



For Immediate Release: 19th September 2016

Small Islands, Big Ambitions for Better Land, Water and Biodiversity Management – GEF IWECO begins

The natural beauty and friendly climate of the Caribbean are the envy of many, and the pride of our people. Yet, our Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are very vulnerable, due in part to our small size, vulnerable economies, heavy dependence on external energy resources, and rising populations. Unsustainable and, often unplanned, development is rapidly degrading much of our natural environment and Climate change is expected to further accelerate these negative impacts.

Over 60 representatives from participating countries, partners, and implementing and executing agencies of the ***Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystem Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (GEF IWECO) Project***, will gather for its Inception Workshop, 20th – 21st September 2016 in Kingston, Jamaica. **This project is being financed to the tune of almost USD 21 million by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).**

GEF IWECO is a new regional, 5-year, initiative to promote a more integrated approach to water, land and ecosystems services management in Caribbean SIDS. It is a multifocal project that will implement activities under four GEF Focal Areas: International Waters, Land Degradation, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Forest Management. This wide approach is based upon an assessment of the threats and barriers within natural resources management which was carried out in consultation with national and regional stakeholders.

IWECO's primary goal is the implementation of an integrated approach to water, land and ecosystems services management. This will be supported by policy, institutional and legislative reforms, and implementation of effective appropriate technologies and community-based solutions. The project will assist Caribbean SIDS in meeting their global targets on safe and reliable water supplies and improved sanitation, and contribute to improved ecosystem functioning in the Caribbean.

This new project builds upon previous initiatives such as the GEF-funded Integrated Watershed and Coastal Areas Management Project (IWCAM) Project, implemented from 2006 – 2011, which made significant contributions to address gaps for in and coastal water resources management, and associated land and biodiversity resources management issues, in thirteen participating countries, most of which are now participating in IWEco. While the GEF-IWCAM Project and other interventions have contributed to improvements in natural resources management governance in the region, there remain significant needs, particularly in the mainstreaming of policies into national development frameworks and identifying and broadening investments in sustainable technologies, solutions and approaches.

Eleven Caribbean countries are participating: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Eight national sub-projects will replicate and upscale innovative solutions for water, land and biodiversity/ecosystems management, including sustainable forest management. These include a project in Jamaica that will support biodiversity mainstreaming in coastal landscapes within the Negril Environmental Protection Area, one in Saint Lucia that will address problems of land degradation and ecosystem degradation in the upper reaches of the Soufriere Watershed, and one in the Dominican Republic that will promote integrated management of the biodiversity, freshwater and land resources of the Higüamo River watershed and its associated coastal zone, including mitigating climate change impacts. **In addition, GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) will contribute to the development of community-based livelihood initiatives around the main national interventions of the Project with a total of two million dollars.**

The project is being co-implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and co-executed by UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).

Partnerships are an important part of IWEco, which will work with several international, regional and national organizations to further the Project's objectives. In the area of research for instance, the Center of Engineering and Environmental Management of Bays and Coasts (CIMAB) based in Cuba, and all three campuses of the University of the West Indies (UWI) are partners. The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCC) and the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) are among partners for governance matters, and PCI Media Impact and Panos Caribbean are among partners for public awareness and education. Two additional support partnership groupings will focus on resource mobilization and private sector participation.

According to Isabelle Vanderbeck, UNEP Task Manager for the IWECO project, based in Washington DC, “the project is the largest ever implemented by UNEP in the Caribbean – while a challenge - it is also an exciting opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Caribbean persons”.

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About UNEP’s Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) in 1981 under the framework of its Regional Seas Programme. It was developed taking into consideration the importance and value of the Wider Caribbean Region’s fragile and vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems, including an abundance of mainly endemic flora and fauna. A Caribbean Action Plan was adopted by the Countries of the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) and that led to the development and adoption of the Cartagena Convention on 24 March 1983. This Convention is the first regionally binding treaty of its kind that seeks to protect and develop the marine environment of the WCR. Since its entry into force on 11 October 1986, 25 of the 28 Wider Caribbean Region countries have become Contracting Parties. The Convention is supported by three Protocols:

- Protocol concerning Cooperation in combating Oil Spills, which entered into force on October 11, 1986;
- Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA), which entered into force on June 18, 2000;
- Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based sources and activities (LBS), which entered into force on August 13, 2010.

In addition, each Protocol is served by a Regional Activity Centre (RAC). These centres are based in Curacao (Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Information and Training Centre for the Wider Caribbean, RAC/REMPEITC) for the Oil Spills Protocol; in Guadeloupe (RAC/SPA RAC for the SPA Protocol and in Cuba, Centre of Engineering and Environmental Management of Coasts and Bays and in Trinidad & Tobago, the Institute of Marine Affairs, both for the LBS Protocol. As they endeavour to protect the Caribbean Sea and sustain our future, we look forward to their continued effort to preserve our Caribbean Sea by facilitating the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols in the Wider Caribbean Region. The Regional Coordinating Unit (UNEP-CAR/RCU), established in 1986, serves as the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention and is based in Kingston, Jamaica.

CLME+ Project

The UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project is a 5-year project (2015-2020) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and co-financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The CLME+ Project is executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), in close collaboration with a large number of global, regional and national-level partners. The regional Project Coordination Unit is located within the IOCARIBE Offices of the IOC of UNESCO, in Cartagena, Colombia.

IWECO Project

The GEF IWECO Project is a 5-year project (2015-2020) co-implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and co-financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The IWECO project is co-executed by the UN Environment Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP CEP) and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). The regional Project Coordinating Unit will be located within UNEP CEP’s offices in Kingston, Jamaica.

To find out more about the UNEP CAR-RCU, the Cartagena Convention and its Oil Spills, SPAW and LBS Protocols, please visit the www.cep.unep.org. You may also contact Mr. Christopher Corbin, Programme Officer for AMEP/CETA sub-programmes, at UNEP CEP by telephone: 1(876) 922-9267-9, Fax: 1 (876)922-9292, Email: cjc@cep.unep.org. We can also be found on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/UNEP-Caribbean-Environment-Programme> and Twitter at: https://twitter.com/UNEP_CEP as well as Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CEPUNEP/featured>



Chateaubelair Community Consultations, St Vincent, IWCAM



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