ECLAC
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

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

Subregional Preparatory Meeting of the Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development
(Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002)

Havana, Cuba, 28-29 June 2001
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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Terms of reference

1. The Subregional Preparatory Meeting of the Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development was convened by the Director of the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme in accordance with the provisions contained in paragraph (f) of decision 1 as adopted at the eighth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development pursuant to chapter 38 of Agenda 21, resolution A/RES/55/199 of the United Nations General Assembly and decision 17 as adopted at the twelfth meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Place and date of the meeting

2. The Subregional Preparatory Meeting of the Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 June 2001.

Attendance

3. Representatives of the following States members in the subregion participated in the meeting: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Suriname.

4. The following associate members of ECLAC were also represented: Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles and United States Virgin Islands.

5. A representative of Indonesia, a State Member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Commission, attended as an observer in a consultative capacity.

6. The United Nations Secretariat was represented by an official of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

7. The meeting was also attended by a representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

8. The following United Nations specialized agencies were also represented: World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and Pan-American Health Organization-World Health Organization (PAHO-WHO).

9. In addition, the meeting was attended by representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), European Union, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the World Bank.
10. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council were present: **In special consultative status**: Federación de Mujeres Cubanas. **Roster**: Caribbean Conservation Association and Earth Council.

11. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations were present: Academia de Ciencias de Cuba, Asociación de Pedagogos de Cuba, Brigadas Técnicas Juveniles, COHPEDA, Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba, CUBASOLAR, Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez de la Naturaleza y el Hombre, Grupo de Ecología y Medio Ambiente, Hábitat Cuba and Pro Natura.

12. Representatives of the Institute of Marine Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago and of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme also attended as special guests.

**Election of officers**

13. The participating delegations elected the following officers:

- **Chair**: Cuba
- **Deputy Chairs**: Belize, Saint Lucia, United States Virgin Islands
- **Rapporteur**: Barbados

**B. AGENDA**

14. At the first plenary session, the following agenda was adopted:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Organization of work
4. Issues, priorities and challenges relating to Agenda 21 within the context of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States

   (a) National activities, including country reports for presentation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development
(b) Subregional activities: experience of the Inter-Agency Collaborative Group regarding the Caribbean Small Island Developing States process.

- Presentation by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
- Presentation by the Environment and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC
- Presentation by the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

5. Identification of new and emerging issues of critical importance to the Caribbean subregion within the context of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the implementation of Agenda 21, and consideration of proposals for presentation to the Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

6. Report of the panel of civil society organizations

7. Adoption of proposals and recommendations for submission to the Regional Preparatory Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Organization of work (agenda item 3)

15. The Chair informed the participants that on the morning of 29 June a panel of civil society organizations would be held. The conclusions reached by that panel would then be presented to the plenary. A working group would also be formed to draw up the subregion’s contributions to the Regional Preparatory Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

16. It was agreed that statements by international organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations would be included under agenda item 4b.

C. OPENING AND CLOSING SESSIONS

Opening session

17. At the opening session, addresses were delivered by Mr. Reynaldo Bajraj, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Mr. Ricardo Sanchez Sosa, Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme; Ms. Len Ishmael, Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean; Ms. Anne Forrester, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme and
United Nations Resident Coordinator in Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS); and Dr. Rosa Elena Simeon Negrin, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba.

18. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC recalled that the Commission, together with UNEP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, had launched the regional preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development with the valuable assistance of UNDP. The present conference was one of four subregional meetings at which the countries would arrive at conclusions that could then be brought together at the Regional Preparatory Conference. The region had thus embarked upon an orderly, constructive and cumulative process that would enable it to formulate meaningful inputs for the World Summit.

19. The subregional meeting had a number of objectives. The first was to undertake an evaluation of the progress made by the countries of the Caribbean subregion in implementing Agenda 21. That evaluation would enable them to identify challenges and remaining tasks, key policy issues, priorities and follow-up activities with a view to the formulation of a regional platform of action for sustainable development. The Caribbean Governments were committed to implementing Agenda 21 and were working to do so within the context of the Barbados Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States adopted in 1994. Those Governments had created an exemplary structure for the Agenda’s implementation based on a highly specific joint work programme which had been derived from the 15 chapters of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States. ECLAC and CARICOM served as the secretariat for the implementation of that programme, in which numerous regional agencies, regionally-based non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies were undertaking the corresponding activities.

20. The organization of regional preparatory conferences for world summits had become a tradition in Latin America and the Caribbean. At such conferences, ECLAC had the privilege of fulfilling the mandates received from Governments of member States and its own mission by providing input in the form of studies and proposals. The present occasion was the first time, however, that the region had the opportunity to undertake prior subregional consultations with a view to the formulation of a common agenda. Another unique feature of the current preparatory process was the fact that a detailed agenda for the World Summit on Sustainable Development had yet to be drawn up. Accordingly, the current preparatory process was also the first occasion on which the region had the opportunity to bring its shared interests to the negotiating table and to help shape the agenda that would be submitted to the Heads of State for their consideration at the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002.

21. The Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean noted that the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development had begun at the national level, was currently being pursued within a subregional framework and would then progress to the regional level. Provision had been made for two preparatory forums: the Regional Preparatory Conference of Latin America and the
Caribbean for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in October 2001, and the meeting of small island developing States due to be held ahead of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. That process would enable the countries of the region to identify their needs and arrive at a consensus on the position to be taken in Johannesburg.

22. UNEP had been working with UNDP, the Earth Council, CARICOM, a wide range of non-governmental organizations and the University of the West Indies (UWI), among others, at the national level and with ECLAC and other partners at the regional level to further the preparatory process and was confident that the current meeting would generate extremely valuable inputs for the Regional Preparatory Conference and for the World Summit itself. UNEP and ECLAC were making every effort to assist the participants in the four subregional meetings to reach consensus and to arrive at a clear interpretation of the region’s environmental needs as a basis for positioning the Latin American and Caribbean region within the preparatory process. The region was in particular need of international support in the form of resources and environmentally sound technologies as it pursued a sustainable development path.

23. The speaker expressed the hope that the deliberations of the participating delegations and those of the other subregions would enable Latin America and the Caribbean to arrive at Johannesburg with a unified and well-founded position. The prime objective of UNEP was therefore to foster the fullest possible consideration of the issues so that the region could adopt a shared position at the World Summit and garner greater international assistance for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was not simply a matter of reaffirming the region’s commitment to achieving sustainable development, but also of obtaining the necessary resources to do so. It was up to all the countries to act before it was too late.

24. The Director of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean noted that one of the unique attributes of the meeting was that it offered a forum in which to undertake a substantive analysis of problems, needs and interests of particular importance to the small island developing States of the subregion, which were one of three such clusters in the world. The Programme of Action for the Small Island Developing States had been adopted at the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Small Island Developing States held in Barbados in 1994, which had been convened for the purpose of translating Agenda 21 into specific policies and initiatives for tackling the most important challenges facing them in relation to sustainable development. The present meeting should by no means be regarded as detracting from Agenda 21; on the contrary, it provided a means of analysing efforts to implement that Agenda within the framework of its most concrete expression in the subregion, which was the SIDS Programme of Action.

25. In collaboration with a number of regional agencies, in November 1997 the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean had organized its first and, to date, only Caribbean Ministerial Meeting with the aim of analysing the progress made in implementing the Agenda. On that occasion, it was found that although there was no
question as to the Agenda’s validity, mechanisms and systems for its implementation were lacking. Accordingly, the countries had established follow-up mechanisms and modalities based on a uniquely Caribbean model involving the participation of member States, a Bureau responsible for political oversight, a joint work programme covering some 120 activities to be undertaken by over 24 agencies and a secretariat formed by ECLAC and CARICOM. Since that time, ECLAC had organized 10 SIDS-related meetings and had published eight reports and two books on the subject. The most recent of those volumes, *The SIDS POA, Agenda 21: the Road to Johannesburg 2002*, which would be distributed during the meeting, reviewed the implementation of the joint work programme and spoke to the issues that must be addressed in relation to the implementation of the Programme of Action and Agenda 21.

26. Although progress in many areas had been modest and unevenly spread across the subregion, the Caribbean now had a broader picture of the many dimensions of sustainable development. As part of that broader approach, during the second phase of the Agenda’s implementation, which had begun in 1999, the economic and social aspects of sustainable development were also being addressed. However, in the past few years various circles within the international community had challenged both the concept of small island developing States and that of “vulnerability”. It was therefore important to strengthen the Caribbean’s ties with other regions and to work to safeguard the gains made at international forums and enshrined in international accords. It was to be hoped that at the present meeting the countries would succeed in defining and articulating the subregion’s interests, priorities and concerns and in defining the activities and measures required for their defence.

27. The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that the Programme was deeply committed to the preparatory process. It was working to facilitate the preparations for the World Summit at the national level and to ensure that all stakeholders, including civil society, were involved in that process so that current needs might be met without jeopardizing future generations.

28. The Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba noted that the achievement of sustainable development represented a formidable challenge that could not be side-stepped, since it impinged upon the fate of coming generations. The small island developing States needed to ask themselves how much of their resource endowment had been extracted in ways that did not serve to promote their own development.

29. The Caribbean countries had a great responsibility in that respect. She was therefore thankful that so many Caribbean countries had come to the present meeting in Cuba and saw it as a demonstration of how many interests and concerns were shared by the small island developing States. The meeting should serve as an opportunity to evaluate how far they had gone and in what direction they should move in the future. Those findings should then serve as a basis for the formulation of proposals for presentation at the Regional Preparatory Conference and at the World Summit. The developing countries had succeeded in maintaining Agenda 21 as the framework for
efforts to achieve sustainable development, but the resources being provided for that purpose had not been increased and had, in fact, actually declined, and the expected intensification of technology transfer had been constrained by a variety of factors, including patent laws.

30. Cuba defined the concept of sustainable development in terms of the population’s quality of life, which entailed the achievement of a cleaner environment but also a freer and more participatory population able to enjoy the use of its natural resources and an economic level that was in keeping with the sort of society that they all hoped to attain. Sustainable development therefore entailed nature, culture, traditions and sovereignty. She looked forward to a highly productive exchange of ideas and experiences relating to sustainable development that would lead to the formulation of a unified position which would reflect the many shared elements that united them.

Closing session

D. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Issues, priorities and challenges relating to Agenda 21 within the context of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States; National activities, including country reports for presentation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (agenda item 4a)

a. The participating delegations then proceeded to review the progress made by each country in implementing Agenda 21 within the framework of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States and in preparing country reports for presentation at the Regional Preparatory Conference to be held in Rio de Janeiro. A number of countries had experienced difficulties in drafting those reports due to a shortage of financial and human resources. It was noted that various agencies that were active in the subregion, together with countries that had already completed their reports (Barbados and Cuba), could assist those countries that had not yet been able to do so and thus help ensure that all the delegations would have their reports ready prior to the Regional Preparatory Conference.

b. In a statement made by the delegation of Cuba, an offer was made to share experience gained in the preparation of its country report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development with other countries in the Caribbean subregion by providing technical assistance to them. Interest was expressed by other countries in that possibility. UNDP was requested to help in the identification of additional funding from other sources, including Capacity 21, for the preparation of the country reports. Such funding should also be made available to support cooperation among countries in sharing relevant
experience. That activity would be organized in countries that requested it, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator would ensure coordination among ECLAC, UNEP and UNDP. The Earth Council was also interested in contributing to that effort.

c. At the subregional and regional levels, UNDP was also requested to continue its joint efforts with ECLAC and UNEP and to be fully involved in supporting the preparation and implementation of activities in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, particularly the Regional Preparatory Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean which was scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro in October 2001.

d. In a statement made by the delegation of Barbados, the representative discussed the experience gained in the course of the preparation of its country report, which was made available to the participants.

e. In presenting overviews of the status of efforts to implement Agenda 21, many of the participating delegations referred to the role of education in promoting public awareness of environmental issues and fostering community participation. Educational and public information campaigns were being undertaken in a number of countries to that end.

f. Emphasis was also placed on the work being done to strengthen and update the countries’ institutional and legislative structures for the achievement of sustainable development. The shortcomings of those structures, combined with a lack of sufficient human capacity, constituted a serious impediment to further progress.

g. A third factor identified by many representatives was the lack of suitable data and indicators to provide input for decision-makers and a failure, in many cases, to incorporate such assessments into general and macroeconomic policy. In order to furnish a sufficient supply of relevant data, indicators needed to be constructed that would provide an accurate measurement of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. Those measurements would, in turn, provide a means of ascertaining whether or not the countries were moving in the right direction and in determining the way ahead.

h. Another major area of concern for the small island developing States was disaster preparedness and mitigation. A number of the countries were working to upgrade their disaster response mechanisms and to determine what further steps should be taken in that area.

i. There was general agreement as to the importance of strengthening coordination in all areas of activity relating to sustainable development. The countries needed to find ways to measure their progress and needed to distil their priorities in order to make further headway.

Issues, priorities and challenges relating to Agenda 21 within the context of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing
States: Subregional activities: experience of the Inter-Agency Collaborative Group regarding the Caribbean Small Island Developing States process (agenda item 4b)

j. The representative of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean gave a presentation designed to lay the foundations for the adoption of proposals for presentation at the Regional Preparatory Conference and, ultimately, the World Summit in Johannesburg. To that end, he reviewed the implementation of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States at the national and subregional levels and discussed the role of regional and regionally-based agencies in the implementation process. He then drew on these elements in addressing the question of new and emerging issues of critical importance to the subregion in relation to Agenda 21. He concluded his presentation with a discussion of a number of principles and guidelines embodied in Agenda 21 and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States that stood in need of reiteration at the World Summit.

k. The UNDP Resident Representative underscored the fact that the present meeting was a unique opportunity for the Caribbean countries to decide how they could help ensure that results of strategic importance for them would be achieved at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The main objective of UNDP was to address the needs of developing countries, and it was working to form partnerships that would help it to do so. It was also assisting countries to develop a navigation chart that would enable them to determine what was truly strategic and feasible, and was supporting the countries’ efforts to promote a dialogue among all the stakeholders involved in the global preparatory process. In addition, UNDP was working with UNEP and ECLAC to organize a panel on sustainable development financing with a view to the Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit in Johannesburg. Other funding-related efforts included UNDP programmes financed by the Global Environment Facility and Capacity 21. The representative concluded her presentation by reaffirming UNDP support for its partner countries in their desire to achieve greater equity in the governance of the global environment.

l. The Chief of the Environment and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC outlined the objectives of the regional preparatory process and presented a detailed analysis of the challenges and opportunities for the region associated with the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In the 10 years that had passed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held, a number of exceedingly important changes had occurred, including the effects of the globalization process together with its heterogeneous and asymmetrical characteristics. She also referred to the emergence of new modes of production and consumption, the countries’ heightened interdependence and vulnerability, and the creation of new integration schemes, among many others. One of the hallmarks of that period had been a shift in the countries’ export profile towards environmentally sensitive modalities based on the extraction of natural resources. On the social front, poverty had been reduced but the situation with respect to income distribution had either stagnated or grown worse, job stability and working conditions had deteriorated, and intensive international migration was taking place in conjunction with rapid urbanization.
m. Efforts in the sphere of environmental management revealed a degree of fragility and a lack of institutional continuity. Economic instruments were gradually being introduced that complemented direct regulatory and monitoring mechanisms. One of the most important challenges in that area was to delink economic growth from pollution and intensive resource use. The region also needed to strengthen its position in relation to the global agenda and the full incorporation of environmental issues into financial and trade negotiations. The central need was to articulate a Latin American and Caribbean vision of sustainable development.

n. The Regional Coordinator of the Evaluation and Early Warning Division of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean outlined the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) process being used by UNEP as a basis for proposing means of assessing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. The preparation of country reports was a key element in the preparatory process for the World Summit, which provided for a progression from the national to the subregional, regional and then global levels. UNEP was also working to construct scenarios of what the future would look like if the world held to the path it was currently following. Those scenarios would be very specific and would be one of the United Nations Environment Programme’s major contributions to the World Summit. As part of the GEO process, attention was also being focused on the fact that priority concerns were not being integrated into general policy.

o. The GEO process of UNEP had identified a number of areas of priority concern for Caribbean countries, including: the atmosphere, including climate change and its impact; the scarcity of fresh water and its declining quality; the degradation of coastal zones and marine ecosystems; urbanization and waste management; and the increasing frequency and impacts of natural disasters. In conjunction with the identification of those priority concerns, it had identified some of the major causes of environmental degradation in the subregion, which included the poverty of a majority of the population and excessive consumption by a minority, unsustainable environmental management and unplanned urban expansion. It was important to select a limited number of indicators as a basis for an accurate assessment of the progress made and an extrapolation of where the world would be at a specified point in the future if it continued to follow a conventional development path and where it would be under a policy reform scenario providing for improved stewardship.

p. The Caribbean environment was highly vulnerable to disasters due to a combination of social, economic and natural phenomena. It was possible to mitigate that vulnerability, but in order to do so the subregion would have to increase its economic growth rate based on greater value added rather than simply the extraction of its natural resources, thereby turning the market into a tool for achieving sustainable development. An increase in official development assistance was also needed, since although ODA requirements had been set at 0.7% of GDP at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, it had not only failed to reach that target but had actually declined since that time.
q. The crucial equation for the achievement of sustainability entailed determining the nature of the relationship between the environment and trade, achieving adequate growth, boosting exports, allocating more resources for social expenditure, augmenting the level of value added, securing more official development assistance and increasing private investment. It was also important to reduce capital volatility and ensure that the commitments assumed by developed countries under Agenda 21 and the Kyoto Protocol were honoured.

r. In the general discussion that followed the presentations given under agenda item 4b, the participating delegations were unanimous in commending the various agencies on the high quality and usefulness of the material they had presented. The representative of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which was coordinating inter-regional efforts at the request of the Commission on Sustainable Development, said that it would be very helpful if the Caribbean subregion could send a representative to the preparatory meeting for the Pacific region that was to be held in September 2001 so that the SIDS regions could coordinate their positions prior to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

s. A number of delegations addressed issues mentioned in the presentations that were of vital interest to the countries of the subregion. Special emphasis was placed on the Caribbean countries’ particular vulnerability to the effects of climate change, which included rising sea levels and an increase in natural disasters, and on the health aspects of sustainable development.
Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS