

The Port of Spain Accord on the Management and Conservation of the Caribbean Environment

Issued by
The First CARICOM Ministerial Conference on the Environment

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
31 May-2 June 1989

We, Ministers of the Caribbean Community with responsibility for Environmental Matters, met in Conference in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 31 May-2 June 1989 with the objectives of

- (a) achieving increased appreciation of the significance of the issues and needs relevant 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 the environment; and
- (c) identifying approaches that would allow for better regional coordination and monitoring of activities, agencies and resources.

We were profoundly gratified that high-level delegations from twelve (12) Member States of the Community, and from four (4) Observer countries were present, and that we had the honour of being addressed by The Hon. A. N. R. Robinson, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the host country, who declared the Conference open.

We were also pleased to welcome the valuable contribution to our deliberations by observer regional and international institutions which were in attendance.

In our discussions we were very conscious of the fact, as indeed the Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago reminded us in his address, that with improved understanding over the last two decades of the impact of man's activities on the environment,

there has been a transformation in attitudes towards and perspectives on environmental issues in the world as a whole. We recognised that the historic 1972 Stockholm Conference on the environment spawned the foundation of the United Nations Environment Programme, the production of the 1980 World Conservation Strategy and the 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development which highlighted the relationship between the environment and sustainable development.

In our own CARICOM Region, concern about the environment has been no less intense. The spirit and policy of the Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community and the deliberations of several Community fora including the Conference of Heads of Government, the Conference of Ministers responsible for Health, and the Standing Committees of Ministers responsible for Agriculture and for Foreign Affairs, have recognised the importance of sound management of the Region's environment to the quality of life of the Region's peoples.

We have conducted our Conference in the spirit of the Declaration of Brasilia, in the formulation of which several Ministers of the Caribbean Community participated.

We therefore perceive our Conference as coming within this tradition and constituting an opportunity to provide fresh political impetus to the coordinated identification, development and execution of policies, programmes and projects for addressing the identified deficiencies in our arrangements for effective management of the environment.

Priority Issues and Problems

In identifying the priority issues to be addressed in our quest for the protection of the Caribbean environment we have proceeded on the basis of full acceptance of the fact that central to all our environmental concerns is our shared desire for man's survival in a manner that is both in harmony with nature and consistent with human welfare.

We have also proceeded on the basis of the recognition that prominent among the features of the natural environment of our countries are our marine spaces and the extensive forest cover of some of our territories.

We have agreed that the following represent the principal areas in which we must organize ourselves at the national and regional levels, with the support of the international community, to develop urgent strategies for action:

- (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 substances including the control of agri-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) preservation of cultural, archaeological and historical resources;
- (n) air and noise pollution.

Strategic Approaches to the Solution of the Problems

We are convinced, and agree, that in order to effectively address the problems in these areas, our efforts must be based on use of the following urgently needed strategic approaches which will result in an integrated approach to their solution:

(a) the promotion of public education and awareness at all levels in our societies to enhance consciousness and respect for the environment on the part of our peoples, and to encourage behavioural patterns conducive to its preservation. In this connection we agree that there should, inter alia, be full observance in the Caribbean Community of World Environment Day (5 June) and to coordinate, as far as possible, our respective national programmes for that purpose;

(b) the provision of training and development of human resources in order to produce the cadres of experts within the Region whose vocation will be to undertake the many and varied facets of environmental management;

(c) the formulation of policies and plans, including the requirement for environmental impact assessment, which

are essential prerequisites to the rational management of our environment;

(d) the collection, management and dissemination of the information critical to the development of policies, programmes and projects which must be implemented to address the identified problem areas;

(e) the promotion of research based on the reality of the Caribbean situation and aimed at generating solutions to the environmental problems of the Region;

(f) the development of legislative frameworks adequate to the requirements of sound environmental management, and the required machinery for their enforcement;

(g) the promotion of the development of economic pursuits including small scale enterprises which are geared to the enjoyment and enhancement of the environment;

(h) the harnessing of all available political, institutional, and community based resources relevant to the solution of particular environmental problems.

Institutional Arrangements for Consultation and Coordination

It is our clear recognition that in order for practical action to unfold on all the matters that we have set out above, it is absolutely essential that there be effective institutional arrangements at the national and regional levels. We acknowledge that such arrangements are critical for systematic consultation on and coordination of policy formulation and implementation of programmes and projects.

We are aware that certain institutional arrangements do exist. However, there is need for strengthening some of these and for identifying and filling any existing gaps.

We therefore:

(a) agree that at the regional level Ministers with responsibility for Environmental Matters should meet at appropriate intervals for the purpose of conducting policy and programme review and establishing the goals and guidelines for action; to this end we support the proposal by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that a Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for the Environment be established;

(b) approve, also at the regional level, the establishment of a consultative forum of agencies whose activities in the region are relevant to the development of Caribbean environmental programmes and projects. The function of this forum will be to pursue the identification of, and the allocation of responsibility for action on programmes, projects and studies relating to the priority problems and strategic approaches set out above.

The CARICOM Secretariat will have the responsibility for convening this forum;

(c) reiterate the Community's commitment to the effective development of the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute as a Regional technical, advisory and project implementing facility in the environmental field.

We mandate the CARICOM Secretariat to arrange consultations and negotiations with donor agencies for support to Caribbean environmental programmes and projects on the basis of the policies and guidelines laid down at ministerial level and the results of the work of the consultative forum. In this connection, we express appreciation to those bilateral and multilateral agencies which have been actively supporting these programmes.

We strongly recommend to all governments of the Community that they establish arrangements that would permit an integrated approach to environmental management at the political, technical and administrative levels, and that such arrangements should include a designated focal point which would relate in a coherent manner to the regional and international levels.

In conclusion, we reiterate our firm and unswerving commitment to the rational use and conservation of our environmental resources. We call upon all Caribbean peoples to exercise the respect and reverence for the environment which will ensure its protection for the benefit of future generations.