CROSQ STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2009-2012

At the 26th Meeting of the Ministers of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), held in Guyana from 24-25 November 2008, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) presented its Three-Year (2009-2012) Strategic Plan. The Plan takes into consideration the new direction in which CROSQ is moving, setting up Strategic Themes as the pillars for developing the Regional Quality Infrastructure (RQI), with Strategic Objectives as the building blocks and business drivers of the future. It also takes into account the necessary human, technical and financial resources as well as projects and activities that will help the organisation achieve the set targets. In developing the Plan, CARICOM’s Strategy over the medium term, in particular, the Economic Development and Competitiveness Thematic Priority, was also taken on board. The Plan has seven Strategic Themes, each with 1-3 Objectives aimed at producing the expected Strategic Results and supporting the process of continuous improvement (see Strategy Map).

CROSQ’s Budget for 2009-2010 was also presented, with a rolling plan for 2010-2012, which would be developed during the course of the preceding year in order to build on the momentum gained and to ground the process in the prevailing realities during each year. The COTED approved both the Strategic Plan and the Budget and commended CROSQ for its sound budgeting and management control.

Over the past 2-3 years, externally-funded projects made significant contributions to the development of CROSQ, with a three- and two-fold increase in the number of projects and the staff complement, respectively, at the Secretariat in Barbados. Going forward, the region faces new trade agreements that will provide new opportunities for the export of goods and services. The recent slowdown in the global economy, on the other hand, could impede the rate of development. In response, manufacturers need to consciously shift the focus from cost leadership to product and service differentiation on quality parameters, including and in particular the added value of brand imaging. At the national level, this would require a shift in the emphasis from import inspections against mandatory standards to export-led growth using international voluntary standards benchmarked against international best practices. CROSQ has a pivotal role to play in the process, with the ultimate goal being the fulfilment of our Mission: “The promotion and development of standards and standards related activities to facilitate international competitiveness and the sustainable production of goods and services within the CSME for the enhancement of social and economic development.”
Ms. Astrite Sutaj, a student of Clausthal Technical University, on behalf of the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt, PTB (German National Institute of Metrology) recently conducted research on several Caribbean countries while based at the CROSQ Secretariat in Barbados.

Field research was focused on the four Caribbean countries of Barbados, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, and was conducted during the period 31 March to 20 June 2008, followed by data analysis, report preparation and presentation.

The research included questionnaires and face-to-face interviews of stakeholders of the regional tourism industry, such as hotels, restaurants, manufacturers, suppliers, etc, while the analysis took into consideration: the local conformity assessment and regulatory bodies, including governmental organizations such as the National Standards Bodies, the National Tourism Bodies, the Hotel and Tourism Associations, and the Ministries of Health; relevant standards, such as those related to the environment and hygiene; and conformity assessment criteria.

The objective of the research was to assess the impact of the elements of the Quality Infrastructure (QI) on the components of the Tourism Value Chain (TVC) and more specifically the Food and Accommodation components in the Caribbean region. It was important to determine which QI elements (e.g. calibration, metrology, standardization, certification, accreditation, testing, inspection and quality management systems) are mostly required and which elements are already available to the tourism industry.

It was also significant to assess how the local/regional QI service providers can better address the needs of the tourism industry to ensure continued sustainable development in the Caribbean region.

Ms. Sutaj did an excellent job in her research, the results of which are eagerly awaited by the region as they have significant implications on the tourism sector for ensuring quality products and services.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has been offering online training courses, entitled eTraining, since 2007. eTraining is the distance-learning capacity-building project of the WTO Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) aimed at providing online training on matters related to international trade and WTO Agreements. Taking full advantage of the latest web-based technology, the eTraining platform provides distance-learning services to officials from developing countries and economies in transition, who are WTO Members or Observers. eTraining offers introductory courses on the WTO, as well as on specific WTO issues and agreements.

From 27 October to 5 December 2008, several members of staff of the CROSQ Secretariat undertook the first of the intensive training courses, Introduction to the WTO - Ms. Anne Marie Sirju, Ms. Nadia Corbin and Ms. Giselle Guevara.

Ms. Sirju is the Technical Officer of CROSQ primarily responsible for the technical work of CROSQ in regional standards development, harmonisation and implementation and facilitating the development and training associated with needed standards infrastructure.

Ms. Corbin, the Information Systems Officer of CROSQ, has primary responsibility for the management and maintenance of the Information Management systems for CROSQ as well as the Information Technology infrastructure of the organisation. She is also required to maintain current and accessible information in areas of interest to the organisation through research.

Ms. Giselle Guevara is the Project Coordinator of the CROSQ/EDF Caribbean Laboratory Accreditation Service (CLAS) project.

The course was aimed at providing:

- enhanced knowledge of the basic principles of the WTO;
- enhanced knowledge of the role and functions of the WTO and the key features of the WTO agreements;
- improved ability to interpret relevant information and documents on WTO-related issues, and to use the WTO legal texts and related background materials; and
- skills to take part effectively in more in-depth technical assistance activities in the future as a result of having first successfully completed a basic WTO training.

The course also provided an opportunity for the CROSQ staff to establish a network of useful contacts between participants, course organizers and tutors from the WTO Secretariat.

Having successfully completed the course, all three individuals will continue to increase their knowledge of the WTO through subsequent online courses offered in the eTraining program.
CROSQ/IDB-MIF SME Project Workshops Update

The Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) project has been holding a series of awareness building workshops as a means of making companies aware of the normative documents being developed to facilitate their business. The aim of these workshops is to expose participants to the standards development process and to the normative documents currently being developed by CROSQ under the SME project. They are also intended as a means of sensitizing the SMEs to the services offered by the respective National Bureau of Standards and the importance of standards to their business.

To this end, workshops were held in Belize, Guyana and Suriname during November 2008 targeted at organisations in sectors: packaged bottled water, labelling of pre-packaged foods, and tour guides and tour operators. The workshops were also intended to raise awareness among key stakeholders and within selected countries to the importance of Traceability, Verification and Calibration Services. SMEs were afforded the opportunity to contribute to the specific standard being developed, through interactive presentations and group activities, the feedback from which was noted for inclusion as amendments to the normative documents currently under review. During the workshop held in Guyana on packaged bottled water, for example, one item in particular stood out, namely the need for the standard to accommodate refills in terms of the health and sanitation aspects. Refilling of containers is the major activity engaged in by the SMEs involved in the industry in Guyana and warrants some consideration in the standard.

Overall, the workshops facilitated the following:
- Increased awareness of standards in general;
- Increased awareness of the content and requirements of the specific standards discussed; and
- Increased knowledge of how regional standards are developed and the role of the public in the development process.

They also provided attendees the opportunity to interact with personnel involved in the development of the standards and enabled them to receive those standards which can have an impact on the quality and “marketability” of SME’s products and services.

HOSPITALITY ASSURED PROGRAMME
In December, CROSQ aligned with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) in the establishment of the Hospitality Assured program. CROSQ’s role in the program is to assess organizations to the criteria identified as requirements for them to be certified. This pilot phase comes to an end in 2009.

CARICOM ICT STEERING COMMITTEE
The Regional Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Committee is slated to have its Third Meeting on 3-4 March in St. George’s, Grenada. The meeting will be held to discuss the draft action plan arising from the Sub-committee meetings recently held in Barbados and to further discussions on the development work plan for Regional ICT. The Information Systems Officer will represent CROSQ at this meeting.

CDM EDUCATION SECTOR SUB-COMMITTEE
In December 2008, CROSQ attended the Second Meeting of the Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Education Sector Sub-committee of the CDM Coordination and Harmonization Council (CHC) at the Hilton, Barbados.

RADIO PROGRAM - AWARENESS RAISING
CROSQ was interviewed in October on a Barbadian talk show on 100.7AM for the show ‘Talk Yuh Talk’. Dr. Lopez, the Chief Executive Officer, provided an overall CROSQ perspective; Ms. Sirju, Technical Officer, spoke on standards and the development of standards component; and Mr. Maharaj, Regional Technical Support Coordinator for the CROSQ/IDB Regional Quality Infrastructure project, covered the aspects of Regional Quality Infrastructure, Metrology, and Certification. The interview was very successful with multiple callers asking queries and providing comments, which were handled successfully by the CROSQ team. It is anticipated that CROSQ will be invited to appear again on the talk show, possibly with specific focus on particular areas.

HIPCAR
The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) recently held its Planning Meeting for the Project on “Enhancing Competitiveness in the Caribbean through the Harmonization of ICT Policies, Legislation and Regulatory Procedures (HIPCAR)”. Mr. Simeon Collins of the Grenada Bureau of Standards represented CROSQ at this meeting.
AWARENESS
The Regional Building Standards (RBS) project requires that each participating Member State set up a National Technical Sub-Committee (NTSC) under the ambit of their respective Standards Bureau. In many instances these committees will comprise of the members of their existing building/engineering sub-committees along with other stakeholders.

As part of the Project Execution Unit (PEU) for the RBS Project Outreach and Awareness Program, the Project Coordinator has scheduled the systematic formal launching of the NTSC in each participating Member State. At the launch, the opportunity is taken to highlight key aspects of the project including, but not limited to:
- Providing a broad background of the project;
- Reporting on the progress to date; and
- Noting the projections on the way forward.
Most importantly, the launch also seeks to encourage the NTSC contribution and participation.

To date, five NTSCs have been officially launched. Of these, three were undertaken by the former Project Coordinator (as reported in an earlier issue of the newsletter). Two additional NTSCs were launched in collaboration with the Antigua and Barbuda Bureau of Standards (ABBs) and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) in November and December 2008 respectively by the new Project Coordinator, Mr. A. Michael Wood. Tentative plans are presently in place to launch the Barbados and St. Lucia branches in March 2009.

Regional Technical Committee
The PEU is staffed by the Project Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant. A Regional Technical Committee (RTC), comprised of professionals from regional organisations and the Head of Standards Bureaux or their nominee, oversees the technical work of the project.

The RTC meets on the last Wednesday of each month – the meeting is usually conducted by way of part face-to-face and part teleconference. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday February 25th, 2009. Minutes of these meetings will be uploaded on the CROSOQ Group Office so that all stakeholders can be kept informed and also to encourage wider participation.

CONSULTANCIES
The project envisages the involvement of four consultancies to develop the RBS:
- Seismic Hazard Mapping
- Flood Hazard Mapping
- Standard Development Consultants (SDCs)
- Technical Consultant for Member States (TCMSs)

Seismic Hazard Maps
Intended for an experienced firm/company with a proven track record in the area of the development of seismic hazard maps, this consultancy is intended to cover fourteen states ranging from Belize in the North to Trinidad and Tobago in the South.

The consultancy was regionally advertised and two responses were received and evaluated, for a No Objection from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). However, due to a subsequent intervention by the RTC, it was felt that this consultancy should be re-advertised.

Flood Hazard Maps
This consultancy will focus on the six Member States where no maps currently exist in the area of flood hazard and rainfall intensity duration - the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Coastal Zone of Guyana,Montserrat, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. The engagement of this consultancy is progressing well as CDB has given its No-Objection to CROSOQ contracting one of the two firms that submitted proposals. At this point, the draft contract has been agreed between both parties and will be forwarded to the CDB for their approval. Projections are for a start date of March 2009.

Standards Development Consultants
Four consultants are to be engaged as SDCs on a part-time basis for twenty months. To date, only three responses to the regional advertisement for this consultancy were received and CDB has given its No-Objection to the engagement of an experienced SDC from Jamaica. During the first week of February, the PEU will begin negotiations with this individual. The other two applications were received on 9 January 2009 and are awaiting evaluation.

This consultancy has already been advertised on two separate occasions, and permission is being sought from the CDB to advertise for a third time, hopefully on a much wider scale, to increase the number of applications received.

Technical Consultants for Member States
This consultancy also involves the hiring of four individuals on a part-time basis for twenty months. At this time, only one response to the advertisement has been received and CDB has given its No-Objection to the engagement of an experienced TCMS, and negotiations will begin in early February.

The consultancy has also been advertised on two separate occasions, and permission is being sought from CDB to advertise for a third time, hopefully on a much wider scale, to increase the number of applications received.

RELATED ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS
The Project Coordinator attended a conference in Martinique on Capacity Building in the Greater Caribbean in the Field of Major Risk geared at providing updates on their projects related to Building guides and standards. The conference was held on 12-15 November 2008 and provided insightful knowledge into the Martinique perspective.

The Barbados Building Authority (BBA) is presently preparing a Small Building Guide for national use. The Project Coordinator is in touch with the Head of BBA so as to be kept abreast of its progress.
Highlight on Caribbean Export

**EU-CARIFORUM BUSINESS FORUM LAUNCHED**

The 1st EU-CARIFORUM Business Forum was launched on November 24-25 at Hilton Hotel, Barbados, with a focus on developing greater business activity between the CARIFORUM countries and the European Union (EU) on an ongoing basis.

The Forum was a follow-up to a successful trade mission to Europe held recently for Caribbean business persons in the Audio-Visual and Information Communications Technology sectors, and was attended by approximately 100 business persons from the Caribbean and Europe.

The EU-CARIFORUM Conference was a BizClim Project, a programme of the Asian Pacific and Caribbean States (ACP) with support from the EU, Caribbean Export, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery and the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce.

**3rd TRADE & INVESTMENT MEETING**

The Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) hosted the 3rd Meeting of the CARIFORUM/FCOR/OCT Task Force on Trade and Investment in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on 5 December 2008.

The mandate of the Task Force is to deepen the level of cooperation between the CARIFORUM Member States and the French Caribbean Outermost Region (FCOR - comprising of French Guyana, Guadeloupe and Martinique), as well as the Other Countries and Territories (OCT) of the European Union (EU). This Task Force was convened under the EU-funded Caribbean Trade and Private Sector Development Programme (CTPS-DP). One of the main objectives of CTPSD is to increase the competitiveness of firms and sectors in CARIFORUM Member States through market expansion and export diversification.

The purpose of the Session was to provide an update on the progress achieved by the Task Force to date and to develop an agenda for 2009. Additionally, the meeting also identified priority sectors to improve the terms of trade and investment flows between CARIFORUM, FCOR and the OCTS through: facilitation of movement of goods, services and persons; upcoming trade missions; the SME Enterprise project, as well as actions in favour of sports tourism; alternative energy; water conservation and treatment; education services; and mutual recognition for professionals.

- Adapted from the Caribbean Export Trade Watch

Institutional Strengthening of CROSQ

TDV Global, a Canadian Strategic Management company with their headquarters located in Ottawa Canada, has made significant progress in a three year project with CROSQ, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), for institutional strengthening. Most key processes of CROSQ have been mapped and documented, the quality management system has been finalized and HR initiatives are taking place within the CROSQ Secretariat.

In particular TDV has assisted the Secretariat to align employee objectives with their recently developed Strategic Plan. Joanne Lincoln was responsible for performing a gap analysis and spent an intensive week working with the Secretariat team to implement key actions. The plans have been finalized and further assistance from TDV will be provided throughout the implementation phase which will involve mentorship, monitoring performance objectives and conducting satisfaction surveys. Also coming out of this alignment was an adjustment to some of the job titles of several employees in order to more adequately describe their main roles and responsibilities.

TDV has spent the last year with the CROSQ Technical Management Committee (TMC) to define the process for implementing new standards for CARICOM. The process has been mapped and the final version of the documented procedure is expected to be approved in mid-January by the CROSQ Council. This has been a long and complicated process but the benefits of many hours of involvement with the TMC and TDV will provide consistency and significant benefits for the CSME initiative.

TDV Global also provided a software solution for CROSQ that will allow for document and record control, management of meetings, actions tracking and other elements that will be beneficial from an improved communications perspective and improved process controls. The setup and training for the Secretariat has taken place and focus will now be on implementation over the coming months. This software solution will be rolled out to each of the Member States over a period of one year.

Ron Higgins of TDV has also agreed to assist CROSQ as their Quality Manager for a period of 6 months starting in January 2009.

Going forward there are a few key initiatives that TDV will be focused on in its project with CROSQ:

- Sustainability assistance of the programs that have been implemented over the last 2 years;
- Development of a CARICOM or CROSQ Quality Award Program;
- Assistance with branding and marketing of CROSQ;
- Assistance with financial stability for the Secretariat;
- Conducting of an HR salary baseline study;
- Assistance with a metrology baseline study and potential funding; and
- Assistance with project definition for future projects.

In order to focus on future objectives and to ensure adequate handoff of completed initiatives, TDV Global will be opening an office in Barbados to provide onsite support. This will be key to ensure ongoing support and sustainability for the programs that are being implemented and to meet future objective timelines. Ron and Wendy Higgins will be managing the new office for TDV International and will be providing implementation support, training and mentorship to CROSQ over the remaining nine months of the contract.

The TDV Global team wishes everyone at CROSQ best wishes for a successful 2009.

- Submitted by TDV Global
CLAS - Raising Accreditation Awareness

The process of laboratory accreditation and its associated benefits are not widely understood outside the accreditation community. Even laboratories themselves may be unfamiliar with what is involved and how the process can enhance their service until they have actually gone through accreditation. At the same time, other conformity assessment processes are available, and often neither the laboratory nor its customers understand the distinction between these alternatives. If laboratory accreditation is to survive in an increasingly demanding and competitive environment, its proponents and practitioners must be actively promoting both an understanding of its purpose and how the process enhances testing and calibration services for the benefit of the laboratory, the customer and the wider community.

To assist in the process of awareness raising, the CLAS Project Coordinator worked alongside both the Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS) and the Suriname Bureau of Standards (SBS) to conduct awareness seminars in December 2008.

In Belize, the BBS Director and Project Coordinator undertook a series of meetings from 1-5 December with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade, and laboratories aimed at improving the understanding of the benefits of Accreditation.

A seminar was also conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Health which catered to 40 participants from various public and private laboratories. The seminar dealt with the following aspects of Laboratory Quality:

- Fundamentals of Quality Management and Accreditation;
- Requirements for Quality Documentation;
- The use and benefits of Proficiency Testing; and
- The 20 milestone Roadmap to Accreditation.

Based on the experiences at the workshop, an evaluation of the participant’s comments and overall impression of the activities conducted, the Bureau will determine what future workshops can be planned and identify the target group for technical assistance, to ensure improvement in the capacity of the country’s laboratory scientists and testing capabilities.

The Project Coordinator visited Suriname from 15-18 December at the invitation of the SBS and the Ministry of Health. The main objectives for the visit were:

- to perform a needs assessment for planning future interventions with the SBS and its stakeholders;
- to conduct an awareness seminar in conjunction with the SBS; and
- to conduct a seminar for the Medical Laboratories in coordination with the Central Medical Laboratory of the Ministry of Health for continuing education of the Laboratory Staff.

The awareness seminars attracted approximately 80 participants from various organizations in the public and private sector who expressed their support for the SBS’s activities and encouraged the organizers to plan similar activities in the future.

LABORATORY QUALITY SYSTEMS GROUP (LQMS)

The National Accreditation Focal Point (NAFP) for Barbados, working closely with the Project Coordinator, convened a group of 6 laboratories to form a Laboratory Quality Systems Working group which met on 28 October 2008. This group will serve as a focal point for Quality Improvement activities in-country supported by the CLAS Project. The benefits of participation will be:

- Access to information and training on Quality Management for Laboratories;
- Access to Technical Assistance under the Project to develop a QMS; and
- Preference with respect to Proficiency Testing and workshops for labs.

In an effort to replicate the success of this activity, the Project Coordinator produced a template that was then sent to all the NAFPs in the region encouraging them to do likewise. Each LQMS is expected to work in tandem with the project and the NAFPs to improve the Quality of Lab services and realize the goal of Tested once, accepted everywhere!

COTED Update on CROSQ

At the Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) held on the 24-25 November 2008 in Georgetown, Guyana, CROSQ submitted as recommendation for approval the CARICOM Regional Standard (CRS) for Rum (CCS 0025:2008).

The CRS for Rum has been an issue for quite some time due to the difference in the minimum alcohol content between the 40 per cent indicated in the standard and the 37.5 per cent accepted in Suriname. After many deliberations and discussions, it was agreed that the Suriname Alcoholic Beverages (SAV) would be allowed to bottle at 37.5 per cent for the CARICOM market up to and including 31 December 2009, in order to allow the company to exhaust its existing stock of labels.

The COTED noted the resolution of this issue and confirmed the approval of the CRS for Rum. This means that companies are now in a position to purchase this standard from the CROSQ Secretariat for implementation of the requirements in their production line.

Additional approvals from COTED as it relates to CROSQ included:

- the amendment to the title of the Head of the CROSQ Secretariat from Executive Secretary to Chief Executive Officer in order to reflect the true function of the position;
- the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 that took into consideration the current structure and projects, future plans and the necessary human and financial resources; and
- the Budget for 2009-2010.

COTED also agreed that CROSQ should broaden its membership base to include additional membership groups. These groups would be expanded to include stakeholder-organizations from the private sector from individual Member States of CROSQ.
CARICOM and Oxford University Launch CARIBSAVE Project

Oxford University Centre for the Environment (OUCE) and the Caribbean Community Centre for Climate Change (CCCCC) have formed a partnership to address the impacts and challenges surrounding climate change, the environment, tourism and related sectors throughout the Caribbean region. The project is multi-sectoral, multi-objective and multi-donor in nature and is known as CARIBSAVE.

Comprising seven objectives, the project focuses on: sectoral and destinationial modelling; vulnerability and adaptive capacity assessments; socio-economic analyses; analysis of the impacts of climate change on key sectors and their integral relationship to tourism in the Caribbean (i.e. water, energy, biodiversity, agriculture, human health, disaster risk management and infrastructure); the development of carbon offset projects and carbon neutral destination status; and capacity building activities across the Caribbean basin.

The project will secure approximately US$35 Million over a 3–5 year period to achieve its aims and will provide a sustained and enduring approach to dealing with the challenges presented to the Caribbean and its tourism sector by climate change.

The project has received seed funding from the British Government’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO). It anticipates more significant funds from Oxford University's worldwide connections and the UK Department of International Development (DFID) in the next few weeks and has the support of the Association of Caribbean States, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and a range of other international and regional organizations across the public and private sectors.

Part of the seed funding will be spent on a six-month pilot study of two Caribbean destinations - Eleuthera in the Bahamas and Ocho Rios in Jamaica. Climate change scientists will monitor the islands as test cases for the entire region’s tourism industry. By analysing destinational climate models of data collected between 1961 and 2008, the researchers will calculate the islands’ likely climate until 2100, predicting likely levels of rainfall, wind-speed, the rate of rising sea temperatures and sea levels, as well as the frequency of extreme weather events like hurricanes or monsoons, and will assess the particular vulnerabilities of each island to physical impacts. The climate science and physical impacts will be linked with socio-economics and other factors such as health; for instance, whether rising sea levels could contaminate water supplies, and the increased risks of dengue fever and malaria posed by more frequent flooding.

The pilot study will provide a blueprint for climate and adaptation modelling, as well as vulnerability screening, that can be rolled out across other tourist destination sites and countries in the Caribbean region.

The environment, tourism and its associated sectors are vital drivers for social and economic development in individual island states and in the Caribbean region as a whole, and are critical factors for sustainable livelihoods across the region. This pragmatic project, and the partnerships formed as result of the shared vision, will reduce the vulnerabilities of the Caribbean to climate change.

The project will enhance the resilience of the region’s nation states, their economies and the livelihoods of its communities to climate change. This will be achieved by comprehensively addressing the multifarious sectors and the complex interrelationships that coexist in the climate change, tourism and environment nexus.

The vision for the CARIBSAVE Project is longevity; a sustained and comprehensive approach to address the challenges of climate change in the tourism and related sectors across the Caribbean, in nations and at destinational level in perpetuity, with scope for evolution and refinement.

- adapted from CARICOM Secretariat

10th Joint CSL/JIFSAN Symposium on Food Safety and Nutrition

The increasingly global nature of the food supply presents new challenges for assuring food safety and for responding to emergency situations. Meeting these challenges will require the proactive development of improved documentation systems; response strategies, flexible technical capabilities, and communication channels. These tools can serve as the basis for establishing enhanced management systems for coordinating responses to emergencies, confirming the origin of a food and for protecting public health worldwide.

Each year, a symposia on food safety and applied nutrition, jointly organized by the Central Science Laboratory (CSL), UK, and the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN), USA, and supported by the EU Joint Research Centre (JRC) is held. Each year a different theme is selected.

The focus of the 2009 Annual CSL/JIFSAN Joint Symposium, to be held 13-15 May 2009 in Maryland, USA, will be on tracking, tracing and verifying food throughout the supply chain. The meeting will provide an overview of advances in research related to tracking, tracing and verifying foods and ingredients and tools for the electronic exchange of product information within the food supply chain.

Invited speakers will be drawn from regulatory agencies, public interest groups, universities and research institutions in Europe and North America. Additionally speakers involved with the EU Trace Project (http://www.trace.eu.org/) will participate. Contributed poster presentations are invited.

Symposium sessions will include discussions on advances in analytical technologies to characterize the origin of a food products; application of technologies for tracking food through the supply chain; IT tools for electronic exchange of information; and barriers to adopting these technologies.

Promoting Regional Quality Infrastructure
G20 Leaders Agree to Address Current Financial Crisis

Leaders from 19 nations plus the European Union gathered in Washington, USA on 15 November 2008 to consider how to repair the global financial system. The series of meetings were aimed at discussing efforts to strengthen economic growth, deal with the financial crisis, and lay the foundation for reform to help ensure that a similar crisis does not happen again.

Since the outbreak of this crisis, the world's leading nations have coordinated actions more closely than ever before. Thanks in large part to these decisive measures, once frozen global credit markets are beginning to thaw and businesses around the world are gaining access to essential short-term financing.

The Summit achieved five key objectives. The leaders:
- reached a common understanding of the root causes of the global crisis;
- reviewed actions countries have taken and will take to address the immediate crisis and strengthen growth;
- agreed on common principles for reforming financial markets;
- launched an action plan to implement those principles and asked ministers to develop further specific recommendations that will be reviewed by leaders at a subsequent summit; and
- reaffirmed their commitment to free market principles.

The leaders agreed that immediate steps could be taken or considered to achieve the outlined objectives and to restore growth and support emerging market economies:
- Continuing to take whatever further actions are necessary to stabilize the financial system;
- Recognizing the importance of monetary policy support and using fiscal measures, as appropriate;
- Providing liquidity to help unfreeze credit markets; and
- Ensuring that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and other multilateral development banks (MDBs) have sufficient resources to assist developing countries affected by the crisis, as well as provide trade and infrastructure financing.

They also agreed on common principles for reform:
- Strengthening transparency and accountability by enhancing required disclosure on complex financial products; ensuring complete and accurate disclosure by firms of their financial condition; and aligning incentives to avoid excessive risk-taking;
- Enhancing sound regulation by ensuring strong oversight of credit rating agencies; prudent risk management; and oversight or regulation of all financial markets, products, and participants as appropriate to their circumstances;
- Promoting integrity in financial markets by preventing market manipulation and fraud, helping avoid conflicts of interest, and protecting against use of the financial system to support terrorism, drug trafficking, or other illegal activities;
- Reinforcing international cooperation by making national laws and regulations more consistent and encouraging regulators to enhance their coordination and cooperation across all segments of financial markets; and
- Reforming international financial institutions (IFIs) by modernizing their governance and membership so that emerging market economies and developing countries have greater voice and representation, by working together to better identify vulnerabilities and anticipate stresses, and by acting swiftly to play a key role in crisis response.

The leaders stressed their commitment to an Open Global Economy, recognizing that these reforms will only succeed if grounded in a commitment to free market principles, including those of: respect for private property; open trade and investment; competitive markets; and efficient, effectively regulated financial systems. They further recognized that over-regulation of the financial sector must be avoided so as not to hamper economic growth and exacerbate the contraction of capital flows, including to developing countries.

The leaders declared that within the next 12 months, they will refrain from: raising new barriers to investment or to trade in goods and services; imposing new export restrictions; or implementing WTO inconsistent measures to stimulate exports. They also reaffirmed the importance of the Millennium Development Goals, urging both developed and emerging economies to undertake commitments consistent with their capacities and roles in the global economy.

An Action Plan was approved that sets forth a comprehensive work plan to implement these principles, including immediate actions to:
- Address weaknesses in accounting and disclosure standards for off-balance sheet vehicles;
- Ensure that credit rating agencies meet the highest standards and avoid conflicts of interest, provide greater disclosure to investors, and differentiate ratings for complex products;
- Ensure that firms maintain adequate capital, and set out strengthened capital requirements for banks' structured credit and securitization activities;
- Develop enhanced guidance to strengthen banks' risk management practices, and ensure that firms develop processes that look at whether they are accumulating too much risk;
- Establish processes whereby national supervisors who oversee globally active financial institutions meet together and share information; and
- Expand the Financial Stability Forum to include a broader membership of emerging economies.

- Adapted from the Declaration of the Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy

The G-20 in Washington
Implementation of the CARIFORUM-EC EPA

PROVISIONAL APPLICATION
On 15 October 2008, thirteen CARIFORUM States and the EC signed the CARIFORUM-EC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) at a ceremony in Barbados. Guyana subsequently signed the Agreement on 20 October in Brussels. Haiti, the only UN-designated Least Developed Country (LDC) in the CARIFORUM Group, has not yet signed the Agreement.

Consistent with the Decision of 14 December 2006 by the General Council of the WTO on Transparency Mechanism for Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs), the CARIFORUM-EU EPA was jointly notified to the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements (CRTA) on 16 October 2008. The notification was modified on October 22 to reflect Guyana’s addition to the slate of CARIFORUM signatory states. Two factors contributed to the prompt notification of the Agreement. The first was the then impending Appellate Body hearing on bananas (16-17 October) and the desire to ensure that there was legal coverage for the preference being accorded to CARIFORUM bananas exports. The second was Article 243(3) of the EPA which committed the parties to commence provisional application of the Agreement “as soon as possible but no later than 31 October 2008”.

Given the region-to-region nature of the EPA, provisional application by the CARIFORUM party could only take effect when all of the CARIFORUM signatories individually completed the domestic procedure necessary to enable provisional application or ratification. The last signatory CARIFORUM state deposited its notification in mid-December 2008 and Provisional Application took effect on 29 December 2008.

REGIONAL PREPARATORY TASK FORCE
The work programme of the CARIFORUM-EC Regional Preparatory Task Force (RPTF) includes overseeing the preparation of a comprehensive set of studies. These studies are aimed at assisting in providing the EC and other potential donors with a better understanding of the region’s needs. They also aim at translating the cooperation provisions of the EPA into concrete and actionable sector programmes destined for any potential donor, detailing timing and activities required in order to allow the region to fully implement the commitments in the Agreement. Efforts are being made to accelerate the work of the Task Force.

With the signing of the Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIPT) on November 15 on the occasion of the European Development Day, the financial framework is now in place for drawing down resources to fund programmes identified in the completed studies.

EPA IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES
The CARIFORUM-EC EPA is a comprehensive agreement covering, inter alia, trade in Goods, Services and Investment, Competition Policy, Innovation and Intellectual Property, Transparency in Public Procurement, Environment and Social Aspects, and Personal Data Protection. There is also an overarching Development Chapter, which outlines scope and cooperation priorities, such as support to build human, legal and institutional capacity, promotion of private sector and enterprise development, diversification of export base and support to develop infrastructure necessary to conduct trade. This chapter is complemented by subject-specific development cooperation priorities.

CARIFORUM has already started to give consideration to an “EPA Implementation Road Map”. The Road Map, which will be refined based on the output of the studies, sets out the legislative and policy actions required at the national and regional levels; timelines for accomplishment of each action; an estimate of the resources required for the implementation of EPA commitments; and possible sources of funding, including those already committed by the EC. In addition, several Member States have established or are in the process of establishing national EPA Implementation Units.

While the major implementing legislation will not be needed immediately upon provisional application of the Agreement, some “immediate action items”, such as the need to convene initial meetings of the institutional bodies and more specifically the Joint CARIFORUM-EC Council and the Trade and Development Committee, are required.

RECENT ACTIVITIES
In addition to the dissemination of information to stakeholders on the CARIFORUM-EC EPA, CARIFORUM has initiated actions aimed at taking advantage of the opportunities under the EPA. Specifically, in September 2008, a study tour of European capitals was conducted involving several Caribbean organisations and business owners, including the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, Caribbean Export Agency and the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery. The tour focussed on matching Caribbean and European businesses in the area of creative industry and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

CARIFORUM and the EC also held its first Business Forum on 24-25 November in Barbados. The Business Forum aims to build private sector capacity in the CARIFORUM region by providing a platform to facilitate dialogue between CARIFORUM and European firms and investors. Among the issues discussed were the opportunities and challenges associated with doing business in Europe and the CARIFORUM region in the area of services export from a general and sectoral perspective as well as how to effectively use the EPA as a tool to expand trade between the two regions.

Additionally, Mr. Malcolm Spence of CRNM provided a half-day seminar on the EPA at the Thirteenth Council Meeting of CROSO in September 2008.

- Adapted from the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery Special RNM Update
Standardization for the ICT and Telecommunications Sectors

The first-ever Global Standards Symposium (GSS) was launched in October 2008 in Johannesburg, South Africa with a broad agreement on the need to take aggressive action to streamline standards work and end the duplication of efforts within the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector. The one-day symposium brought together government Ministers, diplomats, senior executives from the private sector and lead officials from other standards bodies.

Opening the Symposium, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) standards chief Malcolm Johnson noted that without global standards the ICT world would be a very different place. "Imagine a world with no Internet or no telephone calling from one side of the world to the other," Johnson said, adding that clarity and efficiency must be brought to bear as the standardization scenario gets more complex by the day. "We must ensure we all pull together and avoid duplication of effort and waste our increasingly limited resources. Even large organizations are having difficulty resourcing this effort, so how can small organizations, especially from developing countries, hope to play a role?"

Industry and standards leaders argued that the bewildering array of standards bodies is costly and inefficient. It is estimated that there are over 300 ICT standards bodies in existence today and GSS delegates agreed that keeping track of them was a difficult task. Better coordination at an international level is needed between industry and standards developing organizations (SDOs) to ensure that standardization needs are met quickly and efficiently. Steps are being planned to establish a direct line of communication between technology leaders and ITU’s standardization arm to ensure that emerging needs are addressed in the most efficient manner and at the most appropriate place.

ITU Secretary-General, Dr Hamadoun Touré, underlined the importance of standards in times of financial crisis. "The World Trade Organization (WTO) trade report of 2005 underlines the important benefits that standards can deliver," he said. He added that "standards may have a significant effect on limiting the undesirable outcomes of market failure. And, the work of ITU and other bodies in the development of global standards for ICTs and telecoms has helped the smoother, more economical introduction of new technologies."

Participants at the Global Standards Symposium also addressed: ICTs and climate change, increasing developing country participation in the standardization process, and accessibility to ICTs for persons with disabilities.

Delegates were called on to set an example by committing to specific programmes to limit their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reduce their carbon footprint and help ensure that the expansion of the global communications network is done in an environmentally friendly manner. The importance of the work of the ITU Focus Group on Climate Change was recognized; in particular the need for a standardized approach to measuring the impact of ICTs on the reduction of GHG emissions.

Malcolm Johnson noted that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had underlined ITU’s role in addressing climate change - the moral challenge of our times. "From a standardization perspective, ITU has already produced a checklist for standards authors to ensure climate change is taken into account in the development of our standards," Johnson said. "Industry is faced with probably its biggest ever challenge but also its biggest ever opportunity in terms of corporate social responsibility. There is the challenge for the ICT industry to limit its own emissions, but also the opportunity to maximize its potential to help other sectors reduce their emissions. This could make for a tremendously good news story for the ICT industry."

Bridging the standardization gap is the term ITU uses to describe its efforts to increase developing country participation in the standards making process. Recent efforts by ITU’s Standardization Sector (ITU-T) include holding five regional forums in 2008, establishing a voluntary fund to be used for workshops and meetings in developing countries, fellowships, remote participation, surveys and study programmes. It was recognized that the increased involvement of developing countries in standardization work provides an opportunity to better consider their needs in developing new standards and will help meet the traditional objective of ITU in continuing to ensure global interoperability of communications.

In the arena of accessibility to ICTs for persons with disabilities ITU was encouraged to continue its efforts in producing standards that support the ICT needs of persons with disabilities. Work to develop an on-line toolkit that will serve as a global electronic repository of policies and strategies and as a platform for sharing experiences on best practices on ICT accessibility was announced.

The GSS took place one day before the start of ITU’s World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-08) which is a quadrennial event where ITU members decide on the direction of ITU’s standardization work for the next four years. WTSA-08 drew to a close October 30 with decisions on a wide range of issues that will impact the future direction of the ICT industry. ITU members, spanning the global ICT industry and administrations from across the world, asked for increased emphasis on key areas such as ICTs and climate change, the deployment of IPv6, accessibility to ICTs for persons with disabilities, conformance and interoperability testing, and encouraging academic participation in ITU’s work.

WTSA-08 also revised Resolution 44, which sets out a detailed action plan for addressing the standardization gap and for implementing Resolution 123 which involves: “the continued shortage of human resources in the standardization field in developing countries, resulting in a low level of developing-country participation in meetings of ITU-T and of ITU-R and, consequently, in the standards-making process, leading to difficulties when interpreting ITU-T and ITU-R Recommendations;” This contributes to the standardization gap between developed and developing countries which adversely affects the ability of representatives from developing countries to access, implement, contribute to and influence international ICT standards, specifically ITU Recommendations, contributing to the persistence of the wider digital divide.

- Adapted from International Telecommunication Union
Photo Gallery Of Events

CROSQ team at a recent radio show

Beverly Monroe giving a presentation at the SME workshop in Trinidad

CROSQ Council members after the Thirteenth Council Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago

Vindel Kerr presenting to Council members at the Corporate Governance workshop in Trinidad and Tobago

Attendees of the World Standards Day 2008 Launch in Antigua and Barbuda

Astrite Sutaj during her research tenure at CROSQ
2009 Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 12-14</td>
<td>Thirteenth Meeting of the Technical Management Committee of CROSQ</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 10-11</td>
<td>Capacity Caribbean 2009</td>
<td>St. Maarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 12-16</td>
<td>Caribbean Services Summit</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 23-27</td>
<td>Sixth Meeting of the CROSQ Editorial Committee</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>Thirty-First Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (External Trade Relations)</td>
<td>Guyana</td>
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<td>March 2</td>
<td>Launch of the CROSQ/EDF Caribbean Laboratory Accreditation Service project</td>
<td>Guyana</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 3-4</td>
<td>Third Meeting of the CARICOM Regional Information and Communication Technology Committee</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 12-13</td>
<td>Twentieth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community</td>
<td>Belize</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17-20</td>
<td>Fifth Summit of the Americas</td>
<td>Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 23-24</td>
<td>Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development</td>
<td>Guyana</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 27-30</td>
<td>Fourteenth Meeting of the Council of CROSQ</td>
<td>St. Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 5-6</td>
<td>Regional Workshop for the Development of the Strategy and Standards for the Regional Disaster Risk Management for Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean Project</td>
<td>Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<td>May 7</td>
<td>Second Joint Project Advisory Committee / Technical Advisory Committee for the Regional Disaster Risk Management for Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean Project</td>
<td>Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 7-10</td>
<td>Forum on Next Generation Network Standardization</td>
<td>Colombo, Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>May 13-15</td>
<td>2nd World Congress: Information and Knowledge</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 13-15</td>
<td>Tenth Joint CSL/JIFSAN Symposium on Food Safety and Nutrition - Methods and Systems for Tracking, Tracing, and Verifying Foods</td>
<td>MD, USA</td>
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<td>June 8-10</td>
<td>Fourteenth Meeting of the Technical Management Committee of CROSQ</td>
<td>Quito, Ecuador</td>
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<td>July 9-11</td>
<td>ICT Symposia on ICTs and Climate Change</td>
<td>Quito, Ecuador</td>
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<td>September</td>
<td>Fifteenth Meeting of the Council and Fifth Annual General Meeting of CROSQ</td>
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<td>October 26-28</td>
<td>Fifteenth Meeting of the Technical Management Committee of CROSQ</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 27-29</td>
<td>Commonwealth Heads of Government</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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CROSQ’S MISSION

The promotion and development of standards and standards related activities to facilitate international competitiveness and the sustainable production of goods and services within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) for the enhancement of social and economic development.

For further information, please contact:
CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality
“The Heritage”, 35 Pine Road,
Belleville, St. Michael, Barbados BB11113
Tel: 246.437.8146 | Fax: 246.437.4569
Email: crosq.caricom@crosq.org

Please visit our website: www.crosq.org