



For and beyond Rio+20: Launch of the Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group

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As the world prepares to discuss next week in Rio at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) how a “green economy” approach can redirect us towards a sustainable development pathway and address the current economic, social and environmental crises, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) launched a Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group.

The launch took place on May 23rd 2012 in St. Kitts during the Sixth Biennial Caribbean Environmental Forum and Exhibition (CEF 6) “The Green Economy: Challenges and Opportunities in Managing Health, Water, Waste, Land, Energy, Climate Change and our Natural Resources”. CEF 6 was coordinated by the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI).

The Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group (GE ALG) will serve as an important independent regional mechanism to facilitate sharing of information, ideas, and initiatives, and development of joint recommendations from and for the Caribbean. Mr. Cletus Springer, member of the GE ALG and a native Saint Lucian currently serving as Director of Sustainable Development of the Organisation of American States (OAS), noted that in the Caribbean “the GE ALG process is the only available mechanism around that can make a significant contribution to the advancement of a green economy for sustainable development. At this time there is no other mechanism that can link the green economy processes now underway in several Caribbean countries and promote synergies between them and related international process.”

The GE ALG is comprised of persons from across the Caribbean and diverse sectors who are implementing various green economy initiatives in their sectors and countries. They come from government agencies, technical assistance and inter-governmental agencies, and civil society organisations (national, regional and international and including community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic institutes, media and labour). Members are appointed in their individual capacity. Nicole Leotaud, Executive Director of CANARI, noted that “it is exciting that we have such a range of perspectives in the GE ALG, including civil society organisations working on developing sustainable community livelihoods in Cuba and Grenada, a Dominican cultural icon, a gender expert with experience in working around the Caribbean, leading Caribbean economists, government technocrats involved in the development of climate compatible development plans and renewable energy initiatives in the Dominican Republic and Nevis, and private sector perspectives from the tourism and agricultural sectors.”

Information and lessons learned from initiatives implemented by GE ALG members and other partners across the Caribbean will be analysed by the GE ALG to better understand how green economy approaches can help to advance sustainable development in the Caribbean. The evidence-based knowledge emerging will be communicated to build greater understanding of Caribbean stakeholders at local, national and regional levels.

At the launch in St. Kitts, participants from around the region discussed how the GE ALG would need to focus especially on the challenge of communication for influencing policy in the region and with our international partners about how best to support Caribbean efforts towards economic development principles, policies and practices for sustainable development. In April, CANARI presented the GE ALG to the 39th Special Meeting of the Council on Trade and Environment (COTED) of CARICOM, which accepted this as a useful mechanism in the region to promote the sharing of lessons, best practice and experiences. The COTED noted that the region needed to focus on carrying to Rio+20, relevant and established policy positions on what a green economy means in the Caribbean context, and then post-Rio+20 on devising mechanisms to support greening processes and activities now underway in several Caribbean countries, including, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis and Guyana.

Getting the Caribbean perspective into international discussions is an important function of the GE ALG and a policy brief on Caribbean perspectives on green economy has already been developed by CANARI and disseminated to stakeholders and policy makers across the region and at several regional and international meetings. GE ALG members have already shared this Caribbean perspective on green economy at several regional and international fora, for example the Global Green Growth Institute/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Consultation on Green Growth and Developing Countries held in Korea in May.

CANARI and the GE ALG are also partnering with the global Green Economy Coalition, which is involved in several events in Rio+20, including a session on June 16th hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) on “Fair Ideas” to discuss the nine principles for green economy that have been drafted in consultation with stakeholders from around the world and which are being discussed in the Rio+20 negotiation process. A Caribbean dialogue on green economy was facilitated by CANARI in 2010 (supported by IIED) and the ideas were fed into development of these key principles.

The outcomes of Rio+20 are uncertain at this point as agreement has not yet been reached among negotiators on much of what needs to be done. Hopefully our Caribbean delegations will have a strong voice and raise critical needs and opportunities for us and other small island development countries. It remains to be seen if “green economy” will be seen as just another buzzword with little real meaning or if it can catalyse fresh thinking about how economic development can provide more equitable social benefits while conserving the natural environment. Following Rio+20, the GE ALG will be implementing a two to three year programme of work to help test green economy approaches to see if and how this strategy can advance the urgent need for a more sustainable development model in the Caribbean.



Photo: Nicole Leotaud (Executive Director of CANARI) presents the CANARI Policy Brief on green economy in the Caribbean at the launch of the GE ALG in St. Kitts in May. Left is Dr LaVerne Ragster, Chair of CANARI and centre is Mrs Patricia Aquing, member of the GE ALG and Executive Director of CEHI. (Credit: Donna Spencer for CANARI)

About CANARI

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for more than 20 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building, communication and fostering partnerships.

For further information, please contact:

Nicole Leotaud, Executive Director, Caribbean Natural Resources Institute at: email: nicole@canari.org;
Tel: 868-626-6062; skype: nicole.leotaud; or see www.canari.org

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