

Fresh eyes on the Caribbean Basin Initiative

THE Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) started in 1983 has picked up very little momentum in the Caribbean, however, Andrea M Ewart a customs and international trade attorney with her own firm, Develop Trade Law believes that the intention of the workshop is that entrepreneurs can have fresh eyes and a new perspective of the benefits of the CBI.

Ewart spoke yesterday at technical workshop facilitated by the US Embassy in Barbados at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, and School of Business. The CBI was envisioned as a program to facilitate the economic development and export diversification of the Caribbean Basin economies. As of 2013, CBI provides 16 countries and dependent territories with duty-free access to the US market for most goods.

She told *The Barbados Advocate*, "The Workshop is a start of a process in terms of reminding people of the very real benefits the CBI brings. The primary focus is to discuss the benefits that are available to entrepreneurs through the Caribbean basin initiative.

This is a 13 year old programme that has not been effectively

utilised after that first initial focus on textile and setting up apparel manufacturing operations in the country, but the reality is that the programme continues to offers some very real benefits to businesses in Barbados and across the region. It is not just the duty free access to the US market but the opportunities to have shared production with other Caribbean countries and Central American countries that are former beneficiaries of CBI.

The core of CBI is duty free access in terms of goods but part of the idea that because of the duty free access combined with the proximity of the Caribbean to the US market is an opportunity to attract foreign investment to set up operations in the county to be able to take advantage of that access, it is not built into the program but that is one of the suppositions that was made because the driving policy of the CPI is to support economic development through export diversification.

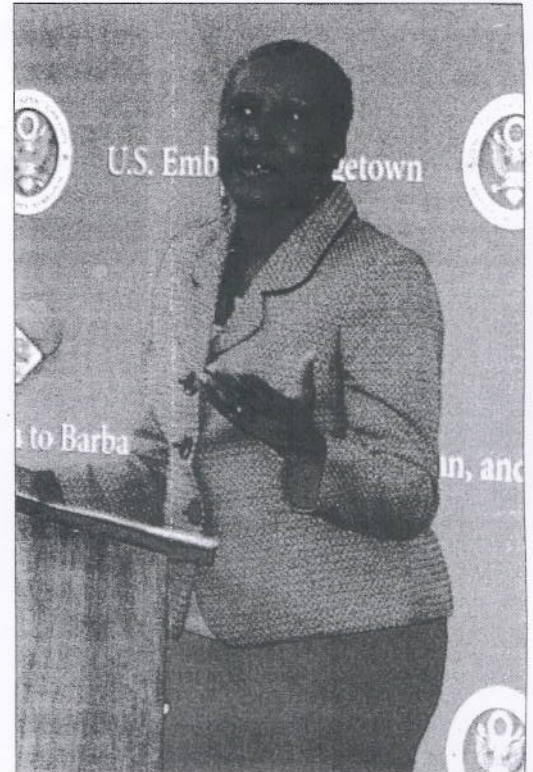
Another area that supports services is the tax abatement that is offered to business people that come to the Caribbean for meeting and conventions they are able to get tax rebates, which is an area that can benefit the

meeting and convention niche." **Accessing the benefit of the CBI**

The Lawyer admitted, "I wouldn't deny they are hurdles to overcome and it starts with addressing some of the constraints that exist here in Barbados or the particular county, there is information available for those who are trying to export to the US market.

The workshop is an expression of the US wanting to refocus on the trade and economic component of its partnership with the Caribbean. They are discussions around how to help the Caribbean to address the barriers for example the sanitation issues for those who want to export food, it is possible to request the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to come to the country and provide some capacity building to work with entrepreneurs to figure out how to meet the standards.

Private Sector has to become proactive in understanding what its needs are and voicing them to Government and US whether through the embassy etc to start the process in how do we partner going forward to deal with the challenges and get business going" (NB)



Andrea M. Ewart, customs and international trade attorney with her own firm, Develop Trade Law speaking at the technical workshop on the CBI



Prime Minister Freundel Stuart

PM: Higher levels must be considered - for new coastal development

DEEPENED consideration must be given to allow three storey residences along the coastline in the interest of mitigating loss during flooding events.

This view was advanced by Prime Minister Freundel Stuart who holds responsibility for Planning, as he delivered the featured address at Caribbean Urban Forum 2014 at the Accra Beach Hotel yesterday morning.

Prime Minister Stuart made the point that the special requirements of the built environment on the coast must also be reviewed. "I believe that deepened consideration must be given to allowing three storey residences along the coastline, in which the lower floor can be used for parking and storage. This policy should also obtain for new coastal development to minimise loss during an event."

His comments came against the backdrop of the effects of climate change on Small Island Developing States, where such a move could mitigate the impact which could be manifested in a number of ways including sea level rise and in the event of a storm or hurricane, storm surges.

According to the Prime Minister, "Our small island developing States are for the most part, coastal communities where the bulk of our population lives, works and socialises."

"Our location makes us singularly vulnerable to the numerous challenges facing oceans and coasts, including the challenges of increased population density and economic activity in coastal areas. Sea level rise, the bleaching of our coral reefs, more intense and frequent hazards such as hurricanes, saltwater infiltration of our aquifers, ocean acidification and severe drought all resulting from climate change are some of the perils which we must manage sustainably and responsibly," he explained.

The Prime Minister said the county's planning systems must also be flexible enough to adopt standards which facilitate greater engineering designs for structures such as breakwaters and groynes from one to 25 year events, to as much as one to 50 year events, in order to combat the stronger spring tides and storm surges which are now expected.

Chief Town Planner Mark

Cummins told the media that there are areas on the coastline where there with two to five storeys including condominiums, but acknowledged that the Prime Minister's comments came against the backdrop of mitigating damage in an event such as sea level rise where there would be minimal loss if the bottom floor is used primarily for storage or patio furniture.

Prime Minister Freundel Stuart told participants that given the greater risk of flooding as the built environment increases, in tandem with heavier rainfall events, appropriate drainage systems to deal with these eventualities must also be designed.

"Our planners must, therefore take the lead in preparing our countries for the effects of climate change. In that connection, we cannot ignore the fact that in the Caribbean much of our tourism plant is located in the coastal zone. Our planning systems therefore must be adapted to ensure that new development in the coastal area is carried out with the best technical knowledge available," he said. (JH)