



CARIBBEAN WATER AND WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

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29 March 1999

Chairman, Committee of Government
Representatives on Civil Society
c/o Tripartite Committee (Ref Civil Society)
United Nations Economic Commission for
Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
1825 K Street NW, Suite 1120
Washington, D.C. 20006
U.S.A.

Dear Sir

FTAA and Environment Management

This is in response to your "Open Invitation to Civil Society in FTAA Participating Countries" recently advertised in a local newspaper. Herewith submitted for your Committee's use in the ongoing FTAA negotiations is a recent paper of mine on the subject of "Predicting the Environmental Impact of FTAA in the Caribbean". Although I am a senior member of the under-mentioned environmental NGOs, I have not had the time to consult with either management.

- 1) Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA)
c/o Water and Sewerage Authority
St. Joseph, Trinidad, W.I.

(Founder and First President; now Chairman of TT branch)

- 2) ReCaribe – Wider Caribbean Waste Reduction and Recycling Alliance
c/o The Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Ltd.
Independence Square
Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

(Co-founder and Caribbean Technical Advisor)

The paper is an updated version of one which I wrote in 1997 on NAFTA, and I hope it can help in any future discussions on environmental management in FTAA from a Caribbean standpoint.

Yours sincerely

Eng. Ronald A. Williams
Environmental Engineer

cc: Mr. Bernard Sylvester
Ministry of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Riverside Plaza, Besson Street, Port of Spain

Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The growing public concern over the impact of unsustainable development throughout the Caribbean continues to be teased from time to time by governmental boasts of new industries and hotel facilities. In the meantime, environmental infrastructure is inadequate and out of date, including government inspection personnel and their legislative tools of the colonial past. To add to the shortcomings of our governance, the private sector tends to develop in advance of environmental management commitments of cleaner production, while the general public merely enjoys its observer status amidst rampant consumption.

In the more developed of the Caribbean countries, many are further concerned about the benefits of our participation in international conferences and agreements; and some are still wondering at the lack of progress towards Sustainable Development seven (7) years after UNCED '92 in Rio. However, from time to time our frustrations subside; and among the achievements of outstanding athletes, functionable Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and the success story of a local industrial exporter, we are able to come to terms with national needs such as trade and investment, tourism, and crime, with or without punishment.

This then is a condensed version of how environmental groups view their Caribbean society(ies) as the 20th century comes to an end. Yet tropical people are natural optimists, and they look forward with much hope that as "smaller economies" a hemispheric grouping can provide increased opportunities for progress through free trade with an expanded market, in parallel with such "special attention" as financial assistance and appropriate environmental technology.

The integration of Caribbean peoples is an essential product of our geography, our common history, and our search for the potential of synergistic and symbiotic relationships. And such an integration is an inevitable progression towards hemispheric membership. (Just as our Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association founded in Trinidad in 1989-91 almost immediately became a Full Member in the Inter-American Society of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering, Sao Paulo.) Indeed, the FTAA principles include: "Countries may negotiate and accept the obligations of the FTAA individually or as members of a sub-regional integration group negotiating as a unit." Perhaps more than the Latin States, Caribbean countries trust that the ongoing negotiations will "ensure mutual advantage and increased benefits" to them as sub-regional participants.

Thanks to an excellent educational background and an inherited respect for institutional framework, most Caribbean people understand the fragility of their native lands and the vulnerability of national economies. They are actually in the first stage of developing national environmental management policies and programs to catch up with post-independence developments (after 1962). What is needed now is some catalytic action from the north and the south of the Americas to assist and accelerate the environmental movement in the Caribbean for the new millenium.

**PREDICTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
OF FTAA IN THE CARIBBEAN**

for

**Committee of Government Representatives
On Civil Society
UN ECLAC, Washington**

by

**Eng. Ronald A. Williams
Environmental Engineering Consultant
Trinidad**

March 1999