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Regional commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Caribbean)

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Convention on Climate Change (Caribbean)*

The Caribbean planning for adaptation to Global Climate Change (CPACC) Project

Regional commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Caribbean)

- 1.** The members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are primarily small island states with fragile coastal ecosystems. Agriculture and tourism are their principal sources of employment and foreign exchange earnings. Coastal areas, holding the vast majority of the population and economic activity, are vital to the prosperity of these countries. Coastal areas are usually the most biologically productive areas, supporting a wealth of living marine resources and characterised by high biological diversity. In recent years, these resources have come under increasing stress: intensification of human population and activities; concentration of tourism-related infrastructure; inadequate disposal of liquid and solid wastes; decaying drainage infrastructure, uncontrolled and often ill-conceived development schemes; severe weather events which have brought about record losses and a reinsurance industry crisis; and mismanagement of coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangroves, and wetlands. In addition, the lack of comprehensive information systems and a coordinated institutional structure prevent an integrated management of those resources.
- 2.** Anticipated global warming and consequent changes in sea level, sea surface temperature, and wind and ocean currents may seriously compound these problems. Sea level rise, in particular, would likely affect freshwater supply, increase beach and coastal erosion, increase permanent coastal inundation, and aggravate the impact of tropical storms. It also threatens the disproportionate share of industrial, tourism, energy, transport and communications infrastructure concentrated in the coastal zone.
- 3.** Global climate change has emerged in the past few years as one of the world's major long-term challenges. Anticipated global warming and consequent changes in sea level, sea surface temperatures, wind and ocean currents will seriously impact on the coastal areas of the countries of CARICOM. The devastation of Mitch in 1998, Lenny in 1999 and the recent coastal disaster in neighbouring Venezuela are ample evidence of the vulnerability of the region to climate related phenomena. It is therefore imperative that CARICOM countries begin planning for adaptation to climate change in order to avoid adverse impacts and to undertake measures to reduce their vulnerability.
- 4.** To address the issues of climate change and climate variability, twelve member countries are now involved in the implementation of a regional project – the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Global climate Change (CPACC). The project had its origin in the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which took place in Barbados in April/May 1994. During this Conference, the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean requested GS/OAS assistance in developing a project on adaptation to climate change for submission to the Global Environmental Facility. After a series of national and regional consultations, the project, endorsed by CARICOM Ministers of Foreign Affairs was submitted to the GEF Council and approved by the latter as part of its Work Programme in May 1995.
- 5.** The project's overall objective is to support Caribbean countries in preparing to cope with the adverse effects of Global Climate change (GCC), particularly sea level rise, in coastal and marine areas through vulnerability assessment, adaptation, planning and capacity building linked to adaptation planning. More specifically, the project will assist national governments and the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED) to:

- a) Strengthen the regional capability for monitoring and analysing climate and sea level dynamics and trends, seeking to determine the immediate and potential impacts of GCC.
- b) Identify areas particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and sea level rise.
- c) Develop an integral management and planning framework for cost-effective response and adaptation to the impacts of GCC on coastal and marine areas.
- d) Enhance regional and national capabilities for preparing for the advent of GCC through institutional strengthening and human resource development.
- e) Identify and assess policy options and instruments that may help initiate the implementation of a long-term program of adaptation to GCC in vulnerable coastal areas.

6. Funding for the project is through the World Bank and GEF implementing agency, and is being executed by the Organisation of American States. A small Regional Project Implementation Unit (RPIU) operating under the aegis of the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED) and hosted by the Government of Barbados is responsible for the implementation of the project.

7. The project follows a regional approach and is being executed through the cooperative effort of all twelve participating countries – Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago – through a combination of national pilot/demonstration actions and regional training and technology transfer linked to adaptation planning. The project seeks to build on existing institutions and experiences and to liaise with other important regional initiatives and programs underway in the Caribbean. In this regard, participation of Suriname and the Dominican Republic in CPACC activities are anticipated. Through the UNDP/GEF supported national projects for the preparation of member country's First National Communications, possible areas of collaboration with CPACC are also being explored. Linkages with similar programmes being undertaken in Central American countries are considered to be mutually beneficial and desirable.

8. The CPACC project is executing a comprehensive program of human resource development for upgrading the skills of technicians, and officials from the twelve participating countries in areas relevant to GCC and adaptation planning. These are nine project components comprising the following:

- a) Design and establishment of sea level/climate monitoring Network.
- b) Establishment of databases and information systems.
- c) Inventory of coastal resources and use.
- d) Formulation of a policy framework for integrated coastal and marine management.
- e) Coral reef monitoring for climate change.
- f) Coastal vulnerability and risk assessment.
- g) Economic valuation of coastal and marine resources.
- h) Formulation of economic/regulatory proposals.
- i) Preparation of first national communications.

9. A recently concluded mid-term review of the Project conducted by the World Bank observed that project implementation performance throughout the first half of the project was good and constituted a sound basis on which to continue CCPACC activities. The review team agreed that CPACC had:

- a) Made good progress toward the achievement of expected technical and institutional outputs.
- b) Provided critical inputs to improved knowledge on mitigation and adaptation issues in the region.
- c) Contributed to increased awareness and participation of CARICOM countries in the global fora on Climate Change.
- d) Through the institutional capacity building aspect, the project played a major role in support of regional consultation on climate change issues.

10. The first CARICOM Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the SIDS/POA convened in November 1997, recommended *inter alia*, that the Caribbean States support the development of the necessary institutional mechanisms to ensure that critical programmes initiated under CPACC are sustained beyond the lifetime of the Project. To give effect to this recommendation, serious consideration is being given to the evolution of CCPACC into a regional Climate Change Centre.

11. The World Bank in their final report of the mid-term review recommended that such a centre should be considered as the appropriate institutional mechanism to ensure the sustainability of the project after the present tranche of GEF support comes to an end in December 2001. The possible role of such a Centre is envisaged to:

- a) Collect and disseminate Climate Change baseline data and serve as an authoritative source in international negotiation of agreements on climate change issues.
- b) Advise ACS, CARICOM governments and the private sector on Climate Change and related issues.
- c) Develop special programmes targeting key issues such as coastal zone management and hurricane preparedness, and sectors such as Tourism, Agriculture, health and Insurance.
- d) Assist member countries in the preparation and implementation of future clean development mechanism projects.
- e) Fulfil the need of a regional certification entity as envisioned under the Kyoto Protocol.
- f) Assist in resource sharing and technical co-operation and to provide information exchange on training, both regionally and elsewhere throughout the world.
- g) Link with other Pacific and Indian Ocean initiatives.
- h) Facilitate direct meeting of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) representatives before the Conference of the Parties meetings, to define common strategy and goals and to advocate for SIDS at international fora.
- i) Serve as a focus for visiting scientists working on climate change related research and for the organisation of Workshops, Seminars, Lectures and other outreach activities aimed at increasing public awareness of the problems associated with climate change.

12. Regional support for this initiative, which was recently endorsed by the Council of CARICOM Ministers of Trade and Economic Development (COTED), at their Eight Meeting in Georgetown, Guyana, will be crucial, as we solicit support for the establishment of the Centre from international donor agencies and the regional private sector.

13. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as defined under Article 12, allows for the transfer of certified emissions reductions (CERs) from developing countries to Annex 1 Parties (industrialised countries). The CDM is established with the dual purpose of helping Annex 1 countries meet their commitments under the Protocol and contributing to efforts by developing countries to meet their sustainable development objectives.

14. CARICOM countries have been active participants in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and have been strong advocates of adaptation-related financing for vulnerable countries. As such, they have supported the early development of the CDM as a source of new funds for adaptation projects, based on the adaptation fees provided for under Article 12. Along with other members of the G-77, Caribbean countries have voiced concern about the need for regional equity to be considered within the CDM. Their concern is that investors will focus on larger countries that are likely to have lower costs for institutional design and project evaluation. With the advantage or economies of scale, transaction costs associated with developing CDM projects in larger countries will likely be lower than those in individual small island states.

15. To address this concern, CARICOM countries will be exploring the development of a regional approach to project identification and development as a mechanism for enhancing the competitiveness of proposals developed for funding under this instrument. This exercise which will be carried out in collaboration with the Centre of Clean Air Policy (Washington), the Global Change Strategies International, Inc. (Canada) and the Commonwealth Science Council (London), will seek to build regional capacity for the development of proposals eligible for funding under the CM.