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CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE

AD HOC WORKING GROUP FOR PHYSICAL AND REGIONAL
PLANNING

First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group for
Physical and Regional Planning

BACKGROUND AND MANDATE OF AD HOC WORKING GROUP
ON PHYSICAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

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UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean

WORKING GROUP ON PHYSICAL AND
REGIONAL PLANNING - BACKGROUND AND MANDATE

The Second Meeting of Planning Officials held in Kingston, Jamaica from 29 May to 2 June 1980 proposed the formation of six Ad hoc Planning Working Groups to cover Agriculture, Energy, Physical and Regional Planning, Transport, Manpower and Training.

It was envisaged that the groups would comprise officials and experts from the relevant government organizations of CDCC member countries and experts and consultants from relevant regional institutions.

The concept of working groups was approved by CDCC ministers at the Fifth Session of the CDCC, held in Jamaica from 4-10 June 1980.

The mandate for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Physical and Regional Planning proposed that the group focus on:

"Physical and Regional Planning, including the relationship between planning for the environment and other aspects of planning, and taking into account the importance of the marine environment to the CDCC member states and also the importance of planning in coastal area development".

It was generally recognised from the initial discussions that Caribbean planners needed to be sensitized to the impact of development on the environment and that measures would need to be taken to minimize this impact in the formulation and elaboration of their developmental plans.

In accordance with resolution 2997 of the XXVII Session of the United Nations General Assmmbly, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was established "as a focal point for environmental action and co-ordination within the United Nations system". While recognizing that environmental issues were global in scope it was

also believed that a regional approach would allow states of a specific region to satisfy priority needs and mobilize national resources for that purpose.

An action plan was accordingly formulated for the wider Caribbean region by a team financed and administered by UNEP/ECLA and resident in the ECLA Office in Port of Spain from April 1977. The action plan was approved by member governments at an intergovernmental meeting held in Jamaica from 6-8 April 1981.

The action plan consists of three component parts, as follows:

"(i) Environmental assessment. The assessment and evaluation of the causes, magnitude and consequences of environmental problems are essential activities providing the basis for assistance to natural resources in an effective and sustainable manner.

(ii) Environmental management. A wider range of activities requiring regional co-operation falls under this component: rational exploitation of living resources, utilization of renewable sources of energy, management of freshwater resources, disaster preparedness and co-operation in cases of emergency, etc. Regional conventions, elaborated by specific technical protocols, usually provide the legal framework for the action plan and have in many regions proved to be an excellent tool in the hands of environmental managers.

(iii) Supporting measures. The national institutions are the institutional basis for the implementation of the action plan, large-scale technical assistance and training are provided to them where necessary to allow their full participation in the programme. Existing global or regional co-ordinating mechanisms are used when appropriate. However, specific regional mechanisms may be created if Governments feel they are necessary. Public awareness of environmental problems is stimulated as an essential supporting measure for the action plan. Financial support is initially provided by UNEP and other international and regional organizations, but, as the programme develops, it is expected that the Governments of the Region assume increasing financial responsibility."^{1/}

In addition, it was recognized that a framework for regional co-operation would need to be created in order to strengthen the capability of the countries of the Caribbean to implement sound environmental management techniques in order to achieve the development of the region on a sustainable basis. This

^{1/} Taken from E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.INF.3, page 3.

co-operation would need to include special measures if the goals outlined were to be achieved, as follows:

- "assistance to all countries of the Region recognizing the special situation of the smaller island countries;
- use of the Region's human, financial and natural resources through technical co-operation between developing countries (TCDC);
- regional self-reliance through the sharing of experience on common problems;
- co-operation on problems of a transnational or international nature, including natural and man-induced disasters;
- stimulation and co-ordination of international assistance activities;
- strengthening of existing national and sub-regional institutions;
- increasing public interest in, and awareness of, the environment/development process".

In order to operationalize these goals the action plan comprises a number of projects and project outlines on the range of issues identified for action. Governments were asked to identify their priorities as well as those projects that would attract regional, sub-regional or purely national support. This categorization was agreed at the final intergovernmental meeting in April 1981. Administrative structures were also agreed and charged with the responsibility of administering the Plan.

Overall authority for monitoring the implementation of the action plan was entrusted to the Monitoring Committee comprising seven governmental representatives, the membership of which is subject to rotation.

Responsibility for day-to-day implementation of the action plan rests with the Regional Co-ordinating Unit, a small technical secretariat to be established and located in Jamaica. It will liaise with the focal points located within member governments or with regional and

sub-regional institutions such as CDCC. It will also promote and co-ordinate the work of national and sub-regional institutions involved with implementing the action plan.

In view of the interest shown by CDCC planners and the wide representation of Caribbean states in CDCC, it is perhaps appropriate that this ad hoc Working Group should focus its attention on the Caribbean action plan to see how it might advance it to benefit all CDCC members.

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