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EU funds weather station to help protect Cayman from natural disasters

The Cayman Islands is now better prepared to deal with natural disasters, thanks to the recent commissioning of a Digital Early Warning System station in that country. The station completes and complements a European Union regional programme which has already allowed the construction of radar stations in Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Belize. The objective being to improve the early weather warning system for the people of the Cayman Islands and by extension the Caribbean, thereby reducing the loss of life and property.

Construction of the tower and provision of the custom-designed Doppler Weather Radar was made possible through a grant of €4.16 million from the European Union. The station which was constructed under the supervision of the Cayman Islands Airports Authority (CIAA) will link with the other weather stations established across the region providing real-time weather data to the National Hurricane Centre in Miami, allowing the centre to provide a more comprehensive outlook on radar information for the region in the case of severe weather threats. The state-of-the art technology will greatly enhance weather forecasting and will allow local and regional meteorologists to accurately observe, track and study heavy rainfall events and other unusual weather activity.

In commissioning the station earlier today (Thursday, April 25) Head of Delegation European Union to Jamaica, Belize, the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Cayman Islands, Ambassador, Paola Amadei, pointed out that small island states were most vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters. *"When disasters occur it also results in substantial resources being diverted from development to relief, recovery and reconstruction; and in many instances impact substantially the economic status of the country or region and hence the mid and longer term economic perspectives. This is why, as part of its strategy for supporting Disaster Risk Reduction, the European Union works in collaboration with the Governments of the Caribbean region to place greater focus on the implementation of comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction approaches as opposed to mainly responding to disasters after they occur."*

In 2004, Hurricane Ivan significantly impacted Grand Cayman, taking lives and temporarily displacing significant proportions of the population. The total economic impact to the Cayman Islands was estimated at CI\$3.4 billion or 183 % of GDP. Premier and Minister of Finance, District Administration, Works, Lands & Agriculture, the Honourable Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, expressed gratitude to the EU for the system" ... it will help minimize loss of life and damage to property and by extension will promote the social welfare of the people of the region. The Cayman Islands Government is indeed indebted to the European Union for this generous grant and on behalf of our people I extend our sincere appreciation for this gesture,"

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