



Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology forecasts end of Caribbean drought; warns more rain means increased chances of flooding for region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Bridgetown, Barbados (February 15, 2016) -- The drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 / early 2015 are expected to subside by the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season. But in their place we should prepare for the risks of landslides and flashfloods, as the rains return.

This is the key warning from regional climate services provider the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) in its latest seasonal climate forecast. The forecast comes after many months of warmer and drier than average conditions in the Caribbean fueled by El Niño, a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific which has implications for weather patterns around the world, including drought in many regions.

After the forecasted weakening of El Niño, its counterpart La Niña (a cooling of the Pacific) may take over and affect the region in the latter part of 2016. If the change in circumstance takes place, it is likely to result in higher than normal rainfall and stronger storm systems.

While near to above average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean later this year, CIMH advises that areas experiencing long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flashfloods, once rains return in excessive amounts.

“Limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils,” explains Adrian Trotman, Agrometeorologist and Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at CIMH. “As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil which increases the risk of flooding.”

Mr. Trotman says that recent advances in climate forecasting services for the Caribbean now means that government planners and other bodies can now make important decisions based on seasonal forecasts up to three to six months in advance.

“We know that advanced warning of an extreme event like a hurricane can help us to be more prepared. The same now applies for longer-term climatic events and this means that the sooner we can have an early warning of changing conditions the longer time we have to prepare and be more effective at mitigating those impacts,” he says.

On February 17th at 4.00pm, CIMH will host a press conference at the Savannah Hotel in Bridgetown, Barbados to discuss what the forecast means for the Caribbean, and in particular how its early climate warning information products can help the region’s six climate-sensitive sectors (agriculture, disaster management, energy, health, tourism and water) prepare for and adapt to what is expected to be a more intense wet / hurricane season. This press conference will be facilitated by the well-known journalist and BBC World presenter, Mr. David Eades, who is visiting the region as part of an international initiative sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization to highlight how climate forecasting services are being used to boost business and economic opportunities in all Small Island Developing States.

As a regional climate services provider, the Caribbean Regional Climate Centre (RCC) at CIMH offers several user-defined climate products and services to inform risk-based decision making in climate-sensitive sectors at the national and regional levels. The RCC also hosts the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF), a World Meteorological Organization-sanctioned network of regional meteorologists and users of climate information who meet bi-annually to discuss real-time seasonal forecasts, develop climate early warning systems and produce credible and authoritative regional climate outlook products -- such as the [Caribbean Drought Bulletin](#) and the [CariCOF Drought Outlook](#), which have been informing the region during the current record-breaking drought.

CariCOFs are the Caribbean's version of Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs), which are active in several parts of the world and critical for the development and effectiveness of early warning systems in that they provide real-time seasonal climate forecasts and interpretation.

An overview of the forecasted drought alleviation and subsequent increase in rainfall is available through CIMH's [CariCOF Caribbean Climate Outlook Newsletter](#), a climate information product that summarizes recent and expected seasonal climate events. Detailed information on the current drought situation is published in the [Caribbean Drought Bulletin](#).

For more information about the press conference, please contact Shireen Cuthbert, CIMH Communications Specialist at 246-425-1362 / 246-425-1363 or scuthbert@cimh.edu.bb

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