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**ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL
MECHANISM/CONSULTATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE
COORDINATED AND COHERENT IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE BARBADOS PROGRAMME OF ACTION/MAURITIUS STRATEGY IN
THE CARIBBEAN**

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Section 1

**Background: Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in international society:
The SIDS process**

1.1 The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (UNGCSIDS), Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994

By virtue of the convening of the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (UNGCSIDS), not only was formal recognition given by the wider international community to the special characteristics and needs of those States, but, also, a specific Programme of Action was adopted to address those characteristics and needs.

The "Barbados Declaration" and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) that were adopted at that global conference elaborate principles and set out strategies for development that are also intended to protect the fragile environments of those States.

1.2 The Barbados Programme of Action

The BPOA outlines specific policies in 15 chapters, each representing a priority area relevant to addressing the special sustainable development challenges of SIDS. The respective chapters cover:

1. Climate Change and Sea Level rise;
11. Natural and Environmental Disasters;
111. Management of Wastes;
- 1V. Coastal and Marine Resources;
- V. Freshwater Resources;
- VI. Land Resources;
- VII. Energy Resources;
- VIII. Tourism Resources;
- IX. Biodiversity Resources;
- X. National Institutions and Administrative Capacity;

- XI. Regional Institutions and Technical Cooperation;
- XII. Transport and Communication;
- XIII. Science and Technology;
- XIV. Human Resource Development;
- XV. Implementation, Monitoring and Review.

1.3 SIDS + 5: The Twenty-Second Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 27-28 September 1999

The five-year review of the implementation of the BPOA convened in the context of the twenty-second special session of the United Nations General Assembly, on 27-28 September 1999. This special session remedied a major shortcoming of the BPOA, as identified by Caribbean SIDS, among others, through the incorporation of elements that presented major challenges to their sustainable development but which had found no expression in the BPOA in explicitly operational terms. Among the elements incorporated at the special session were trade, investment, commodity issues, capital markets, unemployment, and poverty eradication. The special session also provided an explicit operational approach to “sustainable development” with the reference in its report to the need for “the integration of economic, environmental and social components of action to achieve sustainable development.”¹

1.4 RIO + 10: The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

Reflecting the close relationship between the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the UNGCSIDS, the convening of the WSSD over the period 26 August- 4 September 2002, in the context of what had earlier been envisaged as Rio + 10, was an event of great significance for the further development of Agenda 21 and also of its progeny, the BPOA. The major outcomes of the WSSD, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), paid specific attention to the sustainable development of SIDS, particularly in Section VII of the latter document which was dedicated to “*Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*”.

1.5 SIDS + 10: The Mauritius International Meeting to review the implementation of the SIDS POA, 10-14 January 2005: Major outcomes

As provided in General Assembly resolution 57/262, it was intended that the international meeting “...*should seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to, and should focus on, practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action, inter alia, through the mobilisation of resources and assistance for small island developing States;*”

The outcomes of the *Mauritius International Meeting* are contained in the *Mauritius Declaration*; and the *Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the*

¹ UNGA resolution S/22/2,annex

Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

1.5.1 The Mauritius Declaration

The Mauritius Declaration reaffirms “*the continued validity of the Barbados Programme of Action as the blueprint providing the fundamental framework for the sustainable development of small island developing States*” and that SIDS continue to be a special case for sustainable development. The document also reaffirms a commitment to the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and underscores the importance of the implementation of such other instruments as Agenda 21, the JPOI and the outcomes of other relevant major United Nations conferences and summits in advancing the sustainable development of SIDS. The concept of vulnerability is highlighted as a major concern with a warning to the effect that “*this vulnerability will grow unless urgent steps are taken.*” In the context of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of 26 December 2004 and of the 2004 hurricane season in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, the need to develop and strengthen effective disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, emergency relief, and rehabilitation and reconstruction capacities, is highlighted. The achievement of the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* is also identified as a means of advancing the sustainable development of SIDS.

Further, the *Declaration* emphasises, *inter alia*:

- The importance of a multilateral system based on international law, supported by strong international institutions, with the United Nations at the centre, for achieving international peace, security and sustainable development;
- The importance of subregional, regional and interregional cooperation in addressing sustainable development;
- The importance of building resilience in SIDS, including through technology development; capacity-building and human resource development;
- The importance of trade to building resilience and the need for international institutions “to pay appropriate attention to the particular needs and priorities of small island developing States”, as well as the need to prioritise trade-and development needs in the context of the Doha mandate within the World Trade Organization (WTO); and
- The need to comprehensively address the health needs of SIDS, particularly in relation to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), in all regional and global programmes.

1.5.2 *The Mauritius Strategy*

The Mauritius Strategy in essence sets out a diagnostic of the developmental problems and needs of SIDS. The respective sections of this document reflect all chapters of the BPOA in addition to such topics as graduation from least developed country status; trade: globalization and trade liberalization; sustainable capacity development and education for sustainable development; sustainable production and consumption; national and regional enabling environments; health; knowledge management and information for decision-making; and culture.

In paragraphs 83-86, issues related to *Implementation* are consolidated in relation to 12 operational areas identified as “most urgent sustainable development challenges”, namely, climate change adaptation and sea-level rise; energy; intellectual property rights and development; biodiversity; culture and development; natural and environmental disasters; marine resources; agriculture and rural development; HIV/AIDS; transport and security; sustainable production and consumption; and information and communication technologies (ICT).

The importance of, *inter alia*, effective human, institutional and technical capacity development; and effective monitoring and coordination, including through the support of regional SIDS organizations, are emphasised for the success of the Strategy. The need for the support of the international community, “particularly through the provision of financial and technical support” and the provision of “improved trade opportunities”, is also emphasised.

Further, paragraphs 87-98 deal in some detail with: access to and the provision of financial resources; science and development and transfer of technology; capacity development; national and international governance; and trade and finance. Paragraph 99 addresses monitoring and evaluation; paragraphs 100-103, role of the United Nations in the further implementation of the Programme of Action. The final paragraph, paragraph 104, deals with the Role of small island developing States regional institutions in monitoring and implementation.

Section 2

The Coordination Requirements of the Barbados Programme of Action implementation process

2.1 The Caribbean experience

Having been very actively engaged in the preparatory process of the UNGCSIDS, from the moment of the adoption of the BPOA, the SIDS of the Caribbean subregion have displayed a profound appreciation of its relevance; the urgency of its implementation; the need to identify priorities; and the imperative of establishing appropriate mechanisms, including financial provisions, to ensure that the subregion derived the greatest possible benefit from implementation efforts. At the operational level, within the Caribbean subregion, the need was recognised, at a very early stage, for a mechanism or for a coordinated system of mechanisms to promote and generally facilitate the implementation process. The challenge has always been and, for the most part, remains that of translating the appreciation of these elements into corresponding action on a sustained and effective basis, against the backdrop of the existence of a number of constraints, whether of a financial or institutional nature, or related to human resources, among other aspects.

2.1.1 Early recognition of the need for coordination in the Caribbean subregion

Shortly after the adoption of the BPOA, at a *Caribbean Meeting of Experts*, coordinated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in collaboration with a number of agencies, on 17-19 May 1995,² all these aspects were recognized and explored. Significantly, the elements identified in that forum, in large measure, continue to inform the basic agenda of the subregion, as far as the implementation of the BPOA is concerned.

At the 1995 *Caribbean Meeting of Experts*, it was agreed, inter alia, that:

- The absence of a coordinating mechanism at the Caribbean subregional level was a critical factor accounting for the slow pace of implementation at both national and subregional levels;
- Pending the establishment of such an institutional device, the CARICOM and ECLAC/CDCC³ Secretariats should be requested to

² These agencies included the United Nations Development Programme Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (UNDP/TCDC); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat.

³ The Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) is a permanent subsidiary organ of ECLAC, established in 1975 to promote cooperation towards economic and social development.

jointly provide a regional coordinating mechanism, on an interim basis, for one year; and that the secretariats should, for this purpose, seek the full cooperation and support of other organizations, particularly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED).

- The institutions identified to coordinate the implementation of the BPOA should be provided with the resources required to fulfil their mandates, at both national and regional levels.

Of great interest, also, are the functions envisaged by the 1995 Meeting of Experts for the Interim Regional Coordinating Mechanism. These were as follows:

- Support and facilitate the implementation of the BPOA at the national level, by serving as a source of information and technical assistance on aspects of its implementation, including resource mobilization;
- Serve as a focal point for information and for regional and international liaison;
- Identify and take action on transboundary and other subregional sustainable development issues in the Caribbean, including the formulation of regional projects and the mobilization of resources for same;
- Encourage political support for the BPOA and ensure that relevant aspects are brought to the attention of policy makers in the various sectors and in international forums;
- Serve as the secretariat for an appropriate regional consultative or advisory body, which would include non governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interest groups; and
- Examine the feasibility of establishing a permanent arrangement for the coordination of the implementation of the BPOA, at the regional level and, depending on the outcome of this examination, seek the funding required for its establishment.

In light of this comprehensive diagnostic by the 1995 Caribbean Meeting of Experts and informed by the recognition that little progress had been made in the adoption of sustainable development approaches and in the integration of the BPOA into decision-making at the national level, the subregion created the opportunity to undertake a review, as technical as it was political, of the implementation of the BPOA within its geographical area. The occasion of the review was “*The Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*”.

The members of the CDCC are Antigua and Barbuda; The Bahamas; Belize; Cuba; Dominica; the Dominican Republic; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; St Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; St Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; and Trinidad and Tobago. The associate members are Anguilla; Aruba; British Virgin Islands; Montserrat; The Netherlands Antilles; Puerto Rico; and the United States Virgin Islands.

2.1.2 The Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the SIDS POA, Barbados, 10-14 November 1997: A watershed in subregional implementation

This meeting was convened on the initiative of the Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC for the Caribbean, with the support of a number of regional and international agencies⁴ and was hosted by the Government of Barbados, over the period, 10-14 November 1997. The meeting was essentially geared to address three main aspects, namely, the status of implementation of the POA in the subregion, in the context of, *inter alia*, the pending review in the context of SIDS + 5, in September 1999; the level of political commitment to the process; and the way forward.⁵

The fundamental realization, in that context, as might be gauged from the decisions adopted by the ministers, was the dire need for a system of coordination, as an effective means of coming to terms with the very limited progress that had been recorded in the implementation of the BPOA, in the subregion. Already, three years into the five-year period, at the end of which the international review of progress was to be undertaken, the subregion had very little to report. Nor was there even a reporting mechanism. The ministerial meeting also highlighted the subregion's lack of a strategy to coordinate, implement and report on activities undertaken or envisaged under the BPOA. Nor were resources available for these purposes.

2.1.3 The Caribbean Model for the Implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action

Context

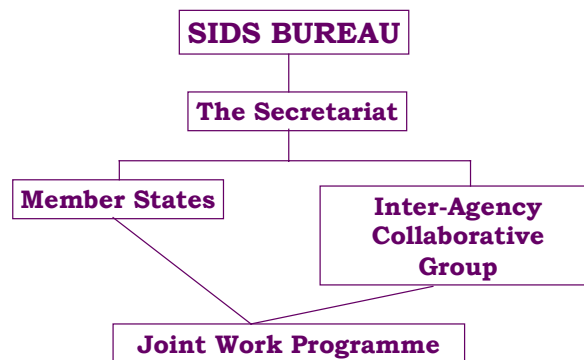
In the context of what came to be regarded as a watershed in the process of implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action in the Caribbean subregion, what was eventually referred to as “the Caribbean Model for the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action”, crystallized by virtue of the formalization, by the Caribbean ministerial meeting, of a number of arrangements that had been earlier fashioned and promoted within the subregion. This development conveyed the recognition, by the subregion, of the need to develop and implement mechanisms that would help it to

⁴ The agencies which collaborated in the convening of the meeting included the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), CARICOM, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs-Division for Sustainable Development-Small Island Developing States of the United Nations (DESA-DSD-SIDS), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS), the OECS, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), UNDP and UNEP.

⁵ The meeting was attended by, *inter alia*, representatives of 18 Caribbean SIDS, 10 United Nations bodies; 18 other intergovernmental organizations; 24 NGOs; three developed country observers (Canada, the Netherlands and the United States of America); and three Special Guests.

overcome the financial, technical, manpower and other constraints which had hitherto foreclosed many options identified by its SIDS, towards their sustainable development within the specific framework of the BPOA. As adopted by the ministers, the Model comprised four elements, namely, a Joint Secretariat, a SIDS Bureau, and an Inter-Agency Collaborative Group (IACG) for the implementation of a Joint Work Programme (JWP), for the benefit of the Caribbean SIDS that were members of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC).

Structures for Implementation



The Joint Secretariat

The Joint Secretariat, was conceived as a temporary Regional Coordinating Mechanism and its functions were entrusted to the secretariat of the Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC for the Caribbean and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat. Within this interim mechanism, the former functioned as the operational or technical secretariat, while the latter engaged in the political outreach that was deemed necessary to maintain issues related to the BPOA on the international agenda, among other important aspects. The principal functions of the technical or operational Secretariat were in respect of the coordination, implementation and general follow-up activities; the convening of meetings, including the preparation of all relevant documentation; the dissemination of information; the reporting function; and acting as an intermediary between the IACG and the SIDS Bureau.

The SIDS Bureau

The Ministerial Meeting entrusted its own Bureau, subsequently referred to as “*the SIDS Bureau*”, with the task of political oversight of the implementation of a JWP extrapolated from the BPOA.

The Inter-Agency Collaborative Group (IACG)

The JWP was envisaged for implementation by an IACG, comprising, inter alia, some 24 regional institutions, regional NGOs and United Nations agencies.⁶

The concept of an IACG, conceived by the Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC for the Caribbean and formalized by the ministerial meeting, may also be viewed as a major innovative device to promote inter-agency collaboration of a scope unprecedented in the subregion. Significantly, the agencies concerned committed to the JWP, fully aware that no extrabudgetary funds would have been forthcoming for its implementation. In addition to its direct involvement in the literal implementation of the projects that comprise the JWP, the IACG supported the Joint Secretariat, principally in the execution of the reporting function, in the context of which lead agencies were identified in the implementation of specific projects within the respective priority areas of the BPOA.

Through the IACG, the Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC became centrally involved in the coordination of implementation at the subregional level, in which context its basic contribution was that of maintaining a focus on the implementation of the SIDS POA across the subregion. More generally, its contribution spanned, in addition, the convening of meetings for the articulation of regional positions for presentation at international forums; the representation of regional concerns at international meetings such as the Donors' Meeting of February 1999; meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and Special Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly; preparation for the WSSD and SIDS + 10; and the preparation of documentation.

The Joint Work Programme (JWP)

In an effort to accelerate the very modest rate of implementation of the SIDS POA, as well as to facilitate a system of monitoring and reporting, the ministerial meeting adopted a JWP comprising some 130 concrete activities extrapolated from the SIDS POA and agreed for implementation by the IACG.

This concept of grouping project activities in accordance with the respective chapters of the BPOA, to be supported by agencies responsible for implementation, represented yet another element that had been earlier promoted within the subregion. This format, together with the corresponding activities identified, evolved into the subregion's JWP.

⁶ Among the entities involved were the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Coordination Unit (UNEP/RCU).

2.1.4 The Decline of the Caribbean Model

Following the path-breaking Caribbean Ministerial Meeting, the mechanisms and procedures generated by the decisions taken in that forum, provided the basis for an intense activism as the subregion sought to come to grips with the effective implementation of the BPOA.

However, following an initial period spanning the *Ministerial Meeting* and *SIDS + 5* and for some two to three years thereafter, during which the Caribbean Model functioned quite effectively, for a number of reasons this performance could not be sustained, hence the call at the October 2003 *Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting* for the *Mauritius International Meeting*, for a “*well-established, well-defined coordinating mechanism*”. At this *Caribbean Regional Meeting to Follow-up on Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy*, the call is for “*a regional mechanism/consultative framework for most effective coordinated, coherent implementation of the BPOA/MSI*”.

Fundamentally, the decline of this coordinating mechanism reflected a sharp bifurcation of approaches to the coordination of the implementation of the SIDS POA in the subregion by certain key entities involved in the process. In broad terms, one approach calls for the establishment of a centralised body to deal with all sustainable development issues within the Caribbean subregion, while another emphasises the need for decentralization of the implementation process, in order to take account of subregional peculiarities. Hints of what is often referred to as “institutional rivalry”, in the context of the overlapping of memberships and mandates of the entities concerned, also surfaced. Fundamentally, though, the challenge lies in the fashioning of an approach to coordination, including the development of a corresponding mechanism within which both ends of the spectrum can be accommodated. At a more general level, it is also evident that no single regional or subregional entity can muster the financial, political and other resources that are required to address the situation. Nor is recourse to the governments of Caribbean SIDS feasible in this regard, given the prevailing acute resource constraint. Some form of regional and/or international cooperation is therefore required.

Underscoring the Need for a Regional Coordinating Mechanism/Consultative Framework: Selected Elements

The Barbados Programme of Action

Paragraph 129 of the BPOA emphasises, *inter alia*, that:

“In accordance with Agenda 21, regional and subregional cooperation will play an important role in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the sustainable development of small island developing States. The United Nations regional commissions, regional development banks and regional and subregional

economic, environmental and technical cooperation organisations can contribute to that process.....

Further,

Para 134: Each of the relevant regional commissions of the United Nations should be enabled to support regional activities to coordinate the implementation of Conference outcomes at the regional level, including providing the necessary autonomy and adequate resources to their subregional offices and operational centres, taking into account the ongoing process of decentralization. That would involve:

- a) Assisting regional and subregional organisations and mechanisms involved in the promotion of sustainable development, as appropriate;
- b) Acting as a point of liaison between United Nations agencies and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat in New York, and among United Nations agencies at the regional and subregional levels.”

At the *Meeting of Representatives of Prospective Donors and Representatives of SIDS (the Donors' Conference)* held in New York, on 24-26 February 1999, among the four subregional project proposals presented by the Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC for the Caribbean, on behalf of the members of the CDCC, was one entitled Regional Coordinating Mechanism for the Implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action: Establishment of a Secretariat. Though the concept was well received by a number of delegations from among the donor community and, also, from among other agencies of the United Nations system, that initiative did not prosper.

The Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The *Mauritius Strategy*, in its paragraph 101, provides, *inter alia*, that:

“The Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to fully mobilize and coordinate the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including at the level of regional economic commissions, within their respective mandates, and further mainstream small island developing States issues to facilitate coordinated implementation in the follow-up of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States at the national, regional, subregional and global levels. ...”

Further, in its paragraph 104, it is provided that:

“Small island developing States regional institutions should play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the present Strategy.”

Section xxxxx

Development of a Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM)/Consultative Framework for the Caribbean

Some major issues

In addressing the design of a Regional Coordinating Mechanism to facilitate the implementation of SIDS Programme of Action, including the outcomes of the Mauritius International Meeting, in the Caribbean, among the major issues to be considered, are the following:

1. The operational context;
2. The institutional environment, including the role of regional organisations;
3. The objectives of coordination; and
4. Approaches to the coordination of implementation;

The operational context: implementation of the BPOA and the history of implementation in the subregion

In relation to the establishment of an RCM in the Caribbean, the operational context is provided by the decision of the SIDS of the subregion to implement the BPOA. This aspect was earlier reviewed in the context of the SIDS process which was indicated to span Agenda 21; the SIDS POA; SIDS + 5; the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation; and the Mauritius Strategy. The history of implementation efforts is also relevant and this too has been reviewed above.

The institutional environment: The decentralisation of the implementation process

With respect to the “*institutional environment*”, this broadly refers to the various decentralised arrangements that exist within the subregion to address the sustainable development problematic of SIDS, in particular, CARICOM; the OECS and their related institutions. Also relevant in this context, is the existence of such entities as the Subregional Headquarters of ECLAC for the Caribbean; and the several other regional and regionally-based organizations operating in the subregion. These entities have also been captured in the earlier review of the history of implementation efforts in relation to the BPOA in the subregion. Particular attention needs to be drawn, nevertheless, to the overlapping nature of the mandates of the several regional and subregional institutions

involved in the process and, also, the existence of what often appears to be “competing interests”.

Reference has already been made to the role envisaged for regional organizations in the *Mauritius Strategy*.

The objectives of coordination

The objectives of coordination would include such elements as the avoidance of unnecessary duplication of effort and expenditure; the exploitation of synergies; the development and presentation of a common position and to otherwise strategise vis à vis donors and other third parties, in general; and facilitation of the reporting function, for example, to the General Assembly; CSD; and global, regional or inter-regional Conferences. Also to be emphasised, is the need for an approach to coordination that takes into account the multi-dimensional nature of the sustainable development process. This element assumes particular relevance in the situation in which the governments of Caribbean SIDS appear to be adhering to the earlier interpretation of the BPOA as an “environmental” programme, hence their apparent inclination towards a coordination mechanism designed from that perspective.

Approaches to the coordination of implementation

Approaches to the coordination of implementation span two broad alternatives: “centralised coordination” and “coordinated decentralisation”.

- a) **Centralised coordination.** The experience of the centralised approach to coordination in the context of the Caribbean Model, as outlined above, suggests the acceptance, on the part of Caribbean SIDS, that this approach has failed.
- b) **Coordinated decentralisation:** As regards a system of “coordinated decentralisation”, the following observations are relevant:
 - i. Within this system, each regional/subregional entity, such as CARICOM, ECLAC/CDCC and OECS would pursue the implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action as an internal matter. For example, ECLAC would continue to oversee its implementation responsibility in the context of the CDCC and its work programme;
 - ii. A mechanism is, however, required to facilitate coordination among the several entities, with a view to the avoidance of unnecessary duplication of effort and related aspects.

Specific functions that might be envisaged for a Regional Coordinating Mechanism/Consultative Framework

In the context of the foregoing, it has been suggested that the absence of a permanent, effective, coordinating mechanism at the Caribbean subregional level is a critical factor that accounts for the slow pace of implementation at both national and subregional levels. More specifically, should this situation persist, Caribbean SIDS would continue to be deprived of an opportunity to pool, or otherwise combine, the limited resources at their disposal as a means of overcoming the manpower, financial, technical, institutional and other constraints that inhibit implementation of the BPOA. They would also be deprived of the means of effecting a sustained, joint or coordinated interface with third countries and regions and also with other relevant international entities.

At the *institutional* level, specific modalities for coordinated decentralisation might include:

1. The establishment of mechanisms for the exchange of information;
2. Periodic joint meetings of the governments of Caribbean SIDS and their respective secretariats, including joint meetings with relevant subregional, regional or regionally-based organizations;
3. Harmonisation of monitoring and general reporting formats, methods, standards and criteria (with possible implications for capacity-building at national and subregional levels with respect to the infrastructure for monitoring and reporting, including the development and implementation of relevant legislation, regulations, etc); and
4. Joint/coordinated representation vis à vis third parties, such as donors and global conferences, including the presentation of joint, or coordinated statements, as appropriate and feasible.

At the more *substantive* level, modalities for coordination and consultation in relation to implementation might envisage:

Possible Detailed Tasks of an RCM/Consultative Framework

The following tasks might be envisaged for a Regional Coordinating Mechanism/Consultative Framework:

- The basic coordination of implementation across the Region via liaison with governments and agencies and serving as “Secretariat” for the implementation process;
- Provision of advice/information on global and regional sustainable development issues to governments, regional institutions and civil society;
- Identification of transboundary and other sustainable development issues in the Caribbean and the formulation of recommendations;

- Supporting national implementation through, *inter alia*, the provision of technical information;
- Supporting the preparation of regional and national project proposals and the mobilisation of the required technical and other resources;
- Conducting research and supporting the formulation of subregional Sustainable Development Strategies;
- Facilitation of the development, updating and monitoring of Work Programme(s), as well as the reporting and evaluation functions.
- Facilitation of the convening of subregional coordination meetings;
- Mobilisation of international political support for the BPOA and its implementation.

Designing a Regional Coordinating Mechanism/Consultative Framework

The design of a Regional Coordinating Mechanism/Consultative Framework will necessarily be informed by the major guidelines that have been provided and which envisage:

- a regional *mechanism/consultative framework* for effective, coordinated, coherent implementation; and
- A well-established, well-defined RCM taking into consideration the special circumstances of the Associate Members of ECLAC, as adopted at the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Mauritius International Meeting.

These *guidelines* or *specifications* simultaneously speak to the *structures* that are required, namely, a *Regional Mechanism* and/or *Consultative Framework*, as well as the *outputs* that are envisaged from the operations of the structures i.e. a process of coordination/ consultation towards effective implementation of the BPOA, with particular reference, in this instance, to the Mauritius Strategy. As regards the structures, two approaches are suggested and between them the proposed *Consultative Framework* seems to connote a looser arrangement, more in accordance of the requirements of the “Coordinated Decentralisation” regime depicted above. The qualification “*effective*” before “*implementation*” might be construed as connoting the undertaking of actions that are, *inter alia*, relevant; results-oriented; cost-beneficial; consistent with minimum duplication and directed to the achievement of impacts within pre-determined time-frames. Some of these actions, which are also closely related to the *outputs* envisaged have been enumerated above in the context of the “*specific functions*” that might be envisaged for the Mechanism/Framework.

Also to be taken into account are a number of “operational” or “environmental” considerations, relating to such aspects as:

- (1) The roles recognised for sub/regional organisations in all basic SIDS-related documents, from the BPOA, to the Mauritius Strategy; and
- (2) The affective as well as the effective dimensions of the “legitimacy” of sub/regional arrangements. A high degree of legitimacy or acceptance attaches

to such arrangements, arising from the fact of their location in very close proximity to the specific operational area. The effective dimension comes into play, to the extent that the arrangements are able to deliver on their mandates thus satisfying the needs of the peoples of the subregions. Continued significant shortfalls in this dimension could have important negative implications for the *affective* aspect.

Emerging from the discussion have been two major options: Coordinated decentralisation on the one hand and centralised coordination, on the other. If only in the light of the experience of the “centralised coordination model” as explained in some detail above, attention will be focussed, in the context of an “Issues Paper”, on the alternative approach that has been highlighted, namely “Coordinated Decentralisation”.

Some Basic Merits and Challenges of Coordinated Decentralisation

As regards the perceived merits of “Coordinated Decentralisation”, these include:

- (1) The possibility of having subregional peculiarities and other concerns directly addressed by officials who are familiar with the corresponding countries, their institutions, culture and other relevant aspects;
- (2) Related to (1) above, the possession of “specialised knowledge” by the entity concerned;
- (3) From the perspective of the Governments and other actors/clients, greater access to the relevant institutions and modalities. There is no question of remoteness, whether physical or psychological which can bedevil collaboration endeavours;
- (4) The possibility of introducing flexibility into the implementation process, for example, to address newly identified needs or to close gaps;
- (5) The possible facilitation of consensus-building, arising from, *inter alia*, the smaller number of actors and the likely existence of shared concerns;
- (6) Less arduous monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes

With respect to the challenges, these include:

- (1) Risk of duplication of effort and a related intensified competition for resources;
- (2) The ability, on the other hand, to benefit from arrangements for the sharing of information and expertise; for exploiting synergies with other decentralised entities;
- (3) The development of cooperation with entities addressing different priorities;
- (4) The formulation of a balanced report covering the activities and results of implementation across several decentralised entities.

Coordinated Decentralisation and Centralised Coordination: Composition and Functioning

Coordinated Decentralisation

Within this model, the implementation process is conducted by essentially autonomous, decentralised Units as an “internal” matter. Coordination within the wider region may be conducted by means of a “Regional Consultative Mechanism”, comprising selected members of each decentralised Unit and the relevant secretariats, supported, as required, by representatives of other regional or international agencies. Such agencies might provide support for several, or even all decentralised implementation Units across the wider region. *Closed* meetings in which only Member States and Territories of the relevant subregion participate, are also envisaged. The Regional Consultative Mechanism could be entrusted with the reporting function which would be informed by inputs from the Member States and Territories, as well as from the Secretariats of the respective decentralised implementation Units.

Centralised Coordination:

Within this model, a “Central Mechanism” could be established, comprising a nucleus of representatives of each decentralised subregional implementation Unit, from across the wider region and supported by the subregional Secretariats, to undertake the coordination of the development and implementation of a **Regional Work Programme** agreed by all regional SIDS. It is also envisaged that this Regional Work Programme would be supported by other regional and regionally-based agencies. As regards the reporting function, while this will be conducted on the basis of activities undertaken at the country level, the Central Mechanism would be expected to play an active role.

Conclusion

This paper has been concerned to identify and also to summarily explore some of the “major issues” that are to be addressed in designing “a regional mechanism/consultative framework for the most effective coordinated, coherent implementation of the BPOA/MSI in the Caribbean. Among the major elements that informed the approach to the exercise, was the “institutional environment” that characterises the subregion and the history of implementation of the BPOA, including the basic approaches that have evolved within the past decade or so. A major aspect in this regard, was the collapse of what was once referred to as “the Caribbean Model” which represented an essentially centralised approach to the regional coordination process as regards the implementation of the BPOA. The adoption in 2001, of the St George’s Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS as the platform for launching of a number of far-reaching environment and sustainable development endeavours within that subregion was another. It was the joint consideration of these two

aspects that gave rise to the alternative typologies of “Centralised Coordination” vis a vis “Coordinated Decentralisation.”

The preparation of this Paper was also informed by the provisions of the resolution adopted on 14 July 2005, as contained in document A/59/L.63 of 6 July 2005, in which the United Nations General Assembly, *inter alia*:

1. “Urges Governments and all relevant international and regional organisations, United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies and regional economic commissions, international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and major groups, to take timely actions to ensure the effective implementation of and follow-up to the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation;

8. Requests the Secretary-General, through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to articulate a plan with recommendations for action and proposed activities, for the coordinated and coherent implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation by the relevant United Nations bodies, the specialised agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system within their respective mandates, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.”