



UNITED NATIONS



SIXTY YEARS WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM)
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 21 April 2008

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**MEETING OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM (RCM)**

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MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM (RCM)

Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean convened the first meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 21 April 2008.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the TAC: Belize, British Virgin Islands, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES-UWI), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI). The list of participants appears as an annex to this report.

Agenda item 1 – Opening remarks

The first meeting of the TAC of the RCM was held 21 April 2008 at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port-of-Spain. Mr. Joseph Howard, Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, Trinidad and Tobago, called the meeting to order and delivered opening remarks. He commended ECLAC for its work in highlighting the concerns for sustainable development as it impacts on the Caribbean region. He noted that by organizing this first meeting of the TAC of the RCM for the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, ECLAC had demonstrated the need to heighten the general awareness of the urgency of the issues affecting Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Mr. Neil Pierre, Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, welcomed participants to the meeting. He thanked everyone for attending and Deputy Permanent Secretary Howard for his kind remarks. Mr. Pierre outlined several outstanding matters namely, election of the Chair of TAC, the work programme of the RCM and preparations for the Sixteenth Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). He provided a synopsis of the background to the RCM as being a response to the requests of governments and thanked members of the RCM Core Group for their hard work and contributions. He also recalled the contributions of the late Marcia Philbert-Jules, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Planning and the Environment, Saint Lucia whose passion and concern on how member States of this region should coordinate themselves helped to drive this process. Mr. Pierre stated that under the envisaged structure, the TAC had a critical role to play as it was the technical body charged with the practical aspects of coordination and reporting its recommendations to the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) meeting as the Inter-Governmental Council (IGC). He indicated that there might be some details of composition or process still to be ironed out, but the general consensus was that these could be further refined as the mechanism advanced. In closing, he reminded the meeting that:

- (a) The RCM was a coordinating entity;
- (b) Specific aspects of capacity strengthening, reporting and resource mobilization were essential to its work programme;

(c) Review of the sanctioning of the RCM system would take place after two years;

(d) There would be secretariat support through joint collaboration of ECLAC and the CARICOM; and

(e) Setting up of the National Institutional Focal Points as an effective communication medium is crucial to the success of the RCM.

Agenda item 2 – Adoption of agenda

The following agenda for the TAC was adopted:

1. Opening remarks
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Procedural matters
4. Consideration of the work programme of the RCM for the period 2008-2009
 - (a) Review of the CARICOM matrix “Towards regional implementation of the MSI”
 - (b) Review of the St. George’s Declaration on the principles for environmental sustainability in the OECS
5. Review of preparations for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)
6. Recommendations and conclusions.
7. Close of day’s proceedings.

Agenda item 3 – Procedural matters and organization of work

Election of Chair

Saint Lucia was nominated as chair of the TAC and would chair the committee for the first two years.

The Chair thanked the meeting for the confidence placed in the Government of Saint Lucia and vouched to continue the work of the late Marcia Philbert-Jules. The working hours of the meeting were then established.

Agenda item 4 – Consideration of the work programme of the RCM for the period 2008-2009

The Regional Adviser of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in her capacity as Regional Coordinator of the TAC, introduced the discussion by providing a background to the establishment of the RCM, stating its objectives in regard to the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for Small Island Developing States (MSI). In doing so the mandate received from a number of intergovernmental meetings was noted, including the Sixteenth Inter-sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, held in Paramaribo, Suriname, 16-17 February 2005, and more recently, the Fifteenth Meeting of the OECS TAC & Eleventh Meeting of the OECS Ministers Environment Policy Committee (EPC), 16-18 January 2008.

It was further noted that the establishment of the RCM fulfilled one of the key objectives of the regional follow-up meetings to facilitate the MSI which was, the creation of a regional institutional mechanism with overarching responsibility to ensure implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

In reporting on the progress made so far in instituting the TAC of the RCM, the composition of the TAC as well as the IGC, was detailed and it was further noted that the Office of the Regional Coordinator of the RCM Secretariat had been established at ECLAC; that governments, regional intergovernmental institutions, civil society and development partners had been invited to take up their positions on the TAC and at the 25th meeting of COTED, 14-18 April 2008, The council was informed of the establishment of the TAC of the RCM and of its activities. It was further reported that COTED congratulated ECLAC on the establishment of the TAC and noted its functioning as a part of the regional environmental governance structures.

In closing, the Regional Adviser advanced a number of challenges which the TAC may need to address in order to advance its work. Among them were: the level of awareness/understanding of the MSI on the part of government officials; the level of engagement of the donor community; the uneven capacity of countries to generate appropriate data; and the continued perception of the Mauritius Strategy as a framework for action within the environment sector only.

Discussions on the RCM

The discussions highlighted the necessity to identify not only the activities which the TAC would undertake, but the resources required. Another challenge identified was the defining of a work programme given the diverse work programmes of other organizations and the difficulty in sourcing and collating robust data. It was advanced that a joint programming meeting may be necessary. In addition, the TAC could use the status of preparation of regional policies as a starting point for its work programme, and that a review of the impacts of ongoing programmes could assist in the identification of gaps which could be reflected in the work programme.

The representative of CARICOM suggested that the work programme of the RCM should be guided by the Caribbean Position Paper that was submitted to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) which was derived from submissions by members of

the Caribbean region and, secondly, the relationship between the RCM and member States should encourage a free flow of information so as to encourage synergies and avoid duplication.

The discussion concluded that the coordinating mechanism should be viewed as a mechanism for networking and coordinating activities for implementation of the BPOA and the MSI by encouraging synergies and avoiding duplication.

Presentation of the CARICOM Matrix “Towards regional implementation of the MSI”

The representative of CARICOM was invited to lead the discussion on the CARICOM matrix. He described the background to development of the matrix that was prepared in 2005 indicating that it highlighted four main areas, namely, climate change, disaster management, freshwater resources and trade, environment and development policy. The overall focus is in terms of the entire MSI and a programmatic approach with result-based management was being promoted. He indicated that it focused on capacity-building, institutional strengthening, public education and public awareness. At a technical level, it focused on technology transfer, transport and environmentally-sound technologies and the promotion of public-partnerships.

Climate change was a priority area and CARICOM traced the development of the climate change programme in the region from a project management focus to the establishment of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) where a draft regional strategy had been developed. He indicated that member States needed to reflect on this in refining the matrix, in considering the results of consultations that would be concluded by February 2009. This strategy would then be taken to COTED and presented to the Heads of Government Meeting for approval. The CARICOM representative also mentioned that a parallel process had been completed, as in 2003 Heads of State mandated the CARICOM Secretariat to form a task force to develop a draft energy policy. This was realized under the Caribbean Regional Energy Development Project (CREDP) and was still being examined by member States. This document also contained issues related to climate change and, as such, both documents should be considered in tandem by member States. He expressed the challenge that the responsibility for climate change may fall under the mandate of ministries of finance or agriculture so that greater coherence among the roles of ministries as needed. CARICOM would also soon be implementing the European Union/African Caribbean Pacific (EU/ACP) project that would seek to build on the achievements of the recently-concluded CREDP project.

In the area of disaster management, it was noted that the Caribbean Disaster Emergency and Response Agency (CDERA) was the lead agency within CARICOM and had developed a comprehensive set of activities for consideration by the TAC. With respect to trade, environment and policy, focus was on the more than 500 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to which Caribbean member States were signatory and the reporting requirements that accompanied such parties. CARICOM also mentioned the significant role that this region had played in negotiations at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol. He indicated that these MEAs were important and the CARICOM Secretariat was about to engage in implementation of an EU-funded activity focusing on building capacity for MEAs.

In the area of freshwater resources, the representative of CEHI described the objectives of the Integrated Watershed and Coastal Area Management (IWCAM) project implemented through best practice pilot projects in 13 States. CEHI is also addressing land management issues.

In the area of finance, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was identified as one of the main financiers but the Caribbean region was not represented on the GEF Council. Member States were present at constituency meetings but the region had not been fully utilizing GEF resources. It was anticipated that at the next constituency meeting in July 2008, the CARICOM Secretariat planned to define a regional position to present to the GEF. This highlighted the need to become familiar with GEF procedures so as to make greater use of the resources. There was also need for collaboration among the national focal points and environmental focal points in accessing GEF resources. In other words there needed to be a regional orientation in accessing resources. The representative of CARICOM reiterated the need to strengthen the matrix in order to attract resources for implementation of activities.

The representative of CARICOM indicated that there might be role for the RCM to become part of the Caribbean constituency in approaching the GEF. The Chair noted that the GEF constituency in the Caribbean met actively. The Chair also noted that a paper "Caribbean Alliance for Sustainability" promoted a programmatic approach to accessing GEF funds. It was reported that this paper was presently under review and had been endorsed by Saint Lucia.

The meeting agreed that a strategic approach was necessary at the regional level to access GEF resources and in this regard a regional strategy paper had been prepared and circulated to member States for comment.

It was noted that the matrix represented a compilation of priorities but there was no mention of coastal and marine resources and an absence of strategies to address linkages in management of resources. It was also noted that there should be some inclusion of strengthening the interface between policy makers and academia and, academia making itself more accessible to policy makers through the availability of its expertise.

The meeting suggested that a logframe approach could be adopted complete with indicators and the present matrix could be a point of departure for refining into the work programme of the RCM.

There was a call for the linkages between trade and the environment to be examined. The meeting agreed that the work programme of the RCM could be informed by past documentation related to follow-up activities to the MSI.

A number of documents were referenced for consideration:

- (a) Document prepared by the core group of the RCM at the St Kitts/Nevis meeting to devise guidelines for the way forward in implementing the MSI;
- (b) The Caribbean position paper produced for the SIDS preparatory meeting in January 2005;
- (c) SIDS Caribbean regional Report for Mauritius;
- (d) The ECLAC work in identifying the Caribbean SIDS priorities in implementing the MSI;

(e) ECLAC's work on challenges faced by Caribbean SIDS in implementing the MSI:

(f) Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), they agreed to a line of support for SIDS which is articulated in the publication "Caribbean SIDS Programme – A Draft", this document has been accepted in principle as a base document which has since been modified; and

(g) A document entitled "Towards a policy and institutional framework for CARICOM".

It was further suggested that the initial task would be to use the CARICOM matrix as a base, then to look at ECLAC's publications on SIDS priorities and challenges in implementing the MSI and finally examine other documents that would address any existing gaps.

Review of the St George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS (2006)

In furtherance of the discussion on the consideration of the work programme of the RCM, the attention of the meeting was drawn to the St George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS (2006) and the quality of life indicator; the commitments of governments and agencies to the implementation of the Declaration; and the relevant supporting definitions. The chair indicated that it was a good and worthy instrument and the challenge was in the collection of information from various agencies to inform preparation of the reporting document.

It was suggested that the reporting requirements and indicators were still being refined and objectives, indicators and targets were being streamlined. It was felt that enhanced cooperation between the CARICOM and the OECS Secretariats would improve implementation of the MSI.

The Regional Adviser initiated the discussions on the detailing of the work programme of the RCM by making reference to the documents which included the LC/CAR/L.90 "Report of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee" and LC/CAR/L/90/Rev1 "Meeting of the Expanded Core Group for the Establishment of a Regional Coordinating Mechanism for the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy". In addition, she listed five key points which arose from the deliberation of the TAC meeting from the previous agenda items and which could feed into the work programme of the TAC. These included:

(a) The revamping and updating of the CARICOM matrix and consequent preparation of the log frame;

(b) The preparation of the work programme based on past and historical documents; and

(c) Ensuring the RCM supported development at the regional level

The core provisional work programme of the RCM was outlined to include the following components:

- (a) Institutional strengthening and capacity-building;
- (b) Scaling up information dissemination of best practices;
- (c) Encourage the development/strengthening of partnerships;
- (d) Public Awareness and Communication; and
- (e) Effective Management of Deliverables and follow-up as outlined in the work programme.

Discussions proceeded on the best approach to revamp the CARICOM Matrix; on the role of national focal point mechanisms, and on the collection of information.

The meeting agreed that the RCM should serve as a portal of knowledge, rather than as mere repository of data. In regard to the efforts toward institutional capacity-building, the meeting agreed that the RCM would serve as a catalyst rather than engage directly in these activities since intervention of this nature would take away from the ability of the RCM to properly fulfil its functions. As an immediate action the meeting identified that the secretariat would be responsible for providing a draft list of reports, to be supplied by the countries involved. This would be circulated to TAC members for any further input.

The details of the work programme, as agreed upon, are attached as Annex II.

Agenda item 5 – Review of preparation for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

The Regional Advisor outlined the purpose of the CSD and the reasons for the review within the context of the importance for the governments of SIDS to be heard internationally. Several members of the meeting recalled the importance and productivity of the Early Morning Closed Ministerial Meetings concerning the CSD.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) meetings were deemed also to be of particular importance to the discourse at the CSD, and members of the TAC suggested to the CARICOM delegate that the Secretariat use its influence to ensure that the meetings are held. It was also suggested that the delegations could decide who would take the lead on particular matters, thus ensuring that issues which the region deemed of importance would be addressed. Country specific approaches were suggested and it was agreed that direct queries would be made to the national focal points.

Other strategies for Caribbean SIDS intervention at the CSD were discussed.

Regarding the major topics that could be addressed to increase participation, it was felt that discussions in agriculture should be brought more to the fore, in order to encourage more members to attend. It was noted that a strategic opportunity lay in Antigua and Barbuda's

chairing of the G77 meeting, and many opportunities were possible for Caribbean SIDS to advocate their positions.

Agenda item 6 – Conclusions of the TAC

(a) The TAC reconfirmed its role as a facilitating and coordinating mechanism thus reflecting a work programme that was not of an implementing nature;

(b) The TAC acknowledged the importance of the National Focal Point Mechanisms to achieving the work of the RCM and recognized the existence of diverse mechanisms across the region. In this regard, the TAC allowed for a period of an additional six months in the work programme to support the identification of national mechanisms;

(c) TAC encouraged member countries to participate at the 16th Session of the CSD and at the high level segment, where possible;

(d) TAC agreed that the secretariat would be mindful that the work of the RCM build on activities and processes already underway in the Caribbean; and

(e) TAC agreed to conduct an end-of-first-year review in order to guide its second year work programme and evaluate its performance at the end of the two year period.

Annex I**List of Participants****A. Governments****BELIZE**

Mr. Emil Joseph Waight, Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, NEMO Building, Belmopan, Tel: 501-822-2110; Fax: 501-822-2854; E-mail: ewaight@yahoo.com

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Ms. Najan Christopher, Assistant Secretary External Affairs, Government of the British Virgin Islands, Central Administration Complex, Road Town, Tortola, VG1110, Tel: 284-468-3701 ext 2074; Fax: 284-494-6413; E-mail: nachristopher@gov.vg

GUYANA

Mr. Navin Chandarpal, Presidential Adviser, Office of the President, Vlissengen Road, Georgetown, Tel: 592-223-5233; Fax: 592-223-5186; E-mail: navinc51@yahoo.com

JAMAICA

Ms. Cherett A. Campbell, Counsellor, High Commission for Jamaica, 2 Newbold Street, St Clair, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-4995-7; 868-622-9043; E-mail: jhcom@tstt.net.tt

SAINT LUCIA

Ms. Caroline Eugene, Sustainable Development and Environment Officer II, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Economic Planning, National Development and the Public Service, American Drywall Building Centre, Vide Bouteille, Castries, Tel: 758-451-8746; Fax: 758-451-9706; E-mail: caroline.eugene@gmail.com

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ms. Melissa Boissiere, International Relations Officer, CARICOM Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26-32 Edward Street, Port of Spain, Tel: 868-623-3895; Fax: 868-623-2170; E-mail: caricomtt@yahoo.com or boissierem@foreign.gov.tt

Ms Shelly-Ann Clarke-Hinds, Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Knowsley”, 1 Queen’s Park West, Port of Spain, Tel: 868-623-4116 ext 2241; Fax: 868-623-7427/868-623-0571; E-mail: hindscsa@foreign.gov.tt

Mr. Joseph Howard, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, Level 14, Eric Williams Finance Building, Independence Square, Port of Spain, Tel: 868-627-9700 ext. 2025; Fax: 868-623-8123; E-mail: joseph.howard@planning.gov.tt

Mr. Jerome Joseph, Foreign Service Officer I, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Knowsley”, 1 Queen’s Park West, Port of Spain, Tel: 868-623-4116 ext 2244; Fax: 868-623-4220; E-mail: josephj@foreign.gov.tt

Ms. Cheryl-Ann Ramsubeik, Sustainable Development Specialist, Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, 16-18 Sackville Street, Port of Spain, Tel: 868-623-1912 ext 504; Fax: 868-623-5003; E-mail: cramsubeik@yahoo.com

Ms. Dana A. Wallace, International Relations Officer, CARICOM Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26-32 Edward Street, Port of Spain, Tel: 868-623-3895; Fax: 868-623-2170; E-mail: caricomtt@yahoo.com

B. Organizations

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Mr. Garfield Barnwell, Director, Sustainable Development, Georgetown, Guyana. Tel: 592-222-0001 to 75 Ext: 2668/2645; Fax: 592-222-0154; E-mail: gbarnwell@caricom.org

Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI)

Mr. Christopher Cox, Programme Director (Acting), P.O. Box 1111, The Morne, Castries, Saint Lucia. Tel: 758-452-2501; Fax: 758-453-2721; E-mail: ccox@cehi.org.lc

Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES-UWI)

Mr. Robin Mahon, Professor of Marine Affairs and Director, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, St Michael, Barbados. Tel: 246-417-4570; Fax: 246-424-4204; e-mail: robin.mahon@cavehill.uwi.edu or rmahon@caribsurf.com

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Mr. Christopher Corbin, Programme Officer – Environmental Pollution, Caribbean Environment Programme, Regional Coordinating Unit, 14-20 Port Royal Street, Kingston, Jamaica. Tel: 876-922 9267-9; Fax: 876-922-9292; E mail: cjc@cep.unep.org

University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)

Ms. LaVerne E. Ragster, Professor of Marine Biology and President, #2 John Brewers Bay, St Thomas, United States Virgin Islands 00802. Tel: 340-693-1000; Fax: 340-693-1005; e-mail: lrage@uvi.edu

C. Secretariat

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, 1 Chancery Lane, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868-623-5595; Fax: 868-623-8485

Mr. Neil Pierre, Director, E-mail: Neil.Pierre@eclac.org

Ms. Asha Kambon, Regional Advisor, E-mail: Asha.Kambon@eclac.org

Annex II

MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM (RCM)

Monday 21 April 2008, First Floor Conference Room

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME OF THE RCM FOR THE PERIOD 2008-2009

GOAL:

To assist Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in meeting their commitments under the MSI.

OBJECTIVES:

- (a) To ensure the achievement of effective coordination of sustainable development initiatives in the Caribbean region;
- (b) To facilitate the implementation of Agenda 21, the JPOI, the BPoA and MSI;
- (c) To optimize benefits from the use of available human, financial and other resources;
- (d) To assist in the mobilization of new and additional resources; and
- (e) To promote awareness at all levels of sustainable development issues and activities.

EXPECTED OUTCOME:

A coherent programme of action of Caribbean SIDS in meeting their commitments under the MSI.

DRAFT
WORK PROGRAMME OF THE RCM FOR THE PERIOD 2008 AND 2009

Activities	January – December 2008												January – December 2009											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Establish TAC																								
• Invite governments/Development partners/Regional technical institutions to take up seat on the TAC																								
• Organize teleconference																								
2. Organize first meeting of the TAC of the RCM																								
3. Identify and develop Focal Point Mechanisms																								
CORE WORK PROGRAMME:																								
A. Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building																								
• Build capacity on issues of trade and environment																								
• Strengthen regional action and response in regard to financial mechanisms such as the GEF																								
B. Scaling up, gathering and dissemination of information with special attention to best practices																								
• Arrive at a consensus on core documents																								
• Establish a technology platform for the hosting and sharing of relevant information																								
• Collect CSD national reports																								
• Collect other information on projects and agency reports																								
• Make information available																								

C. Encourage the development/strengthening of partnerships																							
• Enhance member States knowledge of RCM/TAC																							
• Enhance member States knowledge of the diverse approaches to National Focal Point Mechanism																							
D. Public awareness and communication																							
• Prepare a media product on MSI (for policy-makers)																							
E. Effective Management of deliverables and follow-up as outlined in the work programme																							
• Update and strengthen the CARICOM matrix and extend to the wider region and as an operational tool																							

