



For immediate release

New Caribbean alliance for diversity launches on Human Rights Day

(Castries, December 9, 2016) As the world joins to observe international Human Rights Day on December 10, several organisations across the eastern Caribbean have come together to launch the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality or ECADE. ECADE was ratified in November 2016 during a two-day meeting in Saint Lucia, which follows an initial meeting held in Grenada in February, 2015. At the Saint Lucia meeting, members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) and human rights organisations from the eastern Caribbean, including Barbados and Saint Martin/Sint Maarten, met to discuss and endorse policy and governance issues and next steps to guide this new network over the coming years.

"We are all as Caribbean citizens guaranteed certain rights and freedoms by our constitutions in order to live a full and productive life," states ECADE Communications Officer Maria Fontenelle. " Yet, across the Caribbean today, our people are being denied the right to live a complete life and face unfair and biased treatment at home, at work, in schools and public spaces because of perceptions of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and their intersex status. ECADE, was formed in response to this continuing discrimination."

This organisation will act as an umbrella body for human rights groups within the small countries of the eastern Caribbean, in particular those that seek to protect the rights of LGBTQI people. ECADE aims strengthen the institutional capacity of member organisations and provide a platform to strategise and work towards equality within the eastern Caribbean. A follow-up meeting will be held in Antigua in 2017 to ratify a policy framework for the organisation. In the interim, a planning committee will continue to develop and implement plans of ECADE until the official inauguration of the board takes place. The committee consists of representatives of organisations in Grenada, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Saint Martin/Sint Maarten and Dominica.

Of the meeting, Lysanne Charles-Arrindell of the Saint Martin/SintMaarten Alliance for Equality (SAFE) says, "The energy in the room, the careful, thorough deliberations concerning how this regional organisation could assist local organisations on the ground, while pinpointing the areas of similarity that can be addressed collectively, indicates the strength of the team behind this organisation and their awareness of the role that ECADE can play in making the Caribbean a safer, better place for all LGBTIQ persons."

This year, Human Rights Day calls on everyone to stand up for someone's rights! The alliance will also call on the people of the Caribbean to reaffirm our common humanity and make a real difference. An integral part of ECADE's advocacy includes raising the awareness of the people of the eastern Caribbean to the social and political conditions that create inequalities and the resulting harm to our societies.

The ECADE objectives will build on the decisions from the Grenada meeting in 2015. Through intense deliberations, participants and country representatives solidified the mission and vision of the organisation as follows:

Mission: *To strengthen regional capacity for the defence and full recognition of human rights through intersectional collaboration, training, network expansion, development of grassroots HRDs and organisations and sensitisation of policy makers, legislators, government and service providers.*

Vision: *An empowered eastern Caribbean that promotes a culture of human rights, equality, justice and respect for all people.*

Among the programs identified for the immediate future is training in regional advocacy, documentation, media and safety and security for human rights defenders and sensitisation training for states' employees on issues affecting LGBTIQ and human rights organisations and their members. The Alliance will monitor, report and document human rights related issues, provide a platform for organisational collaboration, communication and action and represent small island states internationally on issues affecting the LGBTIQ community and human rights defenders.

This Human Rights Day, December 10, 2016 communities of people marginalised and made vulnerable by stigma and discrimination have reason to celebrate as well. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says, "On Human Rights Day, let us recommit to guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and protecting the human rights of all."

ECADE promises to bring in a new era of equality and justice as it promote a rights-based approach to advocacy on behalf of marginalised populations in the eastern Caribbean.

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Regional media contact:

Hayden Bethelmy
ECADE Planning Committee
St. Georges, Grenada
1 (473) 423-2003
hbethelmy@gmail.com

Skype: Spiceboi3

Learn more about the work of Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc. (ECADE) at www.ecequality.org or email info@ecequality.org. Follow us on Twitter and Instagram [@EC_Equality](https://www.instagram.com/EC_Equality).