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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CDEMA signs MoU with the Caribbean Alliance of National Psychological Associations (CANPA) to build psychosocial resilience in the Caribbean

Bridgetown, Barbados April 7, 2021 – The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Caribbean Alliance of National Psychological Associations (CANPA) participated in a virtual MoU signing ceremony on April 6, 2021. This MoU will allow the 19 CDEMA Participating States (PSs) to benefit from CANPA’s expertise on psychology in disaster response, to coordinate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

CDEMA Acting Executive Director, Ms. Elizabeth Riley, spoke to the diverse hazards experienced in the region that not only cause death and physical damage, but also “displacement and family separation, impacting lives and livelihoods and affecting mental health and psychosocial well-being of Caribbean people”. Ms. Riley also referenced the “extreme stressors for persons of all age groups” caused by COVID-19 restrictions, which have resulted in loss of income and long-term isolation from family and friends.

She said the MOU signing is “a part of a larger vision of an enhanced Regional Response Mechanism for the CDEMA System, one which is agile, flexible and responds appropriately and in a timely manner to all hazards (current and future) which face the region... A critical part of this vision is a sustainable mechanism for addressing PSs’ needs for various vulnerable groups including children.”

Dr. Guillermo Bernal, CANPA’s President, highlighted the significance of the occasion by noting that it marked “a new day for the Caribbean region.” He acknowledged CDEMA’s

Participating States:

Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Virgin Islands



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expertise in resources disaster management and CANPA's psychological expertise and diverse language resources to serve the Greater Caribbean.

Dr. Bernal concluded his remarks with an invitation to attend the Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology (CRCP2020+). The theme of conference, Caribbean Resilience: Psychology's response to historical and contemporary disasters, is most relevant to the historic signing event, that was facilitated by CANPA's Disaster Mental Health Committee, co-Chaired by Drs. Peter Weller and Alisa Alvis. Dr. Bernal emphasized the key goals of the conference: to stimulate and promote psychological theory, practice, research, assessment and training relevant to meeting the needs of the diverse communities within the Caribbean.

The partnership will examine psychosocial programming in Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation and Recovery, in the current multi hazard environment. Agencies in the CDEMA Participating States will receive assistance after hazard impact, and deployment teams will receive support following response operations.

CDEMA will also benefit from new public education materials, for accurate messaging on disaster risks and mental health in the region, while promoting behavioural change among target groups.

END

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