

University working to protect Caribbean Sea

THE Caribbean Sea is essential for this region's existence and survival.

Delivering the welcome address at the Caribbean Sea Commission Ocean Governance Conference yesterday morning, in the Shell Suite at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Principal (Ag) Eudine Barriteau stated that the Caribbean Sea is an economic resource and geopolitical reality that has defined our history in the region. With that in mind, she said the university's aim is to contribute to the protection of our ocean's resources.

Barriteau noted that the University is working on a project that will produce a university level text and a degree course, both of which will address coral biology and management from a Caribbean perspective. She explained that in 2009, the University launched the Caribbean Reef Education Initiative (CREATiVe) Project to save the region's rapidly dying coral reefs, a resource that has been depleted by overexploitation, pollution and climate change.

She pointed out that coral reefs are the foundation of the Caribbean's tourism and fishing industries and account for a sixth of the region's jobs, a third of its income and 500 000 tonnes of its food.

According to the Acting Principal, the project, which is funded by the European Union and executed by the university's marine biologists, seeks to increase the number of skilled Caribbean professions with applicable knowledge of coral biology and management and also conservation methods, by training lecturers from a number of regional institutions and Caribbean countries.

Meanwhile, making reference to the oil spill within the Gulf of Mexico, Barriteau said that there is no doubt that the Caribbean is concerned about the potential impact of that disaster if it were to reach our shores.

"No one has to tell us how such a calamity happening within the Caribbean Sea would imperil our economies. Tourism and fisheries, in particular, would suffer incalculable damage while there would be widespread environmental destruction of flora and fauna that could take decades, if not centuries to recover," she said.

Barriteau continued, "It is not accidental that this conference is being hosted by CERMES at the Cave Hill Campus. Professor Mahon and CERMES are partners in the project on Sustainable Development of the Caribbean Sea. As the region's leading research institution, the



Acting Principal of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Eudine Barriteau.

UWI has contributed to the formulation of policy affecting every aspect of Caribbean economy and society and we will continue to do so. It is a responsibility the leaders of this University take very seriously. This under-

scores our role as a critical partner in the regional development process, our deep commitment to regionalism and the ongoing useful application of our research to all aspects of regional development."
(JRT)