



UNITED NATIONS



PARTICIPANTS ONLY

7 March 2013

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Caribbean Forum: Shaping a Sustainable Development
Agenda to Address the Caribbean Reality in
the Twenty-first Century

Bogota, 5-6 March 2013

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the international community agreed to Agenda 21 which raised awareness of the fragility of the environment and resulted in the development of strategies for achieving sustainable development. However, this agenda did not consider the special needs of small island developing States (SIDS). This need was articulated in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPoA) and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI).

Following this, countries committed to the Millennium Declaration, which led to the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and continued to review progress in meeting the BPoA, MSI and the MDGs. In particular, the MDGs will be reviewed in 2015 and the need has arisen to define a post-2015 development agenda, and this is of relevance to Caribbean SIDS given the challenges that they face in meeting the goals of the BPoA and the MSI, and in achieving the MDGs.

The initiation of a complex process within the framework of the United Nations to define a post-2015 development agenda and, possibly, sustainable development goals engages the full participation of Caribbean SIDS, because of the need to consider the special needs of these countries as well as the challenges they are facing in meeting the various goals. This process has started with the convening of national-level consultations in Saint Lucia in respect of a post-2015 development agenda.

Caribbean SIDS are also involved in regional preparations for the third Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Development States that will be convened in Jamaica on 2-4 July 2013, as well as the Latin American and Caribbean ministerial meeting that will take place in September 2013 in Barbados. The outcomes of both meetings will feed into the global meeting to be held in Samoa in 2014. This meeting will review progress made 10 years after the MSI and 20 years after the BPoA were adopted. It is expected that this global meeting will set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda that will focus on the progress made by Caribbean SIDS in achieving the goals of the BPoA and the MSI and also address emerging issues of importance to SIDS.

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It is within this context that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Group for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), convened a meeting entitled “The Caribbean Forum: Shaping a sustainable development agenda to address the Caribbean reality in the twenty-first century” to discuss the challenges being faced by Caribbean SIDS and to provide input in defining a post-2015 agenda. This forum, which was held in Bogota on 5 and 6 March 2013, agreed on the following guidelines and priority areas for action.

1. Guidelines

It is proposed that the development agenda for the Caribbean in the twenty-first century be based on the nine guidelines set forth below, and maintain and expand the social, economic, and environmental development of the subregion’s human and natural resources. The subregion regards the post-2015 development agenda as embracing the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development goals, which are complementary to each other, and as providing countries with the flexibility to identify their respective avenues for development within a coherent and single vision for the Caribbean.

Accordingly, the development of the subregion will continue to be guided by the following:

1. Poverty eradication, with specific focus on vulnerable groups, inter-generational poverty, and ensuring the sustainability of gains made in poverty reduction;
2. Participation: The subregion is committed to ensuring the participation of all segments of the population, including civil society, private sector, trade unions and the most vulnerable segments, in the development process;
3. Sustained, inclusive and equitable growth to the benefit of all citizens;
4. People-centred development;
5. Applicable regional and global agendas;
6. A comprehensive development agenda;
7. The recognition of the vulnerabilities of small island developing States;
8. Enhanced and inclusive governance;
9. The finite natural resources of the subregion.

2. Priority areas for attention

Among others, the meeting proposed the following priority areas for attention:

1. Increasing investment in research and development and furthering the patenting of inventions originating in the region;
2. Improving the availability and efficiency of regional air and sea transport;
3. Upgrading education systems from early childhood through tertiary to ensure relevance to twenty-first century realities, paying particular attention to addressing appropriate teacher training and continuing professional development;
4. Bridging the science-policy interface to inform evidence-based policymaking;
5. Ensuring the availability of education and employment opportunities for young people to contribute effectively to the creative, intellectual and economic development of their communities, countries and the region;
6. Addressing the development of our children and youth, with emphasis on their active involvement in development;
7. Prioritizing policies and actions to address citizen security, focusing on youth and gender-based violence;
8. Enforcement of legislation in the area of sustainable development;
9. Adopting a more integrated development strategy in economic, social and environmental dimensions;
10. Strategic assessment and planning in key sectors, including amendments to legislation and regulations to take account of vulnerabilities and emerging challenges and building sustainability at the community level;
11. Utilizing a futures-based approach in identifying potential threats as well as opportunities;
12. Creating a sustainable development technical group to provide advice to key regional bodies;
13. Designing a mechanism to assess the carrying capacity of the tourism industry;
14. Strengthening the capacity for preparation of cost-benefit analyses, environmental impact assessments and feasibility studies that convey the full externalities of investment and other economic decisions;
15. Examining best practice models in participatory decision-making;
16. Identifying emerging windows of opportunity in the international sphere for advancing the sustainable development agenda of Caribbean small island developing States;
17. Promoting the convergence model of development finance to convert excess liquidity in the private banking and financial sector into loans and equity for productive enterprise;

18. Devising mechanisms to minimize and adapt to the effects of economic shocks;
19. Promoting partnerships, including public-private partnerships as vehicles for development;
20. Examining ways in which the United Nations system can support countries in implementing sustainable development initiatives;
21. Advocating for special consideration to be given to small, heavily indebted middle-income countries by international financial and development institutions;
22. Advocating for the application of measures of development that address the vulnerability of Caribbean small island developing States;
23. Attracting more innovative sources of foreign direct investment;
24. Exploring innovative ways to increase engagement of the diaspora in subregional development, including through diaspora direct investment in line with national policies and priorities;
25. Resolving to ensure that the implementation of green economy policies is supported by finance and that innovative sources of finance meet the needs of the countries and that such policies be implemented on a voluntary basis and in accordance with national priorities;
26. Addressing more seriously the challenges of energy, food and water security;
27. Establishing a balance between environmental preservation and conservation including the management of the region's biodiversity resources;
28. Exploring innovative approaches to social protection and mobility;
29. Pursuing more aggressively the creation of knowledge-based economies through enhanced access to information, research and the increased application of appropriate technologies;
30. Address the multidimensional challenges of communicable and non-communicable diseases in a holistic manner, including through ensuring universal access to primary health care services for promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation; and
31. Strengthening measures to address disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in order to build resilience.