



**Towards an Effective Sustainable Development Program for the Caribbean
Organization of American States**

GSB 756

March 31, 2009

2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Background Note

Introduction

OAS Member States, through the Summit of the Americas process, have committed to address the development needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the hemisphere. More specifically, in the Declaration of Santa Cruz + 10, Member States acknowledged that the “vulnerability of Small Island Developing States in the Hemisphere continues to be a major challenge to their sustainable development...” Thus, they vowed to “give special attention to the Small Island States, whose environmental vulnerability, especially with regard to natural disasters, is greater owing to their geographic situation, their size, and the scale of their economies...” Further, the Declaration of Kingstown on the Security of Small Island States indicates that, *inter alia*, Small Island States possess environmental and geographic characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable and susceptible to security risks, threats, concerns and other challenges of a multidimensional and transnational nature.

The Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS) currently implemented by the OAS-Department of Sustainable Development (OAS-DSD) takes these considerations into account within the strategic priority action areas which form the current institutional focus of the Department. Thus, the OAS-DSD is mandated to conduct priority activities in the following areas: climate change and energy, environmental law, policy and good governance, biodiversity, natural hazard risk reduction, and water resource management.

Considering the importance of securing the development integrity of the Caribbean region, which comprises mostly of SIDS, the OAS-DSD, through its various divisions, has dedicated itself to securing resources and implementing projects and initiatives in the established priority areas, for the benefit of the Caribbean region. Notwithstanding the relevance of the issues addressed by the Department, recently, resource mobilization has proven challenging, partly due to reduced donor support and more intense competition for available resources. Hence, the OAS-DSD has convened a dialogue with Caribbean Ambassadors to discuss current initiatives and possible next steps towards achieving an effective sustainable development program for the Caribbean.

The following summary illustrates some of the ongoing activities being executed by the DSD in the Caribbean region:



Energy and Climate Change Division

The Energy and Climate Change Division supports the development and use of sustainable energy technologies and services within OAS Member States. The Division's mission is to enable Member States implement policies, laws, strategies, and actions for the advancement of energy for sustainable development. This support is consistent with its multiple mandates in the energy arena, including the Declaration of Panama: Energy for Sustainable Development. Thus, the Division maintains a comprehensive umbrella program to support sustainable energy through its hemispheric program - the Sustainable Energy Partnership for the Americas (SEPA).

Much of the Division's work is focused on the Caribbean region. The following are some of the initiatives executed by the Division:

1. Caribbean Sustainable Energy Program (CSEP) - Increasing the Sustainability of the Energy Sector in the Caribbean through Improved Governance and Management

SIDS in the Caribbean face unique challenges associated with the generation and use of energy as they are dependent, almost exclusively, on imported petroleum for their energy, including both electricity generation and transportation. This fact renders them particularly vulnerable to not only the volatility of international oil prices which results in a tremendous drain on capital for imports, but also the environmental impacts associated with fossil fuel consumption such as sea level rise and the increased strength and frequency of hurricanes.

Thus, the CSEP, a three year program launched in November 2008, facilitated through financing from the European Union Energy Initiative (EUEI), supports national efforts to accelerate the transition toward cleaner, more sustainable energy sources. More specifically, CSEP addresses market conditions for the development and use of renewable energy and energy efficiency systems by mitigating the barriers to their use. Among the proposed actions are: the adoption of appropriate energy policies and regulations that facilitate sustainable energy development; building the technical, legal, financial, and management capabilities of public officials, electric utility personnel, and large consumers within each project country; ensuring the existence of capable institutions that will participate in the energy sector, including through the establishment of national sustainable energy offices in the appropriate energy or other relevant ministries, and the creation of a regional sustainable energy project office; and identifying commercially-viable, sustainable energy projects and ensuring that the technical assistance critical for their implementation is available.

The project countries include Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia. Energy consumers of the



participating countries including residents and other major electricity consumers from the commercial, tourism, and agricultural sectors, are the expected primary beneficiaries.

Finally under this initiative, the Division conducted the following activities:

- Key government officials and other energy stakeholders gathered in Dominica from March 23-25, 2009, to discuss priorities, opportunities and proposed implementation actions, to advance the formulation of the National Energy Policy (NEP) and the Sustainable Energy Plan (SEP);
- On October 9, 2008, the CSEP program was officially launched in Saint Lucia. There, representatives from the participating countries and implementing partners met to outline the program's expectations and opportunities for engagement throughout the region; and
- A pre-launch meeting of the CSEP was conducted on July 24, 2008, during the *Caribbean Regional Sustainable Energy High Level Seminar*, in the Bahamas. The objective of this meeting was to inform ministers and other high level government officials about the general terms and goals of the CSEP program.

2. Global Sustainable Energy Islands Initiative (GSEII)

The GSEII, funded by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), is a consortium of international NGOs and multi-lateral institutions including the OAS-DSD, that has been organized to support the interests of all Small Island States and potential donors, by bringing renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, models, and concepts together in a sustainable plan for small island nations. The GSEII seeks to showcase national efforts that significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The beneficiary project countries include Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia. Energy consumers in the participating countries including residents and other major electricity consumers from the commercial, tourism, and agricultural sectors, are the expected primary beneficiaries. Thus far, the Division has been providing continued technical support to the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis in their efforts to develop sustainable energy, including wind, bio and geothermal energy.

3. US-Brazil Biofuels Bilateral Agreement

In March 2007 Brazil and the United States signed a bilateral biofuels agreement that established a collaborative partnership to advance the development and use of biofuels in the Americas. The General Secretariat of the Organization of the American States (GS/OAS) was included in this partnership as a collaborating institution and main implementer of sustainable bio-energy development projects/programs under agreement. The activities to be implemented by the GS/OAS include technical assistance and feasibility studies, support for policy and regulatory reform, and identifying opportunities for human and institutional capacity building and outreach.



Further, the Parties to the Agreement agreed to focus on four countries, which include Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The Division has been assisting Saint Kitts and Nevis in exploring alternatives and conducting of feasibility studies to determine the possibility of sustainable bio-energy development and use. Regarding Haiti, a revised program design (incorporating earlier input) was prepared by the OAS and the IADB. The primary objectives of this program include: defining and developing a strategy for the implementation of a National Policy for Bioenergy, particularly in terms of technical specifications as defined by international standards, in order to facilitate the creation of a competitive bioenergy industry; and establishing a regulatory framework that promotes investments in this sector. The program's plan is currently being reviewed by the Government of Haiti and activities will be launched upon approval.

4. Grenada Caribbean Solar Finance Program

Grenada faces several challenges associated with the generation and use of energy. Given that it is not an oil producer, it relies exclusively on the combustion of diesel fuel for electricity generation. Middle and low income households utilize electric hot water heating systems of 3 to 6 kW to heat their water for one hour or more per day. Given the high rates paid per kWh on the island, heating water with electricity is a very costly practice. However, solar hot water systems offer a less costly solution to supply this important, basic need.

Thus, the Program, funded by UNIDO and in partnership with the Grenada Credit Union League and the Trust for the Americas, expects to increase access to solar hot water systems for low to middle income segments of the Grenadian population.

The OAS-DSD and the Trust for the Americas have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the project, and at the official Program launch, to be held in Grenada in April 2009, the Trust for the Americas and the Grenada Credit Union League will also sign a MOU. Finally, a two day Solar Hot Water Heater training program is scheduled for May 2009.

5. Belize Cellulosic Ethanol Market Potential Assessment

The Belize Cellulosic Ethanol Market Potential Assessment is funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). It aims to assess the potential for the early introduction of pre-commercial scale cellulosic ethanol plants using residues from agriculture, forestry and municipal waste present in Belize. The Division, on March 5, 2009, conducted a multi stakeholder meeting with all the key energy stakeholders in Belize to share the findings and recommendations of the *Cellulosic Ethanol Market Potential Assessment* executed by the division. Further, the OAS-DSD and the Government of Belize are exploring opportunities for the Division to



provide technical assistance in developing a comprehensive national energy policy for Belize.

Environmental Law, Policy and Good Governance Division

The mission of the Environmental Law, Policy and Good Governance Division is to contribute to good environmental governance, by supporting the development and strengthening of environmental laws, policies and institutions, as the foundation for sustainable development in the region. More specifically, its objectives are: enhancing the effectiveness of environmental laws, policies and institutions in the region; improving the capacity of lawmakers and civil society in the different areas of environmental law and enforcement, including the negotiation and implementation of agreements; and promoting mechanisms that advance the incorporation of sustainable development concerns into decision-making strengthened in Member States. These objectives are being pursued through the execution of several projects and initiatives in the Caribbean including:

1. Caribbean Emergency Legislation Project (CELP)

Current legal and institutional frameworks in the Caribbean limit the ability of governments to respond to natural disasters. These nations lack relevant state of emergency legislation and an institutional framework capable of mobilizing executive powers in the aftermath of a disaster. Thus the CELP aims to build legislative capacity to enhance legal and institutional frameworks for state of emergency and budget appropriation in eleven CARICOM countries and the Dominican Republic; and make recommendations on how to improve legislative channels and administrative procedures during, and immediately after, the occurrence of a natural disaster.

Pursuant to these objectives, the project will assess current legal-institutional frameworks in the Caribbean applicable under a state of emergency, review global best practices, and promote dialogue with national and regional stakeholders, in order to ascertain areas for improvement and make recommendations that are best suited for the Caribbean region.

The OAS-DSD with the support of the World Bank, will execute the one year project in the following beneficiary countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The project's launch and first Steering Committee meeting was held on January 12, 2009 in Barbados. The role of the Committee is to provide policy advice on meeting the priorities of the project. The Committee is composed of budget, legal and natural disaster experts from various government agencies and regional institutions including the: CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, OECS



Secretariat, Offices of Disaster Preparedness, Ministries of Finance, University of the West Indies, and Caribbean Development Bank.

2. Trade and Environment in the Americas

The DSD is working to respond to trade-related capacity building needs in environmental management, through the Trade and Environment in the Americas project, executed with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The project addresses priority challenges of OAS Member States in the following areas: the sound management of chemicals; public participation and the effective enforcement of environmental laws; market-based approaches to the conservation of biological diversity; and educational capacities in the area of trade and environment.

The Caribbean has played an integral role in much of the project's capacity building activities. The region has been instrumental in hosting an OAS-DSD supported regional technical workshop on the Sound Management of Chemicals in the Caribbean; and participating in an OAS-DSD supported inter-agency consultation meeting on the sound management of chemicals in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. The OAS-DSD has also collaborated with UNEP and CARICOM in conducting a Caribbean SAICM Implementation meeting scheduled for March 2009 and has engaged Caribbean participants in a pilot training course on Trade and Environment in the Americas. The project's Steering Committee and the OAS-DSD's Environmental Law Advisory Group, include Caribbean representatives.

3. Assessing and Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change on Coastal Infrastructure in Jamaica (Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Project)

More than 80% of the total population in most countries of the region is concentrated on the coast. Consequently, most of the socio-economic infrastructure (public markets, airports, tourism amenities, roads, hospitals, government offices and schools) are also located in this area, thereby significantly increasing the vulnerability of the region to the adverse effects of climate-related hazards. These vulnerability risks, while not accurately described and quantified today, are nevertheless expected to increase, when value estimates of long term climate change parameters are factored in the analysis, where among other changes, an average yearly sea level rise of 5 mm is to be expected.

Using the coastal zone of Kingston, Jamaica as a pilot, this project, funded by CIDA and executed by the OAS-DSD, will assess the vulnerability risks and macro-economic impacts associated with the adverse impacts of climate change on the integrity of social and economic infrastructures, such as businesses, hospitals, schools, shelters, and storm barriers; identify engineering and other solutions for strengthening the resilience of infrastructure determined to be at highest risk; and strengthen the technical capacities of



the building professionals (physical planners and professional engineers) in conducting effective vulnerability risk analyses.

4. Sustainable Development in the Caribbean: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities.

While there is a plethora of literature on sustainable development at the global level, very few address the subject from the perspective of the SIDS in the Caribbean region. Thus the OAS-DSD is finalizing the preparation of a publication on Sustainable Development in the Caribbean. The publication is a comprehensive collection of technical papers, reports and speeches on specific sustainable development themes: climate change, sustainable tourism, sustainable land management, integrated natural hazard management, integrated water resources management biodiversity management, and coastal/marine resources management. Each theme addresses the issues, challenges and opportunities facing SIDS in the Caribbean. Technical papers written by staff of the OAS-DSD and regional institutions form the core of the publication, as they draw on the outcomes and lessons learnt from the implementation of sustainable development projects in the Caribbean over the past decade.

Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management Division

The Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management Division recognizes that the Caribbean is one of the most important and biologically diverse areas on the planet. Thus its main objective is to support the exchange of information critical for decision-makers and the public in conserving this rich and unique heritage. The following are some of the initiatives executed by the division:

1. ReefFix: An ICZM Coral Reef Restoration, Watershed Management and Capacity Building Demonstration Project for the Caribbean (IABIN)

ReefFix is an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Coral Reef and Mangrove Restoration and Watershed Management Demonstration program that works with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to restore and effectively manage coastal resources. Its objectives include: supporting efforts to implement the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) at the national and regional level; conducting assessments designed to improve the understanding of the status and trends of coastal and marine resources; strengthening the monitoring of coastal and marine resources, including supporting the IOC Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network; supporting education and training efforts and model demonstration programs aimed at improving the management and conservation of coastal and marine resources; generating revenues that will be used to financially assist coastal and protected marine areas in becoming self-sufficient over the long-term; and collaborating and exchanging information with other coastal and marine research, education, conservation and training institutions.



Through the use and development of cost-effective techniques and economic valuation of ecosystems methodologies, ReefFix is currently being applied to the following case-study sites:

- Montego Bay Marine Park Trust, Jamaica
- Eastern National Park, Dominican Republic
- Moriah Harbour Cay National Park, The Bahamas
- Caracol's Mangrove Park, Haiti

Further, ReefFix is composed of 4 one-week workshops conducted at each case study site. Through hands-on training and demonstration, participants will learn economic valuation methodologies in order to realize the economic benefits derived from coral reefs and sustainably use those resources that are crucial to Caribbean countries.

Finally, within the ReefFix framework, the Government of Grenada has revisited the *Plan and Policy for a System of National Parks and Protected Areas* written in 1988 by the Government of Grenada and the GS/OAS. The purpose of the system plan is to protect for all time, representative natural areas of Grenadian and Caribbean significance in a system of national parks, so as to encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this natural heritage and leave it unimpaired for future generations.

Natural Hazards Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Land Use Planning Division

The goal of this Division is to support the priorities of OAS Member States in adapting to and managing the increasing risk associated with natural hazards, as well as those associated with the management of hazardous chemicals, by providing them with technical and policy recommendations related to risk management. Ultimately, the aim is to mainstream risk management into development policy and planning, across all sectors and government levels. The program guides OAS-DSD action, by taking into account: relevant OAS mandates and directives, changing priority needs of member countries, and related work underway at the international and regional levels, including through the UN System. The following are some of the initiatives executed by the division in the Caribbean region:

1. Central America Small Valleys Flood Alert and Vulnerability Reduction Program (SVP): Regional Platform Development

The SVP approach stresses the importance of community-based, Flood Early Warning Systems (F-EWS), and the need for the early involvement of all community members in vulnerability assessment, risk identification, observation and monitoring of floods, preparedness, communication through the delivery of alerts, and response. Hence, in a region where flash-floods are predominant, innovative, practical, low-tech, affordable solutions are required as they help to integrate forecast data provided by remote sensing



systems, i.e. radar and satellite earth observation systems, into on-the-ground observation and monitoring systems for timely alert and response.

The one year project, funded by the Federal Republic of Germany, of which Belize is a beneficiary, will build upon the experiences of other small valley flood alert programs, while adapting to the latest findings on climate change and climate variability trends, and capitalizing on state-of-the-art weather forecast systems. It is expected that this new phase of the SVP Program will integrate local and central systems under a community-operated system that incorporates ancestral and scientific knowledge, and locally and remotely collected data, in a single F-EWS.

2. Applying Information and Communication Technology for Disaster Mitigation

Natural hazard vulnerability reduction, preparedness and contingency planning demand good governance to coordinate efforts among a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society. Thus, this requires a wide range of information is required, including hazard and vulnerability maps, damage assessments, scientific data and knowledge of natural phenomena, such as El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomena and climate change scenarios, early warning, preparedness and contingency planning. With the advancement of information and communication technologies, a great deal of information and knowledge, including satellite and other remote sensing information, collected and produced by government agencies, private data providers and others have become available.

The project is supported by the International Development Research Center (Canada) and the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas, and Belize is one of the beneficiary countries.

3. The Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM)

The OAS Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM) was established with the support of CIDA, in response to requests from OAS Member States to enhance practical and concrete cooperation among governments, as they increase programs intended to reduce the growing human, economic and developmental threats of natural disasters. INDM provides a permanent hemispheric mechanism for strengthening practical cooperation among intergovernmental agencies and national competent agencies, by means of Good Practices Forums, in the area of disaster mitigation.

The Network includes regional institutions and designated National Operational Focal Points (NOFPs) from Caribbean OAS Member States. Currently, Jamaica's NOFP, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), is the Network's co-chair.



Integrated Water Resources Management Division.

The DSD supports OAS Member States in their efforts to improve the management, conservation, and sustainable use of water resources within the framework of social and economic growth. Activities include assisting countries in the development of policies and legal and institutional frameworks for integrated water resources management (IWRM); and strengthening the role of local communities in decision-making in water-related issues. More specifically the Division: develops and strengthens capacities for IWRM in local, national and multinational basin organizations; supports intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation; facilitates the exchange of information, experiences and training programs related to IWRM; and formulates strategic action programs and investment proposals related to IWRM. Within the Caribbean region, the Division is executing the following initiatives:

1. Strategic Utilization of the Transboundary Groundwater Resources of Hispaniola (Artibonito/Masacre).

The project seeks to sustainably manage aquifers in the intermountain and coastal regions of Hispaniola with a view to reducing: environmental degradation, excessive erosion-sedimentation resulting in land degradation, and poverty by adopting innovative, multi-purpose groundwater management approaches. The OAS-DSD is currently finalizing a Block A grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for this project which will be executed in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), within the framework of the OAS/UNESCO ISARM Americas Program.

2. Development of Integrated Water Resources Management Policies in the Americas

The project's concept is being developed in collaboration with the OAS National Focal Points for Integrated Water Resources Management, with support from the Government of Austria. The project seeks to: provide a coherent and compatible technical and legal framework for advancing the development of policies for the planning and integrated management of water resources in the region; and establish the mechanisms for furthering collaborative arrangements for joint actions among the water management institutions in the region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the OAS-DSD is committed to meeting the sustainable development needs of the Caribbean and will continue to dedicate itself to securing resources and implementing projects and initiatives in the established priority areas, for the benefit of the Caribbean region.



For further information on this note or OAS-DSD activities in the Caribbean, please contact Mr. Cletus Springer, Director of the Department of Sustainable Development (cspringer@oas.org) or Ms. Claudia de Windt, Chief of the Environmental Law, Policy and Good Governance Division and Caribbean Coordinator (cdewindt@oas.org).