

Fairtrade Focus on African, Caribbean and Pacific Producers

February 22, 2010

Belfast, Northern Ireland: Fairtrade Fortnight 2010 started today with an event at Stormont Parliament, organised by the Fairtrade Belfast Committee and sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Junior Ministers.

The ceremony was attended by Ministers, MLAs, Central and Local Government, Charities, Fairtrade Groups, Statutory Bodies and invited guests, including the main speakers: Mr Robin Newton MLA, Junior Minister – OFMDFM, Professor Gerry McCormack, Pro Vice-Chancellor – Queen’s University Belfast, Dr Christopher Stange, Chair of Fairtrade Belfast and Hon. Consul of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.



L - R: Susan Kearney - Queen’s University Belfast, Mary Cathcart – Oxfam Ireland, Gillian Hannah – Co-operative, Catriona Ruane MLA – Minister of Education, Dr Christopher Stange (Chair) – Consulate of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Robin Newton MLA – Junior Minister (OFMDFM), Professor Gerry McCormack – Queen’s University Belfast, Clare McKeown – Sustainable Development Commission, Jo-Anne Dobson – Assistant to Jim Nicholson MEP, Jacqueline Gibson – Graham Construction, Reggie Clark (Treasurer), Jim Shannon MLA

The theme of this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight is the “Big Swap” whereby we are encouraging all sections of the population to swap their normal goods and produce to a Fairtrade variety. When consumers choose Fairtrade products, the price they pay covers the cost of sustainable production but also provides a premium that is invested in social, environmental and economic projects in developing nations.

In doing so, Fairtrade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers, primarily from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and improved terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.



L - R: Jim Shannon MLA, Robin Newton MLA - Junior Minister (OFMDFM), Ian Paisley Jnr. MLA, Dr Christopher Stange (Chair) – Consulate of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Dr Stange explained: “Fairtrade sales are currently £2.4 billion, assisting 562 producers across 3 continents in 60 different countries, particularly the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) region. This translates into more than 1.5 million producers, about 7.5 million people, including dependants, who are benefiting directly from Fairtrade. More can be done regarding other towns, churches and schools seeking Fairtrade accreditation, as well as, central and local government leadership relating to procurement, including and/or expanding Fairtrade options, throughout Northern Ireland.



L - R: Clodagh McAleavy, Niamh Bradley, Robin Newton MLA - Junior Minister: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Fionn McKeever, Rachel McEvoy and Leigh O'Neill. The children are from St. Clare's Primary School and Holy Rosary Primary School, winners of Fairtrade Belfast's Primary School Poster Competition

The event concluded by recognising the work of those primary schools who are championing Fairtrade across Belfast via the Primary School Fairtrade Poster Competition Awards. Fairtrade prizes were awarded through the generosity of the Co-operative and Oxfam Ireland.

ENDS

Notes for Editor:

Belfast achieved its first Fairtrade City Status for the UK Fairtrade Foundation in May 2005 and then was awarded a 2nd Fairtrade City Status in March 2006 by fair-trade Mark Ireland. Belfast is the only city in the UK or Ireland to date to have achieved this joint accolade. Both accreditations are scheduled to be renewed in January 2011.

For more information: www.fairtradebelfast.org