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**INSTITUTIONAL REPORT OF THE  
ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN  
ON THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND  
DEVELOPING STATES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
MAURITIUS STRATEGY**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents a review of the support provided by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean to small island developing States in the Caribbean for the further implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This report forms part of the MSI+5 Review and addresses structural support through the establishment of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism and the Technical Advisory Committee, and the applied research conducted by ECLAC which is intended to lead to policy implementation.



## Background

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 63/213 (February 2009) “Follow-up to and Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,” reaffirmed General Assembly decision 62/191 to “review progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.” Resolution 63/213 stressed “that the review should provide the international community with an opportunity to conduct an assessment of the progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI) and agree on what needs to be done to further address the vulnerabilities of SIDS”.

In this regard, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean was invited by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) to produce a comprehensive report, highlighting activities undertaken by ECLAC in support of small island developing States (SIDS) in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. This report, therefore, presents a preliminary review of the support provided by ECLAC to Caribbean SIDS in the further implementation of MSI.

The support provided for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy is defined in the mission statement of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. In June of 2005, staff of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters met in retreat and developed a mission statement which reiterated the commitment of the Commission to Caribbean SIDS through the “provision of sound policy advice and technical assistance ...focused on growth with equity and (with a) recognition of the region’s vulnerability.”<sup>1</sup> The mission statement reiterates the central role of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and MSI. This role and mandate is derived from, but not limited to, the following paragraphs:

- Paragraph 129 of the BPoA, on the importance of regional/subregional cooperation
- Paragraph 134 of the BPoA on the role of the relevant regional commissions of the United Nations in supporting regional activities to coordinate the implementation of conference outcomes (in providing resources, for example)
- Paragraph 101 of the Mauritius Strategy, calling on the United Nations Secretary General to mobilize/coordinate United Nations agencies within their respective mandates.

Additionally, on the issue of coordination, the Organization was requested to pay particular attention to issues of unnecessary duplication of efforts and expenditures, the exploitation of synergies, and facilitation of global, regional or interregional conferences. This institutional report focuses on the actions and activities undertaken from January 2005 to December 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> See ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean mission statement (2005).

It is important to note that, in October 2005 at the *Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy*, the Deputy Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat acknowledged the relatively weak level of implementation of the BPoA, and the need to develop an innovative and uniquely Caribbean methodology for implementation of MSI. The meeting also considered a number of integrated approaches and, more specifically, possible linkages and synergies among sectors using the themes of climate change and energy, among others, to advance the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The discussions pointed to the necessity, at the highest level, for consideration of sustainable development to move beyond a strictly environmental focus. This was a significant recognition as a number of countries had not yet appointed national mechanisms for the implementation of the MSI. National mechanisms, where in place for the promotion of sustainable development, dealt mainly with environmental matters. Since the scope of MSI was deemed to encompass more than environmental issues, its implementation called for deeper understanding and renewed efforts at the development of concrete action and institutional mechanisms.

During the period under review, work had already begun in the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean on development of a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for SIDS. Action on the development of an SVI began in 2002, through a project for the “Development of the Social Statistical Databases and a methodological approach for a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)” funded by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This project addressed the need for greater availability and better quality of social and statistical data and indicators to measure the vulnerability of small States.

The notion of developing an SVI stemmed from the discourse among SIDS for tools to better reflect their status and to integrate elements of ecological fragility, economic vulnerability and social vulnerability into a composite vulnerability index for SIDS. Although the project ended, the research on the development of an SVI and notions of vulnerability and resilience continue, particularly with regard to disaster risk reduction, adaptation to climate change and the sustainable development of SIDS.

Chapter XVIII of the MSI called for further action in the development of vulnerability indices and for the elaboration of a resilience index. It has been argued that work on the construction of an SVI, undertaken by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, which explored the two dimensions of vulnerability, that of susceptibility and resilience, contributed to the deepening of the operationalization of the concept of vulnerability among Caribbean SIDS (Kambon, 2009).

## I. STRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MSI

Since the adoption of the BPoA in 1994, Caribbean SIDS have increasingly extolled the importance of subregional cooperation to support its implementation. Numerous follow-up conferences and meetings highlighted the urgency with which governments viewed goals to achieve sustainable development through the BPoA and Mauritius Strategy.

In view of the many challenges faced by SIDS, mostly as a result of their very nature, it was felt that a subregional mechanism was required to allow effective action, while taking into account the existing constraints in terms of financial, human and institutional resources.

It was as early as 1995, shortly after the adoption of the BPoA for SIDS at a meeting of Caribbean experts, that the absence of a coordinating mechanism at the subregional level was highlighted as impeding the implementation process. Indeed, without a body designated to coordinate the efforts at both national and subregional levels, the BPoA implementation process could not proceed efficiently. A first attempt at creating such a mechanism was made in 1999, at the initiative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, but did not materialize. However, precisely because both the BPoA and the Mauritius Strategy contained provisions requiring that subregional institutions and agencies play a significant role in the coordinated implementation of both, this issue had to be addressed. Discussions were held in 2005, in order to consider the main issues to be tackled prior to the establishment of the subregional coordinating mechanism. It was then agreed that, based on the overlapping nature of the mandates of regional and subregional institutions as well as their sometimes competing interests, duplication of efforts and expenditures should be avoided. Such coordinating mechanism should then be aimed at finding a way to pool and combine the limited resources of SIDS to overcome existing constraints.

At the twenty-first session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) in January 2006, member Governments agreed to set up a Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the BPoA. The stated objectives and functions of the Mechanism provide for doing more, and better, towards the implementation of MSI. For that purpose, the RCM aims to promote awareness at all levels of issues and activities related to sustainable development, and assist in the mobilization of new and additional resources. It will also optimize benefits from the use of these resources for the achievement of sustainable development in the Caribbean, while ensuring that all initiatives and activities are undertaken in the best-coordinated way possible. A number of specific tasks fall under the responsibility of the RCM, such as assisting in the development, monitoring and coordination of a subregional work programme, facilitating the exchange of best practices and transfer of knowledge, and liaising with SIDS in other regions for the promotion of joint positions at international forums.

Key objectives for the establishment of the RCM included the promotion of information sharing, coordination, strengthening of institutional arrangements and effective participation of civil society organizations. Indeed, one of its main purposes is to allow countries to achieve effective coordination of various sustainable development initiatives. The RCM is also designed to assist in mobilization of additional resources and to provide assistance and support to countries at the national level, with regard to the implementation of MSI.

The RCM is engaged in the establishment of a subregional database on sustainable development activities and of cooperative agreements and partnerships among agencies. The governance structure of the RCM, which is anchored in the CDCC ministerial decision-making process, requires ministerial approval to

ensure that it obtains the highest level of recognition among stakeholders. A crucial component of the RCM structure is the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

In order to demonstrate its commitment to providing support to the SIDS in implementation of MSI, ECLAC established a post of Regional Adviser, to act as the Regional Coordinator of the RCM, based in the Port of Spain Office. The Regional Adviser was to have been supported by a secretariat, however, funding for the secretariat has not yet been realized. The Regional Adviser provides leadership and direction in the administration and execution of RCM activities and primarily coordinates disaster risk reduction initiatives for the Caribbean subregion. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, through its work programme, seeks to provide support to the diverse obligations in the MSI despite its relatively small staff complement and financial constraints.

### **A. MEETINGS OF THE TAC OF THE RCM**

Since its inception, the TAC has held two meetings. As a component of the RCM, TAC is multisectoral and multidisciplinary in nature. It provides technical advice to Caribbean SIDS and comprises 15 representatives from a number of governments, regional organizations, civil society representatives and development partners. On the occasion of its first meeting which took place in Port of Spain on 21 April 2008, the TAC highlighted the many challenges it faced as a coordinating mechanism. It stated that the awareness and understanding of MSI on the part of government officials and the level of engagement of the donor community was clearly insufficient. The heterogeneity among member countries also results in uneven capacities of countries to generate necessary and appropriate data. In addition, there is still a continued perception that the Mauritius Strategy is a framework for action within the environment sector only.

Despite these challenges, the first meeting of TAC considered an important component of its work programme, namely the CARICOM Matrix “*Towards the Implementation of the MSP*”. The latter focused on four areas, namely climate change, disaster management, freshwater resources, and trade, environment and development policy. Though the content of the activities towards implementation were considered, it was also reiterated that the primary function and purpose of the RCM was to act as a coordination body rather than as an implementing agent, and that it would only engage directly in the activities highlighted when requested and as necessary.

The second meeting of TAC, held in Port of Spain on 7 September 2009, reviewed the work programme of RCM for the period 2008-2009. The secretariat reported on the information gathering and dissemination that had been undertaken at the time, highlighting the establishment of the information platform available on the ECLAC website. A number of recommendations were made, regarding coordination by the TAC secretariat of requests for technical assistance from countries, as a means of increasing the overall efficiency of RCM. There was concern that countries would have difficulties in meeting the reporting deadlines on MSI and so the task of identifying appropriate resources was seen as key. The work programme for 2010-2011 was also approved.

### **B. RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN**

In 2006, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean carried out two studies with the aim of deepening the appreciation of Caribbean SIDS for the MSI and providing improved understanding of obstacles to its implementation.

In October 2006, the report “*Caribbean priorities in implementation of the SIDS/PoA*” (LC/CAR/L.100) was elaborated on the premise that the Mauritius Strategy did not address the full range of priorities of Caribbean SIDS, as expressed by subregional stakeholders. One of the main aspects highlighted

in this report is the extent to which SIDS in the subregion require support from the international community to be able to better implement MSI. The scarcity of their financial as well as technical resources impacted on countries' ability to address their needs. According to the findings of the report on Caribbean priorities, SIDS were concerned with energy resources, coastal and marine resources. In addition the view was expressed that natural and environmental disasters, climate change and sea level rise were among the top priorities for Caribbean SIDS.

The study noted matters still to be resolved, such as those regarding coastal and marine resources. The MSI, it was felt, did not specify the mechanism to be used for the delimitation of maritime boundaries. The report highlighted, as top priorities, the mapping of Exclusive Economic Zones and data collection to gather information towards the rehabilitation of the ecosystems. Additionally, capacity-building was recognized as necessary and greater collaboration among institutions, such as universities and tertiary level institutions, was recommended. It was also felt that such collaboration across language zones in the subregion was important.

The second study also contributed to an enhanced understanding of MSI as it focused on "*Challenges in the implementation of the MSI in the Caribbean*" (LC/CAR/L.101). Such challenges were identified on the basis of responses to a questionnaire sent to 23 CDCC member countries and 11 subregional agencies that had placed sustainable development on their agendas. Difficulty in accessing financial and technical resources was cited as one of the main deterrents to implementation of the MSI by countries and agencies that responded to the questionnaire. Furthermore, insufficient public awareness with regard to the provisions and content of the Mauritius Strategy was also considered a significant obstacle. The report provides a well-informed overview, by sector and theme, of the various existing and/or anticipated difficulties and suggests that, in the case of climate change and sea level rise, the lack of strong political will, combined with restricted access to resources and technical expertise, was delaying implementation. The absence of a synergistic approach to national plans and policies also acted against effective implementation of MSI.

## **II. SUPPORT PROVIDED ON SELECTED THEMES OF BPoA AND MSI**

### **A. NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS**

The activities undertaken by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean pertaining to natural and environmental disasters consist mainly of the conduct of disaster assessments at the request of countries affected by the onset of natural disasters, as well as the development and dissemination of training instruments in the use of damage and loss assessments, or the DALA methodology, as it is known. The methodology was developed by ECLAC with input from many development partners. The application of the DALA methodology can be used to develop recommendations for disaster risk reduction, for incorporation in the development planning frameworks of the requesting governments.

Mitigation, preparedness, early warning capacity, increased public awareness, and the inclusion of risk management as part of the national planning process are among the guidelines set up by the Mauritius Strategy in the area of natural disasters. To this extent, a number of training workshops on the ECLAC DALA methodology for the evaluation of natural disasters were held. As part of the requests for technical assistance services, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean cooperated with various countries and organizations in convening training workshops and post-disaster assessments. The Regional Adviser leads the ECLAC initiatives to strengthen national capabilities for the assessment of economic and

social impacts of natural disasters, and has carried out a number of workshops and training sessions in various countries, as follows:

- (a) February 2007: ECLAC Regional Workshop to review the existing tools and methods for use in disaster management and to develop strategic linkages for improving disaster risk in the Caribbean subregion
- (b) June and October 2008: Training workshops on the socio-economic impact of disasters using the ECLAC methodology: *A sustainable livelihood approach*, Jamaica
- (c) October 2008: Technical cooperation in a socio-economic and environmental impact assessment of damages caused by Gustav, Hannah and Ike in Haiti, and follow-up disaster impact assessment training to the Planning Institute of Jamaica
- (d) February 2008: Technical assistance to the Government of Jamaica for the development of a proposal for undertaking a “Gender impact assessment of selected natural disasters” in Jamaica

Post-disaster assessments were undertaken at the request of countries affected in the following instances:

- (a) 2005: Floods in Guyana and Hurricane Jeanne in Haiti
- (b) 2006: Floods in Suriname and Guyana
- (c) 2007: Hurricane Dean, in Belize, Dominica and Saint Lucia
- (d) 2008: Hurricanes Gustav, Hannah and Ike in Haiti – Tropical storm Hannah and Hurricane Ike in the Turks and Caicos Islands and Belize
- (e) 2009: Hurricane Paloma in the Cayman Islands

On 26 and 27 October 2009, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in collaboration with the Planning Institute of Jamaica, in Kingston, Jamaica, convened an Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Education Sector. Twenty-five experts from the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica and the United Nations system, attended the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum in which the ministries of education, academic institutions and development partner organizations from the Caribbean could discuss, inter alia, the impact of natural disasters in the Caribbean on the education sector, the workings of emergency plans and programming at the national level for the education sector, and recommendations for the strengthening of disaster risk reduction in the sector. It was the first time that experts from the subregion, drawn from the education sector, gathered to discuss that matter.

Also in 2009, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean commissioned a study which examined the cumulative impact of extreme events on Caribbean SIDS over the last two decades. The study estimated that the total effect of extreme events in the region amounted to US\$136 billion and pointed to the extraordinary vulnerability of Haiti relative to other Caribbean countries. It reinforced the notion that disaster impacts might be the manifestation of unresolved problems of development, and not only the result of extreme events created by natural forces.

## **B. FRESHWATER RESOURCES**

MSI states that access to safe drinking water, the provision of sanitation and the promotion of hygiene are the foundations of human dignity, public health and economic and social development. As such, these should be high priorities for SIDS. However, the reality is one of scarcity, pollution and monopoly of service and access. Additionally, the lack of access to water-related public services by significant sectors of the population easily illustrates the relevance and need for improved water governance.

It is recommended that, with the assistance of the international community, SIDS work towards self-reliance and capacity-building for the development and further implementation of freshwater and sanitation programmes, and the promotion of integrated water resources management.

In order to encourage a comprehensive approach to water resources management, ECLAC conducted an assessment of the capacity of the national water authorities for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) within the context of its principles and techniques, considering existing national profiles. The study outlined an overview of the water profile for three countries, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Grenada. It reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the main potable water supplier in each island, the mechanism for water allocation, watershed management, water resources/hydrological monitoring, and identified the types of water sources existing in each country. This information was assessed to determine the strategy needed for the implementation of IWRM. The study concluded that there was no specific IWRM policy, strategy and plan for the three islands. Water resources management activities were being undertaken based on a sectoral approach, coordination was absent and collaboration on water resources issues minimal.

A number of recommendations were proposed at a high-level technical meeting of Caribbean authorities responsible for water resources management. Among the recommendations were: the need for public outreach and advocacy, macroeconomic planning, methods and procedures for conflict resolution, capacity-building in legal frameworks, development of IWRM indicators, and establishment of networks among subregional institutions.

## **C. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA-LEVEL RISE**

With the objective of assessing the likely economic impacts of climate change on key sectors of Caribbean economies, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, together with the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, embarked on a “*Review of the Economics of Climate Change*”. In evaluating the actual costs of climate change and the reasons why it is beneficial to adapt and mitigate in order to reduce these costs, the project also aims at stimulating governments, regional institutions and the private sector to develop policies for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The first of four phases of the RECC started in the last trimester of 2008. The second phase started in July 2009. A meeting was held in February 2009 in Barbados to present the project to stakeholders and discuss future initiatives.

The RECC Phase 1 report (September 2009) provides an informed overview of the theoretical and practical work that has already been undertaken in a number of Caribbean countries to address the critical issue of climate change. Nine individual country reports are also included in this report. However, in view of all the issues at stake with respect to climate change, the report also highlights the areas still requiring action. Among the recommendations made is the necessity to link initiatives aimed at climate change adaptation and mitigation to policies and strategies in development planning, poverty reduction, and disaster risk reduction. Addressing climate change should be integral to the development needs of Caribbean SIDS.

A report on “Climate Change: Selected Economic Dimensions” (June 2009) undertook a comprehensive analysis of the main economic issues of climate change. Apart from its theoretical

considerations, the report highlighted a number of potential economic tools and options to address climate change in the Caribbean, as well as key areas in which the United Nations system could play a critical role.

Among the various challenges to be addressed were ways to combat anticipated, as well as already noticeable, effects of climate change. To that effect, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, convened a Meeting on Biotechnology Development and Climate Change in the Caribbean. The meeting followed the publication by ECLAC of a study on the development of biotechnology in the Caribbean which focused on the use of fermentation and enzyme technologies, tissue culture and recombinant DNA technology and is more commonly applied to plant varieties rather than animal species.

Having reiterated the threats of climate change, especially for vulnerable SIDS of the Caribbean subregion, examples were given in the analysis of the possible use of genetic engineering to transform species that could better adapt to climate change. It was proposed, among other things, that tertiary institutions should integrate their research agendas to improve research and development in biotechnology, and that time, as well as financial resources, should be duly allocated to derive results from science that will serve to inform policy.

#### **D. COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES**

International recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development was deemed to be of considerable importance to Caribbean member States. Chief among a number of reasons was the fact that the Caribbean Sea marine ecosystem was the second largest in the world, covering an area of approximately 2,648,000 square kilometres and is included among the large marginal seas and bays on the western side of the Atlantic Ocean. The impacts of natural disasters, combined with the unsustainable use of the resources threaten this ecosystem, challenging the sustainability of its development and compromising livelihoods for millions of inhabitants, who derive economic, cultural, climatic, and environmental benefits from this marine ecosystem.

Following the adoption of four United Nations General Assembly resolutions promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development, it was decided that ECLAC would assume the lead role in the execution and coordination of the technical work to be undertaken in the elaboration of a work programme and in reporting on progress in implementation. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean held consultations towards the elaboration of a work programme for the Caribbean Sea Commission. For that purpose, a brainstorming session was convened in March 2007, to obtain suggestions and opinions on the modality of stakeholder consultations.

The work programme of the Caribbean Sea Commission, which was prepared in consultation with member States, addresses governance, technical and scientific research and data collection as well as project management. It seeks to advise participating member States on adopting measures towards conservation of the Caribbean Sea. Public awareness of the value and fragility of the ecosystem, the need to strengthen capacity to cooperate towards sustainable management of the Sea, in particular through the exercise of political will by member States, were also taken into consideration, in the preparation of the work programme.

## **E. ENERGY RESOURCES: BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES**

In regard to energy resources and biodiversity, the following activities were undertaken:

- (a) A technical mission was undertaken in July 2009 to Guyana, to provide technical support for conducting a financial feasibility study into the use of molasses for the production of bio-ethanol
- (b) A proposal was made by ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean for the development of ethanol as an alternative source of energy. Support was provided to the Government of Guyana for the implementation of this project
- (c) The Government of Montserrat received advice on the potential for developing geothermal energy, as well as for the elaboration of a national energy policy and governance mechanism
- (d) A Meeting on Energy Efficiency in the Caribbean was convened by ECLAC on 29 April 2009. A questionnaire was sent to Member countries, for information related to their current situation and future prospects and initiatives with respect to energy efficiency. The overall objective was to inform energy efficiency measures and policies based on the information provided. The meeting was convened to analyze the results of the survey which considered a limited number of countries, namely Barbados, Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago;
- (e) The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean convened a seminar on formulating public policies for the sustainable use of biofuels. The office also undertook a review of ethanol production in Brazil, and the potential for this in Jamaica and Guyana

## **F. TRADE POLICY**

Chapter XIII of the MSI acknowledges the difficulties which small island developing States face, as a result of their smallness, when seeking to integrate into the global economy and market. Through its research, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean summarized the concerns of Caribbean SIDS in the 2006 ECLAC publication 'Caribbean Priorities in Implementation of the Small Islands Developing States Programme of Action' (LC/CAR/L.100) which stated that the emergence of a global economy and its resulting regional and global trading blocs caused concern about the increased marginalization of SIDS in global economic, financial and trading systems. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters highlighted the need for more effective representation of SIDS in international forums, in order to make the case for special and differential treatment.

Studies on trade issues carried out in the 2006-2007 biennium, such as 'The Treatment of Asymmetries: Review of the Issues' (document LC/CAR/L.110) recognized the vulnerabilities associated with SIDS in regional and international trade agreements. The paper recommended that the deepening of asymmetry associated with trade liberalization required mitigation and, in line with the Mauritius Strategy, cited that other regional trade agreements that improved market access measures and financial support for SIDS and less developed countries served this end.

In the subsequent biennium, five studies examining the implications of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in CARIFORUM (CARICOM and the Dominican Republic) were completed in 2008, which included an assessment in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, of its gender impacts (document LC/CAR/R.106). Other topics examined were the implications of the EPA for

trade, regional integration, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional development. These issues were discussed at an Expert Meeting on the CARIFORUM-European Union EPA in February 2009, which was held in Port of Spain (document LC/CAR/L.196/Rev. 1).

A review of the CARIFORUM-European Union EPA in development cooperation and WTO compatibility (document LC/CAR/L.177) examined development cooperation measures in the agreement, the form and type of technical assistance to support institutional and policy reform, the appropriateness of instruments and effectiveness of aid disbursements, all of which closely echoed issues raised in the Mauritius Strategy as pertaining to SIDS. In addition, the questions of WTO compatibility, and of whether the EPA builds on the DOHA development agenda were analyzed, together with an assessment of the impacts of the changes on the sugar, banana and rice industries in selected CARICOM countries. WTO compatibility issues were felt to be relatively minor as the examination process of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements would give CARIFORUM enough time to prove compatibility.

The Doha talks since the Hong Kong round on special and differential treatment, on the other hand, have not made the desired progress. The CDCC secretariat has supported the Caribbean SIDS position on special and differential treatment with a study in 2004, "Meeting the Challenges of the FTAA: Trade trends, Export Specialisation Patterns and Regional Integration in the Caribbean" (document LC/CAR/L.4). At the twentieth session of the CDCC, the issue of special and differential treatment was again discussed and the report (document LC/CAR/L.15) noted that it "was regarded as a necessary component of any free trade agreement involving smaller economies".

## **G. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING**

Through the MSI, SIDS recognized the benefits which might be afforded to them through the new developments in ICT, both in regard to overcoming limitations caused by isolation and remoteness, and in building resilience. However, being able to harness the benefits of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for knowledge management, information and decision-making has been a difficult challenge for Caribbean SIDS, a situation which they sought to address as they recognized that ICT could become a major driver of economic and social transformation. ECLAC, through its work in the area of knowledge management and ICTs has been supporting the efforts of Caribbean SIDS through applied research and the creation of opportunities for discussion and information sharing.

In 2005, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean embarked on a study to collect data and information on the characteristics of Information Technology Industry (ITI) in the region. More than the numbers of ITIs, the study also aimed at identifying who was responsible for regulating the telecommunications industry. One of its main findings highlighted the heterogeneity of the industry in the region and the considerable variations among member States.

The 2005 *ICT in the Caribbean Stocktaking Report* responded to the need to assess government responsiveness and gather information on ICT policies, their plan for the development of ICT and e-government initiatives. Although there was common agreement that the application of ICTs by governments could increase affordable access and greater efficiency in the production and delivery of government services, the study concluded that Caribbean SIDS moved at varying paces towards becoming an information society. The study found differing priorities regarding the provision of ICT services depending on the country's infrastructure level.

In September 2006, ECLAC brought together Caribbean ICT policymakers to better assess the extent to which ICT contributed to human development in the region despite the difficulty in quantifying this

contribution. Caribbean SIDS recognised that because the return on investments, based on the amount of time and resources allocated to ICT development, had fallen below expectations, there was an even greater need to identify progress made. The main objective of the seminar was, therefore, to mainstream the issue of ICT strategic planning into national development planning. Additionally, the establishment of a regional framework for ICT planning and financing was also discussed. The expectation was that Caribbean SIDS could define a common approach to achieve information society status.

The results of the stocktaking exercise suggested, that in terms of strategic planning, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago were classified as fully mature. On the other hand, most other countries from among Caribbean SIDS, such as Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia, were classified as at the formative or progressive stage of the information society. Overall, the main challenges identified were the lack of information-sharing between ministries and agencies, a certain resistance to change, as well as inadequate physical infrastructure. Furthermore, there was also a lack of human and financial resources to propel the development of an information society.

As part of its work programme for 2008-2009, in the area of Knowledge and Information Management, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean convened an expert group meeting on *Knowledge Management for Development: Towards a practical approach for the Caribbean (LC/CAR/L.239)*. Increased awareness of knowledge management as a tool for development was the main purpose of that meeting.

In spite of the obstacles that were identified, such as the lack of synergies among Caribbean countries in sharing experiences and “know-how”, the inefficient documentation of experiences and the dissemination of knowledge-sharing practices, as well as inadequate support from stakeholders, among others, a number of strategies were identified as beneficial by the meeting. These were: the fostering of an enabling environment for learning through the allocation of a percentage of GDP to knowledge management, the creation of an innovation/technology institute to support the promotion of knowledge management, and the promotion of regional integration and coordination to benefit from each country’s strengths and capabilities. These strategies could contribute to economic growth and have all been identified as having the potential to contribute to an effective use of knowledge management for development.

## **H. TOURISM**

Many Caribbean countries derive a significant part of their revenues from the tourism industry and the agricultural sector. Therefore, in its studies, ECLAC has recommended that both these sectors must be linked, in order to try and improve the competitiveness of the tourism sector, on the one hand, and the livelihoods of communities and rural areas, on the other (LC/CAR/L.76). Indeed, it is argued that linking the two should lead to increasing competitiveness for both sectors, and should increase benefits from tourism which would redound to the poorer segments of the local populations.

ECLAC studies have noted that Caribbean SIDS have witnessed the successes of a few countries at positioning themselves in ecotourism and special interest tourism at a world level such as Trinidad and Tobago in business tourism and eco-tourism, and Saint Lucia in the wedding and honeymoon sectors. The success of the region, as a whole, at hosting major events, especially festivals and carnivals as part of developing heritage and culture tourism, was also noted.

The MSI (paragraph 47) called on SIDS to find effective ways and means “to develop and implement sustainable tourism”. In supporting countries’ efforts to achieve this outcome, ECLAC sought to deepen understanding of other aspects of the tourism product. In 2005, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Trinidad and

Tobago, conducted a study on the yachting industry in Tobago. The study highlighted that the industry needed to direct its development towards sound policies and adequate infrastructure. It was noted that the collection of data regarding the presence of yachts in Tobago, at any point in time, was of primary importance. Also, specific incentives would need to be created to target much needed private sector investment. The study also suggested that an increase in the number of marinas would have to occur for the clustering of yacht-based activity. The study recommended that yachting and its related activities constituted a tourism product that could be further developed and better marketed. For that purpose, a regional body comparable to the Caribbean Hotels Association should be established, as well as inter-island collaboration increased, all of which could be presented in a regional strategy that would consider the commonalities shared among most Caribbean countries.

The MSI addresses the possible ways for SIDS to achieve sustainable human development. For the countries of the Caribbean, this objective cannot be separated from the development of the tourism industry, and the ways to improve the industry's competitiveness, thus increasing revenues that are derived from it.

The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in continuing its applied research on the sector, undertook a study on tourism competitiveness and upgrading strategies in the Caribbean (2009). The study concluded that over the past decades, tourism has been contributing significantly to Caribbean economies. Various strategies, such as upgrading in terms of niche marketing and quality development, have been used successfully. Countries, such as Jamaica and Barbados, have proven to be internationally competitive over the years, but overall, the Caribbean as a region has succeeded in enhancing its tourism competitiveness to move upward the tourism life cycle by resorting to mass-tourism strategies until the 1990s and upgrading thereafter. The study concluded that there was room for more growth.

An earlier study on tourism in the Caribbean and the role of public private partnership (document LC/CAR/L.151) and public policy suggested that public private partnership could be an effective policy instrument for implementing tourism strategies aimed at enhancing tourism competitiveness throughout the various stages of the tourism life-cycle.

### **III. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES WITH A FOCUS ON GENDER EQUITY**

The States participating in the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (1994) affirmed that "full attention should be given to gender equity and to the important role and contribution of women, as well as to the needs of women and other major groups, including children, youth and indigenous people".

The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in seeking to support governments in the operationalization of gender equity as a cross cutting issue of MSI conducted a study in 2005 on *Reproductive Health and Rights* which considered gender equality and the HIV-AIDS pandemic. With the second highest adult HIV prevalence rate in the world, the Caribbean subregion was also experiencing rising infection rates among women. The annual incidence of HIV infection among Caribbean females ranges from three to six times that among males. It was noted in the study that gender inequalities made females more susceptible to HIV infection.

The findings of the report also highlighted the extent to which gender relations affected women's ability to exercise their rights. The study suggested that poverty was an exacerbating factor as women in dependent economic situations were less likely to terminate a relationship which put them at risk. The study

also warned of the dangers of “transactional sex” which resulted in women entering into a pattern of serial relationships to secure financial support for their children.

In a further exploration of the links between gender and poverty, a study was undertaken in 2006 on *Nutrition, Gender and Poverty in the Caribbean* which highlighted the extent to which women were amongst the poorest population groups in the Caribbean, in addition to bearing the burden of being single heads of households. The study suggested that policymakers examine women’s unequal access to resources, be it in the private sphere of the household or in the public sphere, to make the direct link with the gendered dimension of poverty. The resultant recommendation of the study was that women’s empowerment should be a key component of development policies, and be seen as an approach to address gender inequalities.

In 2007, in accordance with its multi-year programme of work to support gender mainstreaming policies, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean produced a *Report of the Technical Meeting on the Status of Gender Indicators in the Caribbean*. The purpose of the meeting was to arrive at a situational analysis of men and women in the region, thus contributing to the body of information used in decision-making.

The meeting strengthened capacity within Caribbean SIDS in the production, collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data. Participants identified numerous obstacles to achieving that task, key among them were the lack of manpower and resources and the lack of training in the use of gender statistics. The inadequacy of data collection instruments was also highlighted, as well as the insufficient dissemination of findings.

In an attempt to address the inadequacy of data to support gender analysis, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean joined with its Headquarters and other partners in the establishment of a Gender Equality Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Observatory is meant to be used as a regional tool to help strengthen national gender machineries in achieving their national mandates of full gender equality. The methodology of the Observatory consists in developing strategic gender indicators to assist with policymaking and providing training in their use. The Observatory is also meant to be a medium for promoting and disseminating information on good practices.

#### **IV. THE WAY FORWARD**

ECLAC expects, in the 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 bienniums, to increase its focus on the sustainable development of Caribbean SIDS. This would be achieved through the scaling-up of applied research in the areas of sustainable tourism, assessing the use and impact of science and technology, analyzing the impact of climate change impact in the Caribbean, and measures to reduce vulnerability, including disaster risk reduction.

Efforts to strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes among Caribbean SIDS will also be reinforced through increased training in evidence-based policy formulation, and support for the collection and analysis of economic and social data, fundamental in the understanding of the development challenges facing Caribbean SIDS. Collaborative initiatives will be strengthened with intergovernmental organizations such as CARICOM, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Association of Caribbean States as well as development partners such as the Caribbean Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility and other regional entities.

ECLAC will also continue to provide support to the governance mechanism of the RCM and TAC and for policymakers of Caribbean SIDS to meet, exchange best practices and formulate strategic actions in furtherance of MSI. In this regard, ECLAC proposes to introduce an annual development policy round-table, in addition to continuing and further enhancing publication of its Caribbean Development Report.

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