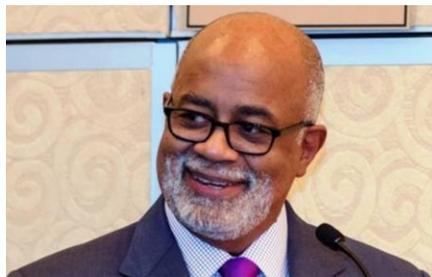




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## **Saint Lucia Embassy Participates in Virtual Town Hall on COVID-19**



**Washington, DC** - Ambassador Edmunds was a panellist in a virtual town hall meeting on April 21, 2020. The event, organized by the Authentic Caribbean Foundation, focused on updating the Caribbean diaspora on the effects of COVID-19 on Caribbean countries. Also presenting were Embassy representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Haiti, Saint Kitts & Nevis and Saint Vincent & the Grenadines.

During his intervention, Ambassador Edmunds provided an overview of the effects of COVID-19 on Saint Lucia, including numbers of people infected and the recovery rate. He reported on measures implemented by the Government, and the economic impact of the virus. He noted that COVID-19 has tested the medical system in Saint Lucia as it has the rest of the region, notably in forcing countries to direct resources to retrofitting facilities and the procurement of goods and equipment in amounts that had never been contemplated. Programs being put in place to assist the underprivileged and vulnerable as well as incentives being offered to businesses who retain the employees were highlighted - though he noted the fact that the economic impact for Saint Lucia and the region will be staggering. He noted that the nations of the Caribbean are for the most part highly dependant on tourism, and are particularly vulnerable, considering their relative high debt loads and an international financial system that has been increasingly difficult to navigate. COVID-19 highlights the region's vulnerability.

Ambassador Edmunds highlighted the challenges in identifying and repatriating nationals in North America – including cruise ship employees and Saint Lucian students. He commended the efforts being undertaken by the Diaspora and notably the various Saint Lucian associations for their willingness to provide support to those in need.

The meeting was an opportunity not only for the diaspora to be more informed about the realities on the ground in their respective Caribbean countries, but also provided a platform for said individuals and groups/associations to share some of the work they were undertaking to assist members of the diaspora directly impacted by COVID-19 and governments.

The Authentic Caribbean Foundation, established November 2012, is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing education and training, health, community tourism and support services to children and adult with disability and aids within the Diaspora and the Caribbean by achieving a high level of development and sustainability helping to eliminate poverty.

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Authentic Caribbean Foundation Inc. is a not-for-profit organization, based in Boston, focused on transforming the lives of the Caribbean children impacted by disabilities, HIV/AIDS and their caregivers through health and educational support.