MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

9th November 2011

One of Caribbean's largest environmental projects reviews achievements

The Global Environment Facility-funded Project on "Integrating Watershed and Coastal Areas Management in Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean" (the GEF-IWCAM Project), which included thirteen Caribbean countries, will host its Final Project Conference in Kingston, Jamaica, 16 – 18 November 2011.

The experiences and achievements of more than five years of implementation will be shared and reviewed by project partners and stakeholders. The public is also invited to follow the proceedings via webcast available at www.iwcam.org

The GEF-IWCAM Project had the overall objective of strengthening the commitment and capacity of the participating countries to plan and manage their aquatic resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis. It came from the realization that the sectoral approach to the management of watershed and coastal resources which prevails in Caribbean countries is unsustainable. Degradation of the environment, overexploitation of natural resources, competing resource uses and conflicts among users are all commonplace.

Patricia Aquing, the Executive Director of the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), recalls that: "Between 1999 and 2006, CEHI and UNEP's Caribbean Regional Coordination Unit (CAR/RCU), supported by the Implementing Agencies UNDP and UNEP, worked with thirteen countries in the Caribbean to ensure the approval process by the GEF. It was a long gestation period but when it was finally launched in 2006, it marked the start up of one of the largest environmental projects in the Caribbean." She says "Now that the Project is winding down (and hopefully moving into another phase), it is only fitting that we reflect on the progress that has been made in the region, as a result of it."

Nelson Andrade, Regional Coordinator, UNEP-CAR/RCU, notes that: "While the ratification of agreements such as the Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution (or LBS) Protocol and the strengthening of national policies and laws were major achievements for IWCAM, the most profound impact was at the grass roots and community levels. It is through these "on the ground" impacts that we will ensure sustainability of the "IWCAM" way of doing business."

The Conference will be attended by government and community representatives from all thirteen participating countries as well as regional and local environmental organizations. Input will also be sought from participants on a follow-on project.

"It is our hope that our efforts will prompt further investments by countries in the areas of integrated watershed and coastal area management. It is our hope that the approaches tested through the numerous pilots, sub-projects, and demonstrations will take root at the national and community level" says Vincent Sweeney, Regional Project Coordinator, of the Project's achievements over the past five and a half years. He noted that "the region has seen much direct impact on the lives of Caribbean communities, including improvement of access to water for human well-being, for agriculture and basic sanitation; communities being cleaned; children being educated on environmental issues; and professionals across the region developing and applying new skills. These lessons have been shared far and wide and collaboration among disparate organizations has been strengthened".

XXXXX

For more information contact:

Donna Spencer

Communications, Networking and Information Specialist

GEF-IWCAM Project

Caribbean Environmental Health Institute

Morne Fortune

Castries

Saint Lucia

E-mail: dspencer@cehi.org.lc

Tel.: (758) - 452 - 2501 / 1412