

## **JAMAICA HOSTS WHTI MEETING**

Jamaica played host to the 10<sup>th</sup> Western Hemisphere Transport Initiative (WHTI) meeting held at the Jamaica Conference Centre on Friday, April 27, 2007. This is the second time that Jamaica was hosting this meeting.

In giving the welcome address at the meeting, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing, Transport, Water and Works, said, “ WHTI plays an indispensable role in assisting the hemisphere to confront those global realities that are making small developing states such as many of those in our grouping, more vulnerable.”

He noted that the issue of transportation was a most important one and that the various modes (of transport) had for centuries marked the development related to nations around the world. “This meeting,” he highlighted “is therefore very timely occurring as it is when several issues concerning transportation continue to dominate world news.”

The Executive Committee Meeting received an update from various sub-groups including those for Civil Aviation and Security as well as Marine Safety, Security and Environmental Protection. Deliberations also took place concerning administrative issues with a review to strengthening the capacity of the WHTI.

Of particular importance to the meeting were the Millenium Development Goals, in particular, Goal 7 and 8. MDG 7 speaks to Environmental Sustainability, the target of which encompasses environmental sustainability to be promoted in all transport operations and development programmes and the rate of road accident fatalities. MDG8 highlights the need for Global Partnership for Development. The targets are concerned with (a) Transport cost for landlocked countries to be reduced by half and their access to global markets improved by 2015 (b) All non-physical transport barriers that increase journey time, customs clearance, border delay and impede the flow of goods by 2015 (c) Axle load limits, equipment and infrastructure for all modes of transport, technical standards harmonised by 2015 (d) Air and Maritime transport services improved, fares reduced and movement of goods and services improved by 2015 and (e) Compliance with international conventions on safety and security.

Several countries were represented at the Meeting; these included: USA, Canada, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Haiti and of course, Jamaica.

Mrs. Elsa-May Binns, Senior Director, Policy Planning and Evaluation in the Ministry of Housing, Transport, Water and Works and Mr. Joseph Traini representing the US were co-chairs of the meeting.