



The 14th High-level Forum of Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water (HLF 14)

9th to 10th October 2018

Jewels Hotel, Montego Bay Jamaica

Briefing Note

Background and Rationale:

Although countries of the Caribbean have adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have taken actions towards achieving those Goals, there are some basic problems in the areas of water and sanitation (SDG 6) which they face and which have defied sustainable solutions. One of the reasons is a failure to address some systemic issues, key among them being the lack of clear policy directions as well as the political will necessary to implement policy which should drive national and regional agendas. In addition, the challenges faced by Caribbean countries as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are exacerbated by Climate Change and Climate Variability which impacts the water sector. Indeed, it is agreed that Water is the most climate sensitive sector and given its place as a factor of development, there is need for proper planning to ensure that the resources are well managed. It cuts across sectors such as tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, health and maintenance of ecosystems so the very economic, social and environmental sustainability of Caribbean SIDS are threatened.

Over the last few years, the High Level Forum of Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water (HLF) organized by the CWWA and Development Partners has been focused on advancing the regional agenda for the Water Sector. Over time, significant resources have been expended by these partners such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the United Nations Environment (UNE) and the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) to assist the region to address water sector challenges. However, it was felt that the region needed to be more strategic in developing a planning framework for water sector development that is more systematic, strategic and comprehensive. It has been decided that an ad hoc approach does not contribute to sustainability.

As such, a White Paper on Governance and Building Climate Resilience in the Water Sector in the Caribbean was commissioned in 2017 supported by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The White Paper has acted as a foundational document for the preparation of a Regional Strategic Action Plan (RSAP) on the same subject. It identifies key challenges faced by the region and proposed actions needed to address them. It builds on work being done by the IDB, the CDB and other regional partners. The document was presented to the 13th High Level Forum of Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water in Guyana 2017.

One of the key challenges is the issue of Governance within the utilities, with specific reference to the operating efficiency, financial performance, policies, and institutions of the water and sanitation sectors.

The IDB has been supporting an initiative in the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The sector needs to overcome performance and institutional challenges. Continued under performance and not having objectives and targets to improve performance diminishes the credibility and the accountability of the water providers. As part of capacity building, the mentioned countries are working with the tools to measure and improve operating efficiency, one such being AquaRating, a system based on international standards for the evaluation of water and sanitation utilities.

The overlay of climate change and climate impacts on the Water Sector have brought additional challenges on top of the existing systemic ones. Countries have been charged with focusing on designing transformative interventions in the water sector. The CDB has been supporting the countries in this initiative. The objectives are to establish a suite of tools and guidance resources for institutions responsible for water policies and plans and the implementation of investment programmes to assess and design effective climate resilient action. It has introduced a gender element into the proposed interventions. The initiative is intended to assist practitioners to establish robust and implementable climate resilient sector policies and investment plans and to identify potential finances.

The White Paper derived from the findings of the work done by the IDB, CDB and other partners, has identified key issues of a regional nature as well as those that are common in many countries. In February of 2017 a Regional Coordination Meeting was held in Barbados at the PAHO Headquarters to discuss aspects of the RSAP and to prepare for the WWF8 in Brasilia. The Report of that meeting captures specific inputs from country representatives to be used in the preparation of the RSAP.

Some of the key areas identified in the White Paper are: Climate Impact, Human Health, Wastewater, Tourism, Agriculture, Data Management, and overall Policy and Legislation. As mentioned the development of the RSAP will engage various sectors such as Health, Tourism, Agriculture, Climate and Disaster.

The RSAP is under preparation by a CWWA Consultant using a multi-stakeholder approach, as evidenced by the inputs of various regional and national agencies who participated in the Barbados Meeting. The RSAP would be the first comprehensive, cohesive document on Governance, Water and Climate. It is anticipated that when completed, it would be used to leverage donor support. The next priority would be the development of National Action Plans for the Water Sector which countries could use for investment purposes. It is intended that the RSAP will become the blue print for action in the water sector.

It is also clearly recognized that the RSAP must have stakeholder buy-in and political endorsement in order to move successfully to the level of implementation and for seeking investment. The HLF as organized by the CWWA provides the opportunity for Ministers, Technical Advisers, Regional Water Institutions, Development partners and other experts to review the RSAP. This year, the CWWA will convene the HLF 14 in Montego Bay, Jamaica supported by regional and international partners. Beyond the HLF, CWWA and Partners will use existing opportunities for further political uptake at fora such as within CARICOM and the OECS Commission for further endorsement. The overall objective is implementation of the RSAP so that the engagement of political bodies to support and endorse it will be a major step forward.

The Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) is the premier professional association in the Caribbean and has worked assiduously with key partners to elevate water and wastewater issues to the political agenda of the region. The CWWA has been granted status at the CARICOM COTED and COHSOD to be the voice of professionals in the sectors. It is supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), UN Environment, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), CARICOM Secretariat and several indigenous regional agencies.

Objectives:

1. To bring together ministers, technical advisors and development partners in a high level political and policy forum to review and provide endorsement and support for the Regional Strategic Action Plan (RSAP) for Governance and Building Climate Resilience in the Water Sector in the Caribbean;
2. To discuss an implementation strategy and roadmap of the RSAP with various donor and development partners as well as financing options;
3. To share updated information and tools on aspects of water development in the Caribbean.

Outputs:

1. Statement of support for the Regional Strategic Action Plan for Governance and Building Resilience in the Water Sector and Implementing Strategy
 2. Report of HLF on Water Management, including presentations
-