



**United Nations Environment Programme  
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean**

PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE  
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT  
PROGRAMA DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS PARA O MEIO AMBIENTE

---

**First Special Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of  
Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Johannesburg, South Africa  
31 August 2002**

**Distribution:**  
General

**UNEP/LAC-SMIG.I/2**  
Friday 30 August 2002  
**Original:** English

---

**Latin American and Caribbean Initiative  
for Sustainable Development**

**I. Background**

1. The Rio Conference of 1992 was convened once it was recognized that patterns of production and consumption, especially in developed countries, had reached unsustainable levels, jeopardizing the stability of environmental goods and services. This had an adverse effect not only on the continuity of productive activities but also on the quality of life itself and the Conference was intended to demonstrate how this situation could be reversed to the benefit of all.
2. The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted by the 1994 United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the first post-UNCED Conference, clearly outlines the key issues to be addressed in pursuit of sustainable development of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS).
3. Ten years after Rio-92, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean recognize that significant progress has been made in some areas, especially in building awareness and in the entry into force of national and international legal norms. Nevertheless, there are still important challenges to be met although new imperatives have emerged to make sustainable development a reality and to bring about needed changes in present development models. It is essential to reverse current tendencies of degradation of both the natural and urban environments and, in particular, to take vigorous steps to eradicate poverty and inequity –together with the impact they cause- that so afflict the countries of the region.
4. This initiative recognizes the importance of sub-regional and regional processes to promote sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, within the framework of the Platform for Action on the Road to Johannesburg 2002, approved in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in October 2001. Launching a Latin American and Caribbean Initiative is justified by the need to give a practical direction to the process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and to reflect the region's unique characteristics, visions and goals, while being particularly cognizant of the validity of the principle of States' common but differentiated responsibilities.

5. The peoples and countries of the region see the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a unique opportunity to evaluate progress achieved at all levels in complying with the commitments made at Rio-92 and to adopt effective action in seeking solutions to the new challenges posed by sustainable development. The Summit is, moreover, a unique opportunity to assert that it is not only possible but indeed necessary to strike at the economic and social roots of environmental problems and to ensure that financing is redirected towards a new globalisation that will lead to development which, besides sustainable and equitable, is also inclusive. It should also promote the adoption of concrete actions through cooperation provided by developed countries and by multilateral and regional organizations, including financing institutions, and by strengthening South-South cooperation.

6. The task at hand consists in identifying programmes and projects aimed at attaining these goals. This initiative implies making adjustments to the current situation, and takes into account social, economic and environmental dimensions. Also, with ethics as its foundation, it means transforming sustainable development into a strategic priority in Latin America and Caribbean countries.

## II. Objectives

7. The objectives of the Latin American and the Caribbean Initiative are as follows:

- a) To consolidate and continue efforts being made in Latin America and the Caribbean, at different levels of Government and civil society, to overcome obstacles in putting into effect programmes and projects of interest to the region so as to comply with the recommendations of Agenda 21 by placing emphasis on the effective development and implementation of participatory mechanisms;
- b) To develop, in selected areas, actions based on the political will of States that encourage participation by the private sector and civil society to promote investments that may generate sustainable productive activities and maintain sustainable livelihoods while, at the same time, allowing for the conservation and sustainable use of essential environmental goods and services;
- c) To promote, on a foundation of ethics, the implementation of competitive sustainable development models backed by public policies designed to develop science and technology, financing sources, human resources capacity-building, institutional development, the evaluation of environmental goods and services as well as sustainability indicators adapted to each country's social, economic, environmental and political conditions, or to the needs of sub-regional groups of countries; and
- d) To contribute, within a political framework, to identifying and prioritising financial, technical and institutional mechanisms to effectively implement Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the 22<sup>nd</sup> United Nation General Assembly Special Session, thus facilitating the

transfer of, access to and development of technology and knowledge and promoting the adoption of suitable regulatory frameworks.

8. This Initiative will also identify suitable topics for harmonization and cooperation with proposals put forward by other regions, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Asia and Pacific Initiative.

### **III. Operational Guidelines for the Initiative**

9. The operational guidelines of this Initiative are:

a) To reinforce positions adopted at and consolidated after Rio 1992 to:

- i) Urge developed countries to fulfil their commitment to devote 0.7 % of the GNP for development assistance, as reiterated in Agenda 21;
- ii) Promote the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and call upon States that have not yet done so to ratify the Protocol, in particular, those states that are the largest emitters of greenhouse gases;
- iii) Comply with the commitments of the Doha Declaration and the Consensus of Monterrey so as to ensure access to markets and the availability of funds required to achieve sustainable development goals, particularly in support of developing countries' efforts;
- iv) Provide guidance on how to establish new financial mechanisms, including cancelling developing countries' debts, in particular those of the least developed countries, and setting up a natural disasters contingency fund;
- v) Fully apply the principle of States' common but differentiated responsibilities and the respect for the sovereign right of each country to control its natural resources;
- vi) Reiterate a commitment to the precautionary principle as defined in the Rio Declaration, as a key component of environmental policy, so as to safeguard our natural and social heritage;
- vii) Urge the developed countries to fulfil these commitments to give priority to the Small Island Developing States in the region, especially in financing the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action
- viii) Address the economic, social and environmental vulnerability of countries of the region which undermines their capacity to achieve sustainable development and economic integration.
- ix) Increase participation by non-governmental agents and improve transparency in decision-making processes by strengthening initiatives

such as the establishment of National Councils on Sustainable Development and the preparation of national and local Agendas 21.

- x) Promote the introduction of a new sustainable development ethical practice that takes account of processes that have already been developed, such as the Earth Charter.
- xi) Implement the Guidelines on Sustainable Consumption approved in 1999 by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

b) These guidelines will be followed when implementing the programmes and projects intended to face the region's sustainable development challenges, while keeping within an ethical framework by:

- i) Promote sustainable economic growth and establishing mechanisms and instruments to confront new sources of instability by fostering internal savings and private capital flows.
- ii) Supporting the implementation of public policies aimed at reducing poverty and social inequality by creating jobs and promoting sustainable development with justice, equity and social inclusion.
- iii) Promoting social cohesion and stability by addressing, inter alia, the proliferation of crime and violence and their associated debilitating impacts
- iv) Implementing integrated human health and environment measures to ensure that more recognition is given to the health and well being of the people of the region and that such measures are systematically translated into policies and programmes.
- v) Underlining the links that already exist between unsustainable patterns of consumption and the globalisation of production patterns, in particular the growing importance of awareness by consumers and enterprises of how essential it is to apply concepts that imply social and environmental responsibilities.
- vi) Developing new sustainable bases of competitiveness for the region's productive structure to make it easier for its countries to join the world economy. This implies proposing strategies to achieve the effective opening of external markets, above all in developed countries, an essential condition for attaining the objective of sustainable development in the region.
- vii) Creating or strengthening economic, tax and fiscal instruments to promote sustainable development.
- viii) Stimulating the adoption, by governments and the productive sector, of voluntary instruments (certifications, ISO 14000, certification for sustainable tourism, etc.) applicable to the sustainable development process.

- ix) Initiating or continuing environmental or natural resources evaluation processes to make better use of the region's comparative advantages, incorporating indicators relating to environmental liabilities and assets to permit their inclusion in national accounting systems.
- x) Supporting regional action and sub-regional efforts, in particular those of the Caribbean (SIDS), the Amazon countries (TCA), the Andean sub-region (CAN), MERCOSUR and Central America (ALIDES).
- xi) Strengthening regional, sub-regional and national institutions, as well as sub-national mechanisms, to implement, follow up and monitor policies, programmes and projects deriving from this Initiative.
- xii) Formulating strategies to incorporate transfer and develop technologies to be supported by mobilizing and expanding existing financial institutions' resources.
- xiii) Enhancing or adjusting existing systems of sustainability indicators that respond to the region's social, economic and political characteristics, or building such systems.
- xiv) Developing South-South cooperation activities that favour the use of developing countries' strengths and opportunities in terms of the sustainable development of the nations in the region.
- xv) Promoting the development of specially devised systems, based on a variety of instruments and mechanisms, to protect traditional knowledge, and encouraging the concept that current intellectual property systems take into account the traditional knowledge associated with biological diversity, when evaluating requests for patents and other related rights.
- xvi) Promoting capacity building through the strengthening of national, sub-regional and regional institutions and the development of human resources.

## **IV. Action priorities**

### **A. Priority Themes**

**9.** At the XIII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in October 2001, the countries of the region agreed to identify actions that could focus efforts to implement this Initiative.

**10.** Priority areas for urgent action include, inter alia, eradicating poverty and social inequalities; introducing an environmental dimension in economic and social processes; strengthening technical and vocational training institutions; promoting human resources development, particularly in information and communication technology; developing micro-enterprises; empowering civil society organizations;

promoting economic diversification; promoting regional cooperation and collaboration that increases the region's capacity to access international markets; the need for qualitative and analytical work on a vulnerability indexes to define the economic, social and environmental vulnerability of countries concerned; sustainable management of water resources; sustainable generation of energy and increasing the use of renewable sources; managing protected areas for the sustainable use of biodiversity; adapting to impacts caused by climate change and sustainable management of urban and rural areas, with special emphasis on health, environmental sanitation and on minimizing risks and vulnerability to natural disasters. Actions to promote scientific and technological innovation, strengthening research and development institutions and increasing existing sources of financing are also relevant. In this context, centres of excellence in research and development should promote the building of a solid scientific alliance through, among others, scientific exchanges, establishing interdisciplinary information networks and formulating joint research projects.

**11.** The countries of the region should act together so that multilateral cooperation and financial institutions, as well as regional and sub-regional organizations, support action programmes and projects identified in this Initiative.

**12.** They should also promote inter-regional cooperation actions with a view to reinforcing intra-regional and inter-regional technical and scientific cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean; Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

**13.** Furthermore, countries of the region should strengthen public-private sector partnerships to promote scientific and technical progress based on the conservation of natural resources and their sustainable use.

**14.** The countries of the region should advance concrete activities to promote a sustainable development ethic in discussions at international forums, consistent with the Rio de Janeiro Platform for Action of October 2001.

**15.** A review will be made at five-year intervals of how the guiding goals and indicative purposes are being implemented at regional level.

**16.** The proposals for action identified in this Initiative form the basis for future activities by the Latin American and Caribbean countries in terms of sustainable development imperatives. The region recognizes that, to achieve these goals, means of implementation and possible partnerships must still be determined. Emphasis is placed on the need for a favourable international scenario which would basically be one of peace and solidarity, enhanced by an effective commitment by developed countries to transfer and adapt technologies, provide new and sufficient additional resources, eliminate subsidies and provide greater access to their markets, among others.

## **B. Guiding Goals and Indicative Purposes**

### **1) Biological diversity**

- *Increase of the forest area.*

- i) Ensure the sustainable management of forest resources in the region, significantly reducing present deforestation rates.
- *Territory included in protected areas.*
  - i) Increase significantly the territory in the region under protected area regimes and, when defining them, include buffer zones and biological corridors.
- *Genetic resources - Equitable sharing of benefits.*
  - i) Adopt regulatory frameworks for access to genetic resources, as well as for fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from their use, compatible with the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- *Marine biodiversity*
  - i) Ensure the conservation and proper use of the Caribbean Basin Countries' marine resources with particular emphasis on marine and coastal ecosystems.

## 2) **Water resources management**

- *Freshwater supply*
  - i) Improve technology for more efficiency in water use in industry and agriculture and for domestic consumption.
  - ii) Introduce modern desalination technologies.
  - iii) Integrate the management of coastal aquifers to avoid saline intrusion.
- *Watershed management.*
  - i) Improve and strengthen institutional arrangements for the integrated management of water basins and aquifers, among other measures, by establishing water basin committees with the participation of all sub-national levels of government, civil society, the private sector and all involved stakeholders.
- *Management of marine and coastal areas and their resources.*
  - i) Implement national and regional action plans for the integrated management of coastal resources and coastal ecosystems, with particular attention to the Small Island Developing States.
  - ii) Adopt a holistic and Integrated approach to the management of Caribbean Sea through the development of a comprehensive strategy for its protection and management

- *Better quality of inland waters.*
  - i) Improve the quality of effluents and reduce the discharge of pollutants into surface water bodies, groundwater and coastal areas.

### **3) Vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities**

- *Land-use planning.*
  - i) Implement land-use planning policies and plans from a sustainable development approach.
  - ii) Incorporate risk management instruments in land-use planning.
- *Areas affected by degradation processes.*
  - i) Reduce significantly the areas of the region subject to erosion, salinization and other soil degradation processes.
- *Air pollution.*
  - i) Reduce the concentration in the air of polluting emissions.
- *Water pollution.*
  - i) Increase coverage of drinking water services and wastewater treatment.
- *Solid wastes.*
  - i) Reduce significantly solid waste generation (domestic and industrial) and, among other measures, promote recycling and reuse.
  - ii) Implement integrated management of solid wastes (domestic and industrial), including appropriate treatment and final disposal.
- *Vulnerability to anthropogenic disasters and those caused by natural phenomena.*
  - i) Implement and strengthen regional risk management cooperation mechanisms to lessen the impact of anthropogenic disasters and those caused by natural phenomena, including setting up a regional early-warning system and forming immediate response groups.
- *Vulnerability and risk management*
  - i) Refine and apply vulnerability indicators
  - ii) Incorporate indicators into national development plans;



#### 4) Social issues, including health, inequity and poverty

- *Health and environment.*
  - i) Implement policies and plans to reduce environmental risks that cause damage to health, in particular those transmitted by water, vectors, air pollution and exposure to chemical substances.
  - ii) Implement comprehensive measures to control and reverse the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic including development of coordinated approaches to research education and treatment and access to retroviral pharmaceuticals; and,
  - iii) Increase the proportion of green and healthy areas per inhabitant.
- *Environment and job creation.*
  - i) Promote the formulation and implementation of sustainable development projects and programmes that will help to create jobs and avoid migration and displacement.
- *Poverty and inequity.*
  - i) Reduce drastically poverty rates in the region's countries;
  - ii) Create sustainable livelihoods by developing micro-enterprises; and,
  - iii) Formulate and implement strategies for women, youth, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, migrants, disabled and other minority groups of the region in accordance with human rights and fundamental freedoms.

#### 5) Economic issues, including competitiveness, trade and production and consumption patterns (energy)

- *Energy.*
  - i) Increase renewable energy use in the region to at least 10% of its total energy consumption by the year 2010.
- *Cleaner production.*
  - i) Install cleaner production centres in all the countries of the region; and,
  - ii) Incorporate the concept of cleaner production in a significant number of the main industries, with emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises.
- *Economic instruments.*
  - i) Establish a system of economic incentives for productive and industrial processing projects that will save natural resources and energy and

eventually reduce the amount of effluents discharged into water, land and the air.

## 6) Institutional arrangements

- *Environmental education.*
  - i) Improve and strengthen the incorporation of the environmental dimension into formal and non-formal education, the economy and society.
- *Training and capacity building of human resources.*
  - i. Eradicate illiteracy and ensure universal enrolment in primary and secondary education;
  - ii. Build capacities to address vulnerabilities in the region; and,
  - iii. Establish, for the public and private sectors and for the community in general, programmes for capacity building in sustainable development management.
- *Evaluation and indicators.*
  - i) Develop and implement an assessment process to follow up the progress made towards attaining sustainable development objectives, including the results of the Johannesburg Plan, adopting national and regional sustainability indicators that respond to the region's unique social, economic and political features.
- *Participation of society.*
  - i) Create and strengthen participation mechanisms to deal with sustainable development issues, with representatives from government, non-government and major groups in all countries of the region.

\* \* \*