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**REPORT OF THE CORE GROUP TO CONSIDER THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A REGIONAL COORDINATING MECHANISM
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
MAURITIUS STRATEGY IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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At the regional consultation on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (St Kitts Nevis, 5-7 October 2005), a Core Group was established to give further consideration to the establishment of a Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) for sustainable development in the Caribbean.

During the deliberations of the Core Group special note was taken of the decisions of the fifteenth meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, with respect to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and resolutions on the sustainable developments of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The Core Group met again on 15–17 January 2006 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The following countries and organizations participated: Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, the United States Virgin Islands, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Following is a report of the recommendations arising from this meeting, which incorporates revisions emanating from the twenty-first session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC).

1. Proposed guiding principles of the RCM

The RCM for sustainable development in the Caribbean would seek to promote sustainable development as a means for the efficient and effective use of human and natural capital. This would ensure that human, cultural, historical and natural resources are used and managed efficiently and for the greater good at the national and regional levels. This would be done in accordance with the principles outlined in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), the BPoA and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI).

The RCM should provide assistance at the national level in focusing and obtaining resources to fulfil national priorities and support national implementation.

The RCM shall be guided by the following principles:

1. Fair and equitable consideration of all member countries regardless of their political or sovereign status;
2. Information sharing and coordination across a wide range of issues and institutions; this would include the sharing of best practices, setting goals and identifying the necessary means for achieving them;
3. Optimal utilization of resources, strengthening of institutional arrangements, identification of gaps and avoidance of duplication of activities;
4. Effective participation of civil society in sustainable development activities, including the involvement of the private sector, the labour movement, community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders; and
5. Consideration of the special needs of the lesser developed countries of the Caribbean.

2. Proposed objectives of the RCM

The RCM will have as its objectives:

1. To ensure the achievement of effective coordination of sustainable development initiatives in the Caribbean region with a view to enhancing coherence, complementarity and consistency of activities;
2. To facilitate the implementation of Agenda 21, the JPOI, the BPoA, and MSI through the coordination and rationalization of all required technical and other inputs towards these ends;
3. To optimize benefits from the use of available human, financial and other resources for the achievement of sustainable development goals in the Caribbean;
4. To assist in the mobilization of new and additional resources, including the use of south-south collaboration, for achievement of sustainable development;
5. To promote awareness at all levels of sustainable development issues and activities.

3. The functions of the RCM will be as follows:

1. Assisting in the development, monitoring and coordination of a regional work programme and evaluating its satisfactory delivery to member countries;
2. Facilitating the exchange of best practices, information sharing, transfer of experiences, knowledge-based technology and techniques among Caribbean SIDS and countries of the Greater Caribbean;
3. Liaising with SIDS in other regions in promoting joint positions in international forums;
4. Assisting in the promotion of capacity-building efforts and strengthening of the human resource base through training and education;
5. Contributing to the identification of development partners and sources of funding for development activities;
6. Providing technical advisory and policy services to member countries in support of their sustainable development efforts;
7. Facilitating technical assistance to member countries;
8. Building and maintaining institutional memory on sustainable development activities in the Caribbean subregion;
9. Establishing a regional database on sustainable development activities;
10. Promoting, strengthening and establishing cooperative arrangements and partnerships among relevant government agencies, CBOs and NGOs, the private sector, and other stakeholders; and
11. Supporting, reinforcing and assisting sustainable development initiatives at the local, national and regional levels.

4. The structure of the RCM

The structure of the RCM should be developed in a manner such that no new institutions or bodies are created and would need the smallest possible deployment of additional resources to carry out its functions.

Ministerial approval and oversight is necessary to ensure that the RCM obtains the highest level of recognition among all stakeholders throughout the subregion, and maintains a high standing in regional and international forums. It is suggested, therefore, that the ministerial

forum of the CDCC should be invited to serve as the ministerial council. Member countries are therefore urged to ensure that the highest level of representation is present at the CDCC sessions.

It should provide oversight function in directing the work of the RCM and collaborate with existing subregional intergovernmental processes, such as CARICOM and its organs.

The Core Group proposes that a Technical Advisory Committee be established for the purpose of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the MSI within the Caribbean. This Committee should be multidisciplinary and multisectoral in its approach and would consist of representatives drawn from:

- (a) Regional institutions/agencies having a mandate for sustainable development issues and the implementation of the SIDS/PoA and MSI, varying in composition dependent on the thematic areas or issues to be addressed, as appropriate;
- (b) Relevant intergovernmental organizations; and
- (c) Caribbean SIDS (based on an agreed number and rotational arrangement).

In pursuit of the implementation of the work of the RCM, a secretariat will be based at the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean supported by the existing secretarial services of CARICOM and an agreed division of labour with related division/allocation of human and financial resources.

For any funds made available to the RCM, arrangements should be put in place for the budget and work programme to be mutually agreed between ECLAC and CARICOM.

The national focal points would need to be clearly identified and their relationship with the secretariat and the RCM well defined.

The Core Group recommended that a meeting be convened among the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), CARICOM, the ACS, ECLAC and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) within the next six weeks to draft the Terms of Reference for the national focal points and the Technical Advisory Committee and to determine the details related to the staffing structure and budget of the secretariat.

The CARICOM Secretariat has developed a regional work programme for the implementation of the MSI and approval of this programme should be sought within the ministerial session of the CDCC. This approved work programme would then be submitted to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) for presentation to the fourteenth session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) in May 2006.

5. Collaborative mechanisms

The work of the RCM should be executed in unison with the processes that recognize the work and needs of SIDS including the decisions of the fifteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and the University Consortium of SIDS.

Attached to this report is an annex on the two decisions of the fifteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean related to the implementation of the BPoA and the Mauritius Strategy for the sustainable development of SIDS.

Annex

Decisions of the fifteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the environment of Latin America and the Caribbean related to the implementation of the BPoA and the Mauritius Strategy for the sustainable development of SIDS.

Decision 2

Working groups were established for the implementation of decisions of the Forum.

Twelve working groups comprising representatives of member States and intergovernmental organizations were established with designated country(ies) serving as Coordinator.

A working group with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of decisions for the Forum relevant to the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the BPoA for the sustainable development of SIDS was established.

This group comprises: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cuba, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM with Saint Lucia as coordinator.

Decision 4 - SIDS

Among other decisions this calls for:

The further development and implementation of the Caribbean SIDS programme and its continued review and assessment so that it might reflect the goals of the MSI and emerging development needs and priorities for the region.

UNEP to support the implementation of the Caribbean SIDS programme, and to strengthen the institutional capacity of SIDS at the national and regional level including access to new and emerging technologies.

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and the BPoA for the sustainable development of SIDS has been called upon by UNEP/ROLAC to submit specific activities/proposals for inclusion in the 2006-2007 Regional Action Plan to enable fulfilment of the relevant agreements included in the decision on SIDS by 31 January 2006.

Members of the Working Group have been given a further deadline of 24 January 2006, by the Coordinator to submit their proposals to facilitate compilation and onward transmission to UNEP/ROLAC.

The recommendations of the Core Group with respect to the RCM will, in effect, give response to the long requested well-established, well-defined RCM for the further implementation of the BPoA and the Mauritius Strategy for the Caribbean region.

The CDCC in its twenty-first meeting takes the process further on the finalization of arrangements for the RCM.