

Governments should welcome new US legislation for Caribbean

The Observer



Caribbean Basin countries have had preferential trade arrangements with the United States (US) since the early 1980s. The first piece of legislation to be approved by Congress was the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act of 1983, commonly referred to as the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

This covered most of the Caribbean's exports to the US, except for some restrictions on apparel and textiles. The beneficiaries were the countries of the Caribbean and Central America.

In 1990, Congress passed the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Expansion Act, which further increased the list of eligible goods, but there were still some types of apparel that were excluded.

For years, Central America and the Caribbean lobbied the Congress, White House and the US Trade Representative to expand the coverage by removing the restrictions on apparel and textiles. Eventually, the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act of 2000 was passed, expanding tariff preferences for imports of apparel products made in the Caribbean and Central America. The Haiti HOPE Act of 2006 was also passed and amended in 2008 and 2010.

In 2004, the Dominican Republic joined the Central America Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, which saw two-way trade growing to an estimated US\$37.9 billion in 2009.

In spite of these trade preferences, US financial aid to the region declined and many in the Caribbean expressed, with disappointment, the view that the US was not giving enough attention to the Caribbean. Apparently this frustration has been heard in the halls of the US Congress, because recently a new piece of legislation has been proposed to remedy this apparent benign neglect.

The legislation, titled the United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act of 2016, is sponsored by Representative Eliot Engel (Democrat) and Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, (Republican) of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It was introduced on April 14, 2016. If passed, it would require the secretary of state and the administrator of the US Agency for International Development to submit to Congress a multi-year strategy for the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora in the United States. The objective is to “increase engagement with the governments of the Caribbean, the Caribbean diaspora community in America, and the private sector and civil society in both the United States and the Caribbean.

Some will no doubt complain that the bill does not seek to requisition any funding attached to it, but this initiative should be welcomed and endorsed by the governments of the Caribbean.

UWI professor condemns regional opposition to CCJ

Source: Antigua Daily Observer



Dr Hollis Liverpool

ST JOHN'S, Antigua — A University of the West Indies (UWI) Professor has strongly condemned opposition to the Trinidad & Tobago-based Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ).

Dr Hollis Liverpool described persons against the move towards the adoption of the CCJ as “stupid”, and dismissed the London-based Privy Council as relic of colonialism.

“Emancipation was since 1834. After 200 years of learning, you’re telling people you still want to go to England,” he said. “People who don’t understand history would want Privy Council.”

Liverpool has supported the claim that Privy Council judges cannot aptly rule on regional issues because they are not knowledgeable on cultural practices unique to countries in the region.

“They can’t judge us because they don’t know Old Road or John Peter mango. So a fella t’ief two John Peter mango they don’t know what the hell you are talking about,” he said. “Any time you fall in front of them, they judge you based on English laws.”

The Trinidadian said many of the laws established during colonial times and handed down to Caribbean countries were not a tailored to the culture of the region.

He said while “law is law”, the law cannot survive without cultural backing.

“Laws are built on the culture of people. You can’t make a law without understanding people’s culture,” he added.

A public education campaign is ongoing on the CCJ ahead of a referendum to determine whether it should replace the Privy Council as Antigua & Barbuda’s final court of appeal.

The referendum is expected to be held later this year.

The End