



Parliamentary Observatory on Climate Change and Just Transition (OPCC)

OPCC side event at the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)

CONCEPT NOTE

Key event details

Title	Climate change and environmental legislation in support of the delivery of the new Programme of Action for SIDS
Date	29 May 2024
Place	Saint John's, Antigua and Barbuda, American University of Antigua (SIDS4 conference venue)
Time	4.00 p.m. – 5.30 p.m. (AST, local time Antigua and Barbuda)
Coordination	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Government of the British Virgin Islands, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission Parliamentary Observatory on Climate Change and Just Transition (OPCC)
Support	Open Society Foundations (OSF)
Languages	English
Link	https://www.cepal.org/en/events/climate-change-and-environmental-legislation-support-delivery-new-programme-action-sids
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About the OPCC

The Parliamentary Observatory on Climate Change and Just Transition (OPCC)¹ is a network comprising lawmakers, technical advisors, and government focal points from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The OPCC's main goal is to bolster environmental and climate change legislation in the region. This initiative stems from a recognition of the crucial role of cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity among parliamentarians across the region in facilitating a just transition to sustainable and low-carbon economies and enhanced resilience. The OPCC is in line with the objectives of the Escazú Agreement,² which aims to ensure access to environmental information rights across the region. Therefore, it supports improved transparency and accessibility to legislative data, also recognizing them as powerful drivers for increased public participation. The OPCC leverages the diversity of its participants to foster a collaborative environment where common ground can be found for advancing the region's climate ambitions. OPCC's Joint Statements are one of the initiative's tools to articulate those shared perspectives in international forums to the global community.

The portfolio of activities, resources, and opportunities available to OPCC participants are summarised below:

- **A network-building and knowledge-sharing platform:** the OPCC facilitates technical meetings, workshops, webinars, and other activities, including a permanent digital communication channel. These efforts provide an interactive space for participants to share their diverse expertise and discuss effective legislative practices with peers from across the region.
- **An online database and information dissemination tool:** it offers free access to a comprehensive Legislative Data Tracker that hosts over two thousand records of environmental laws, bills and proposals, and climate change framework laws. Legislative bulletins containing technical legislative analyses collaboratively produced by participants are also available online.
- **A forum for high-level coordination and dialogue to enhance the region's climate ambition:** the OPCC also provides a platform for both technical and high-level dialogues aimed at shaping and promoting a regional climate agenda. This includes engagement in international forums, such as the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The OPCC is constantly open to proposals for new initiatives and innovative approaches that can address its contributors' diverse perspectives and needs.

The OPCC currently has the participation of 26 parliamentarians from eleven Member States (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay) and four Associated Member Countries (British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands). More information on the OPCC can be accessed on the Observatory's website: <https://opcc.cepal.org/en> (available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese).

¹ The acronym refers to the initiative's name in Spanish: *Observatorio Parlamentario de Cambio Climático y Transición Justa*.

² More information on the Escazú Agreement is available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>.



Description of the event

The vulnerability of Caribbean small island developing States (SIDS) to the impacts of climate change is extensively documented. The Caribbean is the second most hazard-prone region globally, with hydro-climatic events representing over 90% of the disasters in the subregion between 1990 and 2017. With a large majority of the population living in settlements in coastal areas, extreme events often lead to successive damages to critical infrastructure that represent large portions of the gross domestic products of the countries in the subregion. This situation is aggravated by SIDS' higher vulnerability to external economic shocks and by existing barriers to much-needed financial support to address the requirements to build more resilient infrastructure. Therefore, both the disproportionate effects of climate change and the inadequate climate and development finance architecture currently in place internationally make the phenomena of climate change a threat to SIDS' sustainable development. Given the existing gap in climate finance required for the subregion's climate adaptation, the development of robust and transparent legal frameworks is vital to creating an environment conducive to mobilizing public and private funds, both nationally and internationally. Transparent and ambitious legal frameworks are key to attracting public international funds and private sector finance.

The event will seek to shed light on innovative legislation and its roles in creating a positive funding environment for building resilience and stronger institutional capacities to face the challenges posed by climate change. Additionally, the event will showcase how the OPCC Legislative Tracker can be used as a tool to promote transparency and intergovernmental cooperation in the area of the environment and climate change legislation. The event will underscore the importance of knowledge exchange to develop adequate legislation to establish a positive funding environment and enhance institutional capacities for sustainable development agendas, including the new Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Emphasis will be placed on the role of lawmakers in drafting and sponsoring legislative initiatives to enhance climate finance.

Objectives

The overall objective of the event is focused on exploring ways in which the OPCC can collaborate to bolster environmental and climate change legislation in Caribbean small island developing States (SIDS) to address climate change vulnerabilities and amplify climate financing in the subregion. The specific objectives are threefold:

- (i) Showcase the OPCC Legislative Data Tracker, the initiative's data platform with over two thousand records of environmental and climate change legislation, bills, and proposals from 21 LAC countries, including nine Caribbean SIDS.
- (ii) Explore the role of legislation in enhancing climate finance and give visibility to innovative initiatives from Caribbean SIDS.
- (iii) Foster knowledge exchange and advance sustainable development agendas, including the new Programme of Action for SIDS.

The event will also seek to raise awareness of the OPCC while serving as a platform to increase the number of Caribbean focal points and parliamentarians engaged with the Observatory.



Target Audience

- Parliamentarians, Ministers, and other high-level representatives of Caribbean SIDS.
- Senior decision-makers responsible for environment, sustainable development, climate change, and finance portfolios in Caribbean SIDS.
- Civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, and representatives of other relevant stakeholder groups attending the SIDS-4.

Programme

	Session
Moderation	<i>Honourable Veronica Dorsette-Hector, Parliamentary Secretary, Montserrat</i>
(15 minutes)	Welcome remarks <i>Diane Quarless, Director, ECLAC Caribbean</i> <i>Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, Premier and Minister of Finance, British Virgin Islands</i> <i>Chamberlain Emmanuel, Head of Environmental Sustainability Cluster, OECS Commission</i>
(15 minutes)	Presentation of the OPCC <i>Honourable Gwendell Mercelina, Member of the Parliament, Curacao</i>
(10 minutes)	The Virgin Islands Climate Change Trust Fund Act <i>Honourable Dr. Karl Dawson, Junior Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Environmental Matters, British Virgin Islands</i>
(10 minutes)	The Legal Framework to address the phenomenon of Climate Change in the Dominican Republic <i>Honourable Milagros De Camps, Vice-minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic</i>
(10 minutes)	Addressing Climate Resilience through Policy, Institutional and Legislative Frameworks in SIDS, and Opportunities for Knowledge Exchange - The Barbados Case <i>Mr. Travis Sinckler, Senior Environment Officer, Policy Research, Planning and Information Unit, Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy of Barbados (to be confirmed)</i>
(10 minutes)	The case of Grenada <i>Honourable Kerryne Z. James, Minister of Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy of Grenada</i>
(15 minutes)	Q&A
(5 minutes)	Closing remarks <i>Honourable Veronica Dorsette-Hector, Parliamentary Secretary of Montserrat</i>