



- Antigua and Barbuda
- Aruba
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Br. Virgin Islands
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Montserrat
- Netherlands Antilles
- Puerto Rico
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago
- U.S. Virgin Islands



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**SPECIAL MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
 CDCC MEMBER STATES ATTENDING THE
 TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF ECLAC**

Cartagena de las Indias, Colombia, 26 April 1994

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Organization and opening remarks

Delegations of member countries of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) met in Cartagena de las Indias, Colombia, during the twenty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The following member countries were represented: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Suriname. The following associate members were represented: Aruba, Netherlands Antilles and the United States Virgin Islands.

The meeting was chaired by Mr William Joseph of Grenada, the current Chairman of CDCC (technical level).

The representatives all welcomed the newly-appointed Director of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, Mr Daniel Blanchard, and wished him success in his new post and pledged their support, involvement and commitment to the work of the Office. They expressed their confidence in his capabilities to lead the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean through paths of mutual cooperation among Caribbean and Latin American countries and expressed the hope that his close working relationship with the ECLAC Santiago Headquarters would be of benefit to the CDCC.

Agenda

The meeting agenda was as follows:

1. Reflection on priorities for the Caribbean
2. Update on activities of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat
3. Agenda and documentation for the fifteenth session of the CDCC
4. Other matters

Presentation by the Director - Update on activities of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat

The Director informed the meeting that his immediate goal was to look at how improvements could be achieved so as to optimize benefits from the human resources available at the Port-of-Spain Office, in order to fulfil the expectations of member governments in line with the approved work programme.

Visit to member countries

He intended to pay a familiarization visit to CDCC member countries to discuss the work programme of the Office and priorities of member governments. He had, in fact already paid such visits to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Port-of-Spain, the Foreign Minister of Guyana, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Grenada and the Vice-Minister for Economic Cooperation of Cuba. Visits were planned to Barbados in April, Belize and Jamaica in May and the Netherlands Antilles in June.

He indicated that it was his intention to work closely with other regional and international organizations. To this end, cooperation agreements had been signed with the University of the West Indies, Institute of International Relations (UWI/IIR); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to concretize collaboration between these institutions which would assist in carrying out activities earmarked in the work programme of the Office.

Mr Blanchard also informed the meeting that he had visited the Secretary-General of CARICOM in February 1994 in an effort to identify areas of collaboration. A formal agreement was expected to be signed soon between ECLAC/CDCC and the CARICOM Secretariat. The draft agreement was presently being circulated by CARICOM to member States for their comments.

The delegates endorsed the initiative of the secretariat to strengthen links with the CARICOM Secretariat, since they felt it would avoid duplicity of work and could only be of benefit to all.

Support from ECLAC Headquarters

The Director informed representatives that one of his main priorities was to obtain additional financial resources by way of formulating and seeking funding for new projects. In addition the secretariat had been successful in obtaining additional resources from ECLAC Santiago for supplementing travel; for three ad hoc expert group meetings (US\$30,000); and an additional \$30,000 had been acquired for physical improvements to the Port-of-Spain Office. New computers and equipment had also been promised.

The Executive Secretary, Mr Gert Rosenthal, had promised his help in obtaining extrabudgetary resources and in providing substantive support. He manifested this commitment by paying a visit in February 1994 to the Port-of-Spain Subregional Headquarters. He also took this opportunity to visit the University of the West Indies and to meet with the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago.

Staffing

Mr Blanchard stated that another priority was the staffing situation at the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat within the context of limited human and financial resources. He noted that the Office had undergone a period of great rotation among staff over the last few years and this presented difficulty with regard to continuity of activities. At present, there were two vacancies at the P-2 level and one vacancy at the P-3 level. An attempt was, however, being made to fill the posts with highly qualified persons from the subregion. It was his intention to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to focus on priority issues rather than spread the available resources too thinly.

The delegates present supported the initiative of the Director in seeking to fill vacant posts as early as possible and as far as possible with Caribbean nationals.

Extrabudgetary financing

The Director informed the meeting that the secretariat had prepared 23 project proposals for which negotiations to secure funding had commenced. The projects had budgets which ranged from US\$6,000 to \$310,000. Securing financing for projects was a time-consuming exercise but the secretariat had the backing and support of ECLAC Headquarters. The Director gave a brief description of the projects prepared. One of the project proposals, submitted to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had already been approved in principle and involved an amount of US\$210,000.

A training course in project preparation and management was being organized for August 1994 jointly between the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) which had pledged US\$50,000. The representatives welcomed the initiative of the training course in project preparation and looked forward to receiving invitations to participate.

The Director also made mention of a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development/Maritime Training Programme (UNCTAD/TRAINMAR) project in training in maritime transport totalling US\$300,000 which had been drafted and submitted for consideration.

He also informed that the information services project financed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) would be coming to a close in July 1994, but a new project had been drafted and submitted to that agency for consideration. The delegate from Jamaica supported the work done on information systems by the secretariat and particularly praised the work of Mrs Wilma Primus in this respect. She made mention of the very useful and impressive recent training mission to Jamaica undertaken by Mrs Primus and expressed her Government's hope that financing would be achieved for a continuation of the project which was important not only for her country but for all CDCC member countries.

A draft project entitled support to Non-Independent Caribbean Countries (NICCs) has again been submitted for funding to potential donors, but there has been no success to date in obtaining funding. The delegate from the United States Virgin Islands expressed his appreciation to the secretariat for their efforts in seeking funding for this project since he felt that it represented regional integration in the fullest sense.

He took the opportunity to reiterate his Government's support for the work of the secretariat in the areas of demography, CCST, TRAINMAR and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and reassured the Director of the full support of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands in the work of the secretariat.

The delegate from Aruba suggested that funds for project financing could perhaps be obtained from the Dutch contribution to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He informed that the Dutch Government was more receptive to funding programmes with a definitive start and end rather than a continuous project. He felt that the contributions to the UNDP were being underutilized for programmes in the Caribbean and perhaps Mr Anton Kruidierink, a senior Dutch national at the UNDP/Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean in New York could be approached as he might be able to suggest modalities whereby these funds could be sourced.

Work programme of the Subregional Headquarters

Mr Blanchard informed the meeting that substantive activities were continuing in the areas of statistics, information, support to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), environment and Export Processing Zones.

Priority areas for the future included:

1. Caribbean/Latin American relations. A document was being prepared for presentation at the upcoming fifteenth session of CDCC which described ongoing activities in this area. The delegate of the Netherlands Antilles suggested that a blueprint study be prepared on areas of cooperation and perhaps an inventory of regional arrangements, agreements and schemes could be included.

2. Language Barriers Project. The Director expressed his optimism that funding would be obtained for the project on Elimination of Language Barriers. The representative of the Netherlands Antilles endorsed the optimism of the Director in respect of successful funding for the Language Barriers Project, and indicated that her Government had supported and worked very closely with the secretariat to ensure a successful outcome to the negotiations with the European Union. A meeting of experts was scheduled for June to examine and submit the final project for funding to the European Union. The delegate of Grenada informed the meeting that at a recent meeting of the G3 with CARICOM and Latin American countries, concern had been expressed about existing language barriers and

he suggested that perhaps an approach could be made to the G3 group to seek financing for the project.

3. **NICCs.** Work was expected to continue in this area pending the outcome of the quest for funding for this project.

4. **Association of Caribbean States (ACS).** The meeting was informed that the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had actively participated at meetings which deal with the formation of the Association. The secretariat was extremely interested in this activity and intended to support and collaborate with the CARICOM Secretariat in all activities in every way possible.

5. **North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).** Since interest has been expressed by member States in joining this initiative, a paper was being prepared for presentation at the fifteenth session of the CDCC. The delegate from Grenada requested that the paper include not only the implications for countries should they choose to join NAFTA but also implications for them should they decide not to join. The delegate from Jamaica also noted the cooperation with CARICOM on the issues of the ACS and NAFTA. She stressed that cooperation should continue with CARICOM concerning NAFTA to avoid duplication of efforts.

6. **United Nations Global Conferences.** One of the main functions of the Office was to bring to the attention of member governments, major objectives of United Nations world conferences and to organize Caribbean regional preparatory activities for these events. This involved convening Caribbean subregional meetings and publicizing the issues and goals of the world conferences so as to enable Caribbean States to consolidate their positions and make more of an impact at the global forums. This initiative was applauded by many of the delegates present. The Director gave an overview of the activities and involvement of ECLAC in respect of each of the global conferences:

- ECLAC/CDCC organized the Caribbean preparatory meeting for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (Cairo, September 1994). A Caribbean Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development was prepared for submission to that Conference.

- Concerning the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS, Barbados, April/May 1994) the secretariat had co-hosted a preparatory regional technical meeting and an NGO meeting together with CARICOM. The ECLAC/CDCC secretariat was fully represented at the conference and the Executive Secretary had been designated representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, together with the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It was expected that the regional commissions would play an active part in the follow-up to the SIDS conference.

Activities were underway in respect of the World Summit for Social Development (Denmark, 1995). A meeting of experts had been held in November 1993 and the report was presently being circulated. A consultant from Suriname was at present preparing studies on poverty in selected countries.

With regard to the World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), a meeting was to be held in the Netherlands Antilles in June 1994. At present, funding was being sought to enable the participation of one government representative and one NGO from each CDCC member country at this meeting. Partial funding for this activity had been obtained from CARICOM and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The delegate from Saint Lucia reiterated his Government's support for the work of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat. He made particular mention of the Language Barriers Project and Caribbean/Latin American cooperation. He also welcomed the cooperation between the CARICOM and ECLAC/CDCC secretariats with respect to the formation of the ACS. He indicated that it was apparent that the statutes would be signed in July 1994, but that the structure was still not clear and perhaps this was where the CDCC could make a contribution.

Other matters

The representative of the Netherlands Antilles informed the meeting of the recent referendum held in the Netherlands Antilles and as a result these islands would still comprise one nation. She also urged the full participation of Caribbean States in activities geared to cooperation with Latin America and she emphasized the support of her Government for regionalism.

She took the opportunity to appeal to representatives for support for the upcoming meetings of Women in Development and Language Barriers to be held in Curacao in June.

The representative of Suriname expressed his Government's concern over the delayed submission of reports and papers prepared by the secretariat and looked forward to an improvement in the future. He stressed that ECLAC brought the Latin American perspective to the Caribbean and it was important that the CDCC strived to bring the Caribbean perspective to their Latin American neighbours. At times, he had difficulty convincing his Government of the usefulness and importance of their membership in the CDCC and such delays only made this task more difficult.

The Director acknowledged the delayed submission of reports and apologized for this occurrence. He would look into the matter and would ensure improvement in documents submission in the future.

The delegate from the Dominican Republic noted that for his Government the CDCC was a bridge for them with the English-speaking Caribbean. He pointed out that any

integration scheme in the Caribbean was a high priority of his Government and he was also heartened that the CDCC encompassed countries i.e., Haiti, Cuba and Suriname which were not party to any integration scheme. His country was looking forward, together with members of the G3 and Latin America to the signing of the ACS agreement at the forthcoming Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM in July, 1994.

He welcomed the ECLAC initiative concerning the organization of preparatory meetings for upcoming United Nations global conferences which would assist in consolidating the position of the Caribbean.

The delegate from Antigua and Barbuda stated that public relations in the secretariat needed to be strengthened if the CDCC hoped to achieve the respect which CARICOM had earned in the region. He felt that more effort was needed to project the image and publicize the work of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat throughout the region. He assured the Director that the secretariat had the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, New York, as a backstop.

The representative of Cuba informed the meeting of the upcoming conference hosted by the G3 in Caracas, Venezuela, in December 1994 on social issues in the region. He suggested that the CDCC secretariat should attend this meeting in order to benefit from the funding provided by the G3, and also liaise with other organizations in the area of social reforms as the goals were similar to those expressed at the twenty-fifth session of ECLAC.

Fifteenth session of the CDCC, Dominican Republic, 26-29 July 1994

The Director circulated the draft provisional agenda of the CDCC session and informed the meeting that it was being finalized in consultation with the current chairman, Grenada. He also informed that although it had been agreed at the fourteenth session in Grenada that the Committee would meet at the ministerial level every other year, since 18 months had already elapsed since that session and the secretariat felt that it was necessary to convene the fifteenth session at the ministerial level. This decision was endorsed by all present.

The representative of the Dominican Republic took the opportunity to reiterate that his country looked forward to welcoming representatives of CDCC member countries at the fifteenth session of the CDCC in July.

