

THE CARICOM-SICA FTA NEGOTIATIONS

Since the first Preparatory Meeting held May 2007, negotiators have reached consensus on a few preliminary issues. Firstly it is agreed that the negotiations would be based on the accession of El Salvador, Guatemala Honduras, and Nicaragua, known as the CA4, and Panama to the existing CARICOM-Costa Rica FTA. The terms of their accession would be negotiated and determined by Protocols to the FTA which will outline textual amendments to the existing FTA and the tariff schedules including rules of origin.

During the First Technical Negotiating Meeting held August 9-10, 2007 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, consideration was given and amendments made to proposals on the Preamble, Chapter I – Initial Provisions and Institutional Arrangements, and Chapter XVII – Final Provisions. However the proposals on Chapter III – National Treatment and Access of Goods have been deferred to the next negotiating meeting to facilitate time for consultations by CARICOM. The negotiators have also agreed to exchange information. Thus, CARICOM has requested that CA4 and Panama supply copies of national legislation pertaining to free trade zones, and distribution services/dealer protection laws. CA4 and Panama have requested statistics relating to trade between CARICOM and each of the Central America and Panama as well as Applied Tariffs of CARICOM countries.