

**Opening Remarks by
Lt Col Edward H Croft,
Director of
The Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy and
National Point of Contact to the (OAS)
Inter American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE)
at
REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON DRUG INFORMATION NETWORKS (DINS)
(AUGUST 1-2, 2012)**

Salutations:

- **Master of Ceremonies**
- **Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda
Hon Dr. W Baldwin Spencer**
- **OAS Representative in Antigua and Barbuda – Mr. Jean Ricot Dormeus**
- **Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister – Mrs Paula Frederick-Hunte**
- **Research Specialist at the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs / Inter American
Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) Pernel Clarke**
- **All Facilitators**
- **Distinguished Overseas Guests**
- **Participants**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

A very Pleasant good morning to one and all. It is indeed my distinct honour to be given the opportunity to present brief Welcoming remarks.

Let me begin by indicating how pleased I am for Antigua and Barbuda to be hosting this important regional workshop. The number of countries, some 14 in all, which are represented here this morning is a clear indication of the importance of this area of information sharing in the area of drug phenomenon. We at the Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy as the National Coordinating Entity are pleased to be associated with this effort to ensure that not only the country but the region is in a better position to adequately respond to the need to strengthen our ability to respond to the threat of this phenomenon. As the Commissioner to CICAD, I am particularly pleased that Antigua and Barbuda was chosen as the host country for such a significant conference. I am certain that we are all aware that information is critical and if we are to be positioned to address the adverse impact of drug abuse amongst our respective communities and to develop the necessary strategy in order to effectively address this issue, I think we all agree that it is most important that the appropriate statistics and information be obtained before an effective plan can be developed.

I wish to take this opportunity to recognize the contribution of the OAS in their leadership and support for the region in the area of Drug policy development and research, drug supply and drug demand, and treatment of persons from substance abuse. This is the first regional workshop of

this type within the Caribbean and it is a credit to the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Canadian government whose support has made this workshop a reality that there exists the vision to address this important strategic regional vulnerability.

I am pleased to extend a special welcome to all our overseas regional participants and organizers, we are delighted that you are here, and request that you please take some time to enjoy our usual warm hospitality, especially our Carnival 2012. There is the old saying, "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" or to be more politically correct I might add in today's environment Jack or Jill / a dull boy or girl.

I also take this opportunity to extend a special welcome to our facilitators, I recognize amongst us Dave Alexander, Dr. James Hill, Esther Best, Dr. Cecilia Younger and Dr. Garfield Douglas. Based on the agenda and the array of expert presenters and facilitators, I am assured that each of you will benefit immensely from the discussions and involvement throughout this workshop.

It is therefore important that as a region we embrace this opportunity to strengthen our ability to be better prepared to respond to the impact of this drug phenomenon through our enhanced understanding of the indicators and through improved analysis both nationally and regionally. In order for analysis to be effective there is the requirement for information to be relevant and timely. Hence the importance of this workshop

Once again, I welcome you all to this most important and strategic regional workshop on the development of Information Sharing Networks and protocols, and trust that you will leave here enriched by the experience and better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Thank you.