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JOINT UNEP/ECLA PROJECT  
FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT  
IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN AREA



UNITED NATIONS

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The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), in co-operation with the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), is sponsoring the Joint UNEP/ECLA Project for Sound Environmental Management in the Wider Caribbean Area. Informally, the Project is known as the Caribbean Environmental Project. Its objective is to prepare a Caribbean Action Plan for Sound Environmental Management.

The Project covers some 32 territorial entities<sup>1/</sup> which are unified by the waters of the Wider Caribbean, defined for this Project as including the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. All but 4 of the 32 countries share the coastline of this body of water. The remaining 4 (The Bahamas, Guyana, French Guyana, and Suriname) have close economic, historical and cultural ties with the rest of the area.

The Project is an element of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme. As early as 1974, UNEP's Governing Council designated the Caribbean as one of its priority areas for environmental action. Principal impetus for the Project came, however, from the Governing Council's 1976 meeting. By 1976, UNEP had made important progress toward implementing an action plan for the Mediterranean, and several delegates urged UNEP to establish a comparable programme for the Caribbean. They stressed, however, that the Caribbean area has distinct ecological, social, economic, cultural, and political characteristics, and they accordingly urged UNEP to

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<sup>1/</sup> For convenience these territorial entities are hereafter referred to as countries, regardless of juridical status.

rely as fully as possible on indigenous resources and institutions.

The Project is also a response to the desires of Caribbean nations for attention to their needs. A Latin American Preparatory Meeting, held shortly before the 1976 meeting of UNEP's Governing Council, agreed by consensus on the need to address the environmental needs of the Caribbean. And the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC), established pursuant to a 1975 ECLA resolution, has identified several proposed spheres of action that have important environmental implications. "Whatever the strategies selected for development and co-operation in the Caribbean", the CDCC has also pointed out, "the solutions should come basically from the Caribbean itself if such strategies are to have any chance of success".

In April 1976, UNEP initiated a one-year Preparatory Activity for the development of a Caribbean Environment Programme. The objectives of this Activity were to identify: environmental problems of the Area, human and institutional resources available to deal with them, ongoing environmental activities, and objectives for future action. A Co-ordinator was appointed for the Preparatory Activity.

Operating from UNEP's regional office in Mexico City, the Coordinator undertook extensive consultations with governments, with regional bodies of the United Nations, and with other regional and international organizations. In addition, data were collected, and reports were prepared to serve as the basis for a future work programme. The Preparatory Activity resulted in the formulation of the current Caribbean Environmental Project.

Project work formally began in May 1977, when the Coordinator opened the Project office in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. In August and September, the Scientific Expert and a research assistant began their duties.

A generalized work programme was prepared during the early months of the Project, and priority activities were tentatively identified. By the end of December, these had been reviewed with officials of several Area governments and approved by UNEP (and ECLA Headquarters).

In January 1978, Project staff prepared a Preliminary Draft Action Plan based on the previously identified priorities. In February, UNEP and ECLA held a joint session to review the draft and approve a work programme for completion of the Project.

The Project will benefit from the guidance of a high level Advisory Panel of nine experts from the Wider Caribbean Area. It is expected that the Advisory Panel will meet thrice during the lifetime of the present Project. The first meeting is scheduled for April, 1978, with the objective of reviewing the Draft Action Plan, background documentation, the proposed priorities and the timetable and Work Plan.

Invitations have been issued to an Inter Agency meeting scheduled for May, 1978. It is expected that this meeting will precise the involvement of the specialised Agencies in the preparation of background and overview studies which will provide the basis for the final draft of the Action Plan which is to be presented to the Governments of the wider Caribbean Area.

A directory of Scientific Institutions in the Region, dealing with environmental concerns, and a list identifying experts familiar with the Region, will be made available to the Agencies at their meeting.

The Project's offices at Port-of-Spain, will act as the coordinating unit for the different tasks to be undertaken

in the preparation of the Action Plan, and is expected to work in close cooperation with and through the Specialised Agencies of the United Nations system, in their respective spheres of competence in preparing the interdisciplinary Action Plan. It is anticipated that CEP will also promote in coordination with the appropriate agencies, at least three Workshops considered important by the Governments of the Region.

A Media Workshop to increase the awareness of the Media Sector with regard to the role of sound environmental management plays in achieving and sustaining an acceptable quality of life. This would be the first step in the promotion of an environmental education programme for the Wider Caribbean Area.

An oil pollution Workshop will be held to examine the magnitude of this serious problem and the means to ameliorate and control it in the Wider Caribbean area.

Finally, it is proposed to hold a Workshop to evaluate the potential of remote sensing as a tool for resource monitoring and environmental management in the Wider Caribbean area.

In parallel with the above mentioned activities, the Project office in discharging its function as the coordinating unit for the Project's activities, will undertake consultations with the Governments of the Wider Caribbean area on a continuous and as required basis concerning the development of the Project, and with a view to preparing for meetings with Government nominated experts in late 1979, and the Intergovernmental meeting to which the Action Plan will be presented later the same year.

The Governments of the Wider Caribbean area will be invited to nominate experts to attend meetings which will be convened by UNEP and ECLA to review the background and overview studies prepared by the Specialised Agencies, as well as the results and

recommendations of the three Workshops, and to contribute to the preparation of the final draft of the Action Plan.

The Draft Action Plan as revised by the meetings of Government nominated experts, will then be presented to UNEP and ECLA for clearance.

That draft of the Action Plan will subsequently be distributed to the Governments of the Wider Caribbean area, the Agencies of the United Nations systems, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in the Wider Caribbean area for their detailed study. At the same time, the Project office in discharge of its function as the coordinating unit, will undertake intensive consultations with all the parties concerned.

It is expected that an agreed text will then be presented to an Intergovernmental meeting for consideration and adoption by the end of 1979.

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