



**EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE  
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE (CDCC)**  
*30 March – 1 April 2000*  
*Chaguaramas Convention Centre, Trinidad and Tobago*

---

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN  
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE

GENERAL  
CDCC 18/INT.5  
13 March 2000  
ORIGINAL ENGLISH

**THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON  
THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF  
SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (UNGCSIDS)**

# **THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (UNGCSIDS)**

## **Introduction**

The convening of the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development on Small Island Developing States (UNGCSIDS) in Barbados in April-May 1994 was in response to a sustained campaign waged by small island developing countries, including those of the Caribbean, for a global forum in which to engage in international discourse regarding the unique and special challenges faced by them. A central element in this campaign was the identification of a range of social, economic and ecological vulnerabilities that conditioned the existence of the countries concerned. More immediately, however, the Conference was convened on the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and was approached as the first test of the global partnership forged at UNCED, on the basis of which the developed countries agreed to collaborate with the rest of the international community towards advancing the sustainable development of the small island developing States. The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS POA) adopted at that Global Conference, set out a number of principles and strategies towards sustainable development that would protect the fragile environments of small island States.

The implementation of the SIDS POA in the Caribbean might be reviewed by reference to the following four major events, namely:

(a) The Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Barbados, 10-14 November 1997;

(b) The Meeting of representatives of Donors and representatives of SIDS, New York, 24-26 February 1999;

(c) The Seventh Meeting of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD V11), New York, 19-30, April, 1999; and

(d) The Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, New York, 27-28 September 1999.

### **The Caribbean ministerial meeting**

Among the major outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting were:

1. The adoption of a Joint Work Programme (JWP) extrapolated from the SIDS POA and the establishment of an Inter-Agency Collaborative Group (IACG) comprising regional and regionally-based organizations to undertake its implementation, in collaboration with Caribbean SIDS. Subsequent refinements to the ministerial arrangements produced, inter alia, the designation of lead agencies to spearhead implementation and reporting, in relation to the several elements of the Joint Work Programme;
2. The formalisation of mechanisms directing and overseeing the implementation process, specifically, the SIDS Bureau, for political oversight and the Interim Secretariat, comprising the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariats, to, respectively, undertake the technical work and the political outreach required to keep SIDS-related issues on the international agenda, among other aspects.

### **The meeting of representatives of donors and of SIDS (“The donors’ meeting”)**

Caribbean SIDS presented 149 of the 312 Project Proposals submitted by SIDS of all regions. The donors’ meeting provided an opportunity for a general and wide-ranging discussion on the merits and relevance of the SIDS POA, with prospective donors, for the most part, expressing unqualified support for it and for its use as a framework for the pursuit of sustainable development efforts by SIDS. Certain shortcomings of the POA were also identified, the most important one, from the Caribbean perspective, being in relation to the perceived need for the incorporation of a “trade component”, as articulated variously by the delegations of Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The Meeting also emphasised the relevance of a coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the SIDS POA at the regional level and endorsed the efforts of ECLAC/CDCC in this regard. More specifically, strong support was expressed for the establishment of such a mechanism at the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of ECLAC, not only in recognition of its performance, to date, but also taking into account the need to ensure the sustainability of the coordinating process. As anticipated by many, the meeting turned out not to be in the nature of a pledging conference. Instead, it addressed issues related to format, criteria, procedures, guidelines and even elements bordering on “conditionalities” in relation to the submission of projects proposals. The consolidation of national projects, where possible, into regional submissions was vigorously advocated and procedures were outlined to guide the donor-recipient process up to September 1999 when the Special Session of the General Assembly was scheduled to convene.

As follow-up to the donors’ meeting, the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat prepared two reports which were forwarded to Caribbean SIDS. These reports conveyed, inter alia, the

perspectives articulated by some 24 prospective donors, in particular the interests of each, as regards those project proposals that were likely to receive their support and the terms on which such support would be forthcoming. The thrust toward the regionalization of project proposals was also conveyed to Caribbean SIDS, together with some specific suggestions for the regionalization of a number of national project proposals. The approval of the respective governments was sought for the conduct of the exercise and additional proposals were invited with respect to, inter alia, the suggestions of the secretariat and the preferences of member States with respect to other areas to which the regionalization process might be extended. To date, attempts to convene a Working Group to advance this process have not been successful. Overall, only a modest response has been forthcoming from regional SIDS and agencies, in the form of written responses. The secretariat entertains the hope that an exchange of views at the occasion of the eighteenth Session of the CDCC might generate new impetus for carrying the project proposals forward.

## **CSD V11**

The Seventh Meeting of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD V11) had been earnestly anticipated by SIDS as a comprehensive Preparatory Meeting for the Special Session of the General Assembly. In the event, only sessions on two days of its 23-30 April 1999 duration were specifically devoted to the preparatory process. Dissatisfaction was expressed by many delegations, particularly given the fact that negotiations on the "Draft Final Text" to be adopted at the Special Session were being conducted in a parallel process. At CSD V11, reports on the implementation of the SIDS POA were submitted by all SIDS regions, the Caribbean submission having been endorsed at the November 1998 Joint Meeting of the SIDS Bureau and the IACG.

### **The Special Session of the General Assembly**

In its drive for comprehensive and focused preparation for the Special Session, an open-ended Joint Meeting of the SIDS Bureau, other member States and the IACG was convened on 14 August 1999. The main thrust of the meeting was towards the development of a regional consensus on Caribbean expectations from the Special Session and the "The Way Forward" for presentation at that global forum. A number of the issues identified by Caribbean SIDS were eventually reflected in the Final Document of the Special Session. For example, there was consensus on the fact that notwithstanding the recognition that all aspects of the implementation of the SIDS POA continued to attract priority attention, emphasis should be placed on taking the process into a more dynamic, operational dimension, through the incorporation of specific provisions that capture the emerging issues related to, inter alia, increasing poverty, crime and the drug problem that now constitute vital concerns to regional SIDS as they pursue their sustainable development. In the "Final Document" adopted at the Special Session, the eradication of poverty is recognised to be "a serious issue and an objective of high priority for small island developing States...". Recognition is also given in that document to the risks inherent in the "emerging global economic order in the areas of

trade, investment commodities and capital markets” with respect to small island developing States.

### **Overview**

In 1998, the Interim Secretariat convened no fewer than four meetings of the SIDS Bureau and the IACG, either jointly or separately. Documents were prepared and disseminated by the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of ECLAC, as the region prepared for the donors’ meeting, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations Secretariat in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in February 1999. A similar process was followed on connection with CSD V11, the Special Session of the General Assembly and other meetings to which reference has been made.

In addition to activities conducted within the region as outlined above, in an effort to ensure even greater cohesion through the effective flow of information, the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of ECLAC held briefing sessions with Caribbean representatives in such strategically important diplomatic centres as Brussels, New York and Washington.

At the Special Session of the General Assembly, it was recognised that the United Nations agencies would need to continue to focus on their areas of expertise and agreed mandates and to build upon regional or national strategies, conventions and programmes that were country-driven. It was also recognized that the United Nations should continue to play its catalytic and supportive role, particularly through regional commissions, which were regarded as playing an integral role in the overall implementation of the SIDS POA.

The immediate tasks facing the region in its implementation of the SIDS POA include the further development of project proposals for consideration by prospective donors. The incorporation of the social and economic issues into the Plan of Action at the Special Session provides new scope for action and, perhaps, enhances the prospects for the fuller recognition of the SIDS POA as the framework for the sustainable development of the small island developing States of the Caribbean.