

The Bahamas

Date and Venue

Monday, 9th October 2000 – Oceanview Terrace Conference Room, Breezes Hotel, Nassau.

Participants:

Timothy Bethel	-	The Bahamas National Trust
John Bowley	-	Water and Sewerage Corporation
Godfrey Burnside	-	Department of Meteorology
Eric Carey	-	Department of Agriculture
David Cates	-	Cabinet Office
Jacklyn Chisolm	-	College of The Bahamas
Dwayne Curtis-		Department of Environmental Health Services
Jerome Elliot	-	The Bahamas Electricity Corporation
Terrance Fountain	-	Ministry of Health
Lynn Gape	-	The Bahamas National Trust
Nakira Gaskin	-	The Bahamas Environment, Science and Technology Commission
Dr. John Hammerton	-	Secretary, National Climate Change Committee
Dr. Maurice Isaacs	-	Department of Agriculture
Coral Knowles-Miller	-	Department of Environmental Health Services
Glen Laville	-	Water and Sewerage Corporation
Eugene F. Newry	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Eleanor Philips	-	Department of Fisheries
Christopher Russell	-	Department of Lands and Surveys
Beverley J. Taylor	-	Ministry of Education
Philip Weech	-	Chair, National Climate Change Committee
Dr. U O'D Trotz	-	CPACC RPIU
Rawleston Moore	-	CPACC RPIU
Dr. Leonard Nurse	-	CPACC RPIU
G. de Berdt Romilly	-	CPACC RPIU

Agenda: See Annex A2 (The Bahamas)

Commentary:

The first part of the meeting involved a chapter-by-chapter review of the draft *The Bahamas First National Communication* to facilitate the finalization of the document. Thereafter presentations were made outlining the purpose, goal and scope of Component 4 under the CPACC project.

The following comments were made during the meeting by various participants:

- Further work needs to be undertaken in order to ensure that the areas of
 - (a) biodiversity, and
 - (b) public education and awareness,
 are adequately addressed in the draft *The Bahamas First National Communication*.
- Recording stations have been established on 8 islands to monitor climatic conditions under the CPACC project, but these are insufficient to adequately monitor weather patterns. It is considered that up to 60 stations may be required.
- Systematic hydrological data has been collected since 1971, but there has been no systematic water monitoring program which essentially undermines any attempt to accurately assess vulnerability. The establishment of a comprehensive water resources management regime is a critical requirement, together with the stringent control of water extraction.
- 3 sea-level rise monitoring stations have been established, but these are insufficient to adequately monitor sea-level patterns. Additionally, there are no wave recorders in The Bahamas to measure sea swells, or wave height/length or wave energy. Storm surge modeling needs to be undertaken throughout the Archipelago.
- The Ministry of Health has been recording ultra-violet radiation since 1999, but an additional 2 recorders are required.
- Although a considerable amount of data has been collected, continued problems are being experienced in data management and quality control of data/information. There is a need to obtain climate data management software to improve information management practices, and a program of institutional strengthening within the Department of Meteorology needs to be undertaken.
- The vulnerability of coastal areas from storm surges is a concern, and sea-wall instability continues to be a problem.
- Coral reefs in The Bahamas continue to experience bleaching during El Nino Southern Oscillation events.
- There is a pressing need to establish a comprehensive weather, solar radiation and wave monitoring capability in The Bahamas, together with a capacity to measure and monitor soil moisture.
- Vulnerability analysis has been done in some islands to assist with physical planning, but this needs to be extended to other islands.
- Some coral reef monitoring has been undertaken, and work has been initiated on monitoring sea-grass productivity. This work needs to be continued and extended to other areas.
- During Hurricane Floyd, extensive damage to forest cover was suffered on some islands with

as much as 5 out of every 10 trees being destroyed. Although data on forestry resources has been collected since the early 1980's, there is an urgent need to monitor changes to forest and mangrove areas resulting from climatic events and changes.

- Existing forestry legislation is inadequate to protect and conserve forest cover, and physical planning and development is often undertaken without any value being placed on existing forestry resources. There is an urgent need to secure the permanent protection of vulnerable forest and mangrove areas. An integrated approach to resource management is urgently required.
- The sectors most vulnerable to climate change impacts are agriculture and tourism, while water and marine resources are the most vulnerable areas. It is imperative to ensure that development affecting these areas and sectors adequately take into consideration the impacts of climate change. It is anticipated that climate change impacts will include:
 - (a) saltwater intrusion into sub-surface water reservoirs,;
 - (b) an increase in wetland areas;
 - (c) heavier storm surges which will result in increased damage to coastal infrastructure (e.g. roads and sewerage systems);
 - (d) greater incidents of flooding resulting in increased infiltration of flood waters into sewerage systems;
 - (e) increased storm activity which will result in increased seasonal damage to electrical and telephone lines;
 - (f) loss of biodiversity (terrestrial and marine);
 - (g) Loss of coastal infrastructure.
- The entire country is a coastal zone, with 80% of The Bahamas being within 5 feet of mean sea level, thereby making “retreat” and redistribution/relocation of settlements unfeasible options. Engineered improvements to coastal structures is very costly. An integrated approach to resource management is required to adequately address the impacts of climate change.
- Adaptation to climate change impacts will require considerable institutional strengthening in a variety of government and private sector organizations (e.g. Vector Control).
- Regional impacts on ecosystems and regional biodiversity (e.g. harvesting of Shearwater by Cuban residents in times of food shortages caused by drought) resulting from climate change needs to be urgently addressed. It is considered essential that the resilience of natural systems be enhanced.
- It is anticipated that *The Bahamas First National Communication* will be completed within the next two weeks and thereafter forwarded to Cabinet for review and subsequent approval.
- *The Bahamas First National Communication* has identified a number of activities that are required at the national and regional level to effectively implement obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These activities are outlined in a two page summary (see Annex B). In addition it is recognized that The Bahamas will need to

formulate a *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Action Plan*, and a *National Water Resources Management Policy*. Work on these activities will commence once *The Bahamas First National Communication* has been approved by Cabinet. Priority will be given to the formulation of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Action Plan* and the National Climate Change Committee will access resources under Component 4 of the CPACC project to undertake this activity.

- It was considered that obtaining support, consensus and buy-in from the public/private sectors is an essential part of the process to develop the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy*.

Development of Climate Change Adaptation Policy - Proposed Work-Plan:

- (a) It was agreed that the National Climate Change Committee would co-ordinate the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Action Plan*.
- (b) Once *The Bahamas First National Communication* has been approved by Cabinet, the National Climate Change Committee will prepare a work-plan relating to the formulation of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Action Plan* which will be communicated to the CPACC Regional Project Implementation Unit.
- (c) In the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Action Plan* there will be the need for the development of a comprehensive public awareness/education program. Areas in which CPACC RPIU can assist with such a program will be investigated. The public education and awareness program on climate change that has been developed in Trinidad and Tobago will be forwarded to The Bahamas for review to determine its applicability. It is considered that there may be a need to invite the Governor General to host a meeting to initiate the public awareness and sensitization process.