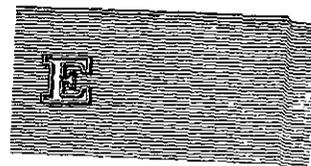


UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED
LC/L.324
11 March 1985
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

E C L A C

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION IN
MEXICAN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

(Mexico City, 13 and 14 August 1984)

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Preface

This report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the ECLAC/UNEP Workshop on the Incorporation of the Environmental Dimension into Mexican Planning: Foundations for Latin American Co-operation, which was held at the ECLAC Mexico Office in Mexico City on 13 and 14 August 1984.

This workshop was conducted as part of the ECLAC/UNEP project on incorporation of the Environmental Dimension into Development Planning Processes which is being carried out by the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit with the assistance of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES).

The workshop was organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (ROLAC/UNEP) with assistance from the Secretariat of Programming and Budgetary Matters (SPP) and the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE), through the Office of the Undersecretary of Ecology of Mexico.

One of the initial objectives of the workshop was to gather information concerning Mexico's experience with the incorporation of the environmental dimension into planning and to analyse it with a view to refining such data and exploring the possibilities for co-operation with other countries in that connection. Another objective was to analyse and discuss possible approaches to such co-operation based on studies conducted in various countries in the region.

In the pursuit of those objectives, two basic documents relating to the experience of Mexico were available. One of them provided an historical view of the subject and the other described the present-day situation and trends. A document containing an analysis and critique of the approaches taken to incorporating the environmental dimension into planning, which had been prepared by the ECLAC Development and Environment Unit, was also available, along with other supporting documents.*/

*/ See annex I.

I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date

1. The Workshop on the Incorporation of the Environmental Dimension into Mexican Planning: Foundations for Latin American Co-operation was held at the ECLAC Mexico Office in Mexico City on 13 and 14 August 1984.

Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by 34 experts.*/

Opening and closing meetings

3. At the opening meeting the floor was taken by Mr. Casio Luiselli, Deputy Director of the ECLAC Mexico Office; Mr. Osvaldo Sunkel, Co-ordinator of the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit; and Mr. José Lizárraga, Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC). The speakers addressed the participants concerning the objectives of the workshop and the part they played within the programmes and activities carried out by ECLAC and UNEP in Latin America and the Caribbean. Emphasis was placed on the contribution to economic and social development which could be made by planning activities and projects for modifying the environment and by incorporating new approaches and tools into economic planning based on environmental and ecological studies. Attention was also drawn to the importance of the case of Mexico as a paradigm in this regard whose implications for other countries in the region should be explored.

4. The meeting closed on 14 May with statements by Mr. Luis Donaldo Colosio, Director General of Regional Programming for the Secretariat of Programming and Budgetary Matters of Mexico, and Mrs. Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, Undersecretary of Ecology for the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology of Mexico. They stressed the inter-agency rapprochement fostered by the workshop on a national and international basis, as well as the wisdom of planning this kind of activity at a level that would be closer to the action, both in sectoral bodies at the federal level and in state and municipal bodies.

5. Mr. Osvaldo Sunkel, Co-ordinator of the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit, took the floor on behalf of ECLAC and the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES). He underscored the learning which had taken place in the workshop, the sophistication of

*/ See annex 2.

the view expressed and the frank exchange of ideas which had been achieved, as well as its potentially beneficial influence on the horizontal co-operation activities being carried out in these areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting was closed by Mr. Casio Luiselli on behalf of the Director of the ECLAC Mexico Office: he expressed the hope that the conclusions reached would find practical expression and that a closer relationship would be created among the actors directly involved in planning and the environment both at the national level and among the countries of the region.

Agenda

6. The workshop was held on the basis of the following agenda:
 - a) Presentation of the workshop.
 - b) Incorporation of the environmental dimension into Mexican planning: An historical perspective.
 - c) Incorporation of the environmental dimension into Mexican planning: Recent experience and projections based on the First National Meeting on Ecology.
 - d) Incorporation of the environmental dimension into planning: An analysis and critique for Latin American co-operation.
 - e) The experience of Mexico and of other Latin American countries with the incorporation of the environmental dimension into planning: The outlook for regional co-operation.
 - f) Conclusions.

Officers

7. During the two days of discussion, the work was co-ordinated by Mr. Casio Luiselli, Deputy Director of the ECLAC Mexico Office. The meetings were presided over by Mr. José Lizárraga, Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; Mr. Osvaldo Sunkel, Co-ordinator of the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit; Mrs. Alicia Bárcena, Undersecretary of Ecology of the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology of Mexico; and Mr. Donaldo Colosio, Director General of Regional Programming for the Secretariat of Programming and Budgetary Matters. Mr. Arsenio Rodríguez of UNEP and Mr. Carlos Collantes of ECLAC acted as rapporteurs.

Description of the meetings

8. Mr. Osvaldo Sunkel presented the project on incorporation of the Environmental Dimension into Development Planning Processes: Case Studies, Methodological Aspects and Horizontal Co-operation, which had been initiated by the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit in 1983. He drew attention to the progress made in the case studies which had been analysed thus far and announced that a regional seminar on the subject would be held in 1985.

9. Mr. Daniel Bitrán, an ECLAC consultant, introduced a document entitled "Incorporación de la dimensión ambiental en la planificación mexicana" (LC/R.391), which primarily concerned the past experience acquired in this area as viewed from the standpoint of economic and social development patterns and the requirements of planning officers and other bodies in the Mexican public sector.

10. This presentation was then elaborated on by the participants, who referred to other historical and institutional cases of concern on the part of the Mexican public sector for the environmental topics examined in the study. Mention was also made of action taken by the private sector with regard to these matters; stress was placed on the potential usefulness in this regard of tools for the early assessment of environmental impacts and of encouraging the participation of the parties concerned in the design of the relevant norms and public policies.

11. Emphasis was placed on the gradual rapprochement between the agencies responsible for planning and those responsible for the environment. One factor which had made this possible was the enlargement of the environmental perspective; originally, it had included only those aspects related to sanitation in a restrictive sense, whereas it was now based on the perception of ecosystems and their potential. Another factor was the notable expansion of the legal and institutional infrastructure in the fields of environment and planning. In this connection, it was pointed out, however, that the biggest impediments to making greater progress in incorporating the environmental dimension into planning stemmed from the overall development models followed in the country and from a tendency to consider ecological concern as being confined to the sectoral realm.

12. Mrs. Alicia Bárcena, Undersecretary of Ecology of the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology of Mexico, made a substantial statement concerning recent experience with incorporating the environmental dimension into planning in Mexico, in particular since the creation of the Office of the Undersecretary of Ecology. She placed particular emphasis on the progress achieved thanks to various mechanisms for the dissemination of information, exchange and co-ordination with organized sectors of the population and with other federal and state agencies, particularly the public hearings which had been held to assist in formulating the present development plan, the First National Meeting on Ecology of Mexico, and the specific consideration given to ecological issues in the overall development plan.

13. The Undersecretary also presented a programatic organization plan for the Office of the Undersecretary of Ecology showing its broad aims and some of its main activities in each of the following areas:

/a) Ecological

- a) Ecological land management
- b) Pollution prevention and control
- c) Ecological conservation, preservation and restoration
- d) Improved utilization of natural resources through their integrated management.

14. In regard to the main objectives of the Office of the Undersecretary, attention was drawn to the need to avoid development options which might be based on an incomplete understanding of the resources of various ecosystems and, hence, on a poorly planned use of those resources. Stress was also placed on the urgent need to promote the diversification of such options in keeping with the variety and specificity of the different environments in Mexico, as well as with the cultural, social and economic characteristics of each one. In order to achieve such objectives, romantic, academic or doomsday approaches had to be done away with and a sustained effort had to be made to undertake practical training, to promote participation and to increase the responsibility and capacity of the social actors involved. Far from entailing higher costs, greater restrictions or more coercion, this approach could bring about savings and an increase in economic and social benefits, as well as providing a more propitious atmosphere for dialogue, conviction and, in the final analysis, for planning and development.

15. The participants agreed with these views and underscored the substantial progress and changes which could be achieved with the suggested approach in relation to previous attempts in Mexico to incorporate the environmental dimension into planning and other spheres. It was felt that one of the factors which might have facilitated a closer relationship between the persons responsible for planning and those in charge of environmental matters was the effort which the Office of the Undersecretary of Ecology had been called upon to make in order to incorporate planning into its own environmental management tasks. One of the results of that effort was that it was able to orient its activities in terms of economic and social development objectives, and to use methods, tools and a vocabulary which were compatible with those employed by planners.

16. It was stated that the progress achieved along those lines had been far greater than what might have been expected in practical terms, especially in relation to the design and endogenous generation of systems of production and technological patterns which played a part in the relationship between society and nature. Putting those guidelines into practice required not only a great deal of political will, but also an enormous collective effort, particularly with respect to the training of human resources, knowledge about the environment and applied technological research.

/17. Mr.

17. Mr. Carlos Collantes, an expert on the staff of the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit, presented a document entitled "Incorporación de la dimensión ambiental en la planificación: análisis y crítica para la cooperación latinoamericana", which contained an analysis of a number of ideas as to the significance of such incorporation according to the various concepts of the environmental dimension which were prevalent in Latin America; the study also contained a proposal which was intended to serve as a basis for co-operation in this area.

18. Mr. Collantes pointed up the limitations of the predominant approach in the region, in which the environment was regarded as a constraint on development, whether in terms of inhibition of economic growth, the demographic coercion of poor sectors, or in terms of alterations in the prevailing growth pattern. But even in the best of cases, these changes seemed to take forms which were consistent with the prevailing imitative pattern of growth and accumulation, thereby favouring a more intensive use of energy, capital and imports, a larger external debt and a greater inequality of distribution.

19. He outlined a basic approach which might be common practice in many countries of the region and which could be enhanced by taking an instrumental approach to the environment: he regarded that approach as being very similar to the one described by the Undersecretary of Ecology of Mexico. On that basis, he pointed up the possibility of specific areas of co-operation in terms of both conceptual review and operational incorporation of the environmental dimension into planning in Latin America. Examples of the latter included the meetings of scientists and planners which were being promoted by ECLAC and whose aim was to formulate proposals specifically relating to the development of dry zones, tropical wetlands, high mountain zones and the metropolitan areas of the region.

20. The participants agreed in general with the views and proposals voiced, although there were some differences of opinion regarding their viability. While attention was drawn to the tremendous amount of inertia which existed and to international and ideological factors which stood in the way of the success of such proposals, emphasis was also placed on the need to be in closer contact with local conditions, which might present many real, as well as latent or potential, possibilities and alternatives. The difference of opinion was finally resolved with respect to the limits within which action could be taken depending on which specific topics and interests were at stake; in many respects, there was a great deal of room for action within the limits imposed by historical and current conditions.

/II. CONCLUSIONS

II. CONCLUSIONS

21. The discussion concerning the above presentations led to two main types of conclusions. The first was that an instrumental approach should be adopted as a basis for co-operation in relation to the incorporation of the environmental dimension into planning. The second was that this approach should be disaggregated and applied in more specific areas in order to achieve concrete results both in each individual country and in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole.

22. Among the reasons for suggesting the instrumental approach as a foundation for co-operation was the fact that it required the "Latin Americanization" of the environmental debate at the same time that it made such a step possible. If the approach to be employed was one whereby the use and conservation of the environment was oriented towards the needs and capacities of the population, then it was logical to assume that its central reference would be the particular concrete needs and capacities of the peoples in each country and in the region as a whole. This not only avoided the all too frequent and erroneous generalizations that were masked by abstract concepts of the environment or ecology and which were often used for alarmist purposes, but also made it possible to incorporate the environmental dimension into the development process in a more organic manner.

23. Thus, if development was to be understood as endogenous progress towards meeting needs and enhancing the population's potential, then a fundamental part of those capacities would be the cultural, organizational, technical and labour forces of that population which could assess and lay claim to both the natural and cultural environmental factors affecting their existence.

24. It was concluded that the relevance, viability and practical application of this approach hinged on a number of factors, some of which were the following:

- i) The openness of the environmental administration to the interests, viewpoints and tools of planning and, on a reciprocal basis, the openness of planning to the physical dimensions of development and to long-term policies and strategies;
- ii) The ability of society to engage in scientific and technological endeavours as an internal and strategic function in utilization and enhancement of the environment and its adaptation to its own needs, interests and possibilities;

/iii) The

- iii) The careful specification of concepts and problems so that they can be dealt with effectively in each ecological, social and cultural context in keeping with their particular features; and
- iv) The resulting decentralization and deconcentration of environmental management through the increasingly competent and skilled action of the sectors of the population and agencies concerned.

25. Those interested in implementing the instrumental approach would find horizontal co-operation among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to be a valuable tool. One reason for this was because it put it on a scale in which each of the factors mentioned in the previous paragraph would take on greater visibility and prominence. Another reason was that this same scale would make it possible to create an organization and division of labour that would be more accessible to our countries; in turn, this would increase their internal capacity for handling the challenges, risks and opportunities arising in ecosystems as well as cultural, social and technical conditions which had a great deal in common. Lastly, another reason was that this would make it possible to deal more forcefully with proposals which were primarily channeled through restrictive approaches and the alarmist publicity that went along with them.

26. So too, the growing tendency towards international interdependence with respect to the use of the environment only increased the need for co-operation among our countries in this area. Along the same lines, it was pointed out that horizontal co-operation should help us to pool our capacities and interests so that we might join the scientific and technological transition which was currently taking place at the world level and allow us to use technology in keeping with our cultural and ecological needs and situations, as well as to scrutinize carefully calls for so-called appropriate technologies which might in some instances be regressive or isolated from such progress.

27. The specific areas into which future co-operation in these areas could be broken down included: those areas relating to basic needs in the fields of agriculture and food, energy and urban development; those relating to the predominant ecosystems common to most countries in the region whose development posed particularly difficult challenges, such as the tropical wetlands, arid zones and high mountain areas; and, lastly, those in which there was some financial commitment, political interest or other conditions necessary for a minimum of viability.

28. In line with the above-mentioned model of deconcentration and decentralization, it was also concluded that co-operation should take place directly among those who shared similar responsibilities and duties in these areas in the various countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. This

/included those

included those in charge of environmental management and planning as well as scientific and technological researchers, community organizations and representatives of the different cultures of the region.

29. Finally, it was felt that the workshop served to demonstrate the opportunities which were opened up by the adoption of an instrumental approach to the environment at both the domestic and international levels. In this regard, it was suggested that similar discussions should take place on a disaggregated basis at the domestic level with administrative sectors such as energy, agriculture, water resources and tourism, and in key regions such as the tropical wetlands of the Southeast, the arid zones surrounding the Sea of Cortez, and the urban zones selected for deconcentration programmes in the metropolitan area of Mexico City. It was felt that, at the international level, the approach described by the Undersecretary of Ecology of Mexico should be directly communicated to officials having similar responsibilities in other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the joint programmes of ECLAC and UNEP on planning and the environment.

Annex 1

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED AT THE WORKSHOP

Symbol	Author	Organization	Title
E/CEPAL/R.368/Rev.1	Carlos Collantes	ECLAC/UNEP	Incorporación de la dimensión ambiental en la planificación. Análisis y crítica para la cooperación latinoamericana
LC/R.391	Daniel Bitrán (Consultant)	ECLAC/UNEP	Incorporación de la dimensión ambiental en la planificación mexicana
<u>Supporting documents</u>			
E/CEPAL/G.1242	Joint ECLAC/ UNEP Develop- ment and Environment Unit	ECLAC/UNEP	Incorporación de la dimensión ambiental en la planificación
E/CEPAL/ILPES/R.46	Nicolo Gligo	ECLAC/ILPES	Medio ambiente en la planificación latinoamericana: vías para una mayor incorporación

Annex 2

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