



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMPONENT
in the framework of the
First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on
Sustainable Development

Summary of Preparatory Workshops and Key Guiding Questions for Discussion

The First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development will identify and advance concrete partnerships at the regional and hemispheric level to integrate environmental considerations into development, poverty alleviation, social and economic policies. The principle focus of the meeting will be the environment-economy nexus. The meeting will identify specific opportunities for cooperation among OAS member States in integrating environmental management within core economic development, poverty alleviation and related goals. Public and citizen participation, gender equality and the active engagement of indigenous peoples will be main themes of the Ministerial Meeting.

The meeting will examine three areas: (1) Sustainable Management of Water Resources; (2) Reducing the Risk of Natural Disasters; and (3) Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism.

The overarching and cross-cutting theme to be examined in each of the three agenda items will comprise public and citizen participation, good governance, gender equality and the inclusion and respect of indigenous peoples. The particular way in which these cross-cutting themes will interact with the three themes will differ, and be articulated during the preparatory meetings.

I. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES:

The Preparatory Workshop on Sustainable Management of Water Resources was held in Quito, Ecuador, June 19 -21, 2006 to identify policy guidelines, strategies, and priority actions related to sustainable management of water resources. The discussion highlighted issues related to water governance, the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals on water supply and sanitation; and climate change and its potential effects on water resources, among others topics.

The Workshop also identified specific cooperation opportunities to support the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) related to water resources, following up the global agreements reached during the IV World Water Forum held in Mexico in March 2006.

Workshop recommendations include:

- National and regional water plans should be developed with full public participation.
- Urge ministries of water, environmental and health to meet to address water-health linkages, vulnerability and poverty-gender nexus.
- Water institutions also need to take account indigenous people's concept of the value of water, and fully respect their customs.
- Climate change is a reality, and poses a significant threat. There is an urgent need to integrate climate change into water basin planning, and strengthen early warning and climate adaptation capacities.
- Provide a hemispheric mechanism for articulation between the different IWRM national processes, focusing on the harmonization of management tools; development of mechanisms for



information generation and access; local and community participation; and horizontal cooperation.

- Adopt comparable processes at the hemispheric level to support meaningful public participation.
- Adopt benchmarks and guidelines regarding institutional transparency.
- Adopt comparable access to environmental information commitments.

Guiding questions on integrated water resources management for comment and discussion:

1. Indicate mechanisms through which the participation of indigenous peoples can improve the use, management and conservation of water resources in the hemisphere.
2. How can cooperation mechanisms aimed at increasing water and sanitation coverage be strengthened in order to reduce the risk of waterborne diseases?
3. What type of educational activities at the regional level could promote social participation in water management?

II. REDUCING RISKS OF NATURAL DISASTERS:

The Workshop on Natural Disaster Management took place in Kingston, Jamaica on the 18th and 19th of April, 2006. The objective of the workshop was to consolidate knowledge from experts and specialists to establish strategies to promote improved management of natural disasters and reduce their possible effects. It also identified policies, projects, and areas of cooperation that allow progress in both the mitigation and transfer of risks. The discussion emphasized the following priority areas: (i) identify projects, policies and cooperative partnerships that make progress in both risk mitigation and risk transfer, in particular, governance-related building codes and standards adaptation monitoring and enforcement, and land-use planning and zoning; (ii) strengthen economic analysis associated with the benefits and costs of risk mitigation and risk sharing, and mainstream risk mitigation and expenditures in development and economic planning; (iii) identify best practices in the adoption of risk mitigation technical standards; (iv) identify specific risk sharing and risk transfer initiatives at the regional and sub-regional levels, including through insurance pooling; and (v) integrate a perspective of environmental protection, social equality and sustainable development with a gender perspective in natural disasters risk management.

Workshop recommendations include:

- Promote citizen participation into educational and training programs that involve governments, private sector, civil society, academia, and international agencies.
- Create a regulatory framework, codes, design and construction standards and certification to evaluate and reduce the vulnerability of educational infrastructure.
- Create an Inter-American Mechanism for disaster reduction on the need of reinforcing existing networks and cooperation of agencies, NGOs, and civil society under different scenarios.
- Incorporate a gender perspective in natural disasters prevention.
- Promoting the creation of legal frameworks with more emphasis on citizen participation is the key to building systems and regulations dealing with prevention, mitigation and response to disasters.

Guiding questions on management of natural hazards for comment and discussion:

1. What type of incentives can be created for public participation and cooperation of multidisciplinary efforts in the region, with a system of co-responsibility and coordination for the



development of policy and/or technical support of government authorities, that will lead provide concrete actions in the management of natural disasters?

2. How can access to information related to natural disasters risk management be guaranteed to indigenous peoples?
3. What type of mechanisms can be created to identify the mechanism to promote the public contribution to consider the necessities, the functions and the specific gender social power, which will determine the level of vulnerability?

III. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND TOURISM:

This Workshop was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, November 2nd, 2005 to identify management and policy approaches that support sustainable agriculture, forestry and tourism. It identified the mechanisms at the national and regional levels that promote these objectives. It also promoted the central role of rural communities in resource management and application of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples.

Participants agreed that a major obstacle is the fragmentation of sustainability issues and development policies; the lack of integration among key economic sectors and different ministries at the national level adds another obstacle to achieve sustainable development. Given the multiple sectors involved in sustainable resource management, the discussions recognized that a broad range of related regulatory matters require good governance, solid support, and close examination. The need to approach environmental management from an economic perspective was highlighted. The workshop also examined the role of public and citizen participation in the efforts leading to the support of community-based projects, associations and policies on sustainable agriculture, forestry and tourism. Participants emphasized the pivotal role of rural communities, including traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, in achieving the objectives of sustainable agriculture, forestry and tourism, in order to implement successful projects that promote sustainable subsistence.

Workshop recommendations include:

- Building links across sectors
- Establishing voluntary initiatives
- Promoting innovative financing

Guiding questions on sustainable agriculture, forestry and tourism for comment and discussion:

1. What would be the role of civil society and indigenous peoples in the development and implementation of sustainable practices and policies in agriculture, forestry and tourism?
2. Please identify and support existing initiatives that encourage community participation in agricultural, forestry and tourism activities, and their sustainability. How can local authorities/government/private-public partnership/international organizations support these initiatives?
3. What are the best ways to identify and share best practices in a meaningful way?

General Questions:

1. What are the needs on sustainable development that require an immediate response from competent organisms?
2. What do you think should be the priority on sustainable development during the discussion of ministers and why?
3. What are the benefits of using adequate practices for sustainable development?