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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Sixteenth Session of the IOC Committee on International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE, Lisbon, Portugal, 30 October – 9 November 2000)**

**Report of the Regional Co-ordinator for the IOC  
Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent  
Regions**

Submitted by Alan Duncan, IOC Acting Secretary for IOCARIBE

The period 1996-2000 was marked by two major events that underscore needs that must be met if oceanographic data and information management in the region is to be put on a sound footing. The first of these events was GODAR-V held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia October, 1996 and the other was IOCARIBE-GODAR-I held February, 2000 also in Cartagena de Indias.

Fifteen (15) countries, represented by Principal data holders, Directors of National Oceanographic Data Centres (NODCs), National IODE Co-ordinators of the IOC member States of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

GODAR-V, a workshop, identified several constraints to proper data management and the meeting culminated in a number of recommendations to the IOC for improvement.

IOCARIBE-GODAR is a product of these recommendations and when implemented should greatly enhance the process of data and information management in the region. It cannot be denied that any improved management of existing data is a basis for the future and that this can be accomplished through training and awareness creation. A major constraint to data management in the region is lack of co-ordination at the national level e.g. in the anglophone Caribbean there may be several institutions and private individuals and scientists collecting data which find their way into referred journal publications but not into institutional and/or national databases. A similar situation can be envisaged for other IOCARIBE Member States.

During the period under review oceanographic data continued to be collected by ships of opportunity conducting research in the Caribbean region. Major contributors to the data collection effort were ships operated by NOAA/AOML (Miami), training ships from the Sea Education Association Inc (a consortium of universities and research institutions on the Eastern seaboard of the US), the Coast Guard vessels of the Caribbean Regional Security System (a CARICOM initiative). More recently, the CARICOM/OAS/GEF-funded Caribbean: Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change (CPACC) Project has added its quota to the fund of ocean-related data and information the region. This latter effort will see the acquisition, processing and availability of selected data sets in near real-time.

Marine related data were also collected by the member institutions of the Caribbean Community Ocean Sciences Network (CCOSNET) - the University of the West Indies (three campuses), the Bellairs Institute of McGill University (Barbados), the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), St Lucia, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), Trinidad and Tobago and the University of Guyana. Whilst the IMA has responsibility for co-ordinating the activities of CCOSNET little has been done since the retirement in August, 1997 of the CCOSNET Co-ordinator.

More recently and attempt is being made at dialogue between the IOC, CPACC and CARICOM for collaboration on marine and coastal related efforts in the Sub-region.

The merits of these data collecting regimes cannot be denied. However these activities are not likely to bear significant fruit in the longer term unless data co-ordination mechanisms are put in place now in order to achieve the worthy goals of providing access, and using the acquired information for:

- fostering the generation of knowledge, sharing of information, expertise and experiences on the wider Caribbean and its coastlines;
- assisting Member States to develop their capacity to formulate national policies and plans to meet their needs in marine science and technology;
- reinforcing and broadening scientific co-operation, regionally and internationally through networking and institutional arrangements with organizations operating within and without the region (for example, UN bodies, IGOs, NGOs, the scientific community)
- providing the regional input to global ocean sciences and observation programmes; and
- promoting and facilitating the implementation of IOC global science programmes and ocean services at the regional level

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