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**REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING
 ON THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE
 ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN**

A Strategic Planning Meeting on the Work Programme of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) was held on 29 January 1998 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The objectives of the meeting were to present the ECLAC/CDCC work programme to representatives of institutions/agencies in the subregion in an effort to identify possible areas of functional collaboration and to minimize the duplication of work between ECLAC and these organizations.

Representatives of the following organizations were present at the meeting: Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM), European Union (EU), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Organization of American States (OAS), Pan-American Health Organization/ World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (The [list of participants](#) is attached at Annex 1).

The agenda, as adopted, was as follows:

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Opening and Introduction

The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Ms. Len Ishmael, welcomed participants to the meeting and stated that their participation underscored the importance of collaboration in maximizing and targeting the resources available for development in the Caribbean.

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Overview

Ms. Ishmael first presented a brief overview of the evolution, history and mission of the office. She outlined the main elements of the work programme, as provided in the document *Revised draft work programme of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean for the 1998-1999 biennium*. The ECLAC/CDCC work programme was divided into six programme elements: Global Economy and Competitiveness; Integration and Regional Cooperation; Production and Technology; Economic Development and Information for Development; Human and Social Development; Environment and Sustainable Development. The work programme will be supported by approximately 20 meetings, 45 publications, including four newsletters, and advisory services.

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Specific Responses and Current Emerging Pressure Points

Following this overview, each element of the work programme was presented in separate sessions by their respective subject area specialists. Nevertheless, it was seen that these subjects were all interrelated, mutually reinforcing and integral to development. In effect, the work programme was therefore cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary in scope.

This session described ECLAC/CDCC's contribution to subregional development. Specifically, it identified the main pressure points which Caribbean governments will face in the next few years in their quest for development, and ECLAC's responses via initiatives aimed at relieving these pressure points.

! Economics

In the context of economics, the work programme centres on refashioning regional adaptations to global trends. In this regard, the office will continue to produce annual and first semester economic surveys which are the vehicles used to monitor short-term developments for CDCC countries and provide comparative analysis. These surveys provide inputs to the Survey of Economic Performance for Latin America and the Caribbean, published at ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago. The surveys are also provided to CARICOM as raw material for its own work. An expert meeting will be held to examine the subject of economic management, as performance in this area was uneven among the CDCC countries. Research will be carried out in relation to economic diversification, a comparative study on macroeconomic policies in some small island countries in the Caribbean and in other regions and a study on the contribution of foreign investment to development in the subregion.

In its work programme around the nexus of domestic policies and external developments, the secretariat will continue its preparation of the study on global economic developments. It will provide an input to a scheduled expert meeting to analyze the impact of hemispheric and global events on the economic integration and global linkages of Caribbean countries.

ECLAC/CDCC will continue to produce a quarterly economic bulletin, entitled, "External Sector Briefing Notes" focusing essentially on trade developments. Finally, a document will be prepared to update specifically on the progress made in international trade negotiations leading to the greater liberalization of world trade with a discussion of its consequences for the Caribbean.

Other specific studies are designed to investigate the impact of liberalization of certain activities in the Caribbean. They will focus on selected services and financial markets; hemispheric developments; payments and investment; and the implications of hemispheric economic cooperation for Caribbean economies. Studies on trade statistics will also be conducted in an effort to discern trends in trade between the subregion and Latin America and with the wider hemisphere.

! Sustainable Development

The second programme element presented to the meeting was in the area of sustainable development. The meeting was informed that in November 1997 this office convened the Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Barbados, in collaboration with a number of agencies represented here. This meeting on the SIDS Programme of Action (POA) influenced the ECLAC/CDCC work programme in formulating its activities in sustainable development in three areas:

- Regional Coordinating Mechanism;
- The Implementation of the SIDS POA (with specific reference to the 1999 Special Session of the General Assembly aimed at reviewing the implementation of the SIDS POA); and
- Various technical issues on which ECLAC/CDCC and other agencies have been requested to focus.

In an effort to accomplish these goals, an inter-agency collaborative group was established to implement a joint work programme. The challenge over the next two years will be to show governments that agencies (regional and international) can collaborate to further the implementation of the principles of the SIDS POA.

! Social Affairs

The activities for the Human and Social Development element of the work programme will focus on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development; the preparation of a Social Panorama of the Caribbean; and technical assistance to member governments in poverty eradication activities. The Social Panorama will appraise social development, emphasizing the areas of major concern in the Caribbean subregion. It will contain quantitative and qualitative data, with general and specific information accompanied by analysis, where possible. It can also serve to highlight social trends that will inform existing social policy, or to assist in formulating social policies where there were none. In the area of poverty eradication, ECLAC/CDCC will assist governments and other stakeholders in preparing special studies at a national level and assist governments in formulating policies and preparing national plans of action for poverty eradication.

In the area of Women in Development, the meeting was informed of the CARICOM/ UNECLAC/UNIFEM Post-Beijing Encounter: A Caribbean Subregional Ministerial Conference held in Georgetown, Guyana on 6-8 August 1997. The conference was convened to review governments' progress in the region after the Sixth Regional Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. In addition, the conference sought to prepare the countries of the Caribbean subregion for the Seventh Session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Santiago in November 1997. The office seeks to continue its focus on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, with specific reference to gender management systems, gender impact analysis, and gender and development issues.

! Population and Development

The activities in Population and Development are formulated to assist governments to integrate population factors into their development planning apparatus. This is being done by ECLAC/CDCC through a number of activities all designed to define more realistic strategies with respect to the issues associated with population and development and policy formation. These activities will centre on research, training, data collection and policy/programme formulation. The issues to be highlighted will be in migration, youth/adolescents, training to improve skills in integration of population issues in development planning, and strengthening of linkages between population and social and economic planning.

! Science and Technology

The work programme for Science and Technology responds to the challenges facing countries of the subregion to be competitive, to develop and manage their human and other resources, to prepare for changing world situations and to inform policy makers on technological choices. As the secretariat for the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST), ECLAC/CDCC undertakes programmes and projects in the areas of science policy, science popularization, institution building and networking, science teaching approaches, integrated approaches to natural resource and environmental management, promotion of renewable energy and industrial competitiveness and technology information dissemination. The promotion of the mechanism of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) was an intrinsic component in all these activities. Within the programmes listed the Council will also undertake activities that, while not directly related to specific sectors, provide the methodologies for action and implementation.

! Information for Development

Indicators

One of the main challenges facing ECLAC/CDCC was identified as the general lack of information in the region. The office will continue work in assisting member countries to upgrade their information infrastructure. In this regard, the office will develop a relational database approach in-house, enabling data elements from different subsets of different countries, to be more fully linked. The office will also begin a data mapping exercise to construct an integrated information infrastructure for Suriname and will urge other countries to do likewise. ECLAC/CDCC will conduct a study evaluating the methodologies used for compiling national accounts. The publication of Selected Statistical Indicators will continue. One update of the document "Major Statistical Publications - Abstracts" will be produced in the biennium.

Caribbean Documentation Centre

The role of the Caribbean Documentation Centre (CDC) as a service point for the acquisition of socio-economic and development information to support the work of ECLAC/CDCC staff and to inform policy makers in Caribbean countries will continue. The Centre serves as a repository of ECLAC documentation, as well as the nucleus of Caribbean development information utilizing the World Wide Web. To continue achieving this, the Centre will further develop the ECLAC website to reflect the work of ECLAC staff and to provide the region with accurate, balanced information on Caribbean development issues. The Centre will also conduct a study on the effective use of information technology and systems in the Caribbean, including an assessment of the contribution of the information sector to the economic development in the region. In addition, a virtual library of socio-economic development information will be developed. One other project, for which funding was being sought, is an outreach activity entitled "Online information for community empowerment".

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Participating Agencies' Areas of Interest and Focus Areas

The participating agencies found the ECLAC/CDCC work programme to be relevant and ambitious. They welcomed the information presented and most agencies found that there were opportunities for working with ECLAC/CDCC in implementing its work programme. Many of the participants felt that there was need for coordination and cooperation among agencies in project implementation at both the national and regional levels. This will not only avoid duplication of effort but will ensure efficient utilization of resources on regional programmes.

It was pointed out that informal arrangements/agendas could not be substituted for a more structured and coordinated forum in effecting permanent coordinating needs. In order to foster integration, growth, progress and productivity, technicians/specialists should meet periodically with an agenda of high priority issues and specific topics in their respective areas. These specialists will be able to highlight problems, solutions and areas where agencies could collaborate.

The issue of diminishing resources was highlighted and it was agreed that it would be useful to establish a resource coordinating system. It was felt that this could probably foster more efficient utilization of resources through the transfer of projects to those agencies with a comparative advantage in the respective areas. In this context, it was suggested that agencies could effect this through agreements and contracts. Representatives also reminded that there was still a substantial amount of resources being offered to the region which were not being fully utilized. It was felt that organizations should assist governments in accessing these funds.

Another main area of concern was that of data gathering and information dissemination and management. There was the opinion that access to information was crucial to the competitive position of a country. In this regard, there should be some degree of order and integration in the collection, processing, storage, analysis and dissemination of data and information. This will ensure that planning and policy formation in every area will be enhanced. Also, there could be substantial research leading to prescriptions for the solution of the economic and social problems, as identified. ECLAC was asked whether or not it would be feasible for this organization to provide support to the information and statistical databases of some agencies represented here. The meeting recommended that an information management system be established to overcome these problems and that a first step could be to convene a meeting of information managers.

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Areas/Themes for Potential Collaboration

In this session, participants identified certain specific areas in which they would like to effectively collaborate with the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. Following are these areas and the representatives who indicated their definite interest.

- The representative of the IDB indicated an interest in collaborating with other agencies in the following key areas of his

organization's work programme: health, tourism, micro-enterprise development and education. He offered his organization's support and that of the country office staff in undertaking the meetings of technical specialists.

- The representative of the UNDP informed the meeting of her organization's interest in collaborating in the following areas: poverty, capacity building, disaster management and environment.
- The ACS representative expressed support for the proposed study on the use of information technology to be undertaken under the programme element "Information for Development". Other areas of collaboration were to be found in the areas of trade, tourism, functional cooperation, promotion of the official languages of the ACS and a regional information network. ECLAC will also be invited to the ACS ministerial meeting to be held in November 1998.
- The ILO representative suggested the need to specifically discuss the possibility of coordinating and managing the statistical databases of each agency.
- UNICEF requested collaboration with ECLAC/CDCC on a conference on social investment which it will convene from 6-8 April 1998. This conference will look at whether the levels of social investment were sufficient to maintain the gains in social indicators made by the region. They were also seeking to work with ECLAC/CDCC in the area of statistics.
- UNDCP stated its willingness to subcontract various activities to the United Nations agencies and other agencies which were in a position to implement them. One of these was in the area of data collection. The representative stated that ECLAC/CDCC could lead in project collaboration in the subregion in data collection and processing.
- The representative of CARIFORUM identified a number of areas where they could cooperate with ECLAC/CDCC. He felt that CARIFORUM could benefit from ECLAC's experience and expertise, and that the organization also intended to collaborate with other agencies.
- It was shown that ECLAC/CDCC and UNIFEM had both included in their work programmes for 1998 a report on implementation by Caribbean countries of the Platform for Action for the Fourth World Conference on Women, following the mandate of the Beijing conference. UNIFEM will also be emphasizing gender planning and equity in the Caribbean and wished to collaborate with ECLAC/CDCC on this.
- Whilst ECLAC/CDCC and CARICOM collaborate on a wide range of issues, the CARICOM representative is the Officer responsible for Sustainable Development. He informed the meeting that during the 1998-1999 biennium, the organization's sustainable development programme will focus on integration and coordination of regional policy framework and institutional capacity building. Another key area was technical support for member States in formulating and implementing intersectoral plans and programmes for local sustainable development in the areas of environment, disaster management, human settlements, meteorology, energy and science and technology. CARICOM will be collaborating with ECLAC/CDCC as the Joint Interim Secretariat for the SIDS POA and a meeting between the two organizations will be convened in March 1998.
- The UNIC representative suggested the holding of a meeting of representatives from each agency to discuss their information outputs from their respective work programmes for the coming year. The results of this meeting could feed into a UNIC seminar for journalists on the work of the United Nations in the region, planned for July 1998 in Barbados.
- The representative of the EU felt his organization could collaborate with ECLAC specifically on the study on the technological dimension of economic diversification and development in Caribbean countries. This will fit in with the EU's recently signed five-year programme with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago focusing on economic diversification and poverty alleviation.
- PAHO indicated that it could no longer define health within the parameters of traditional health indicators. As such, they saw the need to collaborate with ECLAC/CDCC to include social and economic indicators in their definition.
- The UNEP representative presented to the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters a copy of his office's work programme, and identified sustainable development and tourism as two important programmes on which it could collaborate with this office. One specific activity was the need to improve the environmental quality of the tourism sector.
- The OAS representative suggested collaboration with ECLAC/CDCC on proposed OAS activities for 1998 in support of the Year of the Ocean.

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Modalities for Effective Collaboration

While the general consensus of the meeting was that of working together to achieve each agency's goals, the Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean stressed that there were varying levels on which collaboration could take place and that these levels should coincide with each organization's respective objectives. This will ensure greater success in achieving all aspects of an organization's work programme.

It was suggested that should an agency identify an area of interest in the ECLAC/CDCC work programme, either for purposes of collaboration or to bring a new dimension to the activity, this area of interest should be discussed with the ECLAC/CDCC office to define a mechanism to effect any potential collaboration.

Participants viewed the meeting as an ideal forum for dialogue and an exchange of ideas, as well as an opportunity to enter into strategic alliances on specific issues. It was thought that for more effective collaboration, one agency could undertake the coordination of a particular thematic area common to the work programmes of other organizations, as was the case with the Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Eradication, held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 1996.

There was some discussion regarding the role of ECLAC as a regional commission. Some representatives felt that ECLAC/CDCC should take on the role of coordinator of activities at the regional level. The Director, in response, pointed out that such coordination required significant resources at both the human and financial level which ECLAC did not have; but that the organization will play a key role in coordinating certain activities, such as those related to the implementation of the SIDS POA, among others.

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Annex 1

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