

Government and Opposition Parliamentarians of the Caribbean Gathered at ParlAmericas Workshop with Auditors General to Discuss Strengthening Budget Oversight

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 10 February 2014

At the closure of ParlAmericas' capacity-building workshop, *Strengthening Parliamentary Budget Oversight in the Caribbean: Phase 2*, participants stressed the unique opportunity the event had created by convening parliamentarians from both government and opposition, as well as heads of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs).

"It has been incredibly useful," stated Hon. Cheryl Bazard, Senator from The Bahamas. "The key is synergy with all partners, inclusive of AGs [Auditors General], SAIs and the public so that there is a greater awareness of PACs [Public Accounts Committees]."

The workshop took place February 5-6, 2014, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and was attended by 25 parliamentarians and six SAI heads from Caribbean countries.

Key outputs of the workshop included the identification of ways to strengthen PACs in small jurisdictions where the PAC rarely or never meets, as well as a discussion about how PACs can support SAI independence and the production of timely financial statements.

According to Hon. Emma Hippolyte, Minister for Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs of Saint Lucia, "It is time to start a public discussion about accountability and transparency and the role of parliamentarians leading the way."

To conclude the workshop, parliamentarians and heads of SAIs shared key findings arising from their deliberations on moving forward to strengthen the estimates process and PACs. These will be presented in a final report that will be made available shortly on the ParlAmericas website (www.parlamericas.org).

"[I am] pleased with the extent of the contributions from colleagues which reflected both the enthusiasm as well as the value they placed on this most important issue," said Hon. Carl Greenidge, Member of Parliament and Chair of PAC in Guayana.

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ParlAmericas is an independent network composed of national legislatures of 35 states from North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean. Members of ParlAmericas are committed to developing inter-parliamentary dialogue on relevant hemispheric issues. They do so at capacity-building workshops and other events closely aligned with issues of current hemispheric importance.