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Major benefits expected as Saint Jude's Hospital concludes twinning with CCH in Taiwan

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Thursday, July 9, 2009 – An “**Agreement to Explore Avenues for the Twinning of St. Jude Hospital, Saint Lucia and Changhua Christian Hospital, Republic of China (Taiwan)**” was signed on the morning of Wednesday, 8th July at Saint Jude's Hospital and witnessed by Hon. Dr. Keith Mondesir, Minister for Health, Wellness, Family Affairs, National Mobilization, Human Services and Gender Relations and H. E. Tom Chou, Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan), among a fully-packed-library audience of the officials from the Ministry, Hospital staff and members of the Embassy of the R.O.C. (Taiwan).

Mr. Percival McDonald, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Saint Jude's Hospital in his welcoming speech recalled his personal experiences visiting Taiwan when he was the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health in late 1980s. He further indicated the urgent need and challenges the Hospital encounters are in part addressed by means of arrangements even before signing the Agreement. Since three technical staff members from St. Jude Hospital are currently at the CCH in Taiwan undergoing a three-month bio-medical training program under the auspices of both the Government of R.O.C. (Taiwan) and the CCH, he expected immediate assistance in the areas of radiology and pathology would be pursued. He thanked both the Ministry of Health and the Taiwanese Embassy, especially Ambassador Tom Chou, for their persistent assistance in making this sisterhood possible.

According to the agreement, both medical facilities agree to undertake a comprehensive exchange of information on the health sector, provision of international volunteers and to facilitate the increase in knowledge of health care professionals through the conduct of seminars and professional training and exchanges of staff on the basis of equality and reciprocity.

In his presentation, Dr. Yee-wen HUANG, Head of the CCH delegation on behalf of Dr. Shou Ren KUO, Superintendent of CCH, briefed the audience with general information and values of the CCH, and shed light

on the training program being undertaken by the three trainees from St. Jude Hospital displaying their photographs in the process. He explained that the CCH is a 1600- bed medical center located in central Taiwan, employing over 3,800 people and receiving approximately 5,000 patient-visits daily. Dr. HUANG also praised Minister Mondesir's determination in facilitating the cooperation between the two hospitals, which led to the signing of the Agreement.

In response, Dr. Mondesir shared with the audience his observation during his first encounter at the CCH in Taiwan last year. He observed that the CCH offers a complete array of patient-centered health care services delivered in a beautiful facility. When asked in what way could the two hospitals substantiate cooperation, he immediately presented a long shopping list for St. Jude Hospital to the CCH, and kept in touch with the Taiwan Embassy, which resulted in the agreement being signed. Minister Mondesir also revealed that in addition to the three trainees from St. Jude Hospital, two medical staff members from two other hospitals in Saint Lucia are also participating in workshops at the CCH in Taiwan which points to cooperation reaching beyond St. Jude Hospital.

Opinions have been exchanged among the two hospitals, the Ministry and the Taiwan Embassy with regards to resolving the urgent needs of assistance in radiology and pathology, and training programs for nursing and management staff at St. Jude Hospital. Preliminary ideas and arrangements for sending medical and nursing volunteers from Taiwan were also discussed.

As a happy matchmaker, the Taiwanese Ambassador Tom Chou attributed the origin of this cooperation to the initiatives by Prime Minister Stephenson King and Health Minister Dr. Keith Mondesir. They all appreciate the same view of the urgent need for St. Jude Hospital to strengthen its capacity building measures by twinning with CCH, one of Taiwan's premier academic medical centres and a major referral centre. It has been given the highest mark "Superior" in hospital accreditation and "Excellent" in teaching hospital. Now that the Agreement is signed, many more programs and areas of cooperation along with relevant schedules would be announced soon with an aim to balance medical resources between the north and the south of Saint Lucia. Ambassador Chou then happily announced the "marriage" a reality.

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