



Global Environment Outlook

for Youth in the Caribbean

A Vision for Change!



UNEP



CCA



CYEN

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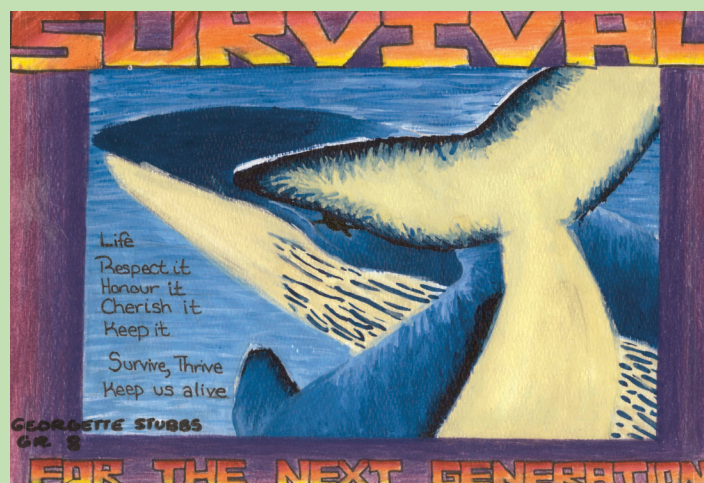
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Prologue

Youth is one of nine major groups that are recognized in the context of Agenda 21. As part of the Caribbean's commitment to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA), the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), we initiated the GEO Youth of the Caribbean assessment to afford young people in the Caribbean the opportunity to contribute to sustainable development policies and actions. We promote youth participation in on-going decision-making processes, since these decisions will impact their present living conditions as well as influence their future.

Countries of the Caribbean, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS), face numerous development and environmental challenges. Due to its particular economic, social and geographical conditions, people of this region are particularly vulnerable to global changes such as commodity markets and global warming. Their development and management options are often limited by small population sizes as well as the national economies that depend heavily on a few limited sectors.

Giving our youth venues to discuss openly environmental issues and share their innovative ideas for more sustainable future is a great way to plant a sense of environmental stewardship in the leaders of tomorrow. For a decade, the GEO for Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean project, to which this GEO Youth of the Caribbean assessment is part of, has expanded to provide such opportunities to young people throughout the region.

The Caribbean process was carried with the united efforts of youth organisations, community groups, schools and individuals that have resulted in the production of this report, supported by a partnership among the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) and the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN).

Through this report, young people of the Caribbean voice their concerns toward environmental damage and rapid change. It also conveys youthful vision and recommendations for what must be done, proposing strategies for sustainable development. It is a showcase of their holistic vision and eagerness to initiate concrete actions to address environmental problems and development challenges. The perspective of youth, as presented in this report, shall encourage today's decision-makers to develop and implement better policies and action plans pave a way for a more prosperous and sustainable Caribbean.

We recognize the contribution that youth can and must make to achieve a sustainable development, and that this publication would inspire you too join in our endeavours.

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Background

The GEO for Youth of the Caribbean report is part of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), an integrated environmental assessment process that began in 1995. Evaluations of the state of the environment at the global, regional, national, and sub-national levels are regularly updated to provide guidance for decision-making on the development of policies, environmental protection measures, and resource allocation. The reports warn the international community about environmental deterioration and call for a reversal of negative trends.

The youth component of the GEO process presents the environmental concerns and proposals of young people. Young people are critical stakeholders in environmental issues due to their determining influence on present and future development trends. Indeed population forecasts indicate that nearly 60% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean will be below the age of 30 in 2005 (ECLAC, 2004). UNEP's commitment to involve youth, between the ages of 15 and 25, in environmental management led to the launch of the GEO for Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean initiative in 1999 by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC). Due to the success of the project's first publication GEO for Youth: Open Your Eyes to the Environment in 2001, national and sub-regional processes were initiated throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The resulting network of youth environmentalists enables environmentally conscious and committed youth to share experiences and develop skills in project design, implementation, and evaluation.

The GEO for Youth of the Caribbean project began in 2003 through collaboration between UNEP, the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), and the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN). The participation of youth from 14 Caribbean countries (13 English-Speaking territories and Dutch-speaking Suriname) make this a lively network committed to increasing public awareness and fostering innovative action to improve the environmental situation in the Caribbean. The GEO for Youth of the Caribbean report showcases research, case studies, personal experiences, and artistic contributions from over 150 young people that describe the present state of the Caribbean's environment and propose strategies to alter negative trends. The projects presented in this report should inspire youth to participate in environmental management, and to build rewarding partnerships that will bring environmental issues to the forefront of development strategies in collaboration with other sectors of society and government.

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