

Dominica to host workshop on freedom of information implementation in the Caribbean

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ROSEAU, Dominica: A workshop on Freedom of Information Implementation in the Caribbean will be held in Dominica from November 27- December 1, 2006. The event will take place at the House of Assembly in Roseau.

Currently more than sixty countries around the world have passed freedom of information laws. The Commonwealth Caribbean countries which have implemented Freedom of Information laws include Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The Governments of the Cayman Islands, Bermuda and Guyana have also announced their willingness to fulfil the Freedom of Information.

The Workshop will encourage lawmakers to design an access regime that is gradual and evolutionary by implementing key parts in stages to take into account national priorities and sensitivities, resource constraints and the importance of long-term bureaucratic culture change.

In preparation for the implementation, governments will need to take steps to establish the groundwork and infrastructure necessary to ensure effective implementation of the access law. These preparatory steps include establishing systems, manuals, guidance notes and other resources.

The training of public officials, raising public awareness and record management are especially important in small and developing countries such as those of the Caribbean.

Those implementing the law need to be fully trained in their responsibilities under the law, in how to manage applications/appeals, to apply and interpret the law.

Participants at the workshop will include Members of Parliament, Attorney's General and/or Law Ministers, representatives from the Public Sector, Civil Society and the Media. Participants will come from Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Guyana, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines, Cayman Islands, Barbados, Trinidad, Nova Scotia and Turks and Caicos.

The Resource Team will include Venkatesh Nayak, Project Coordinator, Constitutionalism and Right of Information-India Programme, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Eric Olson, Senior Specialist, Organization of American States;

The Public Sector Officials will include Paula Edwards, Senior Policy Analyst, Public Service Transformation Division, Trinidad and Tobago; Joan Archibald, Director, The Access Information Unit, Archives Records Department, Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica, Kurt Thomas, Clerk of Parliament, St Lucia among several others.

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