



# 2023-2024 IN REVIEW

Economic Development,  
Growth, Connectivity

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# FROM THE DESK OF THE CHAIRMAN



The 2023-2024 Work Programme Year was an important one for the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO). We continued our engagement with CARICOM Heads of Government and the CARICOM Secretariat, and other Member Organizations. The CPSO also interfaced with the Ministry of Agriculture in Guyana and played a lead role in collaboration with the Ministerial Taskforce (MTF) on Food Production and Food Security to advance the 25% x 2025 Agenda. We identified opportunities for agriculture expansion and trade under 25 x 2025, and advanced critical proposals for the private sector at the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) and within Working Groups established by the Community.

The CPSO is leading an initiative to establish a Regional Stock Exchange. The initiative requires support from a myriad of stakeholders to be successful. Consensus TORs for a Consultancy Study have been achieved. The Study will be completed in FY2025.

The CPSO, regional private sector feedback altered the course of the implementation a Front of Package Label (Octagonal Warning Label), that would have been deleterious to regional manufacturing and trade. Instead, CARICOM will first focus on developing a Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) Policy and Strategy for a more wholistic approach.

We have embarked on strategic engagements with partners and stakeholders, for several projects in line with our Strategic Priorities, a few of which are highlighted in this report.

I commend the CPSO Secretariat for its efficiency, and dedication in championing the interests and responding to the challenges on behalf of the regional private sector. We had a good year, and we have a clear programme of work for the year ahead. I am confident that our Team will continue to deliver, to the highest standard, in achieving our strategic objectives for 2024-2025. I look forward to reporting on our progress.

*Gervase Warner,*



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO & TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Over the past year, we remained resilient in pursuit of the CPSO's Strategic Agenda. Our projects included advancing intraregional development and trade opportunities, addressing front-of-package labelling, maritime transportation and putting together the framework for the development of a single regional stock market.

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We also collaborated on the digital transformation of the Community and coordinated the private sector's disaster response following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Beryl. Concurrently, we continued advocacy on the impact of non-communicable diseases, sustainability, and the free movement of labour.

Through our participation in CARICOM working groups and committees, our positions were shared with policy makers including Government Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and regional and international experts.

We continued open and professional dialogue with all stakeholders to strengthen avenues that would ensure the sustained growth and prosperity of the Region as a whole.

None of our successes would have been possible without the dedicated support of the CPSO's membership. Therefore, I thank you all for your continuous commitment and contributions.

There is always more to do. Looking ahead, we will continue to work tirelessly to advance the interests of the regional private sector, drive positive change and improve the competitiveness of the Community.

We have an ambitious agenda for the year ahead and look forward to continuing the mission of the CPSO in partnership with each of you.

*Dr. Patrick Antoine*



# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## WORKSTREAMS

- 1 – Work which the Community has embarked upon as part of the CSME Agenda.
- 2 – Priority areas and subjects initiated by the regional private sector; work requiring specific treatment- articulation by private sector interests.
- 3 – Responds to specific approaches by the CPSO Membership, COTED, and Member States on priority matters germane to the expansion of intra-regional trade.



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past year, the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) continued to pursue its strategic priorities in the areas of: Trade Facilitation, Enhanced Doing Business Environment, Expanding Investment in Agri-food Trade, Finance and Capital Market Deepening, Free Movement of Goods and Services, Risk Reduction and Recovery, and Free Movement of Labour. With these Strategic Priorities in focus, several milestones were recorded this year. These are just a few.



## LANDMARK PARTNERSHIPS

The CPSO collaborated with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) on a Sargassum Project for bio-stimulants and compost. This led to the landmark agreement between Plant & Food Research and Caribbean Chemicals in July, 2024. We collaborated with the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) on a project for the displacement of imports of grain for animal feed. We also participated in the pilot launch of the first transfer of the digital currency of trade, the Carib\$, on July 23, 2024.



### Addressing the issue of Front of Package Labelling

For the regional private sector, Front of Package Labelling (FoPNL) can be an important tool, as a part of a comprehensive and well targeted package of measures aimed at assisting CARICOM consumers in making healthier food choices. *Read More on Page 22.*



### Maritime Transport Solution

In 2023, the CPSO was challenged by CARICOM Heads of Government to collaborate with their African counterparts to develop a consortium to solve some of the perennial challenges facing the Region on maritime transportation in the Southern Caribbean. *Read More on Page 8.*



### MoA signing with Consortium of Regional Universities

This Memorandum of Agreement represents the commitment of regional educational institutions and the regional private sector to the realizing of our Region's '25 x 2025' goals. *Read More on Page 21.*



# TOWARDS A REGIONAL NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY AND STRATEGY



The regional private sector is committed to the objectives of reducing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). As a service organization, established to contribute to the regional private sector's participation in the full implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) is committed to a "Whole of Society" approach, supported by "joined-up" action among the stakeholders, in addressing the high level of NCDs among CARICOM people.

For the regional private sector, Front of Package Nutritional Labelling (FoPNL) can be an important tool, as a part of a comprehensive and well targeted package of measures, aimed at assisting CARICOM consumers to make healthier food choices, which when combined with healthy lifestyles will result in lower levels of NCDs. The undertaking by CARICOM to adopt an FoPNL must, therefore, be grounded in a model that provides "best fit" for the circumstances relevant to CARICOM countries as net food importers and small country exporters, with trade still concentrated among traditional partners and with a commitment to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

-CPSO Position 2023

The official results of the 2023 Voting Process on the 'Final Draft CARICOM Regional Standard 05: 20xx Labelling of Pre-Packaged Food - Specifications', including an FoPNL model with Octagonal Warning, did not achieve the 75% consensus among Member States necessary to be passed. This outcome highlights the importance which the Community places on the development of a comprehensive package of measures to address NCDs which includes an FoPNL model appropriate to CARICOM.

The CARICOM Impact Assessment Study: 'Determination of an Appropriate Front of package Nutrition Labelling (FoPNL) Scheme and the Identification of a Harmonised Approach for Implementation' (the Study) undertaken by KMA Consulting Limited provided a compelling basis for a holistic approach to addressing NCDs and the need for the Region to adopt an FoPNL Scheme that is designed to meet the needs of CARICOM consumers.

The empirical findings of the Study demonstrated, inter alia, that the UK Traffic Light and US Facts Up Front FoPNL models, which have already been included on the packaging of

## THE CARICOM PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION

several products sold in the Community, are better suited to achieving the regional population's objectives of reducing NCDs as compared with the black-and-white Octagonal Warning Label (OWL).

The results of the Study have been published in the journal, Nutrition & Food Science [ISSN: 0034-6659, Vol.54 Issue 4; publication date: 2024.05.13].

This publication follows a series of stringent peer reviews by the publishers, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd., a global publisher specializing in academic and professional literature.

To date, the Study remains, the most comprehensive one conducted with a specific focus on CARICOM Member States.

The regional private sector supports the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)-led process at the regional level to remove the FOPNL Option from the Draft 'Final Draft CARICOM Regional Standard 05: 20xx Labelling of Pre-Packaged Food - Specifications'. The regional private sector is also committed to the development of an NCD Policy and Strategy with a focus on an appropriate FOPNL for CARICOM. The CPSO has established a private sector Working Group on NCDs which has already commenced work.





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# MARITIME TRANSPORTATION IN THE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN



CARICOM Heads at the Africaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (‘ACTIF23’), in October 2023, challenged the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) to collaborate with their African counterparts to develop a consortium to solve some of the perennial challenges to maritime transportation in the Southern Caribbean which face the Region.

The CPSO immediately commenced work on the issue of maritime transportation in the Caribbean, Phase I (Southern Caribbean), with analytical work aimed at determining the nature of the gaps in the trading corridors among CARICOM States.

The CPSO’s analytical work was carried out for all CARICOM Member States in order to determine for which routes (‘where’), the precise gaps in maritime transportation exist and for which type of service (‘what’) (‘break-bulk’, Less than container load (‘LCL’), ‘chilled’, etc). The result of the work revealed several interesting findings, among them

the existence of excess ‘liner capacity’ based on Member States’ imports and exports (TEUs). The critical role played by ‘schooners’ in the movement of ‘break bulk’ cargo, including agricultural products was highlighted. Concerns about the ‘age’ of these vessels and their lack of ‘chiller’ capacity, which limited the trade in some agriculture products requiring these services to maintain product integrity (vegetables, meat and fish, etc.) were also identified.

The Study recognized that ‘schooners’ will continue to be an important element of the ‘Maritime solution’ for several CARICOM Members and recommended fleet modernization and retrofitting to make them better suited to CSME trade expansion.

The need for more direct connectivity for several Member States was revealed by the analysis undertaken by the CPSO. Trading pairs consisting of Belize and Suriname on the one hand, and the Eastern Caribbean on the other, can benefit from improved connectivity.





Displacing extra-regionally sourced agriculture products, with intra-CARICOM trade from Belize, Suriname and Guyana is a potential 'bright spot' for CARICOM trade and regional integration, if solutions can be found to enable the transport, logistics, and market access challenges.

The mandate of Heads was also extended to cover the movement of persons. A passenger ferry service would provide opportunities for growth in the number of persons travelling to visit friends and relatives and for leisure. In this regard, the Maritime Study confirmed the investment potential for a 'roll-on-roll-off, passenger and goods service for the Eastern Caribbean corridor, comprising Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia and Barbados.

The Study confirmed that sustaining such a maritime service would require a substantial 'scaling-up' of the goods trade and movement of persons among the Member States included in the 'transport corridor'. The production thrust required to inter-connect with the maritime service, will require a deliberate collaborative initiative among Governments, the private sector, and the competent authorities to expand production in areas where CARICOM Members possess competitive advantages. The Study highlighted the importance of packing facilities and 'consolidation' and 'deconsolidation' centres,

as strong contributors to the expansion of production and trade volumes. The need for investments and technical support, using various models (private sector, cooperative, PPP) was also recognized as being critical to success.

The application of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) on intra-regional trade by Member States, has retarded the attainment of scale economies by regional producers. In addition to the discriminatory application of standards, health and phytosanitary regulations, etc., access to foreign exchange has emerged steadily as a major barrier to intra-regional trade and hence, to the sustainability of maritime services among the Member States.

Subsidies imposed on products by extra-regional partners that are imported into the CSME, contribute to the difficulties encountered by CARICOM producers in expanding production and scaling operations. This dampened demand has a direct bearing on the availability and adequacy of maritime transport. These subsidies exacerbate the vicious cycle between trade and adequate maritime transport: adequate maritime transport is necessary to expand trade, but trade can't be expanded without adequate maritime transport. The study recognizes the role of public policy, private action, and public-private partnerships (PPP) in 'filling in' the 'essential elements' in the 'production-transport' continuum.



# REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR RELIEF RESPONSE TO HURRICANE BERYL

## Coordinating the Relief Response

The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) played a critical role in coordinating the regional private sector's relief response efforts for the CARICOM States of Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica which were impacted by the passage of Hurricane Beryl. The response effort resulted in several shipments with critical relief and aid provisions from the private sector leaving Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Saint Lucia, Dominica, and other countries.



The collaboration by the private sector across the Region speaks volumes to what can be accomplished when resources are joined toward a common cause. By working together, the private sector has shown the strength and resourcefulness of 'the collective'. This spirit of collaboration will auger well for advancing the collaboration and cooperation on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).







# EXPLORING NEARSHORING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CARICOM REGION

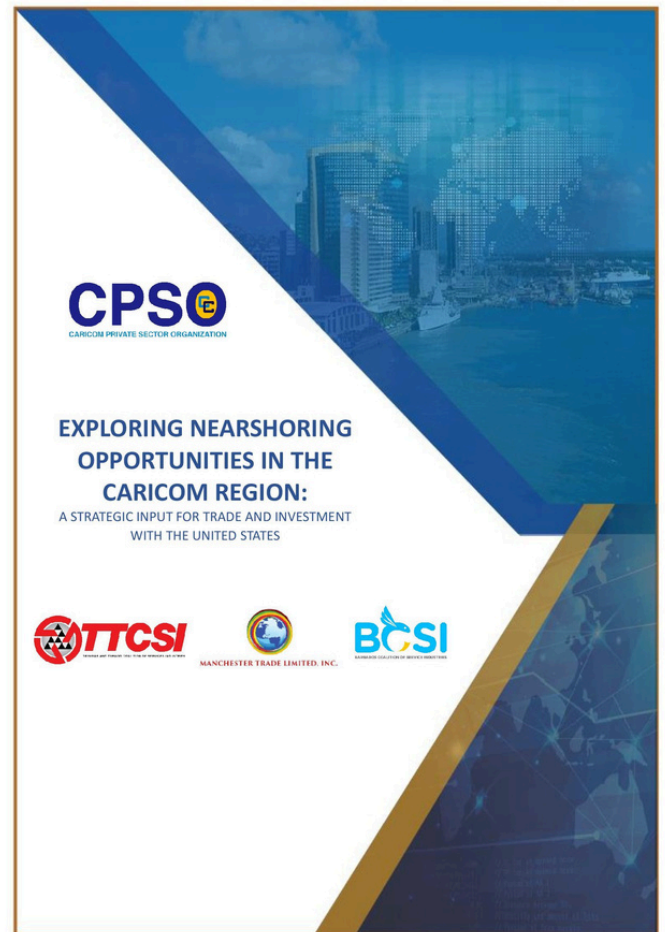
## A STRATEGIC INPUT FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES

On the occasion of the 56th meeting of the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED), held on June 1st and 2nd, 2023, the CPSO was invited by Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry of Trinidad and Tobago, to prepare a paper on nearshoring opportunities in the CARICOM region, for the US, in advance of the meeting of the CARICOM-United States Trade and Investment Council (TIC), which took place on October 13th, 2023 in Georgetown, Guyana.

**Attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) has and continues to be a key component of the economic development strategy of CARICOM Member States.**

As part of the region's post-COVID-19 recovery effort, the Caribbean Community has taken steps towards expanding FDI beyond the traditional sectors of energy, tourism and financial services to agriculture and digital technology.

A key factor driving the move towards nearshoring is the perceived need to increase redundancy in the supply chains so as to reduce the risk of disruption to the US in an increasingly volatile geo-political environment and in a world with new and emerging natural hazards emerging from climate change and other natural phenomena.



## RESPONDING TO SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

In the last three to four years, the world has been negatively impacted by global supply chain disruptions, due in large part to the pandemic and the Russia/Ukraine conflict. As a result, industry players in the US began to examine their primary source markets, such as China and Europe, with respect to the ease of obtaining goods during times of crisis.

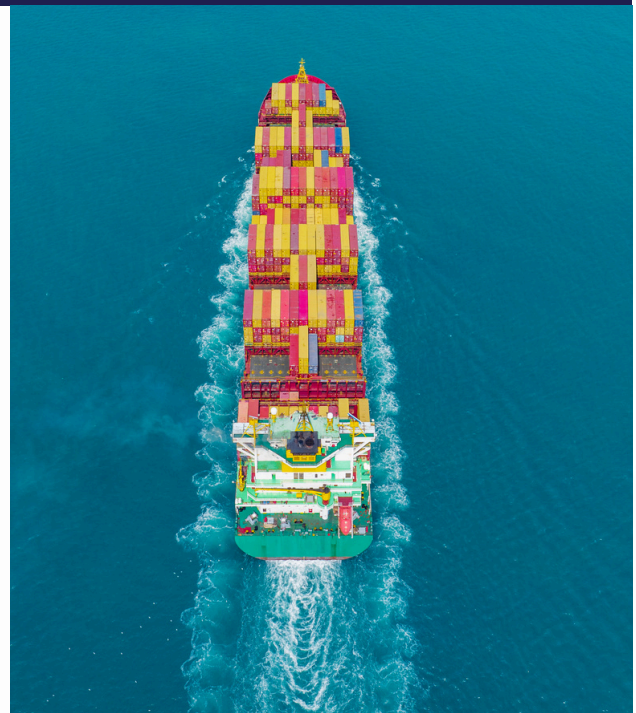


## MAKING CARICOM A VIABLE DESTINATION FOR NEARSHORING BUSINESS

In order for CARICOM to effectively promote its attractiveness to its North American neighbours as a viable destination for nearshoring business, the possible “connective tissue” which could yield positive results in a nearshoring relationship must be considered. For example, synchronized time zones, cultural similarities and commonly spoken languages are some of the incentives for US businesses to set up operations in the region. Broadband reliability and availability are essential for successful nearshoring.

This review of the supply chain energised the concept of “nearshoring”, a form of “offshoring”, in which companies move their operations or parts thereof to a more geographically close country, offering several benefits, including lower landed costs.

Results of a global survey from Axios showed that the progression of firms which have embraced nearshoring moved from 15% in 2020 to 42% in 2023. CARICOM should not be left behind.







A further endorsement of the establishment of nearshoring relationships between the US and the CARICOM region came from the Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee who, in early 2023, was quoted as stating that, “In response to the economic challenge of China’s manufacturing dominance, one policy that has been gaining traction is nearshoring – relocating supply chains and business operations within a nearby region instead of halfway around the globe.” From a political standpoint, it is clear that advances are being made to integrate the concept of nearshoring as an integral part of the trade policy of the United States of America.

Redirecting the focus to the countries of the CARICOM region, it is important to note that while proximity to the US offers numerous advantages, the success of the nearshoring industry also depends on other factors such as workforce skills, infrastructure, data security, government support and overall business environment.

**For example, Barbados has a favourable corporate tax rate, which, at its highest end is 5.5% and is lower in comparison to the US at 21% and the United Kingdom, at 19%.**

A 2022 study by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) revealed that nearshoring could add an annual US\$78 Billion in additional

exports of goods and services to the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean in the near and medium-term, with opportunities for “quick wins” in the auto industry, textiles, pharmaceuticals and renewable energy.

It is also important to recognise that nearshoring embraces both goods and services trade, with the latter including Business/Knowledge Process Outsourcing (BPO/KPO) operations. BPO/KPO operations include customer and back-office support, insurance claims management, medical billing and coding, human resource management, digital marketing, third party risk management, predictive asset optimization and research and data entry.

A number of Member States, such as Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, are home to companies in the BPO/KPO industry, with plans for expansion to new regional CARICOM locations.

Other sectors such as e-commerce, fintech and captive insurance are also progressing or are well-established in various jurisdictions. The blue and orange economies are also areas which have enormous potential to not only operate as stand-alone industries but also in support of those which are already established.



## THE CARICOM PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION

Within the discussion about the positive aspects and potential advantages of nearshoring, must be a review of the challenges which may be faced by the region. Issues such as fragmented transportation networks (both within and across jurisdictions and from the region to the US), the interconnectivity and strength of telecommunications (including the internet) and the pace of legal and regulatory systems, are areas which require improvement; in some instances, more drastic overhaul. Along a similar vein, differing corporate cultures and labour law systems must be considered.

Another critical aspect of nearshoring which must be considered is labour costs which form a part of the larger economic framework of the Member State. The low-cost labour may unintentionally contribute to industries which offer poor value addition propositions.

The achievement of long-lasting economic diversification requires a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach that encompasses the cultivation of skills, promotion of innovation and establishment of knowledge-based sectors. Therefore, the strategic allocation of resources towards education and enhancement of skills assumes a critical role in enabling CARICOM countries to provide specialised services which are conducive to attracting investments of a higher value.

It is with the foregoing in mind, that the trade relationship between the US and CARICOM, fueled by the power of nearshoring, could transcend traditional boundaries offering tremendous benefit to the region. By aligning strategies, fostering skill development, nurturing infrastructural growth and encouraging open dialogues, nearshoring can be a critical catalyst for trade-led economic growth and prosperity for CARICOM.



# IN PURSUIT OF **CAPITAL MARKET INTEGRATION** – TOWARD A **REGIONAL STOCK EXCHANGE** FOR CARICOM



The development of a Regional Stock Exchange was recognized at the 10th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (July 1989) in Grand Anse, as an important first step for accelerating the widening and deepening of Member States’ capital market as a critical feature of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Owing to the existence of three stock exchanges at the time, the development of the Regional Stock Exchange was often taken to be synonymous with the development of the ‘regional capital market’.

The Community aspiration of capital markets development is set out in Articles 44 and 71 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC), which provides for the free movement of capital as one of the fundamental ‘rights’ for the benefit of CARICOM people and the private sector.

The regional private sector stakeholders engaged in various facets of the regional securities market

(regulators, dealer-brokers, stock market operators, agents, institutional investors, among others, were invited, by the CPSO, to consultations commencing in Q-1, 2023. The series of CPSO-led consultations were aimed at building private sector consensus to contribute to the realization of the Regional Stock Exchange and the build out of CARICOM’s securities markets.

The ideas, contributions and perspectives gleaned from these consultations formed the basis of the CPSO’s participation in discussions on the Regional Stock Exchange, during the Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on CSME, chaired by Prime Minister Mia Mottley (March 2024). The CPSO oral submissions highlighted the private sector’s concerns regarding the need for urgent concerted action towards the achievement of the Regional Stock Exchange. Prime Minister Mottley encouraged the CPSO to continue the work focused on achieving the implementation of



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Regional Stock Exchange by 2025.

The CPSO has galvanized stakeholders' support and has reflected their desire to advance this work in a methodic and strategic fashion in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Regional Stock Exchange Study. When completed the Study will provide possible options for 'moving forward' as well as the possible models for the operationalization of the Regional Stock Exchange. The second objective of the Regional Stock Exchange Study is to identify the best model for operationalization among the CARICOM countries.

In crafting the ToR for the Stock Exchange Study, the CPSO has also benefitted from the views of the region's Securities Regulators which were canvassed from the proceedings of the 'Regional Meeting to Advance the Formulation of a Harmonized Legal and Regulatory Framework', convened by the CARICOM Secretariat in March 2024. The CARICOM Secretariat also graciously provided much welcomed comments on early drafts of the ToR.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Study will be issued and the responses will be used to develop proposals for financing from key stakeholders, including the private sector. The governance arrangements for the Study will be provided by a Project Steering Committee which will include representatives of regulators, broker-dealers, agents, Development Finance Institutions, the CARICOM Secretariat and the CPSO. Private sector stakeholders highlight the role of the CARICOM Secretariat's initiatives, as being important to the realization and functioning of the regional stock exchange in the Community.

The CPSO intends to present the progress toward establishment of the Regional Stock Exchange/Regional Securities Market Development, at the Forty Seventh (47th) Meeting of the Conference and will make the specific request for the Heads of Government to support the approaches which the CPSO will make to International Development Partners to join the regional private sector in funding the Study on the Development of the Regional Stock Exchange.





# CPSO AT GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN FORUM

The first United Nations Global Supply Chain Forum (GSCF), organized by the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Government of Barbados was held from 21st -24th May 2024 in Barbados.

The event included over 1,000 participants from more than 120 countries, together with 103 Developmental Partners. The GSCF addressed escalating disruptions in global supply chains and provided policymakers, industry leaders, representatives from the private sector, academia, and youth representatives with the opportunity and spaces to transfer knowledge, create synergies, increase cooperation, and find tailored and proactive solutions to transform supply chains and make them more resilient, sustainable and efficient.

The CPSO participated in a number of sessions on the GSCF Agenda. Mr. Jefferey Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Pan Jamaica Group Ltd and CPSO Executive Committee Member, represented the CPSO in the opening Plenary Sessions on the first day of the Forum, and also brought introductory remarks on behalf of the regional private sector to the Ministerial Roundtable.

The CPSO participated as part of the panel - *'How Global Supply Chain can contribute to Food Security'* which was led by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The CPSO also collaborated with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in organising and hosting the *'Regional Connectivity and Services (including Maritime and Air)'* session on Thursday 23rd May.

The session explored the situation and outlook for maritime and air transport services, as a key driver for the achievement of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).





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The session also discussed recommendations for addressing the gaps (in maritime and air transport) pursuant to the efficient integration of the CSME with global markets. The Session was extremely well attended, with the meeting room at full capacity.

The CPSO Maritime Transportation presentation, which reflected the findings of the Maritime Study (Phase One), delivered by Executive Committee Member, Mr. Anthony Ali, was extremely well received.

The Air Transport presentation by Mr. Garvin Medera, CEO Caribbean Airlines, and contributions from the other panelists, Ms. Diane Edwards, UWI School of Business, and Gavin Bovell, Coordinator, MSC Logistics and Supply Chain Mgt., UWI, Cave Hill, ignited substantial discussion and received high commendations. Participants who attended this session were completely engaged.

The following were among the key next steps identified from the CPSO-CDB Regional Connectivity Session:

- CPSO, in its presentation on maritime transportation to the 47th Regular Meeting of CARICOM Heads, will raise some of the issues of concern identified in the Session.
- Collaboration with key stakeholders/players in the market (Caribbean Airlines, Tropical etc.)

The CPSO's participation in the Global Supply Chain Forum was a resounding success and contributed to the high quality of discussions and engagement over the four (4) days of the event. The CPSO will continue to build on this momentum.



**Parallel Sessions C7 and C8**  
 DAY 3:  
 Thursday, 23 MAY  
 09:00 – 11:00 (GMT-4)  
 Room Bougainvillea

**Regional Connectivity and Services - Maritime and Air**

 Anthony Ali CEO, Goddard Enterprise Ltd, CPSO	 Garvin Medera CEO, Caribbean Airlines	 Diane Edwards Director, Professional Services Unit, UWI Mona	 Gavin Bovell Coordinator, MSC Logistics and Supply Chain Mgt., UWI, Cave Hill	 Ian Durant Director, Economic Dept., CDB MODERATOR
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Global Supply Chain Forum  
Barbados

UN trade 4

# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A GIGABIT CARIBBEAN SOCIETY BY 2030



The CARICOM Single ICT Space framework can be realized through the implementation of the Gigabit Caribbean Society by 2030. The goal is that the CARICOM citizenry should have access to affordable and high-speed digital connectivity everywhere in the Community and that digital technologies and services must be made available to all. This is a key prerequisite to promote equal opportunities for success in an increasingly digitalised world, and to ensure that the Caribbean is not left behind.

The Digital Transformation of Caribbean societies is necessary for the Caribbean to remain a

sustainable competitive and productive region, focusing on digital skills, digital infrastructures, and digitalization of businesses and public services.

Accelerating real economic growth requires harnessing technology to increase productivity. Based on the recently released ICT Development Index (IDI) 2023 report, ("ITU Report") the Caribbean is a full 20 points behind Europe in its measurement of Digital Development. In the context of the realization of the Single ICT space through the framework of a Gigabit Caribbean Society - there is a clear recognition of the need for secure and sustainable Digital Infrastructure.

A global discussion has been taking place about how the Internet ecosystem is evolving. At the center of this discussion is the rise of the so-called Big Tech internet giants and the concomitant growth of data transmitted by these companies. Among CARICOM Members, a small number of Big Tech firms now account for 70% of Internet data transmitted over Mobile Networks. The debate has focused on the impact of Big Tech data on telecommunications networks, and how Big Tech companies should contribute to sustaining the networks that deliver their data.

Concerns for the sustainability of ICT access have been reflected in the 'fair share' debate grounded in the need for systemic traffic generators to contribute fairly to network deployment and investment.



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The outcome of the 'fair share' debate will shape the strength of the CARICOM telecommunications sector as well as its overall investment capacity to deliver the Gigabit connectivity required to achieve a digitally transformed Caribbean society and a single ICT space.

At the recently concluded CANTO 39th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition in Miami in July 2024, whose overarching theme was 'Towards a Sustainable Digital economy', significant focus was placed on identifying the investment gap in both Mobile and Fixed that will need to be met if the Caribbean is to achieve Gigabit status by 2030 or digital maturity as defined by the ITU.

The GSM Association (commonly referred to as 'the GSMA' or Global System for Mobile Communications, originally Groupe Spécial Mobile) presented the results of its Study (2024) which indicated that the mobile investment gap is US\$ 3.45 Billion (comprising 4G coverage gap US\$600M, Usage gap, US\$3 Billion, and 5G Investment US\$450M).

On the Fixed side Strand Consult estimates that Investment gap ranges from US \$5.1 billion to US \$9.5 billion. In total between the Mobile Investment and the Fixed Investment Gap, the investment gap in the Caribbean is between US\$8.55 billion and US\$12.95 billion

In January 2024, in the margins of the CANTO Annual General Meeting, the CANTO C9 group, the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) and other interested parties met with the CARICOM Secretariat. The Meeting agreed that a Working Committee would be set up to review the prevailing issues and provide proposals and recommendations for the attention of relevant Ministers. The Working Group, chaired by the CPSO, has now agreed to Terms of Reference to guide its work. The Working Committee is required to report to CARICOM Heads with recommendations on achieving a Caribbean Gigabit Society by 2030. The Working Group is expected to complete its work ahead of the Meeting of CARICOM Heads, in February 2025.

## CPSO SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH CRFM



The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on October 12th, 2023. The MoU established a formal, structured mechanism for substantive and effective cooperation between the Parties in pursuit of the shared objective of securing greater private sector investment in sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture value chains, by increasing supply and improving competitiveness of production and harvesting, processing, marketing and trade, regionally and internationally.

The signing, held during the Caribbean Week of Agriculture in The Bahamas, was attended by Mr. Milton Haughton, Executive Director of the CRFM and Dr. Patrick Antoine, Chief Executive Officer and Technical Director of the CPSO.

Building upon this agreement, the CPSO has been collaborating with the CRFM on a Sargassum Project for bio-stimulants and compost.

# CPSO COLLABORATIVE BELIZE MISSION

The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) held a 2-day mission with the Government and Private Sector in Belize from 15-16 April, 2024. The mission was organized with the full support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belize and the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Hon. Francis Fonseca, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and Hon. Jose Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, jointly chaired a meeting with Dr. Patrick Antoine of the CARICOM Private Sector Organization, discussing challenges and solutions for regional producers and enhancing trade between Belize and CARICOM on 15th April, 2024.

The Meeting received presentations from the CPSO on issues related to the alteration of the CET for selected industrial products- paints, pork (meat of swine) and pigtaails; the trade in poultry and the opportunities existing for Red Kidney Beans and soybean.

On April 16th, the CPSO met with private sector firms as well as the representatives from the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry. CPSO Executive Committee Member, Mr. Michael Bowen also participated in the meeting.



Similar issues featured in the Private Sector engagement as well as discussions on key issues of concern for the Belizean private sector.

The presentations by the CPSO were well received on both days by all participating groups. The work of the CPSO was highly commended and there was interest of participation as Members by firms.



# CPSO SIGNS MOA WITH REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Consortium of Universities of CARICOM involved in Agricultural Education and Research (CUCAER) on Wednesday 15th May, 2024.

The MoA represents the commitment of our regional educational institutions and the regional private sector to realizing the Region's '25 x 2025' goals as it aims to bolster food security and agricultural development across the region. The agreement focuses on developing human resource capacity and creating viable proposals to attract private sector investment in key agricultural commodities.

The signing ceremony was attended by Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal St Augustine Campus, University of the West Indies; Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture of Trinidad and Tobago; Professor Mark Wuddivira, Dean Faculty of Food and Agriculture; Deans and other representatives of the Consortium of Universities of CARICOM involved in Agricultural Education and Research (CUCAER), Heads of Departments of the UWI, St. Augustine, as well as members of the media.

Feature remarks were brought by Dr. Patrick Antoine on behalf of the CPSO and Professor Wuddivira on behalf of the Consortium.



# THE YEAR AHEAD

## WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2024-2025

**25% x 2025 Initiative**

**Finance & Capital Markets  
Regional Stock Exchange**

**Addressing Non-  
Communicable Diseases**

**Caribbean Resilient Economies  
and Sectors (RESET) Activity**

**Digital Transformation &  
CARICOM Gigabit Society 2030**

**Industrial Products**



# **CPSO** UNAUDITED **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED  
30 JUNE 2024**

**Y on Y for Comparison  
(Unaudited)**

## THE CARICOM PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION

### Statement of Financial Position

As at 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

(Expressed in United States dollars) Thousands

	Notes	2023/2024 \$	2022/2023 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Non-current Assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment		—	—
<b>Total Non-current Assets</b>		—	—
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Accounts Receivable and Prepayments	1	94,038	35,000
Cash in hand and at bank	2	127,568	131,108
Taxation refund due		—	—
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		221,605	166,108
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>221,605</b>	<b>166,108</b>
<b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>			
Capital reserves	3	111,875	69,190
Retained earnings		—	—
Equity		111,875	69,190
<b>Non-current Liabilities</b>			
Deferred Tax		—	—
<b>Total Non-current Liabilities</b>		—	—
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Account payable and accruals	4	75,939	75,300
Project funds	5	33,791	21,619
Payments received in advance		—	—
Taxation payable		—	—
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		109,730	96,919
<b>Total Equity and Liabilities</b>		<b>221,605</b>	<b>166,108</b>



## THE CARICOM PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION

### Statement of Surplus or Deficit For the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

(Expressed in United States dollars) Thousands

	Notes	2023/2024 \$	2022/2023 \$
<b>INCOME</b>			
CPSO Membership		584,121	474,340
		584,121	474,340
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Consultancy Fees		413,800	472,750
Trvl & Related		37,835	21,901
Administrative		24,000	
Legal Fees			4,450
Telecom/Utilities		12,000	13,000
IT/PR/Outreach/Rpts		4,552	
Office Accom/Supplies		12,000	6,500
Subscription		881	
Barbados Expenses		6,281	
Chamber Services		17,647	17,647
Bank Charges		1,149	893
		530,145	537,141
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		<b>53,976</b>	<b>(62,801)</b>

## THE CARICOM PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION

### Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

(Expressed in United States dollars) Thousands

	2023/2024	2022/2023
	\$	\$
<b>1</b>		
<b>Accounts receivable and prepayments</b>		
Trade Receivables	94,038	35,000
Prepayments	-	-
	94,038	35,000
<b>2</b>		
<b>Cash in hand and at bank</b>		
CPSO	93,777	109,490
FOPL	3,856	6,631
Project Root	12,488	14,988
USBS	17,447	-
	127,568	131,108
<b>3</b>		
<b>Capital reserves</b>		
CPSO	111,875	69,190
	111,875	69,190
<b>4</b>		
<b>Account payable and accruals</b>		
Econotech	75,939	75,300
	75,939	75,300
<b>5</b>		
<b>Project Funds</b>		
FOPL	3,856	6,631
Project Root	12,488	14,988
USBS	17,447	-
	33,791	21,619



# JOIN US

**The CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) is the most recently accredited Associate Institution of the Caribbean Community.**

Acting in accordance with Article 22 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC), the Heads of Government, at the Fortieth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, designated the CPSO an Associate Institution of CARICOM on 29th October, 2020.

The CPSO is a 'Service Organization' to mobilize and advance private sector participation in CARICOM, with a mandate to contribute to the full implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

The Membership of the CPSO is comprised of private sector entities operating in the CARICOM space, including Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs).

CPSO members enjoy the following benefits:

- Advocacy representation at community, national, and regional levels.
- A 'pooling' of private sector interests in pursuit of financing for strategic initiatives and projects.
- Better coordination and facilitation among regional private sector entities on priority policies, measures, interventions, and projects related to the CSME.
- Specialized technical research to bolster private sector positions on issues relating to private sector trade and investment (goods, services, capital and labour, rules-related regimes, i.e. government procurement, contingent rights, etc.)
- Participation in Meetings of the Councils, Bodies, and Organs of CARICOM.
- Identification and elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade (NTBs) and administratively burdensome practices that impede trade and investment in the CSME.
- Access to Resolution Reference Services- "CPSO's Good Offices" to resolve disputes among members of the CARICOM Private Sector in respect of issues related to CSME events

# KEEP IN TOUCH

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