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ITC SUPPORTS CARIBBEAN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SECTOR

Creative industries can contribute significantly to economic growth in the Caribbean, but first good and timely information on the sector is needed, the International Trade Centre (ITC) will tell ministers and top officials at a meeting later this month.

The importance and challenges of creative industries will be the focus of an ITC presentation to the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), which is meeting May 16-20 in Georgetown, Guyana.

While data on the creative industries in the Caribbean region is weak, initial studies suggest that, given appropriate incentives and support, the sector could help diversify exports and generate jobs.

“There are signs that the region has significant potential in the creative industries, but more systematic data and analysis are needed to improve and increase policy and programme interventions,” says ITC Deputy Executive Director Jean-Marie Paugam, who will deliver the presentation to COTED.

Collecting statistics on cultural services in the region is difficult because the sector is largely informal, many artistes are not based or registered there and some are unwilling to provide information.

Together with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), ITC is representing at the meeting an inter-agency group of development partners that includes the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

According to UNCTAD’s Creative Economy Report 2008, many small and developing countries, such as the Caribbean states, enjoy some comparative advantage in the creative industries’ sector.

The ITC initiative is tied to a scheme for promoting creative industries in the region called ‘Promoting the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) Creative Industries Project’, which is funded by the European Union.

The project aims to raise awareness among decision-makers of the economic potential of the creative industries and to build capacity among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) so that they can respond to international market demands.

It also works to strengthen the ability of the Caribbean Export Development Agency, and other trade support institutions, to provide better marketing and networking services for the sector.

“ITC is committed to providing technical assistance to the region and to strengthening partnerships to support the Caribbean’s creative industries,” adds Paugam.

ITC is the joint agency of WTO and the United Nations and is devoted to helping SMEs in developing countries become more competitive in global markets and thus to speed up sustainable economic development and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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