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Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean**

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Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development

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I. Background

- 1.** The Rio Conference of 1992 was convened upon the acknowledgement that patterns of production and consumption, especially in developed countries, had reached unsustainable levels, jeopardizing the stability of several environmental goods and services that guarantee not only the continuity of productive activities but also the quality of life itself, with the intention to pave the way to revert this situation in the benefit of the world.
- 2.** Ten years after Rio-92, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean recognize that significant progress was made in some areas, especially in awareness building and the entry into force of national and international legal norms. There remain, however, important challenges and new imperatives have emerged to turn sustainable development into a reality and to materialize the necessary changes in the current development models. It is indispensable to revert the current tendencies of degradation of both the natural and the urban environment and, in particular, eliminate at a vigorous rhythm poverty and inequity – together with their impacts-, that afflict the countries of the region.
- 3.** This initiative recognizes the importance of regional action to promote sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in the framework of the Platform for Action on the Road to Johannesburg 2002, approved in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in October 2001. The launching of a Latin American and Caribbean Initiative is justified by the need to give a practical direction to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and reflect the unique characteristics, visions and goals of the region, taking into account, above all, the validity of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of the States.
- 4.** The peoples and countries in the region see the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a unique opportunity to proceed to the evaluation of progress achieved at all levels in fulfilling the commitments undertaken in Rio-92 and to adopt effective actions in the search for solutions to the new challenges of sustainable development. The Summit is, moreover, a historic opportunity to assume that it is not only possible but necessary to give response to the economic and social roots of environmental problems and to ensure financing redirected towards a new globalisation that will ensure sustainable, equitable and inclusive development. It should also promote the adoption of concrete actions through the cooperation of developed countries, multilateral and regional organizations, including financing institutions, and through the strengthening of South-South cooperation.

5. The task at hand consists in identifying programmes and projects aimed at the attainment of these goals. This initiative implies adjustments to the current international situation, and takes into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions and, on the foundation of an ethical basis, makes sustainable development a priority for social and economic political programmes for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

II. Objectives

6. The objectives of the Latin American and the Caribbean Initiative are the following:

- a) Consolidating and continuing the efforts of Latin America and the Caribbean, at the different levels of Government and civil society, in order to overcome obstacles in the implementation of programmes and projects of interest to the region in implementing the recommendations of Agenda 21, emphasizing effective implementation and the development of participation mechanisms in the Caribbean;
- b) Developing actions in selected areas that, based on the political will of States, stimulate the participation of the private sector and of civil society in order to promote investments that may generate sustainable productive activities and, at the same time, allow for the conservation and sustainable use of environmental goods and services essential to life;
- c) Promoting the implementation of sustainable development models on the foundation of an ethical basis that are competitive and supported by public policies devoted to fomenting science and technology, financing, human resources capacity-building, institutional development, valuation of goods and services and development of sustainability indicators adapted to the social, economic, environmental and political conditions of each country or to the needs of sub-regional groups of countries; and
- d) Contributing, as a political framework, to identifying and prioritising financial, technical and institutional mechanisms for the effective implementation of Agenda 21, facilitating the transfer of, access to and development of technology and knowledge and promoting the adoption of suitable regulatory frameworks.

7. This Initiative will also identify topics that are suitable for articulation and cooperation with proposals by other regions, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

III. Operative Guidelines for the Initiative

8. The operative guidelines of this Initiative are:

a) Reinforcing positions consolidated after Rio 1992:

- i) To ratify, the commitment to devote 0.7 % of the GDP of industrialized countries to official development assistance, as approved in Agenda 21;
- ii) To fulfil the commitments contained in the Doha Declaration and in the Consensus of Monterrey to ensure access to the market and the availability of the financial resources required to achieve sustainable development goals, particularly in support for the efforts of the developing countries;
- iii) To provide guidance for the creation of new financial mechanisms, including cancellation of the debt of developing countries and particularly the least developed countries, and the creation of an contingency fund for natural disasters;

- iv) To fully apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of the States and the respect for the sovereign right of each country over its natural resources;
- v) To reiterate commitment to the precautionary principle, in accordance with the definition that appears in the Rio Declaration, as a key component of environmental policy, so as to safeguard our natural and social heritage;
- vi) To give priority to the interests of countries in the Caribbean, especially in compliance with the Barbados Action Plan;
- vii) To enhance participation of non-governmental agents and transparency in decision-making processes, strengthening initiatives such as National Councils on Sustainable Development and the elaboration of national and local Agendas 21.
- viii) To promote the construction of a new ethical practice for sustainable development that takes into account the processes developed so far, such as the Earth Charter.
- ix) To implement the Guidelines on Sustainable Consumption approved by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999.

b) Operative guidelines:

The programmes and projects intended to face the challenges of sustainable development in the region should follow these operative guidelines within an ethical framework:

- i) Promoting sustainable economic growth and the definition of mechanisms and instruments to face new sources of instability promoting internal savings capacity and private capital flows.
- ii) Supporting the implementation of public policies aimed at reducing poverty and social inequality, creating jobs and promoting sustainable development with justice, equity and social inclusion.
- iii) Implementing integrated human health and environment measures to ensure that the health and well-being of the people of the region are increasingly recognized and systematically translated into policies and programmes.
- iv) Underlining the existing links between unsustainable patterns of consumption and the internationalisation of production patterns, in particular the growing importance of the awareness of consumers and enterprises for the application of concepts regarding social and environmental responsibilities.
- v) Developing new sustainable bases of competitiveness for the productive structure of countries in the region in order to strengthen their insertion in the world economy, proposing strategies that seek to achieve the effective opening of external markets, above all in the developed countries, a *sine qua non* condition for attaining the objective of sustainable development in the region.
- vi) Creating or strengthening economic, tax and fiscal instruments for the promotion of sustainable development.
- vii) Stimulating the adoption by governments and the productive sector of voluntary instruments (certifications, ISO 14000, certification for sustainable tourism, etc.) applicable to the sustainable development process.

- viii) Initiating or continuing the processes for valuation of the environment and natural resources to take advantage of the region's comparative advantages, incorporating indicators in the field of environmental liabilities and assets to allow their inclusion in the national accounting systems.
- ix) Supporting regional actions and sub-regional efforts, in particular those of the Caribbean (SIDS), the Amazon countries (TCA), the Andean sub-region (CAN), of MERCOSUR and Central America (ALIDES).
- x) Strengthening regional, sub-regional and national institutions, as well as the sub-national mechanisms, for the implementation, follow up and monitoring of policies, programmes and projects deriving from this Initiative.
- xi) Formulating strategies for the absorption, transfer and development of technology that should be supported through the mobilization and expansion of resources from existing financial institutions.
- xii) Improving or adapting existing systems of sustainability indicators that respond to the social, economic and political characteristics of the region, or build such systems.
- xiii) Developing South-South cooperation activities that will favour the use of the developing countries' strengths and opportunities on the basis of the sustainable development of the nations in the region.
- xiv) Promoting the development of *sui generis* systems to protect traditional knowledge, based on instruments and mechanisms of various nature and encouraging that the current systems of intellectual property take into account the traditional knowledge associated with biological diversity in the evaluation of patent requests and other related rights.

IV. Action priorities

A. Priority Themes

9. On the occasion of the XIII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in October 2001, the countries of the region agreed to identify actions that could focus the efforts for the implementation of this Initiative.

10. Among them, priority actions are adopted that address, among others, eradication of poverty and social inequalities; expansion of the environmental education dimension in all economic and social endeavours; sustainable management of water resources; sustainable generation of energy and the increasing participation of renewable sources; management of protected areas for the sustainable use of biodiversity; adaptation to impacts caused by climate change and sustainable management of urban and rural areas, with special emphasis on health, environmental sanitation and minimization of risks and vulnerability to natural disasters. Actions to promote scientific and technological innovation, the strengthening of research and development institutions and the increasing of existing sources of financing are also relevant. In this context, centres of excellence in research and development should promote the building of a solid scientific alliance through, among others, activities of scientific exchange, establishment of interdisciplinary information networks and formulation of joint research projects.

11. The countries of the region should act together so that cooperation and financial multilateral institutions, as well as regional and sub-regional organizations, provide support to programmes of action and projects identified in this Initiative.

12. They should also promote inter-regional cooperation actions with a view to reinforcing technical and scientific cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.

13. Finally, countries of the region should strengthen public-private sector partnerships for the promotion of scientific and technical progress based on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

14. The countries of the region should advocate concrete activities to promote an ethic for sustainable development in the discussions conducted at international forums, consistent with the Rio de Janeiro Platform for Action of October 2001.

15. The implementation of the guiding goals and indicative purposes at the regional level will be reviewed every five years.

16. The action proposals identified in this Initiative constitute the intentions for future action by the Latin American and Caribbean countries in terms of the imperatives of sustainable development. The region recognizes that, to achieve these goals, means of implementation and possible partnerships still need to be determined; and it underscores the need for a favourable international scenario, basically a scenario of peace and solidarity, enhanced by the effective commitment of the developed countries to the transfer and adaptation of technologies, the provision of new and sufficient additional resources, the elimination of subsidies and greater openness of their markets, among others.

B. Guiding Goals and Indicative Purposes

1) Biological diversity

- *Increase of the forest area.*
 - i) ensure the sustainable management of forest resources in the region, significantly reducing the present deforestation rates.
- *Territory included in protected areas.*
 - i) Increase significantly the territory in the region under protected area regimes, considering in their definition buffer zones and biological corridors.
- *Genetic resources - Equitable sharing of benefits.*
 - i. Adopt regulatory frameworks for access to genetic resources, as well as for fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from their utilization, compatible with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2) Water resources management

- *Watershed management.*
 - i) Improve and strengthen the institutional arrangements for the integrated management of water basins and aquifers through, among other measures, the establishment of water basin committees with the participation of all sub-national levels of government, civil society, the private sector and all involved stakeholders.
- *Management of marine and coastal areas and their resources.*

- i) Implement national and regional environmental action plans for the integrated management of the coastal zone, with particular attention to the Small Island Developing States.
- *Better quality of inland waters.*
- i) Improve the quality of effluents and reduce the discharge of pollutants into surface water bodies, groundwater and coastal areas.

3) Vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities

- *Land-use planning.*
- i) implement plans and policies for land-use planning from a sustainable development approach.
- ii) incorporate instruments for risk management in land-use planning
- *Areas affected by degradation processes.*
- i) Reduce significantly the areas of the regional territory subject to erosion, salinization and other soil degradation processes.
- *Air pollution.*
- i) Reduce the concentration of polluting emissions in the air.
- *Water pollution.*
- i) Increase the coverage of drinking water services and wastewater treatment.
- *Solid wastes.*
- i) Reduce significantly solid waste generation (domestic and industrial) and promote, among others, recycling and reuse.
- ii) Implement integrated management of solid wastes (domestic and industrial), including appropriate treatment and final disposal.
- *Vulnerability to anthropogenic disasters and those caused by natural phenomena.*
- i) Implement and strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms for the risk management and the mitigation of anthropogenic disasters and those caused by natural phenomena, including the formulation of a regional early-warning system and the formation of immediate response groups.

4) Social issues, including health, inequity and poverty

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