



CIPRIANI COLLEGE
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



CWF²F

Caribbean World of Work Forum

DISRUPTION | RESILIENCE | JUST TRANSITIONS

6TH – 8TH SEPTEMBER 2023

WORK MATTERS

AUGUST 2023

COLUMN

The Caribbean Workers Conference III (6th -9th September 2023)

This is the third iteration of the Caribbean Workers Conference, which in itself is a huge achievement, as it highlights the interaction between academics, practitioners, members of trade union and solidarity movements, and policy makers from all across the Caribbean and beyond.

In addressing the issues that affect workers in the region, this Conference has been highly successful in the past, and this year promises to be just as, if not more dynamic, engaging, inciteful and interactive. One can ask about reasons for the past successes of the Conference, and while many explanations may be given, I think it is important to point out that one of its strengths is the cooperation and involvement of multiple actors from around the region. These actors are genuinely interested in issues related to social justice, climate change, just transitions, gender-related issues, the world of work, the future of work, the role and evolution of trade unions, assessing labour and its contributions to our economies, health and wellness, economic and social disruptions in our countries, governance, digitalization, among others.

As small island developing states (SIDS), we in the Caribbean are historically disproportionately susceptible and affected by a range of crises, which result in some form of disruption, whether environmental, biological, or social, especially with respect to the vulnerable groups within the region. Notwithstanding this state of affairs and concomitant systemic deficiencies, Caribbean people have become the embodiment of the term “resilience”; and this Conference explores these issues and presents possible alternatives to the way we have responded to these disruptions in the past. We as a people have to evaluate the institutions, policies and programmes that guide the way we deal with disruptions and seek to find novel and ingenious strategies to ensure the survival of our people, economies and ways of life.

While there are national priorities among the different countries in the region, one of the strengths of the region is the implementation of policies that go beyond the national boundaries, and seek to impact the region as a

whole, to effect change and protect the citizenry. This is usually implemented by regional bodies that have the benefit of attracting technocrats, policy makers and academics to conceptualize, operationalize and execute programmes and projects for the benefit of the entire region. This approach also allows for inter-institutional cooperation, shared resources, and human resources.

This Conference brings these individuals together with the aim of evaluating what we have done so far, determining the effectiveness of past strategies, and advocating for change and developing new approaches to old problems, while at the same time, predicating and planning for developing and unforeseen disruptions that will affect the region.

The inciteful contributions of past presenters is a testimony to the level of professionals that we have in the region, and their commitment to developing the institutions, human resources and natural resources that exist here. While some contributions may be a little ‘out there’ to some individuals, this also shows the levels of ingenuity that exists among us as a people, and also shows the levels of comfort that we share so that we can bring new ideas to the table without fear of discrimination or judgement. It is only within open forums can we effectively share ideas and fine-tune them among ourselves so that we find endogenous solutions to national, regional and international challenges. As small island states we are influenced by external pressures, but this does not mean that we have to lay down and ‘just take’ what is given to us. We have the ability to influence our destinies, and by working together, and sharing ideas, we will be able to shape our future, and develop a better understanding of ourselves as a region, and ultimately be better able to determine our destiny. With this knowledge, I would encourage all to get come involved in the development of our region, pay more attention to the world of work, reduce discrimination against our females as people and workers, and advocate for the most vulnerable in our societies. To start (or continue) this work, I invite

one and all to The Caribbean Workers Conference III (6th -9th September 2023) and encourage you to share your ideas and concerns with us so that we can add it to our conversations about development in the region.

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