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## Advances and Challenges in the Multilateral Governance of Environmental Security in the Caribbean

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### Executive Summary

The Caribbean is a region with low levels of interstate conflict but highly vulnerable to environmental damage and changes, particularly climate change. In terms of multidimensional, human, and environmental security, these environmental phenomena become threats to security in the region in the short, medium, and long term, and are understood as multipliers of other existing threats, such as the problems of transnational organised crime prevalent in the area. This Policy Paper reviews the multiple regionalisation projects in the Caribbean to analyse the inclusion, or not, of environmental security in their respective agendas, considering concepts like maritime domain awareness, and multilevel and polycentric governance. Finally, some recommendations are made regarding the achievement of a coherent strategy on environmental security in the region.

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# Advances and Challenges in the Multilateral Governance of Environmental Security in the Caribbean

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## Introduction

**T**his Policy Paper is the first product of the subgroup focused on the Caribbean region of the Latin American Network for Environmental Security. It focuses on the current status of environmental security as a concept and practice in the multilateral governance projects in the Caribbean, as a basis to develop future investigations in the research line “Governance challenges for environmental security in the Caribbean”.

All the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (hereafter, LAC) are highly vulnerable to environmental damage and changes, as well as to specific security problems. These two areas affect the possibility of achieving sustainable development in the region, and make the Caribbean a relevant study area in terms of environmental security.

As Small Island Developing States (SIDS), most Caribbean states have particular conditions and needs which are different to those of the states in Central and South America. That said, there are also many countries in Central and South

America with coastal territories in the Caribbean. For the purposes of this Policy Paper and the research line in the future, it is the “Greater Caribbean” that will be considered as the Caribbean region, given the interdependencies between the insular and coastal countries, and their joint work in Caribbean regionalisation projects.

The objective of this Policy Paper is to analyse the inclusion, or not, of environmental security in the multiple regionalisation projects in the Caribbean. It begins with a conceptual framework, followed by a review of the regionalisation projects in the Caribbean regarding environmental security, and ends with some reflections and recommendations.

## Conceptual Framework

### Rethinking the concept of security

The concept of security has evolved in both theory and in practice in recent decades, in line with changes in the international system after the end of the Cold War

and the emergence and/or recognition of non-traditional global and cross-border threats in an increasingly globalised world. The classical conceptualisation of security as the defence of a territory and population against threats from an “other” was characterised by its statist and militaristic approach. But today, multidimensional security is the guiding axis in the field of security and defence, understood as an approach that focuses on the individual, not the state, and which encompasses new conceptualisations such as human security and environmental security (Pastrana Buelvas & Burgos Giraldo, 2021).

Human security includes economic, food, health, community, and political dimensions, and argues that not guaranteeing decent living conditions for the population can contribute to security problems, for example, due to increases in criminal activities if individuals and communities cannot meet their basic needs through legal ones.

On the other hand, environmental security has two aspects: firstly, the protection and sustainable use of the environment and natural resources, and secondly, the mitigation of risks associated with environmental damage and changes (Lodgaard, 1992, cited in Græger, 1996). Regarding the second aspect, the concept of a threat to security and defence has also been reconsidered to recognise that environmental damage and changes can be considered threats. For example, conflicts

may arise over access to non-renewable natural resources, or as a result of social changes caused by environmental phenomena, such as forced displacements for climatic reasons and impacts on economic productivity and sociopolitical stability (O’Toole, 2017). It is worth noting that, in many cases, the impacts of environmental damage and changes are considered as aggravating or multiplying other threats to security<sup>1</sup>.

## Multilateral governance: multilevel and polycentric

In a globalised world, the interdependencies between states and other actors, and between different policy areas, have resulted in the emergence of multilateral governance as a strategy to collectively manage problems that cannot be dealt with unilaterally by states. We understand governance as “the structures and processes through which political and social actors carry out practices of exchange, coordination, control, and decision-making in democratic government systems (Pastrana Buelvas, Betancourt Vélez & Simmonds Pachón, 2014, p. 103).

On the one hand, multilevel governance reflects the fact that states are not a single entity, but are made up of different

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete theoretical analysis of environmental security, see Pastrana Buelvas & Burgos Giraldo, 2021.

entities at different levels, and are forced to share and delegate many activities within their territories in supra- and subnational scenarios (Marks, Hooghe & Blank, 1996). In supranational settings, there are many intergovernmental organisations, both global and regional. Additionally, governmental and non-governmental actors tend to foster ties at different levels of politics, so it is not always the national government of a state that participates in these settings.

On the other hand, multilevel governance is complemented by polycentric governance. A polycentric governance system is characterised by the participation of multiple actors and entities at different scales and levels, each with considerable independence to establish norms and rules in a specific area. These systems tend to promote cooperation, innovation, adaptation, trust, and the achievement of more effective, equitable, and sustainable results (Ostrom, 2010).



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## Maritime domain awareness

Maritime domain awareness is a key element of security for insular and coastal states and territories because, even in non-conflict settings, there are major challenges in monitoring the activities that occur in the seas and oceans. According to the United States Department of the Navy, “the oceans are growing in importance as arteries of the global economy and back alleys of the criminal underworld” (US Department of the Navy, 2007). Therefore, maritime domain awareness is key in the fight against threats to both traditional security and to multidimensional and environmental security, in terms of combating criminal activities, protecting trade and tourism, and avoiding irregular migrations. Achieving this awareness in practice requires multilateral efforts, for example, that the military forces of different states share intelligence information or undertake joint and/or coordinated patrols.

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Considering the three points described in this conceptual framework, we highlight their relevance for the Caribbean region. First, the Caribbean –like all of LAC– is an area with low levels of interstate conflict and threats to environmental security are therefore not expected to result in interstate conflicts in the short or medium term (Franchini & Viola, 2019). In this sense, it is an ideal place to see multidimensional and environmental security in practice.

That said, the region does have significant security challenges, such as intergroup and interpersonal violence, both of which are associated with organised crime and particularly transnational organised crime (TOC) like drug trafficking (Franchini & Viola, 2019; Fuller, Kurnoth & Mosello, 2020). This is partly due to the Caribbean’s geographic location between drug-producing countries and consumer markets (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, May 27, 2010).

Regarding multilevel and polycentric governance, as is shown in the next section of this Policy Paper, there is a broad and heterogeneous range of regionalisation projects in the Caribbean. According to the proposal of Ostrom (2010), this multitude of projects can be considered a polycentric governance system that enables the participation of multiple actors at different scales and levels of the states and territories that make up the region (Fuller, Kurnoth & Mosello, 2020), as well as of extra-regional actors like the US which considers the Caribbean to be its “third border” (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, May 27, 2010), and of the European states that were colonial powers in the region. In the case of a coastal state like Colombia, in addition to its insular and coastal territories, it also has a range of other topographies, climates, and ecosystems, from the Amazon to the Andean highlands. In this sense, it is necessary for subnational entities to be able to participate in multilevel and polycentric governance scenarios in



a differentiated manner, according to the needs of each geographical area.

Finally, regarding maritime domain awareness, this concept is of the utmost importance for the insular and coastal states of the Caribbean in terms of the threats to traditional, multidimensional, and environmental security, especially the illegal activities that represent the greatest threat to traditional security in the region, and also of the capabilities of the region's military forces to respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters, among other aspects.

## Threats to Environmental Security in the Caribbean

It was mentioned in the introduction that environmental damage and changes can be threats in themselves or multipliers of

other phenomena that threaten security. Since 2003, the Organisation of American States –to which many Caribbean states belong– has recognised that global climate change may constitute a threat, concern, or challenge to the security of the states in the hemisphere (OAS, 2003).

These threats arise from climatic and environmental phenomena like extreme weather events –which are increasing in frequency and strength due to climate change–, disasters, sea level rise, coastal erosion, increased surface temperatures of the sea, the acidification of the oceans, droughts, and the depletion and degradation of forests and wetlands due to urbanisation, among others (Fuller, Kurnoth & Mosello, 2020).

These environmental phenomena have a negative impact on the development



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model of the Caribbean, which is generally based on tourism and agriculture. By disrupting the human security of populations, for example, their daily livelihood or food security, and by contributing to conditions that can foster crime and illicit activities, environmental damage and changes can affect multidimensional security (Franchini & Viola, 2019). The main trends in threats to environmental security in the Caribbean are summarised below (Fuller, Kurnoth & Mosello, 2020):

- Climate-related disasters can cause political instability through their impacts on key economic sectors.
- Climate shocks can cause social unrest by exacerbating food security and threatening livelihoods.
- Climate-induced loss of livelihoods can increase opportunities for criminal activity and increase the challenges of urbanisation.

## Environmental Security in Caribbean Regionalisation Projects

This section reviews the different regionalisation projects and their most relevant mechanisms, in order to identify their position and actions regarding environmental security. First, we describe the regional

projects of the Caribbean, and then the cooperation projects with global actors like the United Nations or extra-regional actors like the US.

## Caribbean projects

### Association of Caribbean States

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) encompasses 35 states and territories, and works in five priority areas: 1) the preservation and conservation of the Caribbean Sea, 2) sustainable tourism, 3) trade and external economic relations, 4) natural disasters, and 5) transportation (ACS, n.d.). All of these areas have an impact on, and/or are also impacted by, issues associated with environmental security.

The Mérida Declaration, signed in 2014 in Mérida, Mexico, during the twentieth anniversary of the ACS, includes several issues related to environmental security. Although it does not refer to TOC, it does highlight the need for cooperation in the security field in the fight against terrorism, and highlights the progress of the ACS in risk management and responses to natural disasters and/or those caused by humans. On this subject, the Saint-Marc Plan of Action stands out, agreed in Saint-Marc, Haiti, in 2007, adopting a multidimensional security approach that places the individual at the centre of disaster risk reduction and management plans by protecting their livelihoods, local economies, and the environment through the

protection of forests and wetlands and the restoration of degraded ecosystems to improve the resilience of insular and coastal territories (ACS, November 14-16, 2007). This Plan of Action highlights that ACS members are:

Convinced that the best way to reduce vulnerability to disasters is to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into safe and sustainable development policies and plans at all levels of government, and that the integration of these concerns in planning and practice is a complex issue that requires close cross-sectoral cooperation between all stakeholders (ACS, November 14-16, 2007).

This declaration reflects the commitment of the ACS to both multidimensional security and scenarios of multilateral, multilevel, and polycentric governance.

The Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) is also part of the ACS. The CSC Action Plan 2022-2024 identifies four priority strategies: 1) the preservation and conservation of the Caribbean Sea, 2) improvements in human and social equality while reducing environmental risks and ecological deficiencies, 3) greater capacity in and knowledge of climate change and its impact on the Caribbean Sea, and 4) public awareness and information (ACS, September 8, 2021). These priorities also reflect a commitment to multidimensional security by

explicitly recognising the risks (threats) associated with environmental damage and change.

## Caribbean Community

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is another of the main integration mechanisms in the region, established in 1973 and formed of 15 member states and five associates. In its most recent Strategy on Crime and Security, published in 2013, four levels of threat are identified: 1) immediate significant threats, 2) substantial threats, 3) significant potential risks, and 4) future risks. Level one includes threats to traditional security such as TOC, level two includes threats associated with natural disasters, and at level four is climate change (CARICOM, 2013). It is of the utmost importance that the next Strategy on Crime and Security recognised climate change as an imminent risk that already exists in the present, and not only as a phenomenon that may have impacts in the future.

That said, since the 1990s, CARICOM has, from the environmental side, addressed issues such as climate change adaptation, and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) was established as the figure in charge of informing and creating guidelines on the climate issue for CARICOM. The CCCCC, in addition to being a repository, has played an important advisory role on climate change policies. In 2009, CARICOM members signed



the Liliendaal Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to continued compliance with international guidelines on this issue; and as a result, they commissioned the CCCCC to develop a regional framework for achieving climate-resilient development, followed by an implementation framework jointly developed with the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) in 2012.

This implementation framework contains the risk management approach to be followed, also arguing that decision-making can contain subjective or political elements and, therefore, said framework contains an evaluation culture so that decision-makers consider the political and social dimensions involved in facing climate change and, ultimately, it also seeks to establish mechanisms for coordination

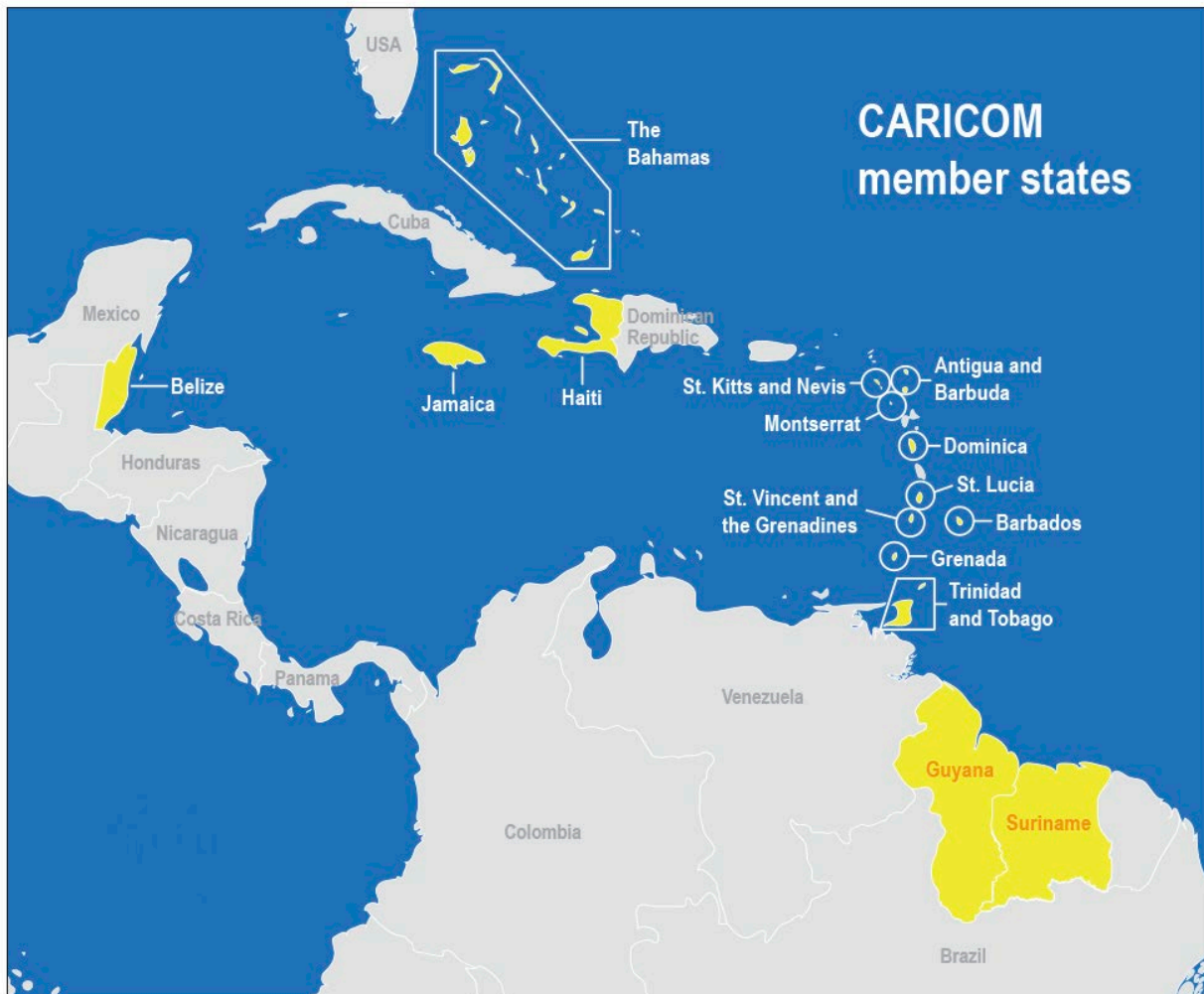


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and collaboration with national Ministries of Finance (CDKN, June 2012).

The CCCCC publication the *Caribbean Climate-Fragility Risk Brief* is also important, as it investigates how climate change has impacted the region and manifested itself in concrete ways in different areas, as well as its future impacts. The report offers a more comprehensive study that delves into the socioeconomic and political impacts of climate change. Along the same

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lines, it is noteworthy for its special emphasis on citizen security, migration, and governance in general. Additionally, it is important to highlight the effort made by the report's authors when it comes to suggesting ways in which governments, and society in general, can address the risks described (CARICOM, December 17, 2020).

These issues have been incorporated into CARICOM's security strategies. The 2015-2019 Strategic Plan included eight priority areas related to crime and security, of which five are closely related to environmental security and environmental threats: 1) pursue functional cooperative security commitments to address and manage shared risks and threats, 2) improve human resource capacities, 3) strengthen regional security systems, 4) strengthen CARICOM borders, and 5)

improve awareness of maritime and air space (CARICOM, n.d.).

From the side of security and defence, CARICOM also has the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which focuses on promoting collective responses to natural disasters in the region. Of the 19 states that make up the CDEMA, only nine have military forces. For this reason, the CDEMA speaks of "disciplined forces" to include other actors, such as the police and firefighters, as the key state actors in these issues in many countries. This reflects multidimensional and environmental security in practice because these forces have an organised workforce with capabilities and experience in logistics in the face of extreme weather events and natural disasters. Through its Regional Response Mechanism, the armed forces and the disciplined forces of the CARICOM member states cooperate among themselves and with external actors to promote effective and efficient responses to environmental threats (CDEMA, 2016).

### **Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States**

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is an association of 11 members –including both states and overseas territories of the United Kingdom and France– which, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, has five strategic priorities: 1) accelerate regional integration, 2) reinvent the economy, 3)

value the environment, 4) develop resilience, and 5) promote equality and inclusion (OECS, n.d.c; OECS, n.d.d). The OECS fully recognises that this subregion is already experiencing the impacts of climate change –stating that 80% of the natural disasters in the region are climate related– and that the projections of this phenomenon in the medium and long term threaten the region’s sustainable development and, ultimately, its future survival (OECS, n.d.a).

Faced with these threats, the OECS has specific programs on climate change, like the Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change Program which focuses on the issue of irregular migration forced by climatic factors and categorises climate change as an existential threat to the region and highlights the need for a comprehensive and proactive approach to respond to human needs related to this phenomenon (OECS, n.d.b).

### **Petrocaribe**

Petrocaribe is an energy association and cooperation initiative that brings together 14 Caribbean countries. It emerged in 2005 with the signing of the Energy Cooperation Agreement during the First Energy Meeting of Caribbean Heads of State on Petrocaribe. The main purpose of this entity is to provide financial facilities and to directly supply fossil fuels to member countries, thus avoiding intermediaries. Its original orientation was focused on

reducing asymmetries in access to energy, principally oil. To that extent, it created a new exchange scheme for its affiliated countries (Ruiz-Caro, 2006).

At first glance, one can perceive that Petrocaribe focuses on the coordination and articulation of energy policies. However, it has also promoted programs for the saving and efficient use of energy, and the use and implementation of mechanisms to obtain clean energy, such as solar or wind energy.

As part of its action plan, Petrocaribe created the ALBA fund with an initial contribution of 50 million US dollars from the Venezuelan government. This is an instrument for financing social and economic programs in signatory countries, including environmental programs (Ruiz-Caro, 2006).

Likewise, Petrocaribe has made efforts to deal with disasters in Caribbean countries.

For example, in Montego Bay, Jamaica in September 2015, in the framework of the X Petrocaribe Summit, the heads of state of the member countries agreed to create a comprehensive ten-year plan. Goals of the plan included the consolidation of an economic zone, exchanges on topics of communications, transport, and tourism, and commercial, productive, and socio-cultural integration. Environmental topics

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and climate change awareness were also on the agenda, evidenced by the initiative to create a Caribbean social protection system and a common civil defence system against natural disasters (BID, October 15, 2015).

However, despite reflecting an –apparently– comprehensive approach that includes multidimensional security, the mission goals described have been criticised in terms of their management, as it is perceived that the actions are directed towards supporters of the governing parties in the member countries as acts of proselytism. However, the achievements of Petrocaribe are highlighted on two fronts: social and environmental infrastructure. This is based on multiple housing construction campaigns and programs focused on environmental awareness, and the construction of sanitation and environmental infrastructure (Elliot, December 1, 2019).

## Regional Security System

The Regional Security System (RSS) was founded by four OECS members in 1982; memoranda of understanding have since been signed with four more members and the RSS has gained responsibilities in the broader CARICOM region. Today, the RSS is the Coordinating Secretariat of the CARICOM Security Assistance Mechanism. While it initially focused on traditional security threats like drug trafficking and illegal arms trafficking, over time the scope of action of the RSS has broadened

to include the non-traditional threats that have emerged in the field of global security and to include non-traditional criminogenic settings (RSS, n.d.a).

The RSS undertakes coordinated maritime, air, and land operations between the public forces of its members, which remain under the command of their national commanders (RSS, n.d.a; RSS, n.d.c). In addition, the RSS has a Training Institute financed by the government of Canada, which focuses on regional training to face common problems in the region and on the search for the long-term restructuring of national security agencies, with a view to improving their efficiency: reducing levels of disparity in terms of knowledge and skills, facilitating regional cooperation on various security issues –both traditional and multidimensional, human, and environmental–, and reducing significantly the total cost of training (RSS, n.d.d). Additionally, the RSS is part of the CDEMA of CARICOM, which demonstrates once again the existence of a polycentric governance system in the Caribbean regarding environmental security.

## Cooperation projects with extra-regional actors

### Caribbean Basin Security Initiative

The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), is a security cooperation mechanism established in 2010. The program's main objective is to connect the efforts of



the Caribbean states in reducing illicit trafficking, strengthening citizen security, and preventing crime in general; the initiative does not have an agenda directly related to the environment. The US Department of State states that the CBSI's actions and programs are complementary to the security component of the 2020 US-Caribbean Strategy (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, n.d.).

Specifically, one can speak of the approach taken by the influence of the CBSI in specific actions and countries. Firstly, in the case of Jamaica, the CBSI has implemented the COMET II program, to raise

awareness of the importance of climate change adaptation actions (USAID, 2018). The program is developed by integrating adaptive actions into the daily activities of the most vulnerable urban communities in order to prepare them for extreme climatic events. In the case of the Bahamas, cooperation activities are undertaken with the Royal Bahamian Police Force Marine Support Services Unit. Particular actions include, among others, the protection of tourism and coastal security, as well as the prevention of crimes against natural resources, such as illegal fishing. Although the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA, 2022) affirms that articulation with this entity



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can be improved with better equipment, training, and information, these activities reflect the maritime domain awareness necessary to achieve environmental security.

Likewise, there have been actions supported by the CBSI in Barbados, Suriname, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the majority of which have been carried out by the coast guards of each country. In Barbados, the Coast Guard conducts offshore patrols and short-range interceptions from the shoreline. Using high seas patrol

vessels, it deploys constant surveillance patrols to fight drug trafficking and to protect the environment by preventing illegal fishing. Similarly, smaller fleets of boats are used in law enforcement, control of illegal fishing, the protection of endangered species, ocean security, and rescue work (CNA, 2022).

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In Saint Vincent, the Coast Guard missions include routine patrol operations, interdictions, humanitarian assistance, port security, and also a special emphasis on the care and protection of marine-coastal natural resources. The CNA (2022) states that the Saint Vincent Coast Guard undertakes patrols for an average of 40 hours a week while, in other countries, similar patrols usually average between four and six hours. This shows, on the one hand, the

interest of this state in maritime domain awareness and security as evidenced in its environmental efforts and emphasis, as well as the results of the CBSI's support.

In the case of Suriname, this South American country faces serious environmental challenges that stem from the illegal extraction of raw materials, mainly gold. As a consequence of these illegal activities, large amounts of polluting substances like mercury and cyanide have been released into the environment, and inevitably reach marine-coastal areas. Regarding maritime security, the country faces serious threats from human trafficking and drug trafficking, and indiscriminate illegal fishing is a clear environmental threat. The Coast Guard, Navy, and the Maritime Authority of Suriname make up the institutional triad which, with the support of the CBSI, carries out actions across the jurisdiction of the country in the mentioned activities, with the Coast Guard being the most prominent (CNA, 2022).

### **Caribbean Nations Security Conference**

The Caribbean Nations Security Conference (CANSEC) is an annual forum sponsored by the US Southern Command which allows Caribbean defence and public security leaders to strengthen ties, discuss regional issues, examine challenges, share successes and lessons learned, and explore ways to enhance security cooperation and build on past achievements. At CANSEC 2022, Caribbean defence leaders

discussed threats arising from climate change and natural disasters, exploring ways in which regional defence entities can support civil authorities during rescue and relief activities in the case of disasters. They also recognised the impact of climate change on the increased frequency and strength of hurricanes, as well as sea level rise, and how this phenomenon threatens the subsistence and way of life of the populations in the areas impacted by hurricanes (US Southern Command, April 7, 2022).

Similarly, and within the framework of the recognition of these situations, the benefits of cooperation and joint work were highlighted, for example, in humanitarian assistance and relief support in the case of disasters. Some concrete actions of the US in the Caribbean through this initiative include technical support for the Panama Canal Authority's multi-million dollar water management project, assistance to Honduras with flood control, and port and watershed development projects in the Dominican Republic, all of this aligned with the US strategy to fight TOC, as well as humanitarian assistance and security cooperation (Richardson, March 8, 2022).

### **CariSECURE**

CariSECURE consists of a series of projects made up of actions oriented towards a public health approach to crime prevention. It is one of three components

of USAID's Youth Empowerment Services project, the objective of which is to reduce crime and violence rates in the youth and adolescent population. The specific mission of CariSECURE is the strengthening of institutional capacities to "collect, analyse, and use citizen security data to develop evidence-based policies and programs that effectively target the risk factors that drive violence, crime, and the victimisation of young people". We consider the CariSECURE approach relevant to the extent that, despite being an initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), it was expected, from its creation, to work closely with CARICOM (PNUD, n.d.a; RSS, n.d.b) and because it has a clear focus on multidimensional security.

Generally, CariSECURE actions on environmental and climate issues must follow socioenvironmental standards, including: strengthening the quality of the programs by guaranteeing a principle-based approach; maximising social and environmental opportunities and benefits; avoiding adverse impacts on people and the environment; minimising, mitigating, and managing adverse impacts when they cannot be avoided; and strengthening the capacities of UNDP and its partners to manage social and environmental risks (PNUD, n.d.b).

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Through CariSECURE, USAID has partnered with Caribbean populations to promote education, health, and economic development. In only the last five years, USAID has invested 650 million US dollars in the Caribbean, including efforts to deal with the impacts of Hurricane Maria. Barbuda and Dominica were two islands practically devastated by this natural phenomenon and, accordingly, CariSECURE made changes to its plans and focused its agenda and budget on responding to the disaster (PNUD, February 1, 2021; USAID, 2017).

### Community of Latin American and Caribbean States



**CELAC**  
Comunidad de Estados  
Latinoamericanos y Caribeños

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, with its initials in Spanish) is an intergovernmental mechanism for dialogue and political agreement launched in 2011, which includes 33 countries in LAC, and aims to facilitate decision-making in the political sphere and cooperation that supports other regional integration programs. By mandate of the heads of state and government of its members, CELAC is the unified voice of the region on issues of consensus (CELAC, n.d.). In this sense, rather than implementing concrete projects, CELAC functions as a dialogue forum for the states of LAC and

undertakes external dialogues with states and other regionalisation projects around the world.

However, while CELAC's priority areas include environmental issues, there is no explicit mention of security (CELAC, n.d.). At the XXII Meeting of CELAC Foreign Ministers in January 2022, 15 points were discussed, of which the following topics stand out for their relation to the trends identified regarding multidimensional and human security: comprehensive disaster risk management, food security, and environmental cooperation. Moreover, the Foreign Ministers of Argentina and Mexico signed agreements with the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) on the initial contributions for the creation of the CELAC Fund for Climate Adaptation and Comprehensive Disaster Response, for a total of 3.7 million US dollars (Gobierno de México, January 7, 2022). In September 2022, this was complemented by the CELAC Meeting of High Authorities on Climate Change, which served as a space for dialogue on the shared challenges of the region in this area and allowed progress in the identification of common concerns and the construction of regional consensus for negotiations at the COP27 (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto de Argentina, September 28, 2022).

Despite these dialogues and initiatives, it is noted that CELAC does not have a differentiated approach in terms of the

different LAC subregions, as its main purpose it to establish common positions vis-à-vis extra-regional actors. Additionally, at different moments in its history, CELAC has been paralysed due to ideological differences between its members and has been characterised of being at risk of becoming a “zombie organisation” (Nolte, August 11, 2021). Therefore, it seems unlikely that this multilateral project will be highly relevant in achieving environmental security in the Caribbean.

### **ECLAC Programs for the Caribbean**

The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) is one of the five regional economic commissions of the United Nations. Its main purpose is to contribute to the economic and social development of LAC, as well as to promote the economic integration of the countries in the region (CEPAL, n.d.).

Regarding climate change and the environmental crisis in the Caribbean, ECLAC has responded, for the most part, through its active participation in discussions about both phenomena, formulating proposals and accounting for their impacts in LAC by presenting reports and holding events.

The first to highlight is the subregional seminar Strengthening Information on the Environment, Climate Change and Disasters in the Caribbean, an event that took place in August 2022 and whose main theme was the need and urgency for data-based forceful responses and

appropriate adaptation plans to climate change, as well as coordinated decision-making at the global, regional, national, and local levels. The event was attended by the statistical offices and the Ministries of the Environment of each country, and international specialists in the field (CEPAL, August 24, 2022).



**UNITED NATIONS**



At the seminar, recommendations were made, and advances were highlighted. For example, the steps taken by some countries in producing information and statistics on climate change were recognised. However, attention was also called to the sporadic and uneven developments across the region in terms of environmental issues, which demonstrate a lack of coordination. Finally, the CARICOM representation promised to continue supporting the efforts of Caribbean countries in climate change

mitigation and the prevention of and response to disasters (CEPAL, August 24, 2022).

The climate agenda was highlighted at the 11<sup>th</sup> General Meeting between CARICOM and the United Nations System, in which ECLAC also participated. The awareness and recognition of climate vulnerability were some of the main themes emphasised at the event. During the meeting, the ECLAC Executive Secretariat presented an assessment of the economic, social, and environmental challenges currently facing the Caribbean, particularly in the pandemic and post-pandemic contexts. Among its recommendations are the possibility of exchanging debt for climate action and green bonds linked to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, recognising that high levels of indebtedness are an obstacle to their achievement (CEPAL, July 21, 2021).

In this context, the ideas of green and blue economies become highly relevant, an area in which ECLAC has highlighted the efforts of the Caribbean countries and affirmed its commitment and support. ECLAC has considered the promotion of industrial and technology policies in sectors related to investment in sustainability. Similarly, it has highlighted the leadership of the Caribbean countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (CEPAL, July 21, 2021). All of the above shows a comprehensive approach from the economic sphere, and a recognition of the paramount importance of environmental

threats in the region, even if they are not directly related to the security sphere.

The XX Meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee was another scenario in which ECLAC showed its interest in an environmental agenda for the Caribbean. In said event, climate change was recognised as an undeniable threat for SIDS, as well as the special impact of natural disasters in these countries, which is aggravated for certain populations due to structural inequalities in what was called a “crisis upon crisis” setting. Again, this approach demonstrates how climate change is a multiplier of other threats and problems. To that extent, and in light of the problems raised, commitments and proposals were reiterated, such as strengthening food security, promoting economic diversification towards green and blue economies, strengthening disaster management, improving social protection, and strengthening the development of sustainable infrastructures. Finally, a call was made to maintain cooperation efforts with CARICOM and the other subregional organisations in the Caribbean (CEPAL, November 5, 2021).

## Reflections and Recommendations

The multilateral governance projects in the Caribbean analysed here are a clear



example of multilevel and polycentric governance, as they encompass different governmental and non-governmental entities at all levels of politics, including supra- and subnational scenarios. In the different mechanisms and institutions of regional governance, the impact of environmental issues is evident, as well as specific strategies and activities proposed by the different projects and states of the region to face said impact.

Although none of the projects analysed talks specifically about environmental security, all recognise climate change as the main environmental problem affecting the Caribbean. By taking a multidimensional security approach, focused mainly on human and/or citizen security, they agree that climate change is a multiplier of other threats, such as natural disasters, and that it affects or will affect in the short, medium, or long term, the sustainable development of the region and the well-being of its populations. Thus, from both the environmental and security sides, the close relationship between these two areas is clearly recognised.

Below, we identify some specific issues that may jeopardise the achievement of multidimensional security in the Caribbean, particularly environmental security, and propose recommendations to reduce these risks.

Despite all of the aforementioned cooperation initiatives mentioned, there is a

disparity among Caribbean states in terms of their vulnerability and their progress in addressing the range of environmental threats facing the region. It is important to note that for some the primary environmental threat is not climate change, and that other immediate threats such as the illegal extraction of natural resources are more worrisome in the close future. In addition, for some, the priority is traditional security threats like drug trafficking and TOC.

- It is necessary to think about specific and comprehensive action strategies that respond to the needs of each state in the region, and to take advantage of mechanisms such as the RSS Training Institute and the CDEMA in order to improve the institutional capacities of the Caribbean states and achieve effective responses to their different priorities.

While there is evidence of an effort to collect and systematise information on the impact of environmental threats, a dispersion of actions in different entities can also be observed. Although this demonstrates the commitment of the Caribbean states to the issue, and may bring the benefits of a polycentric governance system, it could also result in the duplication of efforts and/or contradictions between the strategies of the different projects.

- It is important to prioritise channels through which to undertake initiatives in the framework of a concrete regional agenda. Otherwise, it may be difficult to achieve this due to the variety of programs of the different projects that have different natures, approaches, and objectives.
- It is important that all projects recognise that climate change, among other types of environmental damage and changes, poses a threat to environmental security in the present and not only in the distant future. Therefore, it is necessary that the next CARICOM Strategy on Crime and Security includes this phenomenon as an imminent risk.

One of the main obstacles encountered in the analysis of entities like the CCCCC and ECLAC, as well as the focus of initiatives such as Petrocaribe, is that decision-making

is shaped by subjective elements and political inclinations.

- These subjective elements must be overcome in order to give some lines of action that respond, in the long term, to evidence on the impacts of environmental damage and changes, both for security and for development and public health, among others.

Finally, we recognise that the nature of multilateral governance projects inevitably involves state actors and intergovernmental organisations more than other sectors of society. However, in order to achieve both multidimensional and environmental security, and sustainable development, in practice, the broad participation of all sectors is required, including the private sector, academia and civil society. Facilitating this participation should be an action for the future of the governance projects and, additionally, is an area that deserves more research in the future.

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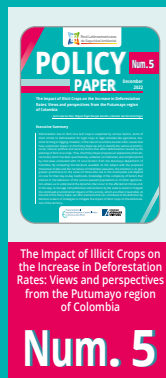
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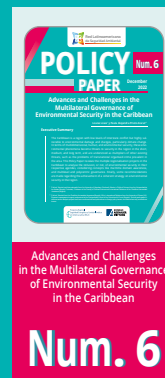
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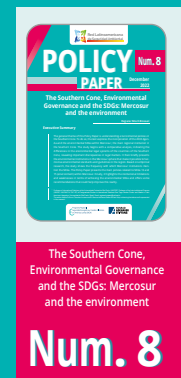
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## Explanation of the network:

The Latin American Network of Environmental Security aims to produce knowledge in the academic field and opinion work on the threats, risks and challenges facing environmental security in Latin America and the Caribbean through various case studies. To achieve this, it has generated spaces for dialogue with civil society organizations, academia, economic actors, and decision-makers from the public sector, to dialogue, raise awareness and seek consensus on the need to give relevance and priority to the threats presented by the region in environmental matters. Thus, through the preparation of papers (policy and working) and books, it is proposed to collect the study work of the network on specific cases to make visible the main problems and propose recommendations to provide inputs to decision makers in both the public and private sectors to respond and mitigate the threats that endanger environmental security in its different dimensions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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