ABRIDGED BRIEF

**SIGNATURE OF AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE**

**CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CCCFP)**

**Mandate & Development**: The elaboration of a Common Fisheries Policy and Regime for CARICOM countries was initiated at the Fourteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government which was convened in Trinidad and Tobago during 14 to 15 February, 2003. The Heads of Government endorsed a proposal submitted by the Government of Barbados on the imperative of elaborating a Common Fisheries Regime and mandated the CARICOM Secretariat to begin work on preparing a Common Fisheries Policy and Regime (CFP&R) for the region. This mandate was subsequently spearheaded by the Secretariats of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and CARICOM. The CRFM Secretariat assumed a lead role on technical matters regarding fisheries conservation and management in view of its mandate. The two Secretariats worked together to oversee the required consultative process involving representatives of Member States and regional experts in fisheries management, marine law, and policy. The development of the Policy was guided by regional policy makers, represented initially by the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) and, since January 2009, the CRFM Ministerial Council (comprising Ministers Responsible for Fisheries), with inputs from COTED and COFCOR.

In January 2009, the CRFM Ministerial Council, decided to separate the development of the Common Fisheries Policy and the development of the implementing Regime and to prepare them sequentially, focusing first on elaborating the Policy. This sequential approach was intended to overcome disagreements and delays arising from the sensitive issues regarding the regime including the proposed common fishing zone, access rules and authority concerning conservation and management of the resources within the zone. In keeping with the 2009 decision of the CRFM Ministerial Council, a revised instrument was prepared to omit those regime issues considered to be contentious.

**Approvals obtained to date**: Following a 2-year period of additional negotiations and further refinements, the instrument, which is now known as “*Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy”* was:

* Unanimously endorsed by the 4th Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the CRFM on 20 May 2011;
* Also endorsed by the 38th Special Meeting of the COTED on 14 October 2011; and
* Further endorsed by the 18th meeting of the Legal Affairs Committee of CARICOM on 29 November 2013 and recommended to the Conference of Heads of Government for signature.

This Draft Agreement has therefore undergone all the required procedures to facilitate its submission to the Conference of Heads of Government for consideration, and was opened for signature during the Twenty-Fifth Inter-Sessional Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from 10-11 March 2014.

**Purpose**: The “*Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy”*, adopted by the CRFM Ministerial Council,lays down the objectives to be achieved, and the basic principles regarding sustainable use, conservation, management and development of the aquatic resources under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of Member States of the Community, in accordance with the mandate of the Conference, relevant principles from the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as well as associated instruments, such as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, the FAO Compliance Agreement and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The present Agreement, which is also consistent with the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy that was recently approved by the OECS, is a comprehensive framework Agreement aimed at establishing a cooperative platform for the transformation of the fisheries sector to ensure a better and more secure future for present and future generations. Its aim is to create new opportunities for economic growth and prosperity, and to bring greater security and hope to the tens of thousands of people who depend upon the region’s living aquatic resources for their livelihoods. It also provides for the elaboration of Protocols to provide detailed rules and other operational guidelines, as required, for implementation of the Policy and development of the proposed associated Regime.

The Governments of Barbados and Suriname have already confirmed their intention to sign the Agreement.

**Action Required:** Member States that have not yet completed their national review of the Draft Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy are urged to do so in preparation for signing of the instrument.

