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# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

## 1. DSD NEWS

### ***IV WORLD WATER FORUM: WORKING TOWARDS LOCAL ACTIONS FOR A GLOBAL CHANGE IN THE AMERICAS***

From March 16 to 22, 2006, approximately 100 ministers from around the world will be joined by some 15,000 people in Mexico City, for the Fourth World Water Forum focusing on Local Actions for a Global Challenge. This is the first time that the Forum takes place in the Americas. For the past two years, the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) has been actively involved in various aspects of the preparatory process for the Forum as member and chair of the Operative Committee of the Americas (OCA). At the Forum, lessons from bilateral and regional transboundary water management projects in the Americas, executed by the Organization of American States (OAS) with support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), will be highlighted to show how regional actions can influence water policy making and have an impact on global sustainability. During the day of the Americas of the Forum, the DSD will emphasize how the following goals have been met within the region in contribution to a global change in integrated water management: identifying successful local actions, advancing solutions to water problems and increasing public participation. The DSD focused its preparatory efforts in good governance and public participation related to issues such as national and transboundary integrated water resources management, potable water and sanitation, the protection of ecosystems, urban water management, environmental education, gender and indigenous peoples. These action areas are precisely those in which the region faces the most relevant challenges and some were discussed during 2005 at the following meetings supported by the DSD: The Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA) in Mar del Plata, Argentina (June 2005). The International Forum on La Plata Basin in Brazil (September 2005). The V Inter American Dialogue on Water Management as a regional event focused on the Caribbean and held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, (October 2005).

A major accomplishment of the DSD in its role as Chair of the OCA was the establishment of the Evaluation Committee of the Americas that recommended a short-list of "local actors" and experiences



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at the project and policy level that will be presented during the Forum. The Evaluation Committee of the Americas formed 5 sub-working groups reflecting the five themes of the Forum itself: (1) Water for Growth and Development; (2) Implementing Integrated Water Resources Management; (3) Water Supply and Sanitation for All; (4) Water Management for Food and the Environment; and (5) Risk Management. The OAS/DSD is extremely grateful for the tremendous work of the Evaluation Committee and, as the only region that established such a committee, believes that the benefits in selecting outstanding local actions, as well as the process by which public participation and transparency was directly supported, will be an important contribution to the Forum.

#### **SECOND COORDINATION MEETING ON PROTECTED AREAS INFORMATION SYSTEMS HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC**

The Second Coordination Meeting on Protected Areas Information Systems was hosted by the DSD as part of the Inter American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) on January 31, 2006. This initiative is supported by the GEF as well as by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The purpose of the meeting was to have an information exchange about current Protected Areas initiatives in the Western Hemisphere. Some of the actions agreed upon by experts from non-governmental and international organizations, federal agencies and academic institutions that attended the meeting include the design of an Andes-Amazon Protected Areas Database (AAPAD), developing quantitative indicators of effectiveness of protected areas management, and developing standards and international protocols to promote compatibility and interoperability of the IABIN database across countries.

#### **CANADA TO SUPPORT OAS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS**

The Government of Canada signed an agreement with the Organization of American States (OAS) to contribute Can\$2 million in support of sustainable development efforts in the hemisphere. The contribution will mainly focus on cooperation in the area of Natural Disaster Management and will also cover the area of environmental law and enforcement for the sound management of chemicals.

The OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza explained that the agreement signed with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will strengthen the capacity of the OAS to meet the needs of its member states by defining stronger policy and supporting development programs. Ambassador Durand, Permanent representative of Canada to the OAS, noted that one of the member states' priorities has been to support natural disaster— and mitigation programs, underscoring the Organization's commitment to these programs. Durand emphasized that one of the specific priority areas identified for implementation under this agreement is for strengthening policies to support governments that must face the destruction caused by natural disasters.

#### **GTZ PARTNERS WITH DSD IN NATURAL HAZARDS SCHOOL RETROFITTING PROGRAM IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

The OAS has recently signed an agreement with the German Cooperation Agency, GTZ to partner in a Natural Hazards School Retrofitting Program in Central America. The initial phase of this program, known as the Central America School Retrofit Program (CASchool), will be implemented by the DSD with the support of experts from the region and will focus on the documentation of institutional and technical experiences, and the review of national school vulnerability reduction plans.

#### **CSD-14 TO MEET AT UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK**

At the upcoming meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in New York (from 1-12 May 2006), the DSD Renewable Energy in the Americas Initiative (REIA) will roll out the Latin American Regional

Sustainable Energy Policy Development Forum. The initiative, developed by REIA with support from the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), will establish a regional forum for sustainable energy policy coordination with the purpose of affecting policy and regulatory reform in Latin America. Forum activities include the actualization of a comprehensive survey of RE/EE policies and regulations in each participating country; the identification of key gaps, reform measures, and stakeholders critical to bring about a significant change in the policy/regulatory environment; and the development of results-oriented recommendations and outlining of strategies for executing the critical reforms necessary.

#### **GEO-CARAÏBES PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS MEETING HOSTED BY OAS IN DOMINICA**

The Eastern Caribbean Geothermal Development Project (Geo-Caraïbes) Stakeholders Meeting will be hosted by the DSD in Dominica. From 15-17 March 2006, high-ranking government officials from Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia will gather in Roseau with the purpose of finalizing the draft project document to be submitted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for the Full-size Geo-Caraïbes Project.

#### **OAS WORKSHOPS ON INTERNATIONAL LAW HIGHLIGHT ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN THE AMERICAS**

The yearly Workshops on International Law, hosted by the OAS Department of International Legal Affairs, recently highlighted issues related to International Environmental Law. At the Workshops, co-hosted in Ottawa by the Faculty of Law of the University of Ottawa, the DSD participated in a panel formed by distinguished professors of International Law from various

universities in the Americas. More information available at: [http://www.oas.org/dil/courses\\_seminars\\_workshops.htm](http://www.oas.org/dil/courses_seminars_workshops.htm)

#### **EXPERTS MET IN LIMA TO DISCUSS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS OF FREE TRADE IN THE ANDEAN REGION**

A team of multidisciplinary experts from Colombia, Peru and Ecuador met for two days in Lima, to discuss ongoing efforts to assess the environmental effects of free trade in the Andean Region. With support of the USEPA, the DSD is conducting national environmental assessments in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, to examine to what extent domestic markets in the region are likely to change as trade barriers fall, and what environmental consequences can be anticipated from these economically driven effects. The model will also examine regulatory effects and how legal and institutional frameworks (domestic and regional) can address these changes. The analysis is intended to provide member states with capacity building and realistic policy options that make trade expansion more sustainable for the region. The DSD expects to unveil preliminary results of these assessments by the end of April 2006.

#### **PROGRESS IN PROPERTY RIGHTS AND LAND TENURE DISCUSSED AT THE OAS**

A panel discussion with the theme: From Mandates to Actions: what has been done to advance Property Rights in the Americas? was recently hosted by the DSD at OAS Headquarters. The objective of the panel was to exchange views among government representatives and land tenure experts about the benefits and challenges of land titling projects in relation to poverty alleviation. During the discussions panelists explained some of the complex processes of registry and cadastre and the challenges to modernize property systems. Participants observed that the Inter-American Alliance for Property Rights brings the opportunity to advance property rights in the Hemisphere and made positive comments about the objectives of the Alliance and the implementation of the "Blueprint for Strengthening Real Property Rights." (<http://www.landnetamericas.org>).

#### **QUOTABLE**

*"Then I say the earth belongs to each... generation during its course, fully and in its own right, no generation can contract debts greater than may be paid during the course of its own existence." —*

*Thomas Jefferson, 1789*

### **WATER PLUS PROPOSAL REVIEW WORKSHOP: PROVIDING SAFE WATER AND SANITATION IN THE ANDEAN BORDER REGION**

Current work on Water and Health related issues and a brief summary of key results from the 2005 Meeting of Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas (HEMA) were highlighted by the OAS/DSD during the Water Plus Proposal Review Workshop: Providing Safe Water and Sanitation in the Andean Border Region organized by the Andean Health Organization (AHO/ORAS/CONHU) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), held in Tarija, Bolivia from February 8-10, 2006. "The envisioned proposal is a holistic community-centered approach to provide water, sanitation, and hygiene to underserved populations and to address the Millennium Development Goals for water", said Bernhard Griesinger, Director of the OAS National Office in Bolivia. During the workshop Andean partners and other interested parties exchanged experiences and made significant advances in the preparation of a general strategy for improving access to safe water and sanitation in rural and border areas that can be replicated in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **2. POLICY SERIES HIGHLIGHTS**

### **WATER MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: LESSONS FROM REGIONAL COOPERATION**

Lessons from regional cooperation for Water Management and Climate Change are highlighted in a special issue of the DSD Policy Series for the IV World Water Forum.

#### **SUMMARY**

Recent evidence showing accelerating glacier melting is one of the strongest signals of greenhouse warming; this reality underscores the view that climate change is no longer a distant threat.



Some scientists estimate that the total mass of Arctic sea-ice has declined by 60 percent in four decades, and warn of similar warming rates affecting the Antarctic. In addition, the Patagonian ice fields, the largest contiguous ice field in the Southern Hemisphere, are experiencing the fastest rate of glacial retreat and the highest

percentage of sea-level increase recorded for any mountain glacier. (Science 17 February 2006:Vol. 311. no. 5763, pp. 963 – 964, Science 17 October 2003:Vol. 302. no. 5644, pp. 434 – 437)

This is also evidenced by the fact that the years 2002 through 2005 are four of the five warmest years recorded in the past century. In the U.N. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, experts from various countries have underscored the important consequences for human well-being of the effects of climate change in ecosystems. Understanding the links between climate change and efforts to secure sustainable water management is still a challenge in the Americas. Regional efforts by the OAS to address these issues include two significant projects supported by UNEP-GEF: the Amazon River Basin and La Plata River Basin which provide common scientific basis through Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) that creates a unique policy "platform" upon which to complement a number of other regional and specific activities that support integrated water management. Lessons from these projects show that the establishment of innovative water institutions, based on existing water basin committees, can create the potential to better understand the effects of climate change, and coordinate cost-effective responses and provide innovative solutions to governance challenges. Three important aspects

to consider in the creation of these water institutions include: building a scientific foundation of consensus-based action; supporting regulatory equivalence and convergence; and securing institutional transparency and meaningful public participation. In achieving this, the Americas will be a step closer in securing sustainable water management.

## **3. PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAM FOR THE BINATIONAL BASIN OF THE BERMEJO RIVER**

Since 1995, the OAS/DSD has acted as the regional executing agency for several GEF financed initiatives in the region, most of them related to international waters, including the Bermejo River Basin. Shared by Argentina and Bolivia, this large basin is characterized by radically differing weather and topographic conditions. The exploitation of forests in the area has diminished biodiversity and impoverished natural resources. Clearing of land for cultivation and widespread overgrazing has created problems of erosion and desertification that has contributed to downstream environmental degradation. The Bermejo project Strategic Action Program (SAP) was formulated to address these major environmental issues and to promote sustainable development of the basin. Some of the activities and results after 4 years of implementation include:

**(1) Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation:** Engineering works, equipment, and training has brought more and better infrastructure, capacity, and information for the control of erosion, retention of sediments, consolidation of riverbeds, and prevention of floods. Water channels for drinking and irrigation have been extended in selected areas. Training in water and soil management techniques has provided production alternatives and improved health conditions. Integrated, community-based units have been created to serve the ecotourism market; sustainable and cost-effective sanitation strategies have been successfully implemented; and a bi-national hydrometeorological network has been implemented, allowing for precise quantification and monitoring of water quality, quantity, and sediment loads.

**(2) Sustainable Development of Natural Resources:** Actions in this component have promoted and disseminated alternative sustainable production methods, minimizing environmental degradation, and providing local populations with better economic opportunities.

**(3) Institutional Development and Strengthening:** Activities undertaken within this component are addressing the identified institutional weaknesses that hinder the effective, holistic management of the water resources of the bi-national basin to ensure institutional capacity to implement laws, regulations, and procedures necessary for sustainable watershed management, to increase participation in decision-making within the Basin, and to strengthen the Binational Commission.

**(4) Public Awareness and Participation:** This component has helped identify and coordinate the interests of basin stakeholders, providing access to information, and encouraging active community involvement in the management of the Basin's natural resources. The project initiated implementation of a comprehensive and integrated environmental education program relating to the sustainable use of water and other natural resources.

## **4. EVENT**

### **FIRST INTER-AMERICAN MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH LEVEL AUTHORITIES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The DSD is leading the preparatory process for the First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities on Sustainable Development. The meeting, to be held October 5-6, 2006, will commemorate the tenth

anniversary of the Bolivia Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development by examining the following three areas: Integrated Water-Resource Management; Natural Disasters Risk Management; Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism. Upcoming activities within the preparatory process include:

- **Contest to design logo for the Ministerial**

The DSD and The Art Museum of the Americas recently launched a contest for the design of a logo that will accompany the Sustainable Development Ministerial and High Level Authorities meeting. The deadline for applications is April 10, 2006. For further information on the preparatory process and the contest visit: <http://www.oas.org/dsd/> or contact: [USDECPR6@OAS.org](mailto:USDECPR6@OAS.org)

- **Technical workshop** on “Managing Risks of Natural Hazards: Risk sharing and Risk transfer arrangements of Natural Disasters” to be held in Kingston, Jamaica on April 18-19, 2006. This meeting is the second of the series of workshops in preparation for the First Inter-American Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development. The main objective of this two day technical workshop is to analyze policies and operational projects to address the vulnerability of populations and their economic and social infrastructure, costs and benefits of investing in natural hazard vulnerability reduction to mitigate risk, and the initiatives and practices to manage risk at the regional and sub-regional levels. For further information visit: [http://www.oas.org/dsd/MinisterialMeeting/ReunionInterAm\\_eng\\_Wkhp2.htm](http://www.oas.org/dsd/MinisterialMeeting/ReunionInterAm_eng_Wkhp2.htm) or contact: [Pbastidas@oas.org](mailto:Pbastidas@oas.org)

## 5. INTERVIEW *ADRIAN COWELL*



Adrian Cowell has been producing award-winning documentary films for the past 50 years, achieving a Special Achievement Emmy and several British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards. He brought us eye-witness accounts of first contacts with indigenous tribes in the Amazon and the upcoming Washington DC Environmental Film Festival (March 2006) will premiere his film “*Jungle Beat*,” showcasing the complexities of illegal logging in the Amazon region, and his 1990 documentary “*A Decade of Destruction: Murder in the Amazon*.”

Although Adrian’s films can not be attributed to directly impacting the implementation of environmental policies, public opinion is certainly more often than not influenced by the media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc) and visual aids are an effective communication tool – a picture is worth a thousand words. In fact, on a couple instances, his documentaries have been used as evidence on particular cases of environmental degradation and, as a result, concrete actions were taken to remedy the situation. During an interview with the DSD, Adrian shared his thoughts on the most pressing environmental issues faced today, Global Warming and Climate Change. Adrian explains that a change in climate would alter habitats globally causing extinction of many species, both animal

and vegetable, unable to adapt to even the slightest change in the environment. When asked on his thoughts on the role of International Organizations in the quest for environmental sustainability, Adrian stated that his experience working with international organizations has been positive and that their strength lies in promoting action and disseminating lessons learned and best-practices, and in raising funds for implementation of significant environmental projects and programs.

## 6. MEET OUR STAFF *MARIA APOSTOLOVA*



Maria is an environmental specialist, based in the OAS Office in Mexico City where she serves as a Project Manager for GEF-funded integrated water management projects executed by the DSD in Latin America and the Caribbean. Maria is currently managing the São Francisco and the Pantanal-Upper Paraguay projects in Brazil, and supporting the preparation of the Amazon River Basin project. Maria holds an MA degree in International Politics from the University of Brasilia (UnB) and an MIPP degree from the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs, with concentration in Environmental Policy. Maria enjoys working and learning in a multi-cultural environment and is fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, English, Russian, and Bulgarian.

Maria has been actively involved in the preparatory process for the Fourth World Water Forum. She puts the OAS water portfolio for Sustainable Development in the Americas and the IV World Water Forum into perspective. The Forum will serve as a venue for decision and policy-makers to discuss the challenges they face in achieving effective sustainable water management, taking into account the policy implications of issues such climate change and ecosystem degradation and integrating environmental variables into development and poverty alleviation policies. The OAS promotes building upon agreed Strategic Actions Programs for the integrated management of water resources, supporting the creation of innovative institutions, strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, establishing mechanisms for public participation and empowerment, and promoting effective decentralization in water management. The OAS brings to the Fourth World Water Forum replicable lessons learned related both to formulation of public policies and to their implementation on the ground, which will be illustrated by local actions developed in the context of the OAS/UNEP/World Bank/GEF water projects throughout the Americas. The OAS experience has been a valuable input in the preparation of a “Common Strategy for Water Management among the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean” that will be discussed at the Forum.



The Organization of American States (OAS) is the world’s oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, D.C., in 1889. The Charter of the OAS was signed in Bogotá in 1948. The OAS currently has 35 member States and has granted permanent observer status to over 48 states. The OAS is the region’s premier forum for multilateral dialogue and concerted action, it brings together the countries of the Western Hemisphere to strengthen cooperation and advance common interests.

Through its Department of Sustainable Development (DSD), the General Secretariat of the OAS (GS/OAS) fulfills member States mandates by promoting the implementation of policies, technical cooperation projects and partnerships that translate sustainable development and environmental protection goals into concrete action. A key objective entails integrating environmental priorities set by OAS member States within mainstream development, poverty alleviation and good governance-related policies.

DSD Editorial Advisory Committee: Claudia de Windt, Beatriz Ferro-Santos, Isis Marquez, Oscar Ceville and Jean Marc Racine.