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

Special Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM)
5 April 2016
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

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**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM**

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A. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The meeting recommended the following:

- That a small working group be formed to review the administrative arrangements for the functioning of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM);
- That strategies for financing the operations of the RCM be explored;
- That steps be taken to convene the soonest possible national focal point mechanism to operationalise of the RCM;
- That the RCM/TAC explore strategies for streamlining the coordination of the sustainable development agenda for Caribbean SIDS including the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date

2. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) convened a WebEx meeting of the RCM/TAC for implementation of the small island developing States (SIDS) development agenda at its office, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on 5 April 2016.

2. Attendance

3. There were eight participants in attendance: two were representatives from Member States of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), these being Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. Representatives from the following organizations were also in attendance: Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and a Consultant in Programme and Project Management.

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of meeting

4. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, welcomed the participants to the meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM/TAC). She recounted the evolution of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) noting that it was first considered during the Sixth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, when the regional and subregional institutions had been confronted by a number of constraints that limited their effectiveness. The constraints identified were attributed to the lack of an overarching coordinating mechanism to track the development progress for Caribbean SIDS. She reminded the meeting participants that the RCM was formalized in 2006, ushering in the technical support of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and ECLAC's contribution through its work as the Secretariat. In this role ECLAC was responsible for convening meetings of the RCM, contributing to the annual reporting on regional development through the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) feeding into the United Nations General Assembly. She recognised the advantage the CDCC provided to the RCM as a broad platform for consultation at the technical, inter-institutional and political levels.

5. In her presentation, the Director identified four main challenges of the mechanism. Firstly, she pointed out that the national focal point mechanism for operationalising the RCM had never been formalized. This undermined capacity for the holistic communication – at all levels – and the potential to facilitate collective decisions making.

6. Secondly, she cited the passing of the late sitting chair, Mr. Navin Chandapal, which drew attention to the absence of an established process for the election of successive chairs. Thirdly, the Director emphasized that the operational process of the mechanism was not effective and needed to be revisited.

7. Furthermore, as the coordinating system the RCM is expected to report on implementation of the Samoa Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which together formed the broader sustainable development framework. Strong leadership and monitoring were therefore both considered essential for successful regional implementation. In this regard, she observed that the international discussion on the selection of indicators for the SDGs should signal to the region the desirability of integrating the Samoa Pathway and SDG processes into the work of the RCM.

8. Fourthly, the issue of funding the RCM was identified as a key challenge to giving functional effect to the RCM. The Director noted that over its ten years of existence, meetings and contributions were constrained by limited finances. Indeed the lack of resources was a principal reason behind the design of ECLAC's Technical Platform and its eventual launch in 2015, as a means of enhancing information sharing and coordination among Caribbean SIDS.

9. The Director challenged the meeting to design a regional project that would address the implementation of the SDGs and SIDS agenda. She suggested that this could be presented to the Green Climate Fund. She summarized that the meeting should give attention to identifying a new chairman; to considering how to operationalize the national focal point mechanism, and to exploring innovative sources of financing for the RCM. She was hopeful that the discussions would help to resolve some of these challenges.

2. Institutional and administrative review of the RCM/TAC

10. The Economic Affairs Officer in the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit of ECLAC, made the presentation "Towards Revitalising the Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Supporting Development of Caribbean SIDS" which contextualised the issues facing the RCM. He emphasized the importance of organizing the work of the RCM/TAC so that it could function as it was intended. He chose to revisit the historical evolution of the RCM to frame the day's discussions.

11. He reiterated the Director's account of how and under what conditions the RCM was established during the Sixth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. He added that the Caribbean governments were the first small island developing States (SIDS) to advocate for a regional coordinating mechanism to track the region's development under the Barbados Plan of Action (BPoA). The TAC was established as a technical support committee to the RCM and set to work. ECLAC, as the Secretariat to the TAC was responsible for monitoring the expanded SIDS development agenda, under the BPoA and MSI. The Economic Affairs Officer in the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit of ECLAC suggested that the subregion determine whether it would also monitor Samoa Pathway and SDG implementation.

12. He revisited the structure of the RCM, identifying the four key elements to be: (i) the Intergovernmental Council – (ii) the country representatives on the CDCC, (iii) the TAC, (iv) the national focal point mechanism and the Secretariat. The Intergovernmental Council has oversight over the work of the RCM, which is supported by the TAC which in turn is supported by the national focal point

mechanism. The national focal point mechanism serves as the linkage between at the countries, the TAC, the intergovernmental council and the Secretariat.

13. He examined the mission of the RCM and invited meeting participants to confirm whether the original objectives of the RCM were still valid. These were as follows:

- Sensitization of policymakers and technical experts on progress made in achieving the BPoA/MSI;
- Promotion and mainstreaming of the post-2015 development agenda in Caribbean SIDS;
- Qualitative monitoring of progress made under the BPoA/MSI; and
- Convening meetings of intergovernmental council and TAC.

14. He reiterated that since the national focal point mechanism had not been established, this hampered effective functioning of the RCM, an issue that needed immediate attention in order to facilitate the implementation of the Samoa Pathway and SDGs. He observed that upon examination, the solely functional aspect of the RCM was the Secretariat. However, there was great potential for synergised collaboration with other regions. He recommended the utilization of existing mechanisms to advance the SIDS agenda.

15. In seeking to monitor the achievement of the SIDS sustainable development agenda, he noted that ECLAC as the Secretariat has been challenged by shortfalls. Going forward the national focal point mechanism is required to gather national data to feed into the regional institutional machinery. He suggested that countries consider viable options to rectify this deficiency. He also encouraged consideration of the metrics were needed to measure progress, including identification of the specific indicators to be used. He welcomed recommendations from the meeting regarding financing of the RCM and the formalization of the functioning of the mechanism.

3. Discussion towards a revitalized RCM/TAC mechanism

16. The meeting's discussions on this issue centred around four main points: (i) the structure of the RCM, (ii) financing of the RCM, (iii) the SIDS agenda and (iv) the broader development agenda and the added value the RCM could bring to the development agenda for the region.

The structure of the RCM

17. There was consensus among the meeting participants that the existing structure of the RCM failed primarily because the national focal point mechanism had not been formally established. The Consultant in Programme and Project Management, recounted the history behind the establishment of the mechanism, at that time it was in response to the implementation of the MSI in 2005. There were 15 members of TAC inclusive of Member States. There was then an agreement among countries to rotate themselves as members of the TAC. However, there was some consideration to treat with special cases for representation from non-member countries Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti as well as those from non-CARICOM territories and associate member states. He noted the contribution of the former chairman Mr. Chandupal who dedicated his service for life to the RCM until his passing, and the involvement of Mark Griffith of CARICOM from the inception of the RCM.

18. He further suggested that there was merit in revisiting the guiding principles of the RCM as elaborated in 2005 to promote sustainable development with efficient use of human resources. Initially, the TAC and ECLAC were to define the scope of work for the RCM and incorporate this into the work of ECLAC. However, in so doing it was important to consider the separation of the work of the TAC and the ECLAC's work programme. To satisfy this, it was decided that the intergovernmental council would

serve as the most appropriate forum to monitor the RCM. Upon review however, it was found that this system did not work well.

19. The Director of ECLAC agreed that while the RCM created an intergovernmental platform that gave prominence to governments, the supporting arms of the intergovernmental council were the representatives on the ground; the national focal points. This was an important aspect of the mechanism required to ensure implementation of the SIDS sustainable development agenda. She explained that the RCM was intended to bring all national stakeholders and other members of the TAC together. The composition of the TAC was multi-stakeholder in nature, providing and facilitating the contributions from the range of stakeholders. She was convinced that the fundamental issues surrounding the establishment of the national focal point would persist in the case of identifying focal points for the SDGs. Resolving this issue however, would require the involvement of institutional and governmental entities with the authority to combine the efforts of all these stakeholders.

20. The Executive Director, Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) questioned whether the mandate, purpose and vision of the RCM were still relevant to the current environment in the Caribbean. She challenged the meeting to define how the regional mechanism could make progress at the national level, given its track record and solicited suggestions that could ensure participation at all levels.

21. She believed if the scope of the RCM could go beyond the work and demonstrate how the mechanism could facilitate a regional discussion and yield a collaborative process that would be an important and powerful statement.

22. The SIDS Technical Adviser, Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), agreed that the CDCC forum was best suited to the Caribbean SIDS structure. However, he suggested building capacity to facilitate the development of strategies to sustain coordination at the national level and facilitate coordination with other SIDS through the RCM. He reiterated the need to firmly identify national focal points to render the national decision making machinery functional, as this was crucial to the success of the RCM. It was noted that ECLAC had the mandate from the General Assembly and the RCM had the mandate from Caribbean states to collectively work on development issues. However this work would need to be expanded to include collaboration with the SIDS Unit, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Pacific to assist in the implementation of the SIDS agenda.

23. The Sustainable Development and Environment Officer III, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of Saint Lucia offered a possible reason for the shortfall of the national focal point mechanism in the past. She shared that Member States were required to monitor numerous instruments which posed problems for reporting and implementation. For example, the targets that were being identified to measure the implementation of the Agenda 2030 were not fully accomplished in Saint Lucia when the SDGs were confirmed. She further reported that Saint Lucia was still considering mechanisms to deliver that work. Other challenges in her country included the difficulty in establishing national obligations; national mechanisms for monitoring and implementation were weak. She observed that these must be strengthened before engaging the regional process successfully. She linked the low member country turn out at RCM meetings to weaknesses in implementation at the national levels. She also believed greater appreciation of the ways in which the national elements worked together would facilitate resolution of these issues.

24. The Economic Affairs Officer, ECLAC agreed with the comments of the SIDS Technical Adviser CPDC. He suggested the establishment of a working group to articulate a proposal to restructure the RCM/TAC for possible approval by the CDCC. He expressed the view that the selection of a chair would not be effective at this point, since the chair would be at the level of the TAC and not at the

intergovernmental council level. He also suggested that the mechanism should be equipped to support countries in the establishment of their national mechanisms. In this regard a structure to promote more effective TAC operation regionally was necessary.

25. The SIDS Technical Adviser, CPDC, agreed with the Economic Affairs Officer of ECLAC but expressed the view that the discussion should seek to clarify the possibility of synergy between Samoa Pathway and Agenda 2030. He suggested that a regional action plan should involve heads of Government in the Caribbean to align all development agendas towards a similar goal. In this regard the RCM with its strategic framework would be able to steer the region appropriately and support capacity building at the institutional level to strengthen implementation. He also emphasized that both, qualitative monitoring and quantitative was required. It was suggested that the RCM/TAC should generate a report on Caribbean development. A framework for Sustainable Development was also necessary. It was also suggested that, considering the Caribbean's relatively low level of implementation of the sustainable development agenda among SIDS, there was need to stimulate a momentum to restructure the RCM, examine the constraints, and fill the structural gaps in order to advance the development process. Additionally, the RCM should design a mechanism to bring the Member States to the table to address these issues.

26. The Director identified as another issue facing the RCM/TAC its lack of personality, in that the RCM lacked the authority to send a representative to important meetings to articulate its findings. There were missing elements in the overall structure, and she agreed that a small group could examine the issues and present its finding to a meeting scheduled to convene during the summer. She suggested that a broader meeting of the RCM was needed to sort through the issues raised at this TAC meeting. This larger forum was more strategic and would ensure that synergies were made between sustainable development and the SIDS agenda.

27. The Executive Director of CANARI supported the recommendation of the ECLAC colleagues to form a small discussion group. It would be advantageous to engage key players to solicit their views on how they envisioned the RCM could add value to the regional development discourse.

28. The Programme Officer Sustainable Energy Unit, of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) noted that national focal point mechanism should originate from a broad scope of backgrounds. For example the Ministry of the Environment should not be the only Ministry to be considered when the national focal points are being nominated.

29. The Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction of the ACS questioned whether the current mechanism was effective, and whether an alternative approach should be considered given the changes in the current landscape of the CDCC. He also wondered if the changing roles of stakeholder organizations may prompt the inclusion of different types of organization in the RCM.

30. The Economic Affairs Officer expressed the importance of the questions raised by the Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction of the ACS. He noted that the structure of the TAC comprised 15 member countries and other institutions. He pondered the initial intention of the original member countries and the reasons that the governance of the RCM had not worked. He noted that the RCM needed to determine and finalize whether the monitoring process was for all four processes – BPoA, MSI, Samoa Pathway and SDGs – or if only the more recent instruments – the Samoa Pathway or the SDGs were being monitored and reported.

Financing the RCM

31. The SIDS Technical Adviser, CPDC, agreed with the comments on funding made by the Director and the Economic Affairs Officer in their opening presentations. He endorsed the Green Climate Fund as a financing option and expanded the discussion of financing the RCM, suggesting the inclusion of the

Caribbean Development Bank and the European Union. He cited the European Union's interest in assisting development in the Caribbean region to suggest their possible willingness to finance the mechanism. He expressed the importance of determining the cause of the difficulty in establishing National Focal Points. He suggested frequent meetings with Ministers from Ministries of the Environment and Planning was necessary to identify funding and national focal points to rectify the void created by the absence of the national focal point mechanism. Additionally, he expressed the view that institutional challenges were imminent and required active discussions for solutions. Further, he proposed that the various United Nations offices and national institutions should form partnerships, including a partnership between the RCM and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

32. The Director of ECLAC indicated that ECLAC had held consultations with the CDB, but that this was in relation to the establishment of a monitoring committee for the SDGs. She welcomed the idea of engaging the organization and the potential to synergise the SIDS agenda with the broader sustainable development agenda going forward.

SIDS agenda

33. The SIDS Technical Adviser, CPDC, recognised that the sustainable development agenda ushered in a SDG framework being reviewed by stakeholders. He suggested that it would be useful to compare this with other existing frameworks in order to refine the SDG framework. Some of those that could be revisited for possible synergies were identified as follows :

- United Nations Development Assistance Framework, (UNDAF)
- Sendai Disaster Risk Management
- Financing for development
- Post-2015 development agenda
- The Paris Agreement on Climate Change

He suggested that there was also a need to find greater alignment between the Agenda 2030 and Samoa Pathway. However, he was not certain whether this alignment was an advantage or a disadvantage. But he was concerned about how best these could be aligned. The Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction of the ACS cautioned that the various development processes were individually very broad in scope. He feared that if the SIDS mechanism became too large some of the issues may be overlooked.

Broader development agenda

34. The SIDS Technical Adviser, CPDC, emphasized that sustainable development was a broad development agenda and leaders needed to be cognizant of how it impacted processes at the national level. He believed basic and comprehensive mechanisms were needed and the RCM could offer some solutions as it had good guidelines and objectives. The shortfall was the financial capacity; national efforts were under-resourced, and this affected its efforts and implementation. He called for a review that would create an enabling environment for the successful functioning of the RCM.

35. The Director of ECLAC underscored the importance of these discussions. She indicated that ECLAC played a role at the regional level with respect to the implementation of the SIDS agenda and sustainable development. In this regard she recalled discussions held at the Monitoring Committee of the CDCC in 2015, noting that there was need to establish priorities in terms of the broad range of the SDGs, given that Caribbean SIDS could not implement all 17 of them. She reiterated that priority goals for the Caribbean should be identified from the SIDS Development perspective. She also observed that although the region was doing work in this area the process was missing the trickle-down effect especially at the

national level of implementation. It was imperative that the Caribbean minds work through the non-functional aspect of the mechanism.

36. She informed the meeting that the Caribbean Development Roundtable and CDCC forums would engage the CARICOM Secretariat, subregional partners and relevant United Nations system agencies in April 2016 to consider establishing a framework for linking the SDGs to the SIDS agenda. This framework will include a monitoring system that would govern the implementation of the SDGs. In this regard, some work had already begun on crafting the necessary monitoring indicators and the Director suggested the possibility of utilizing the current RCM/TAC mechanism as part of this monitoring process. This would however require strengthening of the national focal point mechanism in order to support monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs. She expressed the hope that the upcoming meeting would engage all the regional partners, United Nations system relevant to sustainable development, participating SIDS and all Caribbean governments to take this discussion further to assist the RCM in making linkages to national action.

Inserting the RCM

37. The SIDS Technical Adviser, CPDC, suggested that the results of discussions from regional level could find expression at the national level if these could be compiled into concise reports and sent to the national focal points. Additionally, at national level there could be many focal points for different thematic areas, therefore targeted briefs critically important to support national stakeholders and mandates could be disseminated this way. He agreed that this proposal could be considered by the small discussion group. This group could also identify other sources for financing of the RCM.

4. Closure of meeting

38. The Coordinator, Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit, ECLAC closed the meeting, thanking the participants for their valuable input.

Annex I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Institutional and Administrative Review of the RCM/TAC
3. Towards a Revitalized RCM/TAC Mechanism
4. Other Administrative Matters
5. Closure of Meeting