

## Baroness Floella Benjamin speaks.....

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**44th Anniversary Meeting of Caribbean Council for the Blind-Eye Care  
Caribbean  
Trinidad and Tobago - July 28th, 2011**

Baroness Floella Benjamin - the first female Trinidadian Peer in the House of Lords was the special guest of the Caribbean Council for the Blind/Eye Care Caribbean at the organisations recently concluded 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting in the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

At the opening ceremony of the meeting, which also included the presentation of the James Alves Awards, the Baroness while lauding the work of CCB/Eye Care Caribbean, called on Regional Governments to play their part in fight against blindness.

“There is far too much blindness and low vision in the Caribbean , there is much work to be done to educate and influence families and especially children and young people on the way their diet can have an effect on their health and that includes their vision.”

She said one way of addressing the problem is by a simple change in lifestyle especially among children.

“Foods high in carbohydrates, sugars and fats can cause diabetes and other major health problems which can have a direct effect on your sight and this can lead to blindness. This simple change in lifestyle that has been addressed early.... not eating fast foods, not eating too much sugar, not eating too many high carbohydrates comes with education” the Baroness noted.

In stating that there was need for more resources, Baroness Benjamin said the CCB has been moving in the right direction with the creation of the degree course in Optometry at the University of Guyana.

“The Degree course is such an excellent move and hopefully by 2014 more universities across the Caribbean will come on board and this will fill the service gap in the region.”

Baroness Benjamin who is also the Chancellor at the University of Exeter said that University is currently leading the way in finding out the causes of diabetes and identify the genes linked to that health issue.

“This work is ongoing and hopefully will not just benefit the UK but the work being done by the CCB in the Caribbean and beyond.” She said.

The meeting was officially declared open by the First Lady of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Jean Ramjohn-Richards.



(l-r) Keith Taylor (husband of the Baroness), Baroness Floella Benjamin, Arthur Snell (British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago), Arvel Grant (CEO - CCB), Adelaide Addo-Fening(Director of Programmes - Sightsavers), Lola Marson (President - CCB)