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Opening Remarks

Mr. Cleviston Haynes, Governor, Central Bank of Barbados

at the

50th Annual Monetary Studies Conference

Hilton Barbados Resort

Tuesday, November 6, 2018

Good morning.

On behalf of the Management and staff of the Central Bank of Barbados, I am delighted to extend a warm Bajan welcome to all of you, as we recognise and celebrate the 50th anniversary of this Annual Monetary Studies Conference. We are honoured to jointly host this landmark conference with our colleagues at the Caribbean Economic Research Team (CERT), the new entity established to carry on the rich tradition of its forerunners, beginning with the Regional Programme for Monetary Studies, Caribbean Centre for Monetary Studies and the most recently the Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance.

In recognition of this historic landmark, today we have the rare opportunity of having in our presence at this truly regional meeting, several of the Governors of CARICOM Central Banks who have reorganised their schedules to enable this conference to overlap with their bi-annual meeting. Moreover, they have consented to participate in today's deliberations via a panel discussion during which they will reflect on and discuss some of the critical economic and financial challenges we are currently facing as a region under the theme "*Rebuilding Caribbean Economies: A Regional Perspective on Emerging Economic and Financial Issues*". I encourage you to take advantage of my colleagues' accumulated knowledge and wisdom.

The achievement of fifty unbroken years of service is a significant milestone and by no means an easy accomplishment. It underscores the unwavering support, dedication, passion and hard work of the past Directors, Coordinators, Officers-in-Charge, research fellows, support staff, and the academic and professional economics community to keep the momentum going for this long. I would like to take this opportunity to extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to

everyone who has contributed to the longevity of this conference and I offer my best wishes to CERT, as it continues on the path forged by its predecessors.

From its humble beginnings, with the first conference held in 1969 at the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Annual Monetary Studies Conference has developed into the top economic research conference in the region. Over the years, it has played an important role in building a body of outstanding Caribbean economics scholarship through on-going collaboration, primarily among the CARICOM central banks, the University of the West Indies, the private sector and civil society organisations. It is no surprise, therefore, that this forum has contributed to and honed the economic acumen of some of the more prominent economists of our generation, including current Governors of some of our central banks. Indeed, I personally recall my first attendance at a Regional Monetary Studies Conference in 1981 where I first came face to face with some of the legends of this region. The contribution of stalwarts to this conference such as Professor C. Y. Thomas, Professor Compton Bourne, Terrence Farrell, DeLisle Worrell, the late Professor Roland Craigwell, Shelton Nicholls, to name but a few is worthy of emulation. It is my considered view that for young economists, the comments and encouragement provided by persons of this calibre served to strengthen, over time, the quality of research produced within the region.

As policy makers, we recognise that focused, timely and relevant research is important for good policy-making. In the region, we continue to face many economic challenges in a global environment that is not always favourable. As we speak, there is uncertainty created by international developments such as the discussions on Brexit, protectionism and threats of trade wars, the risks posed by geopolitical risks to oil prices and rising interest rates. At the same time, some of our economies, which have had to shift their economies from traditional primary products to services in an effort to facilitate growth and jobs and make them more resilient to economic and climatic shocks, now face the threats presented by the OECD initiative on Base Erosion Profit Sharing and the threats of EU blacklisting. At the domestic level, fiscal imbalances and high public sector indebtedness act as a brake on growth, raising the question of whether there is an optimal size to government in our economies. There are still constraints on the availability of finance for small enterprises and how can we improve the efficiency of the financial system to promote growth. At the regional level, we are not as advanced in the regional project as we would have wanted to be. These are but some of the challenges for which we require solutions.

In this context therefore, while our research techniques have become more sophisticated through the use of the latest in econometric methods, we must not forget that the underlying rationale for our research remains that we need to explain how our economies have worked and to be able to develop strategies to confront the challenges that we face.

The theme of this year's conference is "**Emerging Economic and Financial Issues in 21st Century Economies**". Judging from the conference programme, the next three days is expected to be stimulating, involving research papers covering a variety of topics, including financial market performance, financial regulation, economic growth, tourism performance and banking industry issues.

Today, we look forward to the launch of the Inter-American Development Bank's ebook "**Nurturing Institutions For A Resilient Caribbean**", an important publication that provides an in-depth analysis of the institutional experiences in the six Caribbean countries that comprise the IDB's Caribbean Country Department, namely The Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

This year's Adlith Brown Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Dr. Arnold McIntyre, Deputy Division Chief, Caribbean Division I, International Monetary Fund, on the timely topic of strengthening economic growth and resilience in the Caribbean. Arnold has a great depth of experience in Caribbean economic research and practice and we are happy he has accepted our invitation to deliver the lecture.

In closing, I am certain that, as is usually the case, we will have a productive and successful three days of discussion and debate. Special thanks to the teams from the Central Bank of Barbados and the CERT Secretariat for organising what appears to be an excellent conference programme.

For those of you are visiting, do enjoy our hospitality and culture.

Thank you.