

The Changing Role of Planners:  
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**REPORT ON THE BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON  
THE CHANGING ROLE OF PLANNERS**  
*"Have Regional Planners and Regional Planning Missed the Boat?"*

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## **SESSION 1: Planning and planners... Have we missed the boat?**

Dr. Len Ishmael, Director of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Office for the Caribbean, made a presentation entitled *Planning and Planners: Have We Missed the Boat?*

The presentation sought to address the issue of the changing role of planning and planners in the region, and undertook a historical overview of the planning process of planning from the 1960s to the 1990s.

The 1960s saw Independence movements regionally and globally, and requests from the then newly-emerging nations to the international community for assistance towards increasing self-sufficiency.

The international environment saw the introduction of the Marshall Plan, the reconstruction of Western Europe and the coming to prominence of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It was agreed that a framework was needed for development assistance and incorporated within this framework there were goals, strategies, outputs and targets. Out of this situation emerged the **Country Development Plans** which focused primarily on economic indicators and economic development. These plans were meant to satisfy donors and to demonstrate how resources would be allocated.

The 1970s saw a shift, whereby it was realised that economic plans inherently contained a spatial dimension that demanded greater emphasis. Thus, the Development Plans attempted to give a spatial context to these economic objectives. This gave rise to the **Master Plan**, which tended to be long term – a 20-25 year period under review – and incorporated land use within its parameters. Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries developed such plans with the assistance of the UNDP/PPP. The undertaking of these master plans engendered surveys in the region, since data was scarce, and many overseas professionals were brought in to render technical assistance. The headquarters of the OECS project in Saint Lucia saw the introduction of planning trainees and architecture trainees. Focus on developing a cadre of regional professionals led to the formation of the College of Arts, Science and Technology (CAST), and preliminary discussions with respect to the role of the University of the West Indies (UWI) in the process.

The Master Plans proved to have limited use, however, since they were extremely ambitious and detailed; lacked flexibility; incorporated too long a time horizon; and lacked public participation. Moreover, they were developed with a limited understanding of the Caribbean context; and generally, were poorly implemented. With the increased focus on development control, regional jurisdictions established Development Control Offices, managed originally by ex-patriots, which over time saw an increasing local staff complement. During this period, planners were highly regarded in the region.

The 1980s saw increasing powers of the Development Control bodies and the issue of outdated or non-existent plans and planning legislation. Some countries began to develop **National Land Use Plans** in a response to the situation. In the professional planning community, government planners began to be marginalised in the development process, and the phenomenon of planners in private practice began to receive attention from investors.

Regionally, foreign aid for development assistance began to diminish. This trend led to an increase in prominence in the field of **Project Planning** funded by multi and bilateral donors and private sector foreign investors. The former requested certain conditionalities, such as environmental and gender sensitivity in the projects and, in more recent times, the issue of “governance” has also been added. These projects caused an increase in the workload of government planning offices. In addition, issues such as coastal zone management, large-scale tourism projects and others related to park and protected areas began to assert themselves.

Further developments included the need for new methodologies for assessment (Environmental Impact Assessments - EIAs); an increase in development applications; and a call for the reduction of the time between project submission and approval. There was increasing tension between planning offices and the political structure, private sector and the average citizen. The skill deficiencies in the planning offices became apparent.

The 1990s has seen ever decreasing Official Development Assistance (ODA), rapidly changing geopolitical structures and the introduction of trade blocs and trade regimes, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the creation of country-to-country Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). This has been followed by a decrease in the value of primary products, a dependence on private sector investment, and a mushrooming of tourism-related projects. The information revolution has also given birth to **e-commerce**. The overall impact of these changes has been an explosion of ad hoc development, disjointed distribution of resources, and a fragmented view of development.

The present situation calls for a shorter time horizon in planning that is flexible and makes appropriate use of the available technologies, together with public participation. The need for accelerated development of infrastructure and quicker project approval has led to a further marginalisation of planners, who are being viewed as “obstructionists”. Planning offices have seen their authority diminished by legislative initiatives, and their recommendations superseded by Cabinet decisions. The lack of current data has also stymied the development of relevant development plans. In the new reality, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are being given permission to manage natural resources, other statutory bodies are assuming planning functions, and private sector actors are utilising the skills of planners in private practice.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, ongoing changes will continue, bringing more and more players into the development process. In many countries, however, planners and the planning process continue to be marginalised, while no clear guidelines have been tabled to tackle the oncoming realities. In addition to these, the presence of poverty continues to be intransigent.

In this context, planners need to get closer to the decision-making process, regional forums for planners need to be contemplated, appropriate regional projects need to be designed. Essentially, there is a need for the reinvention and retooling of planners and their institutions, to deal capably with the challenges of the new century.

### **Panel discussion**

Chairman: Mr. Allan Jones – Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Lands of Barbados

Mr. Jones concurred with the observation that there was indeed a changed role for planners under the new dispensation, and commented on the use of legislation to enable this transition to be made more smoothly. In addition, there appears to be a real conflict between the power of governments and the power of planners. He noted that while planners are charged with the responsibility of dealing with the spatial aspect of economic objectives, they appear to have little power in ensuring that the plans were adhered to. The unspoken conflict between the planners in private practice and those in the public realm was alluded to. Private sector planners are being seen, in some instances, as trying to undermine their professional associates in the public sector. Lastly, Mr. Jones commented on the dichotomy sometimes present between what the public wants and what the government can deliver. Thus, when attempting to establish a framework for national development, while public participation should be sought, there is always the possibility that this could lead to more, rather than less, conflict.

Discussant: Ms. Christine Toppin-Allahar – Consultant

Ms. Allahar alluded to the British origins of planning legislation in the Caribbean. She noted that planning regulation began roughly 100–150 years ago in Great Britain, when private law failed to make optimal use of land resources. She observed, however, that in the 1990s, the issue is not so much “regulation” as “deregulation”. The present legal systems in the Caribbean see the government as the over-arching planner and regulator of land use. Some of the problems experienced by planners, stem from the fact that their role is not clearly defined. In addition, planning also involves interaction with many other disciplines, some of which attempt to “usurp” the position of the planner in the present situation. Further, side-stepping the transparency process has worsened, whereby private sector plans are submitted to Cabinet and then sent to the planning department (for “rubber-stamping”), rather than being submitted firstly to the Planning Division. This constrains the role of planners since an *a priori* approval seems to be appended to the submission.

There is also the ongoing debate as to whether an EIA is in fact part of the planning process, and whether it should be submitted to the Planning Office or to a separate agency for approval. There remains conflict in the region as the legal instruments seek to assert public concerns over private concerns, while trying to encourage the private sector to take a leading role in society.

Discussant: Mr. Blaize Nickson – Chief Physical Planner, Saint Lucia

Mr. Nickson examined the politicisation of the planning process. He remarked that the planners in the 1960s and 1970s had done considerable work, but failed to capitalise on the favourable disposition to planners which existed at that time, and entrench planning in the decision making process.

He also noted that with the presence of private investors in the region, there is a need for planners to develop effective negotiation and communication skills. Planners should also start writing and expressing their views, and making regular public presentations, to articulate the principles of good development planning.

He referred to the situation in some Planning Divisions where there was a prevalence of planning technicians but an absence of planners. This lack of professional staff may be a possible cause of the situation where one sees governments paying more attention to engineers and surveyors especially as these are producing tangible and measurable products. In this context, planners must identify themselves with certain tangible outputs. Mr. Nickson called for innovation and creativity in the planning process, the necessity of securing position on decision-making communities and a clear demonstration that planning adheres to sound scientific principles.

### **General discussion**

Following are the essential points raised during the general discussion on Session One.

1. Planners need to “get back to the basics” of their profession, understanding the system in which they operate, to be guided by how to develop solutions to spatial conflicts in that system. Certain fundamentals of planning do not change, regardless of who the client is, whether private sector or government. It was argued that essentially, planning is a methodology of problem solving; if planners understand this, they will be able to adapt to the changing realities and environment.
2. Planners must be mindful, at all times that they are not the decision makers, but that they are technicians, responsible for providing the decision makers with technical information, to enhance the decision-making process. Planners must accept that it is the prerogative of the respective politician or government to refuse to take on-board (or take) planners’ recommendations. In some jurisdictions, politicians understand the importance of planning (e.g. in Barbados); in others, it is very difficult for planners to be taken seriously (e.g. in some OECS countries).
3. There was a call for clarification on the issue of physical planning versus development planning, and the role of planning *vis-à-vis* whether planning follows policy or vice versa. Another issue for exploration is whether the

philosophical underpinnings of the political framework in which planners operate, would allow them to respond effectively to the challenges of the newly-emerging planning scenario.

4. With respect to increasing the prominence and acceptability of planners, the following suggestions were put forward. Planners should:
  - Focus less on the production of technologically sound plans and ensure the implementation of good plans;
  - Seek to empower and educate the public via information dissemination using the mass media. Education and empowerment of the public is critical, and planners must be clear on the messages they are sending to the national community, to ensure that the public can make informed responses to planning presentations and appreciate the importance of planning;
  - Build professional alliances and create multidisciplinary teams (with other professionals engaged in the planning process);
  - Shift focus to ensuring the relevance of physical planning in the development planning process, as opposed to focusing on physical planning per se.
5. It was noted that the development of schisms in the professional planning community, based on differing ideologies and methodologies, has hurt the public image of the profession. To repair the damage, private and public service planners should appreciate and respect the fact that each brings different perspectives to conflict situations within a spatial context. Once this aspect is resolved, perhaps the public will judge the validity of planners and planning by their effectiveness at resolving these conflicts within a spatial context.
6. Planners' inability to generate public interest in the planning process has led to a lack of public ownership of the plans, even though public participation is implied in the planning process. Planners should therefore seek to involve the public early on in the planning process, to ensure full public support at the implementation stage.
7. It was noted that the planning process in Barbados has been more successful than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Historical factors may account for this success. Barbados is the only country in the region which has never been a crown colony and was not subjected to the Whitehall political system; instead, Barbados adopted the Westminster political system of government.
8. In order for the planning profession to move forward, it was agreed that regional governments must make a clear commitment to the process, in form of human and

financial resources. It was also argued that planners must learn to recognise their limitations, as well as opportunities being presented to them, such as **Disaster Mitigation Planning**, which is assuming greater relevance in the region.

## **SESSION 2: The new planning environment – What are its needs?**

Mr. Ivor Jackson, of Ivor Jackson and Associates of Antigua and Barbuda, made a presentation entitled *The New Planning Environment: How Can Planning Cope (Focus on the OECS)*.

In his examination of trends influencing regional development and affecting our ability to plan, Mr. Jackson pointed to the following:

- (a) The decline in agriculture and shifting land uses which impact on planning, infrastructure, and land values.
- (b) Growing urbanization.
- (c) The growth in motor vehicles/traffic congestion.

The presenter observed that there are six main issues arising out of three key trends, which affect our ability to plan:

### **1. *Limits of national physical development plans***

The presenter argued that this process is time consuming, and not dynamic enough. It thus fails to respond to rapid economic changes, and address current regional problems of urbanization, transportation issues, etc.

To address this issue, recommendations were that there be a review of the context and framework of plan preparation; that planners consider modifying contents of their development plans to place more emphasis on area plans for critical areas.

### **2. *Physical planners (PP) missing the bus on national budget***

The presenter noted that more often than not, the region plans and implements large public sector, and development programmes, with minimum input or involvement of physical planners. Economic planners, budget administrators, and line agency planners are all heavily involved in this planning process. Yet, there is no contribution from the professionals trained in solving land use conflict issues. Often, the result is that land use conflicts do arise, for which solutions (financial and strategic) may be difficult to come by.



The essential recommendation is that physical planners must be included on the team of budget planners for public sector projects. They need to collaborate with economic planners in project coordination, preparation, monitoring and evaluation for physical and environmental effects, and design mechanisms for the mitigation of project impacts.

3. ***Others plan while physical planners react***

This happens in almost all areas of physical planning namely infrastructure planning, transportation planning, housing, area development, product planning for tourism, as well as parks and protected areas. The presenter stated that regional planners must recognise the fact that professionals outside of Town and Country Planning offices are now executing the planning function.

Two key recommendations were put forward to deal with this issue. Firstly, Mr. Jackson suggested that there be greater collaboration between planners and sector agencies. Secondly, that planners consider employment opportunities in line agencies and statutory bodies, with a view to bring their special expertise in planning to projects undertaken by those agencies.

4. ***Neglect of urban planning***

The presenter argued that because of weak urban administration, there is currently a void in urban policy, research, and advocacy. He noted that the lack of planning orientation and the shortage of design skills in regional planning offices have led to “urban sprawl, poor quality urban spaces, and a less than desirable quality of urban life”. Mr. Jackson called for a renaissance in thinking in urban development that goes beyond the development of cruise tourism infrastructure.

He stated that what is needed are: new administrative arrangements; the attraction and incorporation of urban planning and design skills; and a greater emphasis by regional planners on the “town” in Town and Country planning, rather than attempting to plan for an entire country.

5. ***Village/community planning***

Mr. Jackson stated that given the experiences of regional planning over the past few decades, regional planners must now ask themselves several pertinent questions: Can, and should, villages retain historic identities? Are compact settlements disappearing and giving way to large lot subdivisions? Who is providing guidance to the development of rural communities? Are area plans working?

One key recommendation is that village improvement schemes be guided by a vision derived from the various stakeholders, with physical planning intervention directed by the community’s desires and not by area control plans. In addition,

village development projects should be incorporated into the National Budget and National Development Programme, thus ensuring that they have the support of the political directorate and are well funded.

#### 6. *Public perception of physical planners*

Participants agreed, generally, that the public perception of regional physical planners is not what it should be, in order to advance the cause of proper development and physical planning. Over the past few decades, the public has come to see regional planners more as regulatory agents, rather than as agents for change; even as professionals without creativity. Overall, regional planners have not been perceived as team players, helping to facilitate development or development policy.

An evaluation of the current Town and Country Planning Model is therefore necessary, if physical planners are to become “change agents”, collaborating effectively with other government planners. In addition, institutional reform is required, to allow some planners (those operating as “change agents”) to function in an environment where they are not perceived as regulators of development (or as agents of development control authorities).

### **Panel discussion**

In the panel discussion following Mr. Jackson’s presentation, discussants reinforced the recommendation that regional planners must retool and re-engineer themselves, in order to operate effectively in the current paradigm. They also emphasised that public participation in the development planning process was crucial to its future success.

Discussant: Mr. Bentley Browne, Deputy Director of Planning, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Mr. Browne pointed to the fact that liberalisation and globalisation will continue to impact upon regional development plans, in the sense that regional governments will be stepping up their foreign investment attraction initiatives. In terms of proper planning development, it will be harder to do this effectively, as regional governments opt for development **by project** rather than **by plan**. In order to develop an integrated approach to planning, Mr. Browne felt that restructuring the planning departments in the public service, as well as networking more effectively with the private sector and NGOs, might be necessary.

Mr. Browne also examined the impact of social and political trends on the planning process. He pointed out that the sovereignty of regional jurisdictions is under threat from criminal activity (namely money laundering, drug and weapons smuggling, etc.) He argued that social stability is a real problem in some jurisdictions, with the “get-rich-quick” mentality and selfish individualism very pervasive throughout Caribbean societies. The region must address social issues such as increasing domestic violence and abuse. Mr. Browne felt that job creation

might be a way to alleviate or head-off social unrest (and an important source of job creation is the development project).

Coupled with the regional social and political trends, the continuing decrease in aid and development assistance to the region would affect regional development plans. Mr. Browne stated that desperate governments will continue to sideline the proper planning and development process, by creating one-stop-shops for development permits and approvals, in a bid to ameliorate national issues such as unemployment, poverty, sustainable economic activity, etc. as quickly as possible.

Discussant: Dr. Asad Mohammed – Coordinator, Graduate Programme in Planning Development, UWI

Dr. Mohammed examined a few trends in the planning profession, and sought to give some perspective to the status of planning in the region.

He pointed out that although the British planning system was used as a framework for regional development planning, the intellectualisation process and action models for implementing development planning were influenced mainly by funding and conditionalities from United Nations agencies – namely, American models. There was also a great lag time between the creation of plans by these agencies and their implementation by the respective developing country.

Dr. Mohammed noted that regional jurisdictions have incorporated urbanisation principles from the United States and applied these to their development initiatives and systems, and the results have not been encouraging. Regionally, there is not a strong tradition in urban design and tourism planning, both of which are critical to future sustainable development. In both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, there have been attempts to reintegrate spatial and economic development planning, but not necessarily at the macro or national level.

Dr. Mohammed presented a case study of **New Zealand**, to show how that country has attempted to deal with planning issues in the face of a rapidly changing national and international planning environment. It appears that New Zealand has abolished strict planning regulations and legislation, and instead is using the **ISO 14000 System of Environmental Standards** in its urban development planning practice. In the New Zealand paradigm, planning is being used as a proactive tool in the development of environments.

Another observation was the increasing use of sectoral planning, such as transportation planning, wetlands, and park systems among others, all of which result in a less than holistic approach to land use programmes and the overall planning framework.

The tacit schism in the planning profession between practitioners of environmental management (land use/physical planners), and practitioners of EIA (environmentalists), was raised repeatedly by various participants, throughout the discussions. Collaboration among planning professionals on multidisciplinary teams was the major recommendation put forward to addressing this issue.

### **SESSION 3: Approaches to increasing the relevance of planning and planners**

Mr. Allan Jones, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Lands of Barbados, made the presentation for Session 3.

In his presentation, Mr. Jones highlighted a few issues which he felt planners needed to consider. He noted that planners seem to overlook economic considerations when they develop plans, and felt strongly that more of an economic focus be incorporated in planning exercises, with planners fully cognisant of the ramifications of their plans, in every aspect.

Mr. Jones stressed that planners need to create mechanisms to facilitate greater public participation very early in the planning process, and work towards “buy-in” of the plan, on the part of both the politician and the public. He explained that very often, communities might have ideas on how to solve their spatial context problems, but are unable to articulate these ideas. Thus, planners need to be open to helping communities articulate their views, working with them on their development plans, providing technical assistance and guidance.

Mr. Jones argued that the region must possess a cadre of planners with a truly integrated and holistic approach to planning and a firm grasp of social, economic and physical design issues. Given the rapidly changing regional and global environment, it is imperative that modern professional planners become multi-skilled and multi-faceted, to respond effectively to or even anticipate changing trends.

#### **General discussion**

Following are the essential points raised during the general discussion on Sessions Two and Three.

##### Legislative changes

Participants noted that SIDS, by virtue of their small size and tradition of national consultation, are uniquely positioned to resolve the issue of sectoral versus physical development planning. Most legislation in the region has a genesis in consultation.

In current legislation, regional governments have created various mechanisms to ensure some element of transparency in planning practice. In the first model, agencies create their development plans, Cabinet approves them, and the results are published in the press. In another model, a lead agency is created to implement development plans and/or legislation. For example, Trinidad and Tobago’s Environmental Management Authority model.

It was suggested that in the determination of use of land, the planning agency may take the lead role, but to facilitate integrated planning, legislation should mandate collaboration with other agencies and the public.

### Environmental Impact Assessments

Participants stressed that planners must view these as instruments of the planning process, which can help strike the right balance between protecting the environment and ensuring sustainable development. However, planners must be careful that environmental considerations do not dominate the planning process.

A current practice by regional governments is to make the development project applicant responsible for the entire development process; consequently, the Terms of Reference are extremely oppressive. This is a direct result of governments failing to engender a proper planning process.

### Decentralisation of planning skills

Planning may not necessarily play a lead role in some development areas. There can be inter-agency co-ordination/collaboration on some projects e.g. road construction. In addition, planners need to recognise and capitalise upon opportunities for jobs in these other agencies, bringing their holistic view to these, ensuring that good planning practices prevail. In recent developments, physical planners have been working with sector planners, assisting line ministries in developing and implementing projects. Participants felt strongly that this practice should continue.

### Technology issues

The fundamental issue for consideration is the capacity of the country to utilise, effectively, the new technologies created for professional planning. Participants noted that most of these new technologies, particularly GIS, are “data-hungry”, and the chronic data problem of the region is well documented.

New technology apart, without reliable data, regional planners would continue to be hard-pressed to produce better plans. One suggestion put forward was that instead of planning for the development of an entire country or nation, planners should consider the relevance and importance of planning for specific regions within a country.

### Sharing of information

Participants noted that in many instances, economic and financial development plans were seldom made available to planners, with the result that conflict occurred between economic policy directives and the assignment of land for specific activities. The lack of information on sectoral plans (especially macroeconomic considerations) makes it very difficult for physical planners to come up with a truly holistic development plan. In fact, individual sector agencies and ministries themselves often have no specific plans and directions for their operations, which makes for development that is more ad hoc. In addition, participants pointed out that planners became involved much too late, in the development process of other actors. In order to reduce the potential for conflict when developers submit projects for approval, participants agreed that planners should be involved at the conceptual and preparation stage.

Country experiences in planning

<p><b>Barbados</b></p>	<p>Barbados has attempted to strike a balance between the environment and planning functions. Essential planning functions reside within the Ministry of Planning, while the Ministry of the Environment specifically handles environmental issues. Their functions are very specific.</p> <p>The Coastal Zone Management Unit was set up primarily to handle coastal zone issues. It now serves mainly as a consultant to government and the Planning Ministry, to inform planning decisions for the coastal zone areas. Government is attempting a similar approach in dealing with environmental issues.</p> <p>The Chief Town Planner is a member of a Cabinet Planning Committee that meets monthly, and examines all proposals put forward for physical development and public sector projects in Barbados. The Chief Town Planner also reports to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, on all development planning projects taking place, which exceed \$100,000 Bds in value. Other committee members include senior technical officers from the Ministries of tourism, agriculture, environment, and the Coastal Zone Management Unit.</p> <p>A special technical panel was created to review all development projects requiring an EIA. This panel includes the Director of Emergency Services, the Chief Environment Officer, and other members on the Cabinet Planning Committee.</p>
<p><b>British Virgin Islands</b></p>	<p>Planning was carried out on a sectoral basis (sectoral plans), with economic planners heavily influencing the direction these plans took. Thereafter, government introduced Land Use Plans and Physical Development Plans, which assigned specific activities to certain land areas. The Integrated Development Plan then followed, which attempted to rationalise land use to economic imperatives, while at the same time recognising the needs of stakeholders and members of the public.</p> <p>The inclusion of inputs from various technical agencies and groups should ensure that the Integrated Plan would be amenable and acceptable on a broad scale. Economic Plans are drawn up in conjunction with Integrated Plans.</p> <p>As in Barbados, the British Virgin Islands has created a multidisciplinary committee to review EIAs and development projects.</p>
<p><b>Antigua and Barbuda</b></p>	<p>The experience of Antigua and Barbuda was one of attempting to integrate public participation in the drawing up of physical development plans. The lack of data, however, has forced planning to proceed on a sectoral basis.</p>

## SESSION 4: Technical assistance needs to planning offices

### The state of planning in CARICOM States and directors for future action

Mr. Lionel Nurse, Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Home Affairs of Barbados, made a presentation titled *The State Of Planning in CARICOM States and Directors for Future Action*.

In his presentation, Mr. Nurse highlighted the essential issues and challenges facing regional planning, including training deficiencies and needs, technical cooperation. He also proposed potential projects the region might undertake in the future. The paper derived much of its content from previous studies, most notably:

1. The 1997 UNCHS Regional Report And Plan of Action, and
2. The 1999 Draft Project Document for A Regional Caribbean Programme on Human Settlements, prepared by the UNCHS, UNDP and CARICOM.

Based on the findings of these studies, roughly 17 key issues have been identified that affect human settlements in the Caribbean. Mr. Nurse highlighted the following topics:

TOPIC	ISSUES
<b>Links with the macroeconomic framework</b>	National economic policies often have unintended spatial biases, while human settlements have a central place in economic and social policy-making and implementation. Problems arise when these various processes are not properly integrated.
<b>Resource use and conservation (land and water)</b>	<i>Land.</i> The main problems identified include rational allocation among competing users; access to land for particular groups of persons, issues of managing negative external consequences of development activities; and issues of conservation.  <i>Water.</i> The major concerns relate to ensuring that developmental activities do not contaminate the national supplies of underground and surface waters.
<b>Disposal of liquid and solid waste</b>	The main concerns include the lack of proper waste disposal for low-income households; badly located and managed landfills; contamination of water supplies; and the disposal of untreated sewage into coastal and inland waters.
<b>Mineral resource use and extraction</b>	Issues for consideration include land and forest degradation, and contamination of water bodies. There is need for a proper assessing of impacts, and the imposition of conditions for the proper operation, management and rehabilitation of affected areas.

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>ISSUES</b>
<b>Coastal zone management</b>	Throughout many countries in the region, the coastal zone area forms the “backbone of socio-economic development”, which in turn has led to steady deterioration of these areas. The main problems identified include loss of wetlands and shoreline vegetation, development that interferes with natural beach processes, reef destruction, loss of public access and traditional activities, and the general destruction of natural habitats.
<b>Poverty</b>	A clear expression of unsustainable development, this problem and the inability to deal with it has led to rapid growth in the informal sector, in both economic activities and housing provision. Concerning housing, poverty has been a main factor in the incidence of squatting. Squatting in turn leads to unauthorised development, environmental dangers, buildings both unsafe and of poor quality, and public health threats. This demonstrates the need to address tough housing regulatory standards, which may not be economically feasible for many.
<b>Transport and traffic congestion</b>	The challenge lies in finding ways to revitalise inner cities, adapt them to meet changing economic and social functions, as well as ensure standard planning controls over the external consequences of development.
<b>Preservation of built heritage</b>	The preservation of architectural and cultural sites will lead to economic benefits, given the popularity of heritage tourism. The region needs to develop the capacity to preserve these buildings, as well as engage the necessary planning mechanisms to ensure appropriate financial requirements, staff training, listing and recording of these built assets.
<b>Institutional and legislative framework</b>	A weak structure in these areas leads to a diminished capacity to plan, develop and manage settlements effectively. The new planning environment in the Caribbean requires both appropriate and modernised legislation, less cumbersome approval processes, well trained professional planners, improved use of techniques and equipment, and a better understanding of new strategies in settlement planning and management.
<b>Governance and management</b>	This relates to the marginalisation of the planning process in project development and development planning.
<b>Impacts of natural phenomena</b>	The countries of the region are susceptible to the effects of a range of natural events, namely hurricanes, which regularly affect the area to a greater or lesser degree. To reduce the countries’ vulnerability to these events, physical planners must begin to factor them into their development plans, and employ hazard mapping techniques etc., which are now critical to good planning.



<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>ISSUES</b>
<b>Access to services by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups</b>	There has been a general failure to address adequately the needs of these groups. The main manifestations are lack of access to spaces and facilities for persons with disabilities and the elderly. There is also a lack of a gender perspective in planning.
<b>Planning standards</b>	In many instances, planning standards are seen as no more than subjective judgements, working to the disadvantage of low-income groups. They have been identified as causing increased development costs, putting legitimate development activities beyond the reach of some groups, and are often inappropriate for regional circumstances. In addition, poor selection of standards for development can leave buildings / infrastructure vulnerable to natural events, and promote serious environmental and public health problems.
<b>Public participation and community involvement</b>	This was identified in the Habitat Agenda as an important component of success in planning and managing development activity. The lack of public participation and community involvement by locals, NGOs and community-based organizations affects successful implementation efforts. Participation should also include the private sector, the scientific community and other stakeholders in the process.
<b>Regional cooperation</b>	This would facilitate dealings with the International Community and reduce duplication efforts. It allows for the identification of common areas of interest and joint positions on planning matters, as well as the sharing of information, experiences and best practices. For example, we need to have much better co-ordination of regional thinking and action in the area of housing and settlements.
<b>Technical assistance proposals</b>	Possible options are... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The use of international agencies such as ECLAC and the UNCHS to facilitate technical assistance schemes for the regional territories.</li> <li>2. Establishing the idea of twinning Planning Offices within the sub-region for mutual assistance and support and exchange of ideas, i.e. an exercise in self-help. Departments that could be twinned include Barbados and the British Virgin Islands (BVI), Trinidad and Grenada.</li> </ol>

TOPIC	ISSUES
<b>Development projects for the region</b>	Possible projects include... 1. The development of Human Settlement Indicators Programme to evaluate the status of planning. [NB... there is a connection between settlement programmes and criminal activity (namely drugs) in the SIDS.] 2. The development of an Intranet to communicate Best Practices. This is very important for the sharing of ideas and experiences on what does and does not work in the planning practice. [In a survey of Best Practices in the World by Habitat, a Caribbean Best Practice made the Top 100 List.] 3. Examine the planning, development and management of small / Caribbean cities, the issues and challenges.
<b>“Keeping planners and planning relevant is crucial...”</b>	There will be a review of the Habitat process and agenda in 2000, to examine the work of the region since Habitat II, and come up with best practice procedures. This is an opportunity to prepare a good regional response / perspective / position, to take to the Habitat / General Assembly meetings in late-2000.

There has generally been a poor response of Caribbean planners to regional and international initiatives. However, in an attempt to deal with the challenges facing the region, in many instances, individual islands have approached international institutions (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), UNDP, etc.) for financial and technical assistance. The result is that there are many different policies serving many different peoples in the region, most of whom face the same challenges. It is hoped that the preparatory meetings for the five-year review of the Istanbul Declaration would be a forum to address some of the joint Caribbean problems and engender participation.

Training needs continue to hamper planning offices, and regional institutions thus far have not been as effective as hoped, in addressing this problem. Planning bodies in the Caribbean can receive much-needed technical assistance and cooperation from organizations, such as the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean and the UNCHS.

The following mechanisms might help the region in coping with the new philosophies, techniques and approaches to planning in the international arena, while remaining relevant to sustainable development in the Caribbean:

1. Projects that focus on data handling, public participation, human settlement indicators, training schemes, use of GIS technology, sharing of experiences;
2. Formulation of a facility to support CARICOM governments in formalising a cohesive regional representation;
3. Institutional and administrative strengthening;
4. Effective transfers of land; and

5. Evaluation and monitoring of development in coastal zones.

**Panel I: Training requirements**

Discussant: Dr. Asad Mohammed – Coordinator, Graduate Programme in Planning Development, UWI

Dr. Mohammed noted that in terms of regional training, the CAST programme has produced highly skilled planning technologists, and the graduate level programme at UWI, which trains planners for the professional level, was designed to compliment the CAST programme. The programme's content compares favourably with other recognised programs in planning: 45 per cent of the material taught at the UWI programme is international; 55 per cent is contextual and regional in nature. This ratio is the same as pertains to the CAST programme in Jamaica, and at similar institutions in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Dr. Mohammed informed the participants that UWI has been working on international accreditation for its planners' training programme. He noted though, that obtaining accreditation from institutions such as RTPI, is difficult.

Dr. Mohammed argued the necessity, at this time, to review and critique the existing planning training programmes in the region, and examine how well they are preparing the new generation of planners for the new planning paradigm. He argued that the program should take cognisance of many issues, namely:

- (a) Training planners for private as well as public practice;
- (b) Case studies in planning experiences pertinent to Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- (c) An incorporation of gender affairs in planning (this has been partially addressed in training by facilitators from UWI's Centre for Gender Studies);
- (d) Urban consultative processes for public participation;
- (e) An urban design or development style which reflects Caribbean culture (instead of the metropolitan model of the United States).

Discussant: Ms. Carole Smart – Ag. Director, Town & Country Planning Division, Trinidad and Tobago

Ms. Smart expressed concern over the lack of planners and support personnel for planners in the public service. She noted that there was insufficient professional, para-professional and/or technical staff in regional planning offices, as well as insufficient financial

and technological resources allocated to these offices. She argued that planners' ability to use the new planning technologies is crucial to the future success of regional planning departments.

Ms. Smart explained that the Town and Country Planning Division (TCPD) in Trinidad received training in EIAs from the World Bank's BEIRL project, an institutional strengthening programme. Ms. Smart also suggested that regional planning departments consider creating their own in-house EIA training programme.

TCPD has created its own in-house general training programme for its para-professionals, who operate mainly as development control officers. The training incorporates site visits, report writing, processing applications and proposals, among others.

Ms. Smart recommended that other offices in the region adopt a similar practice for their para-professionals. She suggested that perhaps regional planning departments could co-operate and create an "exchange-student" type programme, to ensure that professionals and para-professionals are exposed to regional planning issues.

## **Panel II: Technical assistance needs**

Mr. Mark Cummins, Chief Town Planner of Barbados, headed the second Panel Discussion under the topic *Technical Assistance Needs to Planning Offices*.

In his examination of the topic, Mr. Cummins pointed to several resources for Technical Assistance available to the region, namely the Organization of American States (OAS), UNCHS, UNDP, ECLAC and the British Government. Particularly in terms of addressing the issue of disaster mitigation, the presenter noted that technical assistance and institutional strengthening could be obtained from the OAS. He also emphasised the importance of having planners at the forefront of disaster mitigation initiatives, particularly in the pre-planning stages, with disaster officials handling general preparedness issues.

In terms of self-help initiatives, Mr. Cummins noted that the twinning of Planning Departments may help in the area of in-house/on-site training for planning offices. He observed that the region does have the required expertise in the development planning area and that collaboration and cooperation may be necessary in order to tap into and share this knowledge.

Technical officers, inspectors and assistants are key support people for planners, and it is crucial that they get the appropriate technical assistance. Mr. Cummins explained that Barbados' planning offices have sought to address this issue by linking with RTPI to secure internships for its planning officers. In addition, the Barbados government has been giving assistance to planners wishing to further their studies abroad, in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. However, it has been found that the design element (which is critical for the Caribbean) of the studies is missing.

Mr. Cummins explained that the foreign programmes are policy oriented and euro-centric. He argued that when the region's planning professionals and technicians are sent abroad for training, their training should be comprehensive enough to allow for their almost immediate

re-insertion in the mainstream. That is, that the trainees should be able to immediately implement what they have learnt in their work environment, as well as train / impart this knowledge to their colleagues.

Mr. Cummins also recommended that short courses, tailored strictly to planning professionals and technicians, be developed at UWI, as a another option for technical assistance and continuous / further training.

### **Panel III: Planning issues/Regional projects**

The discussants in this panel reiterated the thoughts of previous presenters, by emphasising the importance of planning professionals re-tooling with technology, and re-engineering themselves with continuous training, technical assistance, and institutional strengthening.

#### Discussant: Mr. Allan Gunne-Jones - Chief Physical Planner at Montserrat's Physical Planning Unit

Mr. Gunne-Jones observed that the current situation in Montserrat clearly demonstrates just how crucial it is that physical and land use planning be flexible, especially in response to those types of emergency crises (such as volcanoes, hurricanes). He explained that recent planning initiatives in Montserrat have sought to integrate both development control and planning. For example, the Physical Planning Act created the Physical Development Authority, which is chiefly responsible for the planning and land use decisions on the island.

Mr. Jones reiterated the point concerning twinning and internships with other planning departments as a means of regional "self-help" technical assistance. He noted that the Caribbean Conference of Planners was a good forum for the sharing of regional planning experiences and realities, and as such, should be revitalised.

Mr. Jones also stressed that the decision makers at planning authorities and regional politicians need a primer on physical planning, to ensure that when planners put forward their plans, the importance of the directives proposed on the plans are understood.

Issues of enforcement of plans and policies / guidelines were also raised. Mr. Gunne-Jones stated that having the appropriate planning legislation, financial and human resources, to enforce these was critical, as is identifying the financing and funding to execute institutional strengthening initiatives.

#### Discussant: Mr. Louis Potter - Chief Physical Planning Officer of the British Virgin Islands

In his discussion, Mr. Potter emphasised the importance of inter- and multidisciplinary teams of professionals operating in the planning environment.

He stressed the necessity for regional planners to become conversant with the latest technological advancements in their field (such as GIS), to make their make physical planning exercises flexible, responsive and up-to-date.

Mr. Potter recommended the creation of a comprehensive information database on possible development projects and planning professionals in the region, which would reside with the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean.

## **General discussion**

Following are the essential points raised during the general discussion on Session Four.

### Planning law

Participants raised the issue of planning law enforcement, particularly as it concerns land law. It was noted that many cases have been brought before regional courts in which requisite approvals and completion certificates were not obtained before transfers of land and titles were legal. Other planning law enforcement issues relate to the fact that regional lawyers are not conversant with planning law, and unlike planners, receive no training in this area. The closest option on the UWI curriculum is environmental law. It was suggested that a forum be created where this disparity can be addressed.

### Financing development

It was noted that many para-statal institutions (such as the CDB) often finance loans on properties without ensuring that proper development planning and practice takes place on the property.

### Training and education

Participants expressed concern that regional planning offices are staffed with professionals with strong backgrounds in development control, but who appear to be uncomfortable with or skills deficient in creating plans and general planning issues. An important recommendation was that in-house or on-site training (whether formally or informally) be carried out, to upgrade skills in planning creation in regional planning offices. Another suggestion was the creation of internship programmes for undergraduates in regional planning offices, to help give them a better appreciation of the work of professionals, and equip them to face the work world.

### Heritage conservation

Reference was made to Barbados' work in preserving its historical buildings and towns by Chief Town Planner, Mark Cummins. One of the oldest planned settlements on the island, Belle Ville, has been given a new incarnation as "a hospital city" of sorts. To preserve the architecture of the area, the Barbados Planning Office has encouraged the re-adaptive use of old houses for professional and doctors' offices, capitalising upon the town's proximity to both the

major hospital and polyclinic on the island. The residential component has been maintained as well.

These old buildings are part of the country's heritage preservation programme. The Special Development Areas Preservation Act identifies areas for special concessions for development. It gives incentives to developers who renovate old buildings or put up structures that fit in with the architectural scheme of the conservation area. For example, in the Scotland Bay area, plantation houses are being encouraged for development and use in bed and breakfast tourism. However, due to the nature of the land and the designation of a national park in the area, new development is not being encouraged.

#### Technical assistance and regional cooperation

Allan Jones, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing & Lands of Barbados, argued the necessity of a conference of regional planners and housing professionals, to concretise the Caribbean position on land use and housing and settlement issues, for lobbying purposes at international forums. He stressed that this is the only way international agencies would structure policies which would actually apply to Caribbean realities.

Mr. Jones informed participants of various options for technical assistance for regional planners and planning offices, which remain unexplored.

1. UNCHS. Perhaps the most important vehicle Caribbean SIDS have at their disposal, to put forward their special position on land and development issues. Currently, Barbados and Jamaica are the main regional attendees at UNCHS meetings. UNCHS will have a major meeting in February 2001, which gives the region considerable time to prepare and consolidate a proper position on land and development issues.
2. MINURVI. Another important forum (a ministerial level meeting) which examines land, settlement and planning issues. Here again, Caribbean interests are under-represented. In the 1999 Ministerial conference, Barbados attempted to raise the special case of SIDS and failed, because there was no concerted regional position being put forward. The next Ministerial will take place in Panama in 2000.
3. Other relevant forums include the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on the Human Quality Council; and the Istanbul process which continues in Nairobi 10-12 May 2000.

## SESSION 5: “The Way Forward”

The *Action Plan* Matrix in *ANNEX I* incorporates some of the information outlined in the following paragraphs, and includes specific items scheduled for follow-up.

### Continuous training issues

- Development of an elective course at UWI for professional planners. This could take the form of an intensive one-year programme, with course work focusing on experiences and needs of professionals. Subject areas for focus include tourism planning, disaster mitigation, etc. A senior professional planner should be a consultant to the programme, and would be responsible for preparing coursework.
- Hosting of a training programme for Disaster Mitigation and Disaster Preparedness during the first half of 2000 (with possible funding from CCAPC). ECLAC will be assessing the effects of natural disasters in the region (in the wake of Hurricane Lenny), and will make recommendations for recovery efforts.
- Develop a mechanism for integrating hazard analysis and disaster mitigation techniques into development plans.
- Overall, the relevance of new information technology (IT) tools to the planning process must be closely examined and explored. Find a way to upgrade the skills of planners to help them apply GIS technology in their everyday work of land-use analysis, and tie this in with hazard analysis and disaster mitigation charting.
- Create a one-week in-house training programme for professional planners and all those involved in the planning process.

### Information updates for planning professionals

- Every professional planner in the region will receive a copy of the Final Reports on these proceedings. Rapporteurs' Report will be available by 20 December 1999; the Action Plan will be prepared by 20 December 1999.
- ECLAC will set up a special chat room for planners at its website, to continue discussions from the meeting.
- Start regional planning journal (both electronic and print format) to communicate best practices and experiences among regional planners and general information updates on regional planning issues.



- Publish and circulate professional papers on the latest developments in regional planning issues. The proposed regional planning journal may be a useful implementation tool.
- Collation of regional judgements / cases in the area of planning law. Disseminate this information via the proposed planners' chat room at ECLAC's website.

### **Regional cooperation**

ECLAC may be able to facilitate the way forward in some areas:

- It is the only United Nations agency with an intergovernmental body (that is the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee – CDCC), among whose aims is the sharing of regional lessons and the promotion of regional integration. ECLAC/Santiago is handling the MINURVI process. ECLAC/POS could assist Caribbean jurisdictions by feeding Caribbean issues to this forum.
- ECLAC could host another two-day meeting next year, to prepare the region for the Istanbul 2000. Day-1 would focus on technical aspects, with the technicians present at the December Planners Meeting ironing out a regional position, to present to regional ministers on Day-2 for ratification.

### **Institutional strengthening of planning offices in the region**

- There may be need for a review of planning legislation in the region.
- Conduct management audits of planning units in the region. These will be useful to assist with strategic planning initiatives, and to help concretise their roles as development planners (and not just development control officers).
- Address the dichotomy between conducting development planning and development control. Meaningful development planning goes beyond what the current regional model allows.
- Regional planning offices to work on improving their public image via better public relations practices.

### **Professional Associations**

1. Set up an Investigative Committee comprising conference participants to determine the need for a regional body of professional planners, which would

accommodate planners from all levels – individuals, planning departments, planning associations.

2. The primary Term of Reference is to examine whether a new body should replace the existing Caribbean Conference of Town & Country Planners.
3. Committee members include Dr. Michelle Mycoo/Trinidad and Tobago-UWI, Deborah Thomas/Trinidad and Tobago, Lionel Nurse/Barbados, and Bentley Browne/Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Annex I:**ACTION ITEMS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ACTION TO BE TAKEN</b>	<b>DUE DATE</b>	<b>PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE</b>
<i>Contact Information</i>	Contact info on all conference participants to be prepared and circulated.  Updating a list of professional planners in the region.	20 Dec.1999	Jessie-May Ventour/ ECLAC  Dr. Asad Mohammed/ T&T-UWI
<i>General Report on the proceedings of the Conference</i>	Final Report to be prepared and distributed to all participants and professional planners in the region.	20 Dec. 1999	Anthony Mitchell/ ECLAC Jessie-May Ventour/ ECLAC
<i>Action Plan for the Future of Planning in the Region</i>	Prepared and distribute Action Plan to all participants.	20 Dec. 1999	Allan Jones/ Barbados
<i>Journal for Regional Planners (electronic and print formats)</i>	First edition would include the following elements / items: Proceedings of the conference in December.  Presentations and special papers prepared by regional planners (especially from participants at the conference).  Abstracts of and/or lists of theses prepared by regional planners.  Regional studies carried out in the area of development, physical (etc.) planning (lists, abstracts and/or texts)	March 2000	Jessie-May Ventour/ ECLAC
<i>Planners' Chat Room</i>	Created a special interactive chat room, linked to ECLAC's website, to allow conference participants to continue dialoguing on regional planning issues.	end-January 2000	ECLAC

ITEM	ACTION TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE
<i>Further Training for Regional Planners</i>	<p>Development of an elective course for professional planners.</p> <p>Intensive 1-year programme Course will focus on experiences and needs of professionals.</p> <p>Subject areas for focus include Tourism Planning, Disaster Mitigation, etc.</p> <p>Senior professional planner to be consultant to programme and responsible for preparing coursework.</p>	---	Dr. Asad Mohammed/ T&T-UWI
<i>Planning Law</i>	<p>Collation of judgements in planning law cases throughout the region. Disseminate information via planners' website, created by ECLAC.</p> <p>Investigate (with UWI and OECS) possibility of establishing a training programme in planning law for regional legal officers.</p>	---	Christine Toppin- Allahar/ T&T Lionel Nurse/ Barbados
<i>Regional Body of Professional Planners</i>	<p>Committee comprising conference participants to determine the need for a regional body of professional planners, which would accommodate planners from all levels – individuals, planning departments, planning associations.</p> <p>Primary Term of Reference is to examine whether a new body should replace the existing Caribbean Conference of Town &amp; Country Planners.</p>	17 January 2000	Dr. Michelle Mycoo/ T&T-UWI Deborah Thomas/ T&T Lionel Nurse/ Barbados Bentley Browne/ St. Vincent and the Grenadines
<i>Training Programme in Disaster Mitigation</i>	<p>Investigate whether CCAPC funding is available for hosting of training programme for regional professional planners in mid-January.</p> <p>Training programme to be hosted within first half of 2000.</p>	end-December 1999	Mark Cummins/ Barbados  ECLAC
<i>MINURVI, Panama 2000</i>	Prepare position paper on planning issues in the Caribbean.	---	ECLAC

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ACTION TO BE TAKEN</b>	<b>DUE DATE</b>	<b>PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE</b>
<i>Istanbul 2000</i>	Proposal to have a 2-day meeting in preparation for Istanbul 2000. Day-1 for technicians (the December conference participants) to prepare position papers / issues for regional ministers. Day-2 for regional ministers to ratify Caribbean position.	---	ECLAC and Participants

Annex II:**WELCOME REMARKS FROM DR. LEN ISHMAEL**

Colleagues and Friends...

It is a real pleasure to welcome you as the Director of the Caribbean Headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, to our offices here in Port-of-Spain. It is an even greater pleasure to sincerely welcome you as friends and fellow planners, many of whom I have not had the opportunity to interact with closely for far too long.

There was a period in the late 1980s when most of us here had occasion to meet from time to time during the rather tumultuous forum that was the 'regional conference of planners'. But those days have long since gone, and the demise of UNCHS in the region, has in many ways resulted in an overall loss in the provision of a forum within which we, as planners, can systematically discuss and engage in finessing solutions to the problems which we face in the profession.

Though largely removed from the technical aspects of planning at the moment, those of you who know me best know that my heart remains very much with this profession. Upon assuming duties here at ECLAC, I introduced a portfolio of technical assistance related to planning among member states, in response to continuous requests for assistance. In addition, it was also clear that ECLAC could play a useful role at the regional level, by providing a regional forum within which we can engage in informal and frank discussions regarding the changing role of planners and planning in the development process in this region, which we call home.

The initiative to host this meeting has been prompted in no small way by my own concern that the planning profession seems to have lost the glitter and the promise of the early years, when it seemed poised to play a pivotal role in the development of these islands. While this sentiment does not hold true for all jurisdictions, the most notable of which is Barbados, there seem to be three main and inter-related concerns:

- The first, a sense that planning has been marginalised and is in some countries largely alienated from the planning process;
- Secondly, the complete and continuous sense of frustration and low morale of some planners working in the public service; and
- Third, the lack of confidence in, and support for, the planning process, by politicians, developers and the average citizen.

I have no expectations that our deliberations over these next two days will result in a re-burnishing of the flame of planning in these islands, overnight. I do hope, however, that we will...

- Engage in frank assessment of the perception that planning is being systematically marginalised;
- Discuss the emerging development structures of these islands, and the changing role of planners and planning – more specifically the need to re-invent planning and re-tool planners to deal with a global, regional and national world, which has undergone rapid transformation;
- Come up with strategies which planners can utilise to make planning more intimately coupled to the realities of Caribbean development and the decision-making process;
- Begin discussion on a portfolio of technical assistance and training programmes which can assist in shoring up some of the most critical weaknesses in planning practice or process;
- See the beginning of an answer to the question... “Where do we, as a group, go from here?”

Before closing, it would be entirely remiss of me to end this brief address without providing a quick snapshot of the work of this commission in the region, in response to requests from some of you, for this type of info.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is one of five regional commissions responsible for different regions of the world. The office in Port-of-Spain is the headquarters for the Caribbean, and is responsible for all countries within the Caribbean, from Belize in Central America, to Guyana and Suriname in the south, and every independent and non-independent country in the insular Caribbean (with the exception of Martinique and Guadeloupe) – total of 24 countries. This office is therefore, the largest United Nations body in the Caribbean.

The office was established 30 years ago as a result of agitation by Caribbean member states for their own headquarters. Cuban President Fidel Castro and then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the late Dr. Eric Williams spearheaded that lobby. Their feeling was that these islands are sufficiently unique and special in their social, political, environmental and historical characteristics to warrant separate attention, divorced from analysis in which they were grouped with the larger Latin American countries, and their identities and the specifics of their concerns, lost.

The office was established...

- To function as a regional “think-tank”;
- To engage in research and provide strategic intelligence to member States;
- To provide assistance directly at the national level; and

- To foster the goals of regional integration.

The organization engages in a wide-ranging portfolio of substantive activities, from economic, fiscal and trade issues, to sustainable development, environmental and tourism projects, and social issues – including gender affairs, population and demographic concerns, science and technology, and statistics and information management, and training programmes. Training and direct technical support, for example, are provided to the statistical divisions of member States.

Through our own research library – the Caribbean Documentation Centre – we provide training to regional librarians and assist researchers both within the region and around the world. Our publications reflect the breath of our portfolio. Last year, we published at least 38 substantive, technical publications, and by the close of this year, we would have published at least 50 more. A thumbnail sketch of our publications can be derived from a quick review of our most recent works. These include, among others:

- An assessment of the importance of the offshore financial services sector to five OECS countries, as well as a similar assessment on the importance of the informatics sector as an economic diversification tool.
- The establishment of policies for returning nationals to St. Kitts/Nevis.
- The importance of national migrant remittances to the OECS economies.
- The impact of returning migrants on demographic and social structures in the OECS.
- A socio-economic profile of Haiti.
- Emergence of “the market” in Cuba.
- Trade liberalisation and implications for public sector revenues in Jamaica and St. Lucia.
- Adolescent fertility in St. Vincent and Grenada.
- Gender mainstreaming in several countries and a review of gender-specific legislation.
- Reformulation of a tourism strategy for Montserrat.
- The impact of a new highway between Guyana and Brazil, on Guyanese trade prospects.
- The impacts of the intra-regional movement of labour in the BVI, St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Cayman Islands, and Sint Maarten.



- The impact of turtles on rural communities in northern Trinidad.

One of my preoccupations in taking up office, has been the need to get the critical work of this organization out there, where it can be of benefit and use to a wider cross-section of people. To that end, we recently completed a workshop on the impact of the proposed FTAA on smaller economies of the Caribbean, in terms of competitiveness, competition policy and standards. This workshop, facilitated by ECLAC staff, undertook a five-country tour, speaking on these subjects to groups that included not only public sector officials, but also small businessmen, and other persons from the private sector.

This office is also mandated by the General Assembly to prepare the region for all global summits; take a lead role in the implementation of Plans Of Action emanating out of these; and report back to the General Assembly on resulting achievements.

In September of this year, we reported to the General Assembly on the implementation to date, of the SIDS Plan Of Action (ECLAC is the implementation Secretariat). We also provided status reports earlier in the year, in June, on the implementation of the POA from the International Conference on Population development (or the Cairo Conference).

We recently completed extensive preparatory work at the national and regional levels, as we prepare to report to the General Assembly in the year 2000, on the status, five years later, of the Beijing Summit on Women, and the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development. This office, if needed, will also be prepared to support a regional review of the Plan Of Action coming from the last Habitat Summit in Istanbul, in the year 2000.

Over the last two years, we have received a series of requests for technical assistance in the area of planning, specifically...

- To assist with land use plan formulation,
- The review and reformulation of planning legislation, and
- To undertake audits of the development planning process, planning departments, and development control authorities (DCAs).

This office has completed management audits of the Planning Department for St. Lucia, reformulated the planning legislation and assisted the government in adopting a new model for planning in that country – one which we refer to as “the St. Lucia Model”, evolving as it has into a distinctive hybrid of the Barbados Model. Assistance has been given as well to a number of other countries.

The office also provides assistance to members states in assessing the macro-economic effects of hurricanes on the economy, and designing action plans to assist in their recovery. In that respect, this office undertook an assessment, for the Government of St. Kitts / Nevis, in the wake of Hurricane Georges last year. Next week we will field a mission with a similar purpose,

to Anguilla, Sint Maarten, and Saba. A regional assessment of the effects of Lenny will also be undertaken.

This, in short, captures some of the work of this office.

Now, as we get to the discussions ahead of us, I wish to thank you for the promptness with which you accepted this invitation to be here today. I also extend a special thank you to those who assisted by preparing material for this session.

I note with regret the absences of Jackie Da Costa of Jamaica, and Patrick Williams of St. Kitts / Nevis: Jackie due to the unexpected illness of her spouse, and Patrick due to the loss of one of his immediate relatives. Orville Proctor of Anguilla is also not with us due to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Lenny, on that country. However, we will share our findings with these and our other colleagues in the region.

Again... welcome...

Annex III

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