



## “ Engaging the Intellectual Capital of UK-EU Caribbean Civil Society ( Diaspora )“

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### **\*Caribbean Dialogue on Caribbean Economic Expansion, Investment and Opportunities Arising From the Economic Partnership Agreement ( EPA**

**by Rudi Page, Andrew Boyce and Mark Griffith**

#### **Background**

British citizens of Caribbean origin hereto referred to as the UK Caribbean Diaspora, constitute a relatively large segment of the United Kingdom population. Over the years numerous efforts have been made to mobilise segments of this population, primarily along national lines. Other efforts have sought to foster a Caribbean wide approach. This is best exemplified by "the idea of developing the Caribbean region by trade relations using the UK lever", particularly through the work of the late Bernie Grant who founded the Global Trade Centre, and organisations such as the UK-Caribbean Chamber of Commerce.

Despite these efforts, the UK Caribbean Diaspora, whilst maintaining strong cultural and economic links with their specific nation of origin via international representative mission offices in London, have been collectively left fragmented and without a clear organisation framework for consolidating on the gains of the past. Factors, which have been cited as contributing to this situation, include, *inter alia*, the inability to pool financial resources as well as management and organisational skills. In addition, the individuality of the Caribbean nations has effectively worked against major cultural and economic events and anniversaries, such as Independence Dates, having the same impact as for instance, the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's Independence.

Notwithstanding, the Caribbean Diaspora in the United Kingdom has within it considerable skills, experience and expertise, which if harnessed, as a collective support mechanism, could be of significant benefit, not only in advancing Caribbean-British interests in the United Kingdom and Europe, but also those of the Caribbean as well as contribute to the regions' future development. Obvious benefits include raising their political profile that could be used to advance their own interests and those of the Caribbean. In addition, the collective packaging of the Caribbean Diaspora in the United Kingdom skills and experience could be used as a platform for greater Caribbean trade and cultural development in Europe.

## **Recommendations**

That the Diaspora/Civil Society in the UK be granted the research opportunity to prepare a Skills Trust, i.e. detailing what would be the key competences that could best be employed to assist Caribbean business development, and how they might be best deployed.

## **Awareness**

Assess the value of producing a quarterly Caribbean/UK newsletter that highlights current trade agreements and developments ( health, environment, technology ), political and cultural news, and promotes existing examples of skills and experience in the Diaspora/Civil Society

## **Understanding**

Proposal to arrange a programme of national seminars and interactive workshops in key UK cities, similar to the event held at the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2008\*, explaining the purpose for an effective Diaspora/Civil Society and inviting expressions of interest and involvement from the targeted audience.

## **Action**

To reach agreement on getting these proposals underway, and setting a realistic timescale for any partnership arrangements with government, and public/private sector organisations.

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