

International Meeting to review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for
the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

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Presentation

By

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Mr Chairman, Distinguished Heads of State and/or Government; Distinguished Delegates; Representatives of Civil Society; Ladies and Gentlemen.....

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has since many years a specific subprogramme for activities in the Caribbean geared to the three components of sustainable development: it studies, recommends and assists with the implementation of policies to stimulate economic growth, including integration and trade; to reduce social vulnerability and to improve responsible use and management of the natural environment, including sustainable tourism. The programme is governed by the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), comprised of precisely the 23 Caribbean countries listed as Small Island Developing States, including seven associate members, non-independent but self-governed territories and states that because of their status as associate member of ECLAC also qualify for inclusion in the list of SIDS. The ECLAC subprogramme for activities in the Caribbean can therefore adequately be described as a programme designed to support sustainable development in Caribbean SIDS.

ECLAC, through its Caribbean headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago, has therefore been intimately involved in the implementation in the Caribbean region of the Barbados Programme of Action which prompts me to offer you some reflections on this experience.

Allow me to recall that this *International Meeting* represents yet another major milestone in the efforts of the international community to evaluate, to promote and to, basically, come to grips with the measures and actions that are required to ensure the effective and, may I say, "*sustained*" implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action and related international decisions.

The earlier milestones reflected the phases through which the SIDS of the Caribbean have journeyed in the quest for their sustainable development: from the initial *acclimatisation* to the prescriptions of *sustainable development* contained in the SIDS Programme of Action; to the explicit incorporation of socio-economic elements at *SIDS + 5*; on to the consolidation into the *Millennium Declaration*; and, finally, the development of a revamped framework for the implementation of the Programme of Action, at the WSSD. These phases reflect swings between optimism and disappointment, disillusionment, even; and to phases of renewed, though tempered, optimism. The launch, at this *International Meeting*, of new departures, as regards the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action would ensure that the confidence of SIDS is restored and the promise of Barbados finally delivered.

Yet much has been accomplished by the SIDS of the Caribbean, for the most part, on the basis of their own resources, in such areas as Climate Change; Coastal Zone Management; Waste Management; and Tourism. Moreover, Caribbean SIDS have acquired an enhanced understanding of the sustainable development process and have established a range of institutions and management modalities such as Environmental Management Authorities and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

Significant legislative packages have been enacted that recognise the complexities of integrating environmental concerns into the development process. At this historic *International Review Meeting*, I expect that Caribbean SIDS will draw attention to these and other achievements, of which, as has been demonstrated, there is a significant number.

Nevertheless, Caribbean SIDS will also need to draw attention to the constraints they continue to face in building *resilience* to confront the several dimensions of their vulnerability: not dwelling on them, per se, but as a means of highlighting the areas in which *vulnerability*, on which the SIDS concept itself is predicated, remains to be overcome or effectively managed.

The link between economic, social and environmental vulnerability and size, has been dramatically reinforced by the experience of such countries as the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Grenada and Jamaica, among others, during the 2004 hurricane season. In this regard, ECLAC has either mounted, or otherwise participated in Teams that have undertaken assessments of the Macro-Economic, Social and Environmental Effects of these natural disasters in Caribbean SIDS, using its own recognised methodology developed for the purpose. This methodology has even led ECLAC to become involved in the efforts of the international community to assess the recent disaster of the tsunami in South Asia.

Against the background of this experience, ECLAC recommends that the opportunity provided by this *International Meeting* be seized to:

1. Address the shortfalls and gaps, in the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action, to date;
2. Support SIDS in building of *resilience* to confront their vulnerability, through the recommendation of specific measures; the identification of funding sources and/or partnerships; the removal of institutional constraints, and effective representation in relevant international fora.
3. Address new and emerging issues e.g. information technology, security, poverty and HIV/AIDS;
4. Take concrete steps towards the finalization of the indices of economic, social and environmental vulnerability of SIDS;
5. Lend concrete support to SIDS-SIDS cooperation at the regional, as well as interregional levels; in particular for those island communities that have little voice in the international arena
6. Establish benchmarks and other means of measuring the progress of the future stages of the implementation process;

Finally, as regards the very important matter of the coordination of their sustainable development efforts, the SIDS of the Caribbean appear to have arrived at a crossroads of sorts. In this context, ECLAC recognises that, in light of the elements earlier mentioned in relation to the multidisciplinary and analytical nature of its work and the coverage of its membership, it remains extremely well placed to make a

significant contribution to the translation of the outcomes of this *International Meeting* into concrete initiatives, projects and activities for the benefit of all SIDS of the Caribbean subregion. ECLAC, as a think tank and branch of the UN Secretariat, therefore takes this opportunity to renew to the SIDS of the Caribbean, its commitment and its readiness to support their sustainable development endeavours in all areas falling within its competence as mandated by the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee in the context of the wider ECLAC and UN governing bodies.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, I thank you.