

2010 has started with a bang.

The Secretariat is now under the leadership of a new Executive Director who brings significant new skills in economics and trade to the Chamber which will certainly redound to the benefit of members.

The Governor of the Central Bank has delivered the outlook for 2010 which projects no growth this year. Whilst this is not encouraging we must look for the opportunities to get ourselves ready to emerge from this recession ahead of the rest.

Over the next six months the focus of the Chamber will be on enhancing value for members, data collection and an exploration of new areas. Our web site is ready for launch and will provide an excellent platform for exchange with members and the further development of relationships with stakeholders.

Our Committees continue with the initiatives from last year which included discussions with the Port and Customs, revitalization of Bridgetown initiative and mentoring entrepreneurs. A Business Forum will be launched this month providing an intimate opportunity for businesses to share issues, suggestions and concerns with Council. Whilst small groups will be invited to allow for the frank exchange, persons who wish to be in the early groups can also approach the Secretariat. Over time all members will have an opportunity to participate.

In terms of data collection, there has been an ongoing concern that the Chamber is not always armed with reliable data regarding members' performances. The Chamber will therefore soon be embarking on a comprehensive membership survey and encourages all members to participate. Indeed, there has been a general concern raised by some government agencies about the apathy or reluctance of members to share information. A country's metrics can only be as reliable as the information provided and all members are encouraged to share necessary data to allow us to benchmark our country against others using reliable statistics.

As the Government gets ready to finalise the Employment Rights Bill, the Chamber plans to have a workshop to raise members awareness

about the new obligations and responsibilities which the legislation will introduce. Members are encouraged to participate in these sessions since the Bill will bring significant changes to the way Human Resource management is presently practiced.

Energy will also come under scrutiny as we provide a forum for our members and experts to discuss smart energy solutions and opportunities for a small economy.

Protocol V of the Social Partnership is under review this year and members are urged to send recommendations and ideas regarding how the social partnership and the protocol should be revamped to serve Barbados better moving forward.

I am pleased with the increased participation by members and certainly encourage all members to get involved. WE are the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber can only deliver what we all put into it.

Finally I am proud of those members who have played a leadership role in raising funds for Haiti. Haiti's circumstances are dire and their continued misfortune is heart wrenching. We must be thankful for what we have and remember our less fortunate Caribbean friends by giving generously – money, goods, resources and services. Remember them in your prayers.

Glenda Medford
President