

CRFM signs fisheries management MOU with University of Belize for partnership with Iceland universities

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The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), headquartered in Belize, on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Belize for collaboration to implement short-term but accelerated fisheries training for managers across the Caribbean.

"For some time now we have had an informal working relationship with the University of Belize and feel that the time is right to upgrade and formalize that relationship," said Hugh Saul, CRFM's executive director, at this morning's signing in Belize City. "The memorandum of understanding seeks to do that by establishing a framework for cooperation in a number of areas, including leadership and management development training in marine resource assessment and management."

Saul told *Amandala* that among those who could benefit from the program are senior fisheries officers, fisheries directors and administrators, and personnel from related organizations.

The intention is to help them meet challenges that management of resources presents, while entering the CARICOM Single Market and Economy era and dealing with climate change issues and a greater demand for fish, which has sparked the need for



STANDING (LEFT TO RIGHT):

Patrick McConney of UWI; Thor Asgerisson, UN University; Arsaell Arnasson and Dr. Ögumundur Knútsson, and Helgi Gestsson - Univ of Akureyri (Iceland); Milton Haughton, Deputy Chief Executive Director of CRFM

SIGNING:
Dr. Santos Mahung
president of UB
Hugh Saul
Exec. director
of CRFM

more aquaculture.

"Here is a project that fits hand-in-glove with our whole thinking, with our whole efforts," said Dr. Santos Mahung, president of the University of Belize.

The University, Mahung said, has to take a leadership role in identifying and responding to the development needs

and priorities of the country and, by extension, of the region.

"We do that through quality academic programs," he declared. "This is an excellent example of how the University of Belize through its research and service programs can respond to aspirations of higher education, but also

in terms of helping with the analysis and formulation of policies," he elaborated.

He noted that it is also critical that UB partners with other universities in specific areas of capacity development, service and research; therefore the

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signing of the MOU today is critical. Two of the collaborators for this project are United Nations University and the University of Akureyri, both located in Iceland.

Thor Heidar Asgerisson, deputy program director at the United Nations University, told our newspaper that they have been working with CRFM for several years.

UB came into the picture when they became interested in looking into the possibility of developing short courses, adapted from courses offered in Iceland, for presentation in Belize, since the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism is headquartered in Belize.

The area that Asgerisson considers to be of high priority is fisheries management. Most stocks in the world are depleted due to excessive fishing pressure, and so effective fisheries

management is important, as well as promoting aquaculture as a means of maintaining food security.

Mario Gongora of the Belize Fisheries Department is the first from this country to receive training in Iceland through the partnership, he noted. Gongora is due to complete his specialization in stock assessment in March 2010.

According to Asgerisson, they hope to offer three such sponsorships for the next few years for people from the Caribbean.

Dr. Ögumundur Knútsson, assistant professor in the Faculty of Business and Science at the University of Akureyri in Iceland, says that they are helping to develop the curriculum for short-term training to be offered to Caribbean fisheries personnel starting next April.

There is a lot of emphasis on applied and practical work, especially group work, which will give trainees the opportunity to work in their own

Central Bank of Belize, economist in the Research Department Rasiel V. Vellos and Human Resources Officer Claudine N. Gordon. Their parents, Oscar and Tomasita Vellos, and Emil, Sr. and Yvonne Gordon, along with other relatives and friends congregated at the new ITVET Courtyard on Freetown Road to witness the official wedding ceremony, conducted by Pastor Hilford Crawford, followed by a reception at the same venue in honor of Mr. & Mrs. Rasiel V. Vellos. Matron of Honor was Nicole Hughes, sister of the bride; and Best Man was Manrique Vellos, brother of the groom.



Mr. & Mrs. Rasiel V. Vellos

environment and see what they need to do to become greater leaders, he explained.

Trainees, at least 20 of them, will train for a diploma certification in the 5-day

course.

Knútsson hopes the program will be sustainable, and that UB will have repeated offerings for fisheries personnel of the Caribbean.