

Competition Law and Policy in Small States Conference Synopsis

The Sir Shridath Ramphal Centre of the University of the West Indies in collaboration with the Small States Network for Economic Development recently hosted a workshop entitled "Competition Law and Policy in Small States: Enforcement and Institutional Challenges". This 2-day conference which took place on October 26-27, 2009, focused primarily on institutional design and strengthening along with implementation challenges for regional competition law enforcement and response to prohibited cross-border conduct.

The Jamaica and Barbados Fair Trading Commissions both presented papers on their respective institutional designs and the challenges which shape those designs. These issues were further discussed by participants from Estonia, Malta, Cyprus, UNCTAD, UK, with these representatives all making presentations on their related experiences. The conference also looked critically at the challenges likely to be faced by the CARICOM Competition Commission in enforcing regional competition policy. On this subject presentations were given by representatives of the OECS, and the CSME Unit. Facilitators of the programme included presentations from academics in the field of competition policy such as Dr. Taimoon Stewart, Competition Consultant and Visiting Lecturer, Ramphal Centre, Professor Lino Briguglio, Director of SSNED and Commissioner of Maltese Competition Commission.

In the workshop, the importance of synchronizing institutional design and institutional strengthening to the law and enforcement principles so as to ensure that both take into account institutional capacity and specific concerns that arise in small economies were recognised. It was noted that there are special challenges and constraints faced by small island states in implementing competition law and policy, and that while the main principles of competition law that have evolved in large developed economies are generally relevant also to smaller economies, the mode and intensity of application will have to take into account the particular characteristics of small insular economies, particularly because of their small domestic market and limited institutional capacity.

The Barbados Fair Trading Commission's paper on institutional challenges can be viewed here...