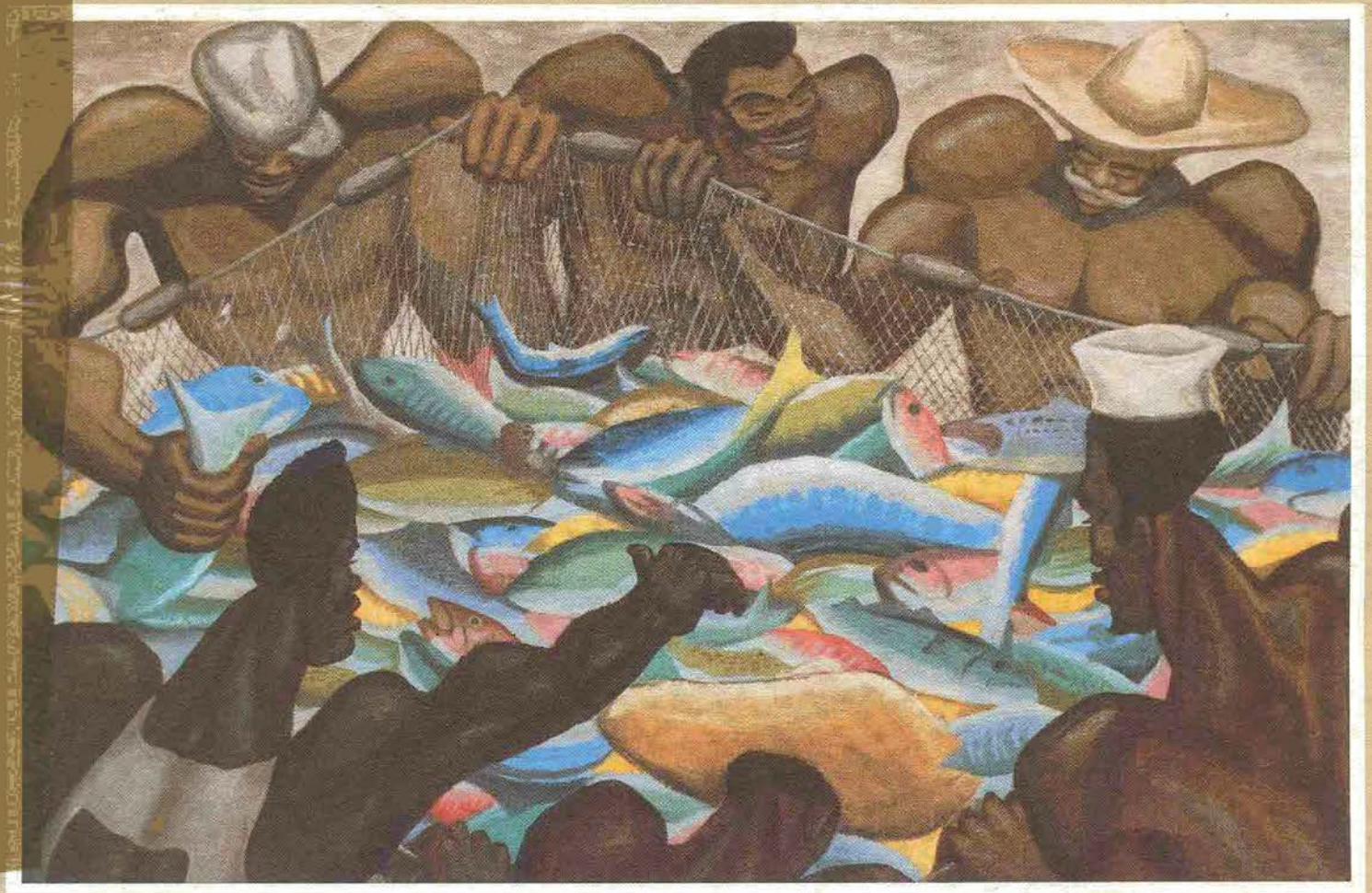




# ACTION PLAN FOR THE CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*



Front cover:

“THE BIG CATCH” by ELWIN TODD, 1959.

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# ACTION PLAN FOR THE CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME


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## *A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME  
CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CO-ORDINATING UNIT  
14-20 Port Royal Street  
Kingston, Jamaica

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October, 1987



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# OVERVIEW

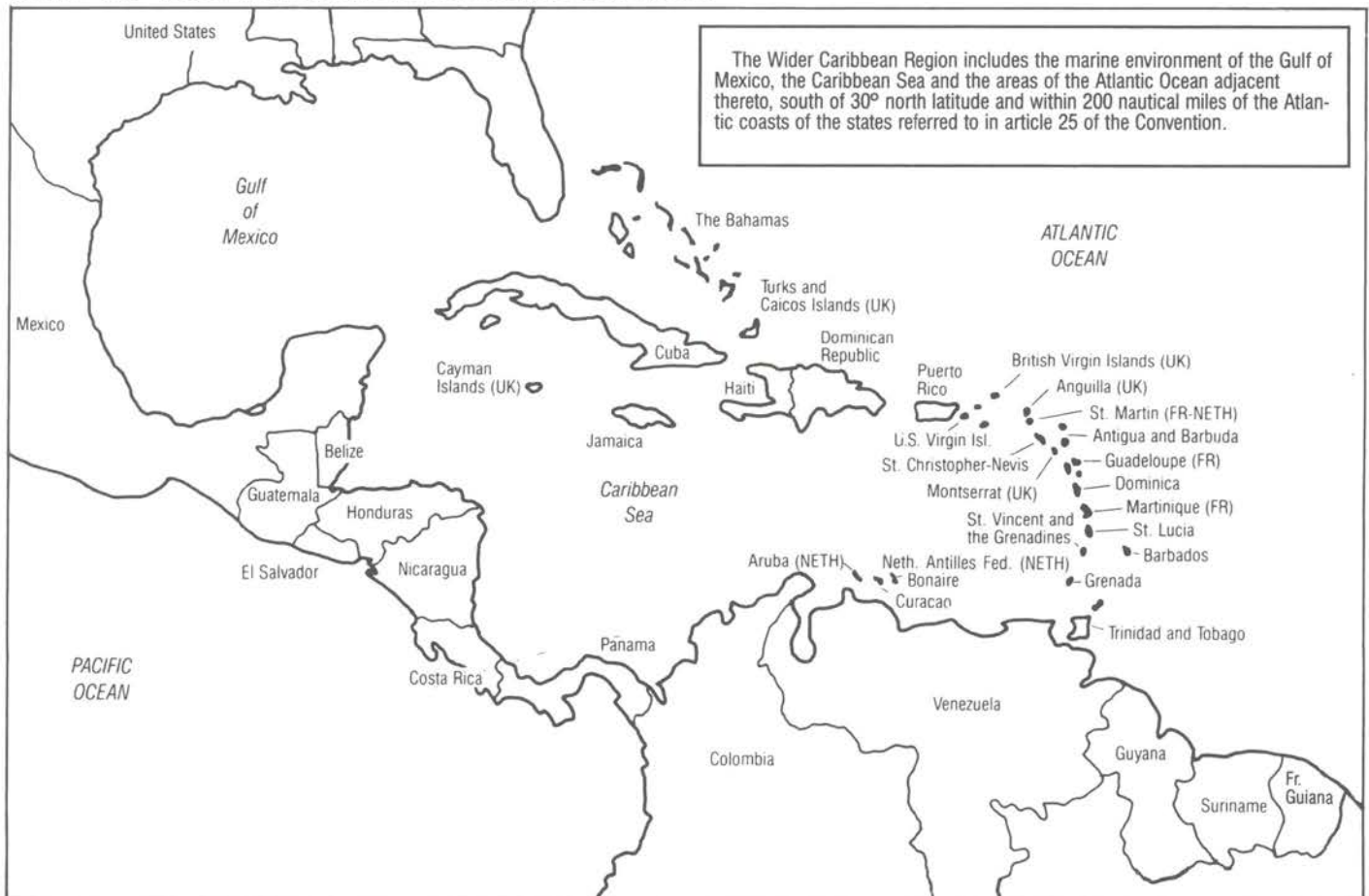
A new and unique opportunity for regional cooperation in the Caribbean is at hand. After years of consultation and negotiation, the states and territories of the Wider Caribbean Region have joined in pursuit of a common goal—protection of the marine and coastal environment through the promotion of balanced and sustainable economic development.

Thirty-three nations and territories comprise the Wider Caribbean Region, an area characterized by great cultural diversity as well as by the diversity of its terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The Region's politics are similarly diverse, with contending ideologies, competing trade and economic alliances, and differing political traditions.

Despite these differences, there exists a strong sense of regional coherence generated by centuries of interchange and interaction. All of the nations and territories share a common resource—their regional seas—the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean—which, together with the adjacent land areas, constitute the Wider Caribbean Region.

On the Region's eastern perimeter is the insular Caribbean—the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, and those of the Bahamian chain to the north. The U.S. Gulf Coast states, coastal Mexico, Central America and the northern tier states of South America complete the terrestrial perimeter which enclose its two major basins—the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

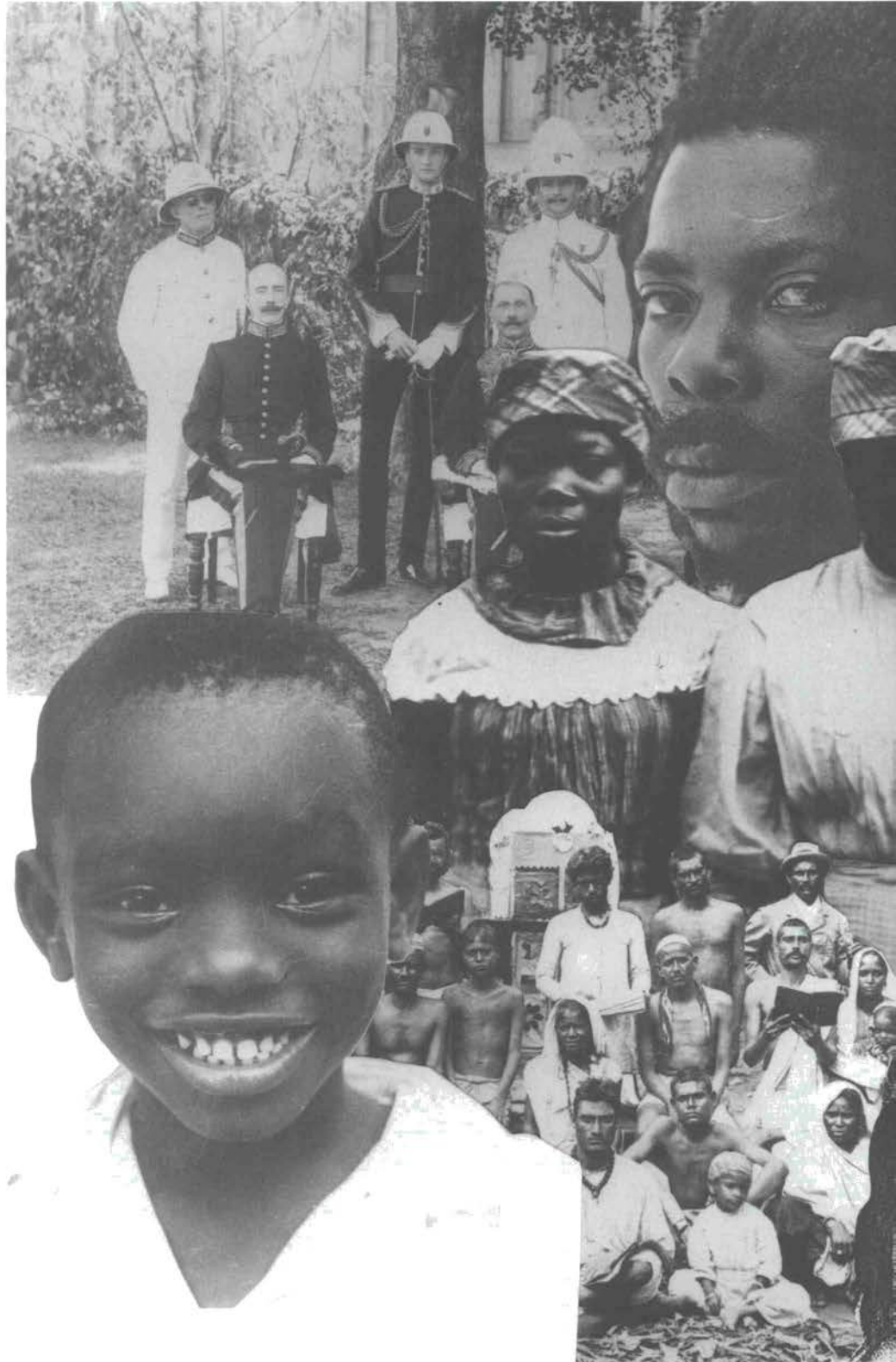
## MAP OF THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION



## *Cultural Complexity*

Culturally, the Wider Caribbean Region is abundantly endowed. Its people spring from five continents, contributing to a rich and vibrant collage of races, religions, customs, and ethnic groups.

The heritage of Northern and Mediterranean Europe co-exist with traditions having their roots in East and West Africa. Descendants of indentured laborers from the Indian subcontinent and South Asia mix with



those from the Middle East and the Americas; a Region of great energy, great tension, great abundance and, paradoxically, a Region of great scarcity; on the one hand, brimming with a richness of cultures, on the

other, suffering from great economic disparities. If any unifying theme is echoed throughout the Region it is one calling for sustained economic growth and development.







## *Resource Base*

While the resources of the Wider Caribbean are diverse, they are limited both in quantity and in regional distribution. It is noteworthy that the insular Caribbean, with its history of highly productive plantation agriculture, does not now produce sufficient food to feed its own peoples. Despite its maritime exposure, the Region's fisheries potential is limited by oceanographic conditions. While some areas in the Gulf of Mexico, the Bahia de Campeche, and along the north coast of South America are rich in shrimp and finfish resources, other areas are relatively barren of harvestable fish stocks because of great ocean depths and the absence of upwelling ocean currents.

Though hydrocarbon resources abound in the Gulf of Mexico, along coastal Venezuela and in the waters of Trinidad, energy scarcity has pauperized many other states in the Region. Past exploitive practices have also left their marks. Gold, bauxite and precious gems have been clawed from the earth of Jamaica, Guyana, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, but none of these resources have produced lasting wealth.

The soils of the Caribbean islands, which for centuries, were exploited to provide Europe and North America with sugar (and rum), spices, tobacco, and coffee, are today eroding at an alarming rate as a result of deforestation and inappropriate agricultural practices. Recognition is growing of the need for fundamental structural changes in the Region's agriculture if this sector is going to contribute to sustained economic growth.

Throughout the Region there is an upsurge of interest in substituting locally grown for imported foods, as well as in the production of export crops to increase farm income and to generate foreign exchange earnings. Employing the latest in agricultural technology, traditional mono-crop agriculture, historically dominated by sugarcane, is gradually giving way to new initiatives in crop cultivation.

Simultaneously emerging is the environmental awareness that the potentially rich rewards of supplying world markets with the products of tropical agriculture must be balanced against ecological and economic risks

including increased levels of agrichemical contamination, and greater exposure of the agricultural sector, and particularly of small farmers, to fluctuations in world commodity prices. Achieving a balance between sustained economic growth and wise resource use is one of the most vexing issues confronting planners and policy makers in the Region.

The Caribbean is an area of great geographic importance. Its waters constitute a broad ocean highway, criss-crossed by shipping lanes that are vital to international commerce.

For the world scientific community, the Wider Caribbean is a great laboratory for pure and applied research. Opportunities abound for studies on coral reefs, aquaculture, oceanography, and tropical forestry to name but a few areas.





For tourists, the Caribbean is a recreational mecca with many and varied opportunities for boating, scuba diving, deep sea fishing, and other tourism activities.

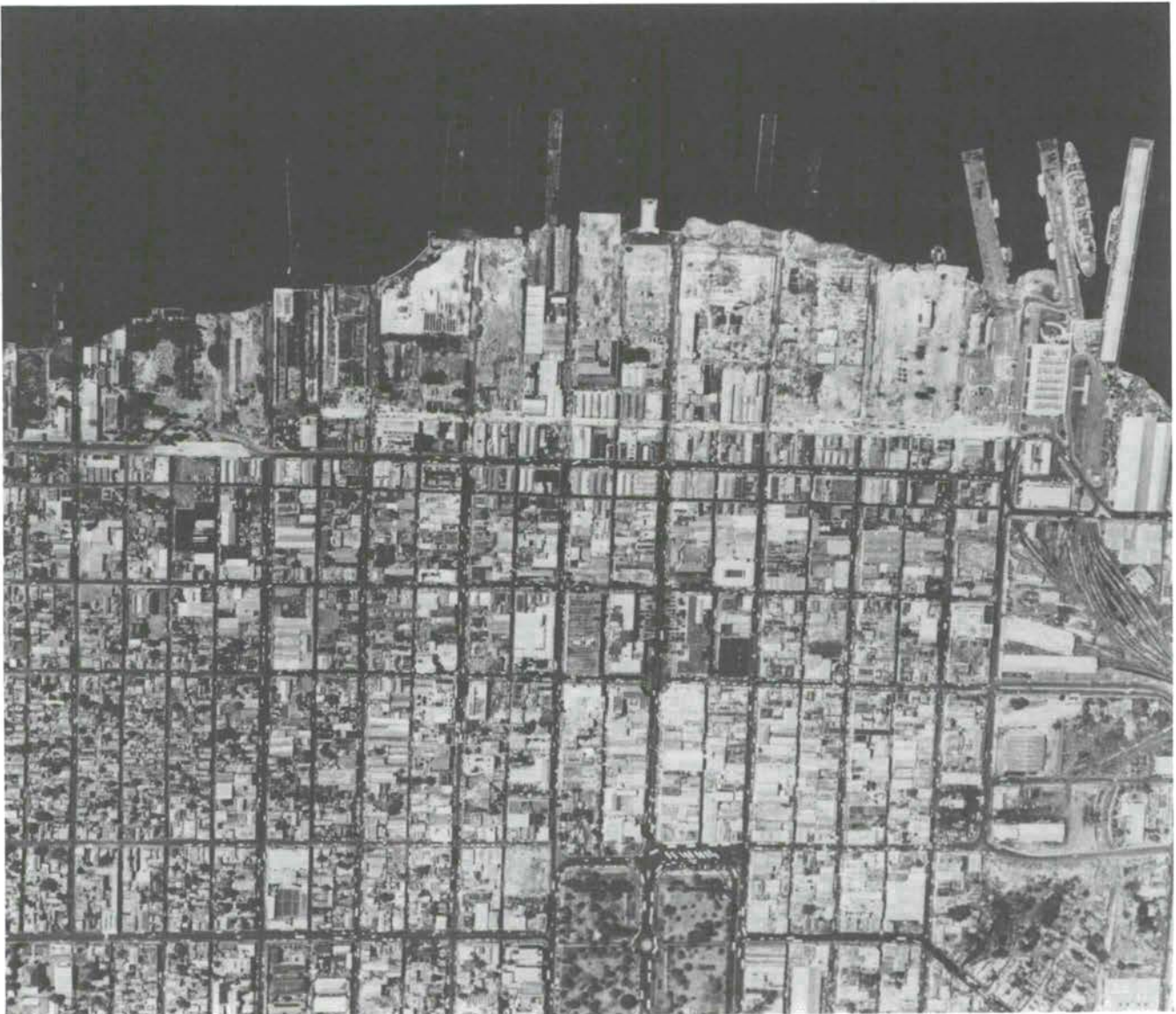
The Caribbean has given much to the world; the bounty of its seas, the products of its soils, the creativity of its people—even its music—calypso, reggae and salsa—have been embraced worldwide. But, paradoxically, the abundance of its gifts contrasts with the scarcity of its wealth.

Juxtaposed with abundance are all too frequent examples of grinding poverty, both in the rural countryside as well as in the urban centers which accommodate an increasingly larger proportion of the Region's population.



## *Problems and Issues*

Despite the Region's great natural beauty, there are striking examples of polluted harbours, silt laden rivers, and contaminated aquifers. Environmental degradation is both cause and effect with respect to human poverty. Thus, the sea lanes of the Caribbean, crowded with merchant shipping, have also become the exodus routes for refugees fleeing degraded ecosystems no longer able to sustain even subsistence agriculture. Some root causes for environmental deterioration and economic decline in the Wider Caribbean Region include:

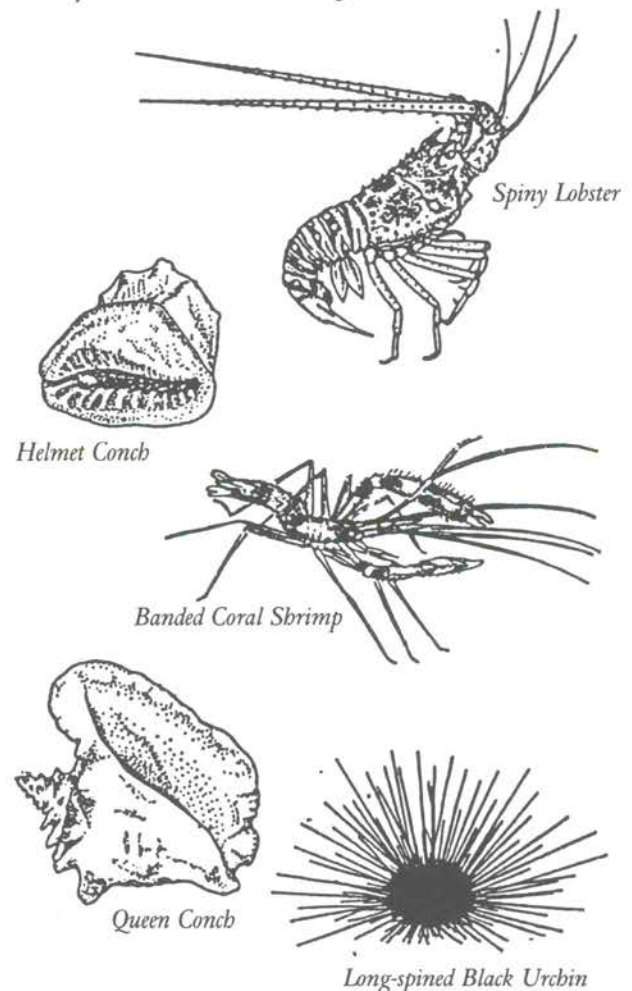


- Deforestation, slash and burn agriculture and clean cropping on steep hillsides resulting in severe soil erosion and steadily declining agricultural productivity. Tons of fertile topsoil are periodically washed out to sea, with suspended sediments smothering coral reef communities.
- Over-fishing and the nonenforcement of regulations to protect immature stocks threaten near-shore reef fisheries. Particularly damaging is the illegal harvesting of fish and shellfish by use of dynamite and the dispersal of chlorine along reefs.
- Destruction of marine nursery areas by the filling of tidal wetlands and mangrove forests due, in some measure, to ignorance as to the ecological value of such areas.
- Beach and dune destruction as a result of the illegal extraction of sand exposes interior areas to the ravages of storm surge and coastal flooding.
- Disposal of untreated sewage from cities and towns, as well as from tourist hotels and resort areas threatens public health, is an aesthetic blight, and can ultimately imperil tourism as a viable industry.
- Oil spills associated with the production, refining, and transportation of petroleum and petroleum products poses an ever present risk to marine ecosystems as well as to coastal recreation and tourism.
- Solid waste disposal, generating leachate that degrades groundwater supplies, is a particular problem of the island countries with their limited land area.
- Disposal of garbage and other wastes at sea by merchant vessels and recreational boaters is a recognized regional issue.
- The increasing use of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals creates the risk of contaminating soil and water resources, thereby threatening sustainable agricultural production as well as endangering the health of local inhabitants.
- Preemption of beach frontage by hotel and condominium developments, often barring local residents

from traditional fishing beaches, is a recurring issue, particularly in areas experiencing an upsurge in tourism. In addition, such development can result in the aesthetic and environmental degradation of the shoreline.

- As cities spread and urban housing proliferates, new development is often sited in areas that are vulnerable to damage from natural disasters—hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions.

Many of these problems are of a localized nature. Others are beyond the capabilities of any one country to solve. However, all of these problems, including more global issues such as species destruction and the rise in sea levels, could benefit from regional cooperation, specifically through information exchange, technology transfer, and a comparison of solutions pursued by other states in the Region.





# WHAT IS THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN?

The Action Plan represents an expression of goals and a programme agenda, adopted by participating Governments, that is consistent with a growing worldwide concern for the conservation and development of marine and coastal resources. The geographic focus of the Plan is the Wider Caribbean Region.

## *Bounds of the Wider Caribbean Region*

The area of the Wider Caribbean Region was drawn to include all of the insular and coastal states and territories of the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, from the U.S. Gulf coast states and the islands of the Bahamian chain, south to the French Department of Guiana. Here is a vast maritime region, of great strategic importance with respect to the global economy, struggling to achieve its own economic development.

## *Evolution of the Caribbean Action Plan*

The Action Plan for the Caribbean emerged as a result of many years of work by governmental and non-governmental representatives of the Caribbean community, assisted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

This was a grass roots, regionally initiated process set in motion by a deep concern about the future of social/economic development and resource management in the Region. Its evolution was an exhaustive process involving extensive discussion and consultation.

Eventually, differences in viewpoints and political perspectives were overcome in the interests of regional cooperation. At Montego Bay, Jamaica in April, 1981, twenty-two states and territories adopted the Action Plan for the protection and development of the marine and coastal resources of the Wider Caribbean Region.

## *In Pursuit of Common Objectives*

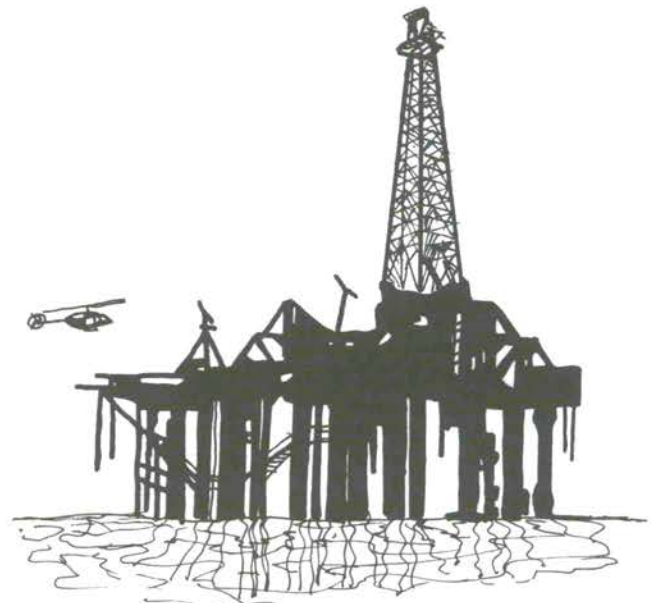
In adopting the Action Plan at the 1981 Montego Bay meeting, the Governments of the Wider Caribbean Region have created a forum for discussion and debate on issues of vital importance to achieving a balance be-

tween economic development and environmental protection. The Action Plan has the unique distinction of being the single instrumentality which officially commits the Governments of this vast and diverse Region to join together in pursuit of common objectives.

The program objectives embraced by the Caribbean Action Plan include the following:

■ *Assistance to all Countries of the Region, Recognizing the Special Situation of the Smaller Island Countries.*

The countries and territories of the Wider Caribbean Region vary enormously in their population size and resource base. On the one hand, the larger continental nations—Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico and the United States—have abundant agricultural and mineral resources. Along the Gulf Coast of the U.S., the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama are major producers of oil and gas, with large coastal cities, and deep-water industrial ports. Offshore of the Mexican states of Veracruz, Tampico, and Campeche are major oil and gas producing fields, as is the case with the coastal states of Venezuela.



In contrast, the Central American republics, and particularly the island nations and territories of the Caribbean, are areas struggling to sustain relatively large populations with very limited natural resources, giving rise to severe economic and social problems. These nations, with few exceptions, have been seriously affected by steeply fluctuating energy costs, and the decline in world commodity prices for many of their major exports such as sugar, bananas, and bauxite. The result has been serious, often desperate problems of inflation, high unemployment, and severe trade imbalance.

For these reasons it is essential that the Action Plan affirmatively link resource management and economic development so that the goal of sustained long-term growth can be realized. Although the Caribbean Action Plan stresses protection of the natural environment as a principal objective, it also embraces the goal of assisting the island nations of the Caribbean in pursuit of programs that result in sustained economic development.

#### ■ *Co-ordination of International Assistance Activities*

A considerable amount of technical assistance is provided to the Caribbean Region by national and international donor agencies, including the European Economic Community, UNDP, PAHO, U.S. AID, OAS and CIDA. Much of this assistance has been for programs that are directly related to improving resource management practices—reforestation, soil conservation, and watershed management.

Over time, the Caribbean Action Plan will link many of these efforts to insure that the lessons learned in any

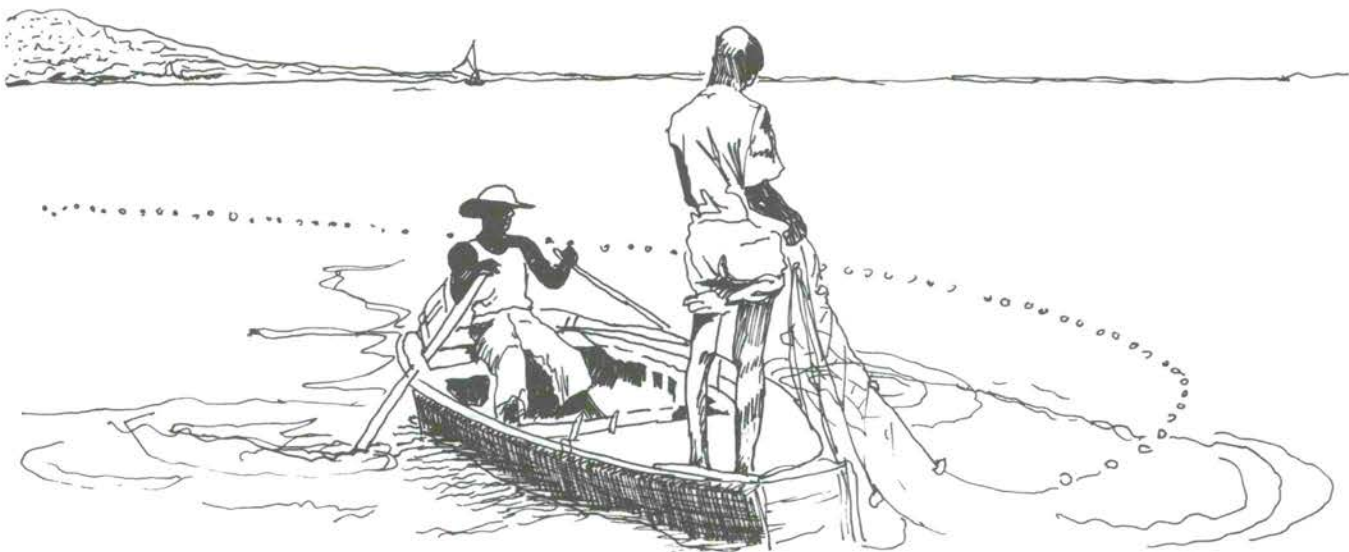
one nation are shared throughout the Region. All too often, program results, which may have broad application, never circulate beyond a particular sponsoring agency or ministry. By announcing new studies, identifying innovative programs, and arranging meetings of experts, the Caribbean Action Plan could make international assistance funds do double duty, seeing to it that valuable research findings and program results are shared among a wide constituency.

#### ■ *Strengthening Existing National and Subregional Institutions*

A major objective of the Action Plan is to strengthen existing institutions by directing funds and expertise to groups prepared to undertake activities consistent with its program agenda. A good example of such an institution building effort is the support extended to the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI).

#### ■ *Technical Co-operation in the Use of the Region's Human, Financial and Natural Resources*

There is a growing, but still inadequate exchange of information and technical expertise among Caribbean nations despite the existence of major university, governmental, and private research centres throughout the Region. The "Directory of Marine Environmental Centres" lists 89 centres in 25 Caribbean countries and territories. Through the process of networking, these centres could strengthen regional capabilities in providing assistance in such fields as agriculture, oceanography, energy, and the entire range of environmental sciences.





# HOW DOES THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN WORK?

## *From Concept to Reality: The Legal Framework*

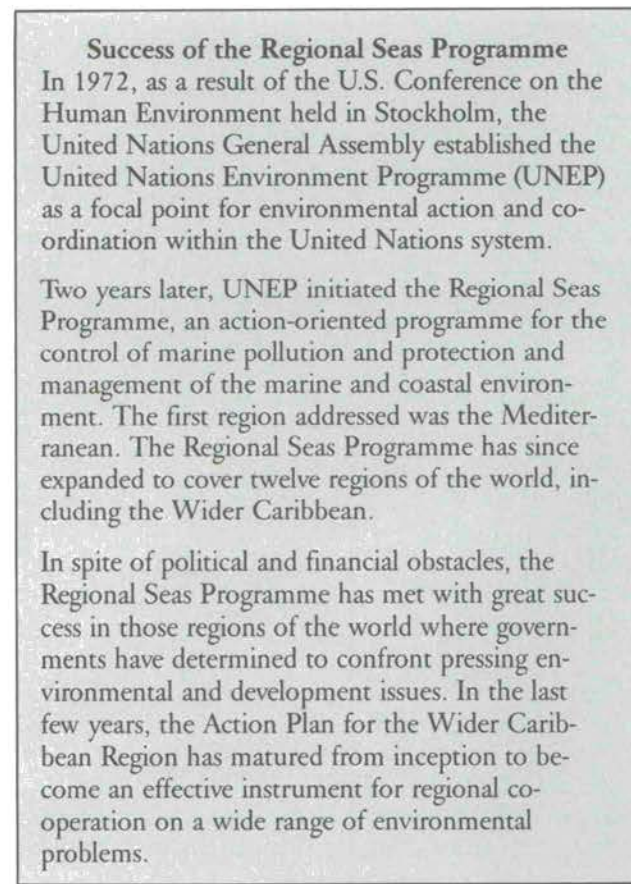
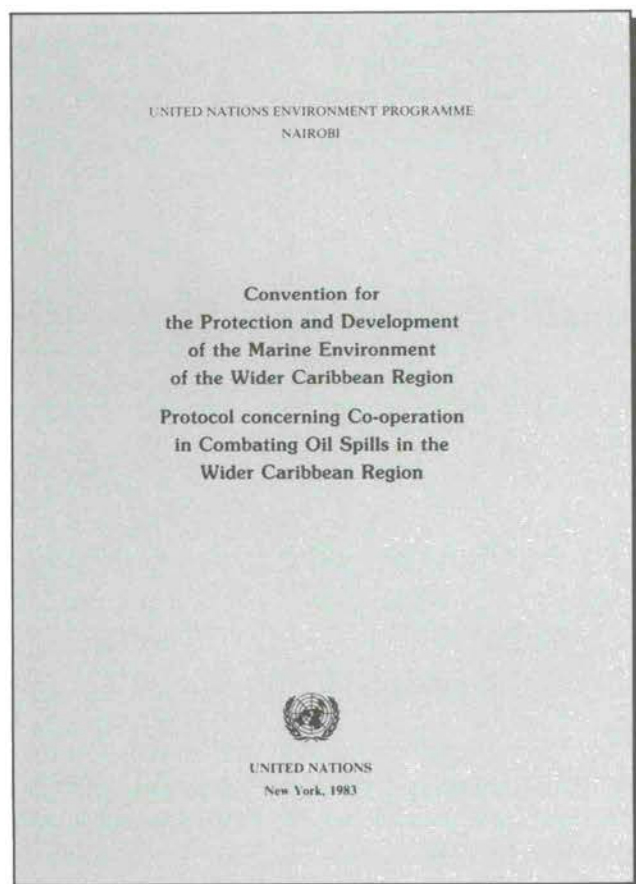
**W**ith the adoption of the Action Plan for the Wider Caribbean in 1981, the participating Governments also approved supporting resolutions dealing with programme implementation, financing, and institutional arrangements.

Two major legal instruments were subsequently adopted, two years later, at the Intergovernmental Meeting held at Cartagena, Colombia, in March, 1983:

- The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region.
- A Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region.

The Cartagena Convention has been signed or acceded to by 16 countries and the European Economic Community and entered into force on October 11, 1986. The Regional Co-ordinating Unit has been operational since September, 1986, financed by a Trust Fund that has received initial contributions from most of the member nations, as well as from the UNEP Environment Fund.

Ratification of the Convention itself and the establishment of the Regional Co-ordinating Unit are just the beginning. Although the framework is in place and the legal and political foundations are secure, the Regional Co-ordinating Unit is now faced with the formidable task of implementing the programme and creating a dynamic and productive catalyst for realizing the objectives of the Caribbean Action Plan.



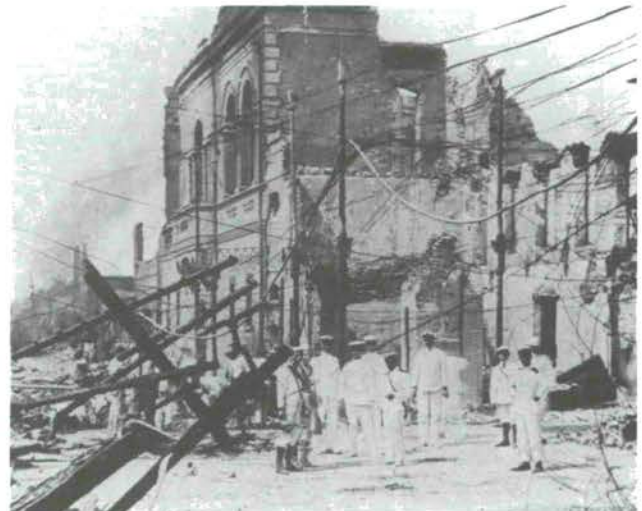
■ *Promotion of Regional Self-Reliance through the Sharing of Experience on Common Problems*

The countries of the Region are neighbors within a common physical environment. One of the major problems facing all of the countries is vulnerability to natural disasters. The Caribbean is often referred to as the nursery area for hurricanes and severe weather disturbances. Many of the islands and mainland states are subject to volcanic eruptions, and the entire Region is within a major earthquake zone.

Natural disaster preparedness and mitigation is a striking example of a shared interest for which a regional approach is particularly appropriate. The University of the West Indies maintains an earthquake monitoring centre in Trinidad; Martinique operates a major volcanology research centre supported by the Government of France; the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami tracks and issues warnings on severe weather disturbances, maintaining contact with meteorological offices throughout the Region; the Jamaica Office of Disaster Preparedness has published educational material that it has readily shared with other nations; and numerous regional conferences on natural disasters have been convened by national and international agencies.



*Volcanic Eruption—St. Vincent*



*Earthquake—Jamaica*



*Volcanic Eruption—Martinique*



*Hurricane—Dominica*

The Caribbean Action Plan and its Regional Co-ordinating Unit will never become a substitute for existing institutions now successfully operating in the Region. Nor will it simply be another layer of bureaucracy in an area which may already seem crowded with regional and subregional groupings. Its purpose is to support, not supplant the Region's scientific research, educational and related institutions.

#### ■ *Increasing Public Interest and Awareness of Environmental and Development Issues*

The Caribbean Action Plan gives high priority to education and training activities, including development of a regional manpower base, environmental education at all levels, support for strengthening of non-governmental environmental organization, and promotion of media seminars and campaigns to increase public awareness of environmental issues.

## *Overall Authority and Co-ordination*

The overall authority to determine the content of the Action Plan, review its progress and direct its course is to be found in the Intergovernmental Meetings (at the ministerial/plenipotentiary level) of the participating states and territories. These Governments have assigned responsibility for overall co-ordination and implementation of the Action Plan to UNEP, which answers to the member Governments.

**Monitoring Committee.** A Monitoring Committee, formed by representatives from nine member countries, meets at least once a year, and oversees financial arrangements. The Committee is responsible for supervising the progress of specific projects and for ensuring that continuous contacts of a technical nature are maintained among the involved experts and institutions during the period between Intergovernmental Meetings.

The Monitoring Committee also prepares the agenda for the Intergovernmental Meetings, reviews project requests, and is responsible for follow-up and evaluation of the Plan, as well as for providing the Regional Co-ordinating Unit with operational and policy guidelines for implementing the Action Plan.

**Regional Co-ordinating Unit.** The Regional Co-ordinating Unit (RCU) was created to ensure regional

co-operation and the timely implementation of the Action Plan. The RCU, which operates under the joint authority of the Monitoring Committee and UNEP, is staffed by nationals recruited from the states and territories participating in the Action Plan.

The principal function of the RCU is to provide policy consistency, administrative oversight, technical guidance, and co-ordination to national and international institutions participating in the Action Plan. Another important function of the RCU is to organize the government expert and Intergovernmental Meetings that monitor the Action Plan and make recommendations on its future implementation.

The RCU does not itself conduct research, but serves as a focus for the collection, review, and dissemination of information on the results of work performed under the aegis of the Action Plan.

**National Focal Points.** Active participation and co-operation of the states and territories is the basic prerequisite for successful plan implementation. In order to ensure such co-operation, National Focal Points may be designated in each of the participating states and territories to deal with all matters relating to the Action Plan. Their role is to co-ordinate the inputs of national institutions to the Action Plan, and to maintain links with the Regional Co-ordinating Unit.

**Scientific and Academic Institutions.** These institutions conduct the specific activities agreed upon among the Governments as components of the Action Plan.

**Subregional and Regional Institutions.** Existing subregional and regional institutions, including NGOs, are used to the maximum extent possible for implementing specific activities or for co-ordinating specific Plan-related activities.

## How Is the Action Plan Financed?

**Sources of Funding.** Funding for the Plan's implementation originates from the following sources:

- Caribbean Trust Fund
- Environment Fund of UNEP
- National, bilateral and multilateral contributions
- Other sources of support.

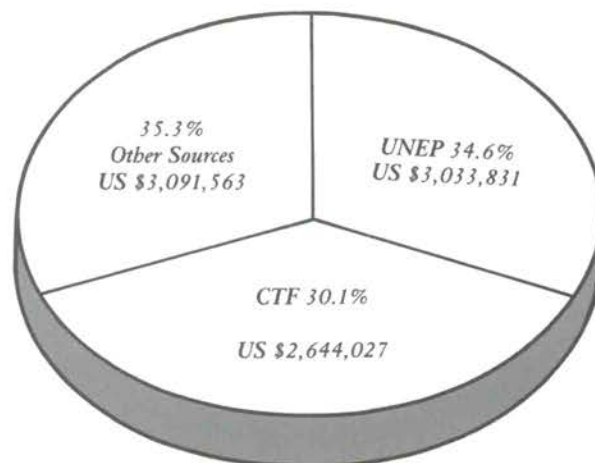
**The Caribbean Trust Fund.** A Trust Fund was established to cover common expenses (administration, coordination, meetings, etc.), and to implement projects of common regional concern. Contributions to the Trust Fund are predominantly from Governments participating in the Action Plan. Levels of contributions are determined by the Intergovernmental Meeting. The Monitoring Committee prepares biennial budgets. These are approved by the Intergovernmental Meeting and are administered by UNEP through the Regional Co-ordinating Unit.

**Environmental Fund of UNEP.** UNEP has provided support to the Caribbean Action Plan through contributions from the Environment Fund. Monies have been allocated to specific projects as well as for the establishment and support of the RCU.

**National, Bilateral and Multilateral Contributions.** Contributions in cash or in-kind (facilities, training, personnel, etc.) have been channeled to projects of particular regional, subregional or national interest. These contributions may come from states and territories of the Region or from other states which do not belong to the Action Plan; from international, regional or subregional organizations; and, from the United Nations system.

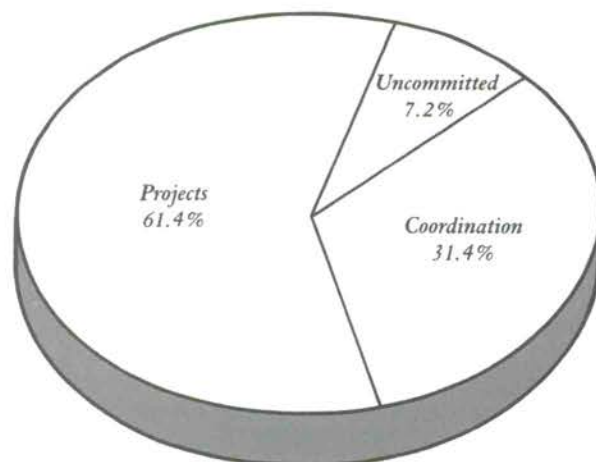
**Other Sources of Support.** Other sources of financial support include universities, corporations, private foundations, and non-governmental organizations with interests in the Caribbean Region. Funding from these sponsors is to be encouraged in order to supplement governmental contributions to the Trust Fund, and to initiate a greater number and variety of specific projects.

Sources of Funding for CAP (1981-1987)



*At the time of the adoption of the Action Plan three sources of funding were contemplated: the Caribbean Trust Fund, the Environment Fund of UNEP, and other multilateral and bilateral sources. The total budget estimated for the initial three year period (1981-83) amounted to US \$8,200,000 (1.5 million from CTF, 1.38 million from UNEP and \$3.2 million from other sources).*

Utilization of CAP Funds



## *Magnitude of Financial Assistance*

Since the adoption of the Caribbean Action Plan in 1981, over eight million dollars have been committed from all sources. Of this amount, 30.1 percent represents the contribution from the Trust Fund, 34.6 percent from UNEP, and 35.3 percent represents contributions from other sources. To date the following states and territories have contributed to the Trust Fund: Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Colombia, Cuba, France, Grenada, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Suriname,

Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and Venezuela.

Ultimately, the participating Governments will assume full financial responsibility for the co-ordination of the Action Plan. Accordingly, financial support from the United Nations would be redirected to projects of regional significance.

### *Major Milestones In The Evolution Of The Caribbean Action Plan*

- UNEP initiated the development of the Action Plan by appointing a co-ordinator for this activity (April 1976).
- The marine pollution problems of the Caribbean Region were reviewed by UNEP-sponsored IOC/FAO/UNEP International Workshop on Marine Pollution in the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (Trinidad, 13-17 December 1976).
- Agreement reached between ECLA and UNEP to develop the Action Plan as a joint activity, with ECLA playing a leading role (February 1977).
- Sectorial overviews on environmental problems of the Caribbean prepared by FAO, UNIDO, WHO/PAHO, UN/DIESA, IUCN, IOC, IMO, ECLA (November 1978—July 1979).
- The draft Action Plan and supporting documentation reviewed by an advisory panel of regional experts (Port of Spain, November 1979).
- The draft Action Plan reviewed by meetings of Governmental nominated experts (Caracas, January 1980, Managua, February 1981).
- The First Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme (Montego Bay, 6-8 April 1981) adopted the Action Plan.
- The draft legal agreements reviewed by meetings of regional experts (New York, December 1981, New York, July 1982).
- The implementation of selected priority projects initiated (mid-1982), in the field of environmental education, oil spill contingency planning and environmental health in co-operation with CCA, IMO, CARICOM and WHO/PAHO.
- The Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena, 21-24 March 1983) adopted the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region and the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region (UNEP Regional Seas Conventions, 1983).
- The Convention and its related Protocol entered into force October 11, 1986.

# WHAT HAS THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN ACCOMPLISHED?

Undoubtedly, the most significant accomplishment of the programme for the Wider Caribbean has been the creation of an effective forum for a continuing dialogue among the nations of the Region. An increased awareness has been generated among policy makers and planners of the need for integrated development and regional resource management. An Action Plan has been formulated, and agreement has been reached on program directions and priorities.

## *Projects Undertaken*

Many project proposals have been submitted by Governments and organizations for implementation as part of the Action Plan. All of them have specific objectives and cover different regional environmental concerns.

The following are some of the priority projects that are now underway or have already been implemented. They are grouped below according to major subject area.

**Oil Spill Contingency Planning.** There have been two projects for oil spill contingency planning conducted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO)—one for the Eastern Caribbean islands and another for the South American subregion. Under the islands project, a plan for co-operating in the event of a major oil spill has already been developed. The plan deals with policy and responsibility of each participating state; response operations, including requests for assistance; mutual cooperation; and, the use of dispersants.

**Marine Pollution.** Three projects deal with marine pollution. One project conducted by CARICOM's Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) is for the protection of the marine and coastal environment of the Caribbean islands. Complete country reports have been prepared on land-based sources of water and land pollution and, since 1983, monitoring of coastal microbiological and chemical pollution has been conducted around St. Lucia and other Eastern Caribbean states.

Another pilot project, conducted by UNESCO, for research and control of pollution in Havana Bay, has

been used to train scientists in research and control of marine pollution in embayments.

A third project, conducted by the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC), trained regional scientists on intercalibration of analytical techniques for monitoring dissolved and dispersed petroleum hydrocarbons.

**Environmental Education and Public Awareness.** Several programmes and projects on environmental education and public awareness are underway or completed. One project, conducted by the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) in Barbados, has developed radio programmes focusing on Caribbean environmental issues, promoted the establishment of an informal network of media personnel, and compiled a regional directory of environmental institutions, resources, and people.

Another on-going project, conducted by UNEP's Environmental Training Network (UCORED) identified the Region's training facilities and training needs in the areas of marine pollution and environmental health.

**Environment and Development.** This project, conducted by ECLAC, dealt with environmental management and tourism development.

**Environmental Impact Assessment.** This project coordinated by Mexico's Ministry of Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE), is intended to devise methodologies for the preparation of environmental impact assessments adapted to the needs of developing countries.

**Conservation and Protection of Natural Areas.** This project involves the development of a methodology for the identification and assessment of fragile coastal ecosystem: having touristic potential or scientific interest.

## *Other Accomplishments*

Of particular importance, in addition to the foregoing activities, is the continual work of the Action Plan in raising the level of awareness among the general public of the linkages between sustained economic development and wise resource use.



# WHY SUPPORT THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN?

## *A Unique Opportunity for Regional Co-operation*

Under the aegis of the Caribbean Action Plan, the states and territories of the Region have a unique opportunity to pursue a long-term strategy in support of sustainable development goals.

The opportunity is unique because nowhere else in the Region is there a forum where states and territories of the Wider Caribbean can debate the relevant issues, seek solutions to acknowledged regional problems, and pool their resources for the implementation of priority programmes and projects.

Here is an opportunity to mobilize the scientific and technical talents of numerous states and territories of the Wider Caribbean, and to use that expertise in furthering economic development that is compatible with environmental objectives and sound resource management. The long-term possibilities inherent in such a regional grouping of Governments are considerable, bound only by the vision, creativity, and resourcefulness of its members.

## *What Does Regional Co-operation Entail?*

- Strengthening national and subregional institutions through the training of personnel and provision of technical equipment.
- Increasing public interest in and knowledge of the linkage between environment and development through work with the mass media and educational institutions.
- Encouraging regional self-reliance through experience gained from trying to solve common problems.
- Providing technical assistance, education and training in marine and coastal resources management to all the countries of the Region.
- Making maximum use of the natural, financial and human resources available in the Region, and avoiding duplication of effort.
- Co-operating on problems of a transnational or international nature, including natural or man-induced dis-

asters, such as accidental spills of toxic substances, or industrial accidents.

- Encouraging and co-ordinating international assistance activities.

## *Benefits to the Nations of the Region*

The ways in which the states and territories of the Wider Caribbean Region manage their natural resources—today and in the future—will deeply affect their security, their economies, their capacities to respond to the growing needs for food and raw materials, their situation and influence in the world, and the quality of the environment in which their people live.

The majority of the Region's states and territories are developing countries; many of them are islands, heavily dependent on the marine environment and its resources. Some of those seeking to industrialize have tended to replicate development patterns copied from the more developed countries, without consideration for the fragility of their ecosystems, often leading to irreversible environmental damage.

No country, least of all small island nations, can afford to pursue development that is ecologically unsound. It is essential to incorporate environmental considerations in the planning and implementation of economic growth if rational use is to be made of limited natural resources and if environmental degradation is to be minimized.

Effective resource management requires an understanding of the complexity and fragility of ecosystems, of their potentialities and of their limitations to human intervention. Implementation of the Action Plan can further an understanding of local ecosystems, thereby encouraging optimum use of resources and ecologically sound development.

The achievement of ecologically sound development by individual states and territories proceeding in isolation is a difficult and almost impossible task. A co-operative



arrangement is needed to compensate for the uneven distribution of natural, technical, financial and human resources in the Region. Each of the states and territories, and consequently the Region as a whole, will benefit enormously by a sharing of experience, jointly reviewing the results of completed projects, and analyzing the approaches that have proved most effective.

Regional co-operation should aim at encouraging broad public awareness. Through the Action Plan, information on environmental issues can be provided to the people of the Region, modifying attitudes and habits that contribute to environmental degradation. Toward this end, educational programmes at all levels will be developed, and will be tailored to meet particular problem situations. The Caribbean Action Plan offers a unique opportunity for focusing public awareness on the considerable, but not inexhaustible resources of the Region.

The Action Plan provides a two-way conduit whereby Governments can offer and request assistance of other nations, and of international organizations to supplement their own capabilities.



# WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE CARIBBEAN ACTION PLAN?

The problems of the Wider Caribbean Region are manifold and formidable, and they are increasing. There is much to be done. If the Action Plan is to achieve its objectives, the continued co-operation of the Governments of the Region will be essential.

Many of the Caribbean nations have provided initial financial assistance. A firm, predictable commitment of political and financial support on the part of all participating Governments is essential to the future of the programme. The active endorsement and assistance of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and other private institutions is also crucial if the programme is to succeed in carrying out its mandate over the course of coming years.

The Action Plan for the Caribbean was born in the early 1980's. It is now entering a new phase, signified by three events:

1. The initiation of the operations of the Regional Co-ordinating Unit in Kingston, Jamaica.
2. The entry into force of the Cartagena Convention and the associated Protocol on oil spills.
3. The availability of funds in the Caribbean Trust Fund enabling development of new projects now being processed for implementation.

While the Action Plan charts a direction for future activities, the substantive agenda must be pursued by the member Governments and by supporting non-governmental organizations, as well as by private sector organizations having the vision to recognize that their interests coincide with the interests of the Wider Caribbean Region.

The scheme for regional co-operation molded in Montego Bay in 1981, is now entering a stage where concrete dividends can be accrued. The legal agreements now entering into force will expand the Caribbean environment/development dialogue into another realm where co-operative action will be enhanced

through the implementation of international laws, and further expressed through the negotiation of specific technical protocols to deal with issues of critical importance to the Region.

The Caribbean Action Plan represents a concerted effort on the part of concerned Governments, private organizations and individuals to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development. The Action Plan and Convention are significant statements with profound implications for the resolution of regional conflicts and the alleviation of national social stress.

The Caribbean Action Plan is a window of opportunity for co-operation among nations which, despite other differences, endorse the concept that economic growth and environmental enhancement are of equal significance in determining the quality of life.



*Credits:*

Ralph M. Field, Editorial and Design Consultant  
Tana St. Claire, Drawings and Graphics  
(pp. 4, 5, 7, 14, 23, 24).

National Library of Jamaica, Photos  
(pp. 1, 4, 5, 6, 8-10, 16, 21, 23).

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