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THE REGION'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ON COURSE TO RECEIVING MORE SERIOUS ATTENTION

Regional stakeholders attending a recently concluded International Trade Centre training seminar in St. Lucia on the economic contribution and performance of creative industries to national economies have agreed to make a joint request to the WTO for technical assistance to improve data collection on the industry. The request came out of a strategy meeting held on the second day of the event and was attended by representatives from the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), CARICOM Secretariat, the Caribbean Committee of Caribbean Statisticians, and the Creative Industries Exchange programme of the University of the West Indies (UWI). St. Lucia's Minister for Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs; Tessa Mangal and her Jamaica counterpart, Karl Samuda, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce also attended the meeting. Two other proposals put forward by the Caribbean representatives during the strategy meeting included, developing a regional long-term project that would address in a comprehensive and sustainable manner the challenges faced by the region's statistical bureaus and having the development partners make a joint presentation before the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on the relevance of data on the Creative Industries Sector.

These proposals resulted from a unified understanding among participants during the three-day seminar: in order for the region to take advantage of the potential offered by the Creative Industries, there needs to be timely and more reliable data on its contribution to Member States' economies.

The honourable Karl Samuda made a spirited appeal to those in attendance. He revealed that when he learned that one Jamaican artiste had in one year earned more than his island's entire banana industry he knew something needed to be done to improve the appreciation of the Creative Industries sector. According to the Minister, he believes the sector can provide a needed boost to that island's economy in a time when other industries are struggling.

Dr. Philomen Harrison; **Head of Statistics Programme; CARICOM Secretariat**, who has been charged with coordinating the follow-up actions resulting from the seminar, said during an intervention: "We cannot treat the creative industries without considering the state of statistics in the region and its critical role in monitoring what is happening in the economy and the use of statistics in planning and guiding policy interventions." Dr. Harrison's position was further supported by Andres Aeroe, the International Trade Centre Director in the Division of Market Development, who said, "It's a common feature virtually all over the world that Creative Industries particularly are not very well captured statistically. We all do understand the importance of the Creative Industries but very few countries have satellite accounts that do capture [the necessary data] and hence there is no foundation for making good policies."



The host Minister, honorable Tessa Mangal expressed St. Lucia's commitment to the Creative Industries but said, "In order for us to push the industry further there is a greater need for us to get the data. We need the statistics to be a lot more targeted to meet the needs of the sector."

The three-day regional seminar was organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC), in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC enables SMEs in developing countries to become more competitive in global markets, leading to sustainable economic development and contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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