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THE PROGRAMME FOR THE REMOVAL OF
 LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN THE CARIBBEAN



UNITED NATIONS
 ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean

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THE PROGRAMME FOR THE REMOVAL OF
LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN THE CARIBBEAN

1. The overall Work Programme of CDCC approved at the Inaugural Meeting of the Committee (Havana, 31 October - 4 November 1975) undertakes in the Chapter on Technical Co-operation among the Caribbean countries:

"To expedite this process of mutual exchange (among the Caribbean Countries) stress has been laid on the need to undertake special measures or programmes to overcome language barriers - practical instruction in the English, French and Spanish languages in all member countries" (E/CEPAL/CDCC/8/Rev.1, p. 14).

2. At the Second Session of the Committee (Santo Domingo, 16-22 March 1977), document E/CEPAL/CDCC/19 was tabled, which further adds:

"It is necessary to keep in mind the need for the Governments to have at their disposal, as soon as possible, a staff of translators and interpreters to satisfy the urgencies arising from an increase in international relations, commerce and tourism. To give effect to official action by the CDCC in the removal of linguistic barriers, it is necessary to augment the number of persons who speak the official languages of the subregion, at the same time that the need for using these languages is being stimulated" (p.6).

The Report of this Second Session states inter alia that:

"The programme should be implemented with special and urgent attention to the needs of those countries within the subregion which, at present have no or very limited related language training facilities or none at all". (E/CEPAL/CDCC/21/Rev.1).

3. From 4 to 7 April 1978, a Joint CDCC/UNESCO Meeting on Removal of Language Barriers in Belize City brought together Caribbean linguists and government officials to examine the Report prepared by a UNESCO-funded consultant, titled "Initial Survey of Foreign Language Teaching Policies, Facilities and Methodology in the Caribbean". Papers were also presented on different aspects of the issue as obtained in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

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4. The Report of the Joint CDCC/UNESCO meeting was tabled at CDCC III (Belize City, 12-17 April 1978). The Committee decided during this Session that the highest priority should be given to eight different subjects, the Elimination of Language Barriers being the first one of them.

5. At CDCC IV (Paramaribo, 21-27 March 1979) the CDCC Secretariat reported its inability to implement the projects related to the Removal of Language Barriers "despite having been granted the highest priority".

6. At the Fifth Session (Kingston, 2-10 June 1980) no progress was reported; but the possibilities of concerted action by the CDCC member governments at the 1980 UNESCO General Assembly raised hopes which were not fulfilled.

7. During the Sixth Session (St. George's 4-10 November 1981; United Nations Headquarters, New York, 3-4 February 1982) nonetheless, "the Committee urged the Secretariat to continue efforts to secure financing".

8. The lack of financial resources has continued to impede the implementation of the Removal of Language Barriers Programme, in spite of the political will expressed by the member governments, the urgency of the situation and the assistance offered by some member countries to contribute human resources and physical facilities.

9. During 1982 the Secretariat continued its efforts without much success. One possible resource base that has not been fully explored is the possibility of all member countries contributing some resources to this priority programme activity. The Committee may wish to explore the possibilities inherent in this approach and accordingly may see fit to provide new or additional instructions to the Secretariat.

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