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CONCEPT PAPER

REGULAR MEETING OF THE

INTER-AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR Integral DEVELOPMENT (CIDI)

MAY 23, 2023

**TOPIC: CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER: WATER SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

1. **Background and Rationale**

At the meetings of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) held in the first half of 2023, the member states drew attention to the impact of the climate change hazard on different sectors and development areas. Compared to other regions of the world, in the Americas, water resources management is relatively strong, but it is not strong enough to address the challenges of the economic, social, and political impact of climate change.

In Latin America, water resources are abundant, and constitute 31% of the world’s fresh water supply. However, many areas of the region are being impacted by unpredictable rainfall patterns resulting from climate change, extreme drought, and extreme weather phenomena.[[1]](#footnote-1)/ Climate change is exacerbating water cycle variability. These cycles produce extreme weather phenomena that undermine the capacity to manage impacts of droughts and flood, while making water resource availability less predictable, degrading water quality, and jeopardizing sustainable development, biodiversity, and access to water and sanitation in the Americas.

Climate change is also impacting water supply systems and different productive water resource uses. Access to drinking water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene are essential to human health and well-being. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, over 166 million (26% of its population[[2]](#footnote-2)/) lack adequate access to drinking water. Water is also required for industrial, food, and energy production, closely related sectors, and, if water resources are mismanaged, these sectors are potentially at odds. Lastly, low levels of investment in the water and sanitation sector jeopardize the guarantee of the basic human right to safe, affordable, and reliable water and sanitation services, exacerbating water insecurity in the Americas.

Strengthening the region’s crossborder water resources agenda is a priority, given the impacts of climate change, growing water scarcity, and increasing water demand. The region has 67 international river basins that cover approximately 50% of its territory, and many of the region’s economic activities are dependent upon crossborder water resources. These resources are, however, vulnerable. Increasing water demand, pollution, and climate variability, along with public institutional underperformance and major lacunae in governance and finance, jeopardize the sustainable management of these resources. In crossborder contexts, international jurisdictions heighten these challenges, for which reason cooperative management is crucial if the economic activity and social well-being of the riparian countries is to be safeguarded.

Crossborder water resources are dependent upon cooperation among various countries. This calls for the promotion of dialogue, the use of diplomacy, and the development of agreements among countries. In this regard, the Organization of American States (OAS), the world’s first organization working to ensure regional integration by means of sustainable management of shared ecosystems, has been at the forefront of the design, development, and management of initiatives to strengthen mechanisms for mutual cooperation among member states for the sustainable management of crossborder waters. The intent is to continue to take integrated management approaches that take into account the needs and perspectives of all parties concerned, especially the perspective of indigenous peoples and local communities.

As part of the preparations for the upcoming Fourth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development, this regular meeting of CIDI will identify priority action areas for the promotion of governance, financing, and innovative ways of promoting water security in the context of the climate crisis in the Americas.

1. **Meeting Objective**

The meeting objective is to underscore the benefits, challenges, and opportunities of integrated water resources management, based on examples of crossborder basin management now in implementation in different regions of the Americas. Such integrated management is greatly impacted by climate change-related phenomena. This meeting will afford the member states an opportunity to discuss their challenges, action priorities, and expectations regarding appropriate mechanisms and actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Questions for member states:

1. What topics or priority action areas does your country identify for the next century to promote water security in the context of the climate crisis?
2. Financing is essential if good water resources governance is to be ensured. What examples can you give of the public and private sectors working together to achieve adequate financing of sustainable water and climate change management projects? What incentives and mechanisms are in use in your country to promote public-private investment in the water sector?
3. Multinational cooperation is important in ensuring good climate action and water resources management efforts. What priority actions does your country identify to promote crossborder water cooperation in today’s climate scenario?
4. **Relevance to SEDI**

* Promotion of political dialogue to disseminate cooperation data, protocols, and frameworks in order to assist OAS member states in building their water resources management capacity
* Promotion of the sharing of information and best practices at the regional level, based on ecosystem management in crossborder basins in the context of climate change hazards
* Promotion of the use of innovative technologies, practices, and strategies for the adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of climate change on the water resources of the Americas
* Improvement of the technical autonomy, resilience, and efficiency and effectiveness of government authorities charged with water management, by means of capacity-building
* Receipt of government contributions on topics to be discussed at the Fourth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development

1. **OAS Mandates**

On June 9, 2022, the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, gathered at the Ninth Summit of the Americas, held in Los Angeles (United States), reached consensus regarding the importance of greater resilience in the Americas, and, in consequence, they adopted the mandate “Our Sustainable Green Future.” The member states recognized the importance of promoting policies and actions that contribute to the implementation of sustainable solutions, such as nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches, and other management and conservation approaches, pursuing efforts to limit the increase in average global temperature to 1.5oC. In particular, they underscored the importance of striving “to conserve, protect, and restore coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, salt marshes, seagrass beds, and river grass beds that function as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gas emissions”.[[3]](#footnote-3)/ They also underscored the importance of supporting “the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies in all States”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In addition, in OAS General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 2967 (LI-O/21), “Advancing Hemispheric Initiatives on Integral Development: Promoting Resilience,” in the strategic line “Strengthening the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Accordance with the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS) 2016-2021,” the following mandates are established: “To instruct SEDI to continue providing support to member states for the promotion and development of national comprehensive water management policies, including provisions for mitigation of, and adaptation to, the effects of climate change, such as extreme droughts and floods, in particular for water-stressed countries and regions at risk” and **“**To encourage member states, when implementing integrated and sustainable water resource management, to address seasonal water shortage and excess, to take into account the implications of increased water demand for health and sanitation to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases, particularly in rural areas, water-dependent sectors, and where agriculture is at risk.”[[5]](#footnote-5)/

The Charter of the OAS establishes the mandates of CIDI to promote cooperation among the OAS member states for the purpose of achieving integral development and, in particular, to help eliminate extreme poverty. It also instructs CIDI to “[p]romote, coordinate, and assign responsibility for the execution of development programs and projects to the subsidiary bodies and relevant organizations, on the basis of the priorities identified by the Member States, in areas such as: 1) Economic and social development, including trade, tourism, integration and the environment;”

The Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS) instructs the OAS General Secretariat to continue, through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, to work with the authorities for sustainable development of the member states that so request in implementing the measures set forth in the PIDS in coordination with other international entities and agencies. The PIDS establishes strategic actions to ensure that the work of the General Secretariat on sustainable development is aligned with the implementation in the Hemisphere of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, and that its objectives and results are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by member states and contribute to their attainment. The implementation of those strategic actions by the General Secretariat will be carried out at the request of member states. In particular, under the strategic action “Integrated Water Resources Management,” the PIDS underscores the importance of “[s]upport[ing] member states in strengthening existing—and promoting new—strategic partnerships for the **implementation of integrated water resources management and projects on climate change mitigation and adaptation**” and the need to “[e]nsure that projects in support of **member states’ integrated water resources management contribute to strengthening national technical capacities**, in order to maximize the benefits for beneficiary countries.”[[6]](#footnote-6)/

The work of the OAS General Secretariat should provide direct support for member state efforts to strengthen water resources use and management, with a view to mitigating the adverse effects of climate change in this sector, considering the repercussions that good management has for those resources at the community, country and regional levels.

1. **Meeting Structure**

Various panelists have been invited to address the problems of water resources management in the context of the challenges posed by climate change in the region. The member states will have an opportunity to participate in an interactive dialogue guided by the Chair of CIDI.

Following the Q&A session with the guest panelists, the Chair will invite the delegations to present best practices and identify challenges and opportunities, as well as specific needs, for hemispheric cooperation in this area.

Guest panelists:

* Cynthia Barzuna, Director, Ocean Action 2030 Coalition, oceans program, World Resources Institute
* Deputy Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia (to be confirmed)
* Luis Carlos García, Director, La Plata Basin and River Navigation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay
* José Miguel Zeledón, Director, water department, Ministry of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica
* Peru (to be confirmed)

1. **Meeting Outcomes**
2. Enhanced integrated water resources management, with a view to improving water security in a context of climate crisis in the Americas
3. An understanding of the needs of and challenges faced by member states in their efforts to improve water management in crossborder basins
4. Dissemination of information on best practices among member states to improve decision-making and streamline water management in crossborder basins
5. Identification of the principal messages that contribute to the formulation of the agenda for the Fourth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development
6. Contributions from member states regarding the management of their water resources and actions they are taking to address the challenges of climate change

1. . OAS, 2022; “Tropical Glaciers and Climate Change, Perspectives from NDCs and adaptation: Analysis and proposals based on the scenarios of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia” <https://www.calameo.com/read/005541614c0b93e63123a> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . United Nations Statistics Division: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . Ninth Summit of the Americas, “Our Sustainable Green Future” and “Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition,” June 9, 2022, Los Angeles (United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . Ninth Summit of the Americas, “Our Sustainable Green Future” and “Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition,” June 9, 2022, Los Angeles (United States). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . AG/RES. 2967 (LI-O/21), “Advancing Hemispheric Initiatives on Integral Development: Promoting Resilience” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. . Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development 2016-2021 (PIDS): [PIDS\_2017.pdf (oas.org)](https://www.oas.org/en/sedi/pub/PIDS_2017.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)