



CASE STUDY

Fulfilling the promise:

Strengthening environmental diplomacy in the Caribbean

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Summary

This paper examines the circumstances that catalysed and sustained the participation of the Caribbean in the international sustainable development process. The focus of the paper is on the period between 1962 - following the collapse of the Federation and the emergence of independent Caribbean states - and 1994, when the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was held in Bridgetown, Barbados. The role of the Regional Task Force on Environment and Development in helping to secure what is widely regarded as the crowning achievement of the region's fledgling environmental diplomacy is also examined.

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Background

The history of the Caribbean's participation in global environment and development issues is a fairly recent one. This is in part due to the fact that until 1962, when Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago gained Independent status, all Caribbean countries were either colonies of Great Britain, or members of the West Indies Federation (1958-1962).

The Caribbean did not have a voice in the historic UN Conferences on the Law of the Sea in Geneva in 1958 and 1960, which accentuated the need for a new and generally acceptable Convention on the law of the sea. However, they were already members of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), when Resolution 2749 (XXV) was adopted on 17 December 1970 which declared inter alia, "...that the area of the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as its resources, are the common heritage of mankind, the exploration and exploitation of which shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole, irrespective of the geographical location of States."¹

The Caribbean and the Stockholm Conference

The UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in June 1972 is generally regarded as having established the foundation of the global sustainable development agenda on which the outcomes of subsequent Conferences in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1992 and 2012), Barbados (1994), Johannesburg (2002), and Samoa (2014) were achieved. The Conference was attended by 3 of the 5 independent Caribbean countries at the time, namely Guyana, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago. There is no record of the contributions of these countries to the outcomes of the Stockholm Conference; and in the communique issued at the end of Conference of Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries, held in Trinidad and Tobago in October 1972 there is no mention of the Stockholm Conference.

The Caribbean and the Law of the Sea Conference

At that recalled Conference in Trinidad and Tobago, the Heads of Government adopted a resolution on the question of the Law of the Sea, which recognised the importance of the subject to the Caribbean States and which contained proposals for follow-up action to be taken in preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. Heads of Government also expressed the hope "that there will be a common approach by CARIFTA States, in the interest of all States of the Commonwealth Caribbean."

It is not clear if at that time, Caribbean countries interpreted issues in the domain of law of the sea in an environmental context. If so, then the Resolution would be the first, recorded, political statement on any aspect of the environment and of the need for a common approach to negotiations on environment-related issues.

Instructively, the constitutions of these five independent countries do not contain any references to the environment; and except for the laws dealing with town and country planning, the subsidiary laws in place at the time were largely silent on environmental management issues.

¹ http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/preamble.htm

The Caribbean and the Brandt Commission

The Independent Commission on International Development Issues - also known as The Brandt Commission, which was established in 1977 and which produced two reports in 1980 and 1983 - was the first major independent global panel to examine connections between the environment and international development. Sir Shridath Ramphal of Guyana was the sole representative from the Caribbean region on the Commission, albeit in an independent/personal capacity. Several reports of the Commission's work, including Sir Shridath's own memoirs, credit him, and by extension Guyana and the Caribbean with having made an impactful contribution to the Commission's work. Among its several recommendations on this subject, was a call to make ecological sustainability a cornerstone of global economic policy through financial incentives for encouraging environmental protection, cleaning up the environment, expanding reforestation projects, reducing industrial emissions, slowing climate change, conserving energy and resources, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and developing clean and renewable energy sources.

The rise of the Caribbean's environmental diplomacy

The 1980s was a watershed decade in the evolution of environment and development issues, both at the global level and within the Caribbean. In 1980, the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) was released. Commissioned by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and funded by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the WCS was intended to advance the achievement of sustainable development through the conservation of living resources². Several Caribbean countries and environmental NGOs who were members of the IUCN at the time contributed to that outcome.

In 1981, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) within the framework of its Regional Seas Programme and in consideration of the importance and value of the Wider Caribbean Region's fragile and vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems, including an abundance of mainly endemic flora and fauna. A Caribbean Action Plan was adopted by the countries of the Wider Caribbean region in 1981, which led to the development and adoption in 1983 of the Cartagena Convention and an Oil Spills Protocol on 24 March 1983³. Protocols on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) and on Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution were adopted in 1990 and 1999 respectively. Several Caribbean countries played prominent roles in the negotiation of these instruments, notably Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados. Trinidad and Tobago had established the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) in 1974 on the recommendations of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Law of the Sea headed by Lennox Ballah. The IMA commenced operations in 1978 with programmes in coastal zone management, data collection and dissemination, education and training and legal matters.

The Brundtland Effect

The 1987 Brundtland Report (Our Common Future) by the World Commission on Environment and Development and the 1992 Rio Summit (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) took the Brandt proposals a step further, placing the model of 'sustainability' at the centre of all global planning for development. Sir Shridath Ramphal, who was again the sole Caribbean

² <https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/WCS-004.pdf>

³ <http://www.cep.unep.org/about-us>. The Cartagena Convention came into force in 1986

representative on the Commission, is credited with helping to “steer the commission away from its initial flirtation with the anti-growth agenda of Western ‘greens’ towards a recognition that economic growth is essential to overcome mass poverty; growth which needs to respect and accommodate environmental limits.”⁴

The core theses of the Brundtland Commission were converted into inter-government agreement in the Langkawi Declaration which was adopted at the Tenth Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Malaysia in October 1989. The Declaration affirmed inter alia “...that the need to protect the environment should be viewed in a balanced perspective and due emphasis be accorded to promoting economic growth and sustainable development, including eradication of poverty, meeting basic needs, and enhancing the quality of life. The responsibility for ensuring a better environment should be equitably shared and the ability of developing countries to respond be taken into account.”⁵ Another precedent-setting aspect of the Agreement was the pledge by developed countries not to connect future international development aid to commitments to environmental sustainability or introduce trade barriers. This, the developing countries had argued, would prevent their economic growth and hence reduce their ability to develop sustainable natural environments. In exchange, the developing countries conceded to the Commonwealth's developed members (particularly Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom), their interest in protecting the environment. Twelve Caribbean countries attended that Conference⁶.

The beginnings of a Caribbean sustainable development agenda

While these seminal global processes helped to enliven global debate on environment and sustainable development issues, it is worth noting that well before the Brandt Commission and Brundtland Commissions had met, the Caribbean had given its first solid indication of regional resolve on environmental issues, in the 1977 Declaration on Health of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Health. In this Declaration the Ministers expressed a common determination to improve environmental health standards and consequently the quality of life of the people of the Caribbean region. A concrete expression of this was the establishment in 1980 of the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) to provide technical and advisory services to Member States in all areas of environmental management, including water supplies, liquid waste and excreta disposal, solid waste management, water resource management, coastal zone management including beach pollution, air pollution, occupational health, vector control, agricultural pollution and pesticides control, disaster prevention and preparedness, natural resource conservation, environmental institution development and the socio-economic aspects of environmental management.

CEHI's formation was to prove to be foundational to the success of the region's participation in the wave of global conferences that took place during the decade of 1990s, including the Second World Climate Conference which was held in Geneva in 1990 at which the decision was taken by representatives of small island states to establish the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to advance a coordinated position in negotiations on a UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the forefront of the early

⁴ Vince Cable former Special Adviser on Economic Affairs to the Commonwealth Secretary-General (Shridath Ramphal) <http://www.global-briefing.org/2012/04/%E2%80%9Cwe-laid-the-foundations-for-a-quarter-of-a-century-of-climate-change-policy%E2%80%9D/>

⁵ <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/news-items/documents/Langkawi-declaration.pdf>

⁶⁶ Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

stages of these negotiations were the Hon. Lincoln Myers, Minister of the Environment and National Service of Trinidad and Tobago, CEHI's Executive Director Naresh Singh, and Angela Cropper, then Director of Functional Cooperation at the CARICOM Secretariat. The footprint of the Caribbean on AOSIS is quite evident in that since its formation, four Caribbean nationals have chaired AOSIS, including Ambassador Annette des Iles of Trinidad and Tobago (1994-1997), Ambassador Julian R. Hunte of Saint Lucia (2006), Ambassador Angus Friday of Grenada (2006 – 2009), and Ambassador Dessima Williams of Grenada (2009-2011).

The Port-of-Spain Accord

A key point in the evolution of the Caribbean's consciousness and action of the environment and development was the Port of Spain Accord on the Management and Conservation of the Caribbean Environment, which was adopted at the First CARICOM Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Trinidad and Tobago from 31 May to 2 June 1989. The Conference had as its objectives: "(a) achieving increased appreciation of the significance of the issues and needs relative to management and protection of the Caribbean environment and of the relationship between environment and development; (b) identifying matters for priority attention in the Region in relation to environment; and (c) identifying approaches that that would allow for better regional coordination and monitoring of activities, agencies and resources."⁷

The Accord identifies 14 priority issues for the protection of the environment viz: (a) orderly land use planning and coordination; (b) housing and human settlements; (c) degradation of the coastal and marine environment; (d) prevention and mitigation of the effects of oil spills; (e) solid and liquid waste management; (f) management of toxic and hazardous wastes, including the control of agro-chemical residues; (g) dumping of extra-regional hazardous and toxic wastes in the Region; (h) water quality and supply; (i) forest and watershed management; (j) preservation of genetic resources; (k) vector control; (l) disaster preparedness; (m) prevention of cultural, archaeological and historical resources; and (n) air and noise pollution.

Further, the Accord identifies 8 strategic approaches for addressing the priority problems as follows: (1) public education and awareness; (2) the provision of training and the development of human resources; (3) the formulation of policies and plans including environmental impact assessment (EIA); (4) the collection, management and dissemination of information critical to the development of policies, programmes and projects; (5) the promotion of research based on the reality of the Caribbean situation; (6) the development of legislative frameworks for sound environmental management; (7) promotion of the development of economic pursuits, including small scale enterprises which are geared to the enjoyment and enhancement of the environment; and (8) harnessing of all available political, institutional and community-based resources relevant to the solution of environmental problems.

The Accord was in many respects a ground-breaking document. Firstly, in providing a listing of priorities and strategic approaches to address them, it gave clear guidelines to personnel at the national and regional level in framing their national agendas and helped to inform national and regional negotiating positions in the several global conferences that took place in the first half of the 1990s. Secondly, in embracing the value of economic pursuits "including small scale enterprises which are geared to the enjoyment and enhancement of the environment" it gave expression to the notion of the "green economy" which was later enunciated by UNEP. And thirdly, it helped to provide fresh political impetus to the coordinated development of policies, programmes and projects for addressing the identified

⁷ http://www.caricom.org/jsp/secretariat/legal_instruments/port_of_spain_accord.pdf

deficiencies in the region's arrangements for effective management of the environment. Griffith and Oderson (2009)⁸ credit Hon. Lincoln Myers and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as the providing the energy, resolve and leadership for this event. In this regard, it should also be said that able support was provided by the CARICOM Secretariat and by Dr. Angela Cropper.

The adoption of the Accord coincided, and in some ways ignited, an environmental renaissance in the Caribbean, marked by: the creation and/or strengthening of Ministries of the Environment in several Caribbean countries; the formulation of laws, policies and programmes dealing with environmental issues; and the strengthening of civil society engagement in environmental issues through the creation of National Trusts and other societies for the protection and enhancement of the environment. At the heart of this renaissance were agencies and institutions like the CARICOM, Commonwealth and OECS Secretariats respectively, and NGOs like the Caribbean Conservation Association, the Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Programme (ECNAMP) - the precursor to the Caribbean Natural Resources Management Institute (CANARI) and the Caribbean Network for Integral Rural Development (CNIRD). At the same time, CARICOM Ministers with responsibility for Health, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs were becoming more engaged in regional and global environmental issues.

Environmental advocacy was at its peak when Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community met in Kingston, Jamaica from 31 July to 2 August 1990 for their Eleventh Conference. This event is noteworthy for the extensive attention that was given to regional and global environmental issues. At this Conference Heads of Government reiterated their commitment to the proper management, protection and utilisation of the environment in support of development and agreed that international environmental efforts should recognise the sovereignty of States and the responsibility of all peoples and Governments to preserve the common ecological heritage of mankind. Further, they urged full participation by Member States in the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, and in the Second World Climate Conference in Geneva in that same year and called on the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNEP to continue and increase their support to small states such as those in CARICOM to facilitate their full and effective participation in the 1992 Conference and the follow-up thereto. They further agreed that all CARICOM States should be parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean, and the Protocol concerning Co-operation in Combatting Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean. They supported the Environmental Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, they recorded their satisfaction with and endorsement of the Commonwealth-Government of Guyana Programme for Sustainable Tropical Forestry, which they considered to be a practical example of linking the preservation of the environment with the need for sustainable development. This was in reference to Guyana's decision to set aside 900 000 acres of Amazonian tropical forest for a pilot project to study utilization of the forests on a sustainable basis and the conservation of species⁹.

The birth of the CARICOM Regional Task Force for Environment

These affirmations and decisions were to seed the decision taken by CARICOM Ministers for the Environment at their second meeting to establish a CARICOM Regional Task Force for Environment. The Task Force comprised representatives of Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Netherlands

⁸ Griffith, M.D, Oderson D (2009): Nuts and Bolts: Strengthening the Inner Circle for Environment and Sustainable Development: The Case of the Caribbean Community. CaribInvest (West Indies) Ltd

⁹ http://www.caricom.org/jsp/communications/communiques/11hgc_1990_communique.jsp

Antilles, CEHI, the Caribbean Meteorological Organisation (CMO), and the Regional Coordinating Unit of UNEP for the Caribbean. The Task Force found its feet and developed its thrust in the Region's participation in the Seventh Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), which was held in Port of Spain on 22 and 23 October 1990; and subsequently in the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Mexico City from 4 to 7 March 1991. The former produced the Action Plan for the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, while the latter produced the Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development. Barbados was elected as the Second Vice Chairman of the Preparatory Meeting – perhaps a harbinger of the pivotal role that it was destined to play in the Task Force and in the UNCED process. At that meeting outstanding leadership was again provided by Trinidad and Tobago, which was represented by Minister Hon. Lincoln Myers. Crucially, the meeting helped to consolidate the LAC's negotiating positions within the G77 and China grouping in the UN.

By the time the CARICOM Regional Task Force assembled in Geneva to take part in the First Preparatory Meeting of the UNCED, it was armed with the Port of Spain Accord, the Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Tlatelolco Platform, as well as two important background documents. The first of these entitled, *Sustainable Development; Changing Production Patterns, Social Equity and the Environment* contained a set of concrete examples taken from actual situations in Latin America, as well as a series of specific proposals for action, based on the conviction that the sustainability of development was a problem not only for the developing countries but for the international community as a whole.¹⁰ The second was entitled *Our Own Agenda*, which was prepared by the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development, under the auspices of Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The statements made by Caribbean delegations at this conference reflected the priorities identified in the Port of Spain Accord. Trinidad and Tobago's representative highlighted the special concerns of the Caribbean for the protection of the Caribbean Sea and with regard to the effects of climate change. He also called for a new approach to national accounting that would reflect a realistic evaluation of the environment and natural resources in the development process. He also gave his support for the participation of non-governmental organisations in international conferences on the environment.

The recognition in Clause 5 of the Tlatelolco Platform of the "peculiarities and vulnerability derived from the size of small island States, which are exposed to the vagaries of the global economic and environmental climate" was a crucial tenet to which the Caribbean held fast during the UNCED negotiations. It was used with telling effect in the Region's call for a Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. Much of the legwork on the vulnerability of small states had been done by Caribbean scholars such as William Demas, Arnold McIntyre, Dr. Vaughan Lewis and by a Commonwealth Consultative Group (CCG) which was established by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their 1983 meeting in New Delhi. The Group's work resulted in a report entitled *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, which assigned significant importance to the issue albeit within a security context.

Importantly, the Tlatelolco Platform reaffirmed all of the priority issues identified in the Port of Spain Accord.

¹⁰ http://www.cepal.org/rio20/noticias/paginas/8/43798/plataforma_de_91.eng.pdf

The Regional Task Force on Environment: From formation to consolidation

In the communique issued at the conclusion of the Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community from July 2-4 1991, in Basseterre St. Kitts and Nevis, Heads of Government again recognized the importance of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and urged greater participation by Member States in its remaining preparatory stages "...so as to develop an effective strategy which might be pursued by the Caribbean Community at the Conference itself." They noted that negotiations on three International Conventions regarding Climate Change, Biodiversity and Forestry were due to be completed in time for possible signature at UNCED, and emphasised the critical importance of a climate change Convention to the islands and low-lying coastal states of the Community. Given the importance of these Conventions, Heads urged that Members States to participate more effectively in these negotiations.

Equally importantly, the Heads of Government acknowledged the need for effective liaison with regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs) concerned with environment and development to ensure that the presentations of these NGOs at the International NGO Conference, slated for 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, are reflective of national goals and regional perspectives. Heads of Government welcomed the offer of Guyana to accept responsibility for supervising action in the area of the environment. These latter decisions resulted in the inclusion of civil society representatives on the Task Force and gave to it the crucial leadership of Guyana through its former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former UN Representative Rashleigh Jackson. He was ably assisted by a corps that included Foreign Service Officer in Guyana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Aubrey Norton, Lance Carberry of Guyana's Forestry Department and Fiona Pompey, an Environmental Lawyer attached to Guyana's Environmental Protection Agency.

The *modus operandi* of the Task Force

Despite the pleas of CARICOM Heads, the level of the Region's representation at preparatory meetings of the UNCED was never commensurate to the task and the region was always grossly outnumbered by developed countries like the United States and member states of the European Union in the negotiations. The situation improved somewhat in those meetings that were held at UN Headquarters in New York where Caribbean Permanent Representatives to the UN provided yeoman's support to the Task Force.

To counteract this manpower deficiency, the Task Force devised a system of specialization and rotation, in which available members were assigned responsibility for tracking discussions within certain working groups and were authorized to speak on behalf of other Caribbean countries in these groups. The practice of countries accrediting personnel from regional organisations as their delegates, with authority to speak on their behalf, contributed greatly to the success of the Task Force. Under this arrangement, CEHI personnel were accredited as delegates of Saint Lucia.

In the deployment of its strategy, the Task Force was greatly assisted by: the consensus positions that had been articulated in the key documents already mentioned; by unflinching camaraderie and collective sense of purpose of Task Force members; and by the fact that at that time, delegates could have intervened in the negotiations in their own sovereign right, so to speak, rather than through the lead negotiator of the G77, as is the case today. Still, with some six working groups meeting simultaneously and often through the night and into the early morning hours, Task Force members were hard-pressed to keep up. On occasion the support of reliable delegates from other AOSIS member states was enlisted. Many of these delegates also tracked negotiations on the climate change and biodiversity conventions

and this helped to build an effective bonding that greatly assisted small states' interests in the UN process as a whole.

Caribbean delegates garnered tremendous respect and support from developed country delegates, as well as from the Chair of the Conference, Ambassador Tommy Koh, for their hard work, for the clarity with which they intervened on various issues, for the fervor with which they defended critical positions, as well as for their willingness to seek compromise, without undermining their fundamental positions. The foundational argument of the Task Force was that the peculiarities and vulnerabilities of small states were such that they could not be adequately treated in a process like UNCED. Indeed during the UNCED negotiations members of the Task Force repeatedly took the floor to point out that the specificities of small states were being lost in generalizations and the once size-fits-all tenor of the negotiations. These interventions helped to reinforce the case for a special conference

Caribbean delegates can point with justifiable pride to several parts of the Rio Declaration and in particular to Agenda 21 which carry the "mark" of the Region. The acknowledgement in paragraph 17.123 of Agenda 21 is noteworthy:

"Small island developing States, and islands supporting small communities are a special case both for environment and development. They are ecologically fragile and vulnerable. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, place them at a disadvantage economically and prevent economies of scale. For small island developing States the ocean and coastal environment is of strategic importance and constitutes a valuable development resource.¹¹"

When Heads of Government met in Kingston, Jamaica on 19 February 1992 for their Third Inter-session Meeting they expressed satisfaction at the soundness of the work that was being done by the Task Force under the leadership of the President of Guyana and looked forward with confidence to the regional position being fed into the preparatory process for UNCED and into UNCED itself. During that meeting the Heads also met Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the UNCED.

The biggest prize of all

The greatest achievement of the Task Force was garnering sufficient support from developed and developing countries alike, for a Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States, to deal on an on-going basis with the special challenges and vulnerabilities of small states. This was no mean feat. While the Region's accomplishments in the UNCED process can be attributed to the hard work of the Task Force, no other delegate worked harder to achieve the inclusion of a special section on small island developing states in Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, than Barbados' delegate, Dr. Mark Griffith. To the rest of the members of the Task Force and AOSIS members, the UNGA's acceptance of Barbados' offer to host the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (GCSDSIDS) was fitting reward for that country's steadfast contribution to the efforts of the Region.

Against this background, Task Force members were disappointed to note the bland statement that was issued by CARICOM Heads of Government at the conclusion of their Fourth Inter-session Meeting, which took place from 22-23 March 1993 in Roseau Dominica. According to the Communique, the Heads of Government deliberated on the subject of environment and development and gave full support to the United Nations Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing Countries

¹¹ Agenda 21 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

scheduled for 4 – 15 April 1994, in Barbados. The Conference was also supportive of a regional Technical Meeting for the Caribbean and Atlantic as part of the preparatory process for the UN Global Conference and further urged Member States to pursue actively the objective of seeking access to the resources available under the UNDP Programme – Capacity 21 – to assist Governments to build the national and regional capacity to formulate and implement programmes of sustainable development¹².

This blandness was perhaps a reflection of the fact that only a handful of Caribbean leaders attended the Rio Conference.

The Task Force continued its role in the negotiations that took place in the preparatory meetings for the GCSDSIDS. In this case, the process was much easier as there already was much “settled language” on SIDS issues. For the most part developed countries were highly supportive, at least publicly. However, Task Force members were aware that privately, concerns were being expressed by both developed and less developed country groupings about the emergence of a new geo-political grouping within the UN systems. Many in the Least Developed Countries Group were wary that SIDS would use their new-found clout to draw resources to them.

The GCSDSIDS was an unqualified success. More than 100 states and territories, including 46 small island and low-lying coastal states, took part. The Barbados Program of Action (BPOA), which was adopted at the GCSDSIDS in June 2004, remains the most impressive achievement of the Caribbean’s foray in the field of environmental diplomacy. With the exception of climate change and sea level rise, the 14 areas of action in the BPOA reflect those areas identified in the Port of Spain Accord. Over the past 20 years the frame around the issues in the BPOA has been expanded and strengthened in the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) for the Further Implementation of the BPOA, agreed at the Second International Meeting of SIDS in Port Louis, Mauritius in January 2005; and in the SAMOA Pathway agreed at the Third International Meeting held in Apia, Samoa in September 2014. The MSI proposes actions and strategies in 19 priority areas, which build on the original 14 thematic areas of BPOA. New additional thematic areas in the MSI include graduation from least developed country status, trade, sustainable production and consumption, as well as health, knowledge management, and culture. The SAMOM Pathway treats with new issues such as food security and nutrition, sport, and sustainable transportation.

At their 15th Meeting in Barbados in July 1994, CARICOM Heads of Government examined the results of the GCSDSIDS. While expressing satisfaction with the outcome of the Conference, they urged that the issues identified in the Barbados Declaration should become a major focus of the Community’s activities in the immediate future. They agreed to pursue these issues in the relevant national, regional and international fora in support of Small Island Developing States. Also they reaffirmed that collaboration should continue among AOSIS Member States with a view to exchanging information, experience and expertise, in the promotion of sustainable development. They deemed it imperative to utilise the restructured Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to develop and implement environmental programmes.

Conclusions and observations

The intention of the Heads as conveyed in their communiqué issued at the end of their meeting was that action plans would be developed which should include: budgetary provision for the CARICOM Task Force on the Environment to enable it to function on a continuous basis; a special effort to identify expertise

¹² http://www.caricom.org/jsp/communications/communiqués/4inthgc_1993_communique.jsp

in the Caribbean and encourage the sharing of expertise regionally; support for the Chair on Sustainable Development at the Mona Campus of the UWI; sharing of equipment and other resources wherever possible to allow individual countries to carry out necessary tasks at minimum cost and greater use of institutions in the region in order to reduce dependence on extra regional sources.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Caribbean has regressed from the very promising and effective beginnings and achievements of the Task Force on the Environment. Following the GCSDSIDS the Task Force remained dormant for nearly seven years. It was reactivated in 2001 with an expanded membership to function as an advisory body on sustainable development issues and to coordinate preparations for the 10-year review of the Earth Summit in 2002. It no longer exists in name or in function.

While the pool of Caribbean environmental diplomats has increased, with the exception of the UNFCCC negotiations where the Caribbean acts as part of AOSIS, there does not appear to be the same level of coordination of the Region's efforts in international negotiating fora. In addition, there does not appear to be any effective coordination of the Region's representation in the various international bodies such as the GEF, the Adaptation Fund and the Climate Investment Fund. The perception is that these representatives sit on these bodies in a personal capacity, when in fact they represent the Region as a constituency.

Since 1994, several attempts have been made to establish a Regional Coordinating Mechanism. However, for various reasons these efforts have not borne fruit. The CARICOM Secretariat is best placed to perform this role, but so far it has not embraced it.

The coordination that is required goes well beyond the mere organisation of regional participation in international fora. What is needed in the Region is the type of coordination that exists in the South Pacific, where clear definitive links exist between the political, technical and institutional arms of sustainable development. The concrete recommendations made by the West Indian Commission in its Report entitled "A Time for Action" have not been implemented. The donor community continues to lament the absence of an effective coordination mechanism, which they rightly argue has resulted in sub-optimal use of scarce resources and of opportunities to advance the Region's sustainable development

Further, except in post-disaster situations, it cannot be said that the Region has made any meaningful progress in consciously sharing its expertise. What "sharing" that now takes place has been largely on the basis of the movement of regional consultants engaged in donor-funded projects. What the Heads had intended was a technical cooperation facility such as that which is managed by the Commonwealth Secretariat, where expertise is moved from countries with surplus skills to those in need of such skills. The first step in such an arrangement - an inventory of skilled Caribbean nationals in environment and sustainable development - was developed by CARICOM Secretariat in the late 1990s, but this has not been utilised.

There is an urgent need for the Caribbean to put its act together so it can take full advantage of the significant opportunities that are promised by the end of 2015, with the finalisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and adoption of a new climate change agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol. The Caribbean need look no further than the South Pacific for lessons about what should be done and how.