

Caribbean Caucus Meeting: April 10, 2006
Chair: H.E. Ambassador Maria Valerie
Trinidad and Tobago

The meeting comprised of brief presentation from the OAS Department of Sustainable Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank [Facility] and Col. David Williams on behalf of CDERA. (Copies of those presentations and background materials are available by contacting the Department of Sustainable Development.)

Below are some highlights of interventions and points made by Missions during the meeting:

Ambassador of Grenada suggested that a better understanding is needed of the impacts of natural disasters on sustainable development, to identify incentives to use in the Caribbean to increase efforts in risk reduction, thereby increasing resilience. Given the persistently high-risks and vulnerability of the Caribbean countries, the Ambassador suggested that the Caribbean countries could be a model for cost-effective risk-reduction measures.

Ambassador of Barbados noted that public education is critical, and also noted that more work is needed in linking building codes and the role of the insurance sector. He suggested a close examination of lessons from the damage costs incurred in Bermuda (at approximately \$72 million) compared to the Cayman Islands (\$1.2 billion) from a single event, noting that the adoption of appropriate building codes were critical to this cost differential. The Ambassador suggested more work is needed to highlight the Caribbean Uniform Industry Codes.

Ambassador of Guyana noted the pivotal role that flooding plays in the costs of natural disasters, citing a ECLAC study that shows that 60 percent of the damage costs incurred in Guyana were the result of flooding. The ambassador requested additional information on scientific data related to climate change, as well as suggesting that more work is needed in examining ways to bolster the resilience of infrastructure.

Ambassador of Jamaica underscored the impact of flooding. He noted that opportunities exist to strengthen cooperation with CDERA in a number of programs, and suggested that performance indicators be clearly identified to measure the successful implantation of any OAS program related to risk reduction. The Ambassador noted the recent discussions in the meeting between Secretary Rice and the CARICOM Ministers of Foreign Affairs, suggesting that opportunities exist to expand cooperation on the policy side of natural disasters.

The Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda reiterated the importance of linking climate-related scientific data with natural disasters, and suggested that opportunities should be identified to highlight this issue with minister of foreign affairs, including at the OAS General Assembly meeting in June 2006.

The Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago, in her summation, requested that the OAS Secretariat, as well as the World Bank, IDB and CDERA, follow-up on the recommendations and advice tabled at the caucus meeting. The Ambassador underscored the importance of rainfall in the impacts of natural disasters; noted the critical role of building codes and standards; and suggested that opportunities needed to be identified in light of the work of the World Bank to engage the re-insurance sector, as well as ensure minister of foreign affairs keep natural disasters on their agenda.