A sustainable energy future for the Caribbean
Optimising the linkages between energy, livelihoods and nature

Concept note for a programme of activities
to be implemented as part of the IUCN Caribbean Initiative

February 2009

1. Introduction
This concept note proposes a multi-year programme of activities with an initial eighteen-month start-up phase on the theme of sustainable energy, livelihoods and nature. The programme has been developed and will be implemented under the framework of IUCN’s Caribbean Initiative. The situation analysis that preceded the development of the Initiative highlighted the threat that current unsustainable patterns of energy use pose to Caribbean ecosystems and human development, as well as the potential to increase the contribution of natural assets to sustainable energy production. As the region begins to assess options for the future, planners and decision-makers need to consider the environmental implications of both new and existing energy sources, including their potential impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. Equally crucial is the need to develop long-term energy strategies that contribute to sustainable livelihoods and help countries meet their energy needs on a sustainable basis.

The programme presented here is based on a detailed consultative assessment of Caribbean sustainable energy issues and needs and of how IUCN’s networks and expertise can best contribute to addressing them. A range of partnerships will be required to implement it: key actors will include national and regional institutions and programmes working in the field of sustainable energy, donors, and a mobilised IUCN membership with interest and expertise in these fields.

The purpose of this concept note is to present the proposed programme to stakeholders and potential partners, to explore possible areas of collaboration, and to serve as the basis for the preparation of more detailed work plans and project documents.

2. Background: energy, livelihoods and nature
For centuries, Caribbean economies and households relied on renewable energy sources available from the natural environment, including wood (often transformed into charcoal), wind and water, which fuelled agricultural production during the plantation era. The remnants of wind and water mills still can be found on many Caribbean islands. While these sources were both free and renewable, the lack of other energy options sometimes resulted in overexploitation, with Haiti’s denuded hillsides being the most dramatic example.

Over the last few decades, as Caribbean economies have grown and become more diversified, these traditional energy sources have become less significant. Most Caribbean countries now generate nearly all their energy through fossil fuels. Sustainable energy sources such as sun and the once-important wind and hydro power play only a small role in national energy strategies. There are few incentives for public or private investment in these sustainable options, while oil production in Trinidad and nearby Venezuela, combined with regional trade agreements, encourages continued reliance on petroleum-based fuels.
The environmental costs of fossil fuel dependence have been great. In many countries of the region, the presence of oil production, refining and trans-shipment facilities has had environmental and social impacts including coastline damage and biodiversity loss from oil spills, groundwater contamination from refineries, and destruction of coastal ecosystems and livelihoods. Systems for monitoring and assessing these impacts are rarely adequate.

The unavailability of mainstream modern energy options can also be environmentally costly. Dependence on fuelwood by the poorest, who cannot afford fossil fuel-based technologies and may lack access to national grid systems, and who are found particularly in Haiti and the rural areas of other countries, contributes to ecosystem degradation, loss of species habitat, unsustainable livelihood strategies and perpetuation of poverty.

These interrelationships between energy, livelihoods and nature are complex and constantly evolving in response to economic, social and political changes. Understanding, monitoring and addressing them are key to the achievement of a sustainable energy future for the region.

3. The changing context: current opportunities and challenges

The assessment of the evolving energy context carried out to inform this concept note (see Appendix) identifies the following key issues affecting the region’s ability to move to a more sustainable energy future:

• Concerned about overdependence on fossil fuels, the countries of the region are giving growing attention to renewable alternatives. As a result, policy reform processes are underway in a number of countries, but the structure of the energy sector in most countries, including regulatory frameworks based on monopoly providers, complex cross subsidies and a lack of incentives for major energy producing and using sectors to diversify, makes implementation problematic.

• There is very limited capacity within governments, the private sector or civil society to assess fully the economic, environmental and social costs and benefits of different energy policies, options and mixes.

• Nonetheless, proposals for the adoption of a range of new energy options, such as biofuel production, geothermal plants, and wind farms, are proliferating and several ambitious projects are already on-stream.

• Particularly at the regional level, there are a growing number of programmes and institutions working on energy policy reform and exploring new energy strategies and options, and these initiatives would benefit from an approach that focuses on the linkages between energy, livelihoods and nature.

• All the countries of the region have active programmes focusing on conservation and ecosystem management. As signatories to the Convention on Biodiversity, they have formulated and are implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans that offer opportunities to strengthen these linkages.

4. The value that IUCN can add

IUCN has decades of conservation experience and a current programmatic focus on conserving biodiversity, naturally energising the future, managing ecosystems for human well-being, changing the climate forecast, and greening the world economy. Having launched a new Caribbean Initiative, IUCN is well placed to support the region’s transition to a more sustainable energy future by helping it to focus on the linkages between nature, energy and sustainable development.
IUCN sees energy as a key issue for sustainability because energy impacts on society and the environment. From IUCN’s perspective, the critical question is how can ecosystems be managed and their services enhanced to support energy provision and sustainable development. IUCN’s recent work on energy has been largely through the framework of its Energy, Ecosystems and Livelihoods Initiative, whose goal is to accelerate the transition to energy systems that are ecologically sustainable, socially equitable, and economically viable. Through this Initiative and its work in areas such as climate change and trade, IUCN has developed expertise and generated knowledge on the role that energy can play in securing a sustainable future, including tools and approaches for managing impacts and promoting opportunities.

In response to a Resolution passed at the 2004 Congress in Bangkok, IUCN undertook a process of consultation with IUCN Members and partners in the Caribbean to design a work programme for a new Initiative in the Insular Caribbean, which was launched at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008. Assuring a sustainable energy future for the Caribbean was one area that those consulted felt was of critical importance. Energy has therefore been given prominence in the new Initiative’s programme for the period 2009-2012.

Also of relevance to the Caribbean is the project launched early in 2008 through the IUCN Oceania Office, Managing the ecosystem and livelihood implications of energy policies in the Pacific Island States. This project, with activities starting up in six small island developing states (SIDS), is testing renewable energy approaches that are appropriate to islands that have much in common with Caribbean SIDS. By supporting activities in both island regions and facilitating the sharing of experience, IUCN can enhance the value of both programmes.

In addition to these assets derived from its programme, IUCN can also contribute its convening power, through which, with the support of its Members in the region, it is able to facilitate dialogues across stakeholder groups and linguistic divides.

Where IUCN is best suited to support the ongoing energy transition in the Caribbean is in the nexus between energy and nature. Consultations with key energy actors working in the region and with IUCN Members from the region have helped to clarify this niche and the types of activities IUCN could most usefully support.

5. Overall aim and objectives

The aim of this programme of activities is to strengthen the ability of Caribbean energy and conservation actors to support the transition to an energy future for the Caribbean that is ecologically sustainable, socially equitable and economically viable.

The objectives are:

- to ensure that national and regional energy policy processes are informed by and responsive to the linkages between energy, nature and livelihood sustainability;
- to build capacity within the region to assess energy options from the perspective of their impacts on and contribution to natural assets, including biodiversity;
- to identify, demonstrate and promote nature-based energy options that support national and regional goals of biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

6. Potential programme activities

The activities described below are the ones that IUCN believes to be priorities given the needs identified for the region and IUCN’s capacities and interests in the field of sustainable energy. This mutually reinforcing set of activities includes elements of policy support, capacity
strengthening, shared learning and demonstration. While taking a programmatic approach optimises synergies and impact, the activities within the programme can also be packaged individually or in thematic clusters depending on the interests of donors and partners. As an ongoing programme, other activities are expected to be added over time in response to evolving opportunities and contexts.

a. **Strengthening the links with nature and livelihoods in energy policies.** Many countries of the region are currently revising their energy policies in response to rising fuel costs, global concerns about energy security and climate change mitigation, and consumer demand for lower costs and greater choice. These reform processes offer an opportunity to assure that national goals and commitments regarding nature, livelihoods and poverty reduction are supported in energy policies and regulations, and that these policies are consistent with principles of and requirements for ecosystem management. IUCN could contribute to these policy processes by ensuring popular awareness and stakeholder participation, as well as providing expert input, potentially through its Environmental Law Programme, on environmental aspects of the policy and on regulatory regimes, siting requirements and incentives to address any potentially negative impacts of energy policy on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and to enhance the contribution of these services to sustainable energy production.

b. **Building capacity to assess energy options that use, or impact on, renewable natural resources.** With global interest in renewable energy investments growing rapidly, Caribbean governments, regional organisations, national utility companies, private sector banks and entrepreneurs, and environmental NGOs urgently need to increase their knowledge about, and ability to assess, new energy options and their potential positive and negative impacts on the environment, households and livelihoods. This was one of the major priorities emerging from the First Caribbean Sustainable Energy Forum, as well as from the High Level Caribbean Regional Sustainable Energy Seminar, held in the Bahamas in July 2008. IUCN proposes to partner with regional actors to develop and disseminate learning tools and information and support capacity-building in the field of renewable energy for governments and key regional organisations. Activities will be designed to take advantage of the considerable but dispersed expertise that already exists within the region, by creating mechanisms for improved dissemination and sharing – including sharing across linguistic divides. This component will draw on work under IUCN’s Energy, Ecosystems and Livelihoods Initiative and the Business and Biodiversity Programme to develop and disseminate tools to help businesses and governments make better energy decisions.

c. **Supporting sustainable energy policy and practice transitions in selected countries.** This component will include a set of activities in support of sustainable energy processes in countries where such processes are now underway, including an assessment and valuation of the contribution of natural resources and ecosystem services to energy, to help “make the case” for conservation as a development imperative. The information generated by such assessments will help national decision-makers in designing economic instruments aimed at sustaining ecosystem services as well as in determining priorities for conservation and restoration of ecosystems critical to energy security. Other activities will be specific to individual countries.

d. **Reducing the energy footprint of IUCN Members.** Some of IUCN’s Caribbean members are interested in developing comprehensive energy strategies to reduce their energy footprint and potentially earn carbon credits. IUCN can support these initiatives by providing links to information and technical advice, documenting examples as case studies for others wishing to reduce their carbon footprint, and encouraging other Members to take similar actions.
e. **Energy for poverty reduction and sustainable rural livelihoods.** The cost of energy puts an increasing strain on rural communities, on rural enterprises, which support a large proportion of the region’s poor, and on ecosystems. Working with and through a range of partners, particularly IUCN Members and other IUCN regional programmes such as those in Africa, and in collaboration with national and regional rural development agencies, IUCN will develop and implement pilot programmes aimed at testing the feasibility and local appropriateness of these sorts of renewable energy options, assessing their gender and social implications, and disseminating information on those that appear most promising in different contexts.

f. **Energy for environmentally sustainable tourism.** Throughout the region, small-scale alternatives to mainstream tourism have emerged, which encourage the enjoyment of the Caribbean’s natural and cultural attributes, often in ways that create strong linkages to the local economy. These small enterprises struggle to compete with the mainstream industry. While much of the focus of sustainable energy initiatives in the hospitality sector, such as the Green Globe programme and the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), has been on larger and mid-sized hotels and resorts, rising energy prices are likely to affect the viability of these smaller, more ecologically appropriate enterprises even more severely in the coming years. Working with national hotel and tourism associations and tourist boards and regional actors such as CAST, IUCN will support increased energy efficiency and reduced impacts on biodiversity through advice on and demonstration of appropriate technologies and energy conservation measures. It could also work with government agencies to develop energy saving incentives targeting this sub-sector of the industry.

g. **Sharing across island regions.** The issues around sustainable energy and livelihoods in diverse island regions have many similarities. For example, small islands share difficulties in achieving economies of scale, capacity constraints, and a largely unavoidable reliance on imported inputs and technologies. There is also less global investment in research and development on the energy technologies and approaches most relevant to the small island context in terms of scale, capacity requirements and cost. As a result of these common issues, there are many parallels in the objectives and activities of this proposed programme for the Caribbean and the Managing the ecosystem and livelihood implications of energy policies in Pacific Island States project and this proposed project for the Caribbean take somewhat different approaches. The final component of this programme will be a set of activities aimed at sharing experiences between the island countries and territories participating in IUCN’s Caribbean Initiative, Pacific Islands Programme, and Programme on EU Overseas Entities, and at jointly developing guidelines and recommendations on the biodiversity, ecosystem and livelihood aspects of energy policies and practices in small island states.

### 7. Short-term implementation plan

The strategy described in this section will be implemented in selected countries and sub-regions during an 18-month start-up phase and then expanded to other parts of the region based on experience and demand. Meanwhile, the Caribbean Initiative will remain open to other opportunities and partnerships that could contribute to the objectives identified in section 5 above. To provide guidance and assure that learning is shared across the region, a programme Steering Committee comprised of experts drawn from IUCN Member organisations and key partners will be established.

- **Strengthening the links with nature and livelihoods in energy policies.** IUCN will offer to contribute to an ongoing energy policy review process being undertaken
in CARICOM Member States through a review of energy policies from the perspective of national commitments under the Convention on Biodiversity and associated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Key partners will include the CARICOM Energy Desk and the Caribbean Renewable Energy Programme (CREDP) supported by GTZ.

- **Building capacity to assess energy options that use, or impact on, renewable natural resources.** The strategy for building regional capacity will initially focus on IUCN Members and on sharing learning across countries and between regions.

  - **IUCN Members.** IUCN’s government agency and NGO Members from the Caribbean are regional leaders on issues of nature conservation and sustainable development. However, most of them have very limited expertise in energy issues and thus are less able to contribute their perspectives and knowledge to energy policy processes and discussions. To bring their valuable voices to these national and regional debates, IUCN will support capacity-building of Members, initially in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, through workshops, study tours and other activities identified by Members.

  - **Intra and inter-regional sharing.** Activities during this initial phase will include participation in regional meetings and workshops, study tours between island regions, and initial work towards the development of guidelines and recommendations on the biodiversity, ecosystem and livelihood aspects of energy policies and practices in small island states. Main partners will include the IUCN Caribbean membership, regional intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies in the Caribbean, the IUCN Oceania Office and the IUCN Programme on EU Overseas Entities.

- **Energy for poverty reduction and sustainable rural livelihoods.** The lack of other affordable energy options has contributed to Haiti’s vicious cycle of poverty → deforestation → loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services → increased poverty. The rising cost of fossil fuels and the global economic recession are already resulting in similar patterns emerging in other Caribbean countries with large populations of poor rural people, including the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. Working with and through a range of partners, and in collaboration with national and regional rural development agencies, IUCN will support efforts in Haiti to pilot simple small-scale renewable energy options with interested poor farmers, rural communities and entrepreneurs, particularly in areas not linked to the national grid and least served by on-going rural development projects. These options could include mini-hydro plants, wind turbines, solar kilns for drying fruits, and biogas digesters. This activity will create synergies with and build on the experience of the UNDP’s GEF Small Grant Programme, which has funded similar initiatives in several countries of the region and is now embarking on a new larger phase of activities in the Dominican Republic focused on mini-hydropower and in Haiti focused on integrated development in the Département du Nord-Ouest. Key partners include UNDP, businesses, private sector organisations and rural development organisations in participating countries.

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1 CARICOM is an intergovernmental grouping comprised of Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, with the UK overseas territories of Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands as Associate Members. CARICOM’s Secretariat is based in Georgetown, Guyana.
- **Reducing the energy footprint of IUCN Members.** A small number of interested Members will be invited to initiate pilot projects aimed at reducing their energy footprint and potentially earn carbon credits, and to collaborate in the documentation and dissemination of their experience.

8. **Conclusion**
The Caribbean region is poised to make a transition to a new energy pathway that will include an evolving mix of new and traditional energy options. The programme of activities described here will help assure that energy choices for the 21st century contribute to shared regional goals of environmental sustainability, equity and poverty reduction. IUCN looks forward to working with IUCN Members and partners to help the Caribbean region meet this challenge.
The overwhelming reliance on petroleum-based energy is beginning to have economic consequences for the countries of the region and their primary industries, including tourism. High energy consuming industries, such as aluminium and petrochemical production in some countries and the airline industry throughout the region, are important contributors to the economy, and their rising energy costs are likely to have major implications for future development. Finding ways to mitigate the economic impact of rising global fuel costs without sacrificing environmental assets including ecosystem services and biodiversity will be a major challenge of the coming decades. Fossil fuel-based strategies of energy providers and major users are becoming increasingly untenable, and there are signs of a growing interest in and policy attention towards alternatives. Response to government incentives for renewable energy products (as indicated by the rapid growth of solar water heating in Barbados) and recent protests over fuel costs appear to reflect consumer readiness for a more sustainable energy future.

Given the pull of rising fuel costs and the push of increasing global attention to sustainable energy and emissions reductions, it appears likely that renewable energy initiatives will emerge and proliferate in the next few years. As this shift occurs, it will be important that Caribbean countries and their regional institutions are prepared to encourage and support choices that are environmentally and economically appropriate and sustainable. National and regional energy policies that reflect this changing context will need to give attention to:

- establishment of clear and consistent regulatory frameworks that give attention to the full range of energy sources, including new renewable options;
- addressing the structural obstacles to broadening the energy sector, including the existence of monopoly energy providers in most countries and the high costs of all forms of energy for the poor in the absence of cross-subsidies that exist in current energy regimes;
- creation of incentives for energy savings, by both industries and households;
- development of promising renewable energy options, some of which may still be in the research and development pipeline, including through incentives for private sector investment;
- support to the development of locally appropriate technologies, for example smaller wind turbines that suit the landscape and can be lowered during hurricanes for the small island context;
- assessment, monitoring and regulation of the environmental impacts of the production and consumption of both conventional and new, renewable energy sources, for example, in the setting of performance standards for energy-consuming vehicles and equipment.

The challenge of making the transition to sustainable energy pathways is starting to be taken up by Caribbean countries and their regional institutions. At the regional level, the main actors in the sustainable energy landscape (Table 1) include the following:

- The Caribbean Energy Desk, recently established within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, is charged with supporting national energy policy reviews in all Member States and developing a regional sustainable energy policy and
regulatory framework. The establishment of the Energy Desk institutionalises CARICOM’s involvement in sustainable energy and succeeds the Caribbean Renewable Energy Programme (CREDP)\(^2\), which ran from 1998 until 2008 and focused on building awareness and supporting policy development. In addition to the policy and regulatory work the Energy Desk has carried over from this earlier programme, it intends to move into new areas that it is now in the process of defining.

- At a broader level, the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), of which several Caribbean countries are members, also contributes to building capacity and encouraging regional policy coherence.
- The regional body of electric utilities, CARILEC, and many of its members have shown a willingness and interest in exploring renewable and sustainable energy alternatives.
- CREDP-GTZ, a programme of the German technical assistance agency, is supporting both policy development in partnership with CARICOM and renewable energy initiatives on the ground.
- The multi-institutional Global Sustainable Energy Islands Initiative (GSEII) has contributed to increased awareness and interest in sustainable energy options in several countries of the region.

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<th>Table 1. Main Caribbean sustainable energy institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Initiative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean Energy Desk</td>
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<td>OLADE</td>
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<td>CARILEC</td>
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<td>CREDP-GTZ</td>
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\(^2\) CREDP was funded by GEF through UNDP, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the German technical assistance agency, GTZ.
At the national level, several countries are developing new policies and strategies that reflect a desire to take more sustainable energy pathways. Cuba is basing a national initiative to increase energy output on sustainable sources including wind, solar, and biogas. Jamaica’s energy policy for 2006-2020 gives prominence to renewable energy sources to complement increasingly costly fossil fuels. The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis has recently announced the development of an energy strategy based to a large degree on development of renewable sources, including bioenergy from sugarcane production, wind generation and tapping of geothermal energy.

The Caribbean Energy Information System (CEIS), headquartered at the Scientific Research Council in Jamaica, is a cooperative initiative of 18 Caribbean governments and regional organisations providing information and undertaking research in the field of energy. While its expertise in renewable energy is currently limited, CEIS has the potential to become an important source of information and advice.

On top of these regional and national developments, there are a growing number of donor-funded initiatives, reflecting the global policy and media focus on climate change impacts and energy security (Table 2). Many of these seek to generate private sector investment in renewable energy.

Table 2. Some current renewable energy initiatives for the Caribbean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme/initiative</th>
<th>Implementers</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Geography</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACP Energy Facility</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Poverty reduction and renewable energy sources</td>
<td>Caribbean countries that are parties to the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and its traditional trade partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biofuels Bilateral Agreement</td>
<td>Governments of Brazil and the US, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), OAS</td>
<td>Biofuel production for energy security and economic development</td>
<td>Dominican Republic, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Bioenergy Action Program (CREBAP)</td>
<td>IDB, OAS, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture</td>
<td>Promotion and support to development and investment in sustainable energy options</td>
<td>CARICOM countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean renewable energy, energy efficiency and carbon finance facility</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency funded, IDB administered</td>
<td>Country projects</td>
<td>CARICOM countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Caribbean Geothermal Development Project (Geo-Caraïbes)</td>
<td>Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial, OAS, UNEP/GEF</td>
<td>Geothermal development</td>
<td>Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Initiative</td>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>Biofuels, renewable energy, energy efficiency, carbon finance</td>
<td>CARICOM countries</td>
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This broad-based interest and involvement were reflected in the convening of the First Caribbean Sustainable Energy Forum, which was held in conjunction with the 4th Biennial Caribbean Environmental Forum and Exhibition in Grenada in June 2008. Participants in the forum, who represented most of the governments and other major energy actors in the region and included a consultant to IUCN, agreed that the major needs of the region in order to move towards a more sustainable energy future are:

- **Policy reform and capacity strengthening**: Policy reform is occurring in several countries and is being supported by CARICOM for its Member States. However, policy implementation remains a challenge, as many countries of the region have difficulty effectively regulating the existing energy sector, and lack policies and regulations that address the new energy options that are being considered or developed.

- **Assessment of options**: There is now considerable interest in various countries, as reflected in Table 2, in the potential of five types of renewable energy. Most countries have very little recent experience in these areas. The global enthusiasm for biofuels is being translated into a number of proposals, several of which are based on transformation of the sugarcane industries in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and St. Kitts. The potential for geothermal energy exists on several islands, has already been tapped in Guadeloupe, and is now being explored in Dominica, St. Kitts-Nevis and Saint Lucia. Wind energy is the third area of interest, with ambitious projects now being implemented in Cuba, Jamaica and a few eastern Caribbean countries. The region has more experience in solar energy, but its widespread use is still largely limited to powering water heaters and small facilities such as photovoltaic powered traffic signals. Because of its suitability to the conditions in the region, solar energy expansion would also be a likely part of any national or regional efforts to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and pilot projects are emerging in several countries. Finally, hydropower has long been a part of the energy mix of several
countries, but the potential of mini-hydro remains to be explored. All countries of the region, as well as potential investors, need help in assessing the viability, and social, economic and environmental costs and benefits of these options.

- **Facilitating sharing among countries:** In developing energy policies for the future, Caribbean countries can be greatly helped by learning from one another: for example, Cuba can share with other countries its experiences in prioritising renewable energy sources and Guadeloupe can offer insights on geothermal energy use. The Caribbean can also learn from experience in other countries, and especially other small island regions such as Oceania and the Indian Ocean.

- **Supporting renewable energy transformations and energy conservation in key sectors:** A considerable portion of the fossil fuels consumed in the region provides energy for the tourism and hospitality sector. As fuel costs rise, the sector’s economic viability will be reduced. Diminishing economic returns from the agriculture sector, resulting in large part from the loss of preferential markets in recent years, means that it is also highly vulnerable to increased energy costs. Helping these key economic sectors assess and take advantage of alternative sources of energy, as well as opportunities for energy saving, is another important regional priority.