Supporting the development and negotiation of Caribbean priorities in the post-2015 global sustainable development agenda

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Submitted by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)

1. Background

The international community is working to develop a set of post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the overarching global development framework after 2015. As part of this, CARICOM Member States are seeking to identify regional priorities and effectively negotiate these in the post-2015 SDGs process.

The United Nations General Assembly established in January 2013 an Open Working Group (OWG) tasked with developing a proposal on the SDGs. The OWG has been progressing with its work and has held nine sessions (March 2013 – March 2014), with four more sessions planned to July 2014. The OWG has developed a document outlining nineteen focus areas for the SDGs, which will be the basis for further work.

CARICOM Member States represented on the OWG are Bahamas/Barbados and Guyana/Haiti/Trinidad and Tobago (via shared seats). CARICOM Member State delegations in New York are collaborating to input into the work of the OWG, and need a clear mandate with regional priorities to prepare for the negotiation process. CARICOM Heads of Government mandated that a CARICOM Task Force should be established to support the development of a negotiating position. Consultation and preparations are also taking place at the national level and via several regional consultations.

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institutes (CANARI) is a member of the Independent Research Forum (IRF), a collaboration of research institutes from across the globe that provides an independent source of critical thinking, integrated analysis and awareness-raising on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a post-2015 SDG agenda. The IRF has provided support to the OWG via facilitating a series of informal retreats for Member States. These have focused on discussing key technical issues such as rationalising the transition from MDGs to SDGs, the various goal sets being proposed, universality and differentiation, developing an integrated goal framework, and selecting priority goals and targets. Two retreats have so far been held in October 2013 and February 2014 and a third is planned for April 2014, which will model how to develop an integrated global goal framework which is transformative and which will be taken up and implemented in countries.

Through this retreat series, CANARI interacted with the Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana delegates serving on the OWG who identified the need for similar technical support to CARICOM delegations. This was explored, including via a skype meeting on February 20 2014 hosted by the delegation from Trinidad and Tobago attended by seven other CARICOM delegations. As small delegations from small countries with very specific needs and challenges, they feel that are not yet as prepared as they would
need to be in order to effectively engage in the negotiations. Although reports have been prepared and priorities have been identified, gaps still exist. In addition, information they do have needs to be matched with what will be required in the negotiations and discussions, including assessing the many recommendations for their consistency with national and regional needs and priorities.

Additional support is therefore needed for:

- facilitating effective integration of civil society perspectives gleaned from multiple national and regional consultations into the formal positions being developed by national governments and CARICOM;
- focusing positions to respond specifically to the framework being developed by the OWG; and
- supporting delegations to be able to immediately input national and regional priorities into what is needed under the OWG process.

This will ensure development and effective negotiation of a strong and coherent regional perspective, reflecting priorities of Caribbean stakeholders and across countries.

This concept note proposes a series of inter-related activities, linked with other regional processes and work of the IRF, to provide technical assistance and independent civil society-led input and analysis to support the formal preparatory processes of CARICOM Member States.

2. Purpose

To provide technical assistance and independent input and analysis to support development and negotiation of a strong and coherent regional perspective, reflecting priorities of Caribbean stakeholders and across countries, in the post-2015 SDG process.

3. Activities

a. Regional and national consultations and webinar series to gather opinions

CANARI will participate in regional and national consultations linked to the post-2015 process to gather opinions of key stakeholders, including civil society, on regional priorities. Potential key regional meetings to which CANARI has been invited are:

- High Level Workshop on the role of the Caribbean within the Global Sustainable Agendas, to be held on April 3 2014, Dominican Republic
- Sixth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) for the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI), April 15 2014, Trinidad and Tobago
- Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) launch in the Caribbean and two-day workshop on Sustainable Solutions, May 7-8 2014, Jamaica

In addition to participating in consultations, CANARI will use social media to reach out to Caribbean stakeholders to elicit opinions on key areas. These will be drawn from the 19 topic areas already identified in the post-2015 process as well as Caribbean priorities identified in the preparatory process for the SIDS 2014 conference (for example ocean governance, inclusive economic growth within natural
limits, and building resilience to climate change and other natural disasters). Webinars and blogs will be used, with input from a range of Caribbean experts from government, academic, civil society, and private sector to stimulate discussion. Webinars may be linked to other regional events if possible.

b. **Retreats with CARICOM delegations in New York to provide technical support**

CANARI will facilitate retreats with CARICOM Delegations in New York to provide technical assistance in understanding the emerging goal framework, including how to evaluate proposals from others as well as how to generate Caribbean proposals. These will be based on the design of technical sessions in the IRF global retreats for Member States and tailored to the specific needs of CARICOM delegations. The first opportunity is immediately following the third IRF retreat scheduled for April 6-7 2014. Additional opportunities, including linked to IRF retreats in New York, can be determined.

c. **Regional workshop to analyse Caribbean priorities**

CANARI will convene a Caribbean Sustainable Development Action Learning Group\(^1\) (Caribbean SD A LG) as part of its work under the IRF. This will be an independent and informal grouping of key Caribbean leaders heavily involved in the post-2015 global process from across the Caribbean and diverse sectors to:

- **Build and share evidence-based knowledge** to build understanding and capacity on the ways in which development change happens and the approaches that have been used to achieve multiple sustainable development outcomes in the Caribbean
- **Advocate** to build commitment and influence policy in the post-2015 dialogue process
- **Act** to deliver transformational results in implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the Caribbean

CANARI proposes that membership of this group include:

- Selected members of CARICOM delegations from New York involved in the OWG process
- Selected proposed members of the CARICOM Task Force
- Selected individuals from national governments who will play a lead role in integrating the SDGs into national policies and implementing SDG-related programmes and strategies
- Selected leaders from civil society organisations and academia working on priority sustainable development topics

The Caribbean SD ALG will:

- compile, analyse and share learning on a range of public/private/community/civil society Caribbean experiences with implementing sustainable development initiatives across selected countries in the region, the results and lessons;
- analyse chains of influence (1) from local to national to regional initiatives and vice versa (2) regional change agent or innovator states and cross-state influence (3) the impact of global policy initiatives;
- facilitate an action learning approach to mobilise and support Caribbean change agents with applying frameworks, tools and approaches in their organisations, sectors and countries to efforts to engage with the post-2015 process;

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\(^1\) An action learning approach to research involves structured engagement of stakeholders in “real” situations that offer opportunities for shared learning and analysis; and application of learning to advocacy processes aimed at changing perspectives, policy, practice and behaviours. CANARI has used Action Research and Learning Groups in other work it has done, for example see [http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARIPolicyBrief14English_000.pdf](http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARIPolicyBrief14English_000.pdf).
• analyse lessons and recommendations for development of the post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDG) framework and implementation mechanisms.

A two-day workshop of the CSD ALG will be held in May 2014 in the Caribbean. This will include:
• reviewing ideas emerging from the national and regional consultations;
• reviewing a desk study conducted by CANARI of results and lessons from a few selected sustainable development initiatives across different countries and sectors implemented by different actors and combinations of actors;
• sharing of experiences of members in their countries, sectors and institutions;
• identifying emerging regional priorities;
• analysing how regional priorities relate to the global SDG agenda topic areas.

One key outcome of the workshop would be agreement on regional priorities to put forward in the global post-2015 debate.

d. Development of a brief on regional priorities
CANARI will develop a policy brief on the key regional priorities emerging from the CSD ALG workshop for communication to CARICOM delegations and other key stakeholders in the Caribbean. This will be useful to:
• guide negotiations by CARICOM delegations in the post-2015 SDG process, including to help them identify priority topic areas to focus on in the negotiations as well as to guide interventions on specific targets and indicators relevant to the Caribbean context;
• inform planned regional consultations, including work by the CARICOM Task Force;
• catalyse wider engagement of Caribbean stakeholders, including civil society, in national and regional consultations;
• inform advocacy being conducted by civil society;
• inform national governments responsible for implementing sustainable development strategies in their countries.

The brief will also be useful to inform preparatory processes for the SIDS 2014 conference. These are taking place in parallel to the post-2015 process and there has been broad agreement that these two processes need to be linked.

4. Timeline and budget

This concept focuses on an immediate and urgent timeline of March – August 2014 to allow for timely input into work by the OWG on a proposal for the post-2015 agenda.

CANARI has access to a very small IRF budget to support this work, and will seek additional opportunities for sponsorship for CANARI to attend regional meetings as a key civil society representative, for co-hosting of webinars, and for sponsorship of travel costs for additional members to participate in the Caribbean SD ALG workshop. Opportunities for piggybacking on regional meetings, including official CARICOM meetings, will be sought. CANARI will use IRF retreats in New York as opportunities to engage in follow-up meetings with CARICOM delegations.