

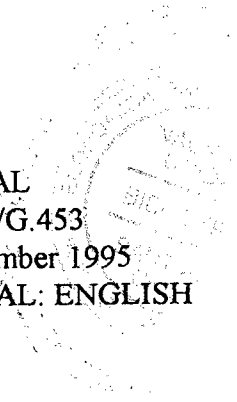


- Antigua and Barbuda
- Aruba
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Br. Virgin Islands
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Montserrat
- Netherlands Antilles
- Puerto Rico
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago
- U.S. Virgin Islands



Second Meeting of National Focal Points
of the CDCC
Grafton Beach Resort, Tobago
13-14 July 1995

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**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING
OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS OF THE
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE (CDCC)**



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE



**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING
OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS OF THE
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE (CDCC)**



The second Meeting of National Focal Points of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) was held at the Grafton Beach Resort, Tobago, on 13-14 July 1995. This meeting was convened in response to a mandate from the CDCC that the secretariat organize a workshop for the purpose of exposing the national focal points of the CDCC to the workings of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and to the functioning of the CDCC within the context of the United Nations system.

Attendance

Representatives from the following member and associate member countries of the Committee attended the workshop: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States Virgin Islands. A complete list of participants, including a number of persons who were invited to the workshop in their personal capacities to serve as resource persons, is provided in Annex I of the report.

Session 1

***United Nations activities in the economic and social fields:
The Secretary-General's Agenda for Development***

The presenters for this session were: Ms. Marjorie Thorpe, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Resident Coordinator, United Nations system for Barbados and the OECS; Mr. Winthrop Wiltshire, Representative and Subregional Science and Technology Adviser for the Caribbean, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Mr. Swinburne Lestrade, Deputy Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean; and Mr. Lloyd Best, Trinidad and Tobago Institute of the West Indies. The session was chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Samuel Insanally, Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations.

The Chairman, in his opening remarks, gave an update on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Development. He recalled that in May 1994 the Agenda for Development concept was launched by the United Nations Secretariat as part of the Agenda for Peace. He informed the meeting of his broad-based consultations on the subject and the establishment of a forum for consultations with NGOs, labour and academia. From these consultations, he reported that the general feeling with regard to the United Nations was that the organization needed to be restructured in order to fulfil countries' development expectations. He informed that a review of United Nations organizations was in progress.

The Chairman stated that a working group had been established to finalize the draft text and to examine the framework of the Agenda for Development. He advised CARICOM Governments to gear themselves to participate in the finalization of the Agenda for Development. He commended the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat for the timeliness of its meeting since it would assist CARICOM Governments in their participation in the process.

Role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Ms. Marjorie Thorpe

Ms. Thorpe commented that the UNDP had to reform itself to meet new definitions of development. She informed that the UNDP had declared its core mission to be sustainable human development, which it defined as development that did not merely generate growth but distributed it equitably, and did not only concern standards of living but the standard of being. That is, a new agenda for development should be centred primarily on people.

The presenter identified three strategic objectives of the UNDP: it sought to strengthen international cooperation for sustainable human development; it focused its strengths and assets to make maximum contribution to sustainable development; and it recognized that it ought to be an effective force in bringing about those desired changes in the countries it served.

The UNDP used two main mechanisms to achieve those objectives: the Country Strategy Note and the function of the Resident Coordinator.

Role of the specialized agencies - Mr. Winthrop Wiltshire

Mr. Wiltshire informed that one of the main characteristics of a specialized agency was the fact that they had a specialized focus. Countries were informed that they themselves had to approach the specialized agencies with a view to ensuring that they served their countries' interests.

He stated that UNESCO aimed to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights, and fundamental freedoms which were affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction by race, sex, language or religion.

He reported that UNESCO had designed strategies for: contributing to development; promoting life-long education for all; assisting in the advancement, transfer and sharing of knowledge; enhancing the heritage and promoting creativity; the promotion of the free flow of information and the development of communication. UNESCO also had plans to encourage education for peace, human rights and democracy, tolerance and international understanding, to promote human rights and the fight against discrimination, to support the consolidation of the democratization process, to encourage cultural pluralism and dialogue between cultures and to contribute to conflict-prevention and post-conflict peace-building.

Mr. Wiltshire stated that UNESCO performed a clearing house function for information on state of the art trends in education, science and culture and the community. It also contributed to the advancement, transfer and sharing of knowledge and encouraged education for peace, human rights and democracy, tolerance and international understanding.

Role of the United Nations Regional Commissions - Mr. Swinburne Lestrade

Mr. Lestrade stated that the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean directed its activities towards seeking solutions to problems of economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. He highlighted that the role of the regional commissions was recognized in the programmes of action of recent global conferences. In regard to the World Summit for Social Development, for example, the regional commissions were ascribed a role in promoting the implementation of the conference outcomes. In cooperation with other regional intergovernmental organizations, the regional commissions were asked to convene, on a biennial basis, a meeting at a high political level to review progress made towards implementing the outcome of the Summit, exchange views on their respective experiences and adopt appropriate measures. The regional commissions were asked to report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the outcomes of such meetings.

The Caribbean Subregional Office of ECLAC had the responsibility of carrying out in the Caribbean the functions identified for the Commission as a whole. The Office and its functions had traditionally reflected a concentration on the carrying out of economic surveys and reviews of economic performance of the subregion, women's affairs, science and technology, trade, documentation and information systems. It could be said that the structure and functioning of the Caribbean Office have been characterized by a large measure of flexibility. This was reflected in its medium-term plan, covering the period 1992-1997, which spoke of providing advisory assistance to governments, assisting in the formulation of policies and programmes of structural development in social development, the integration of women into the development process and the incorporation of environmental considerations into development. The plan also informed of assisting member States in the optimum utilization of resources and the incorporation of population variables into development. These activities were to be carried out through research and the publication of studies and policy papers, and the provision of technical assistance, upon request, within the framework of the mandate and scope of the work of the Office.

For the regional commissions, more particularly the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of ECLAC, the Secretary-General's Agenda for Development was an opportunity to reflect on the role, performance and impact of the Office; an opportunity to take stock of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; an opportunity to seek to ensure that the resources of the Office were expended in priority areas, properly determined, and to seek to ensure that the potential strengths of the Organization were maximized.

Mr. Lestrade stated that all of the considerations and recommendations contained in the Agenda were relevant to the Caribbean Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC, in particular, the warning that confidence in the United Nations depended to a large extent on the efficiency and effectiveness of its programmes. In the Caribbean our special responsibility was to pursue those

objectives within the context of what the Caribbean required; and within the context of the work of other institutions operating in the Caribbean. We needed to carefully examine contextual circumstances from the point of view of the opportunities which they might present for bringing ECLAC's natural and potential advantages into play, and for playing a more critically supportive role in Caribbean development. In this regard, the following three considerations were identified as those of some relevance:

(a) It might be necessary to concentrate on and develop critical mass in areas where there might be a niche for ECLAC/CDCC or otherwise where it could be most effective, and to restructure the Office accordingly.

(b) The work of ECLAC/CDCC needed to be informed by purposeful consultations with other subregional intergovernmental as well as United Nations organizations. The Caribbean was well served by regional organizations that worked closely with governments, were well respected by them, (even as they criticized them), and were influential in issues of regional and international policy. It was for ECLAC/CDCC to seek to situate itself in this regional institutional matrix, to establish functional working relationships with these organizations, and thereby facilitate its continuing relevance.

(c) The Port of Spain Office of ECLAC might need to be further transformed into a more vital instrument of economic and social policy for the benefit of its member countries. This would take advantage of its ability to take a longer range view of problems and of economic and social imperatives than is possible by other regional institutions, which for various reasons cannot do this effectively.

A Caribbean perspective - Mr. Lloyd Best

Mr. Best commented on the failure of the present development paradigm and called for a review of it. He informed that in the past the strategy lay in attacking the symptoms of the problems and not the sources and, he stated, that to understand the sources of the problem lay in the theory and the history behind the situation; from this understanding develop a structure and function to deal with it.

Secondly, he stated that the Caribbean subregion had to approach problems in their uniqueness since every case was a special one. Therefore institutions had to become more focused in their activities. He stated that the subregional offices should be given executive authority to translate global imperatives into regional and subregional action. The presenter called for the decentralization of the regional commissions and stated that since institutions were difficult to change, as a subregion we needed to create mechanisms through which we could achieve some impact.

Mr. Best stated that the mandate of the Caribbean subregion should be to ensure the empowering of the Caribbean Office of ECLAC, and to convene an absorptive capacity workshop in the Caribbean. The objective of this workshop would be to bring people together. This, he felt, would allow for greater understanding of each other which would then lead to greater productivity and effectiveness.

General discussion

The meeting noted the call for the UNDP to take a more proactive approach at the national level. The participants enquired as to the steps governments in the region should take to maximise their returns from the United Nations system. They were informed that the UNDP would be able to answer these questions and, as such, countries should contact them for further information. The meeting also noted that governments should present to the UNDP an integrated multisectoral strategy which clearly articulated their requests. This would enable the UNDP to be more targeted and focused in its assistance to member countries and would also constitute a more cohesive proposal to present to the donor community. It was also suggested that the United Nations agencies should increase coordination among themselves and with the governments when fulfilling country requests. It was suggested that an agency be established to coordinate these activities. In this regard, the meeting noted the role of the UNESCO national commissions that were present in each country and which allowed for participation of national experts and for dialogue with local experts. It was suggested that this model be used by other agencies.

The meeting noted that a number of States had presented papers to be considered in the formulation of the Agenda for Development. These States were able to do this since they had the necessary resources and mechanisms; however, SIDS did not fall into this category. For these States smallness is a constraint. It was suggested that a paper be commissioned to document the perspectives of SIDS and that this should be done before the review meeting in August. The meeting was then informed that the international community had not quite accepted the grouping of SIDS; however, the Caribbean had been served quite adequately by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) grouping and it was suggested, therefore, that this grouping should be strengthened and equipped with greater negotiating capacity.

The participants were informed that the term "elimination of poverty" as defined by the UNDP meant attacking the root causes of poverty and finding means to enable people to empower themselves to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

There was a question regarding the implications of the international conferences and the specific duties set out for the regional commissions. Was the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in a position to carry out these duties and responsibilities? and, What degree of autonomy did the Office have as compared to its headquarters in Santiago, Chile? The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters, the meeting was informed, had a substantial degree of autonomy from its headquarters, and that its budget and work programme allowed the Office to carry out the mandates that the global conferences had prescribed for it.

A participant commented on the need for agency coordination among funds and programmes. Further, the meeting was referred to the role of regional cooperation as outlined in the Agenda for Development, that is, "that regionalism is neither incompatible with nor an alternative to internationalism as expressed through the United Nations. Regional cooperation is necessary for development everywhere. Regional trade associations provide expanded markets for domestic enterprises, and encourage interregional arrangements to facilitate trade. Regional assistance can address development across political boundaries and respond to practical needs wherever they arise."

The participant also reminded that the Caribbean subregion had to be aware of what was desired at the national and subregional levels and should seek to ensure a responsive institutional environment.

The failure of countries to utilise funds from agencies was also discussed. It was agreed that mechanisms had to be put in place to ensure that these funds were fully utilized. It was suggested that smaller agencies could be established to translate funds into activities and personnel could be equipped to be specialized in this area. Thus, it was felt that through these mechanisms, implementation might be more effective.

Session 2

Improving the effectiveness of the Caribbean's participation in United Nations global conferences

The presenters for this session were: Ms. Barbara Boland, Population Affairs Officer, Ms. Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Officer and Mr. Carlyle Corbin, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat; Ms. Jocelyn Dow and Ms. Sheila Solomon, Consultants. The session was chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Lionel Hurst, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations.

Achieving Caribbean objectives: Preparatory activities at the subregional level - Ms Barbara Boland

Ms. Boland, in her presentation, reviewed the preparatory process leading up to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which was held in September 1994, in Cairo, Egypt. She also identified the elements contributing to both the successes and failures and commented on the lessons learnt.

She apprised the meeting that 21 Caribbean countries participated in the ICPD conference and stated that for the first time, the English-speaking Caribbean (including Haiti) gained visibility as a strong separate bloc in the population forum. Caribbean participants achieved 75 per cent of the goals and strategies they had set out for the meeting. They attributed the achievement of this great success at the ICPD largely to the preparatory process in which they had participated.

The preparatory activities consisted of a series of national, subregional, regional and international-level activities that were summarized as follows: At the national level, activities centred around the preparation of National Population Reports; establishment of Population Committees for coordinating national preparatory activities; conduct of awareness creation activities. At the subregional level, five meetings were held in the Caribbean and two major documents produced: The Port of Spain Declaration on Population and Development and Strategies for ICPD. At the regional level, the Caribbean participated in three Latin American and Caribbean regional meetings and contributed to the formulation of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action. Finally, at the international level the Caribbean participated in two PrepComs.

The presenter also identified some factors that she considered essential for planning the design and implementation of the preparatory process for an international meeting. The first was the length of time of the preparatory process, that is, when to start preparing. The second, centred on technical information requirements, which involved determining the skills and tools needed; the next was the coordination of national, subregional and international activities, which required the balance of emphasis and resources among activities. Other issues related to the political will, the support of the political directorate, the strengthening of the Permanent Missions in New York, and their role in strengthening linkages between national and international level activities; another factor was the formation of Caribbean positions, that is, the development of strategies for negotiating at the conference itself, and finally follow-up activities. These should be given equal emphasis and were necessary to complete the process, otherwise benefits to be gained by both governments and the international community would not materialize.

It was pointed out that one of the main strengths of the ICPD preparatory process in the Caribbean was the close collaboration between the governments and NGOs. This was due to the fact that the NGOs were part of the preparatory process from the outset, which gave governments a chance to work closely with them, recognize their important role and ultimately include them on their national delegations. NGOs provided inputs into the formation of the subregional positions and assisted in the development of the post-ICPD Plan of Action.

The presenter stressed that equal importance should be given to the follow-up process, if governments were to really benefit and the investment of human and financial resources gain returns. At the national level, follow-up activities have included the conduct of awareness creation programmes; the preparation of national plans of action for implementation of the ICPD Plan of Action and the formation of special committees for this purpose. Two meetings have been held at the subregional level, and the result has been the development of a Caribbean Plan of Action - Follow-up to the ICPD Programme of Action, which identifies priority programmes for the Caribbean, sets out clear goals and provides the detailed recommended action. This will serve as a guideline for action at both the national and international levels. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this plan of action represents further follow-up steps.

Achieving Caribbean objectives: Preparatory activities at the subregional level - Asha Kambon

Ms. Kambon stated that a conference could be viewed as a key event in a process. The entire process included a preparatory stage, the actual conference itself and follow-up activities. She informed that the role of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had been a facilitating one, assisting governments and NGOs in outlining and underlining what they could achieve and what they wanted to achieve from the conferences, in essence, clarifying the national and Caribbean interest.

She identified the activities preceding the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in which the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat were involved, using this discussion to assist in the analysis of achieving Caribbean objectives. She informed that the period under review was from September 1993, when the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) launched its guidelines, to September 1995 when the actual conference would be held in Beijing, China.

Ms. Kambon suggested that one of the significant outputs thus far of the process had been the strengthening of the national machineries. The process had encouraged dialogue among women at the national, subregional, regional and global levels and also between men and women. The presenter stated that engaging and encouraging dialogue among these groups enabled countries to arrive at some consensus on issues to be addressed for the next five to ten years.

The first phase was the preparation of national reports which were to be completed by May 1994. She informed that in June 1994, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat convened the ECLAC/CARICOM/UNIFEM Subregional Conference preparatory to the Fourth World Conference on Women, Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles, where the document "Achieving Social justice, equality and development: A review of the status of women of the Caribbean subregion in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW)" was presented. The meeting agreed with the areas identified in the paper as those of critical importance to the subregion. These areas were: the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; inequalities in health care and related services; all forms of violence against women; inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process itself; inequality between men and women in the sharing of decision making at all levels; insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women and the girl child.

The next stage in the preparatory process was the Caribbean subregion's involvement and success in the negotiating process. This began with the sixth session of the Regional Conference on Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 25-29 September 1994. The meeting noted the weaknesses which the Caribbean subregion experienced, but was informed that the subregion was successful in achieving a follow-up meeting which was held in Santiago, Chile, November 1994.

The presenter then informed that the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had convened a teleconference of Caribbean subregional governments (November 1994) in preparation for the follow-up meeting to Argentina, that is, the twentieth Meeting of the Board of Presiding Officers, Santiago, Chile. Participants at the teleconference reviewed the critical areas of interest to the subregion addressed at other international conferences and the FWCW, discussed the status of preparations at the national level and made recommendations to assist in the preparation of the Caribbean subregion for the FWCW.

The meeting was then informed that the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had participated in the drafting of the FWCW Draft Platform for Action in New York, December 1994, which enabled the secretariat to better advise governments. This was done through the mechanism of the second teleconference for the Caribbean subregion in preparation for the thirty-ninth session of the Commission for the Status of Women Meeting and Final PrepCom for the FWCW, March-April 1995.

The third phase of the process was defined as follow-up activities. This would involve the review of national reports, conversion of reports to plans and, among other things, the sourcing of funding to implement action for equality, development and peace.

Ms. Kambon concluded her presentation by identifying the constraints of the process. These were: achieving clarification at the national level of the national interests; coordination between the ministries that dealt with women's issues and the ministries of foreign affairs; linkages between the missions and the ministries, thus weakening the negotiating process at United Nations Headquarters. It was suggested that countries should improve the coordination of the people at the technical level, which might result in more efficient sharing laterally among line ministries to enhance continuity of national positions.

Participation of Non-independent Caribbean Countries (NICCs) - Mr. Carlyle Corbin

Mr. Corbin stated that member governments of the CDCC had always recognized the importance of including NICCs in the work of the CDCC. He recalled that in 1975, the non-independent countries of Belize, the West Indies Associated States, Montserrat, and the Netherlands Antilles had been invited to attend all future CDCC sessions. He commented, however, that as active as the NICCs might be in the CDCC, their access to the wider United Nations system was rather limited.

He informed that at the twelfth session of the CDCC in 1989, a Working Group of the NICCs was established which called for activities leading to increased NICCs participation in United Nations programmes, and by the fourteenth session in 1992, the provision of support for the access of the NICCs to the wider United Nations system was placed in the work of the programme of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. From this foundation emerged the beginning of a series of successful initiatives by CDCC in gaining observer status for its associate members in important United Nations global conferences of interest to the Caribbean subregion as a whole.

A new category of participation under United Nations rules of procedure had to be established for inclusion of the NICCs. This category was known as "associate members of regional economic commissions". The creation of this category was proposed at the final preparatory committee meeting of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). This permitted a number of associate members of CDCC, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to participate at UNCED, and marked the first time that CDCC and other associate member countries were included in global deliberations on issues important to their socio-economic development.

The presenter then informed that it was this landmark precedent that had enabled these countries to obtain amendments to the rules of procedure of a number of other United Nations global conferences permitting the associate members to gain maximum benefits from their participation in these proceedings, although each conference required a separate set of intense negotiations in order to secure observer status for these countries.

The meeting noted the importance of the work of the CDCC in this field which was evident in the increased level of activity of many NICCs in the international arena, to which access was not previously possible. From the regional perspective, NICCs eligibility resulted in an increase in the

number of Caribbean countries participating in these global conferences, where the workload for regional government representatives, which often must cover concurrent negotiating sessions, could be quite overwhelming.

The presenter commented that the inclusion of several additional Caribbean governments in the regional lobbying effort, then, had given an added boost to the promotion of the Caribbean position in international negotiations, and a larger and more coordinated voice in global deliberations affecting the wider Caribbean.

He then informed the meeting that NGOs in non-independent Caribbean countries were even more isolated than those in independent countries and that the Working Group of the NICCs was recently successful in gaining accreditation for an NGO from a non-independent Caribbean country to the NGO forum at the Beijing Conference.

Role of non-governmental organizations - Ms. Jocelyn Dow

In her presentation, Ms. Dow traced the history of the relationship between the NGOs in the Caribbean and the United Nations. She recalled that in 1991, NGOs became accredited to the United Nations process. She informed that at the Rio conference, 1700 NGOs were accredited and most of these came from southern countries.

She stated that at every international conference the NGOs had set up an NGO forum, that was separate and distinct from the official conference. The NGOs divided themselves at the conferences, some attended the actual conference while others participated in the NGO forum. In this way, she informed that the NGOs were able to raise consciousness in achieving their agenda, especially since they were covering both bases.

She also remarked that at the conference itself it was important for the government officials to be acquainted with the NGO representatives. This would enable each party to be informed of each other's particular view and, in some cases, merge and present stronger positions. Consultations between both parties would also reduce any existing suspicion and/or hostility between both parties which would enhance working relationships in the future.

At every conference, the NGOs prepared a document, upon which they built consensus. The presenter suggested that a core group of persons be selected to lobby for the cause. She also suggested that young people be incorporated in the process. Governments, were urged to be more proactive and to include more NGO representation in their official delegations, so that the governments' delegation would have not only their experts, but the NGO specialists and this would enable the delegation itself to be stronger.

Small island developing States in the United Nations system: Towards more effective participation - Sheila Solomon

The presenter commented that the present system of development had to change. She stated that what was missing was a caucus of SIDS; SIDS as a grouping was not at all recognized. She stated that the new focus should be on sustainable human development.

She suggested a few modes for SIDS to become more visible in the international arena. The first was through guerilla diplomacy, that is, instead of viewing themselves as the smallest, SIDS should take the perspective that in terms of groupings of islands they were the largest. Secondly, she purported a possible interregional approach. Interregionalism might be used as a cross-cultural mechanism that the SIDS could utilise to develop a foreign policy to influence regional policy.

She also stated that there was need for a new development paradigm which required an inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary approach. In this approach, the new perspective to adopt was that of smallness. She then stated that the Caribbean subregion could not develop a strategy if there was no vision. The subregion had not established a Caribbean vision or a vision for SIDS. She commented that once the subregion stated its vision, they might be able to attract additional funding or might be able to mobilise existing funds.

General discussion

The participants discussed the importance of sound preparation for international conferences and commented on the success of the ICPD process and the preparation activities for the FWCW, as compared to that of preparatory activities for the World Summit for Social Development (WSS). The meeting noted that the major difference between the preparatory activities of the WSS and the other conferences was that when presented to the General Assembly, it was decided that there would be no formal regional preparatory process for the WSS since the Secretary-General of the conference wanted to concentrate on the preparatory process in New York.

The lessons learned from this were essentially that substantial inputs were omitted if the subregional and regional stages of the preparatory activities were omitted. It was noted, however, that the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters had held a preparatory meeting in Antigua and Barbuda, in December 1995. In the future, therefore, it was recommended that all national and regional activities would be conducted at the national and regional level since a substantial gap was produced when stages were omitted.

The meeting noted the fact that when NGOs were included in the process there was an enhancing effect. The participants were also reminded that the NGOs were very organized and participated fully at the WSS. In fact, NGOs had been a great support to government delegations at many conferences.

The meeting discussed the composition of the delegation sent to the conferences. It was suggested that the individuals who participated in the preparatory process should be the ones comprising the team attending the conference. It was noted that continuity between the various

preparatory stages was essential since precious institutional memory was lost when the team was changed. That is, the same persons should take part in every stage of the preparatory process because when the individuals changed, the process had to be re-started in most instances.

It was also noted that the size of the delegation attending the conference was important. A participant reminded that attendance of countries at international conferences was itself a process requiring various inputs and commitments.

A participant suggested that the subregion needed to do a stocktaking exercise to determine the effectiveness of its participation over the past 25 years. Countries had to ascertain what they wanted from the various conferences and to conclude whether they were successful and, after this exercise, they should be able to know where they stood as a region.

It was noted that one definite result of the SIDS Conference was the establishment of a SIDS information database. The UNDP had the prototype for this information system. The meeting agreed that this was indeed a positive step for the future and countries were advised to utilise it fully when it became operational. A participant recommended that since SIDSNET was so important, governments should accelerate the process.

A participant commented that the central problem of the multilateral system was that each player had to make his perspective the centre of the world. He suggested that the most important thing a player ought to be clear about was his interests.

Session 3

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS): Coordinating its activities with other regional and subregional bodies

This session was chaired by Mr. Terrence Baden-Semper. The presenters were: Mr. Daniel Blanchard, Director, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, Mr. Arthur Gray, CARICOM; Mr. Carl Parris, Director, Institute of International Relations; Mr. Winston Dookeran, Consultant, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat and Mr. Simón Molina Duarte, Candidate, Secretary-General of the ACS.

Mr. Daniel Blanchard

In his presentation, Mr. Blanchard stated that ECLAC celebrated the birth of the ACS, an important new organization designed to promote cooperation among the countries bordering on the Caribbean Sea. He stated, however, the fact that the ACS was born at a time when existing global and regional organizations had been subjected to criticism for failing to meet the high objectives set by their founding governments. Many reasons were set forward in explanation of this phenomenon, not the least of which was the failure on the part of the member States to live up to their commitments. Bureaucratic inefficiency, compounded by the cultural differences in organizations staffed by multiple nationalities was another; yet, when countries had the aspiration to promote international cooperation and to build closer ties among neighbouring States, the usual decision was

to create a new regional organization, be it CARICOM, CDCC, MERCOSUR, Central American Integration System (SICA) and now the ACS.

The presenter then addressed the questions that he felt both the Caribbean governments and the existing regional organizations should consider with a view to ensuring the success of the ACS. With respect to the ACS and other existing organizations, these bodies should look at the objectives, the membership, the work programme, financial and budgetary considerations and, perhaps most importantly, mechanisms for cooperation and coordination.

Mr. Blanchard stated that one very frequent and recurring theme at meetings from the United Nations General Assembly was the need to eliminate duplication of effort by international organizations and to ensure that their activities were complementary. He felt that international organizations should be wary of this in light of the new organization - the ACS. The presenter stated that in many instances the same mandates were given to different organizations and suggested that to avoid duplication of action that the committee proposed by the Secretary-General of CARICOM, that is, a regional Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), should be established to advise the ACS. Regular coordination meetings should be held and cooperation agreements, such as those signed between the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat and the CARICOM Secretariat, the UNDP and the UWI, should be signed with the ACS.

He stated that while the region wished the ACS success in its mission, that good wishes were not sufficient. The ACS needed support from the governments, both financially and in achievement of its goals; governments would also have to clarify which organizations should do what, and that existing organizations would have to provide support to the new one. He stated that to achieve all of these objectives there would have to be close collaboration among all parties concerned. The presenter concluded by stating that ECLAC stood ready to continue providing support to the ACS.

Mr. Arthur Gray - CARICOM Secretariat

Mr. Gray stated that one of the hallmarks of the ACS was its design as an agency which was intended to execute its functions in collaboration with other bodies of regional, subregional, hemispheric and even wider international scope. He informed that the constitution of the ACS stated that it was "prepared to promote, consolidate and strengthen the regional cooperation and integration process in the Caribbean region" and "to establish itself as a broad framework for the adoption of common positions among the States, Countries and Territories of the Caribbean."

The presenter stated that from a review of existing cooperation mechanisms and regional integration processes among the potential ACS membership, significant areas of commonality were readily identified. These areas were suggested as areas that might be usefully developed within the ACS.

He stated that the existence of the multiplicity of mechanisms for the pursuit of cooperation and integration, with overlapping membership and shared areas of focus, would appear to provide a major justification for the creation of an ACS, which envisaged the regionalisation of integration and cooperation involving the identification and pursuit of areas of convergence.

He stated that a review of the cooperation mechanisms and integration groupings indicated the following four broad areas of commonality or convergence as regards the spheres of interest: technical cooperation, trade, investment and production development, and external economic relations, for example, NAFTA and functional cooperation.

The ACS recognised the need for its secretariat to interact closely with other inter-governmental organizations for the purposes of both proposing and implementing action, exchanging views, information and suggestions with respect to their respective work programmes and identifying areas for collaboration. In this regard, there was a proposal which went beyond the establishment of bilateral relations between the ACS and any other given organization, to advocate the establishment of a joint consultative mechanism involving the full range of observer organizations. The examples given included the Latin American Economic System (SELA), the Organization of American States (OAS), ECLAC, other United Nations bodies, subregional development banks, etc.

Mr. Gray then commented on the question of why the CDCC did not evolve into the ACS despite its close correlation between the constitution of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat and the Secretariat of the ACS. He recalled the speech, given by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Mr. Gert Rosenthal, at the fifteenth session of the CDCC, in Santo Domingo, July 1994, where he stated that "ECLAC's basic aim is to work with the region's governments in determining the best ways of consolidating their commitments so that they will lead to tangible results; identifying the obstacles and incompatibilities that could arise from the multiplicity of the agreements so that they could be resolved in time; and, most of all, proposing guidelines for leading continuity and coherence to these arrangements, in order to take full advantage of their potential contribution to development. These kinds of efforts, backed up by the Commission's analytical capacity, suggested that our future activities in the Caribbean should be geared towards adapting the work of the CDCC to the new situation prevailing in the subregion and, especially, to the existence of the ACS." The presenter then stated that the ACS welcomed Mr. Rosenthal's offer of analytical and operational support to the Secretariat and inter-governmental organizations of the Association.

He stated that the ECLAC/CDCC has been in the forefront in supporting the establishment of the ACS and in ventilating issues related to the Association. In this latter process, it had been ahead of even CARICOM, the author and promoter of the ACS concept. At the fifteenth session of the CDCC, July 1994, there was ample documentation and discussion, a matter of days after the signature of the ACS Convention in Cartagena de las Indias.

He further stated that it was, however, expected that the Ministerial Council would convene at an early date marking the culmination of the establishment of the ACS. The ACS, he remarked, no longer belonged to CARICOM. In fact, once the concept had been accepted by the other States, countries and territories of the Caribbean Basin, the ACS belonged to its wider membership.

He concluded by stating that CARICOM stood ready to continue supporting the ACS in its activities. With the support of the ECLAC/CDCC, SICA, SELA, G3 and other inter-governmental, subregional organizations, the ACS would be the outstanding success that it was warranted by the new and still evolving hemispheric international system, as our countries sought to advance, promote and defend their interests and to guarantee an acceptable standard of living for our people.

Mr. Carl Parris - Institute of International Relations

Mr. Parris called for the ACS to create a well-established, fully functioning cerebral centre, the latter which must draw its sustenance from the University of the West Indies (UWI) and other intellectual institutions. This would serve to provide an intellectual basis on which decisions would be made, since he felt that far too often decisions were made on agendas set by international institutions.

He stated that for the ACS to make a difference it had to put on its agenda the free movement of all peoples within its member States.

He also stated that the pursuit of the ACS must not lead to the abandonment of CARICOM. CARICOM was a representation of West Indian unity and identity as was known and, therefore, this would be lost if the organization was abandoned.

He concluded by stating that in light of the changing global scenario and at a time when the Caribbean political elite was trying to manage crisis, that the task ahead for the new Secretary-General of the ACS would be to define the Caribbean problem and to seek ways of dealing with it.

Mr. Winston Dookeran - Consultant

Mr. Dookeran, in his presentation commented that the regional State apparatus was more appropriate for the present scenario than the nation State. This could be seen in the emergence of regional groupings, for example, Asean Bloc, the European Union. In the western hemisphere there were regional movements from CARICOM to the ACS and to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). In this context, he commented, international institutions might be the next stage of conflict and crisis.

He stated that the ACS should not engage in new areas and suggested that organizations should decide in which areas they were involved, thereby reducing duplication. This would also assist in more efficient distribution of funds from the donor community to the international institutions.

The presenter stated that the ACS should not be seen solely as an integration movement seeking economic cooperation, but its primary mandate should be to seek larger political space since the multilateral United Nations system would no longer be providing this space. He cautioned that if the ACS was identified as an English-speaking initiative the extent to which they would obtain this international space would be limited.

He stated that the work programme of the ACS should comprise the following: negotiating strategy, trade, international diplomacy, alliance building, double-edged diplomacy rather than those already identified since, in his opinion, they would not be able to achieve all of these simultaneously. They should, therefore seek, to acquire these strategies and skills.

Mr. Simón Molina Duarte - ACS

Mr. Duarte informed the meeting that two more countries had to ratify the ACS treaty before it came into effect. He stated that the only mandate of the ACS at present was what was stated in the convention establishing the ACS.

He commented that one main difference between the ACS and other groupings was the fact that the post of Secretary-General would be rotated, no one person would occupy that post for more than three years.

General discussion

A participant called for governments to remove obstacles to the private sector for export business. In this way regional initiatives, such as the ACS, should succeed.

The meeting then discussed the reasons that brought CARICOM to the ACS. A participant suggested three reasons: The first being the negotiation of protective shelter in relation to the export processing sector, the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) and the Lomé Convention. These converged to compel CARICOM to reconsider the notion of viable negotiating space. Secondly, the emergence of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round central negotiating issues on the world stage. Thirdly, the Ramphal Commission noted that CARICOM was in a state of paralysis. The ACS, therefore, was seen as a stratagem for inducing deepening into the global market.

It was suggested that the agenda of the ACS should not be driven by trade and tariff conditionalities but should emphasize productivity.

A participant then commented that the ACS could not be a primary instrument for the Caribbean people since it lacked the historical, cultural and philosophical underpinnings that was needed for an integration movement to be successful. He suggested that this was the reason that CARICOM had survived.

The representative from the Netherlands Antilles commented on the full participation of the associate members of CDCC in the ACS, and informed the meeting of the problem of the Netherlands Antilles in seeking political space, since all negotiations would be done by the administering power, the Kingdom of the Netherlands. She agreed that there was need for a definition of the problem of the Caribbean which would shape the agenda of the ACS.

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