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Press Release

12/06/2020

“EU provides €7 Million to Strengthen Climate Resilient Health Systems in the Caribbean”

The European Union (EU), through the European Development Fund has signed a five-year €7 Million agreement with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to enhance coordination and increase the climate resilience of health systems in the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) community to better prepare and respond to climate threats.

This will be achieved through collaboration with five sub-regional partners, UN agencies and other organizations. It will build capacity and networks within the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology & Hydrology (CIMH) and the University of the West Indies (UWI).

The following countries will be supported through this grant: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The project is expected to address four lines of action that include supporting Caribbean health leaders in their engagement nationally, regionally and internationally; highlighting the relationship between health and climate change; supporting public health preparedness and the development of mitigation policies to address climate risks; and facilitating access to resources to address the vulnerabilities of health systems to climate change. The project will also support ongoing regional surveillance efforts for COVID 19.

Head of the European Delegation to Barbados the OECS and CARICOM and CARIFORUM, Ambassador Daniela Tramacere, hails this new programme as a demonstration of the EU’s continued commitment to address climate vulnerabilities in the region. She remarked, “The implementation of this action comes at a critical time where the region continues to battle the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on its citizens and health care systems while preparing to face what is projected to be a particularly active hurricane season. The EU stands ready to provide support to its regional partners recognising the enormous challenges precipitated by these unprecedented circumstances.”



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Subregional Program Coordinator for the

Caribbean PAHO/WHO office, Jessie Schutt-Aine, stated that the organisation was grateful for the opportunity to work with the EU and highlighted that the grant funds which will be used in various ways to strengthen health systems in the region and to share knowledge and best practises. “This grant will allow us to work with other subregional partners to fund visionary mitigation and adaptation projects, adapt and prioritize country plans, foster leaders, and increase capabilities for decision making over the five years. Inception meetings will begin in June and at every stage, our partners and the public will be kept informed through our communications and visibility partners and, we hope, will become more knowledgeable and engaged around the impact of climate change on health in the region,” Mrs Schutt-Aine noted.

Assistant Secretary-General of CARICOM, Dr. Douglas Slater, noted that the continued partnership between the European Union, the UN System, represented by PAHO and our CARICOM regional institutions, led by CARPHA, will address the region’s capacity to adapt to and reduce the effects of climate change on public health.

“Science has established that global climate change poses an existential threat to Small Island and Low-lying Coastal Developing States. The CARICOM region has been instrumental in making this case on a sustained basis at the international level for almost three decades. We consider interventions such as these, extremely valuable since they have the potential to positively impact the lives of citizens, and, as such, the Secretariat will collaborate with the partners to ensure that the outcomes redound to the benefit of our Caribbean Community,” ASG Slater stressed.

The project will create a unified interdisciplinary One Health approach towards climate change and responds directly to the recommendations that came out of the Caribbean Action Plan on Climate Change and Health signed by 15 Ministers of Health and the Environment in 2018.

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