



**FIRST INTERAMERICAN MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL
AUTHORITIES
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**PREPARATORY WORKSHOP
INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXPERTS' WORKSHOP:
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF
NATURAL DISASTERS:**

MANAGING RISKS OF NATURAL HAZARDS WORKSHOP

**REPORT AND POSSIBLE STEPS FORWARD OF THE EXPERTS' WORKSHOP ON
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND TOURISM**

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QUITO, ECUADOR, JUNE 18-19 2006

As part of the preparatory process to the First Interamerican Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Sustainable Development to be held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, October 5-6, 2006, the General Secretariat of the OAS, through the Department of Sustainable Development, organized and held workshops related to the themes to be discussed at the Ministerial. The *Workshop on Integrated Water Resources Management*, was organized in cooperation with the Government of Ecuador through its Ministry of Foreign Relations (Bureau of Human Rights, Social and Environmental Affairs) and Ministry of Environment, and held in Quito, Ecuador, June 19 and 20 of this year. More than 70 specialists and authorities from Central and South America and the Caribbean participated in the Workshop, who collaborated in the discussions of each of the themes and in the preparation of the conclusions and recommendations. The Workshop included a total of 16 technical presentations, each of which was followed by a period of discussion, question and answers. Following the workshop, the Secretariat prepared a preliminary report with the general recommendations, which was presented to the consideration of the participants through a virtual forum process. This document summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations reached as a result of this process.

1. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The workshop on Integrated Water Resources Management was designed to establish policy guidelines, strategies and priority actions, helping to identify major challenges and possible solutions for water resources management in the region. Specifically, the workshop was geared toward:

- (i) Identifying the major challenges that the region is facing in the field of water resources, with particular emphasis on:
 - a. Realizing the targets of the Millennium Development Goals with regard to water supply and sanitation, wastewater treatment and links to environmental health
 - b. Governance in water resources management: decentralization, meaningful public participation, institutional transparency, access to environmental information and related issues.
 - c. Climate change scenarios and their potential effects on water resources: identifying the priorities for adaptation to climate change.
- (ii) Building the bases for a regional commitment that makes it possible to forge partnerships and strategies for finding common solutions to shared problems.
- (iii) Promoting the adoption and coordination of measures that further the efforts agreed upon at the Fourth World Water Forum, 2006.

2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme 1. The Millennium Development Goals Related to Water, Sanitation and environmental health

Conclusions:

- The relationship between health and water in the hemisphere is critical. Lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation increases the risk of communicable diseases.
- Water is essential to life and is a basic resource for human development; the availability of a safe water supply and universal accessibility are key factors to include in any development strategy that the countries of the Americas adopt to overcome poverty.
- Human water consumption takes priority over other alternative uses of water. Access to water must not be a function of economic factors.
- One of the targets that the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals aspire to achieve by 2015 is to cut by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. This target can be accomplished in the relatively less developed countries and in those in which the percentage of the population served is lowest provided the international community undertakes new and broader partnership measures tailored to the local conditions and consistent with the policies adopted by each State.
- There is duplication of municipal, national and regional efforts to accomplish the MDGs, while the mechanisms to secure the economic resources needed to develop national plans geared to achieving this end are lacking, as are monitoring and evaluation strategies.
- The sectors associated with water resources are not integrated into strategic partnerships in water and sanitation programs.
- Issues related to the environment are not priorities on national agendas or in government development plans.
- The water administration systems do not properly regulate service quality and tariffs, and do not have data systems that would enable service providers, government authorities and users to compare the quality and price of the services they receive.

Recommendations

- Improve delivery of the political commitments undertaken by the Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA) Initiative and the targets of the Millennium Development Goals through better links with sub-regional organizations like MERCOSUR, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA), ECLAC, the Central American Free Trade Agreement-Dominican Republic (CAFTA) Environmental Cooperation Agreement, the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), and other intergovernmental organizations in the region.
- Institutionalize programs that combine the economic and technical resources of users, the private sector and the competent national/federal, state/provincial jurisdictional institutions.
- Support the development and implementation of potable water plans, while reinforcing sanitary surveillance systems and developing and implementing integrated solid waste management programs.
- Devise health and environmental policies that promote economic, technical and sanitary evaluation, linkage of scientific and technical research, development of sectoral and regional technological cooperation strategies, while examining sustainable financing mechanisms.
- Conduct efforts geared to recovering the costs of supplying water and sanitation services, where needed, introducing rate systems that make it possible to subsidize users who require that assistance.
- Upgrade and improve the instruments and mechanisms by which to increase knowledge of and access to information on the quality of water for human consumption, including

the development, strengthening and integration of networks for monitoring quality of water and water resources according to standards and criteria common to the countries of the region.

Theme 2. Water Resources Management and Climate Change

Conclusions

- Over 80% of the natural disasters in the countries of the Americas are triggered by events associated with the climate-water relationship, such as hurricanes, floods, debris flows and droughts. Having meteorological services in each country, upgrading existing services and commanding greater scientific and technological knowledge and know-how in predicting climate variability (short term) and climate change (medium and long term) for their relationship to hydrology, will translate into social and economic benefits and help protect the environment.
- Too little cost-benefit analysis has been done of the consequences that climate change will have for water resources and which sectors will be affected and how (agriculture, energy, and so on).
- National and regional institutions are not coordinating to establish adaptation measures and policy options for dealing with the anticipated effects of climate change on highland areas and the water basins located in those areas.

Recommendations:

- Support institution-building measures that enable countries to improve the system for observing and forecasting extreme events, including hydroclimatic prediction models.
- Encourage and promote the creation of data systems that identify the areas most prone to extreme events, by favoring the development of contingency plans, implementation of early warning systems, and construction of any infrastructure needed to minimize losses.
- Develop measures geared toward a better understanding of the causes of climate change and its effects on water resources, including the potential impacts on domestic agricultural and energy-related uses, while identifying measures that help mitigate the harmful effects caused to society and the economies of the countries, which will have local and global benefits.
- Prioritize water resources management and basin vulnerability reduction measures, factoring in their differences of scale and strengthening the early warning systems in water basins.

Theme 3. Governance in the Management of Water Resources

Conclusions

- In Latin American and Caribbean, there are many instances in which policies of decentralization in the administration of water resources has vested municipalities with management responsibilities of various kinds. Nevertheless, this decentralization has not been matched by the technical and financial resources that would enable municipalities to undertake that responsibility effectively and enlist the needed participation of social organizations and the private sector. This needs to be resolved,

municipalities need to be strengthened within a broad and robust national/federal regulatory framework.

- All three levels of government have roles in water governance, associated with effective coordination with other territorial actors. Institutional transparency must include clear procedures in which any decision or proposed change in standards and regulations is made available to the public through formal notification procedures. Transboundary water resource management processes are still not driven by a vision of water geared toward a culture of peace, based on the values of dialogue and cooperation and integration among peoples.
- The major limitations are not so much technological factors as inadequate institutional arrangements, financial shortfalls and decapitalization of human assets. The institutions charged with administering water resources do not take into account the indigenous peoples' concept of the value of water.

Recommendations:

- Encourage the development of comparable indicators to improve decision-making and help measure the relationship between good governance and water resources management, including procedures for public participation, institutional transparency, access to environmental information and others.

Governance in Transboundary Basins

- Strengthen and stake out the roles and authorities at the various levels of the institutional arrangements devised to manage transboundary water resources, including their link with aquifers and coastal areas, while recognizing that they are part of the public domain and have a social, economic and environmental value.
- Strengthen and make optimum use of the legal and institutional instruments in the region for management of transboundary water resources.
- Promote cooperation and integration for management of transboundary water resources, making use of such management mechanisms as international treaties, water basin agencies, committees or other institutional arrangements.
- Promote and consolidate regional and subregional transboundary water resources management cooperation mechanisms that make it possible to share experiences and hone skills through existing institutions and networks.
- Promote development of the science and technology that help build consensus on transboundary water resources management.
- Align the activities of institutions administering international waters with the OAS framework of action and give the OAS the role of coordinator and engine of plans, programs and projects in transboundary water resources management.

Knowledge and Information

- Take basins as single units for purposes of reporting on, planning and comprehensive management of water resources. Make progress toward the agreed upon classification and toward the reclassification of basins by a common hemispheric standard.
- Create and consolidate mechanisms and institutions for disclosing clear and timely information so that the public will know what the problems of its basin are, participate in the decision-making process and evaluate the progress made.
- Foster and facilitate a sharing of information, values, experiences and lessons learned about water and its sustainable management, among the countries of the Americas, in the

- quest to find common values and principles.
- Promote the cultivation of the actors' skills, education of the public, and research for integrated water resources management

Financing

- Create a climate that enables investment and efficient administration of the sources of financing.
- In order to secure funds, adopt criteria for cost recovery, economic incentives, payment for environmental services, and others.
- Introduce adequate tariff systems that can grant subsidies based on the public's purchasing power, thus striking a better balance in the costs of delivering water and sanitation services

Policy and Law

- Promote and support land-use planning for water basins and the creation of national and supra-national hydrological regions.
- Undertake an assessment of the principal challenges and opportunities with a view to improving management of transboundary water resources. Such management calls for and indeed demands an unprecedented degree of political cooperation among countries to transform water policies.
- Encourage the creation of an Inter-American Working Group on Water Resources under the OAS umbrella, to standardize policies on water resources on the basis of areas of common concern, identified in specific coordinated and concerted initiatives to put together an inter-American strategy for integrated water resources management.

Public Participation

- Encourage the effective participation of the State, users, indigenous communities and civil society, which is essential for governance of water resources.
- Strengthen the grassroots of water resources management by effectively engaging municipalities, as people at the local level develop, through their organizations, innovative water management practices.
- Promote access to reliable, complete and transparent information on the water basin, water sources, the main uses of the resource and the water problem, with a view to fostering constructive, responsible and prompt public participation.

Theme 4. Harmonization of policy, legal and institutional frameworks for integrated management of water resources in the region

Conclusions

- Despite numerous initiatives and efforts undertaken to modernize laws governing water management in Latin America and the Caribbean, enormous heterogeneity persists as do difficulties preventing modernization of laws.
- In most countries of the hemisphere, many laws are still on the books that were enacted at different periods in those countries' history, when views and approaches were not necessarily the same as those of today. These laws govern various aspects of the water question, with no internal consistency or cohesiveness.

- The challenge of integrated water resources management in general has not been taken on, and the techniques and policies to meet that challenge have not been decided.
- Despite the recommendations made by international events of various kinds, the unity of the water basin is not as a rule the premise for planning and managing water resources.
- Most of the countries have no national policy on integrated water resources management and the mandates of the various agencies and ministries charged with implementing water laws overlap. With such a variety of governing agencies, management and sustainable use of transboundary waters is all the more difficult.

Recommendations

- Encourage development of a hemispheric mechanism to coordinate the various national procedures for integrated water resources management, focusing on the harmonization of management tools, taking into account and complementing existing regional treaties and legal agreements, and involving various subregional institutions, including the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA), the La Plata Basin Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee (CIC), MERCOSUR, the SICA-CRRH, CARICOM-CEHI, the Secretariats of the Andean Community and similar organizations and agreements.
- Develop mechanisms for information generation and access and for horizontal cooperation.
- Adopt common principles and methods to support public participation, education, criteria related to the classification of basins, common indicators and baseline measures of water quality, and monitoring activities.
- Develop mechanisms for information generation and access and local and community participation in the various jurisdictions.
- The experiences of those countries of the hemisphere that have made the most headway in integrated water resources management must be studied; horizontal cooperation must be encouraged and positive experiences replicated.
- Harmonize and strengthen, both regionally and throughout the hemisphere, the bases for planning; hydro-meteorological and water quality measurement and reporting, as well as monitoring mechanisms, working toward common standards as part of a shared, participatory strategy.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXPERTS' WORKSHOP:
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF
NATURAL DISASTERS:**

MANAGING RISKS OF NATURAL HAZARDS WORKSHOP FOR THE
FIRST INTER-AMERICAN MEETING OF MINISTRIES AND HIGH-LEVEL AUTHORITIES ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

MAY 2006

INTRODUCTION

With the main objective of creating a series of proposals and recommendations to be considered by OAS Member States during the preparatory phase of the Inter-American Meeting of Ministries and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development, to be held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia on October 05-06, 2006, the OAS Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) helped organize a number of preparatory workshops, to provide technical and expert recommendations to address the three main themes to be addressed at the October 2006 Bolivia meeting:

- a) Integrated Water-Resource Management;
- b) Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Forestry and Tourism
- c) Managing risk of natural hazards, risk sharing and risk transfer arrangements of Natural Disasters

The Managing Risks of Natural Hazards workshop was held in Kingston, Jamaica, on April 18 and 19, 2006 with the local support from the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) of Jamaica.

At the workshop, a group of experts and specialists contributed to this report, by sharing their knowledge and expertise in order to bring forward policy guidelines, strategies, and priority actions in order to reduce natural hazards effects. The workshop preparation process emphasized the importance of governance-related initiatives, including broad representation from the public and private sectors, gender equality, and inclusion and respect of indigenous people. The discussion highlighted the following priority areas in relation to reduce the risks of natural disasters:

- (i) Identify projects, policies and cooperative partnerships that make progress in both risk mitigation and risk transfer, in particular, governance-related building codes and standards adaptation monitoring and enforcement, and land-use planning and zoning;
- (ii) Strengthen economic analysis associated with the benefits and costs of risk mitigation and risk sharing, and mainstream risk mitigation and expenditures in development and economic planning;
- (iii) Identify best practices in the adoption of risk mitigation technical standards;
- (iv) Identify specific risk sharing and risk transfer initiatives at the regional and sub-regional levels, including through insurance pooling.
- (v) Integrate a perspective of environmental protection, social equality and sustainable development with a gender perspective in natural disasters risk management.

CONTEXT OF THE MEETING

During the IV Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata (2005), in which the main focus was “Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance”, several actions were established through the Declaration and Plan of Action of Mar del Plata (2005) related to natural disasters. In the Declaration, the Member States expressed their concern over risks associated with natural disasters, and the devastating impact of such events on the lives, infrastructure and economies of the hemisphere. The Declaration calls for “action at the national, regional, and international levels to strengthen disaster management programs.”

In the Action Plan, the Member States called for the unity of efforts to “substantially improve the capacity at the national, regional and hemispheric levels for risk mitigation, to implement cost-effective and robust early warning systems, and to enhance disaster recovery and reconstruction capabilities in collaboration with relevant international and regional institutions and the coordinated development of effective public-private catastrophic risk insurances systems”.

- Initiative 1** Calls to increase capacity for disaster preparedness
- Initiative 2** Development of early warning and risk mitigation systems
- Initiative 3** Development of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction
- Initiative 4** Financial assistance as appropriate, particularly for disaster-prone countries, to reduce the impact of disasters.
- Initiative 5** The Member States also support efforts under way to explore private and public sector involvement in comprehensive approaches to catastrophic risk insurance

AGENDA

A particular focus of the Inter-American process is to identify partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels, including identifying specific priorities, gaps and opportunities in capacity-building, information exchange and technical cooperation in relation to risk reduction.

Given that the overarching focus of the OAS Ministerial Meeting will be sustainable development, a key priority of the April 2006 is to identify ways in which risk reduction measures can be mainstreamed into sector-specific planning, as well as cross-cutting fiscal, developmental and economic planning approaches.

Given the need to integrate risk reduction measures into specific sectors, the workshop agenda included the discussion of a limited number of sectors within which risk reduction efforts are underway. These included the tourism, education, and water management infrastructure sectors. The workshop agenda also included the discussion of how best practices in sector-specific risk mitigation can be extrapolated into other sectors.

Finally, the workshop agenda included the discussion to recommend opportunities for collaboration among OAS Member States in the area of risk reduction. This included opportunities to enhance the exchange of information and related coordination among different regional organizations, such as the recently-launched Comprehensive Disaster Management Plan under CDERA and other examples from North, Central, and South America.

MAINSTREAMING RISK REDUCTION: SIGNS OF PROGRESS OR STATUS QUO?

The Socio-Economic impacts of Natural Disasters and Mainstreaming Hazard Risk Mitigation approaches

Mainstreaming risk reduction refers to different sets of interventions and practices depending on the focus of the institutions and entities being considered. To be successfully achieved, mainstreaming requires more pertinent economic cost-benefit analysis, so as to engage ministries of finance and planning, as well as sector-specific agencies and ministries; existence of responsible focal points at the national level, implementation tailored to capacity building efforts, establishment of efficient information sharing mechanism, continuity in international and national interventions, and the existence of sustainable funding mechanism that take into account the private sector.

Recommendations and proposals

- Identify a clear body (champion) responsible for mainstreaming disaster risk management in each country.
- Each country should review their investment in disaster risk management, quantify how many proposed action items have been implemented or not and then prioritize what has received no action.
- Promote concrete programs that apply state policies, in particular, the adoption of on-going programs for monitoring and enforcement of building codes and standards that reduce risk in a cost-effective manner.
- Incorporate a gender perspective in natural disasters prevention.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC: BEST PRACTICES AND OBSTACLES TO RISK MITIGATION

Tourism

Costumers (tourists) demand reasonable levels of safety (risk management). Governments (local and national) have a common interest with the private tourism sector in assuring reasonable levels of safety. The government will have to enforce reasonable safety standards for the tourism sector and related providers in order to comply with their demands.

Recommendations and Proposals

- The tourism sector must have an integrated vision incorporating multiple hazards.
- A priority for public and private sector must be “safety and security tourism”: securing their infrastructure and their contingency plans are the first steps.

Education

Education is a vehicle for knowledge sharing concerning hazards, vulnerability, and contingency planning. It is a central component in creating a culture of prevention. The risk management activities for the education sector related to policies, planning processes, mitigation projects, and preparedness programs.

Recommendations and Proposals

- At hemispheric and regional levels it is necessary to include risk management in the educational programs across the different levels of formal and informal education.
- Create a regulatory framework, codes, design and construction standards and certification to evaluate and reduce the vulnerability of the educational infrastructure.

Water Infrastructure

In addition to post-disaster flooding related to extreme weather events, as well as drought, communities often face high levels of water contamination and pollution in the aftermath of events, leading to immediate human health risks (such as cholera), as well as longer-term clean-up costs.

Recommendations and Proposals

- At the hemispheric and regional level, it is necessary to establish legal frameworks for water in irrigation, industrial and domestic usages.
- Conduct a study on the vulnerability of the water infrastructure to natural hazards that include the water infrastructure management, the role of water infrastructure in natural hazards mitigation, and the own vulnerability of water infrastructure to natural hazards.

Regional Cooperation Priorities in Risk Mitigation

In the Americas, there have been a number of regional mechanisms and capacities available to support and facilitate disaster risk reduction and response at national and community levels. It has been acknowledged, accepted and appreciated in all regions that these mechanisms contribute to the promotion of the concept of disaster risk reduction and enhance the capacity of National Government officials and community leaders.

Recommendations and Proposals

- Development of a multi hazard system that picks up early warning signals.
- Promote public participation in the decentralization process of hazards mapping and technical instruments.
- Emphasize the need of better coordination at international, national and local level for cooperation.
- Highlight the efforts of the OAS to create an Inter American Mechanism of disaster reduction on the need of reinforcing existing networks and the cooperation of agencies, NGOs, and civil society under different scenarios.

GOVERNANCE IN RISK MITIGATION

Supportive National Legislative Frameworks: Among the most common definitions of good governance is its ability to support effective decision-making through the development and dissemination of information (such as hazard maps), and to ensure high levels of public and local participation.

How to Enhance Civil Society Participation? Public participation is a key factor for the effective structuring of a prevention and response system to natural disasters. Institutions such as organized communities, neighborhood organizations and non-governmental organizations, among others, should promote parallel programs in coordination with government bodies to consolidate the efforts directed at addressing and reducing the impact of natural disasters.

Recommendations and Proposals

- Promote citizen participation into educational and training programs that involve governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international agencies.
- Promote the creation of legal frameworks with more emphasis on citizen participation is the key to building systems and regulations dealing with prevention, mitigation and the response to disasters.

REPORT AND POSSIBLE STEPS FORWARD OF THE EXPERTS' WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

**NOVEMBER 2ND, 2005
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA**

Overview of Preparatory Process

Recently, OAS' Member States identified three substantive areas of work to be addressed in the preparatory work for the 2006 Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development: (a) sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable tourism; (b) risk mitigation and risk reduction related to natural hazards and natural disasters; and (c) promoting international cooperation in managing transboundary freshwater resources. Moreover, an important focus of the Ministerial meeting will entail supporting public participation, gender equality, and the active engagement of indigenous peoples in these three specific areas, as well as in sustainable development, more generally.

Objective and Mandate

The objective of this informal, one-day workshop of experts was to identify useful steps forward in supporting sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry and sustainable tourism at the policy and project levels. The November workshop marked the initiation of a preparatory process towards the First Inter-American Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development that will be hosted by the Government of Bolivia, and will be held in the second half of 2006. Experts were asked to identify potential areas of cooperation at the workshop, which could form the basis of more detailed preparatory work by the OAS Secretariat. The options provided below are based on the informal discussions and they represent a first step towards identifying work ahead.

Workshop Objectives

The objective of the Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism included the following:

- Begin the process of identifying successful policies and practices underway within the countries of the region that support sustainable management in the agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors.
- Identify mechanisms by which successful practices can be shared, through information networks, online databases and other means. This should build upon successful regional and other networks, including the Sustainable Tourism Network of the Americas, supported by the Rainforest Alliance and the International Model Forest Network supported by IDRC and others.
- Identify policies and project(s) that could be established in support of the Ministerial meeting.

Background Materials

In preparation for the workshop, a series of brief background notes were prepared by the OAS Secretariat, addressing the following issues:

- An overview of sustainability in the agriculture, forestry, and tourism sector in the region.
- Payments for environmental services.
- Environmental valuation techniques as one means of supporting ecosystem payments.
- An overview of some economic effects of trade agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Some recent developments in trade facilitation, environmental, and sustainability-related labeling and certification systems in the agricultural and forestry sector.

Summary of Some Key Points

Below are some possible steps forward, identified during the discussions, in preparing for the Ministerial meeting in each particular area.

Cluster One: Building Links Across Sectors

Following the speech of Honorable Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Energy and Environment (www.oas.org/osde), it was agreed that a major obstacle to achieve sustainable development remains the fragmentation of the issue and lack of integration among key economic sectors and different ministries at the national level. The role of coherence among different sectors remains a critical challenge, despite the efforts of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and others to bring different sectors together. It was agreed that the OAS Ministerial meeting created an opportunity to bring different stakeholders together in a political context. The experience of the OECD in organizing a sustainable development ministerial meeting in 2002 (www.oecd.org) which brought together ministers of finance and environment, was identified as a potential model for the OAS process and under this cluster, the following items were identified as potential issues to be addressed by the Secretariat in the preparatory process for the Ministerial meeting:

National Reports on Sustainable Development

There is a risk of falling into policy cracks by focusing on the “cross-cutting” issues within sustainable development, because of the need of inter-agency coordination. One concrete suggestion in order to promote coordination among different ministries is to revive the national sustainable development reports, which were identified at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) but a proper follow-up has not been achieved. The OAS preparatory meetings could include a consultation process to help prepare, with cooperation of national governments, these national reports.

Regulatory Issues

In identifying common elements, it was noted that the value-added of work by the OAS in this broad area entailed identifying possible areas of cooperation at the international level. Determine the advantages of compiling and placing online national regulations, standards and norms – where applicable – related to sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable tourism. One possible model could be the recent online law database supported by the OAS in the areas of environmental law and water.¹

Supporting Regulatory-Related Initiatives

¹ Available at <http://www.oas.org/osde/fida/laws/database.htm> and <http://www.oas.org/osde/EnvironmentLaw/WaterLaw/home.htm>

Given the multiple sectors involved in sustainable management of resources, the discussions recognized that a broad range of related regulatory matters fall under the rubric of “governance” and they need to be supported, and their role in supporting sustainable management of natural resources needs to be examined. Several areas which entailed governmental action were highlighted, including:

- (a) Support Effective Public Participation: In 2003, governments to the OAS formally endorsed the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development (<http://www.ispnet.org/1pgmissi.htm>). The strategy provides principles and recommendations that serve as a useful platform to enhance at the operational level meaningful and effective public participation. In the preparation of the Ministerial meeting, the OAS will provide an online “virtual forum” to enable a wide range of stakeholders to comment on draft documents and participate in the process. The virtual forum will replicate one used to support OAS-related activities for the Health and Environment Ministerial meeting, held in Mar del Plata in June 2005. (<http://www.oas.org/consulta/osde/>)
- (b) Support Access to Information: Related to public participation, the preparatory process can identify opportunities to advance access-to-information laws that have an impact on resource management at the national level among the 34 countries of the hemisphere, as well as examine codifying through the political process some basic indicators in support of effective access-to-information provisions. This could include analyzing how effective the 34 Member countries of the OAS are applying Principle 10 of Agenda 21, adopted at the 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.
- (c) More broadly, identify ways in which governments can collapse and aggregate information related to sustainable management of natural resources at the sectoral level.
- (d) Define the Role of Land-Tenure and Secured Property Rights: Examine the role of property rights in supporting sustainable management in the agricultural, forestry, and tourism sectors, using LandNet Americas as online data-source. (<http://www.landnetamericas.org/>)
- (e) Effective Enforcement: Illegal logging is a problem that many countries are facing. The Ministerial meeting provides an opportunity to address this issue, both at the source and consumer side, through various initiatives, including monitoring and enforcement.
- (f) Procurement: Some delegates highlighted the role of governments, noting in particular the work of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation in its Green Purchasing Initiative (<http://www.cec.org/eco-sat/english/index.html>). However, it was noted that this issue while necessary, was complicated for a number of reasons, including possible implications from the perspective of trade policy.

Cluster Two: Voluntary Initiatives

A basic issue which requires clarification in the lead-up to the Ministerial meeting is the parameter of activities that fall under the rubric “sustainable” agriculture, forestry and tourism. There are two approaches to address this issue. First, identify ways in which environmental and social standards (including core labor standards) are affecting mainstream agricultural production, forest harvesting, and the provision of tourism services. Second, identify trends and challenges in supporting the significantly smaller sustainable farming, forestry, and tourism niche markets.

Most of the discussions that took place around this issue focused on the second approach, and examined two areas: (a) market-based instruments and voluntary initiatives that support sustainable produce and services. These ranged from green or social (fair trade) labeling and

certification systems to understanding the market characteristics of different niche markets and the role of the private sector in supporting such schemes, and (b) identifying and supporting actions by governments, either alone or through public-private sector partnerships, in supporting voluntary initiatives.

The workshop discussed some specific areas in which governments, acting alone or jointly through regional or hemispheric initiatives, could play a role in supporting voluntary market-based instruments. The following possible areas of work could be prepared and examined in the lead-up to the Ministerial meeting:

- (a) Summary of Current Schemes: Provide a summary of the multiple definitions and approaches of “sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry and sustainable tourism” that exist in the countries of the region.
- (b) Definitional Issues: Identify common elements among and between different categories, as well as examine if the multiplicity of definitions and schemes are creating problems for regulators, providers, consumers and intermediaries.
- (c) It was noted that harmonization of different schemes is not always an answer. However, opportunities do exist in the area of conformity assessment, equivalency and mutual recognition.
- (d) Information Sharing through Networks: Given the proliferation of schemes, an important initiative involves compiling information, through databases and portals, as well as sharing information proactively through networks. Given the creativity and dynamism of the private sector, it was noted that often, governments are in need of information and not the other way around. Although “best practices” is a notion that has entered the vernacular, it remains extremely difficult to identify and share best practices in a meaningful way. The Canadian Model Forest Network Initiative (<http://www.modelforest.net/cmfn/en/initiatives/>) represents an extremely useful model in this regard, that could be replicated and supported through the OAS Ministerial preparatory process.²

Cluster Three: Innovative Financing

The final cluster of issues discussed involved financing, as well as price setting for sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable tourism. Different obstacles to financing were identified, particularly in the area of rural credit, microfinance and the challenges facing small and mid-sized producers.

The need of approaching environmental management from an economic perspective was highlighted. One particular area which links the economy and the environment and in which new mechanisms for financing are evolving is payments for environmental services (PES). A number of different kinds of schemes are underway within the region, including Costa Rica, Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Panama and others. Most of these schemes are local in nature, focusing on local benefits. Work in the area of PES continues to accelerate given the environmental and socio-economic impacts and benefits for communities, including women and indigenous populations. For example, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) recently held a conference to explore some of the lessons in integrated management of environmental services in human dominated ecosystems and most of the sessions

² The OAS supports a number of hemispheric networks which support information sharing. These include the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (www.iabin.org); the Inter-American Water Resources Network (www.iwrn.org) and the Renewable Energy in the Americas Initiative (www.oas.org/osde).

where dedicated to the topic of PES.³ Further information in this area is available in the background papers prepared for the Workshop in San Jose.

Given the pivotal role that watersheds are playing in most PES systems as a mean to support sustainable forestry-related goals, a specific area of opportunity identified during the meeting is to explore PES schemes related to international water basins. It was noted that the OAS-GEF portfolio of transboundary river basin projects (<http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/usde>) – including the wider Amazon River Basin initiative – created a possible foundation upon which to explore international PES systems. However, it remains difficult to determine whether lessons from one PES project can be replicated to another region. Nevertheless, the importance of flexibility in designing PES systems was emphasized.

As a concrete step forward, the OAS will jointly organize with other partners a one-day technical workshop in early 2006, to identify common elements necessary for PES systems that could include:

- The role of valuation studies in helping to establish monetary levels.
- The role of baseline data and the supporting role that governments and organizations can play in compiling indicators and other information.
- Methods to monitor transactions.

³ Available at
<http://web.catie.ac.cr/catie/Conferencia%20Wallace_eng/home_eng/wallace_home_eng.htm?CodSeccion=56>