

Belize

Date and Venue

Monday, 7th November 2000 – Belize Institute of Management Conference Room, Belize City.

Participants:

Froylan Alvarado	-	Belize City Council
Eugene Ariola	-	Coastal Zone Management Institute
Ramon Frutos	-	National Meteorological Services
Carlos Fuller	-	National Meteorological Services
Janet Gibson	-	Coastal Zone Management Institute
Malcolm Hendry	-	Consultant, Coastal Zone Management Strategy
C. Victor Lewis	-	Office of Electricity Supply, Ministry of Energy
Rafael Novelo	-	Public Health Inspector
Sharon Lindo	-	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sharon Ramclam	-	Fisheries Department
Elvis Requena	-	Ministry of Economic Development
Mustafa Touré	-	ESTAP (Eastern & Southern)
Wayne Usher	-	Consultant, National Issues Paper
Dr. U. O'D Trotz	-	CPACC RPIU
Judi Clarke	-	CPACC RPIU
G. de Berdt Romilly	-	CPACC RPIU

Agenda: See Annex A1 (Belize)

Commentary:

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

- An extensive consultation process has been undertaken as part of the process to formulate the *National Communication*. Cabinet has already reviewed the *National Communication*, which is to be approved once minor changes of an editorial nature have been completed.
- There is a need to develop a *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* that would outline intervention options and an action plan for implementation. It is considered that the Policy document should establish clear objectives, which will be given effect through an Implementation Strategy. In relation to climate change, it is recognized that the responsibilities of government need to “evolve” and these evolving responsibilities should be clearly articulated in the Policy document.
- Climate change needs to be integrated into all national strategies and plans, and should be integrated into all sector programs. Climate change should not drive sectoral policies and

programs but should form an essential part of the planning and implementation process. There is an urgent need to ensure that climate change is considered as part of existing and ongoing initiatives such as the development of the Coastal Zone Management Strategy, the formal establishment of the Sustainable Development Councils, and under the “South-Side Renewal Initiative” whereby a task force has been established to evaluate settlement and housing options. The Sustainable Development Councils, which are being formally established through legislation, could serve as a mechanism to integrate climate change into national development strategies, policies and programs. Consideration for climate change impacts and adaptation options should also be incorporated into the programs undertaken by Public Works.

- Waste management is a national priority, and there is a need to evaluate the impacts of climate change on all waste management practices, with particular attention on greenhouse gas abatement.
- There is a need to review the National Energy Policy to ensure that climate change is adequately addressed.
- A review of the existing legal regime and its adequacy for dealing with climate change adaptation is presented in the draft Issues Paper. There is a considerable amount of legislation that could be used to implement effective adaptation measures. However, the existing legal framework is often unable to deal with pressing environmental concerns because of poor enforcement.
- The priorities and ranking of such priorities that are presented in the draft Issues Paper (page 26) needs to be reviewed and debated, and should ensure that national priorities are reflected to guarantee that support for the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Strategy is forthcoming from the public and private sector. [Concern was expressed about criteria utilized for ranking of national priorities in the issues paper which identified Tourism as first priority. Subsequent discussions identified human settlement, the conservation of water resources, and the protection of human health as the major areas of concern for Belize. It was agreed to revisit this using clearly identified criteria and to indicate what these were in the final Issues Paper.](#)
- A Bill has been tabled to regulate architects and engineers, and to provide for the establishment of professional standards. Currently, there are no building codes or engineering standards. Climate change has obvious implications on the standards to which structures are built, and there is an urgent need to ensure that the regulation of architects and engineers and that the planning and construction of all buildings and structures in vulnerable areas adequately consider the impacts of climate change. There has traditionally been considerable “micro-management” by central government, and there is a pressing need to involve local government and city councils in the implementation and enforcement of building codes and in the regulation of physical planning activities. An urgent requirement is the establishment of a comprehensive land use planning process which integrates climate change into the planning and decision-making processes. Development needs to be planned in a more strategic manner which takes into consideration the characteristics and limitations imposed by the natural

environment. It is considered that the establishment of a comprehensive land-use planning process is the most important management mechanism for ensuring that climate change impacts and appropriate adaptation options are integrated into the planning processes. Active community participation in all land-use planning activities will be an essential requirement if climate change adaptation is to become a reality. There is an urgent need to improve base-line data in order to establish a comprehensive land-use planning process.

- Over 45% of human settlement in Belize occurs in vulnerable coastal areas, and some areas are under sea level. Climate change and sea level rise would have a profound impact on human settlement, and would result in considerable loss of human settlement and recreational areas. It should also be noted that some development areas for human settlement are in low-lying areas that are extremely vulnerable to damage from storm surges and flooding as has been witnessed recently during Hurricane Keith. Many hotels and tourism infrastructure are located in vulnerable coastal or beach areas. There is an urgent need to identify the impacts of climate change on such facilities, and develop appropriate intervention options to prevent the development of further facilities in vulnerable areas.
- Climate change is likely to result in coral bleaching and increased incidents of fish kills resulting from algae blooms which are caused by high nutrient levels in coastal waters combined with higher water temperatures and a reduction in freshwater infusion because of changes to ocean currents.
- Existing laws are sectoral in nature and fragmented, and have not been developed with adaptation to climate change as a consideration.
- There is now a considerable level of sensitivity to climate change impacts in the country as a result of the flood damage caused by Hurricane Keith. The public at large needs to be actively involved in the development of the *National Climate Change Policy*. It is recognized that policy makers have to be sensitized on the urgent need to develop an integrated approach to climate change adaptation planning and management. 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*. It was considered that the launching of Component 4 under the CPACC project presents an ideal opportunity to launch an extensive public awareness campaign on climate change.
- The public sector will play an important role in the implementation of any *National Climate Change Policy*. It is important to ensure that the insurance/finance sectors, developers, engineers and other sectors of the private sector actively participate in the formulation and implementation of the policy.

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

- (a) It was agreed that the Climate Change Committee would co-ordinate the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan. It was considered that work on developing the Policy should be accelerated to take advantage of the considerable

level of sensitivity to climate change impacts that have been generated in the country as a result of the flood damage caused by Hurricane Keith. Such a Policy needs to be established as soon as possible to guide the Government of Belize in all planning and development activities.

- (b) The Climate Change Committee would develop a work plan outlining the process that shall be undertaken to formulate the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan, and within 30 days the Committee shall submit this workplan to the CPACC RPIU together with a breakdown of the resources that will be required to support the process.
- (c) The Climate Change Committee will establish contact with other agencies and committees to ensure that climate change adaptation is considered as part of existing and ongoing initiatives such as the development of the Coastal Zone Management Strategy, the formal establishment of the Sustainable Development Councils, and under the “South-Side Renewal Initiative” whereby a task force has been established to evaluate settlement and housing options. The Committee will also prepare and submit an information note to Cabinet outlining the process to develop the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan, and requesting that appropriate consultation/coordination mechanisms be established to ensure that climate change is integrated into all government planning and development activities.
- (d) Concern was expressed over the need to ensure active participation and consultation in the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan so as to ensure ownership and the effective implementation of the policy and action plan. It was considered that the policy document would best be developed by members of the Climate Change Committee with active participation from select stakeholders.
- (e) It is considered that a comprehensive public education and awareness program will need to be established to support the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan. This process has been initiated with a press release announcing the initial consultative workshop (see Annex 2).
- (f) Work on finalizing the Issues Paper should be completed within the next few weeks. Thereafter, consultations with a variety of stakeholders will be held to obtain input to the Issues Paper. These consultations should be completed by the end of January 2001.
- (g) It was foreseen that a technical meeting would be needed to facilitate discussion on intervention options and discuss proposed management mechanisms. It is considered that the process to formulate a *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Strategy could be assisted through the identification of appropriate climate change scenarios and the development of appropriate intervention options based on available resources. It is considered that a “menu” of such scenarios and adaptation options would help to standardize the policies that are developed in each country. This “menu” of scenarios and adaptation options could be presented at the 2-day workshop that will be held in February 2001. This session would result in the formulation of a Position Paper that would be submitted for broad-based consultation. Thereafter, the Climate Change Committee would undertake an extensive

public consultation process leading up to the development of a draft Policy Paper.

- (h) It is anticipated that the Climate Change Committee would review comments submitted during the public consultation process, and make any necessary changes to the draft Policy document.
- (i) Once the draft Policy Paper had been formulated, it is anticipated that the Climate Change Committee would undertake the development of an Implementation Plan.
- (j) It is anticipated that the draft policy paper and implementation Plan would be submitted to CPACC RPIU for review by a panel of technical experts. Comments arising from this technical review will be submitted to the Climate Change Committee for consideration.
- (k) It is anticipated that once agreement has been reached, the Climate Change Committee shall submit the Final Draft *Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan to Cabinet for review and eventual approval.
- (l) In order to establish a formal training program on climate change in schools CPACC should coordinate and facilitate a regional workshop for teachers and educators to assist in the development of training tools and an appropriate curriculum module.

Public Awareness and Education

The Issues Paper stated that a recurrent theme during its preparation was public awareness and education, as this will be an important component of any adaptation strategy. However, in its ranking of priority issues, 'Public education' was given the lowest ranking. It was suggested to either place public education as a higher priority or to 'infuse' it into all other priorities. The issue of sensitizing tourists was raised. It was agreed that there is a need to educate visitors and tourists from industrialized countries and that a clear message be sent to industrialized countries that existing emission cut-backs under the Kyoto Protocol are not adequate to avoid climate change impacts in vulnerable small island States. It is considered that this message should be made clear to visiting tourists from industrialized nations who have not met their commitments to reduce green house gas emissions to levels that will not cause changes to global climates, in order that they may put pressure on their own governments to address this. The existing tourist product should be reviewed to identify mechanisms whereby greater sensitization can be achieved on climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. A clear message needs to be sent to the political directorate so that they can continue to apply pressure on industrialized governments to improve on emission reductions. Considerable sensitization needs to take place, through a comprehensive public education and awareness program. It is considered that public education and awareness should be a national priority under and *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Strategy.

Proposed Activities

- Public consultations will be initiated, drawing on the experience from the National Biodiversity Strategy where public consultations were held in rural communities.

- Competitions in schools
- Lectures on climate change, field trips
- Regional workshop for teachers / educators to develop climate change curriculum in schools and universities
- 30 second TV ads – factoids

Next Steps

- A copy of the public education and awareness program on climate change that had been developed by Trinidad and Tobago would be forwarded to the Climate Change Committee in Belize for their review and consideration.
- The Climate Change Committee, with the assistance of media personnel, would develop a work plan to develop a public education program to support the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan, and by the end of November 2000 submit it to the CPACC RPIU. This strategy will include a breakdown of the resources that will be required to support these initiatives. It is anticipated that resources would be required from CPACC to assist with the costs associated with the printing and disseminating the Draft Policy document, and facilitating the public consultation process.