and delivered regionally.
- Elements developed regionally and delivered nationally through channels such as:
 - public/private enterprises and Government Information Services;

Elements developed nationally and shared with other national systems (as is or adopted).

The rationale for this approach is to minimise cost, leverage of the tremendous technical and delivery resources at the national level in Member States and relevance of message.

Conclusion

With the CARICOM Connectivity Agenda, the Community has an agreed consensus on a Regional strategy to pursue a sustainable ICT/connectivity development agenda. This process is being propelled by leadership at the highest levels to ensure that it is successful

Given the growing importance of ICTs, it is not unrealistic that countries and their citizens that do not have access to advanced ICTs can fall behind in the race for global competitiveness.

While there is a Community ICT strategy, it is a given that due to various stages of development, each Member State must develop national strategies for connectivity which address diverse yet vital issues. These include education, health, generation of employment, economic opportunities, investment strategies, democratic participation and protection of human rights, gender equality, economic development, particularly small and medium-size industries, commerce and services, tourism, the agricultural and export sectors, culture and recreation. In this same context, public education must take into consideration national imperatives while at the same time, fitting into the overall Community goal.

