



For Immediate Release

Development of oceans needs to bring economic, environmental and social benefits to Caribbean people

Port of Spain, June 13, 2017 – The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) has recognised the potential for coastal and marine resources to be sustainably used to bring economic benefits to the region. At a key international conference examining how oceans should be managed, the Institute called for a focus on social equity and good governance as core principles in development of ‘blue economy’ approaches.

Mr. Terrence Phillips, CANARI Senior Technical Officer, spoke at a side event on ‘A Blue Commonwealth’ at the recently concluded United Nations Ocean Conference, held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. The event was promoting development of a ‘Blue Charter’, a Pan-Commonwealth set of guiding principles for sustainable, fair and equitable ocean economic development, derived from the Commonwealth Charter. The side event was co-hosted by the Government of the Republic of Seychelles and the Commonwealth Secretariat, with participation from senior policy makers from Bangladesh, Barbados, Cyprus, Fiji, Grenada, Tonga, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and CANARI as a representative of civil society.

The ‘blue economy’ concept emerged at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio in 2012 as an approach emphasising an ocean-driven economy. Since then, various initiatives are underway exploring opportunities for economic diversification and growth in areas as diverse as fisheries, energy, tourism, transport and health.

Mr. Phillips noted that the evolving ‘blue economy’ concept is based on the sustainable use and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and resources. However, the social equity and inclusive governance dimensions are being lost in many top-down initiatives focusing on major developments in key sectors for ‘blue growth’ and ‘green jobs’, including through development of coastal infrastructure. These initiatives risk becoming disconnected from the very people they are intending to benefit, particularly poor vulnerable coastal communities. Development can be ‘blue washed’ and the ultimate purposes highjacked.

There are practical examples of blue economy in action in the Caribbean, drawing on the power of civil society, resource users and community enterprises. For example, fisherfolk have a growing voice and seat at the table in decision-making about governance of small scale fisheries at the global, regional, national and local levels. Globally, they were involved in the development of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). At the Caribbean Community level, they are part of a team spearheading an initiative to develop a protocol on the SSF Guidelines, with a focus on Gender, for the Caribbean Community

Common Fisheries Policy. National and local civil society organisations and community resource users are engaged in co-management arrangements for management of marine protected areas as well as resources outside of protected areas. Small and micro community enterprises are using coastal and marine ecosystems to deliver economic, environmental and social co-benefits. CANARI is supporting these enterprises to assess how they are making choices about trade-offs in the delivery of co-benefits, as well as how they build resilience and 'climate proof' their businesses along the value chain.

Mr. Phillips emphasised that to deliver on the promise of a Blue Charter, support is needed to expand these practical innovative efforts by civil society, fisherfolk and other resource users, local communities and community enterprises. This must involve sharing knowledge, building capacity, strengthening enabling policy frameworks and providing spaces for civil society to have an effective voice in the process.

CANARI is continuing its work on blue and green economies in the Caribbean under the **#GE4U: Transformation towards an inclusive green economy in the Caribbean** project, which is being supported by the European Union (DCI-ENV/2016/372-847).

END

For CANARI's full statement at the Ocean Conference side event see http://www.canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CANARI-statement-on-Blue-Economy_June-2017.pdf.

For more information on CANARI's #GE4U project and other work on green and blue economies see <http://www.canari.org/programmes/issue-programmes/green-economy.php>.

For more information on CANARI's work on coastal and marine governance and livelihoods see <http://www.canari.org/programmes/thematic-programmes/coastal-and-marine-livelihoods-and-governance.php>.

For more information on the Ocean Conference see <https://oceanconference.un.org/>.

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 equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing natural resources critical to development. Our programmes focus on research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, capacity building and fostering regional partnerships.

Connect with us:



For further information, please contact: Nicole Leotaud, Executive Director of CANARI at nicole@canari.org or +1-868-626-6062.