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Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

Second Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM)
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REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM (RCM)

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SECOND MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM (RCM)

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in its capacity as secretariat to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) for the coordination of the implementation of the sustainable development initiatives in the Caribbean subregion following the Mauritius Strategy, convened the second meeting of the TAC at its conference facilities in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 7 September 2009. The TAC enjoyed good representation of governments and development partners with participants attending from seven member and associate member countries, two intergovernmental bodies, one development partner and two technical institutions. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

Agenda item 1: Opening remarks

Mr. Embert St. Juste, Director of Research and Policy, Ministry of Finance, Government of Saint Lucia, in his capacity of Chair of the TAC, delivered the opening remarks. He thanked the government representatives, development partners, and representatives of regional and technical agencies for their attendance and reminded them of the importance of the meeting and the tasks before them. He also addressed special thanks to the ECLAC Secretariat for convening the meeting. He stressed the importance of the meeting, especially in view of the current global economic and financial crisis which had heightened the vulnerabilities of small States. He suggested that though the impacts of the crisis might have shifted governments' priorities away from the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI), now was the time for renewed commitment to the Mauritius Strategy. He called for the meeting to inspire renewed commitment to the core principles of the Mauritius Strategy and the objectives of the TAC. He noted that small countries, such as Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were least able to withstand the severe dislocation arising from developments such as the financial market meltdown. He noted that a number of negative impacts such as massive job losses and the fall in tourist arrivals, resulted in an additional burden as most governments were already under severe fiscal pressure and did not have the resources to provide the necessary buffer to such catastrophic events.

Member governments were urged to complete their national assessment reports by the November 2009 deadline so that the regional synthesis report, that would guide the strategy of the region on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, could be completed.

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean extended a warm welcome to all participants. He reminded participants that at its twenty-first Session in January 2006, the Caribbean Development Cooperation Committee (CDCC) decided to establish the RCM at the policy-making level, with the TAC as the operational arm. Following that, at its meeting in 2008, the TAC adopted its work programme with the main feature being its simple, focused and achievable design. He suggested that significant progress could be reported at this

meeting, just over two years after the establishment of the RCM, despite the lack of success in mobilizing the necessary financial resources to support this process.

He reminded the meeting that ECLAC had established the post of Regional Adviser and had used the technical resources of its Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre (CKMC) and Information Technology (IT) resources to establish a coordination website. In that regard, he acknowledged the work of the Regional Adviser in spearheading the effort with the support of the unit.

He drew the attention of the meeting to the fact that the MSI five-year review process had begun, spearheaded by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). He indicated that ECLAC was committed to finalizing an institutional report on implementation for submission by 30 November and to providing technical support to governments for the preparation of country reports. National consultations were expected to embed the preparation of country reports and preliminary discussions with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had begun with a view to jointly supporting the national consultation processes in all member countries.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of agenda

The following agenda for the TAC was adopted:

- Agenda item 1: Opening remarks
- Agenda item 2: Adoption of agenda
- Agenda item 3: Review of the work programme of the RCM for the period 2008-2009
- Agenda item 4: Review of preparations for the MSI Review 2010
- Agenda item 5: Proposals for 2010-2011 work programme
- Agenda item 6: Close

Agenda item 3: Review of the work programme of the RCM for the period 2008-2009

The secretariat presented a progress report on the implementation of the programme of work for the period under review. The Regional Adviser provided background information on the establishment of the TAC and the RCM, their frameworks, organizational structures and memberships.

She recounted the outcome of the thirteenth Meeting of the Monitoring Committee which *inter alia* “noted that one of the key values of the RCM was as a platform for enhancing collaboration and coordination among development agencies and development partners in the area of sustainable development, especially in the context of the CSME”. In regard to the TAC, that meeting had “reiterated the value of the technical institutions to the composition of the TAC,

and sought to ensure the broadest participation in the TAC in order to build bridges across multiple agencies and strengthen a holistic approach to its work”.

One of the core activities on which the secretariat reported, was item 3.4 the gathering and disseminating of information. The secretariat demonstrated the information platform which was established during the work programme period and housed on the ECLAC website and which contained core documents of relevance to the issues of sustainable development as identified by TAC members; and information about the TAC and its members. The secretariat reported that the website was circulated to all member and associate member countries of ECLAC/CDCC and requests for information on their progress in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy was sought through a questionnaire.

The secretariat outlined plans for the period September to December 2009 which would bring the work programme to completion. Among those highlighted were the preparation of the MSI institutional report due on 30 November 2009; the reconfirmation of focal points for the MSI review process; and the identification of resources and the facilitation of technical assistance to member and associate member countries in the MSI+5 review process. The secretariat’s detailed report is contained in document, “Report for the period January 2008-August 2009 of the Regional Adviser as Secretary to the TAC of the RCM” which was presented to the meeting.

A round table discussion followed the presentation of the report.

The secretariat was thanked for the report and congratulated on its ability to undertake the work programme despite resource constraints.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were raised and agreed upon:

(a) It was suggested that in light of the significant work which was being undertaken by the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat in a number of the critical areas identified by the MSI, such work should be presented in the report of the TAC;

(b) A working group of the TAC should be established to provide support to the RCM process comprising the intergovernmental bodies that sit on the TAC: The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), ECLAC, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); and

(c) The ACS offered its assistance to strengthen the collaborative process, presenting as an example the collaboration achieved through the Caribbean Sea Initiative.

Agenda Item 4: Review of preparations for the MSI Review 2010

The TAC was alerted to a number of documents and dates relevant to the preparatory process which would be spearheaded by UNDESA. The Regional Adviser also reported to participants of the secretariat’s involvement in the Inter-Agency Coordinating Group (IACG) SIDS meetings via teleconference convened by UNDESA.

The deadline for the production of national reports, 30 November 2009, was key among the dates presented for consideration. The meeting's attention was also brought to the subregional preparatory process which included a possible preparatory meeting in Grenada; the upcoming CDCC meeting at the ministerial level in 2010; and the production of a synthesis report on the status of Caribbean SIDS. At the global level, members were reminded of the global preparatory meeting to take place on SIDS Day during the eighteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the High-Level Review at the 65th Session of the General Assembly, in New York in September 2010, over a two-day period.

The meeting was informed of the close collaboration of UNDESA with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) on the MSI+5 review process and the fact that Grenada was currently Chair of AOSIS.

Following a substantive review of the documentation presented, the meeting concluded that the review process, MSI+5, was a significant process for Caribbean SIDS and full support should be provided to those governments requiring help, to ensure widest possible participation in the review process.

The meeting was informed that some assistance might become available through UNDESA and/or UNDP/Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) which were working to spearhead and assist, respectively, the MSI+5 review process. Associate member countries (AMCs) were given an opportunity to discuss their participation in the upcoming review and representatives gave assurances of their countries' intention to participate. Representatives of the organizations present indicated that they would follow up with their respective organizations to ensure that the "Reports from Regional and International Agencies as well as 'Non SIDS' countries" would be prepared and submitted by the due date.

The meeting thanked the secretariat for bringing the documentation to members' attention and noted the following:

- (a) The necessity to have an updated list of focal points;
- (b) A benchmarking tool should be developed to compare performance across Caribbean SIDS;
- (c) The secretariat of the TAC should identify resources to enable countries to meet the reporting deadline; and
- (d) The secretariat of the TAC should coordinate the provision of the technical assistance and guidance requested by countries.

The secretariat concluded the discussion by recommending to member and associate member countries, in light of the human resource constraints experienced by SIDS, that where other reports which might contain similar information required for the review have been completed, best use of those existing reports should be made in order to assist countries in fulfilling the MSI+5 Review.

Agenda item 5: Proposals for 2010-2011 work programme

The Regional Adviser outlined the details of the “Proposed Draft Work Programme of the RCM for the period 2010-2011,” and briefly referred to the document “Activities proposed by the working group responsible for monitoring the implementation of the decisions of this forum relevant to the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS” also called the ‘CARICOM matrix.’ It was noted that the focus of the proposed draft work plan 2010-2011 was on core programme activities rather than administration.

Lengthy and in-depth discussions followed the presentation. Advice was given on content and language of the work programme which would make the work programme more precise, measurable and user friendly. A key recommendation arising from the discussion was that the TAC should take ownership of the “CARICOM Matrix” which should be renamed the Regional Implementation Matrix and it should be reviewed and updated.

Discussions highlighted the necessity to change the wording of the draft proposed work plan to be more action-oriented and to include measurable performance indicators, critical assumptions and necessary resources. In light of changing governments and ministerial/agency personnel, the representative of Belize suggested more elaboration to the work plan to inform persons not familiar with the processes.

As related to specific work programme activities, the meeting highlighted the need to develop an advisory working group of institutional partners to spearhead the activity “Strengthen member States’ knowledge of RCM/TAC” under work programme heading Encourage the Development/Strengthening of partnerships.

Pertaining to “Public awareness and communication,” and in support of Trinidad and Tobago’s intervention, the representative of the University of the West Indies (UWI) suggested the secretariat undertake the preparation of an e-newsletter to assist in the management of the information overload and to facilitate the sharing of information.

In regard to the newly renamed Regional Implementation Matrix, it was agreed that there was a need to clarify the status of the matrix, implementation, and authority/responsibility for the activities that appeared.

During the ensuing discussions, it was agreed that:

- (a) The institutional working group of TAC will be established to advise on strategies for updating and implementing the matrix;
- (b) The exercise of updating the matrix should be a collaborative one;
- (c) National/synthesized reports would feed information to update the matrix; and
- (d) There was a need to identify in the matrix- responsibility and time frame for completion of activities;

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in summarizing the discussions, stated that there appeared to be a consensus that TAC should take ownership of the CARICOM matrix with a name change to Regional Implementation Matrix. He also suggested that there was agreement that the Matrix would be updated by using the national and subregional synthesized reports. In addition the TAC should have responsibility to periodically update the matrix, as necessary.

Agenda item 6: Close

The Chairman of the meeting presented to the TAC a brief report highlighting the outcome of their deliberations, which would be presented to the CDCC Monitoring Committee Meeting, to be convened on 8 September 2009. The meeting agreed with the proposed brief with minor modifications.

In bringing the meeting to a close, the Chair thanked the ECLAC Regional Adviser, Director and other staff of the secretariat, and expressed his desire for follow-up and commitment to the process. In his closing remarks, the ECLAC Director thanked everyone for their participation and suggestions for improvement. He also expressed pleasure to be able to report to the TAC that the TAC Institutional Advisory Working Group had agreed on a meeting date and time in Saint Lucia, on the rim of a CARICOM Meeting of Ministers to be convened the following week.

The meeting closed with the usual exchange of courtesies.

Annex I

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Annex II

**SECOND MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM (RCM)**

Monday 7 September 2009

PROPOSED DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME OF THE RCM FOR THE PERIOD 2010-2011

GOAL:

To assist Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in meeting their commitments under the MSI.

OBJECTIVES:

- (a) To ensure the achievement of effective coordination of sustainable development initiatives in the Caribbean region;
- (b) To facilitate the implementation of Agenda 21, the JPOI, the BPoA and MSI;
- (c) To optimize benefits from the use of available human, financial and other resources;
- (d) To assist in the mobilization of new and additional resources; and
- (e) To promote awareness at all levels of sustainable development issues and activities.

EXPECTED OUTCOME:

A coherent programme of action of Caribbean SIDS in meeting their commitments under the MSI.

