

Caribbean SIDS relevant climate change and disasters indicators for evidence-based policies

Final regional workshop of the project 2023

(10-12 May 2023, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)

Opening remarks by Faustina Wiggins, Environmental Statistics, Regional Statistics Program, CARICOM Secretariat

On behalf of the Director of Regional Statistics of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Mr. Halim Brizan, I am happy to deliver these Opening Remarks on the occasion of the Final regional workshop of the project: “Caribbean SIDS relevant climate change and disasters indicators for evidence-based policies”.

The CARICOM Secretariat is pleased to have collaborated with the UNECLAC in the CARICOM SIDS Climate Change and Disaster Statistics Project, through our contributions to various project activities, since its commencement in March 2021. The CARICOM Secretariat has fully supported the project aims; to build capacity in statistics related to climate change, disaster vulnerability and building resilience, since it aligns with our work in environment and climate change statistics in the RSP, which commenced circa 1999. We were pleased that through this project, countries were able to receive support to sustain the momentum, which started in 2019 with the UNSD/CARICOM Workshop on Environment Statistics and Climate Change Statistics for the CARICOM Region, to strengthen capacity of countries to produce the statistics and indicators required by users in these areas of statistics.

We continue to highlight, throughout the project, that the lack of data on environment and climate change is an impediment to building resilience in the region. The availability of this data will contribute to the designing of policies to reduce the Community’s vulnerability to disaster risk and the effects of climate change and ensuring the effective management of the region’s natural resources, which would lead to the desired outcome of a reduction in environmental vulnerability. We are reminded, of the vivid experiences from our Members States who endured the ravages of the various climate events in the past five years as a result of the climate crisis and believe that the outcomes could have been less severe had we invested in the production of sound statistics before. The undertaking of this workshop is a clear indication that all is not lost.

Statistics has a vital role to play in guiding policy formulation relative to the achievement of the goals and objectives of governments as well as the Sustainable Development Goals and other Internationally Agreed Environment Goals in monitoring and measuring progress and fundamentally in achieving sustainable growth and development. In the above context and given the role of statistics in general, the need for regional cooperation in statistics is even more urgent, beginning with the need to reinforce statistical development at the country level through inter-agency collaboration among ministries, departments, and agencies, which this project has promoted. Ministries, departments, and agencies are among the key stakeholders in this area, and they are also key sources of environment, climate change and disaster statistics. Similarly, interagency collaboration among regional and international agencies is vital for the filling of data gaps. The UNECLAC continues to be a key regional strategic partner in supporting member countries in improving environment, climate change and disaster statistics and we would like to express appreciation to the Director, Mr. Rolando Ocampo, and staff for this continued support.

Our key international development partners include:

- the UNSD
- the European Union under the European Development Fund (EDF)
- Paris21
- the Government of Canada
- the World Bank
- the Government of Italy through the Italian national institute of statistics that hosted webinars in this area
- the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) who supported the development of an Integrated Statistical System of Administrative Registers (ISSAR) in selected countries where gender, environment, agriculture, and rural development registers exist in more than one government agency. This IDB project brought together various stakeholders to improve data sharing through, inter alia, the development of a draft data sharing agreement protocol for consideration of the participating institutions.
- The Eleventh EDF project, now underway will see further capacity building activities including in-country work in this area, a workshop on the SDG related environment, climate change and disaster indicators, scheduled for the latter half of this year, and a Consultancy to build capacity in the production of the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We encourage other development partners to come on board and support this thrust of providing resources to build the capacity within the National Statistical Systems of our CARICOM SIDS to be able to produce and report on the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators, which would redound to the benefit of the entire Caribbean Community.

Considering the environmental, climate change and natural disaster issues that CARICOM countries face as small island developing states, the CARICOM Secretariat will continue to support the efforts by countries and regional partners to produce statistics on environment, climate change and disasters to mitigate the impact of these issues and build resilience in Caribbean Community. Central to all these efforts is the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS), The RSDS, which is the strategic roadmap to guide the process of transformation of the CARICOM Statistical System for statistical development for the period 2019 until 2030. Specifically, sustainable capacity building and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development with the 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators are critical strategic drivers of the CARICOM RSDS. The regional strategy for the development of statistics will drive the production and dissemination of statistics in this area.

In conclusion, I would like to advocate for increased collaboration among stakeholders, regional organisations, National Statistical Offices and Development Partners to support training initiatives like the workshops conducted under the Caribbean SIDS project. The training workshops illustrated a great commitment by UNECLAC to making climate change and disaster indicators available to policy and decision makers and ensuring that they are available to illustrate our progress towards building resilience, advancing the CARICOM resilience agenda thereby creating a safer more resilient and sustainable Caribbean Community.

On behalf of the Director and the staff of the Regional Statistics Programme, I thank you.