PRESS RELEASE

in conjunction with

CRFM "stepping up" with new Strategic Plan and Communication Strategy for 2013

– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

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The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) has a new and improved Communication Strategy, incorporating international best practices, as well as a new 8-year Strategic Plan, both of which were finalized last week in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, at meetings attended by key fisheries stakeholders.

The very comprehensive Strategy document was finalized at the ACP Fish 2/CRFM regional technical consultation, *Strengthening the Capacity of CRFM and its Member States for Information and Knowledge Sharing on Sustainable Management of Fisheries in the Caribbean Region,* held on January 28 and 29, at the Sunset Shore Beach Hotel in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where the CRFM's Eastern Caribbean Office is located.

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"The notion of using ICT [Information and Communication Technology] is not new to us," Milton Haughton, Executive Director, CRFM Secretariat, said at the opening ceremony. "Since the inception of the CRFM in 2003, we have been very interested in promoting the use of technology to improve our operations. Today, however, marks a significant milestone. We are stepping up our efforts to introduce and facilitate greater adoption and utilization of Information and Communication Technology to improve capacities in all areas of the work of the CRFM, including our Member States and partner organisations and the fisherfolks."

Haughton explained that the purpose of this first regional fisheries workshop for the year, was "to review and validate the CRFM Communication Strategy, which aims at strengthening the capacity of CRFM and its member states for information and knowledge sharing on sustainable management of fisheries in the Region, primarily by increased adoption and use of cutting-edge information and communication technology in our daily activities."

He also informed that, "The CRFM is in the process of preparing a new strategic plan to guide us through the next 8 years, up to 2021. What is clear is that [the] use of ICT will be an important catalyst for the transformational change and repositioning of the aquaculture and fisheries sector that we are seeking."

This project is funded by the European Union
The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

The new Strategy will make the CRFM more efficient at executing its mandates from the CRFM agreement and the Common Fisheries Policy.

"The Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy speaks to the need to gather and disseminate information to improve management of the region's fisheries," Haughton elaborated. "Also the 6th Meeting of the CRFM Ministerial Council held in the Bahamas, June 2012, mandated the CRFM Secretariat to strengthen the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the sharing of information among Member States."

Among those attending the meetings were Chief Fisheries Officers, Directors of Fisheries or Senior Fisheries Officers, and Technical ICT Officers responsible for fisheries management, data management and communication from Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The event was facilitated by the CRFM Secretariat and PBLH International Consulting Experts, and funded by the European Union through the ACP Fish 2 Programme.

Haughton said that, "The EU has committed about Euro 30 million to the ACP Fish II Project to support the strengthening of fisheries policy and management in ACP countries."

The overall objective of the ACP Fish II Project is to contribute to sustainable and equitable management of fisheries and aquaculture, thus leading to poverty alleviation and improved food security in ACP States, he added.

"The ACP Fish II Project should have ended in May 3013, but the EU has acceded to our request for an extension of the Project to the end of November 2013, to allow completion of the planned activities," he indicated.

The key experts appointed by PBLH of Brussels, Belgium are Mr. Yacine Khelladi and Mr. Vladimir Abramytchev, who visited the region November-December 2012 to consult stakeholders and gather information to update the Draft CRFM Communication Strategy, which was the subject of deliberations at the St. Vincent workshop.

The CRFM's website (http://www.caricom-fisheries.com) will also be refined and expanded to make it more interactive and user-friendly, and to enable greater access to vital fisheries information, on national, regional and international scales.

On Wednesday, January 30, 2013, a new eight-year Strategic Plan for the CRFM, to span 2013-2021, was concluded at the *Regional Workshop to Develop a Draft Second Strategic Plan for the CRFM*, held at the same venue. This important roadmap for the CRFM's work will be tabled for discussion and endorsement by the CRFM Forum in April 2013 and 7th Ministerial Council of CRFM in May 2013.

Almost a decade ago, on March 27, 2003, the CRFM was officially inaugurated in Belize City, Belize, "to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future populations of the region."

The formulation of the new Strategic Plan is being done through a small Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) facility project of US$99,000, funded by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The workshop participants, who included Directors of Fisheries, Chief Fisheries Officers or Fisheries Administrators from the CRFM Member States, made recommendations for strengthening the CRFM and its contribution to the sustainable development, conservation and management of CARICOM's fisheries resources.

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