

## Cayman to Ease Visa Requirements

Cayman Premier McKeeva Bush announced at the Northern Caribbean Conference on Economic Co-operation, that local authorities are to change the present visa requirements for Jamaicans by January.

The change was being made to improve his country's business environment, he told the audience of 160 representatives of government and the private sector from across the sub-region. The conference focused on issues relating to the Bahamas, The Cayman Island, Cuba, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

"Visa exemptions will be put in place for Jamaican Nationals who hold validated US, UK or Canadian visas," Mr. Bush stated. He added in his opening presentation, that the changes would be implemented by January. "I can now tell you that a new 1-5 day business visa will be introduced for business travellers visiting for legitimate business purposes," he added. "In these instances, the business visa will replace the need for these persons obtaining temporary work permits for short trips to attend meetings or conferences."

The conference deliberations need to focus on areas that offer opportunities that exist or can be created, to ease the migration of skilled individuals, stated Prime Minister Bruce Golding. He said, "We have spent too much time struggling to compete with each other, instead of pooling our energies, and determining together, how we can compete with the rest of the world."

In a ferociously competitive global environment, the Prime Minister said, "We have to make ourselves not just as good as the best, but slightly better, in order to attract investors."

Caribbean states have adopted some of the worst of the colonial practices, stated former Prime Minister Percival Patterson. He pointed out that, "We have become or are becoming draconian in our trade and immigration practices (and) in some cases we are becoming more isolated linguistically."

Sporadic attempts have been made to break the isolationist tendency, but none has been fully exploited, Mr. Patterson indicated. He suggested however, that the attempts demonstrate an underlying desire to increase interaction and cooperation. "The Northern Caribbean is rich in opportunities, that if carefully nurtured, could deliver economic growth and prosperity," stated Earl Jarrett, General Manager of Jamaica National Building Society, which supported the event. He said regional leaders could take advantage of these opportunities by acting co-operatively.

"We can cooperatively do things, that we cannot do alone," added Joe Clarke, conference chairman and former Prime Minister of Canada. He indicated that, "One of the characteristics of the globalised age is that none of us has the luxury of being alone."