

# Questions Seeking Answers

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The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) was accused of not negotiating the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) “in the region’s best interests”.

But for those negotiations, the region’s Ministers created a CARIFORUM College of Negotiators.

Instructions were crafted after lengthy Technical Working Groups.

Our Ministers then approved such instructions before they were used by the College’s Lead Negotiators in Technical Negotiating Groups with the European Commission.

I was a member of the College, as a Lead Negotiator on Services and Investment. Brandy Isaacs was also a member, as a Lead Negotiator on Market Access. Kusha Haraksingh was also a member, as a Lead Negotiator on Institutional and Legal Issues. None of us are or were part of the staff of CRNM.

Where exactly did we deviate from our instructions to justify the accusations to CRNM, when all it did was to provide technical support for the negotiations?

Or was there a problem with our instructions?

Merging the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) with the Office of the Secretary-General of CARICOM is leading to resignations *en masse* by the region’s most qualified experts on trade negotiations.

How will the region ensure the support required by the College of Negotiators for future negotiations without them?

Support for trade negotiations requires *effective* institutions that deliver results with *efficiency*.

Their role should be always *impartial* and all of its acts should follow the consensus decisions taken by its constituting Member States, all of which should enjoy equal rights.

How effective has the CARICOM Secretariat been in negotiating trade agreements?

Wasn’t its lack of expertise in trade negotiations the fundamental reason that justified the creation of CRNM in the first place?

How efficient has it been in implementing its outcomes?

How closely has it kept to the implementation schedule of the CARICOM-DR Free Trade Agreement or the CARICOM Single-Market and Economy (CSME)?

How impartial has it been?

Which specific consensus decisions authorized CARICOM Secretary General to demand the European Trade Commissioner last year in Lima the reopening of our EPA or to write in September a letter postponing for a third time the signing ceremony of our EPA?

In assessing how the CARICOM Secretariat implemented the 9<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Regional Indicative Program (CRIP), independent experts hired by the European Commission found severe financial irregularities.

For a region demanding more resources to implement our EPA, the appalling fact was that existing resources available were not being utilized effectively: barely 14% of the 9<sup>th</sup> CRIP has been used, most of which not by the CARICOM Secretariat but by CRNM.

How will merging CRNM with the CARICOM Secretariat help the region to overcome the poor performance observed not only in trade but also in development cooperation matters?

While we await for the urgent answers to these questions, the region has an EPA to implement and new trade agreements to negotiate.

The region has a global financial crisis to face and a rising crime wave to revert.

These are regional problems with national and international consequences.

Addressing and resolving them require a coordinated regional response.

But can the region tackle these and many other challenges ahead without reforming, as a matter of urgency, the Office of the Secretary-General of CARICOM?