

OFFICE OF CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS NEWS



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USAID and National Hurricane Center Brief Caribbean Diplomats



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President Trump Issues Proclamation for Caribbean Heritage Month

President Donald J. Trump issued a proclamation declaring June 2019 Caribbean-American Heritage Month. The President hailed the rich culture of the Caribbean and the remarkable contributions of Caribbean Americans to the fabric of American society. President Trump also reaffirmed America's partnerships with the region and looks forward to exploring opportunities to deepen engagement with the Caribbean. Read the proclamation here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-national-caribbean-american-heritage-month-2019/>



The month kicked off with the Institute of Caribbean Studies (ICS) Legislative Forum on Capitol Hill with participation from multiple U.S. officials, a reception by Congress and featured numerous events around the U.S. celebrating Caribbean-American heritage. Read the State Department's Blog on U.S.-Relations with the Caribbean here: <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2019/06/28/en/caribbean-american-heritage-month-celebrating-us-relations-caribbean>

U.S. State Department Launches Year of the Caribbean



The U.S. State Department has launched the "Year of the Caribbean" initiative, extending from June 2019 through June 2020. Throughout the year ahead, the Department will highlight its engagements under the U.S.-Caribbean 2020 Strategy. Through this strategy, mandated by the United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act, the Department heads a whole-of-government effort to engage with Caribbean countries on six key pillars: diplomacy, prosperity, security, health, education and energy. The Year launched with multiple events in June highlighting the prosperity pillar. The Commerce Department's U.S. Commercial Service Export Assistance Center held its annual U.S.-Caribbean Business Conference in Miami June 5-6, in conjunction with the South Florida District Export Council (DEC). The event completely sold out three weeks before with 400 attendees, 17 sponsors, and 29 U.S. government offices from 15 departments. Companies attended more than 400 one-on-one appointments. The event served as a catalyst to anchor multiple other events including the Partner Post Training, the

Caribbean Energy Breakfast, the USTR Caribbean Trade and Investment Council (TIC) Talks, and the Florida International Bankers Association (FIBA) Caribbean Correspondent Banking Course. On the margins of the event Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross held a press event and met with the DEC for three hours on optimizing U.S. economic strategy. Commerce Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Ana Guevara represented the United States at the Conference, delivered the keynote address, and attended the one-on-one company meetings. DAS Guevara also attended a full schedule of strategic meetings with economic development partners and women entrepreneurs. State Department DAS Cynthia Kierscht co-led the event, delivered keynote remarks and participated in the TIC discussions. U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Michelle Sisson and U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic Robin Bernstein also participated.

The United States is the primary trading partner for the Caribbean. Caribbean countries imported 24 billion dollars worth of U.S. products and services in 2018. Two-way trade in goods between the United States and the Caribbean has increased steadily in recent years. From 31 billion dollars in 2016, up to 34 billion dollars in 2017, to 37.5 billion dollars last year – the commerce between the United States and the Caribbean is on the increase, creating opportunities for markets and investments throughout the region. In 2017, nearly 24 million U.S. travelers went to the Caribbean for tourism or visiting friends and relatives. In 2017, more than 11,000 Caribbean youth studied in U.S. schools and universities. Read the full remarks from Deputy Assistant Secretary Cynthia Kierscht here: <https://www.state.gov/remarks-for-commerce-caribbean-business-conference/>



The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), as part of the prosperity pillar of the U.S.-Caribbean 2020 Strategy, convened the Caribbean Trade and Investment Council (TIC) with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The Departments of State, Agriculture and Labor also participated. USTR held bilateral discussions on trade matters with Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Belize, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. The TIC, which is a useful forum to raise trade issues that arise between the U.S. and CARICOM, is a further step on engaging in matters of mutual prosperity.

Other events supporting the prosperity pillar included a correspondent-banking seminar in partnership with FIBA and a conference call with the Caribbean diaspora community in the United States on the same topic. The State Department, U.S. Department of Commerce, and FIBA collaborated on a March 14 roundtable discussion hosted by FIBA in Miami with financial regulators, bankers, and financial tech firms to address Caribbean correspondent banking issues as part of our U.S.-Caribbean 2020 commitment to increase prosperity in the Caribbean. In response to requests from participants, FIBA hosted follow-on training courses on correspondent banking in June in both Miami and The Bahamas. The successful events generated robust and insightful discussions between over 40 regulators, correspondent banks, technology firms, and Caribbean financial institutions, creating the basis for further discussion on ways forward and providing opportunities for Caribbean bankers to network with representatives of the larger correspondent banks, an important step in forging new ties and contacts. One banker who attended remarked that as a result of the conference, he made promising new contacts which may develop into a correspondent banking relationship.

Hurricane Briefing, Insurance Discussion Highlight Resilience Partnership Efforts

The April 12 launch of the [U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership](#) established a basis for future cooperation on disaster preparedness and response and building resilience. This month, the State Department undertook two activities as part of this partnership. Diplomats from Caribbean countries attended a hurricane season forecast briefing at the Department of State on June 5. Dr. Cody Fritz from the National Hurricane Center (NHC) gave an overview of the forecast for the 2019 Atlantic Hurricane Season. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center predicts a "near normal year" with 9-15 named storms, of which 4-8 could become hurricanes, including 2-4 major hurricanes. Tim Callaghan from the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) gave an overview of the capabilities of U.S. government disaster response in Latin America and the Caribbean. USAID responds to an average of 65 disasters in more than 50 countries each year. This meeting paved the way for better cooperation in future natural disasters. Read more about USAID's U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance work in the Caribbean here: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/OFDA_LAC_Newsletter_June_2019.pdf



Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan hosted Caribbean Ambassadors from 11 countries on June 17 at the Department of State for a discussion on bridging the insurance gap in the Caribbean. Dr. David Sampson, CEO of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA) and Michael Consedine, CEO of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), presented their findings and expertise during the discussion. Matters for discussion included the need for a stable regulatory system to attract insurance companies into the marketplace and ways to

increase availability of affordable catastrophe coverage.