

## 1st Forum on Cluster Development



(Port of Spain, November 9th 2011) The 1st Regional forum on Cluster Development was held on November 9th at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Among the key speakers were the Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States, His Excellency Luis Fernando Andrade Falla, the Honourable Stephen Cadiz, Minister of Trade and Industry of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Winston Dookeran, Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr Luis Antonio Velasquez, Minister of Economy of Guatemala, Mr. Arthur Lok Jack, Professor Miguel Carrillo, Executive Director of Arthur Lok Jack Graduate Business School and Mrs. Fanny de Estrada, Association of Nontraditional Exporters of Guatemala.

The Honourable Mr. Luis Antonio Velasquez addressed the forum indicating that the establishment of cluster development played a pivotal role in raising his country's GDP. He further disclosed that Guatemala had the lowest percentage of foreign debt. He further emphasized that Guatemala is successful in diversifying their economy and reducing their dependence on food imports from 70% to 38%.

Mrs. Fanny de Estrada, Association of Nontraditional Exporters of Guatemala, was also invited to elaborate on the success of cluster development in the agricultural sector. She further gave examples of the variety of food grown for consumption and export in Guatemala.

Secretary General Andrade Falla delivered closing remarks on the way forward indicating the forum's importance in facilitating cooperation among member states. The Secretary General further highlighted the focal areas of the Association of Caribbean States and its role in creating an avenue to promote cluster development in the areas of sustainable tourism, trade, transport and disaster risk reduction.