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goals within the context of the post-2015 development agenda
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Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

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**REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN TECHNICAL MEETING ON
PROPOSALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WITHIN
THE CONTEXT OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

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A. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Caribbean should look at the sustainable development goals (SDGs) process from a holistic and comprehensive view and focus on prioritizing subregional-based targets and indicators. The subregion should build on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) experience and take into consideration that Caribbean small island developing States (SIDS) are at varying stages of development when formalizing the SDGs.
2. Data gathering and evidence-based decision-making are very important to the setting of realistic targets, if they are to be achievable. It is also necessary to have political will to make decisions and implement policies based on the proposed goals.
3. When monitoring the SDGs, countries need to ensure that proper monitoring mechanisms are put in place. The proposed goals should include capacity building which is critical for all CARICOM member States.
4. Even though the SDGs are sector-oriented, issues of climate change and gender equality should be cross-cutting themes throughout all the goals.
5. It was acknowledged that the international community will no longer be providing Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in the traditional way, and countries will now have to find alternative ways to mobilize resources. It was recommended that the Caribbean subregion look into opportunities to unlock domestic investment and attract foreign direct investment (FDI).
6. It was proposed that an inter-agency working group convene to consider the indicators that would best measure and monitor implementation of SDGs relevant to the Caribbean development situation.

B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date of the meeting

7. The Caribbean technical meeting on proposals for sustainable development goals within the context of the post-2015 development agenda was held on 27 March 2015 at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

2. Attendance

8. The meeting was attended by representatives of United Nations Programmes and Funds including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and by representatives of United Nations specialized agencies including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Representatives from the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were also in attendance.

3. Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Overview of the study and identification of critical issues, challenges and emerging issues for the Caribbean arising from the various review processes

3. Consideration of sustainable development goals and targets to address the social, economic, environmental and sustainable development needs of the Caribbean
4. The way forward: Development of a Caribbean framework on the sustainable development goals
5. Conclusion
6. Closure of the meeting

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

4. Opening of meeting

9. Opening remarks were made by the Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. She stated that as the Caribbean developed over the years, policymakers have recognized the importance of equity, sustainability and growth based on fundamental human rights which is the foundation of the SDGs. She noted that in addition to ongoing discussions on the formalization of the SDGs, countries are also involved in another important process called financing for sustainable development which speaks to the private and public financing of the implementation of the SDGs. The region is at a crucial juncture whereby negotiations and decisions on the SDGs and Financing for Development (FfD) are being made on the international front and the Caribbean must have their unified voice heard.

10. The Director noted that the CARICOM Secretariat has been participating in a series of meetings held by ECLAC in New York to discuss targets and indicators that will form the basis of the measurement and monitoring of SDGs tailored to meet the specific development needs of the Caribbean.

11. The Director went on to explain that this technical meeting will focus on the draft of the study entitled “The Caribbean and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda”, which seeks to bring all the development issues of the subregion into focus and set the basis for crafting the strategy for the way forward. She emphasized the importance of a participatory approach to this review and affirmed ECLAC’s commitment to ensure ongoing consultations with its development partners. To this end, she concluded that the subregion should seize the opportunity to speak with one voice to ensure that the challenges to Caribbean development are adequately addressed within the global agenda.

5. Overview of study and identification of critical issues, challenges and emerging issues for the Caribbean arising from the various review processes

12. The ECLAC consultant gave a brief overview of the draft report of the study “The Caribbean and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda” which sought to provide an analytical framework on the sustainable development path of the Caribbean.

13. The first section of the study provided an overview of the Caribbean subregion’s economic performance from 1970, which showed an average growth rate consistently below 3 per cent. He stated that the Caribbean has lagged not only in terms of absolute growth, but also relative to other developing countries, falling well behind growth rates in East Asia and Africa. The strongest economic performers since 1990 in the subregion have been the goods producers- Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Belize. The service economies did not fare well. The second section highlighted challenges faced by the subregion that were related to debt; reduced external financing; climate and environmental vulnerability; increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs); high imported energy costs and a range of issues related to social exclusion and inequality.

14. The third section of the study briefly traced the path of the global development dialogue from its preoccupation with economic growth and gross domestic product (GDP) expansion fifty years ago, to Rio +20's call for a new development agenda rooted in the core values of equality, sustainability and human rights. The consultant emphasized that this approach should prove advantageous for the Caribbean as it called for the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, thereby offering a more comprehensive response to the needs of the subregion.

15. The fourth section reviewed the SIDS' featured role in the sustainable development dialogue. Beginning with the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the 1995 adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action, to the recent Third International Conference on SIDS in Samoa in 2014, there has been a strong support for SIDS. The outcomes of these global conferences have consistently reflected that SIDS are "a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities and they remain constrained in meeting their goals in all three dimensions of sustainable development." The SDG paradigm now provides a framework within which international cooperation and assistance to SIDS can be operationalized across the development agenda.

16. The next section of the study focused on regional priorities that should be incorporated into a Caribbean relevant SDGs framework. Some of these priorities are:

- i. Growth, diversification and jobs- The region can focus on achieving higher levels of productivity through diversification; technological upgrading and innovation; the strengthening and formalisation of micro, small and medium enterprises; full and productive employment including for young people and people with disabilities; and sustainable tourism.
- ii. Infrastructure- The region should ensure that roads, ports (air and sea) and telecommunications are given a clearly defined space in the Caribbean SDGs.
- iii. Sustainable energy- Given the region's dependence on fossil fuel, the main priorities should be access to finance and to technology in order to improve the supply of modern and sustainable energy services.
- iv. Education and skills development- The emerging priorities for the Caribbean should focus on the quality of education and skills development relevant to job market and employment, including life-long learning, and technical and vocational training.
- v. Health- Along with the continuing issue of maternal mortality; the region needs to focus on the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), that has broader social and economic implications of low productivity and output, impoverishment and marginalisation.
- vi. Poverty, inequalities and social inclusion- The region's approach to and perspective on poverty eradication should take full account of poverty's linkage with other forms of vulnerability and exclusion such as those associated with age, sex and disability.
- vii. Climate and environmental vulnerability- The SDG paradigm explicitly recognises that ecosystems and the preservation of bio-diversity, are important not only to environmental sustainability but to social and economic sustainable development. This is especially relevant for the region as small island developing and coastal states that are both vulnerable to the advance of climate change and dependent on forests and oceans for livelihoods and way of life.
- viii. Effective, transparent institutions and safe, peaceful societies- The region should build effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and ensure peaceful, safe and inclusive societies.

ix. Discussion

17. The FAO representative suggested that the agricultural sector in Caribbean countries should be considered as one of the promising sectors to boost development in middle income countries. She also recommended that the consultant look at solutions for dealing with the issue of NCDs from the standpoint of improving food and nutrition in the subregion.

18. The representative of ILO suggested that when analyzing the GDP from a subregional standpoint, policymakers should determine an ideal GDP that should be reached in order to maximise growth, instead of making projections.

19. The representative of ILO further noted that the study spoke about the need for investment in teachers in the education sector, and improvements in the quality of education. However he believed that the issue had more to do with the persistent loss of teachers and other highly trained nationals from the Caribbean. He mentioned that when students attain their educational qualifications, a significant amount tend to migrate before entering the formal labour market, thereby creating a significant brain drain in the region. There is the need for policies that focus on generating skills and resources for the development of the Caribbean.

20. The representative of ILO also suggested that even though the SDGs are sector oriented, climate change and SIDS vulnerabilities should be seen as cross-cutting all goals. The representative of UN-WOMEN as well suggested that gender should be mainstreamed across all SDGs and that the study should have a stronger gender equality approach.

21. The representative of CARICOM stated that the most crucial benchmark for measuring development was the achievement of the MDGs. He recalled that since the globally agreed MDGs targets and indicators did not adequately represent the circumstances of the subregion, the CDB and CARICOM had developed a more focussed, differentiated and relevant set of MDGs targets and indicators for the Caribbean. However, monitoring the implementation of these goals was found challenging because many countries had difficulty in completing their national reporting. Based on the MDG experience, he suggested that when dealing with the SDGs, countries would need to ensure that proper monitoring mechanisms are put in place.

22. The representative of the IOM suggested that the topic of migration should be integrated into the SDGs when considering the Caribbean situation. She suggested that policies should be designed to take advantage of the love and interest in home that remains vibrant in the diaspora. Countries should thus explore ways to ensure that the negative impact on growth and development in the subregion is minimised.

23. She also suggested that countries should focus their attention less on prioritizing the goals, and more on achieving the targets and indicators for these goals.

6. Consideration of sustainable development goals and targets to address the social, economic, environmental and sustainable development needs of the Caribbean

24. The ECLAC consultant presented a set of eight priority areas, as outlined in the study, which the subregion should focus on in the sustainable development agenda. During his discussion of each area, the consultant identified possible indicators and targets. He noted that the targets should be supported by political buy-in and underpinned by policy and regulatory frameworks that support desired outcomes. In addition, he commented that a supportive and conducive international environment was also vital to the successful implementation of the SDGs.

Discussion

25. The representative of the CARICOM Secretariat advised that the Caribbean should learn from its experience with the MDGs, taking into consideration the particularities of Caribbean SIDS, including their varying stages of development. He also noted that in addition to the SDGs development platform, Caribbean SIDS are also being asked to integrate into their national development plans relevant platforms such as the SAMOA Pathway. He also suggested that the proposed goals should all include capacity building which is critical for the sustainable development of CARICOM member States.

26. The representative of the ILO commented on the need for a more holistic approach to assessing policies and actions, with a view to building resilience and preserving the natural environment.

27. The Economic Affairs Officer in the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit of ECLAC agreed with the other members of the meeting that the SDGs should be formalized from a holistic and comprehensive view of the Caribbean peculiarities. He stated that when focusing on one particular sector of development, policymakers have to consider all possible implications, since development in one area can trigger a negative impact in another. He emphasized the importance of evidence gathering in the process of setting targets, for them to be achievable.

28. In addressing the proposed priority area of economic growth, the Economic Affairs Officer in the Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit of ECLAC expressed the view that the focus of this discussion should be on addressing inequality and identifying engines of growth. He noted as well that economic growth at the expense of the environment should be highlighted as an important aspect of this discussion. While renewable energy was highlighted as a proposed priority area in the paper, he suggested that the focus should actually be on climate change, as this is a serious issue for Caribbean SIDS. He also added that it was important to mobilize investment for renewable energy to make it achievable, since this is not necessarily a cheap option for Caribbean SIDS.

29. The representative of UN-WOMEN suggested that gender-responsive trade policies be considered as one of the targets under the priority area of economic growth, especially in light of arrangements like the CARIFORUM EU-Economic Partnership Agreement. She also proposed a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment.

30. The representative of FAO proposed that the sustainable management of marine and other resources be included as priority areas, as this goes beyond mere conservation.

7. The way forward: Development of a Caribbean framework on the sustainable development goals

31. The moderator for this session outlined the objectives for the discussion on the way forward. She proposed that the focus should be on providing guidance to Caribbean SIDS negotiators to support strategic positioning and advocacy, and alert them to the areas requiring crucial emphasis, based on needs. This support should be focused on implementation.

32. The consultant indicated that the study argues that the Caribbean should be a priority in the line for concessionary resources and in this regard, the context of the SDGs provides a unique opportunity to restate that case. He stated that the study also posits that the Caribbean must pay attention to mobilizing domestic resources, which is an examination that should be undertaken at the country level. He added that mobilizing other types of external resources, for example FDI, would require new policy orientations and initiatives.

Discussion

33. The representative of the ACS posed several questions to the meeting, regarding the expectations arising from the SDGs process and the advice to be offered to Caribbean negotiators. He questioned whether the Caribbean would be asked to reflect on their domestic resources, and indicate "off the record" how they are contributing to their own development agenda. He queried whether advice to Caribbean governments should also include this type of discussion. The moderator responded and confirmed that these issues would form part of the discussion and advice to be offered to Caribbean country representatives and negotiators. The consultant also added that the SDGs process involved resources being offered as part of a multilateral package, with goals and targets being mutually agreed upon. Funding would be expected to be target-based, and countries will be free to develop goals and targets as they wish. He emphasized however, that Caribbean governments will be expected to play their part in mobilizing domestic resources to fund the implementation of the SDGs.

34. The representative of FAO supported this idea, noting that Caribbean governments must be alerted that financing will not be guaranteed and will be dependent on the outcomes and agreements made at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development which will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 13 to 16 July 2015. She added that it must be emphasized that the international community will no longer be providing ODA in the traditional way, and countries will now have to find alternative ways to mobilize resources. She posited that middle income countries will be asked to unlock domestic investment and attract FDI. The United Nations has a responsibility to provide coordinated policy assistance, which is a fundamental resource for countries to be owners of their own sustainable goals.

35. The representative of CARICOM advised that it was necessary for the region to have a “good grip” on data regarding the distribution of ODA and also emphasized the importance of domestic and regional structures for the use of ODA. He also added the need for a clear strategic plan on the use of ODA.

36. The representative of UN-WOMEN enquired about facilitation of the participation of Caribbean civil society at the Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in July, either directly or on the margins of the conference. The Director of ECLAC responded that since this will be a United Nations conference, it is expected that there will be opportunities for a broad range of participation. She indicated that ECLAC would confirm whether there are resources available to facilitate the participation of Caribbean civil society at the conference in July.

8. Conclusion

37. The Director of ECLAC expressed the view that one of the best ways for the Caribbean to influence the SDG process was through the identification of goals and targets in a way that ensures the appropriate capture of all elements of the Caribbean reality and concerns. She also emphasized the importance of the shaping of indicators and proper monitoring of the implementation of goals and targets.

38. The Director acknowledged the work being done by other agencies in preparation for the ultimate adoption of the SDGs, with specific reference to the CARICOM Secretariat. She indicated that ECLAC would be working on putting together a consolidated and coherent platform of assimilated goals and targets for Caribbean SIDS, to present to the international community. The most critical of these are to be identified, which would also show a high level of political investment and support for their advancement.

39. The Director issued an invitation to the partner organisations present to join ECLAC and CARICOM in the formation of a working group to develop indicators for the SDGs and financing for development processes. The proposed objective of this collaboration would be a document focused on strategic priorities to guide the next phase of the process. She also reiterated that the indicators chosen must be balanced by the availability and accessibility of data.

40. The representative of CPDC informed the meeting that her organization had been part of the process to select speakers for the post-2015 and financing for development General Assembly discussions. She said that the involvement of a variety of partners in the process provided a comparative advantage and encouraged a regional approach towards data collection efforts and capacity building. She also encouraged partners to focus on capacity building for focal points involved in the process.

9. Closing of meeting

41. The Social Affairs Officer of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean thanked all the participants for attending the meeting and giving very useful comments for the finalization of the study. She also thanked the Director and colleagues of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean for their assistance in support of the meeting.

Annex I**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Garfield Barnwell, Director, Sustainable Development, Caribbean Community (CARICOM).
E-mail: garfield.barnwell@caricom.org

Boubaker Ben-Belhassen, Director of Trade and Markets Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Headquarters. E-mail: Boubaker.BenBelhassen@fao.org

Tonni Brodber, Deputy Representative, UN-Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).
E-mail: tonni.ann.brodber@unwomen.org

Giovanni di Cola, Director, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, International Labour Organization (ILO). E-mail: dicola@ilo.org

Lystra Fletcher-Paul, Trinidad and Tobago Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). E-mail: lystra.fletcherpaul@fao.org

Kemberley Gittens, Senior Projects Officer, Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC).
E-mail: seniorprojectsofficer.cpdcc@caribsurf.com

Ingrid Jacobs, Special Fund Director, Association of Caribbean States (ACS).
E-mail: ijacobs@acs-aec.org

Keisha Livermore, Head of Office, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Jamaica.
E-mail: klivermore@iom.int

George Nicholson, Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction, Association of Caribbean States (ACS). E-mail: gnicholson@acs-aec.org

Sandra Paredez, Technical Advisor Census/Data, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
Email: paredez@unfpa.org

Anna Rappazzo, Coordinator of Post-2015 Task Team, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Headquarters. E-mail: Anna.Rappazzo@fao.org

Ransford Smith, Consultant, E-mail: ransford.smith@yahoo.com

Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, Trinidad and Tobago Representative, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). E-mail: gandiber@trt.paho.org

Mc Donald Thomas, Operations Officer, Social Analyst, Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).
E-mail: Thomasm@caribank.org

Dagmar Walter, Deputy Director, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, International Labour Organization (ILO). E-mail: walter@ilo.org

**Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional headquarters for the Caribbean**

Diane Quarless, Director. E-mail: diane.quarless@eclac.org

Abdullahi Abdulkadri, Statistician, Social Development and Statistics Unit, E-mail: abdullahi.abdulkadri@eclac.org

Sheila Stuart, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development and Statistics Unit. E-mail: sheila.stuart@eclac.org

Willard Phillips, Economic Affairs Officer, Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit. E-mail: willard.phillips@eclac.org