
SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP: CENTRAL AMERICA & CARIBBEAN REGIONAL MEETING

Facilitator: Group

Rapporteur: John Milewski

GOALS

- Strengthen the link between INECE and Central America through regional networks.
- Strengthening environmental management institutions on technical and legal aspects of compliance and enforcement.

1 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The need for collective cooperation between the Caribbean and the Central American countries was recognized, especially in the run-up to the World Summit for Sustainable Development in September 2002. This is the beginning of a process, to be completed by September, a plan for how the wider region can cooperate. Superimpose the issue of climate change and it becomes clear that the social and economic problems of the region are getting worse. Where are the areas for cooperation among the regional interests?

In the round of introductions the following issues were raised, and included the need for cooperation among countries that are neighbors in the hurricane belt, many issues that can only be solved through cooperation. The examples of disaster management systems as well as protected areas were also raised. Cooperation among donors in the region could also be useful. The two sub-regions have more to gain from cooperation. Can encompass sectors like freshwater management techniques and information sharing on resource management. Cooperation among local agencies in the countries is important. Different structures of agencies were discussed. Solar energy was suggested as a means of reducing environmental impact of

energy on societies. The establishment of a regional climate change center was mentioned. Technical and human capacities to deal with environmental problems are required. The importance of the initiative was stressed by all as well as the need to focus on solutions. How can the countries learn from each other?

A question arose as to whether there were other thematic areas that require discussion in case they would lend themselves to cooperation. The need to define an inter-regional collaborative agenda will be fleshed out in the discussions.

Nelson Andrade, UNEP regional seas programme, presented on the sources of land based sources of pollution in the greater Caribbean region. He explained the processes within which the region has established the program. Legal instruments such as the Cartagena Convention are important. The geographic region encompasses great diversity. Convention of Cartagena focuses on oil spills, in Caribbean Area and SPAW protection of marine flora and fauna. 80 % of pollution of marine areas comes from terrestrial sources. Industrial waste from beverage companies, domestic sources etc., contributes to pollution. Focus on sources such as black waters was recommended. It was suggested that it was necessary to reduce quantity of pollutants through

improvement in technology and improve management practices of agricultural areas. The Protocol has mechanisms to apply standards appropriate to the region. Countries cannot sign and apply everything in protocol but focus on what is applicable. Two types of residual waters were mentioned:

- waters that have reefs, grasses or mangroves, reproductive areas, protected areas.
- less sensitive waters that have greater capacity of dilution and where humans are not exposed.

An explanation was given to the permissible limits of the contents of effluent with regards to BOD, pH, fats and oils, fecal coliforms and other parameters for Type I and II waters. Ratification means that standards need to be met due to the compromise made by each country. There is a timeframe to apply standards but can ask for extension of time if they cannot meet the compliance date in the calendar of implementation.

The National Environmental Plan of each country should guide us to know what is found in waters to be able to monitor. Baseline information is important for monitoring to take place. Control of Non-specific agricultural sources should be executed, and other specific future sources to focus on include chemical industries etc. It is preferable to focus on sources of pollutants instead of the pollutants themselves. Challenges include national/local implementation such as finance, technical and institutional capacity formation, etc. Projects and activities of support are underway through UNEP and these include more appropriate technologies for treatment and collection of residual waters, integrated management of watersheds, evaluation of contaminated bays, assessment of improved management of agricultural practices in Wider Caribbean Area due to agrochemical such

as pesticides found in the Caribbean originating from Colombia and other south American Caribbean countries. A Web site to be contacted is www.cep.unep.org

Carlos Fuller (Belize) presented on climate change for the two regions. Both regions have valuable resources under threat from sea level rise, flooding, and erosion. Warmer sea temperatures could affect fisheries and reefs. Biodiversity, health and agriculture could be affected. Technical personnel in both regions have recognized the threats. Both have been proponents of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Both have been seeking its full implementation. They have many similarities in their demands to the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. All have welcomed the Clean Development Mechanism. Mutual interests are shared, yet there have been little common positions. Caribbean Community (CARICOM) negotiates within Alliance of Small Island States, while Grupo Campinas de Recursos Hamaños aligns with Latin America. The question of self-identification, of finding alliances and common interests, and also recognition of common problems has arisen. Roles of SICA and CARICOM are important. National level coordination is also not quite as well formed as could be. Sharing of information does not always occur. Those that have effective information sharing allow for better preparation for negotiations. Each country should have a national policy on climate change that covers all sectors. One mechanism that could work would be through national climate change committees that could inform and disseminate information and expertise. The committees could also cooperate with other countries committees.

Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System (MBRS): Marine biodiversity is under pressure regionally. Fish and vertebrates populations are not well known. It is difficult to coordinate countries using water

resources. MBRS is an effort for multi-disciplinary coordination. Pamphlets circulated show the problems and how it will be dealt with. It involves declaration as a Natural Heritage Site covering the largest Barrier reef in the New World. It contains diversity of corals, manatee etc. It originated from the Tulum declaration where the Prime Minister of Belize was signatory to the conservation of reef systems and supports MBC to compliment management of reef systems. Other countries like Honduras, and Guatemala are participating in this effort through regional projects. Workshops in the region were carried out in the form of consultations to start the project. Objectives focus on strengthening Marine Protected Areas, establishing standard monitoring systems, sustainable use of resources and environmental awareness. Environmental Information Systems are to be established, providing a database for the region to access. Priority areas are establishing biodiversity monitoring, identify spawning areas, sustainable tourism etc. Education, environmental management and public awareness campaigns include incorporation of school curricula as part of the project, school fairs on coastal resources of MBRS and synergies to be established in the region. Fifteen-year projects requiring cooperation from all participants of this workshop with 15 priority areas plus 8 more transboundary areas included in this project since terrestrial impact is received on the reefs through spawning areas. Climate change can have an impact on MBRS but we need to include all other ecosystems including mangroves, rivers etc. The focus is on wetlands since we cannot cover terrestrial area. We aim to establish coordinating mechanisms in the Caribbean in mgmt of Coral Reefs, capacity building, and monitoring of coral reefs. MBRS could be a sub-regional node for the Monitoring of coral reefs. Hol Chan will serve as a demonstration site for the management of marine parks containing coral

reefs. For this to happen, regional cooperation through the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding would need to occur.

List of projects, including projects of MBRS in Excel, with parameters to be monitored: Espen Ronneberg highlighted the manner in which Small Island Developing States have utilized information management for sustainable development especially in the field of climate change. He gave details of the negotiating process and the difficulties and constraints faced by SIDS and other small delegations. The emerging process using SIDSNet and the plan for phase 2 of SIDSNet was explained, in particular the use of closed virtual discussion spaces for elaborating and negotiating position papers for the group. In addition, SIDSNet will provide a virtual library of all relevant SIDS documents. He stressed that there must be a commitment to be well informed, a commitment to cooperate and to take responsibility for carrying out the work. It is necessary to clearly articulate concerns and constraints so as to convince the international community of the seriousness of purpose of the regions and of the countries. An example of an attempt to explain and evaluate climate change impacts was described. Should the two regions decide to cooperate, they must utilize existing mechanisms and also build on their respective expertise. A number of issues and modalities questions will need to be decided upon, but these are the finer details. The important issue is to decide to cooperate and to begin the process.

Al Binger explained the process for the next day. 6 areas should be looked at.

- Sharing of knowledge across region (mechanisms).
- Longer term establishment of capacity – language barrier and sharing of expertise and information between regions.
- Development of new knowledge to tackle the issues, and the emerging issues – compliance.

- Information exchange: look at lessons from SIDSNet, all must contribute to cooperate. Joint purchasing of technologies, best practices.
- Political cohesion: educate the politicians and the public.
- Resource mobilization: accountability, transparency, dealing with donors.

Three presentations were made by the sub-regions, which summarized the environmental management structure and policy frameworks, along with the programmes currently in existence.

Marco Gonzales of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) presented on the Central American Integration process and in particular CCAD and the structure of that organization. He also outlined the membership (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, with Mexico as permanent observer). He explained that CCAD is an institution of SICA which was created in 1991 by an International Treaty known as the Tegucigalpa Protocol. Other systems and subsystems in SICA include the Central American Parliament, the Central American Court of Justice, the Central American Bank of Economic Integration, the General Secretariat of SICA and a Civil Society Consultative Council. There are also various Subsystems, such as the System of Central American Economic Integration, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development and the Social Integration System.

Mr. Gonzales then focused on the structure and work programme of CCAD. He also provided a summary of the role of the organization which was to *inter alia* promote a regional environmental regime, establish an environmental cooperation regime for pollution prevention and control, and prioritize the issues related to the import and management of toxic and haz-

ardous materials and waste and to act as Secretariat for the Regional International Agreements on Environment ratified by the 7 countries. He also described a Central American environmental action plan which had as its key points:

- Reduction of Water, Soil and Air Pollution
- Follow up and promotion of the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreement and enhancing the 7 countries capacity to do that.
- To cluster the 25 or so MEAs, which are ratified by the Central American countries to facilitate the follow up of these treaties.
- Create Cluster on treaties on Multilateral Agreements on Air, Chemicals and Conservation
- Promote the needed mechanisms, institutional arrangements and legal reforms to do that.

Mr. Gonzales also provided an example of regional cooperation in the form of a Regional Center for Training and Transfer of Technology for Central America and Mexico. Activities in the training center include: Inventories of PCB, Recycling of Car Batteries, Promotion of safe incineration in Cement Kilns. Envisioned Actions include support for the countries in requesting GEF funding for the POPs Convention Enabling Activities and National Action Plans. Other activities include facilitation of the establishment of a partnership with the Global Environmental Facility executing agencies chosen by the countries seeking the best comparative advantages and ensuring that in the preparation of proposals for funding there is a regional coordination component included in each country's proposal.

Mr. Byron Blake of the Caribbean Community Secretariat made a presentation on the Caribbean integration process. He also outlined the membership (Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize,

Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago). He explained that the Community was governed by the Conference of Heads of Governments. Under the Conference, a body called the Community Council of Ministers which is responsible for the agenda of the heads of government and the Work Programme of the Central Secretariat, which is based in Georgetown, Guyana. He then explained that under the Community, there are three councils of Ministers that cover the work of the central secretariat and these are the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) under which the sustainable development unit is situated and the trade and economic development business of the community is overseen, the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), where this council is responsible for such activities as community development, health, education and youth, sports and labour and the Council for Foreign and Community relations (COFCOR) which deals with the external relations of the community.

He then focused on the work of the sustainable development unit of the Secretariat which had the primary aim of assisting the Member States to develop environmental management and sustainable development policy frameworks. He also detailed some of the areas of work of the unit, which included sustainable human settlements, coastal and marine resources, comprehensive disaster management and science and technology. Mr. Blake also explained that a lot of the work of the Community was also carried out by a number of specialized institutions many of which are autonomous and had their own governing structures. A few of these include the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), the Caribbean Law Institute (CLI) and others.

Mr. Blake then focused on a number of specific projects that the sustainable development unit was involved in, in which there were a number of collaborative opportunities available with Central America. These include:

- The Caribbean Climate Change Center
- Development of a Management regime for the Caribbean sea
- Development of a mechanism for the enhancement of participation and benefits to be derived from Multilateral environmental agreements
- The work of CDERA

Mr. Gonzales also provided an example of regional cooperation in the form of existing regional agreements with the Government of Mexico. Activities under this regional cooperation in the environment include pesticides management, coastal and marine resources management, GIS training and its use in sustainable development, development of pollution registers and inventories of PCB. Envisioned actions include support for disaster management projects and activities, student exchanges and project development.

The final presentation was given by Mr Orlando Cabrera Rodriguez from the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (*See attached paper by Mr. Rodriguez*)

Looking back through the agenda we know where we have come in the elaboration of our concerns and resources. What is needed is not the particular problems, but rather the mechanisms to address those problems. What would constitute an agenda for cooperation between the regions? We need to know what are the ongoing activities, of course non-exhaustive, but nevertheless get a view of what our infrastructure for cooperation might be.

- First is sharing of knowledge, and the mechanism for doing so in priority areas. Limited human and financial resources warrant such cooperation.

- Second is the development of new knowledge to assist us with sustainable development. Pollution is especially a worry, derived from our necessary agriculture for the economies. Better management and utilization of existing natural resources. Political leaders need to hear of the possibilities for the better choices to be made.
- Political cohesion is the external part of the agenda, for our leaders to affect the donors. Improving response to our needs.
- Technology development is the fourth, so that we can share the quality control; cover joint acquisition and use, as well as for deployment and development.
- Resources mobilization is very necessary, but would require greater accountability and management on our part.
- Information exchange for compliance and best practices.
- Cooperation on public education and awareness.
- Cooperation with the media.

A schematic over the structural arrangements of each region was described. For SICA the use of CCAD was helpful, as the Caribbean does not have such a mechanism. Challenge for the region, and could be established through the CARICOM machinery. But this could be costly and may require certain mandates.

Working groups are now being asked to look beyond ongoing activities. Look at what the collaboration will entail, matching up specific needs. We must make an inventory of projects, or ongoing plans. Each group should have a facilitator and rapporteur.

An important item missing is the issue of linking environment and health, on prevention and not mitigation. Many of the cures are actually being developed as a part of this six part agenda, as the impacts on whole ecosystems may be addressed.

So a focus on the causes can lead us to a discussion on health as a sector. Early prevention is better than late cure. Where does the issue of health fit in, is it a separate issue or one to keep in focus in each of the discussions? Are all working groups going to look at all the 6 areas.

The preliminary agenda is for the working groups. Each group should make the decision on priorities, explaining the rationale to the larger groups. Additional items can be raised in your group.

There are broad issues of cooperation, therefore, do we want the working groups to look at all institutional arrangements? One group could look at that, with another looking at experiences and best practices by another.

What is missing is a need for a careful elaboration with conceptual clarity before we go to working groups. Over the last days the terminology has not been entirely clear, for example sustainable development as opposed to environmental management. Collaboration at the regional level needs to look at sustainable development in the post-Rio and the acceptance of this as a symbol is non-threatening to most groups or countries.

One of the challenges has been to define an agenda for a group of people like this, focus the work yet not prohibit creative flows. We can adjust, because we all have individual perspectives. This is collaboration on the mechanisms to get there. This is not limiting but rather an attempt to get the groups to work on this.

Based on the six areas we could group them into four groups

- Capacity and technology group together.
- Information exchange. Useful document is the Belize Declaration, which talks about different levels, consultation, cooperation and collaboration.
- Foreign policy consultation will be different than cooperation in international negotiations. Need to duplicate the suc-

cesses. Need a mechanism for the prevention of replication of failures. Identification of experiences is also important since we have the two sub-regions together. Some countries have not ratified Cartagena Protocol. These issues should be considered in the working groups.

- Third group could be on an agenda for collaboration. Could include issue of ratification of key conventions. Proposal is possible. I think it is not perfect but a start. A thematic list and looking at the instruments. Information exchange and best practices, existing networks Capacity, technology and resources. Agenda for collaboration, thematic issues. Legal instruments are important, and should not be ignored. May be covered by all the groups.

4 CONCLUSION

Ideas for cooperation have been outlined. Needs a new paradigm for collaboration in fields like education and public awareness. Also necessary is cooperation at the level of international negotiations. A suggestion is that the higher level political cooperation can be used such as a ministerial meeting. The program of activities will have to be accepted at that level. There could be such an endorsement at a meeting in July or August. Having the Caribbean Sea as the uniting force is a useful way to look at the issues. The issue of transportation routes of oil-tankers requires investigation with modeling of current and routes as well as including meteorological data.

This is not going to reinvent the wheel and find the processes that already are in place. Liaise with Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Caribbean. The Chairman will make a summary of the meeting and the process so as to inform the WSSD process of the interest and concerns of the two regions. The participants

have worked very well in putting together a tangible and credible agenda for the common interests and challenges

The time has come for the regions to build their alliances. Set up observer system for CCAD and CARICOM to work together in each organizations and institution. This will bring together the tremendous capacities that there are in the regions. There will be a political element and the Ministers will have to get together. But at least there is a good basis for action and a new working relationship. We need to have an effective use of resources.

The involvement of the Belize Government and the Ministry was recognized and applauded. The personal interest of the DPM was noted. Marco Gonzalez and Albinger were also congratulated for their commitment. It is fortunate that the Belize Ministry is a dedicated and professional team. The synergies of the meeting were such that there was no need for separation of the stakeholders and international organizations. It is necessary for us all to consider compromises of sovereignty and priorities if cooperation is going to function and become a vital part of our cooperation.

Next Steps

- Prepare an action plan to be submitted by INECE.
- Identify a temporary liaison ideally for each country of the region, who will participate in the preparation of the action plan, and liaise with the country.
- Volunteers are: José Cardona, (Belice); Helio Zamora (Nicaragua), Rolando Alfaro (Guatemala); Patricia Madrigal (Costa Rica); Lucia Chandeck (Panamá).