

Third International Conference On Small Island Developing States: Grenada National Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

The unique challenges facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were first formally recognized at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (the Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. In this regard, the outcome document known as Agenda 21 noted:

Small Island Developing States, and islands supporting small communities are a special case both for environment and development. They are ecologically fragile and vulnerable. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, place them at a disadvantage economically and prevent economies of scale (Agenda 21: 17.124).

But it was not until 1994, when the first Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS was held in Barbados, that the commitment to sustainable development identified in Agenda 21 was translated into a policy document. That conference resulted in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (BPOA) - a 14-point programme of action that identified priority areas and specific actions and measures to be taken at the national, regional and international levels for addressing the special challenges faced by SIDS. The BPOA was reviewed in 1999.

The second major international conference to further the BPOA was held in Port Louis, Mauritius, in 2005. On that occasion, the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the BPOA, known as the MSI, expanded the 14-point programme of the BPOA to 19 points. The Mauritius meeting also recognized that financial and other resource constraints continued to hamper the ability of SIDS to fulfill the activities of the BPOA. In particular, the overall decline in official development assistance (ODA) was noted. The MSI was reviewed in 2010.

At Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 twenty years after the landmark 1992 Earth Summit, member states renewed their political commitment towards SIDS and called for United Nations support towards these countries¹. On that occasion they also agreed to hold a Third International Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS, which will be held in Apia, Samoa in September 2014.

Twenty years after the BPOA, the third International Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS will once again bring to fore the vulnerabilities and development needs of SIDS, with a view to identifying solutions and committing resources for the implementation of these solutions. Preparations for this Conference include national stakeholder consultations, which will feed into regional meetings,

¹ United Nations (2012). The Future We Want. General Assembly Resolution 66/288.

followed by an inter-regional preparatory meeting scheduled for late August, and then into the global decisions. The regional preparatory meeting for the Caribbean subregion will be held in Jamaica, July 2-3, 2013.

It is expected this process will help to advance the call for sustainable development in SIDS, strengthening partnerships and identifying resources for implementation, and ultimately contributing to the wider dialogue on a sustainable future for all, captured in the post-2015 agenda.

In preparation for the Regional Meeting in Jamaica, the government of Grenada in collaboration with the United Nations System hosted a national consultation on June 21 2013. The consultation, suitably themed “**The Future We Want**”, attracted representation from government, private sector and civil society, and encouraged discussions aligned with the principles of sustainable development. Most importantly it offered an opportunity for the voice of Grenadians to be heard on these issues.

This report presents an analysis of the findings from this consultative process. The rest of the document seeks to address the following four objectives of the United Nations General Assembly, specifically:

- Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation;
- Affirm a renewed political commitment;
- Identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of SIDS and means of addressing them; and
- Identify priorities for the sustainable development of SIDS to be considered in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

2. ABOUT GRENADA: PROFILE AND EXPERIENCE OF A SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE (SIDS)

The southernmost of the Windward Islands, Grenada is an independent nation state, which consists of 3 inhabited islands - Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique - and a few smaller uninhabited ones including Ronde Island, Caille Island, Diamond Island, Large Island, Saline Island and Frigate Island. Most of the country's 110,000 residents live on the largest island Grenada. Altogether, the islands have a land area of 345 sq. km (133 sq. miles).

Mountainous terrain is ringed by extensive coral reefs in these volcanic isles. The highest point in Grenada, Mt. St. Catherine, lies 833 meters above sea level, while the highest points in Carriacou, are High North and Mount Carre, both 291 meters above sea level. There are a variety of coastal and marine resources, including coral reefs, sea grass beds and mangrove swamps. A humid tropical climate, with temperatures averaging approximately 26 degrees centigrade exists for most of the year.

Prior to 2004, when Hurricane Ivan plummeted Grenada uprooting its agriculture sector, damaging key infrastructure and leaving in its wake losses exceeding the average annual GDP, Grenada was well on the way to achieving several of the MDGs². But the blow to agriculture, the mainstay of the economy – nutmeg, cocoa and bananas, in particular – was substantial. Assessment of damages, after the Hurricane, indicated eighty per cent (80%) of the country was reported to have been demolished with at least eighty- nine per cent (89%) of the housing stock destroyed. There was also a significant loss of lives; reports placed the number of persons dead at twenty-eight. In addition to agricultural infrastructure and livestock destroyed, some crops were uprooted and scorched beyond a capacity to regenerate. In 2005, as the country fought to get back on its development path another hurricane (Emily) struck and once again the country was consigned to recovery mode.

Apart from natural disasters, this country was affected, as were other countries in the sub region, by global events, which had a significant effect on its social and economic progress. In 2006, the international surge in oil and fuel prices reduced the capacity of the Government to reduce poverty by depleting its resources and increasing the cost of production. The Global Financial Crisis added another dimension of vulnerability to the challenges already being faced by Grenada. A Poverty and Social Impact Assessment conducted in 2009³ indicated that this crisis severely impacted

² Recent Natural Disasters and their impact on Grenada's Achievement of Millennium Development Targets and Goals. Neville Duncan (2005).

³ Nils Junge (2009b). Social Implications of the Global Economic Crisis in Caribbean SIDS: Synthesis of the Findings of 7 country Studies. Prepared for the UNDP Sub-regional Office for Barbados and the OECS for the Economic Crisis PSIA with the input of Melissa Felician and Lynette Joseph-Brown.

the tourism industry resulting in declines in both arrivals and spending. The construction industry was also a casualty to the crisis; resulting in high levels of unemployment.

Attempts to keep the economy afloat led to expansionary fiscal policies on the part of the Government, resulting in Grenada's high debt burden of 108 percent of GDP as at December 2012. In this same period, debt financing accounted for 60% of recurrent expenditure. This has had a negative impact in the provision of adequate health services and in the quality and reach of education.

Undoubtedly, there is a high level of interconnectedness, for Small Island Developing States, between environmental, economic and social vulnerabilities. Single events of disaster – environmental and/or economic in nature - to which a country like Grenada is prone because of its geographical location, can have long lasting and far reaching effects, heightened because of its small size.

The Mauritius Strategy of Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action can help to provide opportunities and tools for resilience, even as the vulnerabilities are identified and support for the implementation of effective strategies are being garnered.

3. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. Progress to date in key areas

At the 5-year review of the **Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA)** in 1999 (**BPOA+5**) six of the original 14 priority areas were identified as being in need of urgent attention. These are highlighted in Box 1 below.

Box 1 Priority Areas (BPOA)
1. Climate change and sea- level rise: adapting to climate change and rising sea levels, which could submerge some low-lying island nations;
2. Natural and environmental disasters and climate variability: improving preparedness for and recovery from natural and environmental disasters;
3. Management of wastes
4. Coastal and marine resources: protecting coastal ecosystems and coral reefs from pollution and over-fishing;
5. Freshwater resources: preventing worsening shortages of freshwater as demand grows;
6. Land resources
7. Energy: developing solar and renewable energy to lessen dependence on expensive imported oil;
8. Tourism: managing tourism growth to protect the environment and cultural integrity.
9. Biodiversity resources
10. National institutions and administrative capacity
11. Regional institutions and technical cooperation
12. Transport and communication
13. Science and technology
14. Human resource development

Later, in 2010, the MSI+5 was held to review the further implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action agreed to in 2005 (MSI). Key issues and priorities highlighted at those discussions included the need to focus on the following:

- Strengthening data management capacities of SIDS for monitoring and evaluation;
- Enhancing strategic partnerships, including strengthening South-South and SIDS-SIDS cooperation;
- Assessing the effectiveness of UN system support to SIDS;

- Underlining the need for results-oriented approaches and improved measures to effectively address SIDS' vulnerabilities; and
- Exploring the formal recognition of SIDS as a special category in the UN.

As it relates to Grenada's progress to date in implementing the BPOA, and treating with issues identified at these fora, an excellent review of existing initiatives can be found in the, **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) National Preparatory Process: Background Paper and Workshop Report**, submitted by the Government of Grenada⁴. That document is an important companion to this consultative process, since it is reports on a consultation that addressed similar themes and captured the views of stakeholders in Grenada.

Some of the country initiatives highlighted in that report as being in line with the mandates of the BPOA, would have commenced more than a decade ago and there are in many instances no clear understanding of the extent of progress since its initial elaboration; others may be ongoing or new. Table 1 below summarizes the initiative reported on in that paper.

Table 1: Initiatives relevant to the implementation of the BPOA/MSI highlighted in the RIO +20 preparatory document

Initiative	Comments. Dates (where available)
Tourism Master Plan	Initiated in 1996 and enhanced in 2011
Strategy to mainstream sustainable land management	Expected outcomes include (1) the adoption of a Land Management Authority or Agency; and (2) A study on Land and Marine Management strategy in order to make Land Management more consistent and compatible with coastal / marine management in the small island context.
First national communication on climate change	Provides a framework for mainstreaming various responses to climate change at various sectors including housing and services
Elaboration of a Draft Energy policy	2002 - Manifested in a current policy for rational responsiveness to short term changes in the CIF prices for petroleum fuel
Low Carbon Development Strategy	2010 - Ultimate milestone, a minimum of 20% renewable energy for electrification and transportation.
A comprehensive Physical Planning Development Control Act, PPDCA	2002 - Further enhancement to the PPDCA Act of 2002 is planned in the form of a Bill to create subsidiary legislation for enhancement of control on physical economic developments.

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