

WHY SUPPORT THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN?

A Unique Opportunity for Regional Co-operation

Under the aegis of the Caribbean Action Plan, the states and territories of the Region have a unique opportunity to pursue a long-term strategy in support of sustainable development goals.

The opportunity is unique because nowhere else in the Region is there a forum where states and territories of the Wider Caribbean can debate the relevant issues, seek solutions to acknowledged regional problems, and pool their resources for the implementation of priority programmes and projects.

Here is an opportunity to mobilize the scientific and technical talents of numerous states and territories of the Wider Caribbean, and to use that expertise in furthering economic development that is compatible with environmental objectives and sound resource management. The long-term possibilities inherent in such a regional grouping of Governments are considerable, bound only by the vision, creativity, and resourcefulness of its members

What Does Regional Co-operation Entail?

- Strengthening national and subregional institutions through the training of personnel and provision of technical equipment.
- Increasing public interest in and knowledge of the linkage between environment and development through work with the mass media and educational institutions.
- Encouraging regional self-reliance through experience gained from trying to solve common problems
- Providing technical assistance, education and training in marine and coastal resources management to all the countries of the Region.
- Making maximum use of the natural, financial and human resources available in the Region, and avoiding duplication of effort.
- Co-operating on problems of a transnational or international nature, including natural or man-induced dis-

asters, such as accidental spills of toxic substances, or industrial accidents.

- Encouraging and co-ordinating international assistance activities

Benefits to the Nations of the Region

The ways in which the states and territories of the Wider Caribbean Region manage their natural resources—today and in the future—will deeply affect their security, their economies, their capacities to respond to the growing needs for food and raw materials, their situation and influence in the world, and the quality of the environment in which their people live.

The majority of the Region's states and territories are developing countries, many of them are islands, heavily dependent on the marine environment and its resources. Some of those seeking to industrialize have tended to replicate development patterns copied from the more developed countries, without consideration for the fragility of their ecosystems, often leading to irreversible environmental damage

No country, least of all small island nations, can afford to pursue development that is ecologically unsound. It is essential to incorporate environmental considerations in the planning and implementation of economic growth if rational use is to be made of limited natural resources and if environmental degradation is to be minimized

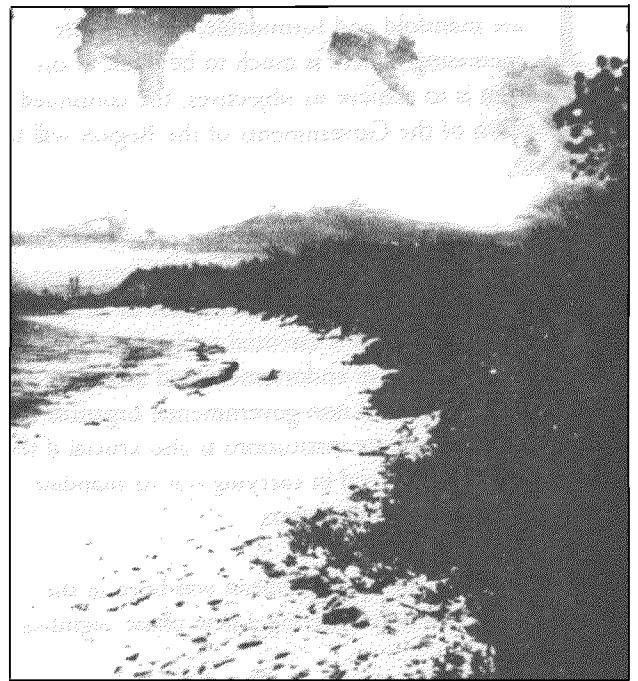
Effective resource management requires an understanding of the complexity and fragility of ecosystems, of their potentialities and of their limitations to human intervention. Implementation of the Action Plan can further an understanding of local ecosystems, thereby encouraging optimum use of resources and ecologically sound development.

The achievement of ecologically sound development by individual states and territories proceeding in isolation is a difficult and almost impossible task. A co-operative

arrangement is needed to compensate for the uneven distribution of natural, technical, financial and human resources in the Region. Each of the states and territories, and consequently the Region as a whole, will benefit enormously by a sharing of experience, jointly reviewing the results of completed projects, and analyzing the approaches that have proved most effective.

Regional co-operation should aim at encouraging broad public awareness. Through the Action Plan, information on environmental issues can be provided to the people of the Region, modifying attitudes and habits that contribute to environmental degradation. Toward this end, educational programmes at all levels will be developed, and will be tailored to meet particular problem situations. The Caribbean Action Plan offers a unique opportunity for focusing public awareness on the considerable, but not inexhaustible resources of the Region.

The Action Plan provides a two-way conduit whereby Governments can offer and request assistance of other nations, and of international organizations to supplement their own capabilities.



WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN?

The problems of the Wider Caribbean Region are manifold and formidable, and they are increasing. There is much to be done. If the Action Plan is to achieve its objectives, the continued co-operation of the Governments of the Region will be essential.

Many of the Caribbean nations have provided initial financial assistance. A firm, predictable commitment of political and financial support on the part of all participating Governments is essential to the future of the programme. The active endorsement and assistance of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and other private institutions is also crucial if the programme is to succeed in carrying out its mandate over the course of coming years.

The Action Plan for the Caribbean was born in the early 1980's. It is now entering a new phase, signified by three events:

1. The initiation of the operations of the Regional Co-ordinating Unit in Kingston, Jamaica
2. The entry into force of the Cartagena Convention and the associated Protocol on oil spills
3. The availability of funds in the Caribbean Trust Fund enabling development of new projects now being processed for implementation

While the Action Plan charts a direction for future activities, the substantive agenda must be pursued by the member Governments and by supporting non-governmental organizations, as well as by private sector organizations having the vision to recognize that their interests coincide with the interests of the Wider Caribbean Region.

The scheme for regional co-operation molded in Montego Bay in 1981, is now entering a stage where concrete dividends can be accrued. The legal agreements now entering into force will expand the Caribbean environment/development dialogue into another realm where co-operative action will be enhanced

through the implementation of international laws, and further expressed through the negotiation of specific technical protocols to deal with issues of critical importance to the Region.

The Caribbean Action Plan represents a concerted effort on the part of concerned Governments, private organizations and individuals to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development. The Action Plan and Convention are significant statements with profound implications for the resolution of regional conflicts and the alleviation of national social stress.

The Caribbean Action Plan is a window of opportunity for co-operation among nations which, despite other differences, endorse the concept that economic growth and environmental enhancement are of equal significance in determining the quality of life.

