Interview to Carlos Fuller and Kenrick Leslie

Carlos Fuller. *Has been Belize's Principal Negotiator on Climate Change since 1990. He participated in negotiating the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. In that capacity he also represented Belize at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the United Nations Small Island Developing States Conference and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.*

Kenrick Leslie. *Is the Executive Director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) in Belize. Has considerable experience in the fields of physics and meteorology. Prior to becoming associated with the Climate Change Centre he was a Senior Principal Scientist in the Applied Physics Laboratories of AlliedSignal Corporation now Honeywell Corporation in Morristown, New Jersey in the United States. He has also contributed much to the development of meteorology and climatology in the Caribbean. He has worked as a meteorologist in the meteorological services of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and the Bahamas. Established the National Meteorological Service of Belize and served as its first Director from 1972 to 1981. In addition he served on the Board of Governors of the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) from 1972 until 1981. During this same period he also served as Rapporteur to the World Meteorological Organization, Regional Association IV comprising North America, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.*

1. Which are the most visible aspects and characteristics of climate change in your country? What are the prospects for the upcoming decades?

Belize has a subtropical climate with a wet season which starts in June and ends in November. The dry season is from February to May. The transition from December to February is marked by the passage of cold fronts from the north. High temperatures range from the high 80s along the coast to the mid 90s in the interior. The low temperatures range from the mid 70s along the coast to the mid 60s inland. Annual rainfall is 60 inches in the north and 200 inches in the south. Belize is affected by tropical cyclones about once every 3 years. However, very strong hurricanes occur once every 10 to 20 years.

Observations over the past 30 years show that average temperatures have risen by about one degree. The minimum temperatures in particular are rising. The number of tropical cyclones and in particular very strong hurricanes affecting the country has increased since 1998. The incidence of extreme rainfall events and consequent flooding has also increased in the past decade. These trends verify the computer model simulations which indicate that temperatures will continue to rise in Belize and that more extreme rainfall events will occur with heavier rainfall in shorter periods, but also more extended and intense dry periods. Not much change in the total annual rainfall is expected.

2. Which are the most relevant concerns of climate change negotiations in your country? Who are the most relevant actors in this debate?

Climate change negotiations are spearheaded by Mrs. Ann Gordon, Deputy Chief Meteorologist of the National Meteorological Service and Mr. Carlos Fuller, Deputy Director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre. The National Meteorological Service is the agency responsible for all aspects of climate change in Belize.

Belize is extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Consequently, the focus of negotiations is for a very robust international regime which would ensure that global warming is contained to within 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Since some level of climate change is inevitable because of historical emissions, adaptation is a very high priority for the country. Funding and technology for adaptation are therefore equally important.

3. From the point of view of the interests in your country and of the Latin America and the Caribbean agenda, how do you evaluate the Copenhagen results?

The results from Copenhagen were disappointing. The two most important outputs should have been amendments to the Kyoto Protocol defining a new commitment period post 2012 for Annex I Parties with provisions for the inclusion of emissions from international aviation and shipping and stronger monitoring for the forestry sector, and a new legally binding instrument for long-term action for all Parties to address climate change including mitigation, adaptation, finance, and technology.

The two *Ad Hoc* Working Groups could not complete their work. Several of the sticking issues had to be resolved at the political level. Unfortunately, because of larger geo-political issues the results of the political intervention could not be considered and adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP).

In addition, the Copenhagen Accord was incomplete as Parties were given until 31 January 2010 to indicate their emission reduction targets with no common baseline defined. Parties were also requested to associate with the Accord by 31 January 2010 if they so desired without knowing what was the level emission reduction being contemplated by Annex I and other large emitting countries.

The results post 31 January 2010 indicate that although the Accord calls on Parties to limit global warming to 2°C, the targets submitted would only limit global warming to 3.5°C. This is extremely detrimental to vulnerable countries like Belize and will require these countries to undertake even more extreme and expensive adaptation measures.

4. Considering the Copenhagen results and conclusions, will it be necessary to review the national strategy in your country in relation with the international negotiations? In which areas and how? Do you see elements for the articulation of regional strategies?

The results from Copenhagen strengthen our resolve to negotiate for strong international mitigation. Financial and technical support for adaptation will be linked to the level of ambition in mitigation, i.e. the less ambitious the mitigation targets the more resources that will be required for adaptation.

Belize has always negotiated within its traditional negotiating groups: Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Central America. It will continue to do so and will use its influence to build alliances with other groups with similar concerns to forge a strong coalition.

5. Are there chances for regional cooperation in the efforts for mitigation and adaptation? In which areas?

Belize has been involved in regional projects in adaptation and mitigation since 1995 and believes that there is scope for much more collaboration. First of all capacity building initiatives at the formal and informal levels are more cost effective and efficient at the regional level. More regional training activities must be developed and funded. There is much scope for pilot adaptation and mitigation activities in the Caribbean and Central America. In mitigation these include the introduction of renewable energy systems in households, public buildings and remote communities. Public transportation is inefficient and unsatisfactory in many countries. This offers opportunities for the introduction of more efficient fleets and more effective traffic management. Waste disposal is a problem in many countries and provides opportunities for the introduction of sanitary landfills which could address methane emissions.

In adaptation, sea level rise is exacerbating coastal erosion and the contamination of aquifers in all countries in the region. Incidences of vector borne diseases are rising and interventions must be developed and deployed. Forest fires are becoming more frequent and warning systems must be developed and implemented. More scientific farming practices are required which employ agrometeorological techniques and forecasts at longer timescales.

Such interventions should be undertaken in several countries and evaluated. Those deemed successful should be replicated in other countries that have similar circumstances.