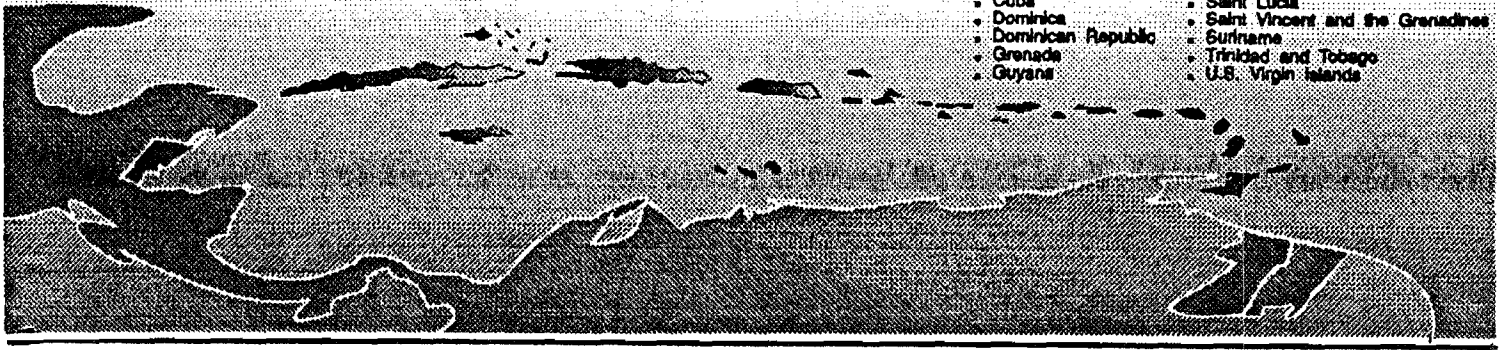


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- Antigua and Barbuda
- Aruba
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Br. Virgin Islands
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Montserrat
- Netherlands Antilles
- Puerto Rico
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint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



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**ACTIVITIES AT THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGIONAL LEVEL IN RELATION TO
THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE

ACTIVITIES AT THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGIONAL LEVEL IN RELATION TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Background and context

The first United Nations World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, 6-12 March 1995. One hundred and nineteen Heads of State or their representatives attended, including representatives of nine member governments of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) and Caribbean Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The purpose of the Summit was to adopt a Declaration and a Programme of Action for policies, actions and measures in areas of concern in social development.

In recent times, the United Nations has witnessed the rise of a glaring contradiction between increased prosperity for some and expanded or intensified poverty for others. Regarding poverty, some groups - because of their particular circumstances of life - are more affected than others, making them particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable, socially excluded or marginalized. Among these are, the extreme poor, the unemployed, the disabled, the elderly, indigenous peoples, women and especially adolescent boys and girls. Furthermore, efforts to engender social development are often adversely affected by increased social distress and instability of family and civic society.

Recognizing that poverty, lack of productive employment and social disintegration are an offence to human dignity and a waste of human resources, the United Nations has faced the challenge of establishing a people-centred framework for social development and of responding to the immediate needs of those who are most affected by human distress.

To this end, the World Summit for Social Development set out to address four main goals: (a) creation of an enabling environment for social development; (b) eradication of poverty; (c) expansion of productive employment and the reduction of unemployment; and (d) achievement of social integration.

The preparatory process

Leading up to the Summit, the United Nations Preparatory Committee convened three meetings in New York. These meetings discussed a range of issues which were formulated in 10 commitments adopted by governments at PrepCom III. These commitments were submitted to the Summit. In a Press conference following this last meeting, the United Nations welcomed the attendance of the Bretton Woods institutions, in particular, as these institutions had so far shown little interest in the Summit. Expectations of obtaining the resources needed in the social development area had been low.

Over a period of one and a half years (September 1993- March 1995), the CDCC secretariat provided technical assistance and guidance to the its member governments in preparation for the United Nations World Summit for Social Development through:

**Convening expert group meetings and
meetings of representatives of government and NGOs
at the subregional level**

(a) Meeting of Caribbean Working Group on Social Development, 25-26 November 1993, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - The general aim was to discuss the objectives and themes on the global agenda of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Within this framework, the meeting intended more specifically: (a) to raise the level of awareness of the need to incorporate social factors in the national development exercise; (b) to identify areas of cooperation in social development; and (c) to provide the opportunity for commitment at the highest political level to mobilize and reallocate resources for social development. In this regard, Caribbean experts and government officials highlighted the following concerns: increase of unemployment and underemployment in the Caribbean; loss of skilled and professional human resources through emigration; increase in the incidence and intensity of poverty; differences of access to education and concerns about the quality of education available to the poor; exclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as women, senior citizens, small farmers, the disabled and indigenous peoples. One of the pertinent concerns noted was the serious inadequacy or insufficiency of data in the social field, and a great need for greater effort in this area.

(b) Second Caribbean Meeting Preparatory to World Summit for Social Development, 6-8 December 1994, St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda - The aim was to contribute to a coordinated subregional input into the Social Summit. The meeting was organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and co-sponsored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Public sector officials, academics and representatives of NGOs discussed the Summit issues from a Caribbean perspective. The meeting recognized that economic growth is essential, but human development considerations should be factored into planning and policy at all levels. It also suggested that employment generation should be pursued by governments and by all social actors. The NGO position on the priority of "six Rs": revaluing, representation, restructuring, resources, redistribution and rights was noted. The Guidelines for Action adopted by the meeting include:

- * Participatory and transparent governance;
- * Eradication of poverty through involvement of individuals, families, communities, civil society and governments;

- * Sustainable opportunities, access to social services and resources for poor Caribbean people;
- * Creation of productive employment as a central objective of policy;
- * Promotion and support to small enterprise;
- * Efficient operation of labour markets;
- * Inclusion of the marginalized and vulnerable into the development process;
- * Reduction of crime, domestic violence, drug abuse and drug trafficking; and
- * Translation of the Guidelines for Action, the Programme for Action and Declaration of the WSSD into actions to be undertaken in the Caribbean subregion.

**Assistance to member countries with regard to
their national preparations for the Summit**

Following these two meetings, assistance to member countries continued more specifically in terms of national preparations for the Summit and, on occasions, within the framework of action towards eradication of poverty at the national level.

On the invitation of the Governments of Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago, ECLAC/CDCC attended national consultations and made presentations and provided technical advice, where necessary. The meetings served primarily to open participation in the preparatory process at the national level. The ECLAC documents and ECLAC's actual presence have been instrumental in assisting governments in this regard. A Workshop on Poverty Reduction and Social Policy, convened by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in Trinidad and Tobago specifically addressed the issues of health and education in that context. ECLAC/CDCC was present at the workshop and contributed to the exercise, particularly from a regional perspective.

The secretariat contributed to the inter-agency efforts towards the eradication of poverty in Jamaica. In this regard, participation in the Workshop Towards the Eradication of Poverty in Jamaica: A Community-Based Partnership Approach, held in Jamaica in May 1995 was crucial. ECLAC/CDCC further contributed in drafting the umbrella document for the Government of Jamaica's Social Investment Fund.

The documentation offered to CDCC member countries by the secretariat in preparation for the WSSD has been useful to most member States. At the seventh meeting of the Monitoring Committee of CDCC, held in Tobago, 14 July 1995, the secretariat was commended for its work on the document prepared for the regional Preparatory Meeting to the World Summit.

Outcomes of the global conference

The major achievement of the Summit was consensus on an agenda which prompted the Copenhagen Declaration and a Plan of Action. The conference identified poverty and social disintegration as major disabling factors caused by unequal distribution of wealth. Of particular relevance to the Caribbean was the consensus on the question of rural poverty, the importance of social safety nets and the recognition of structural adjustment policies as a major cause of social disintegration. The Caribbean agenda conforms to several global priorities embodied in the Plan of Action:

- * An enabling environment based on a people-centred approach;
- * Actions to achieve sustained economic growth, sustainable development and employment;
- * Eradication of poverty at national and regional levels through stronger cooperation and coordination of actions and resources;
- * Application of integrated approaches for elaboration of indicators to determine the extent and distribution of absolute poverty, where basically each country should develop a precise definition and assessment of its own poverty status. This approach should also be followed to address the special needs of Small Island Developing States with respect to eradicating poverty and meeting poverty eradication goals and targets, within the context of social development programmes that reflect their national priorities;
- * Enhancement of opportunities for increased productivity and income;
- * Meeting the basic human needs of all;
- * Strengthening or introducing social protection systems.

Follow-up

The secretariat is committed to working to translate these global imperatives into subregional action. In this regard, work has progressed on the review and research of data in the social field, which includes studying the question of social indicators as these pertain to the Caribbean. Subject to the availability of funds, this in-house study could be complemented with a field-oriented approach on specific priority areas in the subregion. Furthermore, the secretariat intends to broaden existing insights with regard to specific vulnerable groups in Caribbean society. This is important to formulate informed policy recommendations towards reducing the level of disintegration and vulnerability of certain social groups.

The secretariat intends to organize a follow-up WSSD meeting for consultation and follow-up to the Caribbean Programme Of Action in the first half of 1996. The meeting may be urged to agree on priorities within the context of current social scenarios for the subregion.