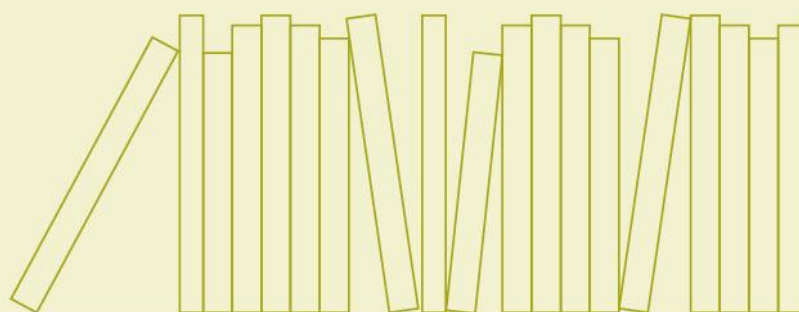


Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN



Report of the meeting to discuss modalities for operationalizing the Caribbean Small Island Developing States Mechanism for Sustainable Development



UNITED NATIONS

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

Meeting to discuss modalities for operationalizing
the Caribbean Small Island Developing States
Mechanism for Sustainable Development

Virtual meeting, 15 January 2024

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**REPORT OF THE MEETING TO DISCUSS MODALITIES
FOR OPERATIONALIZING THE CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES MECHANISM
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

1. The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) convened a meeting to discuss modalities for operationalizing the Caribbean Small Island Developing States Mechanism for Sustainable Development on Monday 15 January 2024.

2. Attendance

2. There were 15 people in attendance. The meeting participants which encompassed representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society were individuals experienced with the implementation of the Small Island Developing States Programme of Action (SIDS POA) and familiar with the work of the previous SIDS Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM).

3. Meeting agenda

1. Agenda item 1: Opening remarks
2. Agenda item 2: Background and context
3. Agenda item 3: Review of the proposed Caribbean Mechanism for Sustainable Development
4. Agenda item 4: Discussion and recommendations
5. Closing remarks

B. REPORTING THE PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting

3. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean wished the meeting participants all the best for 2024. She noted that 2024 was an important year for the Caribbean subregion as the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States was scheduled to take place in Antigua and Barbuda from 27 to 30 May, and as such the subregion should seek to maximize this opportunity. The Director noted that it was important that member States be allowed to be heard in this process. She acknowledged that whilst a new SIDS POA would be expected to be adopted during the meeting, it was also expected that greater emphasis would be placed on having a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess progress of implementation.

4. The Director noted that the subregion had established an interim RCM as early as 1995 to support the implementation and monitoring of the Barbados Programme of Action. The RCM, which was further formalized in 2006 as an organ of the CDCC, thereby allowing for the widest participation of Caribbean States and territories and other stakeholders. She noted that with almost three decades of experience seeking to operationalize the RCM, the subregion in 2020 agreed to a restructure and renaming of the Mechanism. The new Mechanism, known as the Caribbean Small Island Developing States Mechanism (C-SIDS Mechanism) for Sustainable Development, would be responsible for monitoring and supporting sustainable development implementation in Caribbean SIDS. The Director noted that the subregion would be tasked with ensuring that the new Mechanism was meaningful and able to support the monitoring and

implementation of both the new SIDS POA and Agenda 2030. She closed by encouraging the participants to offer frank and earnest feedback on the proposal shared during the meeting.

2. Background and context

5. The Coordinator and Sustainable Development Officer, Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit within ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean provided an overview of the background and context of the RCM. In her presentation she noted that the reason Caribbean SIDS first established the RCM was to assist them in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The Coordinator then went on to provide the meeting with an overview of how the Regional Coordinating Mechanism progressed from an interim RCM to the Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development. The successes and challenges the RCM experienced since its inception were also outlined. She noted that despite some of the challenges faced, Caribbean SIDS in the lead up to the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States noted that such a mechanism was important in supporting the Caribbean SIDS in the advancement of their sustainable development agendas. Noting this, she informed the participants that the meeting was convened to review a proposal for the operationalization of the Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development.

3. Review of the proposed Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development

6. The Sustainable Development Officer, Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean began her presentation by stating that the subregion should first seek to have a clear understanding of the objectives of the C-SIDS Mechanism and that once this was understood, focus on defining its functions and structure. She noted that it was important that the Mechanism provided benefits to Caribbean SIDS and that these potential benefits are shared with member States early in the operationalization process. Taking this into account, the Sustainable Development Officer shared a proposed definition of the Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development. Departing from the proposed definition, she outlined the proposed objectives, thematic areas, functions and structure of the Mechanism.

7. In relation to the proposed structure of the Mechanism, the Sustainable Development Officer noted that the identification of Caribbean SIDS Mechanism focal points was essential to the success of the Mechanism. She noted that the development of terms of reference which clearly outlined the role and function of the focal points would be important in helping countries identify the most appropriate ministry/department to serve as focal point. The Sustainable Development Officer noted that without the identification and commitment of country focal points, the Caribbean SIDS Mechanism for Sustainable Development convening body would not be able to function optimally. This was because the C-SIDS Mechanism was being proposed as a mechanism owned and centred around Caribbean SIDS. She proposed that apart from endorsing the Mechanism's work programme, the convening body could also be responsible for establishing working groups to support the work of the C-SIDS Mechanism.

8. Related to the issue of financing the Mechanism, the Sustainable Development Officer noted that it was unlikely that its operations would be fully funded in the short-term through a project or programme. As such, it was important that the subregion look towards multiple sources of financing and other innovative approaches to ensure implementation of the Mechanism's activities. One approach recommended was the cost sharing of secretarial responsibilities amongst intergovernmental organizations and hosting meetings of the C-SIDS Mechanism in conjunction with other intergovernmental meetings. Support for the implementation of the C-SIDS Mechanism work programme could be achieved by partnering with other regional intergovernmental organizations and donors that are committed to working with Caribbean SIDS to advance their sustainable development agenda.

9. In closing the Sustainable Development Officer posed some guiding questions to support the discussion and recommendations agenda item.

4. Discussion and recommendations

10. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean thanked the Sustainable Development Officer for her presentation. To guide the discussion, the Director invited the participants to comment on the proposals outlined.

11. Defining the Mechanism: The Executive Director of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) indicated that the C-SIDS Mechanism should not be restricted to only governments, and that civil society and the private sector's participation should also be incorporated into the Mechanism. This recommendation was endorsed by the Chair of CANARI, who also queried the rationale for tasking the Mechanism to monitor the implementation of sustainable development agendas, as he noted that these were national responsibilities. In response to these two recommendations, the ECLAC Director noted that sustainable development was participatory and agreed that civil society should be represented. She also noted that regional commissions have a responsibility to report on the status of implementation of the sustainable development agendas. Whilst she did agree that countries are ultimately responsible for monitoring the status of implementation of the SIDS POA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), she noted that regional commissions have been tasked with reporting on national progress. She observed that the regional commissions may do so by seeking the reports from the governments and then using these reports to report upwards to the General Assembly. Taking this into account, she noted that the Mechanism would need to be perceived as being valuable in assisting member States meet their international and regional commitments in relation to sustainable development.

12. The Special Envoy to the Premier of the British Virgin Islands endorsed the proposed definition and noted that this proposed Mechanism was vital to ECLAC associate members. Hence the proposed C-SIDS Mechanism was seen as highly valuable to the associate members specifically. With respect to the objective of monitoring the progress of implementation of the sustainable development agendas of Caribbean SIDS, he noted that the support provided by ECLAC to the associate members in this regard was important in implementing their sustainable development priorities.

13. The Senior Environment Officer, Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Barbados, noted that it was important to identify the barriers which hindered the success of previous iterations of the Mechanism. He further went on to note the importance of broad political ownership of the Mechanism. The Senior Environment Officer reminded the meeting about the existence of other regional coordinating mechanisms and that synchronicity amongst all of them would be important to reduce duplication. He closed his intervention by noting that capacity limitations, another barrier, continued to plague Caribbean SIDS in effectively meeting their monitoring and reporting commitments. If these barriers were not effectively addressed, the Mechanism would continue to struggle.

14. In responding to the previous intervention, the ECLAC Director endorsed the recommendation for increased synchronicity amongst the existing regional coordinating mechanisms. Specific reference was made to the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF), an instrument for planning and implementing United Nations related activities supportive of fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. The Director noted that the MSDCF was focused on agenda 2030 and not the SIDS POA and that moving forward, integration would be critical in reducing the load on Caribbean SIDS.

15. The Project Manager – SDGs, Ministry of Planning and Development of Trinidad and Tobago, endorsed the recommendation of the ECLAC Director in relation to the MSDCF. She further noted that the C-SIDS Mechanism could tailor itself along the MSDCF to reduce duplication of effort. In responding to

this suggestion however, the Programme Director, Vision 2030 Jamaica Secretariat, pointed out that the MSDCF tended to take up a lot of country effort at the expense of other issues that might be important to the countries. The Special Envoy to the Premier of the British Virgin Islands further noted that all the associate members are not included in the MSDCF.

16. Potential benefits: Whilst participants agreed with the potential benefits outlined, they provided recommendations for strengthening the potential benefits to the countries from their participation in the Mechanism.

17. The Programme Director, Vision 2030 Jamaica Secretariat, reminded participants that at times synergy amongst multi-stakeholder groups were lacking and as such this needed to be managed at the national level. She noted that often the bigger challenge was in the monitoring and evaluation of these international frameworks and not necessarily in the reporting. In a related point, the Head of Environmental Sustainability Division, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), suggested the need for the Mechanism to also include South-South collaboration with other SIDS regions.

18. The Senior Environment Officer noted that it was important that the Mechanism go beyond identifying capacity support and that it should instead seek to support countries in meeting their capacity needs. He indicated that this capacity constraint was evident during the Samoa Pathway implementation period where little attention was placed on monitoring its implementation due to capacity issues.

19. The CANARI Executive Director called for the inclusion of a benefit which would speak to encouraging multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships. She also recommended framing additional participants as civil society and not major groups. She noted that civil society incorporated stakeholder groups like academia, media, private sector and professional associations, community groups and non-profit organizations.

20. Proposed objectives: In reviewing the proposed objectives, the meeting participants made recommendations which included: the need for a new objective related to multi-stakeholder collaboration, placing SIDS-SIDS cooperation and collaboration as a separate objective, and ensuring that the advancement of political advocacy occurred both regionally and globally.

21. Proposed thematic area: It was recommended that the New Urban Agenda and Development Finance Framework be included as one of the possible additional agreements that could be assessed within the Mechanism.

22. Proposed functions: The Executive Director, CANARI, noted that due to the revisions to the objectives, the proposed functions would also need to be amended. She then went on to ask if ECLAC had undertaken a mapping exercise of mechanisms and organizations which were delivering, or aiming to deliver, similar functions to those proposed by the C-SIDS Mechanism. The Director acknowledged that such an exercise had not been undertaken but agreed that the findings from such an exercise could guide the development of the C-SIDS Mechanism proposal. She noted that it was important to situate the functioning of the Mechanism within an existing landscape to avoid duplication. She also referenced National Focal Point Mechanism of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) and the Centre of Excellence being proposed by Antigua and Barbuda, specifically, how they would fit within the framework being defined for the C-SIDS Mechanism. The Economic Affairs Officer, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, reminded the meeting that Aruba had also sought to establish a Centre of Excellence for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

23. Proposed structure: The Chair of CANARI asked for clarification on how the meetings of the C-SIDS Mechanism for sustainable development convening body differed from the meetings of the CDCC. It was explained that the convening body was perceived as a technical group, whilst the membership of the CDCC were at the political level.

24. The Programme Director, Vision 2030 Jamaica Secretariat, recommended that the secretariat's function should include both an administrative and technical role. In responding to the issue of the secretariat, the Economic Affairs Officer noted that based on previous experience with the RCM, it was important that the parameters of the secretariat be clearly defined, since this affected the ownership of the Mechanism by State stakeholders in the past. In response, the Programme Director observed that the secretariat should set the philosophical context for the operation of the new C-SIDS Mechanism.

25. The Sustainable Development Officer requested confirmation that the major groups (civil society) would also be part of the C-SIDS Mechanism convening body. The ECLAC Director confirmed the inclusion of civil society within the convening body.

26. The Senior Environment Officer raised the question of the role of the CDCC in the operationalizing of the C-SIDS Mechanism. He further suggested that consideration could be given to engaging civil society through the established working groups. He noted that the subregion in the past had called for a regional partnership framework and asked whether the C-SIDS Mechanism could support the establishment of such a framework. In closing his intervention, the officer noted that it may be too early to consider the Mechanism's structure and instead suggested focusing on building consensus on the Mechanism's objectives and functions.

27. In response, the ECLAC Director noted that the falling of the previous Technical Advisory Committee into abeyance over recent years did not allow for strong engagement of the RCM with the CDCC. She suggested that the C-SIDS Mechanism could help resuscitate this relationship and connect the SIDS agenda more regularly to the CDCC.

28. Meetings of the Mechanism: With respect to meetings of the C-SIDS Mechanism, the Special Envoy to the Premier acknowledged the importance of setting meeting conditions of the working groups, to avoid the groups' activities falling dormant over time. Such conditions were deemed to include meeting frequency and method of convening.

29. Financing the Mechanism: In the interest of time, the ECLAC Director proposed that ECLAC pursue further consultations with other subregional partners (United Nations system, CARICOM and OECS) to identify the way forward. She noted that ECLAC already convened two meetings (Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee and Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development) into which the C-SIDS Mechanism could be added as part of the face-to-face meetings for a SIDS review. She asked the meeting for time to undertake some consultation going forward. In responding to these proposals, the Special Envoy to the Premier of the British Virgin Islands noted the criticality of ECLAC being the anchor for this Mechanism and formally requested this in the interest of the associate members.

5. Closing remarks

30. The ECLAC Director thanked the meeting participants for their contributions during the meeting to advance a proposal for the operationalization of the Caribbean small island developing States Mechanism for sustainable development. She noted that the meeting raised critical issues which should be addressed when revising the draft proposal. The Director noted that it was her hope that the C-SIDS Mechanism could lead the way in supporting Caribbean States and territories implement the new SIDS POA. She noted that

initial success in implementing some of the Mechanism's work programme activities could potentially lead to donor funding. The Director concluded her remarks by suggesting that an in-person meeting with this group to review the revised proposal could possibly be convened during the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development before being shared widely with Caribbean States and territories in advance of the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States. She then closed the meeting.

Annex I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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