

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Date and Venue

Monday, 23rd October 2000 – Chamber of Industry and Commerce Boardroom, 3rd Floor, Corea Building, Kingston.

Participants:

Morrison Bauden	-	St. Vincent National Trust
Bentley Browne	-	Central Planning Division
Ashley Cain	-	St. Vincent Banana Growers Association
Decima Corea	-	Central Planning Division
Alwyn Curid	-	Ministry of Housing
Joel Jack	-	Department of Meteorology
Edmund Jackson	-	Ministry of Health and Environment
Maxwell John	-	Ministry of Agriculture and Labour
Arlene Keane-Browne	-	Ministry of Education
Rowena Kirby	-	Fisheries Division
Kevin Mandeville	-	Environmental Health Department
Cecil McKie	-	St. Hill Insurance Company
Dr. Reynold Murray	-	Ministry of Health and Environment
Cornelius Richards	-	Forestry Department
Dr. U O'D Trotz	-	CPACC RPIU
Rawleston Moore	-	CPACC RPIU
G. de Berdt Romilly	-	CPACC RPIU

Agenda: See Annex A4 (St. Vincent and the Grenadines)

Commentary:

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

- The banking and insurance sectors have traditionally operated in absence of regard for climate change impacts, but there is a growing awareness of the need to manage risks and high costs associated with such impacts.
- The *National Communication* is now drafted and is shortly to be submitted to Cabinet. It is anticipated that it will be presented to the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in November 2000.
- No legislation specific to disaster management has been enacted, although CDERA has prepared “model” legislation which has not yet been adopted. The National Disaster Management Plan does not take into account climate change impacts, or attempt to identify

areas that are vulnerable and which may need special attention under the Plan. At the national level, it is considered essential that a vulnerability assessment be undertaken to identify vulnerable areas so that appropriate response plans can be built in to the National Disaster Management Plan. Additionally, it is critical that institutional strengthening be provided to the National Disaster Management Office in order that effective response can be achieved after severe climate events.

- It was agreed that there was a need to develop a *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* that would outline intervention options and an action plan for implementation. The Policy should identify which laws need to be amended or changed in order to adequately address climate change impacts.
- The issue of vulnerability to climate change impacts has now been highlighted in the 5 year *National Development Plan*. Further work needs to be undertaken on the identification and assessment of risks associated with climate change and the development of sound modeling capabilities as a basis for informed decision making on all planning activities.
- Most of physical development in the country occurs outside the formal approval process, with Government development activities being one of the principal areas of concern since national planning laws do not bind the State. The new *Town Planning Act* of 1992 imposes a legal requirement to conduct an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for all new development activities. However, inadequate enforcement effectively ensures that such assessments are never undertaken. Additionally, there are no building codes in effect. It is considered that adequate response to climate change cannot be undertaken unless these structures are in place. The high cost of not complying with these requirements has already been demonstrated. A case in point is where the government housing agency developed a low cost housing scheme in an area that was prone to slippage after heavy rain. The Government now has to pay out in excess of \$1.3 million to individuals who have lost their homes. In some cases property owners were paying mortgages in excess of two years after their homes were destroyed by storms.
- The last serious hurricanes to affect St. Vincent and the Grenadines were in 1898 and 1936, with the consequence that there is a national attitude that hurricanes will not happen again and there is no reason why extra-ordinary measures should be taken to mitigate or prevent damage from such climatic events. Consequently, it is difficult to get government to spend any extra money to ensure that buildings are built to withstand abnormal climatic events. The new cruise ship terminal is a case in point, and it was severely damaged as a result of storm surges from Hurricane Lenny. The country is suffering financially since the government refuses to make hard decisions which would reduce the risk of such costly damage being sustained if adherence to more stringent building requirements were formally established. Changes will only happen once the public is sensitized to the risks and costs associated with climate change impacts and pressure is exerted on the political directorate.
- Most of the people affected or at risk from climate change impacts are poor and are not aware of the complexities of the issues surrounding climate change and its impacts on civil society. It

is considered that public education on climate change issues needs to come before any significant movement will be possible in implementing any effective adaptation policy. The public at large needs to be actively involved in the development of the *National Climate Change Policy*, and for this purpose it is essential that the message on climate change be presented to civil society in a form that is easily understood and which focuses on their concerns and interests. NGO's and community groups will play an important part in any public awareness program.

- Climate change is an “island systems management” problem that affects areas other than the coastal zone. The “whole island as an ecosystem” needs to be the approach adopted in any integrated and holistic process for adaptation planning and management. The major question that needs to be resolved is how, in practical terms, is climate change incorporated into an integrated planning process.
- The insurance and finance sectors regard climate change as an insignificant factor at the present time, and they do not want to lose business by imposing any stringent requirements about “set backs” or compliance with building standards. There is currently a serious level of under-insurance within the country. There is a need to break the cycle (i.e. cost of financing >costs of insurance>compliance with building standards>lack of political will>costs of building>costs of financing, etc.) which effectively dictates against any short-term improvement.
- The full extent of the impacts on the agricultural sector have yet to be assessed and quantified. It is anticipated that climate change will impact food production, yield, food security, drought relief programs, and exacerbate other problems associated with the agricultural sector including soil erosion, land degradation and loss of fertility. Careful consideration needs to be given to appropriate intervention options since they could have serious impact on the country's ability to comply with environmental standards imposed by receiving markets, and result in trade restrictions or sanction under international trading agreements. As an example the response to increased drought conditions could be the introduction of drought resistant crops which would present concern under international agreements and national legislation in Europe governing genetically modified organisms. Natural response to decreased soil fertility would be an increase in the use of fertilizers which may result in violation of international regimes intended to control the use of environmentally harmful substances on produce intended for human consumption.
- Food security will become an important issue in responding to climate change impacts, and there is a need to develop seed banks containing seed varieties that are suitable for use in a variety of changing climatic conditions. Integrated pest management options may be frustrated by climate change impacts.
- The cost of irrigation and the impacts of water extraction on water resources could become a significant factor with changing climate patterns.
- Any change in forestry cover or forest biodiversity will have an impact on all other sectors in

the country. Forest resources are very sensitive to changing climate patterns. The removal of indigenous forest species during clearing for human settlement or for agricultural development activities has caused micro-climates in cleared areas. These micro-climates are impacted by changing weather patterns, and it has been found that the introduction of exotic species is necessary to re-forest any such area. The continued introduction of exotic species will seriously impact the biodiversity of forest areas, and could affect the resilience of the country's forests. Additionally, climate change impacts are likely to affect water catchment areas and the volume or quality of water generated in such areas. Although a comprehensive watershed management program has been developed, there is a need to undertake a comprehensive inventory of all water resources and identify likely impacts arising from climate change.

- The fisheries sector does not have any formal policy to address climate change. Coral bleaching and harm to marine resources associated with climate change are concerns that have been expressed. The Grenadines have extensive coral reef areas that are important for cultural, social, environmental and economic reasons. A data base on marine water quality has been developed by the Fisheries Department, but no attempt has been made to accurately assess and quantify likely impacts on marine resources from climate change.
- Existing surface water resources appear to be diminishing – caused in part by changing climate patterns which exacerbate problems associated with increased demand for water and a concurrent loss of watersheds. Historically, a number of natural streams used to be used in times of water shortages, and there may be a need to revert back to such solutions if climate change impacts continue to impact surface water sources. A comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan is being developed with assistance from the European Union, and consideration should be given to ensure that it adequately addresses anticipated impacts from climate change.
- The Meteorological Office does not have an exhaustive database upon which sound decision-making on climate change adaptation options can be based. There is no developed weather service at the national level, and urgent consideration needs to be given to the institutional strengthening of the Meteorological Office so as to ensure that a sound basis is developed to assist in decision-making on climate change adaptation options.
- In terms of human health impacts, it is anticipated that climate change will result in an increase in infections from vector-borne disease. Concern has also been expressed about the human health impacts arising from water infrastructure that may be damaged during storms resulting in the contamination of drinking water. There is an urgent need to sensitize the public and media about the human health impacts associated with climate change.
- Although some public education and awareness on general environmental issues has been undertaken, there is a need for a more focussed campaign on climate change aimed at teachers and the whole student body. It is considered that climate change should be part of the formal school curriculum. An extensive and wide-ranging public education and awareness campaign on climate change needs to be established. Climate change needs to be “packaged” for

- teachers if it is to be taught in schools, and a curriculum module should be developed.
- Although a National Climate Change Committee has not been established, work on climate change issues is undertaken by the Environmental Advisory Board.
 - 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.

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

- (a) It was agreed that the Environmental Advisory Board would co-ordinate the development of the *National Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan.
- (b) Work on finalizing the Issues Paper should be completed within the next few weeks with particular attention being focused on identifying current and proposed policies, initiatives and legislation which are relevant to climate change adaptation planning and management. Thereafter, consultations with a variety of focus groups will be held to obtain input to the Issues Paper. These consultations should be completed by the end of 2000.
- (c) The Environmental Advisory Board would develop a work plan and public education program and within 30 days submit to the CPACC RPIU 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.
- (d) It was foreseen that a technical meeting would be needed to facilitate discussion on intervention options and discuss proposed management mechanisms. This technical meeting could be held in January 2001 - comprising 2 half-day sessions. These sessions would result in the formulation of a Position Paper that would be submitted for broad-based consultation. Thereafter, the Environmental Advisory Board would undertake an extensive public consultation process leading up to the development of a draft Policy Paper.
- (e) The Environmental Advisory Board would review comments submitted during the public consultation process, and make any necessary changes to the draft Policy document.
- (f) Once the draft Policy Paper had been formulated, it is anticipated that the Environmental Advisory Board would undertake the development of an Implementation Plan.
- (g) 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 Environmental Advisory Board for consideration.

- (h) It is anticipated that once agreement has been reached, the Environmental Advisory Board shall submit the Final Draft *Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan to the Ministry for Health and Environment for onward transmission to Cabinet for review and eventual approval. It is anticipated that the Final Draft *Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan would be ready for submission to Cabinet towards the end of 2001.
- (i) Assistance would be provided by CPACC to develop a “powerpoint” presentation and other materials that would assist in presentations to the Minister and other parliamentarians in order to obtain their support for the development and implementation of the *Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan. Additionally, it was considered that an Information Note should be forwarded to Cabinet to advise them of the proposed activities to be undertaken in the formulation of the *Climate Change Adaptation Policy* and Implementation Plan.
- (j) 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 module.