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PRESS RELEASE

Experts meeting in St. Lucia explore ways to educate populations about the perils of climate change

(Rodney Bay, 3 July 2007) – Faced with sea level rise of up to one meter by the end of the next century and the need to relocate entire populations within the next 50 years, representatives of 30 small island developing States (SIDS) are meeting in St. Lucia from 3 to 5 July to discuss how their populations can be better educated about the effects of climate change.

The three-day workshop, organised by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), will seek to identify priorities for island States over the next five years.

“This workshop comes at a critical time in the intergovernmental process, and will enable this most vulnerable group of countries, SIDS, to share important lessons on how to best prepare the public to deal with the serious and irreversible effects of climate change that have been predicted,” said Paul Desanker, Team Leader of the Capacity Building and Outreach Unit at the UN Climate Change Secretariat.

Some of these lessons have resulted in efforts like Community Multimedia Centres which combine local broadcasting with internet and related technologies. Initial participants include radio stations in Barbados, Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Another unique initiative to increase public awareness has been the development of a handbook for Caribbean journalists on covering climate change issues.

The workshop is the last in a series of activities which form part of a work programme launched at the UN Climate Change Conference in New Delhi (2002). It will be led by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, who also chairs the Convention’s Subsidiary Body for Implementation. The Honourable Leonard Montoute, Acting Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, will deliver a keynote address at the opening ceremony. Participating organizations include UNEP, UNESCO and IUCN Fiji. Regional organizations such as OAS, SPREP and CARICOM are also expected to attend.

The recent projections of the impact of climate change on SIDS by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has prompted island nations to assess their needs in terms of resources, training and financial support. One of the most dramatic effects of observed and projected climate change is the physiological consequences of coral bleaching, which has already caused long-term damage to many reefs worldwide. It has been estimated that the cost would reach as much as US\$90 billion in tourism alone for loss of 58% of the world’s coral reef. Key findings from this workshop will feed into decisions to be made at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia in December this year.



"The impacts of climate change we are presently seeing in the Caribbean underscore the urgency to act against the phenomenon by launching an agenda for negotiations on a post-2012 agreement in Bali this year. The negotiations need to conclude by 2009 so that the agreement can be ratified by governments before the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012," said Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary.

The post-2012 regime will present new opportunities for addressing climate change, and the role of education and outreach will become increasingly important to enable the greatest participation of all in designing and implementing a sustainable future.

For complete conference information, including a schedule of events, please visit the UNFCCC website: <http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/education_and_outreach/items/4001.php>.

More information is available at:

<<http://unfccc.int/ccinet>>

<http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/education_and_outreach/items/2529.php>

<http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/education_and_outreach/items/4001.php>

About the UNFCCC

With 191 Parties, the United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has to date 175 member Parties. At the intergovernmental level, the Convention recognizes the important role of education, training and public awareness, and has programmes dedicated to supporting countries in their efforts.

Note to journalists

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