



PRESS RELEASE

GCCA Caribbean Regional Conference, 28-29 March 2011, Belize City, BELIZE

The *Global Climate Change Alliance* (GCCA) was launched in 2007 by the European Commission to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on climate change between the European Union (EU) and developing countries most vulnerable to climate change, in particular the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island Developing States, which will be the hardest hit by the adverse effects of climate change. The GCCA acts as a platform for dialogue and exchange of experience between the EU and developing countries on climate policy and on practical approaches to integrate climate change into development policies and budgets. The results of the dialogue and exchange feed into the discussions on the post-2012 climate agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The GCCA provides technical and financial support to targeted developing countries to integrate climate change into their development policies and budgets and to implement adaptation and mitigation interventions. The five GCCA priority areas include: Adaptation, building on national strategies and plans; Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; Enhancing participation in the carbon market through the Clean Development Mechanism; Disaster Risk Reduction; and, Mainstreaming climate change into poverty reduction and wider development strategies.

In 2008, the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) and the EU met in Lima, Peru, during the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit. They issued the **Joint EU-CARIFORUM Declaration**. Through this Joint Declaration, Heads of State and Government:

- *affirmed their commitment to work together to enhance cooperation in international negotiations and strengthen efforts to address climate change, energy and food security including through regular consultations, joint initiatives and leadership in their respective regions and cooperate towards the successful conclusion of a post-2012 international climate agreement under the UNFCCC and in the implementation of their respective commitments to be negotiated and agreed; and,*
- *welcomed the European Union's intention to assist and support the Caribbean region in its adaptation and mitigation efforts, through the Global Climate Change Alliance, and other appropriate instruments.*

The GCCA Caribbean Regional Conference here in Belize City is a further step in this framework.

The two-day meeting was hosted by the Government of Belize and was organised by the European Commission in close collaboration with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre. It was attended by about 50 high-level officials and ministers from CARICOM countries, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and international and regional development partners. Discussions and exchange of views focussed on progress in practical cooperation on climate change. The conference discussed and assessed the *Draft Implementation Plan for the CARICOM Regional Framework for Achieving Development Resilient to Climate Change*. The exchanges were lively and stimulated progress.

The Conference examined the positive results from the Cancun climate conference and the steps towards the Durban Conference at the end of 2011 in order to progress towards a sound post-2012 climate regime.

There were discussions on adaptation and climate resilient/compatible development and on low emission development strategies, including REDD+ and links between climate, agriculture, and energy. There were some exchange of views on existing climate change financing mechanisms, opportunities and difficulties to fund actions tackling climate change.

The Conference affirmed its intent to advance understanding towards a common vision on future climate regime and discussed regional needs in relation to climate change. The delegates had interesting exchanges of views on climate-resilient development and low emission development.

The meeting heard about good progress in mangrove restoration in Guyana using GCCA support. Mangrove forests provide protection against coastal erosion and flooding, while preserving biodiversity and providing carbon storage. Delegates observed the potential for replication in other parts of the region. GCCA support to Jamaica is focussed on watershed restoration and protection through reforestation. This helps to conserve top soil and prevents it washing into coastal waters, affecting coral reefs and fisheries. Support in Belize is due to begin in June 2011 and will be focussed on increasing resilience in the water sector and enhancing capacity of the Government in matters of climate change.

The Conference was an opportunity to hear from development partners on the importance of applying aid effectiveness principles in the area of climate change.

In conclusion it was clear that there must be seamless integration of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation strategies into development agendas and that a low carbon climate-resilient economy must become THE development agenda.