



Report on participation in the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States SIDS (SIDS4), which took place 27-30 May in Antigua and Barbuda.

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I. Introduction

On the occasion of the celebration of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) convened by the UN, in the islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Nitzah Jacobus, Deputy Director of the National Library of Curaçao and Miguel Viciado, Vice President of the Cuban Association of Librarians, both members of the IFLA LAC Regional Division Committee, were proposed by Chair Jeannette Lebrón Ramos to attend the event on behalf of the Regional Division at the request of Stephen Wyber, Policy Director of the IFLA LAC Regional Division, both members of the IFLA LAC Regional Division Committee, were proposed by Chair Jeannette Lebrón Ramos to attend the event on behalf of the Regional Division at the request of Stephen Wyber, Director of Policy and Advocacy of the IFLA Executive Bureau. The participation of the aforementioned librarians was assisted by IFLA in the person of Mr. Wyber, who took care of the organisation of the trip, the necessary support to guarantee our stay, as well as the pertinent orientations for a better use of our participation in the event.

In addition, the conference organisers, after pre-registration (online) as participants, maintained systematic communication to guide all registrants so that they could perform well in the conference by sending them practical guides and changes to the overall programme. This facilitated Nitzah and Miguel's participation in the activities and special events they attended.

II. Participation in activities and special events

The SIDS Conference (SIDS4), convened by the UN for registered representatives of accredited non-governmental organisations, major groups and other stakeholders, was a major event that generated a wide and varied programme of activities and special events. For this reason we planned to attend those that were of interest to IFLA as a UN member organisation.

27 May

- **Collection of Conference credentials at the United Nations Registration Centre.**
- ***Participation in the Opening Ceremony. Morning plenary session from the alternative hall.***
- ***Presentation session by government representatives from the different participating countries from the alternative hall to the plenary hall in the afternoon.***

Attending these two activities was interesting, as we were able to appreciate the new challenges

these states are facing 10 years after the third conference. We were also able to listen to the respective speeches of the Cuban vice-president and the prime minister of Curaçao.

28 May

- ***Interactive Dialogue on Revitalising the Economies of Small Island Developing States for Accelerated and Sustainable Growth.*** Plenary session, as observers.
- ***International Science Council (ISC) meeting.*** We were invited to this meeting by James Waddell, Scientific Officer for Policy Affairs, where we learned that the ISC is working to mobilise the scientific community in SIDS to ensure that research attracts the attention of global policymakers, as well as the importance of science and technology for the implementation of the SDGs of the 2030 agenda in these countries.

Our participation was very useful, especially in the ISC meeting, because we were able to exchange with Mr. Waddell, leader of this movement, on how much libraries in their respective countries and in the LAC region could help and support scientific cooperation, promoting inclusion and resilience in the face of changes in the economic and social order of SIDS. We are of the opinion that it would be appropriate to establish some kind of collaboration agreement between IFLA LAC and the ISC, or to assess the possibility of becoming a member of that institution and from that membership plan mutual cooperation actions.

29 May

- ***Session organised by CARICOM, the Government of Belize and the Government of the United Kingdom,*** which addressed how innovation mechanisms can help countries work towards environmental and economic change.
- ***Visit the National Public Library of Antigua and Barbuda.***

It was gratifying for us to visit this institution and to be able to have a pleasant professional exchange with its director, Mrs. Ryllis Mannix and her work team, about the information services they offer to users of different age groups, especially children and adolescents, the desire of their librarians to improve professionally and the marked interest in being a member of IFLA because this would strengthen them professionally, taking into account that they are a country that has not created a national association of librarians.

The visit concluded with a tour guided by the director throughout the building during which we were able to appreciate the reading rooms, the departments for the technical and methodological work of the staff, the areas for the promotion of reading activities for users and the community in general.

From the exchange with the director of the library and her staff we were able to ascertain that:

- They are interested in being members of IFLA and also of ACURIL, but they don't know exactly what we do and what we can do for them.
- We may be able to help with cataloguing classes, among other things.
- It is a challenge for them (as for so many libraries) to maintain a high level of public

- participation, both in the use of the library and in the activities that the library organises.
- They organise the library week, to raise awareness of the role of the library, especially among children.
 - Other activities they organise such as:
 - ✓ Summer Programme
 - ✓ 60+ programme, in which they explore the topics of health and exercise, among others.
 - ✓ Play dominoes/chess
 - ✓ Homework help
 - ✓ Promoting entrepreneurship
 - ✓ STEM courses
 - In addition to the government grant, they receive donations from third parties, but resources are still tight. As a consequence, in recent years they have also become creative, and their own 31 employees often wear double hats.
 - The NYPL donates books to its library every year.
 - They also have a US section in their library, whose programming comes directly from the US consulate/embassy.
 - They have no library association on the island.

Miguel Vicedo shared his views on possible collaborations between ASCUBI and the National Public Library of Antigua and Barbuda.

Yiannitza-Sharimar Jacobus shared her vision of possible collaborations from the IFLA LAC/ACURIL perspective (see recommendations below), but also shared information specifically about how the National Library of Curaçao conducts its reading literacy programme designed especially for primary schools. A way to involve school children in an interactive programme focusing on promotion and reading in the library.

30 May

- ***Session. Enhancing higher education for sustainable development in SIDS.***

In this opportunity we are going to share a short summary of the presentation of one of the speakers: She studied in Cape Verde and works in Japan as a scientist at a university.

Where should the energy come from when talking about diaspora?

Connection with primary education:

We should not only focus on university students, but we should start with primary education, so that we work in a sustainable way on motivating children/pupils to become learners and to engage in the SIDS mindset.

Connection with higher education:

Tips to consider when talking about students from Small Island Developing States or how to encourage student participation in conferences:

- When welcoming students from Small Island Developing States to universities
 - ✓ Allow them to go back to their roots and explore.
- How much and how we have lobbied to change the curriculum. We have that is intrinsically linked to:

- ✓ Visas are very difficult for students to obtain.
- ✓ Before getting a visa, they need to have hotel reservations and a minimum budget in their bank account, which students do not have.
- Let's push for it as an easier way to enter countries.
- Some things have to change to connect them, and we have to think about it.
- Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders.

- **Plenary session**

What will SIDS collectively do?

- Contemplation of the role of AI?
- Pressure on academic budgets is drying up.
- University-wide data and information needs.
- Decision-makers want stories, not figures/statistics/graphs, etc.
- Students request research that does not fall under SIDS.
- Orient students to the SIDS agenda.

Conclusion:

- There is no one way of doing things.
- Short-term solutions to facilitate visas for students.
- How are we creating our education programme?
- How do we establish the seeds?
- How much do we encourage NGOs for education programmes?
- Private universities have been pushing for VISAs for students coming to their universities. Why can't we make it easier for everyone to go through the collective visa application process for SIDS?

A possible role for IFLA in this:

- IFLA can encourage libraries to work closely with schools to form a platform for different programmes and projects for primary schools to work in higher education:
- ✓ Raising awareness of SIDS in primary, secondary and higher education.
- ✓ Encourage students to work on proposals/projects to win scholarships to attend a SIDS or other related conferences.
- ✓ Libraries as part of the chain of information, guidance and completion of different VISA applications.

Finally, Yiannitza-Sharimar Jacobus had an interesting meeting after the session with two experts, Naya Sena and Makeda Dyese. We connected on our similar culture, but also discussed issues such as Investing in our people, starting in primary school, skills development, health problems from an early age (due to malnutrition), ancestral knowledge, often forgotten due to our fast-paced lives, but also how we can work together forming a platform for the community, using for example our libraries to contribute to these and other issues that are so important for our community.

III. Some final considerations.

Both Nitzah Jacobus and Miguel Vicedo, consider that:

1. Our participation as representatives of the IFLA LAC Regional Division in this International Conference on SIDS has been a significant professional experience considering the knowledge learned and shared. They were days full of experiences, connections, inspirations and collaborations with different people and organisations from different countries present at

the event.

2. The meetings we had, especially with James Waddell and the ISC, the staff of the National Public Library of Antigua and Barbuda, as well as the meeting Nitzah Jacobus had in particular with Naya Sena and Makeda Dyese, they allowed us to share experiences, knowledge and to visualise how the Regional Division itself and the libraries of the LAC region can establish cooperative relationships to strengthen the regional library field and make it stronger and more united in defence of the profession.
3. We would like to personally thank IFLA, our IFLA LAC Regional Division Committee Chair, Jeannette Lebrón Ramos, Biblioteka Nashonal Korsou, ASCUBI and Stephen Wyber, IFLA Director of Policy and Advocacy, for giving us the opportunity and support to represent IFLA at the SIDS4 International Conference in Antigua and Barbuda.

IV. Recommendations

1. To maintain, whenever possible, this experience of different members of the IFLA LAC Regional Division Committee being able to participate and represent their division and the region in events of this type, because this contributes to strengthening the library sector and linking it more directly to the various economic and social problems of the region.
2. To prepare in advance the librarians designated to represent their region in events of this nature so that they can efficiently take advantage of their participation, to make an adequate use of their time, as well as to be able to establish cooperation mechanisms with colleagues from other countries.
3. To carry out a diagnosis of the SIDS and those countries in the LAC region that are not members of IFLA, or that have not created associations representing the library profession in their respective countries, in order to integrate them not only into the World Map of Libraries, but also into the regional library community.

**PHOTOS OF THE PARTICIPATION IN THE
SIDS4 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE,
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

27 May





28 May









29 May





30 May

