

St. Kitts/Nevis participates in freedom of information workshop

Monday November 27 2006

St. Kitts/Nevis is expected to participate in a workshop on freedom of information implementation in the Caribbean which will be held in Dominica from 27 Nov. – 1 Dec., at the Roseau House of Assembly. Participants at the workshop will include: members of Parliament, attorneys general and/or law ministers, representatives from the public sector, civil society and the media. Participants will come from Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Guyana, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Cayman Islands, Barbados, Trinidad, Nova Scotia and Turks & Caicos.

The St. Kitts/Nevis participant has not yet been named, however.

The resource team for the programme will include Venkatesh Nayak, project coordinator, Constitutionalism and Right of Information-India Programme, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative; and Eric Olson, senior specialist, Organisation 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. Currently, more than 60 countries around the world have passed freedom of information laws. The Commonwealth Caribbean countries which have implemented freedom of information laws include Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad & 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.

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