

Introduction and Background

- (1) *Social Inclusion* - a primary mechanism to promote social development in areas such as education, labour, science and technology, and environment. This theme will be used for the short and medium term and will focus on employment, youth and social investment. Social Inclusion was recognized as an imperative for fighting poverty, narrowing inequalities and advancing towards social justice.
- (2) *Global Environmental Change and Prevention of Social Consequences* - This theme will be used for the longer term. The Council recognized the significance of global responsibility for sustainable development, and the imperative to address crises such as the depletion of biodiversity, scarcity of fresh water resources, food and energy shortages, the pressure of accelerating urbanization and population growth, climate change and natural disasters. The social consequences of these developments include displacement and migration, social instability, conflict, intolerance, poverty and the exacerbation of existing social inequalities and marginalization.

This decision was endorsed by the 186th session of the UNESCO Executive Board in May, 2011 and again by the 36th session of UNESCO's General-Conference held in November, 2011. Each region has therefore taken up the responsibility to host FORA related to the respective priority themes.

1.4. Regional Fora of Ministers of Social Development in the Caribbean

In the Caribbean, the Forum of Ministers in charge of social and sustainable development was first institutionalized in 2010.

Introduction and Background

1.4.1. First Regional MOST Forum – Jamaica

This First Regional Forum of Ministers of Social Development in the Caribbean was hosted by the Government of Jamaica in January 2010. The theme of the conference was “*Social Development Strategies for the Caribbean Youth in the Context of the Global Economic Crisis*”.

The conference created an opportunity for approximately sixty (60) participants inclusive of public authorities, policy makers, social science researchers and representatives of civil society from the Caribbean, including representatives of International Development Agencies to debate and share knowledge on the most successful policy responses in their respective countries, which could be adapted by other countries in the region. The specific objectives of the Forum included the exchange of best practices; the identification of practical ways of addressing developmental challenges facing an exploding youth population within the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the adoption of measures that will lead to a higher degree of cooperation within the region.

The Forum articulated **fifteen (15) recommendations** for adoption in a coherent and coordinated national and regional action plan:

1. Each Government should establish a high-level mechanism to provide leadership, coordination, mainstreaming and follow-up on the implementation of national youth policies.
2. Strengthen the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in order to focus more on issues affecting young people through youth mainstreaming in all its deliberations.
3. Each Government should ensure adequate legislation empowering and protecting the rights of youth within the framework of international human rights instruments.

Introduction and Background

4. CARICOM, with support of UNESCO/MOST and other relevant partners, should spearhead evaluation on existing youth policy and programme initiatives with a view to identifying good practices that have proven effective in encouraging youth participation and civic engagement, and ensure that governments and civil society have the necessary information for replication.
5. Strengthen national data collection and analysis capabilities and promote collaboration among the statistical departments or agencies of governments in a regional initiative to develop a common approach to collecting regional youth data.
6. Include pre-adolescents, between 10 and 14 years, in developing a regional approach to youth policies.
7. The implementation of a coordinated regional approach on several key areas, to include education, micro-enterprises, promoting youth media (podcast, blogs, and radio), sports, and the mainstreaming of youth participation with the right to give feedback on all social services, the education system, and justice.
8. Revise and strengthen the existing CARICOM Regional Strategy on Youth Development, including clearly defined youth development goals. In this regard, consideration should be given to the adoption of a CARICOM Youth Charter modeled on the 2006 Africa Youth Charter.
9. The development of national youth policies where non-existent, and the reviewing of existing policy instruments.
10. The undertaking of a "Professionalization of Youth Development" so as to ensure an effective youth empowerment strategy.

Introduction and Background

11. Advance work further on the Youth Development Index currently being undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat to facilitate the scientific impact assessment of development strategies and programmes.
12. Promote partnerships with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.
13. Conduct budget audits of expenditure on youth programmes to ensure adequate allocation of resources, emphasizing that social investment is a productive factor.
14. Strengthen and reposition youth ministries and agencies by undertaking a scientific assessment of their capacities in collaboration with initiatives being spearheaded by the Commonwealth Youth Programme.
15. Use the International Year of Youth (August 2010 to August 2011) and the World Conference on Youth (carded for the same year) to advance youth advocacy and revitalize governments' commitment to investing in youth development.

1.4.2. Second Regional MOST Forum – Trinidad and Tobago

The Second session of the Caribbean Regional Forum is carded for May, 2012 and will be hosted by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT), through the Ministry of the People and Social Development (MPSD) and in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO.

Trinidad and Tobago is a member state of UNESCO and established a National Commission for UNESCO in 1970. The Minister of Education, Dr. The Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, is the President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO. The current Chairman is Dr. Kris Rampersad, Media, Culture and Literary Consultant.