



Expert Consultation on Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission

Building a science-policy interface for ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean

Association of Caribbean States - Caribbean Sea Commission

University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, July 7-9, 2010

Consultation background and purpose

Background

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) has been pursuing the Caribbean Sea Initiative since 1998 through the promotion of the UN Resolution 'Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations' at the UN General Assembly. An outcome of this process was the establishment of the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) in 2008 as a body to promote and oversee the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea. Since its establishment the ACS and CSC have been working towards developing appropriate structures and arrangements for the work of the CSC.

The CSC comprises a number of national representatives and expert members. It reports directly to the ACS Council of Ministers. Barbados is the current Chair of the CSC and Guatemala is Vice Chair. The operation of the CSC is supported by three Sub-commissions:

- Scientific and Technical Subcommission;
- Governance, Outreach and Public Information Subcommission;
- Legal Subcommission.

The key function of the Subcommissions is to acquire and synthesize of information relevant to ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean Region (ACS region) and based on this to provide policy advice to the CSC for review and onward communication to the Council of Ministers.

The current challenge is to develop and operationalise the mechanism by which (1) the Sub-commissions will be able to fulfill their function, and (2) the CSC proper will review the information provided, transform it into advice for the ACS Council and facilitate feedback from the council through the Sub-commissions to stakeholders in the region.

As currently proposed the overall mechanism would have the following characteristics:

- It would make best use of the full range of information and expertise available in the region by creating an effective network;
- It would allow for communication and information flow in two directions (1) upwards from information sources through synthesis mechanism to policy makers and (2) downwards, the reverse direction, for feedback and queries;
- It would be regular and transparent.

The next steps are to operationalise these arrangements. This is envisaged as being initiated through a first phase of four years duration with a focus on living marine resources of the Wider

Caribbean Region, including their linkages with productive sectors such as fisheries and tourism, and with reference to the threats posed by climate change.

The Expert Consultation on 'Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission - Building a science-policy interface for ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean,' is being held to carry forward the process of establishing the CSC and its functions.

Purpose of the Expert Consultation

The purpose of the Expert Consultation is to:

- Share information on the plans for and status of 'Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission' with critical partners;
- Obtain their feedback on the feasibility of the proposals and ideas for improvement of the plan;
- Build a common vision of how the partners can work together to achieve the overall goal of ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean Region.

The Consultation is structured so as to sequentially address three topics that are critical to the CSC: (1) regional ocean governance architecture and the role of the CSC; (2) processes for the science-policy interface that the CSC proposes to establish; and (3) the information system needed to support that interface. This structure reflects the considerable progress that has been made in developing approaches and plans for ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean Region over the past 10 years and in getting national endorsement for these approaches. Each topic will start with presentations that inform partners about work to date as well as related activities and ideas as a basis for discussion. These will be followed by inputs from partners that will stimulate discussions of how best to adapt and proceed with the plans. There will be facilitated breakout sessions around the topics to obtain structured feedback.

Outputs

The final output will be a 'way ahead' that is agreed among the key partners. This will be documented in a report of the consultation and also in a short publication designed to communicate the way ahead to a wider, more general audience.