



Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management



Strengthening the Governance of Land and Soil in Caribbean SIDS

Sixth Session of the PISLM High Level Forum & 1st Session of the PISLM Ministerial Council

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St. George's, GRENADA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group
AE	Accredited Entity
BPOA	Barbados Programme of Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARSIS	Caribbean Soil Information System
COHSOD	Council for Human and Social Development
COTED	Council for Trade and Economic Development
COP	Conference of the Parties (of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification)
CSIDS-SOILCARE	Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Multicountry Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems
CNIRD	Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IGO	Inter-governmental Organization
ILM	Integrated Land Management
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
MSI	Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (of the BPOA)
NAP	National Action Plan
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PIF	Project Identification Form
PRODOC	Project Document
PISLM	Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management
PHLM	PISLM High Level Meeting

RAC/NAT	Regional Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies
SAMOA	Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SLM	Sustainable land management
SRAP	Sub-regional Action Programme
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (of the GEF)
TF	Task Force (of the PISLM)
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UWI	University of the West Indies

BACKGROUND

The Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Management (PISLM) was started by the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean through Decision 4 at their fourteenth session that was held in Panama in 2003.

The PISLM received the support and guidance by the 25th Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) [Environment], held April 2008 in Guyana, where it was decided, inter alia, that *“PISLM should be used as the framework for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Land Management components of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the MSI/BPOA in Caribbean SIDS, to the extent practicable”*.

Further, at the 25th Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) [Environment], held in April 2008 in Guyana, the Ministers decided that PISLM should be used as the framework for the implementation of the UNCCD and the land management components of the Barbados Programme of Action (MPoA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) in the Caribbean SIDS.

Up to this point, the PISLM was a programme within the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD).

In preparation to launch the PISLM into its next iteration, in 2014, the 1st Session of the 4th PISLM Task Force, through Decision 2, mandated the PISLM to develop and submit the regulations and policies that would govern all of its operations. These were subsequently presented to the Ministers responsible for the UNCCD in the Caribbean SIDS and PISLM became an independent coordinating mechanism for the UNCCD Focal Points in the region.

Fast forward to 2023, the Ministers responsible for the UNCCD, at the PISLM's 5th High Level Forum, decided that the PISLM should follow all necessary legal protocols to ensure the development of the Establishment Agreement and endorsed that the Agreement should come into effect 30 days after signing by the three sponsor countries; Grenada, St. Lucia and the Commonwealth of Dominica.

As of April 11th, 2024 the PISLM is now an independent intergovernmental organization with a primary mandate to implement the UNCCD and land components of the BPoA, MSI and SAMOA Pathway.

Through this evolution of the PISLM, the region is now poised to actively address soil and land issues through strengthened governance and development and improved operational mechanisms within the Caribbean SIDS.

The region is in the midst of addressing a food security and livelihood crisis as we battle with the fallout of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the domino effect of civil and international wars, barriers to trade and of course, climate change. Now, more than ever, action towards achieving our target under the Land Degradation Neutrality is paramount. Land, the foundation for plant and animal life and human development is under threat all over the world and this is magnified in small island states where land and soil is of a finite amount and is the sole sustainer of livelihoods for people and wildlife who call these island states home.

SIXTH SESSION OF THE PISLM HIGH LEVEL FORUM

OPEN SESSION

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Lakeram Singh, Chief Technical Officer of the PISLM, presided over the Opening Ceremony of the 6th Session of the PISLM High Level Forum. In so doing, Mr. Singh welcomed Excellencies, State and non-state delegates and the members of the media to this most important meeting.

REMARKS BY NON-STATE DELEGATES

Jose Miguel Torrico – Coordinator UNCCD Latin America and the Caribbean

Mr. Torrico expressed his thanks to the Government of Grenada for hosting this meeting. While identifying PISLM's work as very important in the region, he underscored the importance of partnerships to achieve the milestones of the Convention. In his message, Mr. Torrico issued a call for participation at the upcoming COP16 in Saudi Arabia COP16, emphasizing the participation at all levels, especially high-level representation where Ministers can participate and deliberate. Mr. Torrico also highlighted the participation of civil society in these COP discussions and commended Mr. Reginald Burke, Executive Coordinator of the Caribbean Youth Environment Network, who was in attendance, on his great work with connecting the UNCCD with civil and non-governmental societies throughout the Caribbean SIDS.



The grave issue of drought will be discussed at COP 16, and this is important for the islands as it is often overlooked. The established inter-governmental working group on drought has proposed an instrument to deal with the issue with drought. Two weeks ago, the 5th working group meeting was held in Chile to discuss drought. The Interational Drought Resistance Alliance (IDRA) was launched at the UNFCCC COP27. This is a platform to support work by Governmens on drought issues and land degradation. He encouraged country parties to participate in IDRA.

He proposed a sub-regional preparatory meeting be held before the next COP 16 in St. Lucia under the Chairmanship of Minister Prospere. This will help the countries to articulate and discuss their individual and collective views on the issues they are facing as well as articulate their requests and demands to the UNCCD Secretariat before the meeting. He stressed that the UNCCD is the only legally binding instrument that addresses land degradation and drought and it is important to have this preparatory meeting.

Neila Bobb-Prescott - Climate Finance Specialist- FAO Sub Regional Office

Ms. Bobb-Prescott, expressed welcoming sentiments to the attendees on behalf of the Sub-regional Coordinator Dr. Renata Clarke. She expressed that the FAO is strongly committed, as the technical agency of the United Nations, to the soil and land initiatives of region and governments. The FAO has been with the PISLM from the beginning of the CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1 project. She expressed that this project is still relevant and there is a lot that we are learning as we are implementing. The FAO is committed to supporting



this goal in terms of sustainable soil and land management. FAO is the technical UN agency and well suited to serve the Caribbean. We recognize the value of partnership, and we have expertise and work with partners in all aspects of sustainability. We encourage you to work with us and we are willing and available. The greatest thing we have as Caribbean people are our resources and we have the opportunity to do better than the previous generation. Since the 1960's this is the first set of work done in the region regarding soil and land maps and this is important to understand how we manage our resources and to achieve our development goals and more specifically the regional '25 by 2025' Caricom Agenda.

Calvin James – Executive Director PISLM

Mr. Calvin James, in his address, welcomed the incoming Chairperson of the first PISLM Ministerial Council, the Honourable Alfred Prospere of St. Lucia and thanked the outgoing Chair of the PISLM's High Level Forum, the Honourable Cozier Fredrick of Dominica for his leadership over the last five years. The Executive Director thanked the National Focal Points and the UN agencies for working with him and the PISLM as the facilitator of the Caribbean's soil and land agenda.



He highlighted the upcoming project CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase II will represent an all-Caribbean approach and it is the last notch in the process to take us to the LDN transformative project. All 14 Caribbean Countries and CARICOM agreed that SOILCARE Phase II is an important process. Antigua & Barbuda and IICA will serve as the accredited entities in the LDN Transformative project.

Mr. James reminded the audience that the PISLM has a mandate to help countries achieve the land and soil areas under the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and the UNCCD. In so doing, he endorsed Mr. Torrico's call to all Ministers of UNCCD of the Caribbean SIDS to ensure they attend and participate at the upcoming COP16. At the recently held CRIC in Uzbekistan in 2023, the PISLM supported Minister Prospere's call on the UNCCD Executive Secretary to implement a SIDS Forum at the next COP in Saudi Arabia where all SIDS can meet and discuss SIDS issues.

The Executive Director concluded by thanking all parties for their support and reiterated the PISLM's commitment to helping countries achieve their obligations under the UNCCD.

REMARKS BY STATE DELEGATES

Alfred Prospere – St. Lucia Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Rural Development and Chair of the PISLM 1st Ministerial Council

The Minister commended the PISLM and the Ministers for their work into ensuring the transformation of the PISLM from a coordinating mechanism to an IGO. The Minister thanked the Executive Director for the support received thus far in preparing for this role. Minister Prospere also expressed thanks to Minister Saboto Caesar of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for his assistance in alleviating recent stressors on farmers in St. Lucia. This being an example of the level of partnership and collaboration that is required by Ministers of the region.



The Minister highlighted the ongoing crises of food security and climate change in the region and recognized the work by CARICOM to achieve the ‘25 by 2025’ Agenda.

“This upcoming COP is critical, and we need to represent the region under one umbrella and is important to have full Caribbean representation and I would like to urge all Ministers today to prepare and attend the COP. I am the co-chair of the intergovernmental working group on drought looking at various options that will address drought globally, regionally and nationally. We have identified eight (8) clear options, and we are now doing SWOT analysis of each option and by June 2024 we will have a draft document for the UNCCD that outlines what can be done regionally and globally.”

In closing, the Minister expressed his eagerness to take up the Chairmanship of the Ministerial Council and looks forward to the full support of the Ministers and PISLM as we address the issues of the region.

Cozier Fredericks – Commonwealth of Dominica

Minister of Environment, Rural Modernization and Kalinago Upliftment

Minister Fredericks welcomed colleague Ministers, UNCCD Focal Points, international agencies and all other invitees.

Minister pointed out that land management is probably the most important issue for SIDS. He highlighted that the work of the PISLM is critical in environmental conservation as a whole. The PISLM is a unique platform that works on behalf of all Caribbean SIDS and shows that it can carry the voice of the Caribbean at the UNCCD.



The Minister reminded the gathering that in 2017 a massive hurricane hit the island resulting in a 26% loss of GDP. Since then the country has had to rebuild its capacity and PISLM has assisted with those efforts. PISLM is all about sustainability and healthy soils. PISLM is contributing to the region’s cadre of soil expertise through their scholarship program. Food security is critical, and we need to ensure long-term sustainability, especially for our future generations. Several issues contribute to our unhealthy use of soils and this needs to be changed especially in light of climate change. The work of the PISLM directly affects our achievement of climate goals and so must be given the requisite priority. We need the necessary financing to support projects in the region. PISLM’s work will go deeper and affect water

quality as well in the region as water security is critical for our development. The Minister also encouraged the continued and strengthened engagement of our youths and the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) and technology into the process of work.

As the previous Chair of PISLM, it was very important and has been a very productive journey and Dominica has received many benefits from partnering with PISLM.

Adrian Thomas – Minister of Tourism, Government of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique

Minister Thomas, on behalf of His Excellency Prime Minister Mitchell, Minister Lennox Andrews and the Cabinet and people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, welcomed his fellow Minister colleagues, Permanent Secretaries, technical officers and non-state delegates to the island.



Minister Thomas recognized the Executive Director Mr. Calvin James as being the real architect of this initiative and much more than a facilitator of the process. The Minister recalled the signing of the instrument by the Governments of Grenada, St. Lucia and Commonwealth of Dominica, formally establishing PISLM as an intergovernmental organization in the Caribbean region. This is an important moment as we witness the transition of the PISLM from the 6th and final session under the old governance framework to the first Ministerial Council under a new governance framework. The PISLM has served the region well over the past twenty years. In the case of Grenada, we are grateful for the work that PISLM have done in the region and the government of Grenada is pleased to be collaborating with PISLM on a number of projects. I thank everyone who has contributed to the growth of PISLM over the years. Under this new dispensation of PISLM, I would like to wish all persons the best. The new organs under the PISLM's governance framework such as the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS), Research Advisory and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies (RAC/NAT) and the Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network (CarSoLaN) would do well for regional collaboration, knowledge exchange and land use planning. Minister Thomas encouraged everyone to have frank and fruitful discussions and while doing so to make wise decisions so that we as PISLM, can continue forging ahead to restore degraded lands, improve soil health and mitigate the impacts of drought.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Cozier Fredricks – Commonwealth of Dominica Minister of Environment, Rural Modernization and Kalinago Upliftment

Hon. Cozer Frederick, Chair of the PISLM High Level Forum (HLF), declared the session open.

The PISLM is mandated to work for Caribbean SIDS in achieving the goals of the UNCCD and the land components of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA). The High Level Forum is the

principal policy-making organ of the PISLM. Its responsibilities are to conduct periodic reviews of the policies that govern the work of the PISLM, facilitate requests by member states to coordinate measures requested by them to combat adverse effects of land and soil degradation and to communicate national and regional sustainable development strategies to allow more effective use of resources to successfully implement donor assisted programmes and projects.



Agenda Item 1: Adoption of the Agenda

In accordance with conference regulations and other relevant decisions, the Agenda of the Sixth session of the PISLM High Level Forum was presented for consideration

The Agenda document labelled PHLM.6 was adopted unanimously.

Agenda Item II: Executive Director's Report

The Chair invited the Executive Director Mr. Calvin James to present his report.

This report covers 2023 into 2024 and highlights the outcomes of the 5th HLF held in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

1. The PISLM Secretariat was mandated to carry out all possible processes towards the formation of the PISLM as an established Inter-governmental organization in the Caribbean. The prescribed deadline was the June 2023. However, due to procedural matters related to normal governance frameworks of the sponsor countries in the region, this action was delayed to April 2024.
2. The PISLM was successfully able to engage the CARICOM states in building their capacities and provide technical backstopping. Specifically, the PISLM was successful in assisting twelve Caricom states in preparing and submitting the PRAIS 4 report to the UNCCD before the CRIC in November 2023. The model utilized by the PISLM was deemed best practice and will seek to be implemented by the UNCCD going forward. This methodology will be further elaborated at the pre-COP meeting planned for later in 2024.
3. The PISLM successfully drafted its two-year workplan and has provided the same for review by the PISLM Task Force.
4. The PISLM was mandated to develop the resource mobilization for the LDN Fund and will be shared at this meeting. FAO is a close collaborating partner.
5. The PISLM has strengthened its relationship with CARICOM through collaborative efforts at the COTED-Environment and COTED-Agriculture in June and October 2023 respectively. This has now resulted in the Caribbean Soil Support Group working directly with the '25 BY 25 Initiative'. The Caribbean Soil Lab Network received a mandate to develop soil labs in the region through equipment and training.
6. PISLM was asked to accelerate the implementation of the CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1 project. There still remains some issues that require guidance from the countries in order to remedy.
7. The PISLM has successfully prepared the PIF for CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 2 with assistance from the FAO. The PISLM has hired a consultant to prepare the project documents.

8. The PISLM has successfully signed instruments establishing the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) as the Accredited Entities for the Caribbean LDN-Transformative project. This project's concept note will begin in June 2024.
9. The PISLM is currently engaged in national projects in Dominica, Haiti, The Bahamas and Suriname.

Chair opened the forum for questions and comments.

CARICOM: The Programme Manager for Agriculture, Mr. Shaun Baugh, expressed pleasure on behalf of the CARICOM Secretariat at working with PISLM, and we have seen much progress over the past year. He expressed also congratulatory remarks to the PISLM as it serves as a model for other regions and reiterated that the CARICOM Secretariat will continue to support the PISLM when needed.

Hon. Saboto Caesar: Thanked the government and people of Grenada for their hospitality extended. He also expressed congratulatory remarks on behalf of the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to PISLM for their work and efforts towards achieving this goal. "At one time PISLM was the region's best secret, but now it's no longer and we thank the Chair and the PISLM team. When the history books are written as it pertains to work in drought and climate change, PISLM, Mr. Clavin James, Chair and Mr. Alfred Prospere your work would be known and etched in our minds."

Hon. Adrian Forde: Thanked the government and people of Grenada for hosting. He highlighted importance of biodiversity within our SIDS and expounded on the threat of loss of arable soil and its effects on livelihood. For nearly fifty years we have not done any work as it relates to soil management. The work being done by the PISLM is important and we want to celebrate your achievements thus far. It is important to note that the work done would not be possible if not for political collaboration. Minister Forde has pledged his Ministry's and government's support to the PISLM and encouraged colleague Ministers to do the same.

Hon. Adrian Thomas : Stated that we as a region, we spend time and money fixing things that we are not necessarily responsible for. He encouraged all parties to support and invest in maintaining and defending initiatives that are put in place to fix things so that they are not left in disrepair and more resources need to be expended to reinvent the wheel next time around.

Questions: 1) How far are we in CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1 and 2?

2) What package is envisioned for phase three of these initiatives?

Executive Director: Phase I is carded to end in 2025, phase 2 is carded 2025 to 2029. In the first year of phase 2 we hope to at least complete the project document and the instrument with the GCF. The GCF process is more elaborate than the GEF project. In 2027 we are forecasted to can begin the LDN Transformative project and it will look at product delivetable of SOILCARE phase 1 and 2 and we hope to scale up these initiatives. Each country will get approximately 10 million USD to execute the LDN Transformative. In phase 1 we are nearing the stage where we are implementing projects on the ground in all 8 countries and dealing with livelihood and soil issues. By the end of the year hopefully you would have an instrument to make effective policy decisions with regards to land and soil issues through CARSIS in a decision support system (DSS).

BREAK

CLOSED SESSION

SESSION 1 APPROVAL OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUMENTS OF PISLM

Chairman

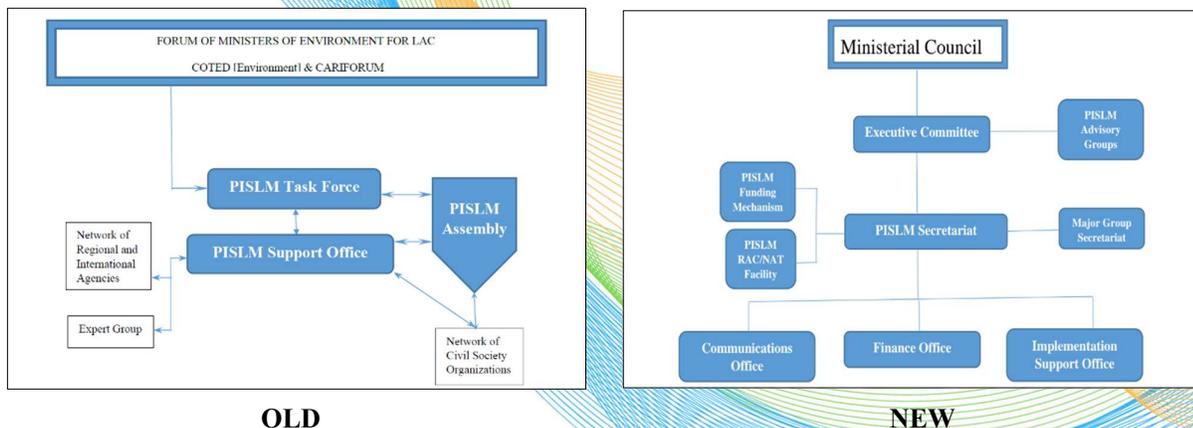
Hon. Cozier Frederick resumed the session reminding delegates that this is the last session of the PISLM High Level Forum as a coordinating mechanism. This session seeks to provide the PISLM, as an inter-governmental organization, with adequate policy guidelines to effectively function in its new role.

Executive Director Calvin James

Decision 01/PHLM.6 – Institutional Arrangement of the PISLM

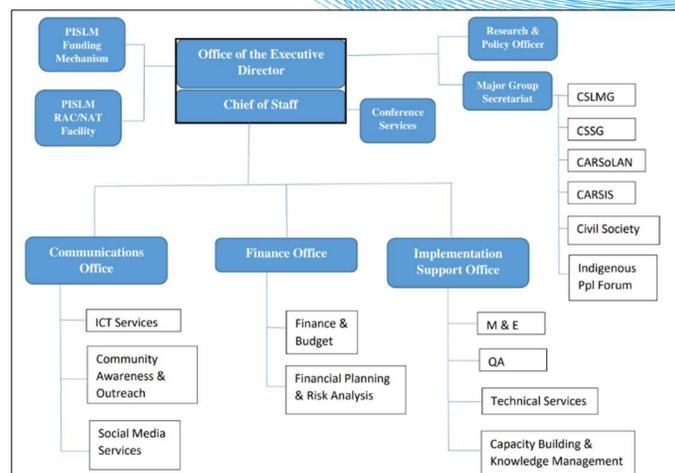
The objective of this session is to examine the administration and governance mechanism that will be used for PISLM as an IGO. The administrative structure, work program, and capacity building will be examined for PISLM as an IGO. This session looks at the first three decisions of the meeting.

Governance Structure



OLD

NEW



Structure of the Secretariat

The governance structure of the PISLM as a coordinating mechanism was overseen by the Caribbean Ministers responsible for the Environment and reported to the COTED. The PISLM Task Force consisted of technical experts who guided the more immediate trajectory of the PISLM. The PISLM Support Office as it is currently known was supported by the PISLM Assembly, more commonly known as the group of Caribbean UNCCD National Focal Points, a scientific group and civil society organizations.

The governance structure of the PISLM as an intergovernmental organization will be overseen by a Ministerial Forum consisting of Ministers responsible for the UNCCD. The supervisory role will fall unto the Executive Committee which will consist of Caribbean Global Soil Partnership focal points (2 members) and UNCCD Focal Points (3 members). The new Secretariat will be led by the office of the Executive Director (ED) supported by the Chief of Staff and the operations will be managed by the Finance, Communications and Implementation officers. Because of the expanded focus of the PISLM, there are now several groups formed and placed into a Major Group forum, ie CSSG, CarSoLaN, CARSIS, Civil Society and the Indigenous Peoples Forum.

The office of the ED will be supported by a research and policy officer as well as the LDN funding mechanism and the PISLM Research Advisory and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies (RACONAT Facility).

At the seventh session of the Sixth PISLM Task Force, additional instruments were approved and are available for review by the delegates. These instruments were the MINISTERIAL COUNCIL RULES, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RULES, PISLM STAFF REGULATIONS AND RULES and POLICIES AND REGULATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT which include *inter alia* business ethics, anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy, financial policy, information and communication policy, gender policy which will be presented to the Executive Committee for periodical review and update.

Decision 02/PHLM.6 - Capacity Building Services

One of the main reasons for being established as an intergovernmental entity in the region is to ensure that there is a high-capacity threshold in the region to meet our mandates and obligations. The PISLM will continue to work with all country parties regarding updating their LDN-TSP's and NAP's. LDN phase 2 has begun, and the ED will be in St. Lucia to launch the Caribbean version of the LDN Phase 2 and St. Lucia will be used to test LDN Phase 2 and then it would be rolled out in other countries as a mandate of the PISLM. The PISLM will continue to work with country parties in meeting their obligations under the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Strategy) and coordinate SSM, SLM and LDN programmes and we will continue to provide Executing Agency services for PRAIS which is done every 2 years. At the last High Level Forum (HLF) all countries agreed to use PISLM as the facilitators for reporting under the PRAIS.

Decision 03/PHLM.6 - The Two-Year Work Programme of the PISLM

The two-year work programme follows a similar trajectory, and PISLM will build on the work already completed under the various projects and programmes. The regional work will continue through SOILCARE Phase 2 and the regional LDN Transformative Project. At the fifth HLF, countries agreed to use the PISLM to provide technical back stopping and develop national projects under the GEF and GCF funding mechanisms. Since then the PISLM has established relations and is working in The

Bahamas, Suriname, Dominica, Grenada and Haiti. St. Lucia has recently requested assistance from the PISLM to assist as well in the execution of a GEF project. These and more, are the services rendered by the PISLM and are available should you require any assistance.

Chairperson, Hon. Cozier Frederick opened the forum for comments and questions.

There being none;

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decisions 1,2 and 3 of the 6th HLF.

This motion was seconded by Hon. Saboto Caesar of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decisions 1, 2 and 3 of the Sixth PISLM High Level Forum were adopted by unanimous consent.

SESSION 2

APPROVAL FOR THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE PISLM FUNDING MECHANISM

Decision 04/PHLM.6 – Resource Mobilization for Land Degradation

Chairman

The Chairman invited the Executive Director to take the floor again to guide the meeting in this session.

Executive Director Calvin James

At the 4th High Level Forum, PISLM was instructed to explore the possibility of establishing a funding mechanism for land degradation projects in the region. The PISLM then commissioned a feasibility study, which was presented and approved at the 5th PISLM HLF. PISLM was then asked to develop the governance structure of the fund. The name of the fund will be ‘ The Caribbean Soil and Land Transformation Facility’ as a not-for-profit organization to treat with the SSM/SLM projects in the Caribbean. The purpose is to provide funding through various forms of mobilization. The fund will be governed by the Council of Ministers, a management committee and a board with direct responsibility to manage the funds. The Ministers are the members of the fund and how it operates will be based on how the Ministers decide to deal with the fund. The management committee will be given the responsibility to oversee the fund between Ministerial Council meetings and the Board will be given the responsibility to manage the day to day actions and accountability of the funds. It will be a part of PISLM but will have its own mandate. The Council of the Ministers will have final oversight of the funds, deal with disputes, receive reports and pass down directives to the management committee and board.

The PISLM has reached out to the FAO for assistance in operationalization of the facility and a commitment has been given from the FAO Headquarters in Rome on this matter. After the preparatory work is done, the Council of Ministers will then be briefed on the election of a Management Committee

and thereafter a Board. The Government of Dominica has indicated that, should Ministers agree, Dominica would provide head-quarter agreement for the funding facility.

Chairperson opened the floor for questions and comments

Hon. Alfred Prospere: Will the Board be a 14-member board, representing the interests of all countries?

Executive Director: The Board will be selected by the Management Committee where the prospective Board members' names will be submitted to all 14 countries for non-objections.

Mr. Keshore Lutchman (DPS- TT): Are their provision for auditing of the funds? What mechanisms are in place to ensure the board upholds its duties and accountability?

Executive Director: After this meeting, the necessary steps will take place to now craft the relevant policies and procedures and will be present to the Council for review and approval before operationalizing the fund.

Hon. Adrian Forde: Endorsed Mr. Lutchman's questions and requested that all governance documents be sent to countries with sufficient time to review before the fund actually becomes operational.

Executive Director: Yes, all documents will be packaged accordingly and sent through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for each country.

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 4 of the 6th HLF.

This motion was seconded by Hon. Saboto Caesar of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 4 of the Sixth PISLM High Level Forum was adopted by unanimous consent.

SESSION 3 MATTERS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF COTED and OECS

Decision 05/PHLM.6 – COOPERATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Chairman

The Chairman invited the Executive Director to guide the meeting on this agenda item.

Executive Director Calvin James

Session 3 deals with partnerships with the Caribbean. We have taken note that in the Caribbean that there are two multi-lateral mechanisms, CARICOM and OECS.

One standing protocol of the PISLM is when Ministers responsible for the UNCCD make decisions at the PISLM High-Level Forum, they are transmitted to the OECS Commission and CARICOM Secretariat for adoption.

Therefore, the PISLM proposes for the following decisions be transmitted to the COTED-Environment, COTED-Agriculture and the OECS Commission or adoption.

- Decision 01/PHLM.6
- Decision 02/PHLM.6

From a legal perspective, this will effectively cause PISLM to be recognized as an intergovernmental organization at the regional level.

Chairperson opened the floor for questions and comments

Hon. Saboto Caesar: “At this important stage, I must commend the vision and foresight of PISLM for including and cementing themselves in the multilateral platforms in the regions as close partners.”

“ I further wish to share an opportunity for this to happen. The Caribbean Week of Agriculture 2024 will be held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and we fully support the move to further institutionalize PISLM in the region and we will give full support before, during and after the COTED Meeting planned for the final day of the CWA. We have allocated an entire day on Climate Change and I wish to propose that the PISLM working with the Chief Advisor to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on climate change and agriculture, to develop a schedule so that the PISLM can fully participate whether solely or through partnerships, at the CWA to highlight all issues and achievements of the PISLM. The CWA is expected in October this year and this can be excellent for Ministers to caucus and send a very clear message as a last effort before COP16 to mobilize Ministers and have them on the same platform.”

“Further I wish to state that the OECS Ministers of Agriculture will be meeting in May and it is not too late to get the relevant decisions of the PISLM High Level Forum on the Agenda for this meeting.”

Hon. Cozier Frederick (Chairman) – Thanked Minister Caesar for his guidance and support as PISLM embarks on this new stage of its development.

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 5 of the 6th HLF.

This motion was seconded by Hon. Adrian Thomas of Grenada.

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 5 of the Sixth PISLM High-Level Forum was adopted by unanimous consent.

SESSION 4 STAFFING OF THE PISLM SECRETARIAT

Decision 06/PHLM.6 – Staffing of the PISLM Secretariat

The Chair invited the PISLM to guide the meeting on this agenda item.

Chief of Staff, Kiefer Jackson

Ms. Jackson explained that since the old governance mechanism of the PISLM has been stood down, essentially all contracts of staff of the PISLM are terminated.

Hence, the PISLM seeks the authority of the Ministers to reconstitute the PISLM the under the new dispensation as an intergovernmental organization.

The PISLM asked Ministers to consider that the current post of Executive Director continue with the current holder, that is Mr. Calvin James, for the first five years of PISLM as an IGO.

The PISLM asked Ministers to decide by way of an appointment letter, that the new post of Executive Director begin 30 days after the establishment of the PISLM as an intergovernmental organization.

Finally, we ask that the Minister directs the Executive Director to hire the appropriate staff within 30 days after the approval of this decision.

The Chairman opened the forum for questions and comments

Hon. Adrian Forde: expressed his personal and his government’s support of the decisions being presented.

Hon. Adrian Thomas: As the country earmarked to host the PISLM Secretariat, Grenada supports the decision and Minister Thomas encouraged his Minister colleagues to follow suit.

Hon. Cozier Frederick: “As Chair of the High Level Forum the past three years, I can only support Mr. Calvin James as he takes on this new role.

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 6 of the 6th HLF.

This motion was seconded by Hon. Adrian Forde of Barbados.

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 6 of the Sixth PISLM High-Level Forum was adopted by unanimous consent.



FIRST SESSION OF THE PISLM MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

OPEN SESSION

APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR

Hon. Cozier Frederick called the meeting to order and welcomed the **Hon. Alfred Prospere** of St. Lucia as the CHAIR of the First PISLM Ministerial Council.

Hon. Alfred Prospere declared the 1st session of the PISLM Ministerial Council open. Minister Prospere expressed gratitude to Minister Cozier Frederick of the Commonwealth of Dominica for successfully leading the PISLM from a coordinating mechanism to the first indigenous IGO in the region. Minister Prospere thanked his Minister colleagues for their confidence and sought their continued support and guidance during his term in office. The Chair also thanked the other organizations such as the CARICOM, OECS, UNCCD, UNEP, ACP, FAO, GM-UNCCD, GEF and the various civil society organizations who would have supported the PISLM over the past twenty years.

The Chair also expressed thanks to the Governments of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana for offering Host Country Agreements to the PISLM over the past years. He expressed special gratitude to the Government and people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique for indicating their intention to host the PISLM in its new status as an IGO.

PLENARY

The Chair, in accordance with Articles 39, 40 and 41 of Chapter 6 of the Ministerial Council Rules, declared the plenary session open.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Ms. Sandra Joseph

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Trade and Barbuda Affairs

Honourable Cozier Frederick, Chair of the PISLM High Level Forum, Honourable Alfred Prospere, incoming chair of the Ministerial Council, Mr. Calvin James, Executive Director of PISLM, , esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a privilege to be part of this momentous occasion, celebrating our collective achievements as we look forward to the journey and work ahead.



As Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean region, we are aware of our challenges; thus, it is through collaborative projects that foster partnerships that we can (1) evaluate our current circumstances or vulnerabilities; (2) exchange information and lessons learned; and (3) implement effective actions and measures to improve our abilities to overcome these challenges.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure and profound pride that I acknowledge the remarkable achievements made through the CSIDS SOILCARE PHASE 1 project in all eight participating countries which include updating of soil maps, development of a knowledge hub, training and capacity building initiatives and many more.

The project's implementation thus far has fostered the local, regional, and international collaboration necessary for addressing our soil challenges, preserving, and rejuvenating our soil ecosystems and cultural heritage.

For Antigua & Barbuda, the interventions made has been pivotal in shaping a path towards sustainable soil management, building on existing efforts to combat desertification.

These include the completion of the National Soil Survey encompassing collection of over 80 samples at 120 sampling sites and their analyses; targeted capacity building and knowledge exchange opportunities in Land Management and Soil Sampling Techniques via the Soil Doctors Programme, and HNVI CSAC Training (High Nature Value Index- Climate Smart Agriculture Compliance) and public awareness campaigns.

Together these have not only contributed greatly to the steps toward achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) but also contributed to building technical and practical knowledge of soils to ministry staff.

Notably, the reception of the Soil Doctor's programme by the District Officers of the Extension Division has been tremendous, and this quarter the division is projected to train at least 45 farmers in soil testing methods and incremental growth each month thereafter.

Which underscores the importance of CSIDS SOILCARE nationally and advances the project's commitment to grassroots engagement and empowering farmers as stewards of soil health and equipping stakeholders with the tools and knowledge necessary for sustainable agricultural practices.

To that end, the Ministry is grateful for the leadership of PISLM as the executing agency, and the diligent efforts of the team at UWI St. Augustine led by Dr. Gaius Eudoxie, the UN-FAO, and support from the Global Soil Partnership.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has been a long-standing partner of PISLM and will continue to provide our unwavering support to this project via the in-country work of the lead agencies namely, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Environment, and the Department of Analytical Services.

We eagerly anticipate collating the relevant outcomes results to enhancing policy development aimed at sustainable soil and land management.

These accomplishments represent not merely individual milestones, but rather interconnected facets of a broader narrative—a narrative of resilience, collaboration, and unwavering dedication to safeguarding our most precious resource: our soil.

In closing, I would like to congratulate PISLM on their new journey in the transition to becoming an intergovernmental organization. To the faces of PISLM and those working effortlessly behind the scenes, your work has not gone unrecognized no matter big or small as it has played a pivotal role in bringing us to this moment, and this transition is a prime example.

As we celebrate these achievements today, let us also reaffirm our collective resolve to continue working together, supporting and uplifting each other as we navigate through each challenge and accomplishment.

Thank you all once again for your support and dedication. Thank you!

THE BAHAMAS

Hon. Vaughn Miller **Minister of Environment and Natural Resources**

I bring greetings on behalf of my Prime Minister, the Honourable Philip Brave Davis, and the people of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

It is an honour to be here and attend and participate in the 1st Ministerial council in my capacity as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation (UNCCD) Focal Point for The Commonwealth of The Bahamas.



Last night, we were present and proud to be witnesses of the establishment of PISLM as an intergovernmental organization (IGO) during the historic signing ceremony of the three sponsored countries: Dominica, host country Grenada and St. Lucia.

Greetings to the Prime Minister of Grenada Honourable Dickon Mitchell. We are indeed grateful for the warm hospitality and welcome by all the representatives of this beautiful country.

I wish to congratulate the Honorable Alfred Prospere for accepting to be the chairperson of PISLM and we pledge our full support to him as he aggressively advance the mandate of our very own IGO.

We currently have a GEF full-size project entitled Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) for addressing land degradation, food security, and climate resilience challenges in The Bahamas, for which PISLM is currently collaborating with the government under Component 1, entitled Strengthening the Enabling Environment for achievement of land Degradation Neutrality through improved policy, and governance.

PISLM is leading the development of an ILM strategy, an intersectoral operational framework of ILM and the land Degradation Neutrality thus assisting us on the alignment of the National Action Program for the ILM following the UN CCD protocols.

Our technical committee is in the final review stages of the NAP before I take it to Cabinet for the full endorsement of our government. Again, as I close, I thank the governments of Dominica, Grenada and St. Lucia for sponsoring and bringing into force the establishment of PISLM as an inter governmental organization that highlight the needs of the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the realm of sustainable soil land management and land Degradation Neutrality.

May today's proceedings be successful as we continue the Sixth Session of the High Level Forum and the First Session of the Ministerial Council of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management. Thank you.

BARBADOS

Hon. Adrian Forde

Minister of Environment And National Beautification, Green And Blue Economy

Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas, Minister responsible for Agriculture and Lands of Grenada.

Colleague Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Partners, Mr. Calvin James, Executive Director of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management, Distinguished Guests;

At the outset, I wish to thank the Government of Grenada for its hospitality, and for graciously agreeing to host this important meeting. Today marks a significant moment in the evolution of environmental governance in our region, as we approach the 13th anniversary of the 1994 SIDS Conference. The outcome from that landmark conference, the Barbados Programme of Action, laid the foundation for robust environmental action and advocacy, and the Caribbean region's interaction with the wider global community. Barbados therefore wishes to reinforce its commitment to PISLM and to sustainable land management in the region.



Since its inception, this Partnership Initiative has evolved and is now recognized at the CARICOM level through the Council on Trade and Economic Development. Indeed, this mechanism symbolizes the kind of collaboration and cooperation which is required to support the development of our region. Now, with the establishment of the Ministerial Council, it is anticipated that even greater impetus would be given to the achievement of our objectives. Political will and action is required in order for us to be effective in the use of our available resources to ensure sustainable land management for all of us. This Council will therefore serve as the nucleus through which PISLM will thrive.

Notwithstanding our achievements thus far, there is still much to be done. The harsh reality of climate change and biodiversity loss represents but two of the hurdles which currently confront us, and which will require our full attention for the unforeseeable future. Our land is a key resource in the development of our countries and this Partnership must be treated as a significant mechanism to support sustainable land management.

The work which PISLM is undertaking is therefore very critical to the ability of Caribbean states to ensure sustainability, food and nutritional security, and the development and maintenance of climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

Barbados commits itself to ensuring that its institutions maintain the momentum necessary to continue to realize achievements under this critical project. Further, we urge regional institutions and partners to fully dedicate themselves to advancing sustainable land management in the region.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

BELIZE

Michelle Alvarez, Inspector of Mines and UNCCD National Focal Point Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining and the Chief Executive Officer, send their apologies for not being able to attend these proceedings. I present their congratulations as National Focal Point.

The Government of Belize extends warm greetings to Grenada for hosting this momentous occasion for our region. We are grateful for the Commonwealth of Dominica and the Hon. Cozier Frederick's commitment to the process of transitioning the PISLM to an Intergovernmental Organization and as Chair of the PISLM High Level Forum.



We are grateful also to Saint Lucia's sponsorship and Hon. Alfred Prospere for accepting to be Chairperson of the 1st Ministerial Council. Belize stands as faithful partner in the mission of PISLM in sustainable land management and in UNCCD implementation.

With PISLM's support, Belize has successfully completed multiple UNCCD reporting cycles. With PISLM's support, Belize is updating its UNCCD National Action Plan and is a participating country in SOILCARE Phase 1 and commits to SOILCARE Phase 2.

Through SOILCARE, we are completing the National Soil Survey, onboarded a consultant to update the National Land Use Policy, and we are in the process of finalizing a consultant to prepare a National Drought Plan with technical oversight from the PISLM.

Belize is very grateful for PISLM, their continuous support, and the availability of the staff and looks forward to the new version of PISLM as an intergovernmental organization. Congratulations once again.

Thank you.

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

Hon. Cozier Frederick

Minister of Environment, Rural Modernization, Klainago Upliftment and Constituency Empowerment

Thank you colleagues for your warm welcome.

I acknowledge the Honourable Adrian Thomas and I thank the Government and people of Grenada for the warm welcome to the spice island. I also acknowledge other members of Government and my esteemed colleague Ministers here today. Also, to our regional and international partners, the UNCCD Focal Points, technical officers and other members of the public service, the Executive Director and staff of the PISLM. I bid you all greetings and welcome.



I must start by saying what we all know to be true. Sustainable land management is important to all small island developing states. It is so important also that we recognize this fact and understand that there are many competing interests for the limited land we have in our SIDS spaces, so using this asset in a sustainable way is most critical for us. So, the PISLM is this wonderful instrument that works on behalf of Caribbean SIDS and ensures that an intergovernmental mechanism, it can carry the voice of the Caribbean as it participates in conversation with the UNCD. The work of the PISLM is very important because among many other things, it assists with environmental conservation that is critical for climate change. As we know for a fact we have done little to affect climate change but stand at the front line of those catastrophic events that affect our economies.

In 2017, Dominica was hit by a natural disaster where we lost more than 226% of our GDP, and so we had to rebuild and bounce back. In doing so, we had to ensure that we were able to do it sustainably and at the same time protecting our biodiversity and natural resources while empowering the human capital of the country and that is what PISLM is about.

So, when we look at environmental conservation we are speaking of healthy soils and also as we witnessed last night, building a cadre of Caribbean professionals who have taken soil science to another level and we can continue to build that within the PISLM to contribute further to humanity.

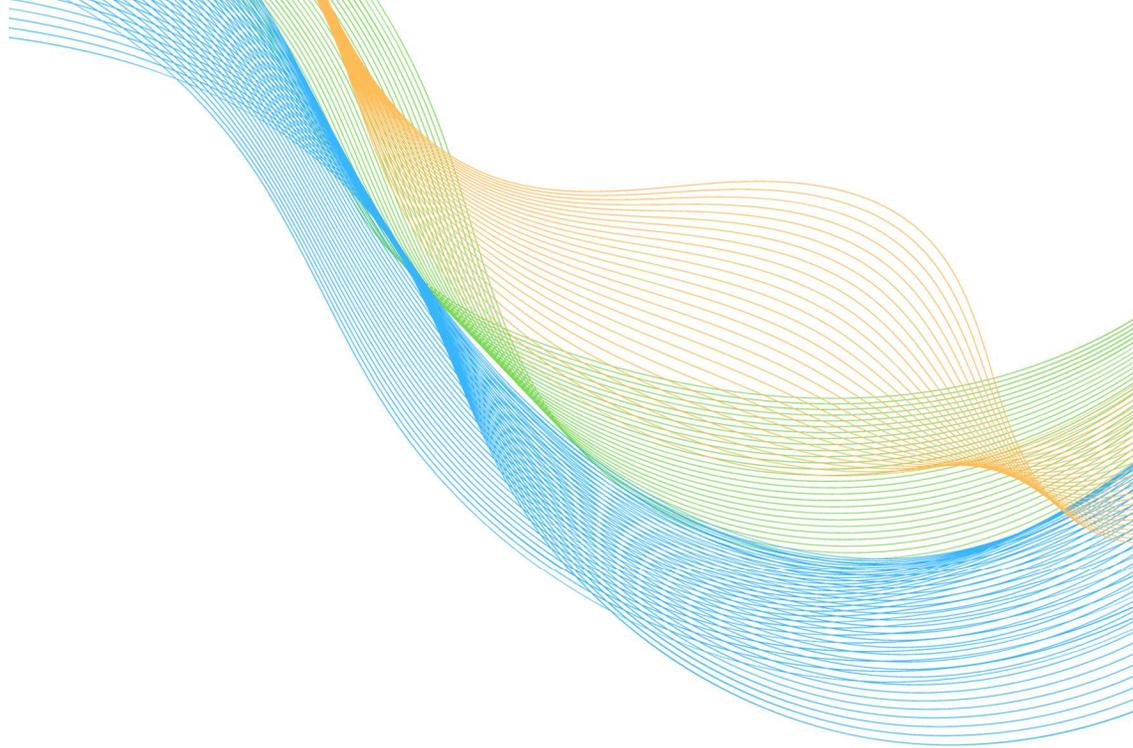
The work of PISLM is interwoven with agriculture and food security and we have to be able to use our limited resources to provide food and nutrition, which begins with having healthy and productive soil which will safeguard our future generations.

We have inherited a landscape that was abused through the use of chemicals, bad practices and deforestation. As we continue to work with the PISLM, we will add value to climate change

mitigations. We know for a fact that healthy soils act as carbon sink and agroforestry rehab out soils and will also enhance carbon storage. We know also for a fact that to do all of this that we need resources and for that I am happy to have our international partners. The work we do at PISLM will also impact our water quality, ensuring highest quality of potable water and surface water in our environment.

I speak not only as a member of Cabinet but as someone from an indigenous space and how that space has grown and continues to give direction to policy and development of biodiversity and heritage protection. So the incoming benefits will reduce costs of projects in the future. The work of PISLM will include encouraging young people and incorporating all forms of technology to improve sustainability and applicability of their work.

In closing, I would like to thank you all sincerely for your support to me as Chairperson over the past three years and I would like to thank the Executive Director for this support to us over the years as well. I also give my support to Minister Prospere and the Ministerial Council as we move PISLM forward.



GRENADA

Senator The Honorable Adrian Thomas Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources

Excellencies, UNCCD National Focal Points, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Hon. Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister; Hon. Lennox Andrews, Minister for Economic Development, Planning, Agriculture and Lands, Forestry, Marine Resources, and Cooperatives, both of whom are unable to attend the sessions here today; and on behalf of the entire Government and people of Grenada, I extend a warm welcome to every one of you to the 6th Session



of the PISLM High-Level Forum and the 1st Session of the PISLM Ministerial Council. To our brothers and sisters who have come from abroad, in my capacity as Minister for Tourism, I say welcome to beautiful and pure Grenada, the Isle of Spice, where everything is nice!

Yesterday evening we witnessed the signing of the PISLM Establishment Agreement by the three sponsor countries, Grenada, the Commonwealth of Dominica, and St. Lucia, formally establishing PISLM as an Intergovernmental Organization. This is why today we are going to witness an important transition from the convening of the 6th and Final Session of the PISLM High-Level Forum under the old governance framework to the convening of the 1st PISLM Ministerial Council under the new governance framework of PISLM.

The Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) has served the countries of our region well for the past twenty (20) years. In the case of Grenada, we appreciate the technical assistance that we receive from PISLM in helping us strive to fulfill our obligations and meet our commitments under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as well as the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA). We are grateful for the work of PISLM in facilitating regional dialogue, learning and capacity building on land and soil issues. The Government of Grenada is pleased to be collaborating with PISLM to implement major projects, such as the CSIDS SOILCARE Phase 1 Project, which aim to avoid, reduce or reverse land and soil degradation, and which aim to promote Sustainable Land Management, Sustainable Soil Management, Integrated Water Resource Management, Integrated Landscape Management, and Drought Resilience. The Government of Grenada looks forward to greater and more productive collaboration with PISLM in the months and years ahead.

Excellencies, UNCCD National Focal Points, I take this opportunity to thank everyone of you who have contributed to the growth and development of PISLM over the past twenty (20) years. I express thanks to the Executive Director, Mr. Calvin James, and the Chair of the PISLM High Level Forum, Hon. Cozier Frederick of Dominica, for successfully overseeing the process of PISLM becoming an officially established Intergovernmental Organization. I also take the opportunity, under this new dispensation, to wish all those who are going to be contributing to the work of PISLM, at whichever level, nothing else but the best. I wish Hon. Alfred Prospere, the soon-to-be first chairman of the PISLM Ministerial Council a successful term in office.

I note that under the new governance and institutional framework of PISLM, various organs are going to be established such as the Caribbean Soil Lab Network (CarSOLAN), Caribbean

Soil Information System (CARSIS), and the Research, Advisory and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies (RAC/NAT Facility). I think that this augers well for regional collaboration, knowledge exchange, evidence-based decision-making, and better planning.

Excellencies, on this very special day, we have quite a number of important matters to discuss including the status of the Caribbean Small-Island Developing States Multi-Country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems (CSIDS SOILCARE) Phase I Project, which is ongoing; the CSIDS SOILCARE Phase 2 Project and the Caribbean Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Project, which are to come; and we are also going to look at our preparation for UNCCD COP 16 scheduled for December 2024 and the establishment of the UNCCD SIDS Forum.

As we go through the sessions today, may we have frank and fruitful discussions and may we make wise decisions so that collectively, as the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM), we can continue forging ahead with our agenda of protecting healthy land and soil, restoring degraded land, and mitigating the negative effects of drought.

Thank you!

GUYANA

Mr. Enrique Monize, Commissioner of Lands and UNCCD National Focal Point Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission

On behalf of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, I, Enrique Monize, the Commissioner of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission and the National Focal Point to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), wish to extend gratitude for the invitation extended to Guyana to participate in the Sixth Session of the High-Level Forum & First Session of the Ministerial Council of the Partnership Initiative For Sustainable Land Management.



The genesis of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) traces back to the Caribbean's acknowledgment of the pivotal role land plays in our livelihoods, our need to safeguard it for our sustainability, and the well-being of future generations. Originating from a resolution passed during the 25th Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) [Environment] in April 2008, hosted in Guyana, PISLM has since evolved into a body entrusted with the direct execution of regional programs and projects. The accreditation of PISLM as an inter-governmental organization (IGO) expands into access to more resources for sustainable land management, fostering regional progress towards the goals of the UNCCD and national initiatives for sustainable development.

Over the years, PISLM has played a vital role in providing technical assistance to promote sustainable land management practices in Guyana and achieving commitments to the Convention. Currently, the implementation of the SOILCARE Phase I is leading new ground into research and implementing climate-smart and sustainable land management interventions. PISLM's execution of the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Multi-country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems: Phase 1 (CSIDS-SOILCARE) has resulted in the training of over thirty (30) technical staff from agricultural agencies in Guyana. This training was on the High Nature Value Index (HNVI) & Climate-Smart Agriculture Compliance Training for technical staff to have the knowledge and tools for building the credibility of farmers' responses to natural resource management. The trainees could determine the degree of Climate-Smart Agriculture compliance, with respect to projects, processes and products using the HNVI certification and auditing tool and would support justification of the applicability and quantum of Climate Change Funding. SOILCARE Phase I would realise digital soil maps and land capability information, a fundamental factor in the decision process for the utilization of good agricultural lands.

With the Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework developed during Phase I, Guyana can address soil degradation and sustainable soil management. The DPSIR report would guide policymakers on environmental quality, and conservation policy and practices for

the soil and land; this is a key area of the project, and in land administration, and to guide land use policy. The SOILCARE Phase I Project executed by PISLM aligns to the Heads of Government of CARICOM commitment to reducing the Region's large food import bill by 25% by 2025. Guyana has engaged PISLM most recently through an endorsement of a second commitment under the eighth cycle of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for a Phase II project, which I anticipate would expand soil and land management interventions in local communities.

With these brief remarks, I join our Caribbean partners on the recognition of PISLM as an Inter-Governmental Organisation (IGO). Guyana has greatly benefited from capacity development, as well as projects and programs aimed at promoting sustainable practices and advocating for policy resources.

PISLM has been supporting our collaborative efforts, uniting the Caribbean community across borders, encompassing research institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector. The accreditation of PISLM strengthens its ability to access programs and resources, fostering partnerships that will contribute to a stronger, more resilient, and sustainable Caribbean. In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the dedicated partners of the PISLM team and reiterate our collective commitment to sustainable land management in the Caribbean region.

Thank you.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

Ms. Sherilita Dore-Tyson

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment, Climate Action and Constituency Empowerment

St. Kitts and Nevis signed unto the Convention to Combat Desertification on 30 June 1997 and since then we have been engaged in several programmes and policies towards land restoration inclusive of Land Degradation Neutrality.

We would like to thank our sister country of Dominica, and in particular the Honourable Cozier Frederick, for overseeing this transition process. Sir thank you for your commitment to this cause.



I also extend our appreciation to the Government of St. Lucia, and the Honourable Alfred Prospere, for accepting the esteemed role of Chairperson for the PISLM Ministerial Council and we pledge our support to you Hon Minister and your team, as we move forward together in this common, necessary and worthy cause.

Consequently, St. Kitts and Nevis recognises and welcomes the advances made thus far, namely:

- 1) The progress achieved in CSIDS – SOILCARE Phase I
- 2) The GEF Project Implementation Form (PIF) for CSIDS – SOILCARE Phase II
- 3) The Caribbean LDN Transformative Project and fourthly
- 4) The institutional capacities of PISLM to carry out its mandate

As such, St. Kitts and Nevis wishes to express its full commitment to the ideals of the PISLM Ministerial Council and fully supports the plans and programmes that have been submitted for endorsement.

We look forward to working with our fellow Ministries responsible for UNCCD through frank and meaningful discussions as we venture forward and develop the regional framework geared towards combating the causes of land degradation while building resilience against their devastating impacts.

Hon Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen I thank you for this opportunity and your attention and on behalf of my beloved country of St Kitts-Nevis I wish this new phase of the PSLIM a safe, supported and successful journey. May God continue to bless our efforts for sustainability in the region. I thank you.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Mr. Keshore Lutchman
Acting Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Planning and Development

On behalf of Hon. Minister Penelope Beckles of the Ministry of Planning and Development, I would like to extend congratulations the new Chair of the Ministerial Council, The Hon Alfred Prospere and Executive Director and to express gratitude to the sponsoring countries of Grenada, Dominica and St. Lucia for facilitating this transition. While it has appeared seamless, I am fully aware of the efforts that have been invested into this process. Trinidad and Tobago has been an early supporter of the PISLM in its first incarnation, acting as the first host country of the organisation.



PISLM is now established as an Intergovernmental organisation and has an approved governance structure to facilitate its operations and achieve to its mandate.

SIDS have limited resources to combat land desertification and affect land management, which require a strategic approach for use of resources and to maximize outcome.

Land management is a critical component that has be managed effectively to create a balance between economic development and conservation of natural ecosystems.

Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the future development of the PISLM along its evolution, not least of which is the implementation of the Regional Transformative LDN Project and more specifically, in the short term, the SOILCARE Phase 2 project. The latter of which, is going to be key to understanding the base of our natural capital and its implementation would be key to its management over the medium to long term.

Trinidad and Tobago will continue to support the PISLM and all of its regional initiatives. Chair, in closing, let me again congratulate the PISLM on its accomplishments to date, they truly provided invaluable service as we seek to navigate a path to sustainable development and sustainable land management.

Thank You.

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Hon. Saboto Caesar

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour

I speak today on an issue of first importance. I had the opportunity to look at the headlines in my country and the premier online newspaper just fifty-six minutes ago, ‘St. Vincent and the Grenadines-Water rationing heightens due to drought conditions. I scrolled further but not too far to see another headline from the same author ‘drought stricken St. Vincent and the Grenadines, introduced nightly water rationing.’ If anyone here were of the view we were in the wrong place, the headlines speaks for us. Our job and our duty here is not ordinary. I want to encourage my colleagues



that while we thank God for tender mercies, we must have faith and courage, especially as policymakers because it is a daunting task and without the support of entities like the PISLM working in conjunction with the FAO and IICA, on a platform we have just decided upon like the OECS and the CARICOM, we would not have the answers to give a farmer who today might be waiting for a ride with a bucket in hand to go to the nearest river to get water for his animals, not knowing if he would be able to complete his duties before evening.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has satisfied its reporting obligation under the UNCCD and I wish to thank the PISLM for all of its support. St. Vincent and the Grenadines established in 2024 a ‘Drought Preparedness and Risk Management Committee’ and I wish to commend the work of Mr. Fitzgerald Providence, Chief Advisor to the Ministry and also to Mr. Steve Maximay on this. We will be formally engaging the PISLM for further support on these matters and concerns.

I know, Mr. Chair that the task ahead is not an easy one but I have confidence that we will be able in the upcoming period to bring out from within us, what we may doubted ourselves, in the past.

Thank you.

REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

Mr. Ritesh Sardjoe
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment

First of all I would like to apologize for the fact that the Minister of Spatial Planning and Environment cannot join this important meeting

On behalf of the Government of Suriname, I stand before you today to discuss the critical issue of soil care in our nation. As you all know, Suriname is rich because of its different ecosystems, from the pristine rainforests to the fertile coastal plains. Soil care is not just an environmental concern, it's a national imperative. Here's why:



Food Security: Our fertile soils are the backbone of Suriname's agricultural sector. They provide the crops that feed our nation and contribute significantly to our export economy. Maintaining soil health is crucial for ensuring long-term food security.

Environmental Health: Healthy soils act as natural filters, purifying water and preventing erosion. They also play a vital role in mitigating climate change by storing carbon. Degraded soils not only lose these benefits but can exacerbate flooding and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Biodiversity: Suriname's diverse ecosystems rely on healthy soils for their survival. The rich microbial life and organic matter within the soil provide sustenance for countless plants and animals. Deteriorating soil quality leads to a decline in biodiversity.

While we recognize the importance of soil care, Suriname faces several challenges:

Land Degradation: Unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation, and mining can lead to soil erosion, nutrient depletion, and salinization. These factors significantly reduce soil fertility.

Climate Change: Extreme weather events like droughts and floods can further degrade soil health. Rising sea levels threaten coastal soils with salinization.

Limited Awareness: Building a culture of soil conservation requires raising awareness among farmers, policymakers, and the general public.

The Government of Suriname is committed to addressing these challenges. We are actively exploring and implementing strategies.

With support of the PISLM, Suriname is in the phase of finalizing its first national action plan on UNCCD and Suriname will participate on the 2nd phase of the CSIDS-SOILCARE program.

Last but not least soil care is not a solitary effort. It requires collaboration between governments, farmers, scientists, and civil society. By working together, we can ensure that Suriname's precious soils remain fertile and productive for generations to come.

Thank you.

CARICOM Secretariat

Shaun Baugh, Programme Manager

Agricultural and Agro-Industrial Development

Chair, we at the CARICOM Secretariat, are extremely pleased to be partners with the PISLM and are happy with the level of output being achieved through this partnership. We are happy that on your own, the PISLM has already created benefits for the region. As a locally born organization we should be extremely proud and the CARICOM Secretariat remains committed to working with the PISLM as it relates to soil productivity, soil rehabilitation and food security. We also stand ready to support the development and implementation of SOILCARE Phase 2.



United Nations Environment Programme

Christopher Cox, Task Manager

Thank you Chair. It is great to be here representing the UNEP. We at the UNEP are very happy to see the evolution of the PISLM as we have been here from the early steps. The UNEP will continue to support the PISLM and assist in the operationalization of GEF projects throughout the region. You would note that addressing land is multisectoral and we have to start looking at how the technical tools and outputs of all our projects can be mainstreamed into our programmes. One apparent thing is that we still have a lot of work to do to ensure the incorporation of these technical outputs into statutory frameworks. In closing, UNEP is happy to collaborate with the PISLM and support the governments.



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Neila Bobb-Prescott, Climate Finance Specialist

Ms. Bobb-Prescott encouraged attendees to think about what future they would want to work towards. A region without water rationing, without unnecessary food importation, with high food security and a region where policymakers, by a few clicks, can access real-time soil data; is the vision we should work towards as a collective to ensure they are achieved so that we don't end up back at the drawing board discussing these same things again.



UN Convention to Combat Desertification

Jose Miguel Torrico, Coordinator for Latin American and the Caribbean

I would like to reinforce the importance of the participation in the COP 16 in December 2024. The Caribbean countries just have a small portion of land and are being disproportionately affected. I invite you all to bring your issues to the table at the COP and also encourage you all to emphasise the land issues, the work of the UNCCD and the work as governments on June 17th, international drought and desertification day.



Caribbean Youth Environment Network

Reginald Burke, Executive Coordinator

I am most pleased to be part of the process and journey with PISLM. In SIDS, land and soil is most critical and we have to do everything to ensure its sustainability. I would like to thank PISLM and encourage everyone to remember that civil society is where policy becomes practice. I will commit to ensuring that all civil society partners play an active role in PISLM's activities going forward.



PLENARY CONCLUDES

SESSION 5

Decision 01/PMC.1 – Status of CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1

The Chair invited the Project Manager, Mr. Trevor Thompson to guide the meeting on this agenda item.

To fully impart the accomplishments of the project, Mr. Thompson presented a video to the attendees.

Major takeaways of the presentation

Component 1

- 6 National Soil Surveys completed
- Sampling design completed for Haiti and Guyana
- The Caribbean Soil Laboratory Network and the Caribbean Soil Support Group are operational and have received COTED mandates
- There have been severe challenges with getting the soil samples out of the countries and into Trinidad and Tobago.
- There has been a lengthy delay on the side of the UWI with analysis of soil samples due to capacity issues. We are working with the UWI to overcome this challenge.
- We are working with Dr. Cesar Garcia, of the FAO on developing the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS).
- We have signed a contract with a service provider for the delivery of the lab equipment and consumables. Delivery will begin by the end of May, 2024.



Components 2,3 and 4

These components rely heavily on the soil analysis data from the intervention sites. As of March, 2024 six of the seven countries' intervention site soil data have been provided by the UWI.

The Drivers, Pressures, State and Response reports for the intervention sites have been completed and shared with the countries. This will form the basis of the upcoming validation workshops where stakeholders will get a chance to see the data, the status of their environment and the proposed interventions that will improve the quality of the environmental parameters targets, whether is be soil fertility, degradation, reforestation, erosion etc.

The CSIDS-SOILCARE Regional Research and Capacity Building Facility on New Adaptation Technologies (RAC/NAT) has just received its lease agreement from the UWI and has begun trial studies using hot peppers and various forms of hormonal stimulation. Additionally, we are poised to establish a BIO-FLOC system at the facility which will seek to intensively farm shrimp and other seafood in a controlled environment utilizing safe chemical and organic inputs.

Component 5

- The PISLM Knowledge Hub is being developed.
- The PISLM has tabled outcomes of the project at four COTED meetings thus far and has received approval for the CarSoLaN and the CSSG
- Five Postgraduate Scholarships awarded
- First edition of the Caribbean Land/Soil Outlook being finalized

- The LDN Transformation Fund is close to being operationalized as the feasibility study has been completed and work is ongoing on developing the institutional arrangements to govern the fund.

Mr. Thompson then invites Dr. Garcia to expound on the CARSIS

Cesar Garcia- Global Soil Partnership, FAO

The idea is to have a full information system, and this requires a database. A sample of the data was shown from Antigua and Barbuda that would be used as a demonstration of how CARSIS would operate. Technical training and documents are being done to build capacity. A demonstration was shown on how the decision support system (DSS) would operate once the entire system is operational. The system allows you to choose specific points on the map to obtain specific data as well as multiple parameters analysis. The idea is to have a regional database that will aid land use planning, land rehabilitation, etc. This system will be a regional platform that will transform the soil data into map layers and finally into a usable and visually appealing decision support system. Training was just concluded in Grenada, for GIS and other technical officers on the development and use of this system.



The Permanent Secretaries of the responsible Ministries will be asked to nominate persons to manage the system. Each country would have training with at least 20 persons per country from various departments.

The Chair thanked the presenters and opened the forum for questions and comments

Chairman, Hon. Alfred Prosper: Is analysis being done currently on the soil samples? How would the issues highlighted be addressed? Is Soil organic Carbon one of the parameters being tested?



Trevor Thompson: Analysis is being done on the intervention site samples first of which most have been provided. However in order to get the CARSIS operational, we need the national data which is happening but not at the pace in which we would like it to be done. Yes, organic carbon is one of many parameters being tested for.

Hon. Cozier Frederick: Dominica is part of phase 2 and given the snail's pace of achieving soil data, what is the recommendation for this in light of phase 2 coming on board soon?

Trevor Thompson: These discussions are being had. We are preparing to meet with the UWI on these matters. However, we hope that by the commencement of Phase 2, the existing labs will be at a stage to take some of this load off of UWI. Another option is to use the RAC/NAT as a soil analysis laboratory as well for phase 2 as well as soil repository for samples collected.

Dr. Cox, UNEP: How did we arrive at the sample points and what is the interpolation mechanism being used and is there an opportunity to compare the data from this project to the 1960's data?

Cesar Garcia: The points were not simply identified. They were arrived at using the legacy data provided by countries and inputted into a complex model of digital soil mapping software to arrive at

the soil sampling design. It might be difficult to compare the data as the interpolation mechanisms used would have been different

Trevor Thompson: We can try to compare the maps when they are done yes, but understand that most of the old maps are physical and not digital and the control points were different. Very importantly also, comparison would be difficult and maybe even meaningless since the techniques used are totally different.

Hon. Adrian Forde: I am hearing about the results but is there a separate section that deals with treatment of the soils, given the data we are now receiving?

Trevor Thompson: Yes. This will be dealt with through a two-pronged approach. Firstly, the capacity of the labs will be built in terms of equipment and chemicals and training of staff. This will allow for even more specific analysis of soil samples and specific determination of soil treatment. Also, under the components 2 and 3, various interventions will help to address some of these concerns. This can then be upscaled in other projects.

Shaun Baugh (CARICOM): What is the database timeline and is it a living data base? Persons are requesting soil data continuously on the farmer level and policy level. Also, is the database accessible now?

Trevor Thompson: It is a living database, and its data will be added and updated to the database. We had envisioned it to be much more complete by now but the absence of data prevented that. However, with the support of the FAO and GSP, we hope we can get this done in large part by end of year. Currently, it is just a static demonstration. However, our colleagues from the FAO are training personnel across the region on the database and how it will work. This system when finished will have a strong and strict security and access protocol built in. Currently, the DSS is accessible but not the CARSIS.

Maria Vasquez (FAO): To compliment Cesar's contribution, there will be nutrient maps and carbon sequestration maps and requisite training scheduled for later this year that will compliment the DSS.

Calvin James: UWI is our premier academic institution. Resources were given to UWI for this process and we have a contract that binds PISLM and the UWI for this work. We were able to conduct the sampling and now it seems there is a bottleneck in doing the analysis. I would recommend that we work with the incoming Chair to work with UWI on expediting the analysis but more importantly to ensure that UWI understands its important role in this process from the high level of the Ministers.

Reginald Burke, CYEN: You are looking at sequestered carbon but not pollution per say. How do you plan to differentiate between sequestered carbon and carbon obtained from degradation of plastics into the soil.

Maria Vasquez (FAO): We are looking at soil health in terms of heavy metals, but not specifically stated as outcomes of this project. There are various methods we can use to map carbon sequestration that can look at both sources of carbon but not under this project.

Keshore Lutchman, Trinidad and Tobago: Have there been collaborations with other agencies that are collecting similar data? Can the system under development be integrated with any other GIS system a country may have for data collection?

Trevor Thompson: With regard to collaboration, each country was required to provide all legacy data from across all agencies in the country that can help the development of the soil sampling design.

Cesar Garcia: The national data can be integrated into the DSS being developed. The data will be managed by each nation's system and not by one entity outside of the national jurisdiction.

Hon. Alfred Prosperere: The Chair thanked all for their meaningful contributions.

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 1 of the 1st Ministerial Council

This motion was seconded by Hon. Adrian Forde of Barbados.

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 1 of the 1st Ministerial Council was adopted by unanimous consent.

SESSION 6

Decision 02/PMC.1 – Status of CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase II

The Chair invited the Executive Director of the PISLM to guide the meeting on this agenda item.

Mr. James: We have made significant progress in the development of Phase 2. The Project identification form (PIF) has been completed and submitted to the GEF Council for approval. We had anticipated that the PIF would be approved at the last GEF Council meeting in January 2024. It was accepted but not on the agenda. We have received assurances that it will be presented at the June session of the GEF Council for approval. Thereafter, we will receive funding for the development of the project document. However, we would like to stick to the predetermined timelines and as such, the PISLM has identified financial resources to support project development ahead of the approval by the GEF. The PISLM has contracted a consultant to begin the development of the project document.

Hon. Alfred Prosperere: The Chair opened the floor for comments and questions.

There being none;

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 2 of the 1st Ministerial Council

This motion was seconded by Ms. Sherilita Dore-Tyson of St. Kitts and Nevis

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 2 of the 1st Ministerial Council was adopted by unanimous consent.

SESSION 7

Decision 03/PMC.1 – Status of the Caribbean LDN Transformative Project

The Chair invited the Executive Director of the PISLM to guide the meeting on this agenda item.

Mr. James: The Executive Director indicated that as per the directive given at the 5th High Level Forum, the PISLM has engaged the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) as the Accredited Entities. We are currently working with the Accredited Entities to formalize their roles and commitments. We will make provisions in CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 2 to make us of funds there to develop the project document for the LDN Transformative Project. The ED will meet with IICA and Global Mechanism of the UNCCD to finalize the way forward for completion of the concept note. Once all goes well, we should have a concept note to present to the Green Climate Fund by the end of the third quarter of 2024. This will be circulated through the Chairman as an appropriate time.

Hon. Alfred Prospere: The Chair thanked the ED for his efforts and commitment to this process.

Hon. Cozier Frederick: Welcomed the partnership with the IICA and recalled the signing of the instrument with IICA on the sidelines of the UNFCCC COP held in the UAE in December 2023. He highlighted the importance of partnerships on these projects going forward. He also highlighted the relationship between Dominica and the IICA and Antigua and Barbuda on national and regional projects.

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 3 of the 1st Ministerial Council

This motion was seconded by Hon. Saboto Ceasar of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 3 of the 1st Ministerial Council was adopted by unanimous consent.

SESSION 8

Decision 04/PMC.1 – Preparation for UNCCD COP 16 & Establishment of the UNCCD SIDS Forum

The Chair invited the Executive Director of the PISLM to guide the meeting on this agenda item.

Calvin James: The 16th session of the Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification will be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from the 2nd to 13th December, 2024. There is a proposed high-level segment, and we recommend that Excellencies attend the high-level segment. From the PISLM Secretariat's perspective, CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 2 will focus on a decision of

COP15 which was on drought. As you may know, Hon. Prospere is a part of the intergovernmental working group on drought. I would like to reiterate Jose Miguel's position that we should state our case on the matter rather than adopt the positions of other parties who have different perspectives and realities on the issue than CSIDS. I note the opportunities to begin preparation in May via the Caribbean Week of Agriculture and further opportunities in June in St. Lucia. The PISLM proposes between the months of October and November we convene a Ministerial Council before going to COP 16 to finalize our decisions.

Further, at the CRIC held in Uzbekistan, it was agreed by SIDS that participated, that PISLM lead a process to begin the creation of a SIDS space within the UNCCD system starting with the formation of the UNCCD SIDS Forum. This will be launched at the COP16 under the auspices of the Hon. Alfred Prospere. This recommendation was accepted by the UNCCD. This decision then asks us to put together a process in collaboration with the UNCCD that includes ALL SIDS.

Finally, the decision is asking that we establish a SIDS pavilion whose mechanisms will be worked out in the process by all Ministers of SIDS countries. Therefore, we are seeking the leave of Excellencies here to have a Ministerial Council meeting to finalize Caribbean position to take to COP 16 and also request all Ministers for the UNCCD to attend the high level segment at COP 16 and get the approval from Excellencies to convene the SIDS forum proposed to be launch at COP16

Neila Bobb-Prescott (FAO): The FAO stands ready to assist with data from the region in drafting of the position paper.

Jose Miguel (UNCCD): I would like to recommend that we get early notification from the PISLM so that resources can be mobilized to attend and/or host the preparatory meetings. Also, there are five annexes and it would be good to promote the preparatory meeting by annexes and not forget the sub-regions within the Annexes. Hence we should start defining our needs by sub-region and then by Annexes.

Reginald Burke (CYEN)- Was the SIDS4 Conference considered as a vehicle for pushing this agenda?

Calvin James: The PISLM has requested time and space for a side event at the upcoming SIDS 4 in Antigua and Barbuda and has been granted permission. The preparation for COP 16 and launching of the SIDS Forum are on the agenda.

Hon. Saboto Cesar: Between now and December, there will be many conflicting meetings and agendas. I would like to suggest there be a Ministerial sub-committee to focus specifically on the COP16 in order to maximise our presence at the COP. I will pledge my support fully to the sub-committee should it be established to help integrate the multilateral platform into the OECS.

Hon. Alfred Prospere: Given the recommendation, I would like to suggest that the sub-committee be comprised of the UNCCD National Focal Points.

Calvin James: The PISLM proposes that we insert a new paragraph under '2' in place of 'b' to read "*Establish a subcommittee, comprised of UNCCD National Focal Points to work with the Secretariat to plan the Ministers' participation at the COP16*"

Hon. Cozier Frederick: Should this decision move forward, suggests that we recruit other capable human resource to bolster the work of the subcommittee. After this process, we should have consolidated statements from the region in addition to the national statements of the issues at hand.

Hon. Alfred Prospere: This is a very important matter as it is sometimes great to see the African officers and Ministers making a strong case for Africa but disheartening to see just a few Caribbean Ministers. It gives the impression that the Caribbean's matters are not of importance and significance and I applaud the effort to begin preparations well before the COP.

Christopherher Cox (UNEP)- I would like to add the voice of the UNEP to assisting the Ministers in the process of developing and drafting decision papers for the COP 16.

The Chairperson moved a motion to adopt Decision 4 with amendments, of the 1st Ministerial Council

This motion was seconded by Hon. Cozier Frederick of The Commonwealth of Dominica.

The motion was placed on the floor for objections.

There being none;

Decision 4 of the Ist Ministerial Council was adopted by unanimous consent.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair, Honorable Alfred Prospere of St. Lucia, extended thanks once again to the Government and people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique for hosting the PISLM's meetings and for agreeing to host the PISLM in its new dispensation. The Chair thanked colleague Ministers and technical officers in attendance for their participation, other international organisations present for their support and the PISLM for their support to the CSIDS and their excellent preparations and for the meetings.

THE CHAIR BROUGHT A CLOSE TO THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS.





Annexes

Approved Decisions of the 6th High Level Forum

Approved Decisions of the 1st PISLM Ministerial Council

PISLM Establishment Agreement

Executive Director's supporting presentation

Supporting presentation on CARSIS