



***“Building a Water Secured Region: A Caribbean Response”***

**IWRM gains support of Caribbean Ministers of Water**

Caribbean Ministers with responsibility for water have endorsed a proposal to include water resource management as a key sector to be addressed at the highest political level in the region. The decision was taken at the recently concluded 5<sup>th</sup> High Level Session (HLS); held in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands on October 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and hosted annually by the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) and its partner the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA). Since the first meeting in 2005, the HLS has brought together ministers and policy makers to have discourse on critical water resources issues with the aim of raising awareness of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the need for policy and planning in this regard.

The Ministers present at this year’s forum signed a Decision Paper recommending that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) convene a special meeting of its Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) and its Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) to discuss matters related to water. They also recommended that a Regional Action Plan (RAP) for water be urgently developed within the context of a Common Water Framework for the Caribbean; and additionally that the RAP adopt IWRM and include strategies for resource mobilisation, capacity building and data collection and management in collaboration with Ministries of Finance and Planning.

GWP-C was honoured to have the participation of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Chair, Dr. Letitia A. Obeng at this year’s HLS. In her keynote address on *‘Building a Water Secured Region’* Dr. Obeng noted the need for decisions about sustainable water management to be taken at the highest possible levels of government and not by a single ministry because of the potential impact on so many sectors and on a country’s economic and social development. She emphasised that the key to this process were ministers of Finance and Planning and that high level policy makers can guide decision-making about sharing and allocation of water resources to different uses in support of overall socio-economic development.



**Dr. Letitia A. Obeng**, Chair of Global Water Partnership (GWP), is seen here making her keynote address at the 5th Annual HLS of Ministers of Water in St. Thomas, USVI.

Other keynote speakers included the Honourable Irfaan Ali, Minister of Housing and Water of Guyana and Dr. Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Technical presentations were made by the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), the Centre of Resource Management and Environment Studies (CERMES) of the University of the West Indies (UWI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNEP)/ Global Environment Facility (GEF) IWCAM project and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Dr. Nigel Walmsley of HR Wallingford (UK) shared IWRM experiences from the Pacific region which shares similarities with Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS).



**Honourable Irfaan Ali**, Minister of Housing and Water of Guyana, is seen here making a keynote presentation at the 5<sup>th</sup> HLS of Ministers of Water in St. Thomas, USVI.



**Dr. Edward Greene**, Assistant Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), is seen here making a keynote presentation at the 5<sup>th</sup> HLS of Ministers of Water in St. Thomas, USVI.

From inception in 2005, the HLS has been a key tool in providing an opportunity to formulate and implement a regional approach to water sector management. Discussions throughout the past four High Level Sessions (2005-2008) have examined issues such as: challenges and opportunities for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the Caribbean and globally; funding of water and facilities programmes and projects in the Caribbean; policy implications for climate change and water utilities; adapting IWRM principles; water financing and several other key technical issues.



Cross-section of the plenary at the 5<sup>th</sup> HLS in St. Thomas, USVI.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum therefore build on the efforts of the previous sessions with the goal of developing and adopting strategies and plans that would ensure that the Caribbean is a water secured region. The recommendations, endorsed by Minister Ali of Guyana, Minister Powell of Nevis and Minister Joseph of Grenada, is a major step in taking the IWRM agenda forward towards achieving water security in the region.