

Outcome report
Third Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development (RIM) in Latin America and the Caribbean, preparatory to the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-18)

I. Overview of the Regional Implementation Meeting

The Third Regional Implementation Forum (RIM) on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, preparatory to the Eighteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-18), was held in Antigua, Guatemala, on 26 and 27 November 2009. The meeting was convened by the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and was chaired by H.E. Dr. Luis Alberto Ferraté Felice, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala, who is also Chair of the Bureau of the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

RIM was attended by the following members States of ECLAC: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, France, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Germany attended as an observer. Among United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, in addition to ECLAC, the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) participated in the meeting. Two national centres functioning under the Cleaner Production Programme of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) were also present, as was the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD). Twenty organizations representing major groups participated, among which three have been granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The meeting was organized in sessions relating to each of the CSD-18 thematic areas, which were preceded by an inaugural session and a presentation delivered by the representative of DESA on the functioning of the CSD-18/CSD-19 cycle, the preparatory process and recent procedural innovations. During the inaugural session, which was attended by the President of Guatemala, Alvaro Colom, the Director of Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC highlighted the main messages contained in the preliminary report prepared by ECLAC entitled “Sustainable consumption and production, mining, transport, chemicals and waste management: the results, trends and challenges of sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean” (hereafter referred to as the ECLAC document), which had been made available to participants. The revised version of this document, which considers inputs and comments received during and after RIM, will be made available on the ECLAC website at the beginning of 2010, as will the meeting report.¹ The main messages of the revised document and the outcomes of the meeting discussions are summarized below in the sections pertaining to each of the thematic areas.

II. Review of issues related to thematic areas

2.1 A ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns

The movement towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in Latin America and the Caribbean implies the multiple challenge of ensuring the basic needs of a growing population

¹ See [online] <http://www.cepal.org/ddisah>.

with high poverty rates, and of doing so sustainably and with the involvement of the local production fabric. It also requires that due consideration be given to the fact that many of the region's economies are strongly based on extractive industries and agriculture. Moving towards SCP requires a rethink of values and ways of life, to which the rich legacy of the region's indigenous communities can bring important lessons. Climate change poses new challenges for SCP, by making it necessary to move towards lower carbon economies, and by presenting new difficulties as regards meeting the basic needs (particularly food and water) of the populations it affects. At RIM, the session on SCP was opened with statements by two members of the delegation of Guatemala, followed by a presentation given by a representative of UNEP on the links between SCP and "green economies".

Progress and achievements

In response to the international commitment to advance in SCP, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have undertaken several actions aimed at changing consumption and production patterns. They have done so both within their national borders and through subregional and regional collaboration. The Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean instituted a Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production in 2003. The mandate of the Regional Council includes providing specialized assistance on SCP to the Forum of Ministers and governments; facilitating the exchange of information and experiences; assessing challenges and obstacles; and identifying sources of international funding and regional cooperation mechanisms. In line with recommendations made by the Regional Council, the Forum of Ministers made SCP a priority within the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) and its regional action plan. The Regional Council met in Cartagena, Colombia, in September 2009. Based on the discussions at this and previous meetings, it established priority areas for SCP in the region. A regional proposal for the 10-Year framework programme on SCP was prepared, as well as a regional plan of action, based on four subregional plans.

According to a recent assessment conducted by UNEP and the Center for Technology and Industrial Information Management (CEGESTI) (see the ECLAC document for details), 14 out of 20 countries in the region have instituted mechanisms (policies, programmes, projects or plans) to accelerate change towards SCP. Some have also enacted regulations or adopted sectoral assessment procedures based on a life-cycle approach for the energy and fuel, sugar, chemicals, construction, electric power, waste management and paper industries and in agribusiness. Some national development plans already incorporate SCP concepts.

With the support of the UNIDO, a number of national cleaner production centres have been established and can claim progress in terms of water and energy consumption, waste generation and emissions.

With regard to subregional initiatives:

- In 2007 the MERCOSUR countries approved a common policy for collaboration and promotion of SCP, focusing on dialogue and cooperation, consumption and production practices, technological innovation, inclusion of SCP in formal and informal education, capacity-building and information exchange, the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and sustainable procurement.
- The Andean Community made SCP a cross-cutting axis of its environmental agenda for 2006-2010. A group of Andean consumers was created in 2003 to develop an SCP strategy

by promoting responsible investments, establishing standards on life-cycle assessments for certain products, capacity-building, and awareness raising.

- The Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) is in the process of preparing a regional policy on sustainable public procurement. The Central American subregion has a regional cleaner production policy for 2005-2010, a Cleaner Production Intersectoral Regional Committee, and numerous successful cleaner production projects. An electronic system of waste exchange was launched in 2009 for Central America and the Caribbean. The Regional Agro-environmental and Health Strategy (ERAS) incorporates concepts of SCP.
- The revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (2001) contains SCP concepts, as does the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Challenges and constraints

Participants at RIM agreed that consumption patterns in the region are generally unsustainable, both because large segments of the population do not have their basic needs covered, and because of overconsumption in the richer segments, driven by a culture that places excessive value on material wealth, induced by corporate policies, mainstream media and advertising. Consumer awareness of the effects of unsustainable consumption and production is limited. All this leads to the consumption of often superfluous products and the frequent renewal of goods (such as motor vehicles and electronic equipment), which contrasts with the serious deprivations suffered by most of the population. It also creates environmental problems, particularly in waste management, and puts pressure on natural resources.

Despite the advances mentioned above in the development of policies, programmes, plans and other instruments, as yet these have had few measureable effects in terms of concrete action. This may be attributed partly to the fact that initiatives are recent.

Climate change may lead to even greater difficulties for the poorest segments of the population in meeting their basic needs (such as water and food). This must be properly taken into account in adaptation plans.

One of the main structural characteristics of the region is its heterogeneous industrial base in which large, often transnational, corporations benefit from financial and technological resources on a par with those of developed countries, and numerous SMEs, which have an important bearing on jobs and GDP, have no such resources. Despite advances in the environmental behaviour of the former, their business models in themselves are often incompatible with SCP. The latter often have difficulties implementing environmental regulation and sustainability policies.

Policy options

The regional priority areas proposed by the Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production² are: national policies and strategies for SCP; support for SMEs; sustainable public procurement; sustainable lifestyles; and the development of an

² Refer to the "Recommendations to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean by the V Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production", approved in Cartagena, Colombia, September 2009.

information and knowledge management network. The regional proposal for the ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable production and consumption patterns, a summary of which is contained in the ECLAC document, proposes policy measures related to each of these priorities (table 1).

TABLE 1 – SCP priority areas in Latin America and the Caribbean

Priority	Policy measure
National policies and strategies for SCP	Mainstream SCP within national development strategies (including development policies, regulations, and programmes); strengthen information, education and training on SCP for the population at large; quantify SCP costs and benefits associated with the implementation of SCP in the region, at the national and subregional levels; promote corporate social and environmental responsibility and promote the concept of extended producer responsibility (EPR) and life-cycle analysis among firms in industrial sectors with high consumption and production levels and significant environmental and social impacts.
Support to SMEs	Afford priority, at the subregional level, to sectors that provide environmental services or protect ecosystems; create or strengthen economic mechanisms and instruments that support the sustainability of the production sectors; define specific SCP indicators within the framework of ILAC.
Sustainable public procurement	Establish high-level political leadership for sustainable public procurement (SPP) and engage lead organizations; adopt a practical long-term strategy for the transition to SPP and identify priority goods and services to commence SPP programmes based on nationally agreed environmental and social criteria; ensure the inclusion and sustainability of SMEs in SPP programmes by establishing specific policy measures and instruments; create a multi-stakeholder mechanism to monitor and evaluate national SPP programmes.
Sustainable lifestyles	Apply new or adjusted policies for promoting the supply of sustainable goods and services at affordable prices to the public; integrate education for sustainable consumption in formal and informal educational programmes; conduct behavioural studies and assessments in order to understand the motivations behind the region's consumption pattern.
Development of an information and knowledge management network	Strengthen the Redpycs tool (www.redpycs.net) as a referential instrument for information dissemination and sharing, linking different stakeholders, and developing capacities for SCP.

Source: prepared on the basis of "Recommendations to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean by the V Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production", approved in Cartagena, Colombia, September 2009.

Participants at RIM stressed the need to recover traditional values and lifestyles. Changes in the media and advertising were cited as key factors in achieving SCP. The European experience of regulating advertising during programmes geared towards children was mentioned. Participants also agreed on the need for the State to play a stronger role through, among others, regulation, the buying power of sustainable procurement and education. Progress towards SCP also requires enhancing participation mechanisms for multiple stakeholders. Participants at RIM attributed positively assessments to experiences with advisory boards and other instruments.

The policy areas in which it was desirable to promote SCP were innovation, life-cycle and supply-chain approaches to policies on production and land use; strategic environmental assessments; the incorporation of SCP in national development plans; voluntary private sector agreements; energy efficiency and renewability; the promotion of environmentally-friendly practices in construction; the need to assess labelling and to define labelling criteria in the best interest of the region; the establishment of instruments to enhance the relative profitability of sustainable activities; the expansion of markets for sustainable products; and efforts to ensure that a fair share of the benefits of the exploration of resources and traditional knowledge are appropriated by local communities and indigenous groups.

2.2 Mining

In many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the mining industry is an important engine of economic activity. The industry accounts for a significant share of GDP and exports.

The realities of small-scale, informal mining and large-scale, formal mining are very different in the region. Small-scale, informal mining takes place under precarious environmental, safety or labour conditions and with inadequate technology. Mercury amalgamation, a common practice in informal, small-scale gold mining, is a health and environmental hazard. Land degradation due to the migratory nature of the activity is also an issue. Large-scale mining has provided significant fiscal revenues for governments and, in some countries (and relative to other sectors), has raised environmental and social responsibility standards. However, the nature and scale of operations together with the intensity of resources use (particularly water), in a context of often weak legislative and regulatory frameworks, generally results in mining practices that are at odds with sustainability. As rising metals prices have driven an increase in the intensity and geographical scope of mining activity, many environmental and social problems associated with the industry have been exacerbated. This has led to questioning—both by civil society and by national and local governments—of the net benefits of mining once these environmental and social problems are accounted for. Mine closure and environmental liabilities are major issues to be addressed.

One concern is the extent to which a fair share of the benefits generated by mining are returned to local communities and to national economies, both because of the applicable tax and royalty regimes and because governments have not been effective in channelling the resources obtained from mining into the development of other, higher-value-added and non-extractive industries.

The session on mining at RIM was opened with a presentation by the Deputy Minister of Environmental Management of the Ministry of the Environment of Peru.

Progress and achievements

Many countries have put in place regulatory and contractual regimes that ensure both stricter oversight of mining standards (including through environmental impact assessment) and greater domestic revenues. The issue of mine closures is on the agenda in many countries and innovative solutions are being developed. Several countries are designing policies to address the environmental liabilities of mining and the remediation of contaminated sites. In the past few years, governments have instituted or raised royalties, taxes and other contributions, or have invested directly in mining, through State-owned or mixed companies, thus claiming a larger share of the benefits.

The large-scale mining industry is recognized for having pioneered the adoption of environmental practices on certain issues in advance of national regulations. Large mining firms publish regular

reports on sustainability and social responsibility, generally in accordance with international guidelines set forth in the mining version of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Companies have also advanced in efficient water use and in improving their relations with the communities affected by their activities.

Challenges and constraints

Despite advances in regulatory frameworks, major challenges persist as regards ensuring that mining contributes substantially to local and national long-term development. Recent experience in several countries in the region shows that even when fiscal instruments are in place, constraints such as weak public management capacities at the local level make it difficult to ensure that mining profits are effectively invested. Many countries still lack coordinated policy frameworks to provide a basis for sustainable mining that takes account of a country's major thematic priorities. Moreover, national and local governments often find themselves poorly equipped to negotiate with and enforce legislation vis-à-vis powerful corporations on issues where public and private interests differ. There is a perception that the social benefits of mining —particularly of mining by foreign companies— are insignificant when compared to private profits.

There is a high rate of informality and illegal activity in small-scale mining in the region. Informality and illegal activities are not necessarily a result of lack of resources. Rather, they are often carried out under the control of powerful landowners and may involve tens of thousands of workers. Cases of quasi-slave labour regimes are known to the authorities. The lack of economic alternatives for these workers is one of the factors driving the continued existence of these enterprises. Activities are undertaken in environmentally sensitive areas, including areas that, formally speaking, are national protected areas. Even within formal mining, participants at RIM reported cases in which companies fail to comply with commitments agreed upon with the respective government and other stakeholders as conditions for extracting the resources.

Despite the advances mentioned in legislation on mine closure, in many cases provisions have not been enforced owing to lack of resources or lack of clarity with respect to firms' concrete obligations. Environmental liabilities, related to the risks generated after a mining operation is terminated, pose a major challenge for the region's governments. Governments must not only undertake the —often costly— management of those risks but also assume the costs of later effects that can materialize, which can be quite severe. Mercury contamination still significantly affects the region, particularly the Amazon basin. Although technical solutions are available and have been adopted in some countries, lack of knowledge and access to these technologies, or their higher cost, have hindered the elimination of mercury use.

Access to water has been a major source of mining-related conflict. Although the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries of the International Labour Organization (ILO Convention No. 169) protects the rights of indigenous communities to participate in decisions on projects in their areas, the historical reality and asymmetrical position of these communities vis-à-vis the large companies has impeded the full exercise of this right. Formal venues for stakeholder participation and conflict management —related to water and other issues— are inadequate, often even exacerbating conflicts rather than preventing them or managing them appropriately.

Many mining companies invest in voluntary initiatives for promoting the development of the countries and communities in which they operate. Nonetheless, there is concern that these intensely publicized actions may serve the purpose of winning community support and thus reducing opposition to their core activities, which generate significant environmental damage or

pressure on resources and which, in turn, are not fully appreciated by the communities that benefit from the voluntary initiatives. Participants at RIM called for independent assessments of voluntary initiatives and corporate sustainability policies.

Climate change poses new challenges to mining, both in terms of adaptation and mitigation. Adaptation has a strong bearing on long-term water availability; mitigation relates to the net contribution of greenhouse gases associated with the energy-intensive mining operations.

Policy options

One necessary step in managing the resources generated by mining activity is to strengthen the capacities of governments, at the national, subnational and municipal levels. Moreover, during RIM, participants expressed the need to articulate a regional position on mining, establishing standards for investor companies and requiring a real corporate commitment to local development rather than marginal contributions to social schemes in the areas of their operations.

Participants also agreed upon the need to advance towards integrated, eco-efficient, environmental management policies throughout the production process. The consideration of mining and metals by the International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management (Resource Panel) and the project of instituting a global sustainable mining initiative, both led by UNEP, could contribute to advancing sustainability in mining in Latin America and the Caribbean. Initiatives promoted by governments (including the home-country governments of major investors), intergovernmental and corporate organizations that promote the reduction of environmental footprints, innovation in waste management, ecosystem risk management, and mine closure rehabilitation and other issues may have a positive impact in the sustainability of the mining in the region.

Participants mentioned the need to implement strategic environmental assessments and stronger zoning and other types of land-use policies, including the establishment of non-mining zones where mining could destroy important or potentially important environmental assets and services and their related livelihoods.

The importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in decision-making and conflict resolution was also emphasized at RIM. Developing and adopting the guidelines due to enter into force in the near future, in the form of ISO 26000, could help to make firms' social responsibility efforts more effective. Despite the complexity of public-private relations in the mining industry, governments should seek opportunities to collaborate and cooperate with the private sector.

The ECLAC document also mentions other types of policies and measures implemented regarding transparency in handling information on the payments generated by the mining industry, specific regulations (laws, regulations, guidelines) for small-scale mining to enable legal, sustainable, socially-responsible practices and effective spillovers into local economies, and policies for addressing the environmental liabilities of mining and for remediating contaminated sites. These policies and measures may serve as references for other countries, including the UNEP programme Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL).

Regarding the use of mercury in gold mining, countries will have to promote the use of alternative substances and ensure solid and stable financing mechanisms to do so. The international negotiations on a binding regime for mercury scheduled to begin in Stockholm in June 2010 will be a key factor for this issue. Countries in the region would stand to benefit from the development of a coordinated regional stance.

In terms of climate change, basic steps forward include systematically measuring the carbon footprint and advancing energy efficiency, as well as alternative sources to fossil-fuels.

2.3 Transportation

Transportation is a complex industry. It includes passenger and freight transportation by water, air and land (roads, railroads) —and combinations of these modes— at the international, regional, national (inter-city and rural-urban) and urban levels. It plays a key role in countries' economic and social development. Effective transportation services and infrastructure are necessary to ensure access to basic goods and services such as education and health care, and they are key issues in trade competitiveness which, in turn, affects economic performance. In urban areas, despite some advances, many cities in the region do not have efficient, safe, reliable and accessible public urban transportation systems. There are major sustainability challenges to the expansion of infrastructure, both within and between countries. Transportation in the region is strongly based on fossil fuels and thus generates significant volumes of CO₂ emissions and of particulate material, and is one of the main factors driving the rise in energy demand. Generally, transportation policies and infrastructure development programmes do not take full account of their environmental and social implications.

The session on transportation at RIM was opened with a presentation by one of the members of the delegation of Guatemala.

Progress and achievements

Some of the largest cities in the Latin American and Caribbean region have implemented reforms in public urban transportation, emphasizing intermodality and efficiency and the improvement of passenger services. Some cities have instituted schemes to promote the use of non-motorized vehicles and have invested in networks of urban bicycle pathways. Outside urban areas, a few countries, such as Colombia, with its National Logistics Policy, have advanced towards integrated infrastructure and logistics policies.

In terms of fuels and vehicle emissions, the use of leaded gasoline has been eliminated (see the section on chemicals). The region has been a leader in the use of alternative fuels to oil. During RIM, participants pointed out, on one hand, that ethanol produced from sugarcane —in which Brazil has developed expertise over several decades— is based on regionally developed technology that can be implemented locally in many countries, generating jobs and contributing to local economies, without affecting food supply. The potential for South-South cooperation in this matter was stressed. On the other hand, participants mentioned differences in types of biofuels and in countries' local capabilities for replicating successful biofuel development experiences. The region has benefited significantly from the information- and experience- sharing on global initiatives such as the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, which was established World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002, in order to help developing countries reduce air pollution from vehicles, through improvements in fuels and vehicles.

There have been improvements in road transportation safety, in some cases through public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder participation.

Challenges and constraints

Although the need to support more efficient and cleaner transportation modes is generally recognized in regard to both passenger and cargo transport, there are still contradictory policies in place. Advances in the sustainability of transportation in the region have been hindered by decision-making and institutional structures conceived and established prior to the consolidation of the concept of sustainable development—including Principle 4 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which requires environmental protection to be made an integral part of development processes—and prior to the emergence of climate change as an issue of unequivocal concern on the global agenda. Not only do transportation policies often not incorporate environmental and social aspects, but policies on different modes of transportation are frequently separate and uncoordinated and administrative entities are poorly integrated and connected. Adopting more sustainable transportation models requires strong intra-governmental coordination and support from the State to overcome the entry barriers to new technologies, methods, management models and professionals.

One challenge regarding the quality of fuels is the need to reduce sulphur levels. Of note in this connection is the decision, adopted at the sixteenth meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, to work with regional organizations and collaborators to reduce the sulphur content of fuels.

Although the CO₂ emissions of the region represent only a small fraction of emissions in developed countries, the level of emissions associated with land transport is high in relation to its income levels owing largely to the relatively high number of vehicles per person. Not only has the number of vehicles overall in the region increased, so has the number of vehicles per capita. This is attributable to deficiencies in public urban transportation which make private transportation the option of choice whenever families can afford it, and to an urban expansion model that has emulated the North American model based on the development of new, detached, suburbs connected to urban centres by highways. Vehicle emissions are also attributable to a relatively aged fleet that lacks adequate maintenance and is lagging on emissions control technology. If current trends continue, emissions from highway transportation in Latin America and the Caribbean will increase markedly in the coming decades. The practice of importing used vehicles from other countries contributes to both pollution and safety problems.

Policy options

Economic instruments, such as taxes on fossil fuels, can affect choice of transportation mode. For this to be effective, however, passengers need to be given options. Therefore, the region must invest in the security, safety and reliability of urban public transportation; infrastructure for alternative, non-motorized transportation modes; and the integration of transportation policy with urban development and land-use policies, towards more sustainable models. The effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of urban public transportation requires the active promotion of co-modality and investment in infrastructure that provides for non-motorized transportation (pedestrian and cycling).

Progress can be made in motor vehicle pollution by instituting mandatory standards and technical revision procedures for vehicles, regulating the importation of used vehicles, and establishing fuel standards and controls, as well as developing alternative fuels. Engaging automobile manufacturers with the life-cycle approach is also a key aspect of transportation sustainability in the region and requires international cooperation, given the geographic location of automobile manufacturing and the fact that most countries are mainly importers.

Most importantly, the region must progress on integrating infrastructure, transportation and logistics policies and, in the process, in incorporating the relevant social and environmental variables and ensuring consistency with other policy areas, such as energy. This will require major institutional changes and the establishment of coordinating mechanisms and of instruments for supporting both public and private sectors in breaking with the established model.

2.4 Chemicals

The production and use of chemicals have significant economic and social benefits. In Latin America and the Caribbean, chemical products are particularly important in agriculture as a means of controlling insect-borne diseases and pests, and as fertilizers. They also play key roles in pharmaceutical production, food production, manufacturing of cleaning and hygiene products, water treatment, construction and many industrial processes. In some countries, the chemical industry plays a large role in the economy. In the absence of appropriate management and monitoring of these substances, however, water, air and soils are susceptible to contamination by toxic chemicals, entailing high social and economic costs. Exposure to contaminants disproportionately affects vulnerable groups —the poor, women, children, older persons and workers regularly exposed to chemical pollution.

The session on chemicals at RIM was opened with a presentation by the representative of Jamaica. Jamaica holds the chair of the Regional Coordinating Committee of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

Progress and achievements

There have been considerable efforts to prohibit or restrict the use of certain chemicals, particularly pesticides. Use of aldrin and dieldrin is now prohibited and nearly all countries have prohibited the agricultural use of lindane, although some countries still allow its use as a drug. Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) is still used in some countries as a component of public health measures to control vector-borne diseases, under applicable international guidelines. First steps have been taken to control mercury contamination, with the development of inventories of mercury emissions and transitioning to alternative products, particularly in health care. The use of leaded gasoline has been eliminated, and the countries in the region have been successful in reducing the use of ozone-depleting substances under the Montreal Protocol. With the support of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, coordinated government action has enabled the dismantling of illegal transboundary shipments of hazardous wastes to the region.

The high rates of ratification of international instruments and participation in international initiatives show recognition of the importance of chemicals management. Most of the countries in the region have ratified the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Rational management of chemical products was firmly set on the regional agenda with a declaration adopted by the ministers of health and the environment of the Americas at Mar del Plata on 17 June 2005. This commitment was reinforced by active participation in SAICM and in sessions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM).³ The Quickstart Programme trust fund has financed projects in 23 countries in the region.

³ For more information on regional priorities and the status of implementation of SAICM in Latin America and the Caribbean, please refer to the ECLAC Document and the Information note and the Information paper prepared by the

Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) are one of the instruments for producing consistent, integrated data on chemicals. Various national and regional organizations have developed systems within the region to collect and disseminate data on emissions and transfers of toxic chemicals from industrial facilities. Trade agreements have been important drivers of PRTRs in the region.

In the area of transportation of hazardous products, the countries have advanced in the implementation of the globally harmonized system of classification and labelling (GHS).

Challenges and constraints

A number of important issues need to be addressed. Despite the banning of certain pesticides, countries still need to invest in enforcing bans, managing stockpiles of obsolete pesticides, and regulating and monitoring pesticide residues in food products. Some parts of the region where persistent toxic substances were produced in the past have critical levels of contamination, with as yet unclear implications for human health in these areas. With regard to heavy metals, as mentioned above, the use of mercury to extract gold remains a problem. Other mercury-related issues include its use in products (e.g., hospital products) and industrial processes, storage and management of mercury wastes and management of contaminated sites, as well as the serious health effects on workers. With leaded gasoline eliminated, countries need to address other sources of lead poisoning, such as lead in paint. Management of hazardous wastes and levels of accidents preparedness are generally inadequate.

Illegal transboundary movements of hazardous wastes are known to take place, sometimes associated with other criminal activities. Rates of reporting under the Basel Convention are low; only one country in the region has ratified the Protocol on Liability and Compensation for Damage resulting from Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and few countries have ratified the Basel Convention Ban Amendment. With regard to the Stockholm Convention, relatively few countries have developed national implementation plans and reporting rates are low; Endosulfan, used in coffee plantations in the region, is being considered for inclusion under the Stockholm Convention, and this will require additional policy measures. The implementation of the Rotterdam Convention faces bottlenecks in administrative capacity.

Despite advances in PRTRs, most of the countries do not yet have wide-ranging systems with rigorous and systematic data entry capable of providing access to, and sharing of, information. There is still scant knowledge regarding the issues involved in PRTRs. Moreover, the available technical resources (including training at the national and international levels), financial resources and infrastructure for data collection are inadequate, while the relevant legal frameworks in various countries remain fragmented.

Implementation of GHS for areas other than transportation is in the preliminary stages and is patchy. At RIM, participants expressed concern over the trade-distorting potential arising from uneven implementation of GHS.

In general the high rates of ratification of international instruments and the establishment of national policy goals have run into strong implementation barriers. Although these barriers are

SAICM secretariat for the third Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development (RIM) in Latin America and the Caribbean, preparatory to the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-18) (available at <http://www.cepal.org/dmaah>)

specific to each of the issues being addressed, and despite wide disparities within subregions and countries, they can broadly be grouped into the following categories:

- **Lack of information:** There are few satisfactorily and systematically maintained inventories and registries of contaminants. There are also few wide-ranging, up-to-date studies on the effects of chemical contaminants on human health and the environment. The lack of information on the use and disposal of chemical contaminants makes it difficult to build adequate awareness of the costs incurred by contamination and inaction and prevents the issue of chemicals management from gaining priority on the region's policy agendas. Even when the issue receives the priority it deserves, the lack of information is a barrier to effective management of the substances, and to adequate accident prevention and response. Public access to the relevant information, education and awareness-raising programmes is necessary for the effective participation of civil society in efforts to manage these products.
- **Poor infrastructure:** In almost all of the region's countries, infrastructure for disposal of hazardous wastes is precarious. There are also few laboratories equipped for monitoring, and technological capacity for developing alternative, accessible products adapted to local needs is lacking.
- **Lack of trained professionals:** This is a major bottleneck in all of the countries. There are deficiencies in the public sector —e.g., among customs officials— as well as in the private sector, where the problem is concentrated among SMEs. Even in the negotiation and implementation of the international conventions, often a single person is responsible for several conventions, limiting the country's capacity to negotiate effectively and to ensure coordination among government institutions involved in implementation.
- **Financial resources:** These are scarce, particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.
- **Insufficient mainstreaming and secondary importance within policy agendas:** Chemicals management is generally not a priority in the countries in the region. Policies for sound chemicals management are poorly integrated with other policy areas such as health, agriculture and labour. Even within environmental policy, chemical contaminants have been a secondary concern, overshadowed by global issues such as climate change and biodiversity. Policy measures adopted to mitigate climate change have generated chemical management problems. During RIM, reference was made to a World Bank initiative to promote the substitution of incandescent bulbs for fluorescent light balls, despite the fact that the latter contain mercury and countries are ill-equipped to dispose of them. The secondary position of the chemicals issue on public agendas is reflected in the scarce financial resources devoted to chemicals management both nationally and internationally, and in the fact that institutions working to the issue lack resources and personnel to effectively implement legal mandates. UNEP has been supporting efforts to improve mainstreaming, which has also been a condition required by donors.

With regard to corporate behaviour, participants at RIM mentioned that although companies publicize principles of product stewardship and EPR for countries that are primarily importers, there is little action on the part of producers. In addition, the policies of exporting countries do not ensure that the end-of-life-cycle concept is applied in the importing country. Specific mention was made of the European REACH initiative.

Policy options

Advances in chemicals management requires each of these barriers to be addressed. Regional priorities in chemicals management and areas for policy action, including a regional SAICM implementation plan, will be discussed in the second regional meeting on SAICM, due to take place in March 2010. The information paper submitted by the SAICM regional focal point on behalf of the SAICM Regional Coordinating Committee proposes the following topics for consideration and discussion by countries at the second regional meeting: further engagement of the subregional integration bodies (CARICOM, Andean Community, MERCOSUR) in the development and implementation of programmes on sound chemicals management; stronger mainstreaming of sound chemicals management into national sustainable development plans and programmes; an increase in the donor base, particularly at the regional level; increased involvement of the relevant regional development agencies in SAICM implementation at the national, regional and subregional levels, including PAHO, ILO, FAO and ECLAC, particularly in capacity-building activities; and the development of national SAICM implementation plans. Countries will also have to assess the implications of the emerging policy issues defined under SAICM: nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials; chemicals in products; electronic waste; and lead in paint.

Technical cooperation and funding for chemicals management are crucial. The Quickstart Programme is limited in time and restricted to enabling activities. New funding sources must be put into place in order to advance beyond the initial stages of SAICM implementation. The donor base needs to be broadened, including the involvement of national and regional development banks; North-South and South-South cooperation must be enhanced, and regional cooperation should be encouraged and supported; funding must be ensured for the regional centres for the implementation of the Stockholm and Basel conventions. Several participants stated their support for the opening of a chemicals window in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in the context of the negotiations on the fifth replenishment of the GEF trust fund.

The countries in the region must be prepared for the negotiations that will take place during 2010 in the framework of the Simultaneous Extraordinary Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (ExCOPs) to be held in Bali, Indonesia, in February 2010; and for the negotiations on a binding agreement on mercury. In both cases, ensuring adequate funding, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, will be critical for implementation of the agreements. Participants at RIM requested support for preparing for and attending these negotiations.

While participants at RIM called for greater stakeholder involvement in chemicals management, they also cautioned against leaving much in the hands of large corporations in the industry, and called for a strengthening of State presence and State regulation. Support is required for SMEs to implement adequate chemical management strategies.

Finally, the participants raised the issue of adequate remuneration for the benefits of traditional knowledge and for the use of biodiversity in developing chemical products and, particularly, the need to reach a fair and equitable agreement on access and benefit-sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

2.5 Waste Management

Although there have been advances over time, waste management remains one of one of the greatest environmental, health, and social challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. In many areas, major gaps exist in basic services, such as waste collection and disposal. Collection

is often incomplete or insufficient, and open-pit dumps are common. Even where collection is adequate, disposal is often not. Clandestine dumps continue to be a major problem, with implications for health, pollution, soil degradation and the attractiveness of potential tourist destinations. Although there are exceptions in higher-income areas, in general local authorities are poorly funded and poorly equipped to deal with the challenges of waste management. In large urban centres, the problem has been aggravated by high rates of population growth without the necessary long-term planning. As seen in the section on chemicals, the management of hazardous waste, including obsolete pesticides, is still deficient, and the region is still a destination for the illegal traffic of hazardous wastes. Though there have been improvements in some countries, hospital wastes and other hazardous residues are inadequately managed and often dumped along with household waste. Incineration is the method most widely used to treat hospital wastes, but equipment and procedures are often inadequate.

The session on waste at RIM was opened with a presentation by the representative of Cuba.

Progress and achievements

Legislation and public policy on solid waste management and disposal have advanced significantly. There is greater awareness of the importance of the matter and this has led to progress in various areas—from collection and disposal in sanitary landfills to recycling and methane recovery for energy generation. In higher-income areas, where local public resources are sufficient, and particularly where collection services have been privatized, collection is generally adequate. Advances have also been registered in industrial waste, through new regulation, enforcement measures, ERP regimes and monitoring by both authorities and civil society. Many transnational corporations that use standard technologies for waste treatment and recovery and follow international codes of conduct are demonstrating the viability of sustainable practices. In specific industries, such as metals and paper, there is now a high level of recycling, which has itself become a significant economic activity. Co-processing has become more common in the cement industry. Exchange systems for industrial by-products have been established. Some countries have implemented methane recovery projects. The clean development mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol has played a part, as has the Methane to Markets Partnership. Although, as mentioned, illegal traffic of hazardous wastes is still a reality, countries have started to react with successful initiatives to dismantle these operations, supported by the Basel Convention.⁴ Customs officials in several countries are being trained in this matter through the Green Customs Initiative, among other schemes.

Challenges and constraints

The region has had some difficulty with the legal and institutional structure for domestic waste management. Waste management, from collection to disposal, is often a legal attribution of local (municipal) governments. Depending on the area, this can be a problem for two main reasons. First, municipalities, particularly in lower-income areas, are often poorly resourced. High poverty rates impact both the resources available to municipalities and the possibility of charging for services. Second, much as in the sanitation sector, the fragmentation of waste management to match municipal borders hinders economies of scale and the efficient management of waste collection and disposal services. Moreover, regulations on environmental aspects are sometimes obsolete or inadequately enforced.

⁴ See section 2.4 on chemicals.

One problem that occurs in areas where waste disposal has been privatized is the perverse incentive embedded in certain concession contract models whereby companies' remuneration is proportional to the volume of waste, eliminating incentives to promote reduction at source, recycling, and other waste generation reduction measures.

With the exception of specific industries, recycling efforts are still sparse. Plastics, in particular, have proven difficult to recycle. The RIM participants suggested an assessment of the social costs of the use of plastics, in order to consider possible measures to reduce their use. Participants also referred to the important role, but the precarious social condition, of informal recyclers who earn a living by collecting waste from dumps. Large numbers of people, including children, live on and make their living from dumps.

Regarding the management of industrial waste, although there have been successful cases of public-private partnerships and of active involvement of the industry in waste management, participants at RIM also reported that companies have actively lobbied and interfered politically with groups of government professionals attempting to advance projects that would have increased firms' responsibility for waste related to their products.

The improvements in the regulation of hazardous waste management have yet to be matched by the necessary infrastructure. Several countries have a single plant for the treatment of hazardous waste, so that such substances have to travel long distances, with the attendant high costs and risks. The region continues to receive illegal shipments of hazardous wastes, a particularly important issue for the Caribbean island states. Participants also reported that countries often import scrap material or used equipment from other regions, and that whereas these operations are often portrayed by the exporters as beneficial to the recipient countries, in fact they generate high costs and risks.

The obstacles to methane recovery include the need to find markets for the energy that is generated, the availability of technology, and the need to invest in adequate infrastructure. Producing electricity from waste requires moving from "first-generation" landfills, which are simply a substitute for open dumps, to "second-generation" operations, which include bioreactors. Most of the region is still at the first-generation stage. Developed countries are implementing a third generation with sustainable landfills or "biocells".

During RIM, participants referred to the management of waste produced by extreme weather-related events such as hurricanes, the frequency of which tends to increase with climate change. Among the problems mentioned were the large volumes of debris from destroyed buildings and the disposal in the sea of PET bottles and plastic bags used to store water and other products in hurricane-preparation periods. One participant reported the findings of a recent UNDP-supported study that showed that poor disposal of hazardous wastes, especially in rural areas, was a key element in the pollution and damage caused by extreme-weather related events.

Another issue discussed was the link between waste generation and consumption and production patterns. While the region is largely poor, nonetheless a significant number of people have access to consumer goods and, as in other parts of the world, consumption patterns include frequent substitutions of equipment, responding to producer policies of successively launching new products, thereby making fully functional products obsolete within very short timeframes. Participants suggested that behaviours should be reviewed on the consumer and producer sides alike.

Financing was a major challenge brought up in regard to several issues. Participants stressed both the limited financial capacity of local governments and the insufficient funding for waste management provided by international institutions and mechanisms.

Policy options

The institutional challenges related to the municipal fragmentation of waste management require coordination and cooperation mechanisms among municipalities, with the involvement of subnational or national entities. At the same time, institutional capacity-building is necessary at all levels of government and needs to be a continuous process.

Innovative models of collection and disposal management, including those that involve the private sector through concessions, can be explored; but they must carefully consider the integration of the different segments of the waste management chain to avoid inconsistencies such as giving waste disposal companies incentives to receive large volumes of waste.

Several participants at RIM stressed the importance of —and successful experiences with— education and awareness-building in regard to waste management. Awareness can contribute both to society's capacity to demand solutions from corporations and governments, and to improvements in domestic behaviour through reducing waste at source and recycling. The potential of economic instruments such as taxes on plastic bags or deposit-return schemes to influence consumer and producer behaviour was mentioned. Participants also referred, in regard to consumption and production patterns, to efforts being undertaken in the European Union to reduce constant changes of equipment, which could serve as references for the region.

RIM participants also pointed to a need to involve producers more extensively, within a life-cycle approach, and to extend producer responsibility to the waste disposal stage.

Regarding illegal traffic of hazardous wastes, participants stressed the need to enhance entry and exit controls at ports and to provide more training for customs officials. Regional cooperation on this issue was called for.

Specific issues raised regarding the Caribbean island states were the need to urgently address illegal waste traffic and to invest in waste reduction given the small amount of space available for disposal, and matters related to marine pollution, particularly in relation to extreme-weather events to which they are particularly vulnerable.

Participants called for greater funding from international sources.

III. Interlinkages and cross-cutting issues

During RIM, participants highlighted the cross-cutting nature of SCP, but also of chemicals and waste management, which both affect each other and the sustainability of mining and transportation. The broad issue of SCP has the strongest and most obvious interlinkages with the other thematic areas of CSD-18/CSD-19. Despite the diversity of thematic areas, many common challenges were identified during RIM and in the preparation of the ECLAC document. Some of these are:

3.1 Information, education and awareness. Advances in all the thematic areas require efforts to produce information and knowledge on the relevant issues, to make that information accessible, to raise awareness and to train professionals. Investing in the quantification of the costs of

environmental and social problems arising either from certain activities —such as mining in some areas— or from inaction —for instance in regard to human exposure to toxic chemicals— is crucial to ensure that these issues are adequately funded and accounted for and mainstreamed into broader policy frameworks.

During RIM, participants referred to the importance, in the efforts towards sustainability, of recovering traditional values and knowledge and of avoiding the replication of foreign models that are not compatible with the region's needs and resources.

3.2 Strengthening of State capacities. Despite recognition and support for the role of multiple stakeholders in addressing each of the thematic issues, participants also emphasized the need to strengthen State capacity to monitor, enforce, manage, and negotiate with other countries and with companies. Many States are still suffering the effects of the contraction and weakening of the State apparatus that took place in past decades. This applies to national, subnational and municipal levels.

3.3 Potential for public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder involvement. Public-private cooperation is key to advancing towards sustainable development. Such partnerships are crucial in translating policy goals and legal provisions into concrete action; in the transfer of technology; in the development of productive linkages between extractive activities and local economies; and in ensuring financing for critical issues related to corporate activity, among others. Countries and representatives of major groups at RIM stressed the potential role of major groups to support States in advancing towards sustainable development. It was stressed, however, that the State has a unique role in which it cannot be substituted by non-State actors.

3.4 The potential for regional cooperation. Countries can benefit from different forms of regional cooperation in pursuit of the different policy goals falling into the scope of the thematic areas of CSD-18/CSD-19. Among others, these may include (and in some cases have already included) regional articulation in international negotiations and the consolidation of common positions on issues of common concern; the exchange of successful experiences in achieving similar policy goals; the adoption of common standards to avoid distorting effects of policy measures on investment and trade; and common policies for integration of infrastructure under the concept of sustainability. The increasing importance of South-South cooperation was also emphasized.

3.4 The need for a subregional approach. It was reaffirmed at the Forum, as at previous RIMs, that it was important to take a subregional approach to topics, considering the diversity of the Caribbean, South America, and Central America and Mexico. Whereas there is diversity within these groupings as well, a subregional approach helps explore issues of common interest to groups of countries, while taking due consideration of the concerns and challenges of smaller countries.

3.5 Cooperation, financing and technology transfer. These are key issues in ensuring that the policy goals and internationally agreed commitments are translated into effective action. The absence of adequate technology is often a major factor impeding the efficient and environmentally safe use of resources. Cooperation in this regard is crucial, as long as it takes into account the specificities of local situations. To the extent possible, there should be incentives to the generation of local technological capacity so that solutions fit local needs. Financing is a major issue in advancing towards sustainability in all of the thematic areas covered by CSD-18/CSD-19. In many cases, international commitments have been undertaken, and national policy goals have been established accordingly, without the necessary funding to ensure implementation.

Upcoming international negotiations on new issues such as the internationally binding agreement on mercury, or on issues already on the international agenda, such as climate change, will have to ensure that financial resources match commitments, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The negotiations for the fifth replenishment of the GEF trust fund must consider the increasing demands placed on the countries in the region.