

**Opening Remarks Presented at the OAS Inter American
Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) Reef Fix Workshop
Held at the Pan American Health Organization, Dayrells Road
Christ Church on April 21st 2010**

Presented by

Mr. Lionel Weekes

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage

Mr. Francis McBarnette, Representative of the Organization of
American States,

Mr Richard Huber, Department of Sustainable Development, OAS,

Mr. David Gill, Meridian Environmental Consulting Agency
(MECA),

Representatives from the

Ministry of Environment Water Resources and Drainage,

Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture,

The Ministry of Tourism,

The Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association

The Barbados Tourism Authority

The Bellairs Research Institute, McGill University

The Center for Resource Management and Environmental Studies
(CERMES, UWI)

The Barbados Marine Trust

Other specially invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to have been asked to provide a few brief opening remarks for this timely workshop.

Coral reefs provide valuable goods and services to support local and national economies, and degradation of coral reefs can lead to significant economic losses, particularly in the coastal areas of developing countries, through loss of fishing livelihoods, malnutrition due to lack of protein, loss of tourism revenues, and increased coastal erosion. Analyses carried out by the Reefs at Risk project indicate that Caribbean coral reefs provide goods and services with an annual net economic value in 2000 estimated at between US\$3.1 billion and US\$4.6 billion from fisheries, dive tourism, and shoreline protection services.

In Barbados, through the ongoing work of the Coastal Zone Management Unit, we are acutely aware of the present condition of

our reef systems, and the level of deterioration the that nearshore fringe reefs have experienced over the last 40 or so years. This has occurred principally as a result of:

1. the rapid changes in agricultural practices; and
2. the exponential rate of coastal development that occurred along the coast fringe as our island developed into one of the premier tourism destinations in the world.

The cumulative impacts are self evident and urgent corrective action is required to address their level of degradation.

As you would be aware, the concept behind Reef Fix is to develop and implement an integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) tool that can allow technical and non technical practitioners an opportunity to improve their understanding, appreciation and management of the coastal and marine resources found around the Caribbean, and in this present instance, Barbados. The Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage (in its many constructs over the years) has for a long time had a *prima fascia* role in the management of the coastal and marine environment. This has been achieved in the past, through inter-ministry action on issues of mutual concern. This integrated approach has still been able to continue to date. In its current configuration, the Ministry

has principle responsibility for the management of the natural environment and its critical resources – a responsibility that is not taken lightly by its responsible agencies.

However, over the years, the Ministry has recognized that with all the best intentions in the world, it is often difficult to impart on the decision makers the significant importance that some small sections of the environment can play in maintaining the natural balance and social well being of this island of ours. Suffice it to say that there is always the ultimate trade off between environment and development. Despite that the fact that the island has a National Sustainable Development Policy, and a Strategic Plan on which one of the core components is the environment, it is always broken down to the ultimate denomination - dollars and cents. It is therefore necessary for the environment to finally express itself, and demonstrate its worth in the same denomination – dollars and cents. Over the years, this has generally been difficult, as environmental considerations have always been branded as “intangible”. Resource economics has increasingly led the way over the last decade or so, to dispel this misconception, however it is still generally a “hard sell” on occasions to decision makers – as it is still not considered to be part of the “practiced” economic science mainstream.

Reef Fix has developed a relatively easy to use, or should I say user friendly unique approach, which grants the ultimate user the opportunity to systematically improve the economic valuation of coastal and marine resources, through the use of robust data set analyses, as well as the opportunity for use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) platform on which to display or present the results. In essence, as more data is collected over a time span, the information can be updated, and the level of accuracy can be improved. Ecological economic decision support models can now play a critical role in the development of effective ICZM for the protection and restoration of coral reefs and associated coastal ecosystems. The more accurate data there are to feed into the model the better the model's valuation projections become. I like that! It presents an opportunity for scientists to use economic principles to defend decisions for environmental management, by providing some realistic value of the contribution being made to the location, by the environment, if left in its present form or with managed modification!

This project is timely for Barbados, and the selection of the Folkestone Marine Reserve for the implementation of this pilot project is as equally important, as it is the sole legislated Marine

Protected Area on the island. In the late 1990's extensive work was performed on this location, as well as the Carlisle Bay Marine Park, to develop management incentive opportunities that would have seen these areas develop into potentially self sustaining entities. Considerable time has passed, and it is hope that through the implementation of this project, the initiatives identified previously under these studies, will be reactivated. Additionally, it is hoped that the project will be able to be replicated at other coral reef sites of significance, proposed marine parks and marine conservation areas, and in so doing demonstrate their realized contributory value to the economy of Barbados.

I hope this workshop is as successful as the agenda presents that it will be. I also hope that it can be repeated to a wider cross section of the Ministry's staff at a future date, so that a greater appreciation of the techniques and their requirements can be presented, in order that the procedures can be integrated into the mainstay activities of the Ministry.

I congratulate you on the implementation of this initiative, and look forward to reviewing the results of the project and the workshop when they become fully available.

I thank you.