



CTA-064-Caribbean Biological

Corridor-Caribbean

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The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation 281.971.7703 P.O. Box 311117 Houston Texas 77231

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Caribbean Biological Corridor – a work in progress

Biological Corridor in the Caribbean: our space, our life

The Caribbean islands have one of the highest concentrations of biodiversity in the world. The welfare of its people is highly dependent on the sustainable management of its ecosystems and their services, which is essential to reduce environment-related poverty, inequity and socio-economic conflict.



Thanks to European Union (EU) funding, an ambitious UNEP-supported project is preparing the way for biological connectivity between ecosystems and habitats in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) *initiative*, which began in 2007 with a political declaration from the ministers of the environment of Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, aims to make an important contribution to the long-term conservation of biodiversity based on ecosystems connectivity across countries and beyond political boundaries.

The first phase of the *project* – called “The Demarcation and Establishment of CBC as a Framework for Biodiversity Conservation, Environmental Rehabilitation and Development of Livelihood Options in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Cuba” – started in 2010 and ended in 2014, after which the EU gave its approval for a project transition phase (January 2015-June 2016) focused on the Dominican Republic. A second CBC phase (2017-2020) is currently under discussion between the three countries involved, the EU and UNEP.

The EU provided €2,774,835 for the first phase of CBC.

Terrestrial ecosystems in the Caribbean are under threat from human activity, aggravated in recent years by high population density, agriculture expansion, mining and poverty which are driving people or enterprises to exploit the “free” natural environment in the absence of alternative livelihoods and long-term sustainable development policies.

Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic are vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti caused massive destruction, as did Hurricane Sandy in 2013, particularly in southern Cuba (a core area of the CBC). A new Food and Agriculture Organization [report](#) says the Caribbean must prepare for increased drought due to climate change. The operational context is therefore challenging.

An official June 2015 evaluation of the CBC project (2010-2014) recommended, among other things, a greater emphasis on connectivity and on the role of a biological corridor in achieving national and regional conservation and sustainable development objectives; the strengthening of the CBC Initiative as a planning and decision-making framework at national



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The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation 281.971.7703 P.O. Box 311117 Houston Texas 77231 and sub-regional levels; and a clear and stated contribution of the CBC Initiative to global and regional commitments and agreements.

The 2015 evaluation also recommended “the strengthening of the CBC Initiative as a planning and decision-making platform, with functional links to relevant national systems and data bases, zoning priorities based on available information (CBC delimitation maps, Key Biodiversity Areas, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, protected area systems, etc.)”

Transitional phase

A transitional phase of the CBC project ran from 24 January 2015 to 25 June 2016, and was funded by the EU to the tune of €300,000 and also with in-kind contributions from Cuba and the Dominican Republic. It was entitled *Strengthening of the capacities of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic in planning and development of actions in biological diversity conservation with a regional impact, within the framework of the Caribbean Biological Corridor Initiative.*

An interim draft evaluation dated 18 May 2016 says key actors in the project agree “that this project has positively transformed the CBC Initiative, and strengthened its identity as a regional initiative, leading, in particular, to the formal adhesion of Puerto Rico. It has also allowed the CBC to function as a cooperation platform, which has been particularly useful to the design of bi-national cooperation projects between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.”

One of the project’s achievements was the adoption by the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic of an innovative planning tool that incorporates the regional vision of biodiversity conservation; another one was the identification of 3-5 core sites (work ongoing) for marine and coastal conservation areas in the Dominican Republic. As stated by one of the representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic interviewed for the final evaluation, “this project and the work of the CBC Secretariat over the past year have helped to create a culture and a momentum of cooperation.”

One conclusion of the report was: “The CBC is insufficiently known in the region, and communications should be given a more prominent place in future project designs.”

Aiming high

The second CBC phase (2017-2020) - currently under discussion - aims to move the CBC from being primarily a project to becoming a permanent institution, something that will require improved governance, capacity and financing.

It seeks to build and demonstrate significant positive linkages between conservation, connectivity, livelihoods and poverty reduction through selected field activities and a targeted communication program.

Several partnerships between governments and the private sector were implemented in each country to broaden the impact of biodiversity conservation.

By the end of the project, the following will have happened: At least one regionally harmonized strategy and three inter-ministerial bi-national or tri-national agreements will have been signed; all or part of the regional training and capacity-building programme will have been mainstreamed in the national training or educational programmes of at least four institutions in participating countries; and the percentage of terrestrial, marine and coastal areas under the CBC vision (e.g. connectivity) will have increased by 10 per cent.

The project will be implemented with UNEP’s assistance and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic; the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Haiti; and the Ministry of



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Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba. Civil society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector will also participate in, contribute to and benefit from the project.

The CBC Initiative started with a declaration of intentions at the highest political level; it transformed its intention and vision into action on the ground with country teams' technical engagement and empowerment. The CBC Initiative has continued "slowly but surely". Next year it will celebrate its 10th birthday with another phase aiming at its further expansion and consolidation. UNEP looks forward to further accompanying and serving countries in this challenging quest.

For more information, please contact: Isabel Martinez: Isabel.Martinez@unep.org

Want to learn about the ecosystems approach? An [online learning opportunity](#) is coming up in September.

*Vic Ferguson
The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation
Executive Director
P.O. Box 311117
Houston, Texas 77231
vic.ferguson@wfcrc.org
www.wfcrc.org
281.971.7703 (office)
512.986.1902 (cell)*

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing" ...**Edmund Burke***