Thank you, Engr. Natalie Sparkes, President of the Jamaica Institution of Engineers; and Engr. McFarlane-Sweeney, President of PERB, for your kind opening remarks. Also my thanks to all authorities, colleagues in the engineering profession, ladies and gentlemen present, for accompanying us in this meeting.

Some eleven years ago, as the clouds of the so-called “great recession” were gathering in places like New York, Paris, London and other capitals of the world’s financial firmament -a recession that ultimately impacted so negatively the economies of so many nations- a different sort of gathering was also taking place in our part of the world. A small, but very representative, group of professionals from a few pioneering countries and institutions of the Caribbean were, at that very moment, converging in Panama City. They were working under the auspices of a few visionary organizations -some public, as the Inter-American Development Bank; some private, as the Hewlett Packard Labs- to make reality a novel idea. And the idea was: to create a region-wide system of quality assurance for engineering education in the entire Greater Caribbean. I know this, because I was there. Our esteemed former chairman, -the late Garth Kiddoe, whose memory we are honoring today- was there as well, amongst the pioneers. That was the July 2008 kick-off meeting of the GCREAS Project. Only a dream then, but also a powerfull, collective, bottom-up effort of all stakeholders then present in that meeting, to carry forward in this region the notion first espoused for the whole continent by the Organization Of American States back in 2004, through the initiative “Engineering for the Americas”.

That initiative was predicated on the proposition that the profession of Engineer is first, and foremost, an instrument of progress. Not only a particular domain of human kowledge. Not a simple college career. But a true social force that can provide solid foundations for our countries to achieve competitiveness and stay competitive in the midst of the world’s economic vagaries. Today, in the eve of 2020, as we approach the twelveth anniversary of that momentous kick-off meeting, and the thenth anniversay of the official chartering of our caribbean organization, we in GCREAS stand proud of being prominent actors in this effort toward the progress of our countries, and of our countrbution to realize that dream of quality assurance of engineering education for the whole region. GCREAS is an autonomous organization, not depending for its sustenance -like other sister agencies in the region- on a mandatory support from any government or political superstructure; or on any sole-source subsidy from any single organization; academic or not; national or international. We only depend on voluntary contributions from multiple public and professional stakeholders in the region. Also we only respond to the voluntary private demand for, and commitment to, the quality of education. Despite this rather challenging business model, the evidence shows that GCREAS has survived the rigors of its institutional
infancy period. And, unlike other similar Caribbean organizations, the agency not only keeps operating in the region, but it continues to grow. The evidence shows that each passing year GCREAS keeps expanding the portfolio of university members and engineering programs engaged in its evaluation and accreditation cycle. The GCREAS quality brand also keeps not only gaining appreciation within the community of colleges and universities, but also eliciting general international recognition. An important reason for this growing good reputation is the agency’s close collaboration with the senior partners: the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology, ABET, of USA and the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board, CEAB; with both of which GCREAS has signed and maintains active strategic alliances, in its steady progression toward being recognised as member of the Washington Accord.

To date our all voluntary, private, non-for-profit, international accreditation agency has received some 40 formal applications and expressions of interest, from 10 universities in the Caribbean, to evaluate and accredit the quality of their engineering education programs. Out of these applications -from careers spanning 12 different engineering specialties- GCREAS has evaluated 12 programs; has accredited or re-accredited 10; and currently has 6 programs under consideration for international accreditation and/or re-accreditation. Also during its relatively short existence, GCREAS has actively promoted an agenda for quality assurance of higher education on Engineering in the whole Greater Caribbean region. Evidence of this promotion are: (i) the permanent 4 on-line introductory training courses it offered during the first years of operation; (ii) the 4 international conferences it has organized with worldwide experts in countries of the region; (iii) the 7 in person Peer-friend Workshops on advanced techniques and procedures for Quality Assessment and Self-study of engineering programs it has organized in universities of the region; and (iv) the international training initiative Leadership in Accreditation Program, established in collaboration with ABET of USA. All through these efforts, GCREAS has maintained active cooperation, via institutional agreements and otherwise, with other organizations promoting the quality of engineering in the Americas; such as the Latin American & Caribbean Consortium of Engineering Institutions, LACCEI, and the Central America accrediting agency, ACAAJ; as well as through M.O.U.s with ABET and CEAB: the senior agencies under whose mentorship GCREAS works toward its membership in the Washington Accord.

So, in GCREAS each year we feel that we are “a year closer” to the time when the Caribbean Engineering ranks among the best in the world, as a result of the continuous effort at quality assurance of our engineering education, based on world class criteria and standards. So, it is in this context that we are here today to re-affirm our continuous and close links of friendship and collaboration in this pursuit with PERB, the JIE, the universities and all other public and private stakeholders of the engineering profession in Jamaica, one of our founding member countries.

Thank you all.