

MEDIA RELEASE

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9th High Level Session Ministerial Forum

Caribbean Ministers Endorse the Importance of Strengthening Wastewater Management in the Region



Caribbean Ministers and senior officials with responsibility for water resources management are seen here along with representatives of the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C), the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) and the Global Environment Facility's Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management (GEF CReW) at the 9th High Level Session Ministerial Forum held in Barbados on October 10th and 11th, 2013.

Missing from Photo: Ms. Judy Daniel, Chair of the GWP-C and Chair of Regional Chairs of the Global Water Partnership.

Five (5) Caribbean Ministers with responsibility for water resources management from Barbados, Anguilla, The Commonwealth of Dominica, Nevis and the Turks and Caicos Islands, and five (5) senior ministerial/ government representatives from Saint Kitts, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe and Belize have endorsed recommendations for placing greater value on wastewater in the region and its role in the holistic management of water in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The recommendations came out of the 9th High Level Session (HLS) Ministerial Forum, which was held in Barbados on October 10th and 11th, 2013 under the theme *"Water and Sanitation and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Addressing Wastewater Policy and Financial Challenges in the Caribbean."* The 9th Forum took place under the auspices of Dr. The Honourable David Estwick, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Water Resource Management through the support of the Barbados Water Authority (BWA).

The Ministerial Forum is held annually as a joint initiative of the Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) and the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA). The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme through the Global Environment Facility's Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management (GEF CReW) continued to provide financial support to this year's event following its initial collaboration at last year's HLS Ministerial Forum in The Bahamas. The Forum provides a unique platform for Ministers and senior officials involved in water resources management to share experiences and propose strategic directions for the resolution of water and wastewater issues affecting Caribbean SIDS. To date, the Forum is an unmatched regional event, being the only meeting of Caribbean Water Ministers.

Key recommendations arising out of the Declaration signed by the Ministers at the Forum were the recognition of wastewater's important cross-sectoral linkages within various sectors and that wastewater management should be regarded as a supportive service that adds value and not costs. Also significant in the Declaration was the proposal for adopting holistic approaches that prioritise Integrated Urban Water Management and treat wastewater as a resource and not a waste. Echoing a similar sentiment during one of the discussion sessions at the Forum, Mr. Victor Poyotte, Executive Director of the Caribbean Water and Sewerage Association Inc. (CAWASA) said "Water and wastewater cannot be looked at in isolation."

During the discussions at the Forum, the Caribbean Ministers and senior government officials presented their perspectives on a range of issues which included achieving financial sustainability in wastewater management; the importance of wastewater management in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the impacts of climate change; the challenges climate change will pose for wastewater management in SIDS; establishing a wastewater policy agenda and associated challenges; wastewater financing; the ratification and implementation of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (or LBS Protocol); among other issues. Also raised during discussions was the need for establishing and enhancing regional mechanisms for agency collaboration and prioritising wastewater management at the highest policy and decision-making level and the value of expanding south-south cooperation and sharing of expertise and best practices.

The Forum of Ministers therefore recognised the need to prioritise programmes, actions and investments in wastewater management in relevant sectors where the most impacts existed, for instance in urban areas and vulnerable communities. Accepting that capital costs are likely to provide a significant impediment for our small and fragile economies, the need for concessionary funds and grants were underscored as being essential to establish or upgrade wastewater infrastructure in the region. A presentation by GWP-C's keynote speaker at the Forum, Professor Kalanithy Vairavamoorthy, Director of the School of Global Sustainability of the University of South Florida and an internationally-recognised expert on urban water management, spurred the Ministers' interest in natural wastewater systems that could be launched incrementally or combined with existing infrastructure, as providing another option that could be pursued.

The Ministers also acknowledged the need to mobilise and secure grassroots support and public awareness as a necessary condition for garnering political support for initiating wastewater policies and programmes. According to the Honourable Troy Liburd, Minister of Works and Communications of Nevis who participated in the 9th Forum "Wastewater is not at the forefront of everyone's mind." He said "Information on wastewater does not trickle down to the average man; the challenge is to distribute this information."

The Ministerial Recommendations were signed on October 11th, 2013 by Dr. The Honourable David C. Estwick, Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management of Barbados; The Honourable Evan Gumbs, Minister of Infrastructure, Communications, Utilities and Housing of Anguilla; The Honourable Reginald Austrie, Minister of Lands, Housing, Settlements and Water Resource Management of The Commonwealth of Dominica; The Honourable Porscha Stubbs-Smith, Minister of Environment and Home Affairs of the Turks and Caicos Islands; and The Honourable Troy Liburd, Minister of Works and Communications of Nevis. Also endorsing the recommendations were Mr. Lenrick Lake, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy of Saint Kitts and Nevis and senior officials representing Caribbean Ministers with responsibility for water from the countries of Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe and Belize.

Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C) and the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) are committed to supporting the realisation of the recommendations coming out of the 9th High Level Session Ministerial Forum, in cooperation with national governments, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and other partners. Furthermore, the GEF CReW project which is due to end in 2015 has pledged its continued support for the convening of the 2014 High Level Session Ministerial Forum and to achieving the Ministerial recommendations.

The Recommendations of the 9th Forum can be found at: www.gwp-caribbean.org, www.cwwa.net and www.gefcrew.org.

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