

NEWS: Caribbean and Pacific strengthen ties at biodiversity meet

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Rotorua, NEW ZEALAND, 13 August 2012/ SPREP/ ACP: Caribbean and Pacific counterparts are boosting their cooperation in the area of biodiversity, with two representatives from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat attending a special preparatory meeting organised by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to help countries organize their approach to the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The meeting was coordinated in partnership with the Project on Capacity Building related to **Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African Caribbean and Pacific Countries**, better known as the **ACP-MEA's** project.

"I am happy to see that the ACP-MEAs project has been able to provide a continuum of support specifically on the negotiation and consultation for Pacific country delegates to better understand and prepare for the CBD COP as a region," presented Ms. Haruko Okusu of the United Nations Environment Programme.

"The upcoming CBD COP11 will be a significant one. It takes the first step in looking at how the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are being transformed into national instruments, and effectively mainstreamed into national planning processes which links to the second area of support provided by the project."

The Caribbean and Pacific hubs of the project reaffirmed ties and common ground with the participation of CARICOM'S Ms Therese N. Yarde, who is Project Coordinator, Caribbean Hub Capacity Building ACP-MEAs and Ms. Anya Thomas, Senior Project Officer, Sustainable Development.

"These two island regions share many issues and challenges and we have a lot to learn from each other, both as partners for international negotiation and in designing activities to build capacity at the national level," said Jill Key, the ACP-MEA Pacific Hub Project Coordinator at SPREP.

"We welcome the participation of our Caribbean colleagues and look forward to exchanging experiences and lessons learned in Phase II of the project."

Ms Yarde has found this a valuable experience, having learnt from the Pacific planning process as the world leads up to the CBD COP 11, with thoughts as to how this project can work closer together in the future.

"We both address common issues differently, issues such as mainstreaming, target setting and indicators. Having spent time here I have learnt how these different approaches can work together and complement each other.



Her colleague from CARICOM, Ms. Thomas is also learning how the Pacific form regional positions and agree upon priority areas to be addressed collectively at the CBD COP 11.

“There is a lot I can take back there in that regard, it has also been a learning experience for me in terms of getting a feel for what the issues are in terms of the biodiversity, what are the priorities, challenges and how they intend to address them.”

The meeting is funded by the European Union through the African Caribbean Pacific Multi-lateral Environment Agreement Capacity Building Project in partnership with the CBD Secretariat. The meeting is part of a four year project by SPREP aiming to empower Pacific islanders to meet their commitments under the different international environment agreements and discuss agreements confidently at formal tables with other contracting parties.

(Photos from top: Jill Key of SPREP and Therese Yarde of CARICOM; Anya Thomas of CARICOM/ Photos by SPREP)

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