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CO-ORDINATION IN PLANNING



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The work programme in Planning is essentially a programme of Technical Co-operation between the central and sectoral planners of CDCC countries. The programme began with meetings of Heads of Planning, the first of which was held in 1979. Subsequently, at its second meeting, the scope of its activities was broadened to include technical sub-groups of planners in five specific subject areas. At the sixth and seventh sessions of CDCC, delegations were kept up-to-date on the activities of those technical groups which had met up to the seventh session. The purpose of this note is to inform the CDCC of the activities carried out since the seventh session and those which will be implemented after the eighth session.

Activities accomplished

(a) Third Meeting of Caribbean Heads of Planning

The Third Meeting of Caribbean Heads of Planning was hosted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and held in Port of Spain from 28 April to 2 May 1983. The report of the meeting is contained in document E/CEPAL/CDCC/101. Representatives of nine CDCC countries and six inter-governmental organizations participated.

The agenda dealt with three major substantive items as follows:

1. Review and evaluation of the CDCC Work Programme in Planning;
2. Discussion of new issues requested by governments;
3. Preparation and participation in the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and Heads of Planning of Latin America from 9-10 May in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The meeting was apprised of all the activities carried out in the planning sector since the Second Meeting of Planners. The Meeting proposed that the following matters should be included in the future work programme:

(i) Manpower Planning: Activities should be expanded to include work on productivity trends, the role of trade unions, and the impact of competitive wage structures on industrialization. The need to improve the capability of middle and upper level planners in the Caribbean was also noted as was the need to provide assistance in improving the quality of manpower data;

(ii) Physical and Regional Planning: It was proposed that the project on environmental impact assessments should be followed up with a component of training and education to emphasize the preservation and improvement of the environment. The working group was also asked to focus on planning legislation, particularly as it related to land use and land tenure systems;

(iii) Agricultural Planning: The capacity of agriculture sector agencies to improve the data base, as inputs to planning was an area that needed to be evaluated by the ad hoc working group in Agriculture;

(iv) Transportation Planning: Transportation links between the Caribbean and Latin America for the movement of goods should be included as a research topic;

(v) Training: It was proposed that activities needed to continue to upgrade the skills of junior planners once the proposed workshop for public sector officials responsible for training had been held;

(vi) New Areas of Focus: Tourism and the State Sector were identified for future ad hoc group activities.

The CDCC is asked to give approval for the continuation of the existing mandates which call for programmes in the fields of Agriculture, Energy, Manpower Planning, Physical and Regional Planning, Training and Transportation and the incorporation of the new subject areas Tourism and the State Sector identified by the Third Meeting of Heads of Planning.

The second major item on the agenda was a substantive discussion of new issues requested by Governments. Falling into this category was a discussion of Economic Planning and Social Policies under which papers were presented by the Republic of Cuba and by Barbados.

A discussion paper was also presented by the United Nations Department for Technical Co-operation for Development (UNCTAD) entitled "Small island Countries: Development Problems and Policy Needs". The papers were the object of useful discussions.

Delegations were also informed of the activities being carried out by the Latin American Institute of Social and Economic Planning (ILPES) since the Third Meeting of Ministers and Heads of Planning and the Fourth Meeting which was scheduled to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The main focus of the discussion on this item was placed on the ILPES paper entitled "Planning and Development in the Caribbean area - Background and Prospects". In the course of the discussions ILPES advanced the proposal to establish an office in the Caribbean in accordance with its policy of decentralization. After outlining the areas of priority the participants asked ILPES to ensure that there is a strong Caribbean input into the establishment, direction, personnel and co-ordination of this Office. The work programme of the office should also be oriented to address the specific and peculiar circumstances of Caribbean countries. Finally, ILPES was asked to elaborate the proposal in accordance with the views expressed by delegations and re-submit it to the eighth session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee for approval.

(b) Working Group in Agricultural Planning

The Working Group in Agricultural Planning was held in Port of Spain from 29-30 November 1983. The report of the meeting is contained in document E/CEPAL/CDCC/110.

The basic working document entitled "Production of Food for Consumption and Export: the need to achieve optimal balance" (CDCC/PWG: A/83/1) was prepared by the Secretariat. Three main considerations guided the study, namely the pressing need of all Caribbean countries to earn foreign exchange and the relevance of the agriculture sector thereto; the need to produce food for the local population; and the evolution of a strategy for the medium to long-term to meet these needs.

It was noted that, with few exceptions, Caribbean countries were basically agriculturally oriented yet were highly dependent on food imports. The food import bill for the region as a whole for 1980 was US\$2,000 million and for most countries food represented 15% - 18% of total imports. An examination of the ratios of food imports to total merchandise exports showed two distinct categories among CDCC countries, those ranging between 10% - 30% and those, mainly the smaller islands, with ratios above 50%. In some cases food imports exceeded merchandise exports.

Grenada, Dominica and Haiti generated more than 30% of GDP from agriculture. Belize, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Barbados and the rest of the OECS fell into the middle category while the remainder were clustered into the third group for which agriculture accounted for less than 10% of GDP. Trends indicated a marked secular decline in the relative share of Agriculture in the GDP in all countries, and underlying this trend lay the fact that domestic food production had shown sustained expansion at the expense of export agriculture.

In so far as production structures were concerned, a general tendency for small farms to produce "domestic" food crops and for the larger farms to produce for export was noted. These trends were however, changing and food products regarded as "domestic" were increasingly being produced by larger farms, and also finding their way into the regional export market. It was also noted that small farms suffered from poor quality of land, and inadequate techniques for cultivation due to a lack of the necessary support infrastructure and information.

Whatever path of development is pursued it will be necessary to increase the production of food for domestic consumption. The question for planners was therefore to find a more optimal mix of the productive factors, labour, land and capital and ensure their optimal allocation between domestic and export agriculture. At the same time new products, more appropriate to local production possibilities and changing market demand, needed to be identified.

After a wide-ranging discussion of the paper the following consensus emerged:

Caribbean countries which were mainly agricultural in character were demonstrating an increasing inability to feed themselves. Food import costs were therefore absorbing a greater proportion of foreign exchange earnings. At the same time the foreign exchange constraints to development made policy-makers reluctant to tamper with those traditional crops which earned foreign exchange despite the evidence that Caribbean countries were becoming increasingly uncompetitive in their production.

It was agreed that a certain level of food security would need to be fixed as an objective by each country to ensure against external events over which it had no control. Nevertheless, beyond that level the agriculture sector as a whole, should be evaluated so that the most efficient and appropriate products might be produced, bearing in mind questions such as comparative advantage and the availability of stable and remunerative markets.

Planning should therefore have as its objective a convergence in the facilities and support arrangements available to both the domestic and export subsectors, such that neither would be artificially penalized and thus allowing efficiency criteria to be widely applied.

It was therefore agreed that a series of policies would need to be put into place if the aims and objectives outlined above were to be achieved as follows:

- (i) A clearly defined land use policy based on a rational evaluation of the existing stock of land;
- (ii) Adequate access to capital;
- (iii) Effective access to information, including new technologies; and
- (iv) A coherent policy towards agricultural labour.

Despite the importance of all the foregoing elements it was agreed that the greatest immediate impact to the agricultural sector would be made by improving the efficiency of that chain of activities which took place between the farm gate and retail outlets since post harvest losses were high.

It was therefore proposed that food marketing and distribution at the national and regional levels be accorded the highest priority in the planning process.

(c) Other activities

The following other activities were carried out during the period:

(i) Technical assistance to the Netherlands Antilles to identify the need for and the contents of a training programme for planners and plan-related personnel, and the preparation of a project for such a training programme;

(ii) Attendance at the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and Heads of Planning of Latin America, to inform the meeting of those aspects of the CDCC work programme relating to planning and the decisions of the Third Meeting of Caribbean Heads of Planning; and

(iii) Attend the Second Meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Caribbean Environmental Action Plan in order to seek support for a training course on Environmental Impact Assessment for Caribbean Planners. The meeting agreed that the course, which would encompass all the English-speaking countries was a priority and would be conducted as soon as funds were available.

Proposed Activities for the Next Period

For the period 1984-1985, four meetings of Planning Experts and one meeting of Heads of Planning for the Caribbean have been scheduled.

The meetings of planning experts will continue to use the existing format with a mix of Governmental and institutional representatives. It is proposed to hold two meetings in 1984 and two in 1985 as follows:

(a) Ad Hoc Group in Physical and Regional Planning. The Secretariat will continue to explore the possibility of a training course in Environmental Impact Analysis as outlined above and will provide whatever assistance it can in this area;

(b) Ad Hoc Group in Manpower Planning.

- (c) Ad Hoc Group in Agriculture Planning;
- (d) Ad Hoc Group in Transport Planning.

Approval has also been received for convening the Fourth Meeting of Caribbean Heads of Planning and it is expected that this will be held in late 1985. A site for that meeting has not yet been decided.

