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**REPORT ON THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**Santiago, Chile
19-21 January 2000**

BACKGROUND PAPER NO. 10

**Prepared by the
Division for Economic and Social Affairs**

Report

Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, Chile, 19 – 21 January 2000

Introduction

The Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean held at the ECLAC's Headquarters from 19 to 21 January 2000 in Santiago, Chile, was the third in a series of such meetings organized by the Division for Sustainable Development at the regional level. The objectives of the meeting were: 1) to exchange national experiences in formulating and implementing national sustainable development strategies; 2) to analyse means in which regional and sub-regional cooperation in sustainable development has been promoted; and 3) to strengthen CSD-regional links including the Bolivia-Summit follow-up and to explore regional priorities for to the Earth Summit + 10 review in 2002.

The collaborating partners in organizing this meeting were: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Organization of American States (OAS), UN-Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Fifty-four participants, representing governments from the region at the senior policy-making level, regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations, financial institutions, key UN regional entities and selected non-governmental organizations active in the region, attended the meeting.

The outcome of the meeting was presented at the Twelfth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean in Barbados in March 2000. The report will also be made available to participants at the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in April 2000. A publication based on the contributions made at the Santiago meeting will be issued in due course.

Conclusions and recommendations

I. Implementation of national sustainable development strategies

A. Relevant factors which have contributed to the formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies (NSDS)

It is recognized that the countries of the region have addressed, in various ways, the need to develop national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) on the basis of proposals formulated by environmental and/or planning authorities, with a view to expediting the transition to sustainable development. At the same time, it is recognized realistically that strategic priorities are aimed at reducing the existing poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. Another aim is to ensure that elements of sustainability are incorporated into the national policies which will lead to NSDS adopted by the highest political authorities. In both of these processes, the following relevant factors have been identified which have contributed to the successful formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies:

- a) The international agreements and commitments entered into as a result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Agenda 21, Rio Declaration, Statement of Principles on Forests, Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification);
- b) The Rio Declaration as a blueprint that sets forth principles and ethical values concerning sustainable development;
- c) The establishment, in most of the countries, of participatory institutional structures or forums which have generated and promoted the formulation and implementation of NSDS, such as national councils for sustainable development or inter-ministerial commissions, among others, and which have an impact on high-level decision-making and promote consensus;
- d) Amendments to regulatory frameworks, which have contributed to greater political integration of the sustainability dimension (constitutions, laws and regulations);
- e) The phasing-in of sustainable development strategies, which open up opportunities to elaborate a new economic model that recognizes the interaction among the economic, social and environmental aspects with a view to improving the competitiveness of the countries of the region in the long term;
- f) The growing participation of local governments, which, as a result of Agenda 21 and the SIDS Programme of Action resulting from the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, have been inspired to formulate and implement their own sustainable development agendas;
- g) Society's growing awareness of the issue, which has generated greater demand for the formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies;

- h) Progress in intersectoral cooperation and coordination, which has promoted the integration of various sectoral public policies in relation to the concept of sustainable development;
- i) The existence of regional initiatives such as the Regional Action Plan for the environment adopted by the Forum of Ministers of the Environment and supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank; the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development, adopted by the States members of the Organization of American States (OAS); the hemispheric Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas adopted by the countries participating in the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in 1996 and the preparations for the Santa Cruz+5 meeting, planned for the last quarter of 2001 in Bolivia as one input to the Earthsummit+10 meeting from the member states of the OAS.

B. Common lessons learned from these experiences: conditions for success and challenges

1. Lessons learnt for ensuring the success of NSDS:

- The desirability of ensuring the effective involvement, from an early stage, of all relevant actors in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national sustainable development strategies;
- The need to achieve long-term political commitments to the objectives of sustainable development to ensure that the latter will transcend successive administrations and to guarantee the continuity of national sustainable development strategies;
- The viability of national sustainable development strategies depends on the innovative and proactive capacity of the actors involved to mobilize human, financial and technical resources, both internal and external;
- The desirability of recognizing and specifying that sustainable development is not synonymous with environmental policy or management and, therefore, that the formulation of national sustainable development strategies should be characterized by an integrating approach that incorporates economic, social and environmental concerns;
- The importance of reflecting, in public policy, the experiences of the private sector, recognizing that sustainable business activity is not necessarily a cost, but rather an investment;
- The building of greater awareness and participation by the population as a prerequisite for the success of national sustainable development strategies and the need to incorporate the principles of sustainable development into formal and non-formal education;

- The need for critical analysis of the impact of the globalization process on the countries of the region to enrich long-term visions.

2. Challenges:

- Including the issue of sustainable development on the priority agenda of Governments;
- Strengthening institutional capacity for the implementation, supervision, monitoring and control of the commitments made in national sustainable development strategies, including policies on the access by the public to information and to decision-making;
- Strengthening institutional capacity to guarantee the representative participation of civil society in the decision-making process;
- Improving access to information on sustainable development and broadening its dissemination through the mass media;
- Guiding the mass media to play a role in promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns;
- Mobilizing funds needed to implement national sustainable development strategies;
- Coordinating national finance mechanisms and international cooperation mechanisms;
- Giving high priority to the coordination of donors and finance agencies to ensure that their agendas are consistent with government priorities. To achieve this, Governments should articulate their priorities and be proactive in their negotiations with such agencies;
- Ensuring that national priorities take precedence over those of international organizations and financial institutions;
- Channelling funds towards the strengthening of permanent sustainable development institutions in the countries of the region;
- Providing support to the economic valuation of the country's natural and social resource endowment so that it may be included in national accounts;
- Promoting more efficient and effective use of existing tools for environmental management, both direct and indirect, to facilitate the practical implementation of national sustainable development strategies;
- Devising policies to channel foreign investment towards sustainable projects;
- Achieving greater coordination and coherence among public policies that affect the natural resource base;
- Strengthening technical capacity to formulate portfolios of practical and viable sustainable development projects;
- Recognizing existing experiences and capacities to avoid duplication of effort.

C. Main characteristics of national strategies for sustainable development (NSDSs)

The issue of “Key Characteristics of National Strategies for Sustainable Development” has emerged from successive discussions of what elements constitute a sustainable development strategy. This is particularly relevant in light of the targets set by the international community, at the 19th Special Session of the General Assembly (Earthsummit + 5), to have in place by 2002 national strategies for sustainable development.

Two previous consultations among UN agencies and bilateral donors (September 1998) and national representatives of the African Region (September 1999) yielded a preliminary list of key characteristics. (Attached in Annex I) This was made available to the meeting as a point of departure for the discussion.

The following points were made during the discussions:

- 1) There was broad consensus that the list identified the basic characteristics relating to the process of preparation of a national strategy for sustainable development; however, before this could be used as a “check list”, it should be subjected to further discussion and in-depth analysis;
- 2) The list could be developed into a well-defined methodological approach through the use of a matrix or flow chart indicating clearly the activities and outcomes. For example, it could be classified in such a way as to reflect the four stages of the process of formulation of the strategy: Identification (of issues); Formulation of the strategy; Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation;
- 3) Adequate resources should be made available to relevant institutions and institutional accountability should be established;
- 4) It is important to include references to indicators, both in formulating and in executing strategies; appropriate indicators should be designed to correspond to national and local contexts within a conceptual framework, allowing for inter-country comparison;
- 5) At all stages of the strategic work, vulnerability to natural and economic factors and other constraints must be taken into account;
- 6) The specific comments on each element on the list in Annex I include the following:
 - a) The process should be participatory by the interested parties and lead to a strategy; the focus should be to establish objectives and overall priorities; it should reconcile diverse interests and resolve conflicts; it should establish a long-term vision with short-, medium- and long-term goals;
 - b) Cultural issues and governance are essential;
 - c) NSDS should take into account vulnerability to natural disasters and other forms of vulnerability; policies at the subnational and local levels should do the same;
 - d) Both intersectoral and cross-sectoral policies should be established to address the issue of vulnerability;
 - e) There should be close links between the budgetary process (allocation of resources) and the implementation of the strategy; Resources should specifically be earmarked to support the achievement of the goals established under the strategy;

- f) Instruments should be defined for the continuous adjustment of NSSDs;
- g) An inventory of natural resources and national technological knowledge should be established; environmental audits and accounting should be included as key instruments for monitoring implementation; data should be converted and transmitted as information for decision-makers; emphasis should be placed on the role of the mass-media in NSDS implementation; appropriate indicators of sustainable development should be included;
- h) Representatives of civil society should include grass-roots organizations, academic institutions and universities;
- i) Alliances should also be formed with international cooperation and finance agencies;
- j) Priority should be given to the optimum use of existing institutions and resources over the establishment of new institutions; existing institutions should be provided with the necessary technical and financial resources to carry out designated responsibilities;
- k) New legal and regulatory frameworks should respond more to NSDS than to environmental policies;
- l) SMART (simple, measurable, attainable, reliable and time-bound) indicators should be applied and the potential for sustainable use of natural resources for improving the quality of life of people should be demonstrated;
- m) Specific reference should be made in NSDS to concerns, commitments and cooperation at the subregional and regional levels;
- n) The NSDS should have a high-level political commitment and be used to elaborate a new social agenda.

It was understood that the above contributions should be taken into account in future work for establishing a consensus around the “key characteristics” and the development of an appropriate methodology.

D. The roles played by subregional, regional and international organizations and by other donors in facilitating national implementation of national sustainable development strategies

Subregional, regional and international organizations and other donors have played different roles in facilitating national implementation of NSDS, which include:

- Encouraging the incorporation of sustainability requirements into the financing of development projects;
- Encouraging consolidation of permanent sustainable development institutions in the countries of the region;
- Assisting in systematizing national political agendas of the region with a view to a region-wide coordination;
- Facilitating the exchange of experiences and public policy instruments;
- Systematizing information on and knowledge of international trends;

- Supporting countries in the formulation of NSDS in the context of international agreements, even if their support for implementation has been insufficient.

II. Regional and subregional cooperation for sustainable development

A. Guidelines emerging from the cooperation frameworks, modalities, issues and partners

Regional and subregional cooperation frameworks should include the concept of sustainable development. Priority should be given to regional over national projects, as in the case of European Union cooperation for Panama and Costa Rica.

There are several regional agencies involved in the areas of development, economics, trade, health, sustainable development, finance, disaster prevention, development of public policies, etc.

The principal cooperation agencies in the region are:

ECLAC, UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank, Central American Economic Integration Bank, Andean Development Corporation (CAF), Caribbean Community (Caricom), Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), Organization of American States (OAS), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Union and various bilateral cooperation agencies.

Over the last few years, there has been a great interest on the part of subregional organizations, including in non-English-speaking countries, in project formulation and implementation. Thus, there has been an increase in cooperation and bilateral assistance among Spanish-, German-, French-, Dutch- and English-speaking countries within the region, in the areas of health, environment, agriculture and trade, among others.

There has been a greater effort to move from bilateral to multilateral approaches, as well as incorporating bioregional approaches to the development planning.

Some of the issues mentioned are as follows:

- Support for micro, small and medium-sized firms;
- Biodiversity;
- Poverty alleviation
- Decentralization of environmental management
- Strengthening civil society
- Institution building
- Ecological and social vulnerability
- Climate change
- Governance
- Trade
- Gender
- State reform

Modalities:

- Non-refundable assistance
- Soft loans (tied loans)
- Risk capital funds
- Cost-sharing

Some shortcomings of the present regional cooperation schemes were also mentioned:

- Projects that receive support often do not correspond to national priorities but rather reflect the agendas of the international cooperation agencies.
- Regional committees and organizations often have been set up in response to donor projects geared to the region. However, the sustainability of these projects has depended on financial support from the Government.
- There is limited capacity to deal with the new integrated approach required by the concept of sustainable development.
- Insufficient cooperation initiatives exist in the areas related to seas and oceans. In order to improve this situation, further regional cooperation is recommended.
- There is enhanced coordination at the sectoral level, however, inter-sectoral coordination is non-existent. Such a mechanism does to a certain degree exist in the context of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States.

B. Contribution by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to local issues, collaboration with other partners including Governments and regional and subregional organizations

NGOs have over time become more constructive, involved and are source of information. They have, for example, played an important role in environmental education, capacity building at the local level and in management of natural resources, parks and protected areas.

Generally, NGOs have played an active role in ensuring that issues of sustainability are taken into consideration in cooperation schemes in the region; examples of these include cooperation in the Gran Chaco Americano and the definition of principles for public participation in the Inter-American Public Participation Strategy (ISP), approved in 1999 by the OAS member states. These organizations are in a better position to establish areas for discussion at the local level and, since they are multi-sectoral, cannot be left out of any process of sustainable development. However, the roles and participation of the different types of NGOs need to be clarified.

The contribution of small, local NGOs is limited given their scant capacity to handle specific issues, as well as their difficulties in transmitting their achievements to the national agenda. On the other hand, major national and international NGOs, and national, regional and thematic networks, have been largely successful in having community work incorporated into the national agendas.

Notwithstanding the above, the following points were made:

- A number of problems of NGO participation were mentioned such as lack of clarity as regards the identity and mission of these organizations. For example, in some cases, the NGOs assume roles and/or functions that are under the competence of the public sector while in other cases assuming the role of consultants. In some instances, the NGOs do not have the required technical capacity to act as counterparts on the same terms as the public and private sectors.

- The lack of explicit recognition of indigenous peoples, of their organizations and how these organizations differ from NGOs in general; The establishment of fora, networks and NGO registers was strongly encouraged.

The contribution of key global NGOs such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), TNC, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Earth Council had been important, although they also were seen as having imposed their own priorities on the national agendas.

Specifically in the case of Central America, the number of subregional NGOs had grown significantly.

NGOs have made their contributions through public demonstrations, criticisms and advocacy, in forging alliances with local authorities, other NGOs and government institutions dealing with areas concerned, and through representatives of the legislative power. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that there have been cases where, owing to lack of accountability for their actions, NGOs have not achieved the desired results.

C. Ways and means of strengthening ties among regional and subregional fora and processes

National councils on sustainable development and other regional fora should provide opportunities for discussion, not only of environmental issues, but also of trade and other issues. To this end, UNCTAD and WTO should be included, in the field of trade, as well as ECLAC, the World Bank, IDB, UNDP and UNEP.

In order to strengthen linkages and cooperation processes, every effort should be made to facilitate technical cooperation between well-established subregional organizations, such as ALIDES and the Andean Community.

The Amazon Agenda for the Twenty-first Century is a good example of collaboration between existing regional and subregional fora for the formulation of sustainable development strategies.

Notwithstanding the importance of all existing international environmental negotiation efforts, the following were identified as playing a central part in international negotiations over the next few years: the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (and the Kyoto Protocol), and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The outcome from the Meeting of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean combined with the expertise of ECLAC should provide the basis for regional follow-up on Agenda 21. Standing working groups should be created to work towards a regional consensus on this issue and for the exchange of information.

III. Preparation for the Earth Summit + 10

A. Specific priority areas in which significant progress could be made in implementing Agenda 21 up to the year 2002, 10 years after the UNCED

- Identification and financing of sustainable development projects;
- Coordination of various international bodies and agencies for the implementation of sustainable development;

- Continuation of the process of defining and using sustainable development indicators to form the basis for accountability and early warning mechanisms;
- Periodic evaluation of programmes and projects for compliance with Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States, based on agreed indicators which are simple, measurable, appropriate, reliable and time-specific and which integrate all dimensions of sustainable development. In this context, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and regional organizations such as ECLAC are requested to support countries in such evaluation efforts;
- Support for regional and hemispheric activities in preparation for the ten-year review of Agenda 21 (Rio + 10), particularly the regional meeting to be organized by ECLAC and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2001, as well as the five-year review of the Santa Cruz Plan of Action (Santa Cruz + 5); scheduled to be held in the second half of 2001;
- Incorporation of natural resource accounts into national accounts;
- Inclusion of the economic, environmental and social vulnerability of the countries of the region as essential sustainable development variables;
- Promotion of decentralization and strengthening of local fora, taking into account mechanisms such as the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development and the UNEP/UNDP Global Environmental Citizenship Programme;
- Strengthening the exchange of information and improved use of existing networks in disseminating experiences acquired;
- Emphasis on capacity-building, especially for the design and implementation of sustainable development projects;
- Promotion of technological innovation, incorporating traditional and indigenous knowledge, to steer production processes towards more efficient and sustainable systems;
- Analysis of the advantages of the relationship between trade and environment;
- Strengthening of negotiation skills, in international fora, of the countries of the region through regional cooperation and coordination;
- Environmental, economic and social impact assessment of tourist activity in the region for its reorientation towards sustainability;
- Promotion of land management, respecting the property rights of indigenous populations;
- Promotion of the integrated management of ecoregions, particularly river basins and biological corridors.

B. Contribution of regional efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean to the Earth Summit +10.

A regional assessment should be made of Agenda 21, on the basis of national experiences and with the support of well-known academic institutions and of regional organizations. These may include ECLAC, UNEP, UNMDP, IDB and OAS. Each organization would work within its own mandate, bearing in mind the work done by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The

indicators to be used in this assessment should be simple, measurable and accessible. The assessment should be conducted at a regional meeting to be convened in 2001 by the United Nations.

The agencies should support the methodological work being carried out by each country in coordination with the consultative councils on sustainable development; these methodologies should be integrated at the sub-regional and regional levels. Likewise, it is important to ensure the participation of important groups (parliamentarians, consumers, experts, entrepreneurs, local authorities, communicators and professional associations)

As for the Caribbean countries, following suggestions are made:

- Efforts should be made to exchange experiences among the English-, Spanish-, French- and Dutch speaking countries of the region.
- Due attention should be paid to the vulnerability and sensitivity of small island States in the Caribbean in preparing for the ten year review of UNCED.
- Guidelines should be developed to steer consultations on Agenda 21/SIDS and the Programme of Action at the national level.

Summary of opening and closing remarks

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo, in his opening keynote referred to the specific mandate of the regional economic commissions to evaluate the progress achieved in implementing Agenda 21 in the different regions. He stressed that the current meeting was an excellent opportunity for ECLAC to reaffirm its commitment to sustainable development, by contributing to the exchange of experiences in the area of national and subregional strategies for sustainable development, proposing mechanisms for more effective inter-agency coordination, consolidating existing mechanisms development in the region, taking into consideration the complexities arising from economic globalization. Such efforts would serve as a preliminary contribution to the evaluation to be made in the region preparatory process for the Earth Summit + 10.

Concerning the overall evaluation of the decade, he gave a positive assessment in the international context with respect to sustainable development. He pointed to the following achievements:

- The United Nations Summit on Environment and Development held in 1992 marked the beginning of the transition towards a new international environmental regime, which, in conjunction with Agenda 21, represented a consensus on new global ethical principles aimed at establishing more equitable foundations for international cooperation.
- In the past decade, awareness of the environmental aspects of development and the related concept of sustainable development had gradually penetrated public policy and some economic and social practices in countries in the region. That was reflected in the development of institutions, strategies and policies.
- The global conventions had also generated a series of important institutional changes and innovative mechanisms for cooperation.
- The involvement of new non-State actors, with the non-governmental organizations (NGO) carrying the most weight, the scientific community and the private sector.

However, Mr. Ocampo pointed to a number of obstacles:

- The principles of environmental protection and sustainable development continued to be viewed by most of the production sectors and a significant number of government economic sectors as external interference that hindered development.
- The economic policies of the energy, agricultural, industrial and urban developments sectors caused conflicting environmental practices which called for a review of policies and instruments for environmental management.
- Liberal trade policies in the region and the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) had altered the course of the development process, the export profile and, with it, the environment as well. Insofar as the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were seeking more and better international trade linkages, their pattern of production specialization in resource-intensive branches placed the region in a more vulnerable situation in terms of the environmental demands that it would have to face on the markets of the more developed countries.

He pointed out that in response to the new international context, countries in the region had strengthened and/or created a set of regional and subregional processes and mechanisms for cooperation, including:

- The Programme of Action for Small-Island Developing State;
- The Alliance for Sustainable Development in Central America (ALIDES);
- Mercosur;
- The Andean Community of Nations;
- The Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The regional reality pointed to the need for major structural and institutional changes and raised a number of questions and outstanding issues; some of these being of a global nature, while others relating specifically to the region. The following were mentioned as some of the outstanding issues on the global, regional and subregional agenda for discussion at the Earth Summit + 10, and which should be included in subsequent discussions:

1. Harmonizing economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability;
2. Redefining the region's comparative advantages on the basis of the global environmental agenda;
3. Modernizing public policy: Consolidating institutions and instruments;
4. Effective participation of other stakeholders;
5. Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies operating in Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of sustainable development.

He stated that starting with his mandate, ECLAC had pledged to continue to support Governments in the region in achieving the objectives of sustainable development.

ECLAC would continue to work to secure a new balance between State and market, which is one of the outstanding tasks of the reforms currently under way in the region. This would, first of all, call for active work to set up, strengthen and redesign public, private and community-based institutions and such institutions that promote solidarity. Secondly, it would call for the development of improved schemes for the organization and evaluation of public management, in particular with respect to economic, social and environmental management. In the environmental sphere, efforts were being made, among others, in the following areas: trade and the environment, preparation of appropriate economic instruments for sustainable development, analysis of sustainability of productive development and in incorporation of the environmental dimension into the statistical information systems that ECLAC had been developing since its inception. Thirdly, institution building covered not only the national but also local and international dimensions, with particular emphasis on enhancing citizens' awareness of major development dilemmas. ECLAC was particularly concerned with the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity given the enormous implications that they have for the region's production and social structure.

Finally, the basic mandate of ECLAC was highlighted as providing a periodic regional review of sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean encompassing economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability.

The Executive Director of the National Commission for the Environment (CONAMA) in Chile, Mr. Rodrigo Egaña, pointed out that the issue of sustainable development had generated growing attention from authorities and citizens' organizations in countries of the region. However, he also stressed that throughout the past decade, emphasis had been placed, and deservedly so, on overcoming poverty, so that, in one way or another, the issue of sustainable development had been relegated to a second place. There had been advances in identifying the major environmental issues on the liability side, the types of institutions that were required and the policies that would have to be defined. He pointed out, among other things, the increasing tendency to integrate environmental policies with other public policies, which was proof of better integration towards the concept of sustainable development. One outcome of the

improved integration was that it opened up opportunities for citizens' participation, civil society had, indeed, systematically become an important interlocutor for the government sector.

At the closing of the decade, one major task left outstanding was how to integrate strategies for economic development, poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability into national policies. In that respect, Chile's experience in the course of ten years of democratic government had been to mainstream the issue into the agenda of State concerns. He pointed to the advances in environmental mainstreaming, which had made it possible, among other things, to pinpoint precisely the objectives and modalities for achieving them. He also highlighted the advances made in environmental institution-building, although admittedly, there was room for reviewing existing institutions in order to improve the way in which environmental problems were tackled. Lastly, he pointed to the achievements with respect to instruments for environmental management and control, which had evolved significantly compared with those existing in the country ten years earlier.

The Chairman of the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Mr. Juan Mayr, in his message, emphasized the need to keep sustainable development high on the national and international policy agendas. He stated that national sustainable development strategies, as a means to achieve the integration, interrelation and interdependence that underlies sustainable development, may be more important for the process of consultation and participation they invoke, than the outputs they actually produce. In his view, much more should be done to ensure that the resources and capabilities of regional institutions are properly focused not only on regional issues, but also on national issues that are amenable to regional approaches and cooperation. A main challenge for the meeting would be to identify ways and means to promote greater regional focus and cooperation in implementing sustainable development. The contribution this meeting could make in this respect would add to the insights and proposals already developed in the other regional consultations, and enrich the understanding of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Thierry Lemaesquier, expressed that since the Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had been participating very actively in efforts to devise paths towards the implementation at the national level of the commitments made with respect to sustainable development. He highlighted the need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between public authorities, civic organizations and, increasingly, the private sector, which had gradually been assuming a greater role.

Bearing in mind that Agenda 21 was one of the most important documents emerging from the Earth Summit in Rio, UNDP had focused its efforts in giving support to countries in the formulation of national programmes through the programme referred to as "Capacity 21", complying with the recommendation that countries should formulate their own programmes. He emphasized that a national strategy should be developed in a political and cultural context, which should take into consideration citizens' and government priorities in all spheres in order to guide the country towards sustainable development. The challenge was to give form to that ideal openly and through a participatory process. Lastly, he urged Latin America and the Caribbean to attend the Rio + 10 meetings with strong approaches and results to show to the world.

The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, Mr. Nitin Desai, in his statement, stated that the process initiated at Rio provided impetus for undertaking regional initiatives and helped foster concerted regional efforts towards the achievement of sustainable development. He referred to the Hemispheric Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development held in Bolivia in 1996, the Plan of Action for Sustainable Development and the Caribbean Action Plan under the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, as examples of such initiatives. An essential purpose of the present meeting, in his view, would be to take stock of where countries of Latin America and the Caribbean stand

with respect to national and regional sustainable development strategies. With regards to regional cooperation, the goal should be to achieve concrete results in terms of understanding shared problems, promoting exchange of information, formulating common approaches and ideas, and catalyzing joint actions, particularly among regional institutions.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Dr. César Gaviria, in his message, mentioned five important milestones for the hemisphere of the Americas: 1) sixteen governments have had the foresight to establish national councils, policies and/or plans for sustainable development; 2) A first presidential summit on sustainable development for the hemisphere was convened in Santa Cruz, Bolivia in December 1996 where a declaration and 65 Initiatives in a Plan of Action were adopted; 3) The Inter-American Strategy for Public Participation (ISP) in sustainable development decisions throughout the Americas was recently approved; 4) In 1997 an Inter-American Task Force on Sustainable Development with seven working groups was established; and 5) The Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS) was established in 1996 out of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). He urged the use of these existing instruments to their full advantage and to take them into account in the meeting deliberations. He believed that the hemisphere could provide the CSD with both positive and substantive inputs to its long-term goals.

Ms. Alicia Bárcena, Director of the Environment and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC, drew attention to the challenges that the sustainable development paradigm presented for Latin America and the Caribbean. In her view, Latin American and Caribbean needed to devise a regional vision of sustainable development in order to conceive and construct a perspective and an outlook of their own. She recalled that the region, and especially ECLAC, had contributed substantially to the generation of innovative ideas and concepts relating to development. In response to those challenges, a regional agenda was emerging and, hence, the priority tasks identified by ECLAC for implementation in the following years in conjunction with other bodies in the United Nations system were as follows:

- To carry out periodic evaluations of sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to determine sustainable patterns in the region, particularly those based on both economic and social perspectives;
- To follow up on public policies and international agreements from a regional monitoring centre;
- To coordinate strategic areas of social development with social and environmental dimensions, which implies pursuing two initiatives: building empirical evidence of the links between the economy and the environment, and assessing the social costs of unsustainable practices;
- To develop a new citizens' contract around sustainable development.

Lastly, she confirmed the offer made by Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, Executive Secretary of ECLAC to make the Commission's capacities available for the regional meeting (Earth Summit + 10) to be convened jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in mid-2001, to assess the status of Agenda 21. That forum would provide an opportunity for the region to present its vision and to report on the progress it had made in implementing the international environmental agenda.

UNEP's Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Mr. Ricardo Sánchez Sosa, presented a brief report on the State of the Environment of the Region and outlined UNEP's priorities for the next two years in the Latin American and Caribbean region. He also stressed, that the

goals and priorities set out by the Forum of Ministers of Environment were of the greatest importance to the region. He emphasized that the focus of the Forum of Ministers of Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean should be on implementing all of Agenda 21 and not only environmental issues. Concerns such as education, health, poverty and equity should be at the center of attention during these meetings.

ANNEX I

Key characteristics of National Strategies for Sustainable Development

Suggested elements of national sustainable development strategy processes emanating from regional and inter-agency consultations

Agenda 21 proposed that all countries develop national strategies for sustainable development. The goal has been formalized by the OECD Development Assistance Committee and the United Nations General Assembly, setting target dates of 2005 and 2002, respectively. As Agenda 21 gives no guidelines for how to develop such national strategies, there is also no clear definition of what they are. Early on, it was recognized that it is not possible to write prescriptive guidelines for what a NSDS would be. Prescriptive guidance would not recognize the myriad of entry points and priorities which are dependent on the specific political, economic, social and environmental context of a country. However, it was recognized that certain issues need to be addressed within all the strategy work underway. The NSDS is broader than environment, so it is necessary to distinguish the features that are singular, and articulate how it builds upon NEAPs, NCS, NTFAPs, NAPs, poverty alleviation strategies.

For many decision-makers, however, NSDS is still very synonymous with an environmental action or management plan. Thus, the challenge is to think not just of what has been our experience to date but rather what is the ideal towards which we are all working. It is clear that we need to identify the features that would differentiate a NSDS from other strategies. What should the process look like? What features distinguish the outcomes of NSDSs from those of other plans and strategies? How will we, country by country, and within the international community, recognize a good NSDS when we see one?

To help distinguish the strategies for sustainable development from other strategic frameworks, it could be useful to identify key characteristics of national sustainable development strategies. This would help the international community to assess how far the goals have been achieved; it will help national governments assess their own progress; it will help identify areas for strengthened interventions; and finally, it will help formulate effective assistance programmes targeting the "weak" area of the national strategy process.

Consultations have been held to begin the process of identifying key characteristics. The following elements have emerged:

1. **Commonality of Vision**
 - Participation which builds consensus
 - Clarity in direction - agreeing on the way forward
 - Continuous processes for reconciling different interests
2. **Integration of Policy**
 - Integrates social, economic and environmental consideration into national development policy
 - Establishes cross-sectoral policies
 - Influences sector policies
3. **Addressing issues of long-term growth**

- Reconciliation of short-term market forces with long-term planning needs
 - Consistency between vision and public/private spending
4. **Iterative and Responsive process**
 - Flexible, dynamic seizing opportunities, responding to change, recognizing timing
 - Integration of successes into the process.
 5. **Knowledge based**
 - Allowing for information and knowledge to flow through all levels
 - Based on sound data, scientific information
 6. **Partnerships**
 - Builds on partnerships between local and national governments, civil society organizations and the private sector
 7. **Nationally (as opposed to externally) driven process**
 - Support networks, dialogue with national leaders
 - Build political commitment
 - Recognizing and supporting local (as opposed to central) action
 8. **Strengthen capacity**
 - Identifies needs, and provides for capacity building at all levels and across sectors
 9. **Institutional framework**
 - Reforms or adapts existing institutions or creates new ones to promote effective sustainable development planning and implementations.
 10. **Tangible successes**
 - Provide tangible benefits to stakeholders
 - Make clear contributions to poverty reduction and other goals of sustainable development
 - Establish a common understanding of successes, that could be monitored later
 11. **Fitting national process and priorities into the international context**
 - Highlighting the importance of international sustainable development commitments
 - Recognizing the national impact of globalization
 - Ensuring a regional and international complementarity of objectives, while allowing for a plurality of processes
 - Monitoring the motivation of the UN system and other supporting agencies
 12. **The "heavy-weight" decision-makers must be part of the process**
 - NSDSs are not "smoke screens" for business as usual
 - Realizing the importance of political and economic power

ANNEX II

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