

Second Meeting of SIDS/IACG  
14 August 1999  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

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**REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE SIDS BUREAU AND  
THE INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATIVE GROUP**

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**REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE SIDS BUREAU AND THE  
INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATIVE GROUP  
*Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago*  
*14 August 1999***

**Introduction**

A joint meeting of the Interim Secretariat of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Bureau, the Inter-Agency Collaborative Group (IACG) and other Caribbean SIDS was convened by the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on Saturday 14 August 1999, at the ECLAC Conference Room, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The list of participants at the meeting is attached at Annex 1.

**Agenda item 1  
*Welcome remarks***

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Ms. Len Ishmael, welcomed participants and provided the context for the meeting by reference to the ongoing implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action (POA) at national, regional and international levels, with particular emphasis on the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) that would convene in September 1999 to review the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In her statement, the Director expressed the view that while the SIDS POA was recognized at the time of its adoption to be a valid framework for the pursuit of the sustainable development endeavours of SIDS, and while this validity remains unquestioned, it was nevertheless necessary to revisit the instrument so that it might be made continuously relevant and specific to the challenges now facing the Caribbean region. Challenges arising from such developments as those related to globalization, increasing levels of poverty, crime, the drug problem and the HIV AIDS pandemic were highlighted in this regard.

The Director's presentation concluded with a request to delegates for a commitment to make the SIDS POA the operational framework for sustainable development and to ensure that it was understood and appreciated at all political and social levels. It was also urged that, taking into account the outcomes envisaged for the joint meeting, Caribbean SIDS should proceed to the UNGASS

in September 1999 with a comprehensive strategy concerning the benefits they wished to secure with respect to the future implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action.

**Agenda item 2**  
***Opening of the meeting***

The Chairman, Mr. John Wilson of Barbados, expressed his appreciation of the opening remarks made by the Director. He then welcomed the delegates and briefly outlined the purpose of the meeting, which he then formally declared open.

**Agenda item 3**  
***Adoption of the agenda***

The meeting adopted its agenda, which is attached at Annex 2.

**Agenda item 4**  
***Procedural matters***

The meeting adopted its hours of work and related organizational aspects.

**Agenda item 5**  
***Review of major developments since the last joint meeting***

- a) The Fifth Meeting of the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), 18–22 January 1999
- b) The Meeting of Representatives of Prospective Donors and Representatives of SIDS, 24–26 February 1999
- c) The Seventh Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 7), 19–30 April 1999

In its presentation of this item, the Secretariat recalled that the three meetings to be reviewed represented the major events envisaged since the last joint meeting in November 1998 in the context of preparation at the regional and international levels for UNGASS. With respect to the meeting of COTED, which convened in January 1999, this was indicated to be the outcome of efforts to convene the regional ministerial meeting to prepare for UNGASS as was

envisaged at the last meeting. In the event, "Sustainable Development Issues" were dealt with in the context of a larger agenda, which was dominated by trade issues. The meeting, however, adopted decisions supportive of the SIDS POA including the need for adequate preparation on the part of the region for the UNGASS.

With respect to the Meeting of Representatives of Prospective Donors and Representatives of SIDS, (the "Donors' Meeting"), of 24-26 February 1999, this was indicated not to have been in the nature of the pledging conference expected by many, if not most, SIDS. Rather, the meeting had provided an opportunity for expressions of commitment to the SIDS Programme of Action and for the expression by prospective donors of their respective areas of focus within that Programme of Action, as well as the procedures for advancing the proposals presented. A major recommendation by the Donors related to the consolidation of national projects into regional submissions wherever feasible.

With respect to the Seventh Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development which convened over the period 19-30 April 1999, emphasis was placed on the fact that as a Preparatory Committee for the UNGASS, the work of the Commission remained to be completed. Against this development, a Preparatory Meeting had been convened for the period 9-10 September 1999.

Following the Secretariat's presentation, a discussion developed covering the status of project proposals formulated in the context of the Donors' Meeting and overall preparations for UNGASS, including the objectives to be pursued by the region in that forum. In the latter regard, particular attention was drawn to the proposal for international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a "special area" in the context of sustainable development and the need for specific reference to be made to the role of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in the development and promotion of the proposal. The view was expressed that the proposal should be disseminated throughout the wider Caribbean in order to garner support and momentum towards its presentation and acceptance at the UNGASS. The Draft Resolution prepared within the Caribbean had been reformulated by an informal group of Caribbean representatives in New York to reflect the United Nations format. The reformulated text had since been circulated to Missions in New York with requests for support, including co-sponsorship. A further draft will be presented to the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and thence to the Group of 77 (G77). Guyana, which occupies the Chairmanship of the Group of 77, and China have been chosen to present the Draft Resolution to the UNGASS.

**Agenda item 6a**  
***The Preparatory Meeting, United Nations, New York***  
***September 1999***

At the request of the Chair, this item was presented by Ambassador John Ashe, Deputy Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, New York. The meeting was informed that a Preparatory Meeting would convene in mid-September 1999 to, *inter alia*, advance consideration of the draft text to be presented to the UNGASS, entitled "State of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)". Informal negotiation of the text was scheduled to resume in New York on 1 September 1999.

A number of contentious issues remained to be resolved in such areas as trade liberalization and globalization, in which the outstanding issues were indicated to be primarily technical in nature, but now requiring a political solution, and the transboundary shipment of hazardous wastes, where the language in the resolution relating to this area was regarded by some as being too harsh. Another outstanding matter was the question as to whether there should be another review of the SIDS POA after another five-year period.

The meeting was also advised that the UNGASS was expected to adopt, *inter alia*, a Review of the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action and a Resolution on the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development.

**Agenda item 6b**  
**State of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the**  
**Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) for the sustainable**  
**development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

In his presentation, the representative of Antigua and Barbuda highlighted the situation as regards the resolution of the outstanding contentious issues and the introduction of new issues. In that context, the incorporation of new ideas was indicated to be difficult at the present stage of the process since, in the case of CARICOM member States, they would have to be ratified by all the CARICOM Heads of State and governments beforehand.

The meeting was also cautioned by one delegation that the inclusion of too many issues could make the document all-inclusive and, therefore, unfocused. On the other hand, the document embodying the Caribbean position

that was envisaged for development at the meeting could nevertheless draw attention to issues of concern which could be articulated within AOSIS and the Group of 77 and China.

The Meeting was further advised that the review of Agenda 21 by the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) would provide an opportunity for the inclusion of new issues and for the consideration of issues not now prominent in present documentation. In addition, the political statements made within AOSIS and at UNGASS could be exploited as vehicles for the articulation of new issues. This political impetus, thus generated, could lead to a justification of another review of the Programme of Action in 2004.

Due to the non-fulfilment of commitments made to SIDS at the Rio 1992 Conference, it was important for the SIDS delegations to ensure that further erosion of any promised benefits did not occur at the UNGASS. To this end, there was consensus that the SIDS community should demand nothing less than was promised at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. A further point raised was that the resources to implement the SIDS POA were grossly insufficient or non-existent. This factor should be raised at the level of the United Nations.

The discussion then focused on the role of regional organizations and agencies in the implementation of the SIDS POA with particular reference to the respective status to be accorded, respectively, to the Joint Work Programme developed in the context of the SIDS Programme of Action and the mandates of the agencies involved in the implementation of that Joint Work Programme. Another query related to the mode of incorporation of additional agencies into the Inter Agency Collaborative Group.

In response, the Director of ECLAC reviewed the evolution of the IACG. The IACG was established with those agencies that were present at the Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on implementation of the SIDS POA, in 1997. However, the IACG sought to be an all-inclusive structure and any agency desirous of contributing to the process was welcome to participate. Within the IACG, responsibilities were allocated to agencies according to their experience and mandate. Agencies set their own goals or intervention points in the implementation of the SIDS POA.

While the gathering of regional SIDS should be seen as a forum for identifying opportunities for agencies to fulfil their mandate while the region charted the way forward, it was important for the SIDS POA to be owned by member States and not be agency driven. In the same vein, it was observed that although the SIDS POA had been proffered as the instrument to be used by

regional organizations as a framework for the operationalization of their respective mandates, there was no mention of these mandates in the SIDS POA.

SIDS expected the regional agencies to lend their expertise in their relevant areas of specialization and to work to ensure unity in the presentation of the SIDS position. Following the Director's intervention, one delegation emphasized the necessity to underscore the work of the agencies participating in the IACG in reports coming out of the SIDS process. Agencies were also urged to make representation to their respective governing bodies concerning the needs and priorities of SIDS.

### **Agenda item 6c**

#### *Adoption of a regional position paper for presentation to UNGASS identifying the region's priority interests and concerns*

The meeting adopted a document entitled "The Caribbean Consensus on the further implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action". This document is attached at Annex 3. In the discussion that followed the adoption of the document, a query was raised by some agencies on its status and, more precisely, as to whether agencies were considered bound by any of its provisions. In response, the Secretariat indicated that the document was intended to be informative and to facilitate dialogue. It was also an instrument that would facilitate the SIDS Bureau in charting the region's future course in the context of the SIDS Programme of Action. In that process, agencies would be invited to provide comments, resources and other inputs while pursuing their respective mandates. The Secretariat also pointed out that it was envisaged that the presence of other agencies at SIDS Meetings would assist them in understanding Caribbean needs and thus make them more effective in the execution of their functions.

The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) then stated that the Jamaica office of that organization had identified the need to hire a SIDS Officer to assist in providing increased levels of assistance to the Caribbean region. The UNEP Head Office in Mexico had endorsed the SIDS Programme of Action and was willing to assist the SIDS process in the region through the convening of a regional meeting in November 1999, at the technical as well as ministerial levels, to discuss the way ahead and the implications of the decisions taken at the UNGASS in September 1999.

He also proposed three projects, which his organization would be willing to integrate with any other suggested projects advanced by the region. The projects related, respectively, to (i) environmental assessment workshops for the Caribbean, (ii) an environmental education programme for the Caribbean, and



(iii) waste management assistance for land-based sources of pollution, including a workshop on environmental assessment. It was also indicated that UNEP was convening a nine-day meeting from 27 September to 6 October 1999 for Land-based Sources of Pollution, in Aruba. In this regard, concern was expressed at the overlap of those dates with those envisaged for UNGASS. In further response to the intervention by the representative of UNEP, it was suggested by one delegation that the meeting proposed by UNEP be held early in the new year to facilitate the transmission of its decisions to a meeting of Ministers of the Environment, which was already scheduled to convene during the second week of March 2000.

### **Agenda item 6d** ***Discussion of regional projects***

In its presentation of this item, many aspects of which had been explored in the context of other agenda items, the Secretariat recalled the recommendation formulated at the Donors' Meeting in favour of the consolidation of regional project proposals into regional submissions. This was indicated to be an approach favoured by the region but which was not followed from the outset as a result of the incorrect advice received even as the region prepared for the Donors' Meeting. In consonance with the recommendation made by prospective donors, the Secretariat had prepared, in addition to those regional projects that the Secretariat managed to submit in time for the Donors' Meeting, five regional projects based on national submissions to that Meeting.

Following an extended discussion, the meeting formally endorsed the regional approach to the formulation of project proposals and their eventual implementation on a regional basis. It was also agreed that all regional SIDS and all agencies participating in the IACG would be provided with the outlines of the regional proposals prepared by the Secretariat, together with the national projects on which they were based. Regional SIDS would be invited to indicate any modifications to the Secretariat document and any interest they might have in participating in any of the proposals contained therein. Proposals for new activities would also be entertained. The views of the agencies would also be sought, in particular with regard to their willingness to participate in the implementation of given project areas.

In response to a further query about the process envisaged for the further development of regional project proposals, the Secretariat indicated that it would endeavour to convene a workshop to facilitate the required consultations. It was also emphasized that while the project proposals were not to be presented at the UNGASS, it was nevertheless desirable that they be finalized by the time of the

convening of that meeting so that the region would be in a position to demonstrate its commitment to the SIDS Programme of Action.

The Secretariat then made a presentation on a project on which it had collaborated with the Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries/United Nations Development Programme (TCDC/UNDP). The project was devoted to the development of a database of sustainable development projects, executed or envisaged for implementation in Caribbean SIDS. Reference was made to the country documents already completed. Several delegations expressed their desire to bring forward the completion of their respective country reports. It was mentioned that, while the database contains a wide range of project profiles, the sustainability of these projects was not assured because there was no standard methodology for determining the success, or otherwise, of a project. Some projects or work areas were more amenable to success, depending on whether they were carried out at a national or regional level, or with long or short-term commitment by donors. A number of preliminary observations were made relating to the overlap that occurred at the regional level and also to the competition that was observed to exist among donors and regional institutions to fund projects in particular areas.

In response to queries as to the criteria used to classify projects under the heading of "sustainable development" and whether projects relating to areas, such as crime or poverty, could be included under this heading, the Secretariat reported that a broad definition of sustainable development was applied which included poverty, education, etc. It was agreed that the system was still in need of expansion. Copies of the results of the project to date in the individual countries were circulated.

### **Agenda item 7 Other matters**

One delegate raised the question of arrangements for an exhibition by the SIDS to be put on in New York during the UNGASS. The advice given was that individual SIDS should be responsible for making all arrangements necessary for their participation.

### **Agenda item 8 Closure**

The Chairman closed the meeting, thanking the delegations for their participation and expressing satisfaction with the quantity of work covered.

## Annex 1

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## **Annex 2**

### **Joint Meeting of the SIDS Bureau and the IACG Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago – 14 August 1999**

#### **AGENDA**

*The Meeting adopted the following Agenda:*

1. Welcome Remarks
2. Opening of the Meeting
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Procedural Matters
5. Review of major developments since the last Joint Meeting with particular reference to:
  - a) The Fifth Meeting of the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), 18-22 January 1999
  - b) The Meeting of Representatives of Prospective Donors and Representatives of SIDS, 24-26 February 1999
  - c) The Seventh Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 7), 19-30 April 1999
6. Preparations for the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) to review implementation of the SIDS POA:
  - a) The Preparatory Meeting, United Nations, New York, September 1999
  - b) State of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS); exchange of views on the draft text compiled by the co-chairmen for presentation to UNGASS
  - c) Adoption of a Regional Position Paper for presentation to UNGASS, identifying the region's priority interests and concerns, in particular:
    - (i) regional expectations from the Special Session
    - (ii) the way forward: plans for the next five years
  - d) Discussion of regional projects
7. Other Matters
8. Closure

**JOINT MEETING OF THE SIDS BUREAU AND  
THE INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATIVE GROUP (IACG)**

*Trinidad and Tobago, 14 August 1999*

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GENERAL  
23 September 1999  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH



**THE WAY FORWARD**

***REVISED DRAFT***

**THE CARIBBEAN CONSENSUS ON THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE SIDS PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

**DRAFT****THE CARIBBEAN CONSENSUS ON THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE SIDS POA**

**PRESENTED TO THE TWENTY-SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, DEVOTED TO THE REVIEW AND  
APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR  
THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES  
27-28 SEPTEMBER, 1999**

**PART A: The Programme of Action for Small Island States: A Summary  
Review**

In its "Introduction", the Programme of Action for Small Island States is indicated to contain agreements to "elaborate principles and set out strategies for development that will protect the fragile environments of small island states." These principles and strategies, in turn, are contained in the fifteen chapters of the Programme of Action, all but four of which have an explicitly environmental focus. These four chapters deal with "Natural Institutions and Administrative Capacity", "Regional Institutions and Technical Cooperation", "Human Resource Development" and "Implementation and Review". In essence, these four Chapters set out modalities and mechanisms for achieving the objectives within the other Chapters whose "environmental" focus has already been highlighted. Approached from this perspective and against the backdrop of the multifaceted nature of the sustainable development process, the Programme of Action, whose environmental prescriptions are incontestable, nevertheless manifests certain shortcomings, from the point of view of the holistic policy-making required in a sustainable development context presented by sustainable development.

In this connection, attention is drawn to the exclusion of the major social and economic issues, with emphasis placed almost exclusively on the environmental dimension. The relevance of this observation might be illustrated by reference to Caribbean SIDS which, while pursuing activities under the various Chapters of the Programme of Action, often see their activities frustrated or at least distracted by issues related to concerns and processes related to poverty alleviation, unemployment, trade, agriculture - including its relationship to the environment - the alienation of young males from, *inter alia*, the education system and from society in general, the increase in crime, drug abuse and the AIDS pandemic. While these issues are not new, their salience in policy terms has either emerged or been magnified, since the time of the convening of the UNGCSIDS, aided by aspects of the globalization phenomenon. It might be

surmised that this observation is what accounts for their non-inclusion in the Programme of Action.

The relevance of the foregoing is the recognition by Caribbean SIDS of the Programme of Action as an instrument that provides a generic framework for activities geared towards their sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the environmental dimension. What this recognition implies is the parallel appreciation of the document as one that is not sufficiently dynamic and multidimensional. Likewise, its general prescriptions deny policy-makers the specificity that would have transformed it into a more effective operational tool. This absence of breadth, in the sense of its failure to incorporate all the principal elements of the sustainable development paradigm, in addition to the lack of specificity of the various prescriptions, translates into the depiction of a paradigm or of an operational framework that is less than comprehensive in its coverage of critical elements and with policy prescriptions that are muted with respect to the precise site and scope of their application.

For Caribbean SIDS, this approach to the Programme of Action, in terms of seeking to acquire a profound understanding of its prescriptions in the overall sustainable development context, constitutes what these countries regard as "the First Phase of the SIDS Process". Such an understanding has been vital to this Region in the context of "a learning curve", in the context of which Caribbean SIDS have come to understand, identify and articulate what their deficiencies were. Informing the approach was their concern to give a dynamic aspect to the Programme of Action in an effort to make it work for them and deliver the promises of Barbados. In other words, the challenge lay in determining the optimum mode of its application within individual SIDS and, also, among SIDS as a group. It is thus that the acquisition of an understanding of the Programme of Action in the dimensions mentioned came to constitute the "First Phase of the SIDS Process". For Caribbean SIDS, the effective operationalization of the Programme of Action in a dynamic manner and with the required specificity even within a wider range of sustainable development issues, should be the hallmark of "the Second Phase".

## **PART B: Overview of Progress**

The Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean have attached the greatest priority to such issues as "Coastal and Marine Resources", "Natural and Environmental Disasters" and "Tourism", as they pursue the implementation of the SIDS POA. In addition to the substantive areas, a number of cross-sectoral issues have acquired high degrees of salience, chief among these being those relating to "National Institutions and Administrative Capacity". Nevertheless, among Caribbean SIDS, there is consensus that all fourteen Priority Areas

enshrined in the SIDS POA are profoundly relevant to their sustainable development, and significant progress has been made by many regional SIDS in their implementation. Reviews conducted on an individual country basis in preparation for the Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action nevertheless served to highlight the unevenness of progress in the implementation as a marked feature of the Caribbean experience. Accounting for this factor was, clearly, the difference in capability among the respective countries. Nevertheless, encouraged by the generally acceptable levels of progress in the region, Caribbean SIDS are striving to maintain and even enhance the contribution of the process to national as well as regional development, through a well-focused and sustained effort. However, a number of constraints have been encountered. Overcoming these constraints would involve, *inter alia*, the following:

1. The explicit integration of the SIDS POA into national planning and decision-making across the region
2. The adoption of more rigorous sustainable-development approaches
3. The acquisition of much-needed financial resources
4. Effective programmes of education, and public awareness of the Programme of Action

Notwithstanding the constraints that have been encountered, there are nevertheless many positive aspects of the experience of Caribbean SIDS in the implementation of the SIDS POA. Among the lasting achievements in this regard is the fundamental element of the enhanced understanding of sustainable development issues that continues to emerge from the process. Evidence of this is afforded by, *inter alia*, the improved identification of environmental as well as socio-economic concerns and projects throughout the Region. In addition, Caribbean Governments and civil society have responded to the demands of the SIDS POA by forging innovative partnerships for collaboration at unprecedented levels, both in terms of intensity and scope. Further, the role of civil society, including the private sector, in identifying as well as achieving the objectives of the SIDS POA has been recognized and encouraged through innovative attempts at co-management of natural resources, in setting standards and in preparing environmental policies and action plans.

Related to the priority concerns as well as to the constraints encountered by the region, the appreciation of the importance of the critical area of "institutional-strengthening" must also be enumerated among the lasting gains from the implementation of the SIDS POA. Such institutional-strengthening has been pursued through capacity building, enactment of environmental legislation, the application of management tools such as environmental impact assessments and the adoption and implementation of environment action plans. These forms of institution-building, together with the establishment of Environment



Authorities and Ministries, are among the mechanisms through which Caribbean SIDS have given explicit recognition to the need for an adequate institutional framework for the promotion and advancement of their sustainable development endeavours.

Further efforts at co-management of natural resources are exemplified by the establishment of Sustainable Development Councils or Commissions which have been established in a number of Caribbean SIDS to provide for broad-based participation in national sustainable development, planning and policy formulation. In countries where they have been established, these Sustainable Development Councils and Commissions are key mechanisms in the organization of national consultations on issues related to sustainable development. For a number of reasons, however, including a lack of resources, the establishment of these bodies is not evenly spread across the region. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Caribbean SIDS have recognized the need for coordinating mechanisms, whether in the form of Sustainable Development Councils and Commissions, or through integrated approaches to planning in which the management of social, economic, environmental and other policies is coordinated in the context of, for example, a national budget.

Finally, as Caribbean SIDS give further expression of their global citizenship, strenuous efforts continue to be made to ratify and implement Multilateral Environmental Conventions (MEAs) among them, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC).

A major difficulty in evaluating the progress of implementation of the SIDS POA in the Caribbean arises from the lack of effective monitoring of the funds that have been explicitly directed to sustainable development programmes. Such an evaluation would require the assessment of projects implemented, on an individual country basis, with reference, in each case, to, *inter alia*, the source of funding. Some efforts are however being made in this regard and as the region enters a new phase of implementation, attempts will be made to have a more specific identification and tracking of inputs of resources into the sustainable development process.

In this regard, mention might usefully be made of the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) which represents the response to the need for a mechanism to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences among SIDS, and which also provides a very useful tool in the tracking of inputs and related activities. Attention might also be drawn to the project being implemented by ECLAC with UNDP funding, which is directed towards the identification of projects related to the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action by reference to, *inter alia*, their operational area of focus;

their status - whether already implemented, in progress or envisaged; and the source and quantum of their funding.

A most significant observation in the evaluation of the Caribbean experience in implementing the SIDS POA is the fact that many activities relevant to that POA, and undertaken in the Region, were neither conceived nor implemented in direct response to the adoption of that international instrument. Indeed, the commencement of such activities, in many cases, pre-dated the adoption of the SIDS POA and these activities continue to be pursued in the context of national sustainable development plans. Significantly, though, the SIDS POA has been able to impact these activities, imparting greater focus and renewed emphasis on them in a comprehensive sustainable development context, thereby contributing to a more holistic approach to their management and to the development of new projects and programmes in response to national needs.

### The Caribbean Model for Coordinating the Implementation of the SIDS POA

#### Overview of the Model:

The model devised by the Caribbean SIDS for coordinating the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action is to be seen as a concrete expression of the results of Caribbean efforts at understanding the precise nature and content of the challenges presented in the implementation of the SIDS POA. It also conveys the recognition, on the part of Caribbean SIDS, of the need to develop and implement systems and measures in an attempt to overcome their deficiencies as they strive to meet those challenges. The model comprises an Interim Secretariat, a SIDS Bureau, an Inter-Agency Collaborative Group (IACG) and a Joint Work Programme (JWP). The various elements of the model are briefly described in the following sections.

#### **1. The Interim Secretariat:**

**Formalizing the arrangement introduced by the Technical Meeting of 1995 for the creation of a Regional Coordinating Mechanism comprising the ECLAC and CARICOM Secretariats on an interim basis, the Ministerial Meeting also refined the arrangement to provide for these secretariats to jointly act as Interim Secretariat to the SIDS**

**Bureau, until such time as a permanent mechanism will have been established. In the context of the Interim Secretariat, ECLAC functions as the operational or technical secretariat, while the CARICOM Secretariat has accepted responsibility for the political outreach needed. The principal functions of the Interim Secretariat are seen as relating to the coordination of follow-up activities, the convening of meetings, the dissemination of information, reporting and acting as an intermediary body between the Inter-Agency Collaborative Group and the SIDS Bureau.**

2. The SIDS Bureau:

**At a Technical Meeting held by Caribbean SIDS in 1995, the ECLAC and CARICOM Secretariats were requested to jointly provide a Regional Coordinating Mechanism for the implementation of the SIDS POA, on an interim basis. The Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the SIDS POA, which was convened by ECLAC with support of the regional agencies that comprise the Inter-Agency Collaborative Group and hosted by the Government of Barbados on 10-14 November 1997, expanded on this arrangement by entrusting its Bureau, commonly referred to as "the SIDS Bureau", with political oversight of the implementation of a Joint Work Programme (JWP) extrapolated from the several Chapters of the SIDS POA and, also, with preparations for the 1999 review of the SIDS POA.**

3. The Inter-Agency Collaborative Group:

The Joint Work Programme (JWP) was envisaged for implementation by an Inter-Agency Collaborative Group (IACG) comprising regional institution, regional NGOs and United Nations agencies. The concept of an IACG, conceived by ECLAC and formalized by the Ministerial Meeting, represents another innovative device fashioned by the Region to promote collaboration of a scope unprecedented in the region. Significantly, the Agencies concerned supported the Joint Work Programme, fully aware that no extra-budgetary funds would have been forthcoming for its implementation. The IACG supports the Interim Secretariat. It also greatly facilitates the convening of meetings as well as the reporting function, in the context of which Lead Agencies have been identified in the implementation of projects within the respective Priority Areas of the SIDS

POA. Through the IACG, ECLAC, in partnership with the CARICOM Secretariat, is centrally involved in the coordination of implementation at the regional level. Progress has been satisfactory in the overwhelming majority of the areas of the JWP.

#### **4. The Joint Work Programme:**

In an effort to accelerate the modest rate of implementation of the SIDS POA as perceived up to that time, the Ministerial Meeting adopted a Joint Work Programme comprising some 130 concrete activities extrapolated from the several Chapters of the SIDS POA agreed to for implementation by the IACG.

### **Constraints to More Rapid and Effective Implementation**

The constraints identified by Caribbean SIDS in the implementation of the SIDS POA fall into three main categories, namely financial; institutional; and human resources and training.

#### **1. Financial Constraints**

Many of the constraints identified in the implementation of the SIDS POA can be traced ultimately to the tight financial situation being experienced by these countries: providing evidence of what has been described as the "retreat from the sustainable development commitments and ideals agreed to at Rio in 1992". This factor, in large measure, explains the significant gaps in the implementation of the POA, for many critically needed projects lie beyond the resources of Caribbean SIDS. Overall, financial constraints present insurmountable handicaps to essential efforts at the establishment and strengthening of infrastructure, institutions and capacity building, among other important developmental imperatives. Caribbean SIDS therefore emphasize as a matter of urgency the honouring of commitments on the part of the international community, in this critical area.

#### **2. Institutional Constraints**

Institutional constraints have also been identified as critical factors retarding the pace of implementation of the SIDS POA at both national and regional levels. Specific elements identified under this category include the following:

1. The uneven situation occurring across the region as regards the explicit integration of the SIDS POA and, more generally, of sustainable development approaches into national policy-making;

2. The need for, *inter alia*, enhanced awareness, capacity-building, training, information management and adjustments in organizational behaviour;
3. The widespread lack in expertise in the preparation of project proposals and in the monitoring and implementation of projects;
4. The gaps in the establishment of National Sustainable Development Councils or Commissions across the region to serve as coordinating mechanisms for a more systematic approach to sustainable development issues and for the development of strategies that respond to the collective sustainable development goals of all the social partners;
5. The need for a permanent, adequately resourced and dedicated mechanism for coordination at the regional level.

From the perspective of Caribbean SIDS, the institutional aspect constitutes a major priority area. The potential contribution of effective mechanisms at the national as well as regional levels to propel sustainable development initiatives is an aspect which Caribbean SIDS are eager to pursue.

### **3. Human Resource and Training Constraints**

The shortage of relevant skilled human resources affects all aspects and levels of the implementation process. It is therefore urged that this element be incorporated into the Projects designed under the respective Priority Areas of the SIDS POA.

Notwithstanding the significant constraints that have been identified to the implementation of the SIDS POA, Caribbean SIDS remain convinced of the long-term viability of the POA. They also recognize that the primary responsibility for implementation rests with themselves. It is nevertheless recalled that the SIDS POA was adopted not only by SIDS but also by the international community as a whole.

#### **The Constraints in Perspective**

In the foregoing section, information was provided on the general status of the SIDS POA in the Caribbean, in terms of the degree of attention given to it by national planners and decision-makers. Generally, the general status of implementation of the SIDS POA in the region, the major constraints encountered in the implementation process and the mechanisms that have been fashioned to promote the implementation at the regional as well as, to a lesser extent, the national level.

All Caribbean SIDS remain committed to the SIDS POA and are encouraged to believe that the significant results achieved in a large number of areas can be further enhanced and replicated in others, subject only to the satisfaction of certain conditions that will be articulated in subsequent recommendations. For this reason, Caribbean SIDS make explicit the observation that the constraints identified to the rapid implementation of the SIDS POA are by no means to be interpreted as detracting from the fundamental relevance, validity and viability of that instrument. It is on the basis of this summary rationale that Caribbean SIDS advance their primary expectation from UNGASS in the form of a recommendation to the effect that the SIDS POA be maintained. This recommendation is reinforced by the important decision taken by the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at its Nineteenth Meeting held in Castries, St Lucia, in July 1998.

At that Meeting, following its consideration of the Item on its Agenda entitled "Caribbean Preparations for the 1999 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Review of the Programme for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States", the Conference **endorsed the need for the implementation of the SIDS POA to be continued following its review at the Special Session.**

### **PART C: Caribbean Expectations from the Special Session**

**Caribbean expectations from the Special Session are set out in the form of Recommendations with reference to the following points:**

#### **POINT I:**

The period of five years that has elapsed since the adoption of the SIDS POA, which has as its objective the sustainable development of these States, has been most valuable from the point of view of the opportunity it provided for the identification of the region's strengths and weaknesses and for putting mechanisms in place to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action. However, this period was inadequate for the thorough implementation of the corresponding programmes identified under the various Priority Areas and much remains to be done in this regard.

#### **RECOMMENDATION I:**

**Caribbean SIDS recommend that UNGASS articulate, in the strongest possible terms, a call for the maintenance of the SIDS POA, not only for the coming quinquennium but also that further extensions be**

**envisaged. They also recommend that the SIDS POA and SIDS-related issues in general be maintained as a permanent item on the agenda of the commission on sustainable development (CSD).**

POINT II:

**In the wider context of what has been referred to as “the retreat from the ideals and commitments adopted at UNCED”, Caribbean SIDS share the concern that the SIDS Programme of Action and SIDS-related issues, in general, appear to be under threat of being all but eclipsed by other issues on the evolving international agenda. Moreover, in several important forums, calls are again being made for a definition of “small countries” in a manner that seeks to re-open issues that have already been settled and which find expression in such documents as the SIDS Programme of Action. Caribbean SIDS urge that the SIDS POA and SIDS-related issues in general which provide scope for the articulation of holistic development strategies covering, *inter alia*, economic, social and environmental parameters, be restored to a central place on the international agenda and entrenched as a valid framework of sustainable development at the international, as well as at the national and regional levels.**

RECOMMENDATION II:

Caribbean SIDS recommend that, at UNGASS, the SIDS POA and related general assembly decisions be formally recognized and appropriately resourced as A valid framework FOR sustainable development at the international level as well as at the national and regional levels, the latter two having already received significant endorsement in practical terms. The need for explicit integration of the SIDS POA into national and regional endeavours should also be reiterated, nevertheless.

**POINT III:**

Related to II above, but worthy of separate mention as a significant factor in its own right, Caribbean SIDS are of the view that the SIDS POA should inform and at the same time be assigned priority in the context of the provision of technical assistance within the areas covered by the SIDS POA.

**RECOMMENDATION III:**

Caribbean SIDS recommend that, at the Special Session, all issues related to the SIDS POA and its implementation be established and maintained as priority elements of international programmes of technical assistance in the economic, social, environmental and technological spheres. In addition, the international and bilateral development agencies should have their activities substantially informed by the SIDS POA and by the urgency attached to its implementation.

**POINT IV:**

***Since the adoption of the SIDS POA by the international community, new issues as well as increased concern about a number of pre-existing ones have emerged: issues such as increasing poverty, crime, and the AIDS pandemic, as well as others related to globalization and the increasing liberalization of international trade, that could impact the prospects for sustainable development of SIDS. These issues should be given a higher profile and addressed through appropriate mechanisms.***

**RECOMMENDATION IV:**

**Even as all aspects of the implementation of the SIDS POA continue to attract priority attention, emphasis is to be placed on taking the process into a dynamic operational dimension and with specific prescriptions that capture the emerging issues related to, *inter alia*, increasing poverty, crime and the drug problem that now constitute vital concerns to SIDS as they pursue their sustainable development.**

**In the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action to date, the focus has been more on the environmental aspects. The social and economic elements now need to be given additional impetus. The**



**dynamic nature of the development process also requires that the chapters of the SIDS POA be revisited periodically. Recognition is also to be given to the development of the appropriate forms of collaboration that will be required to confront new issues and concerns.**

**Collaboration should respect the already existing mechanisms and processes that have evolved in the SIDS regions to coordinate implementation of the Programme of Action. Support should also be provided toward the continued refinement of these mechanisms and processes.**

**POINT V:**

Recognizing that the international community is still without an adequate indicator of "development", moreso in the context of SIDS whose peculiar characteristics have been recognized in the SIDS POA, Caribbean SIDS view the operationalization of the concept of "vulnerability" as holding out great promise in the development of a tool that would guide the activities of international institutions concerned, in their relations with SIDS. The intensification of work on the development of a "vulnerability index" is therefore urged.

**RECOMMENDATION V:**

**Caribbean SIDS call upon UNGASS to endorse the urgent need for work to be intensified toward the development of an index covering the vulnerability of small island developing states and established as a central reference in the approach employed by the multilateral financial and trade institutions and by the international community, in general, in their relations with the small island developing states.**

**POINT VI:**

Caribbean SIDS recognize the need for greater efforts on their part to ensure implementation of the SIDS POA. They also recall that the SIDS POA was adopted by the international community as a whole, with the role of providing access to adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources and the adoption of measures for supporting endogenous capacity-building. In that context, Caribbean SIDS draw attention to the declining trend in the provision of financial assistance to SIDS on concessional terms. They also recognize financial constraints to be a powerful factor in retarding the pace of implementation of the SIDS POA.

***Linking these to the commitments adopted at UNCED and at the UNGCSIDS, in the context of the implementation of the SIDS POA, the opportunity is also taken to recall what is, for most countries, the outstanding matter of the financing of the Project Proposals, presented to the Donors' Meeting in February 1999. This is a critical factor at both national and regional levels, as far as the implementation of the SIDS POA is concerned. Among Caribbean SIDS, increased emphasis is being placed on the submission of regional projects through the consolidation of a number of national initiatives in given Priority Areas of the SIDS POA. This approach is being encouraged as the way forward from the perspective of the more efficient use of resources.***

#### **RECOMMENDATION VI:**

**Caribbean SIDS call upon UNGASS to reiterate the urgency of the need on the part of the international community to supplement national efforts by SIDS in the implementation of Agenda 21, the SIDS POA and related sustainable development activities. This should be pursued through mechanisms that guarantee access to concessional financial and technical assistance and grant assistance at the levels necessary to support the sustainable development efforts of SIDS. Such action would give recognition to the increased significance attached to sustainable development considerations in Small Island Developing States and stem the apparent retreat from the sustainable development commitments adopted at UNCED in 1992. In the area of technical assistance, Caribbean SIDS reiterate the need for emphasis to be placed on those activities that impact the sustainable development prospects of SIDS at the different phases of the development process. Particular attention is to be paid to the project proposals presented by SIDS in the context of the Donors' Meeting which convened at United Headquarters, New York, on 24-26 February 1999. Likewise, particular attention is to be paid to the importance attached by that meeting to the need for coordination and streamlining of the activities of donors both in their relations with SIDS, as well as among themselves, so as to maximize the benefits from the limited resources available. Periodic consultations between SIDS and donors are recommended as an effective means of sustaining the implementation process.**

#### **POINT VII:**

Discussions at the Donors' Meeting highlighted the importance of trade in generating foreign exchange, employment and other aspects that are of great relevance to the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States.

Caribbean SIDS have always been alive to this concern and wish to take the opportunity of the review of the implementation of the SIDS POA to urge international support for this idea.

#### **RECOMMENDATION VII:**

**UNGASS is urged to call for the provision of all appropriate forms of assistance to SIDS, by the relevant international agencies and by the international community as a whole, in those vital areas which impact on the ability of SIDS to effectively implement the SIDS POA. Among these vital areas, as recognized by the Donors' Meeting, are those related to trade, particularly in the context of trade liberalization and the ever intensifying globalization of the international economy. The effective integration of SIDS into the globalized economy, in the context of their sustainable development endeavours, should be among the primary objectives of such assistance.**

#### **POINT VIII:**

The number and complexity of international treaties governing environmental and other issues which impinge on the sustainable development process continue to increase. In addition, there is a heavy reliance by SIDS on these international legal instruments for effecting the changes that are indispensable to their sustainable development. Frequently, however, due mainly to human resource as well as financial constraints, SIDS have a limited capacity to participate in an effective manner in the negotiation of international instruments and, more importantly, to develop the legislation necessary to implement and enforce their provisions. The provision of international support to SIDS in these important areas is recommended.

#### **RECOMMENDATION VIII:**

**UNGASS is called upon to recognize the limitations faced by SIDS in the exercise of their global citizenship in the context of, *inter alia*, their limited participation in the negotiation of international instruments and in the implementation and enforcement of international treaties, including environmental treaties. UNGASS is therefore urged to call upon the relevant international agencies and bodies to facilitate all appropriate means of assistance to SIDS, to enhance, qualitatively, their participation in the negotiation of international treaties and to develop the legislation necessary to implement and enforce these**

**sustainable development treaties. Such assistance should therefore extend beyond the facilitation of attendance at negotiating sessions and include, in addition, the facilitation of consultations towards the development of regional positions. Such assistance may be provided through regional agencies such as ECLAC/CDCC and CARICOM.**

POINT IX:

**The countries of the Caribbean have launched an initiative for international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area, in the context of sustainable development. This initiative has as its objective the coordination of the various efforts to address sectoral issues relating to the management of the Caribbean Sea and to treat this semi-enclosed sea, on which these states rely for their social and economic prosperity, in a holistic manner.**

**RECOMMENDATION IX:**

**Caribbean States recommend adoption of the Draft Resolution presented to UNGASS entitled "Recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of Sustainable Development".**

**PART D: The Way Forward: Implementation of the SIDS POA over the next five years**

Caribbean SIDS are concerned by the need to ensure effective implementation of the Programme of Action by the region with the support of the international community and with the participation of all social sectors which are to be the ultimate beneficiaries of the promise of Barbados. Addressing the Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to the Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States, Caribbean SIDS emphasize the urgency of taking that Programme of Action beyond the phase of understanding and learning, to one of dynamic operationalization. Even as all aspects of the implementation of the SIDS POA continue to be assigned priority, emphasis is to be placed on taking the process into a dynamic operational dimension and with specific prescriptions that capture the emerging issues related to, *inter alia*, trade, poverty, crime, the drug problem and the AIDS pandemic, which, in addition to environmental issues, now

constitute vital concerns to Caribbean SIDS as they pursue their sustainable development.

Finally, even as Caribbean SIDS have urged the popularization of the SIDS POA across civil society, they likewise stress the implementation of that internationally accepted instrument through the execution of activities that impact human lives in ways that are sustainable. The SIDS Programme of Action must be made the framework in which this can take place nationally, regionally and internationally.