



**Intersessional Meeting and Regional Consultation
of the Forum of Ministers of Environment
of Latin America and the Caribbean
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Report of the High Level Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and Regional Consultation for Third United Nations Environment Assembly

Agenda Item 1. Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting began with an opening ceremony on Wednesday, 11 October at 9.20 a.m. including words of welcome from the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia, Mr. Luis Gilberto Murillo, as President of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting was attended by 40 delegates from 21 countries of the region, including 6 vice ministers and 4 ministers; and 2 representatives of 2 Agencies and Commissions of the United Nations system. The list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report.

2. In his speech, Mr. Murillo commented that this meeting of experts, which is organized to follow-up on the 11 Resolutions adopted at the XX Forum through the Cartagena Declaration, would form an important input to the next Ministerial level meeting. He also emphasized that the Forum is the only platform where 33 Ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean gather together to review the most important issues from the region related to the environment such as:

- The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development
- The contribution of the protection, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services to achieve sustainable development
- The implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change and its special relevance due to the vulnerability of the region to climate change

3. He noted that, among the themes specifically related to this meeting, include the following:

- Follow-up on the commitments adopted in the Cartagena Declaration
- The role of the Forum as an institution to define the priorities from the region in the framework of the United Nations Environment Assembly
- The recent renewal of the Latin American and the Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development
- The operationalization of the Climate Change Network and its work plan
- The work related to the region's network of chemicals and waste, among others
- The announcement of the next meetings of the Forum of Ministers, considering the change in the cycle of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including the transfer and the exercise of the Presidency of the Forum for the intersessional period and the organization of the XXI meeting of the Forum.

4. Mr. Murillo also underlined that this intersessional meeting has one very special connotation which is the fact that our region, through Costa Rica, will have the honor of presiding over the 3rd session of the United Nations Environment Assembly with its theme 'Towards a Pollution free planet' where the region has the possibility of forming new alliances.

5. After the opening words from the Minister, Mr. Leo Heileman, Regional Director, UN Environment, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean gave his opening address, thanking the Government of Colombia for hosting the intersessional meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and Caribbean. He mentioned that the work and progress achieved is largely due to the dedication and work of the Government of Colombia.

6. He also sent a message of solidarity, on behalf of Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment, to the people of Mexico affected by the earthquake, the Caribbean islands impacted by a series of

consecutive hurricanes and Central American countries affected by mudslides. He mentioned that natural disasters lead to national actions on disaster reduction and prevention.

7. He further recognized the global challenges and the complexity in their nature as well as the difficulties to solve them in the short term. He identified the impact of climate change particularly on agriculture, ocean pollution and fisheries, illegal mining and the consequences of deforestation and mercury pollution, illegal traffic of species of flora and fauna, and the creation of resilient economies in the face of international crises, as some of these most striking challenges.

8. He also emphasized that these challenges are bringing new environmental, social and economic opportunities that, when combined, can generate very positive results for sustainable development in countries and generate transformative changes in societies in the long term. As examples, the region's progress in significant investments in renewable energies, transformations in the electrification of public transport, changes in sustainable consumption and production patterns, improvements in air quality, sustainable public procurement, elimination of harmful substances for the ozone layer and chemical management, bio-trade and ecosystem management, all within strengthening of national laws and regulations.

9. He noted how the United Nations system is working to consolidate the organization to respond more efficiently to the needs of countries in order to meet with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. He also emphasized the willingness of UN Environment to support member states of the Latin American and Caribbean region to continue to drive implementation of this agenda, recognizing that a healthy environment is critical to human health and creating resilient economies for sustainable development in the long term.

10. He noted that the region is leading ambitious initiatives that can be replicated by other regions to combat poverty and ensure prosperous development in peace and harmony.

11. Mr. Heileman finally called for the use of the Third United Nations Environment Assembly to address the challenges and opportunities that unite us as a community of nations seeking economic prosperity, social equity and environmental sustainability.

Agenda Item 2. Organization of work

2.1. Adoption of the rules of procedure of the meeting

12. The delegates adopted, *mutatis mutandis*, the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly to govern the proceedings of the meeting.

2.2. Adoption of the Agenda and the schedule of sessions of the meeting

13. The delegates considered the Provisional Agenda and the Provisional Annotated Agenda, as well as the Schedule of Sessions proposed by the Secretariat, and adopted them after incorporating modifications that were deemed necessary.

Agenda Item 3: The Forum of Ministers of Environment on the regional and international agenda

14. The representative of the UN Environment Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Juan Bello gave a presentation on the current state of the environment in the region. He noted that during the development of the “Global Environment Outlook”, a group of more than 120 experts from the Latin America and the Caribbean region was created who then carried out a regional evaluation of the status of the environment. The region is continuing to follow the path where high economic growth but degradation of the environment and social inequality can be observed. Similarly, the region is facing enormous environmental challenges including growing degradation of natural ecosystems, pollution, as well as unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

15. He stated that the LAC region hosts 634 million habitants (2015), and is the most urbanized region of the whole planet with 80% of the population living in urban areas, and where 130 million people live with persistent poverty; in this context the combination of poverty, inequality and vast differences between urban and rural communities form a major problem. However, the region shows advances in the access to potable water, which increased from 86% in 1992 to 92% in 2012 as well as advances in the increased access to proper sanitary systems, which grew from 70% to 78% during the same period.

16. The LAC region also suffers from the major challenges such as atmospheric pollution; it is estimated that 100 million people live in areas exposed to atmospheric contamination and 16 cities from the region also show poor air quality, with the annual average concentrations of small particles above international standards. Latin America and the Caribbean are responsible of 5-10 % of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of which 35% come from the transport sector, but related problems of short lived contaminants are also being observed in rural and urban areas.

17. With respect to hydrological systems, coastal zones and oceans, the Caribbean Sea is the second most contaminated (after the Mediterranean Sea) with plastic waste. In the LAC region, some 25 million people who live in the coastal zones are affected by polluted waters originating from the urban areas; 37 of the large trans-boundary waterbodies have problems with contamination; approximately 96.7 million cubic meters of fresh water per year are affected by contamination and 25% of the rivers in the region are classified as 'severely contaminated by pathogens'.

18. The region is showing an important economic growth, which in many cases is at the expense of its natural resources: for example overfishing affects 70% of the coral reefs of the Caribbean; on the other hand 17% of newly cultivated areas and 57% of pasture has been established in forested areas. In addition, during the period of 2001-2013, 1680 square kilometers of forests was lost in Latin America due to mining activities and 70% of the deforestation in the region is due to commercial agriculture. The needs of the growing population (70 million new urban habitants during the last 10 years), and the current patterns of production and consumption are unsustainable.

19. In order to achieve sustainable development, there are opportunities which are not used sufficiently in terms of innovative technology, access to data and information or empowerment of the population for the sustainable use of natural resources. In this sense, for example 45% of freshwater is lost due to the inefficiencies of using existing technologies. In addition, the issues of environmental governance and corruption have roles to play.

20. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is showing patterns of biodiversity loss due to land use change, contamination, climate change, over-exploitation, unsustainable tourism and invasive alien species. Some progress has been made regarding the Aichi targets, but the speed and extent are not high enough to achieve these targets. During the last years a reversal has been observed in relation to ecological restoration, for example.

21. Agenda 2030 offers opportunities for integration in all actions, for example in relation to the challenges in air pollution and water pollution; adopting solutions provides the opportunity to apply them with multiple sectors, with an integrated approach and coherence in public policies. In this context, the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) provides a guide to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Likewise, the Forum of Ministers of the Environment provides the political support required to achieve these goals, it offers great opportunities for South and triangular cooperation and serves as a platform to coordinate with all existing initiatives and platforms in the region. In this sense, more coordination efforts are required as well with other subregional initiatives such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Pacific Alliance, among others.

22. The Forum can provide important progress for the implementation of the Agenda 2030; in this context it presents an opportunity to convert the natural wealth of the region into the source of benefits, prosperity and sustainability for the region.

23. Colombia took the floor and commented that during the XX meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Cartagena in 2016, decisions were taken to

promote environmental sustainability in the Agenda 2030. Colombia also commented that the Second the United Nations Environment Assembly in May 2016 adopted a resolution 2.22 which allows the Assembly to organize its sessions in uneven years. In this sense Colombia invited all the participants of this intersessional meeting to take decisions together and propose concrete actions from the Latin America and the Caribbean region to provide important inputs and to give visibility for the region in the Third the United Nations Environment Assembly in December 2017. Related to the necessary actions for the protection of biodiversity, thanks to the Forum, reliable information can be generated for decisions which are seeking to promote sustainable development, which can then be forwarded to the Third United Nations Environment Assembly. In this sense, Colombia also commented that it is necessary to signal that the unsustainable use of natural resources cannot be the basis for economic growth.

24. Mexico took the floor and expressed appreciation to the UN Environment Regional Office for its presentation, which was a fairly accurate diagnostic proposal and indicated that with this kind of analysis the elements proposed by Colombia could be achieved. Mexico commented that the richness of the Latin America and the Caribbean region should be the starting point, then the challenges, and then the central theme of the Third United Nations Environment Assembly "Toward a pollution free planet", will be the way to build concrete messages which as a region can be transmitted in the context of the Third United Nations Environment Assembly; the delegate proposed that this analysis serve as a basis for the work of this intersessional meeting.

25. Chile expressed thanks for the presentation and comments from Colombia, and noted that the intersessional meeting would have enough discussion elements to change the cycle of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment and for the Third United Nations Environment Assembly.

Agenda Item 4: Follow-up of the decisions of the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Cartagena, Colombia, 28-31 March 2016)

26. In order to start the discussions under this agenda item, the Secretariat, represented by Andrea Brusco, made a presentation on the progress made in the implementation of the Decisions adopted during the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers.

27. The meeting then discussed the progress made under each of the decisions of the Forum of Ministers of Environment

Decision 1: Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development and Decision 2: ILAC Indicators

28. Regarding Decisions 1 and 2, the Secretariat represented by Mr. Francesco Gaetani, provided the meeting with an overview of the advancement in the implementation of these decisions since the last meeting of the Forum of Ministers. These decisions were presented jointly because Decision 1 adopted a new version of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) and given that Decision 2 is about ILAC indicators they complement each other for the presentation of the progress in their implementation. Main points included the work being implemented by the Working Group on Environmental Indicators for the prioritization of ILAC and Sustainable Development Goals indicators relevant to the region; the activities coordinated by UN Environment in the framework of the South-South Cooperation programme funded by Brazil to strengthen cooperation and regional capacity building; the proposal of the Secretariat to produce regional reports about "Status and trends of the environmental dimension of sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean" to be published every 2 years from 2018; and, finally, the strategic objective of establishing a Science-policy interface mechanism of the Forum of Ministers of Environment.

29. Brazil thanked the Secretariat for the presentation, and congratulated all countries for the results and efforts achieved in this area. Brazil considered it a great honour to participate in this initiative, which was undoubtedly of great importance. As environmental indicators are an essential tool for achieving the goals of

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Brazil also considered it essential to make progress in the regionalization of indicators, so that they are better adapted to the reality and needs of the countries in the region. It also highlighted the importance of moving forward in the formulation and adoption of sustainable consumption and production indicators, both because of their relevance to work within the ten year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production (10YFP), as well as for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The delegation of Brazil was pleased that progress is being made in consolidating the interface between the production of scientific information and decision-making. Brazil considered that the work plan is fairly well structured, and they will be pleased to welcome the experts to the Regional Meeting which will be held in Rio de Janeiro in December.

30. Costa Rica thanked the Secretariat for the report and the Government of Chile for its support in the implementation of these decisions. The importance of the capacity building activities in the region related to the production of environmental indicators was highlighted. It mentioned that environmental indicators are of great relevance for the Government of Costa Rica, and that significant progress in this area has been made. Costa Rica expressed its satisfaction with the progress made by the Working Group on Environmental Indicators and, notably, the work conducted for the revision of the ILAC and Sustainable Development Goals metadata indicators. Costa Rica stressed the important role of information systems and open platforms to share data and information useful for environmental management and used the example of the recent hydro-meteorological events that struck Costa Rica to show how geo-spatial data and real time information could be critical to enhance informed decision making.

31. Mexico thanked Colombia for the hospitality, and expressed full concurrence with the points raised by Brazil. The delegate congratulated the Secretariat and all countries participating in the work for the achievements, and reiterated the commitment and willingness to continue to support the work on environmental indicators and statistics. Mexico noted that the activity carried out by the Working Group on environmental indicators is a model of the kind of support expected from the Secretariat. Mexico also expressed its support for the initiative to implement a science-policy interface for the Forum, considering that this interface is fundamental for strengthening the Forum's own capacity to access robust information to substantiate and drive the Forum's decisions.

32. Finally, Mexico emphasized the importance of using this type of initiative to promote the articulation of the region within global initiatives. In this regard, it reiterated the importance of consolidating synergies between agencies such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UN Environment.

33. Chile expressed its appreciation for the report and adhered to what had been expressed by other delegations. Chile emphasized the strategic importance of advancing production of environmental indicators, and considered it essential to receive more information, at a later time, on the issues and limitations that countries are experiencing for the effective adoption of these indicators. Chile considered it of paramount importance that countries clarify their needs, taking into consideration that the production of a robust regional report requires advancement not only in the methodological harmonization of indicators but, also, to ensure that countries have the conditions to generate and process the data needed to calculate these indicators. He also underlined the relevance of the coordination of the regional institutional network, towards a methodological atomization that would allow progress to the harmonization of indicators.

34. Nicaragua thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and remarked on the critical importance of establishing a robust regional set of indicators to monitor and report on the implementation of key global agreements such as the Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

35. Colombia thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and also for the support to the country on the strengthening of their capacity on environmental indicators; the delegate also informed the meeting that the approval of Law 667/2016 provided the country with a basic set of key environmental indicators, which are instrumental to inform decision and policy making.

36. The representative of UN Environment, Isabel Martinez, made a presentation explaining in detail the work of the Environmental Training Network, including the adoption of its work plan, the progress it has had so far in its implementation with regard to 5 lines of action (training and research, cooperation with universities, cooperation with new actors; exchange of experiences and South-South cooperation) and, the financial status of the network, and training and cooperation with other networks at national, regional and global levels, in the framework of agendas, programs and initiatives that address education and education for sustainable development, that include ILAC; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the High Level Political Forum and the Second United Nations Environment Assembly, among others.

37. She commented that one of the greatest challenges of environmental education in the framework of the Forum of Ministers, and other fora related to Education and other actors is to pass from political declaration and solid dispositions in instruments and policies, to action and the assignment of adequate financial resources.

38. There were interventions made by delegates under this item.

Decision 4: Environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

39. The representative of the Secretariat, Andrea Brusco, introduced the background and scope of Decision 4, highlighting three important elements: (i) the project "Integrated Approaches to Environmental Sustainability in Development Planning" implemented by UN Environment with support from the Government of Brazil, on the identification and systematization of experiences and good practices in the field of integrated development policies, which led to the publication "Sustainable Development in Practice", where 28 experiences were selected from 21 countries.

40. She explained that this work has also made it possible to identify specific opportunities for bilateral and triangular cooperation; (ii) the relationship of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment with other relevant forums, in particular the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development, created within the framework of ECLAC, in which the Forum of Ministers of the Environment is invited to provide inputs and contributions on the environmental dimension of sustainable development; (iii) Resolution UNEA-2/2 on the role and functions of the regional ministerial forums with the United Nations Environment Assembly, which recognizes and reaffirms the importance of regional forums and requests the Executive Director to continue to provide support to them.

41. Mr. Carlos de Miguel, Head of Sustainable Development Policies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was invited to provide information on the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development, whose first meeting was held in Mexico, from 23 to 27 April 2016. He highlighted the importance of integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, while recognizing the complexity of the needed institutional coordination. He focused on the scope and results of the Forum on Sustainable Development for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is a key element in establishing regional positions prior to the High-level Political Forum. He invited the Forum of Ministers to be an active part of the Forum on Sustainable Development, not only in relation to the environmental pillar, but also to the economic and social pillar. He also reported that many countries have established national coordination mechanisms for the follow-up of the SDGs, and reiterated the invitation to the next Forum to be held in Mexico in April 2018.

42. Following these presentations, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica and Brazil commented on this Decision.

43. Nicaragua highlighted the importance of the holistic and cross-cutting approach and the need for integrated policies, taking as an example the cross-cutting approach required to address the challenge of climate change. He also warned about the use of the concept of middle income countries as a limiting factor for access to concessional financing of the Green Climate Fund, urging that the region pronounce on this matter by questioning and resisting the use of this concept.

44. Mexico briefed the meeting on its national approach to address Agenda 2030, through dialogues with implementers. He emphasized the importance of involving the different ministries, as promoted during the

Biodiversity COP in Mexico and the Forum for Sustainable Development. He emphasized that the coordination and coherence of policies and programmes must start from the national level, followed by the regional and then global level. A coordinated approach among agencies of the United Nations system is also needed.

45. With regard to the United Nations Environment Assembly, in order to maintain its relevance, he stressed the importance of addressing themes not in isolation but in the context of the implementation of Agenda 2030.

46. Costa Rica affirmed the country's commitment to Agenda 2030, and reported on the national compact of the SDGs, which allows integration into the national planning system. Regarding the link between the United Nations Environment Assembly and the High Level Political Forum, the Minister recalled that there is already a mandate given to the presidency to transmit the outcomes of the Assembly to the Political Forum, but reported that this has been repeatedly tried unsuccessfully. Unfortunately he felt that this suggests that the environment is not part of the political discussion, and in practice it is subordinated to the other pillars of sustainable development. Finally he called for effort to be made to ensure that the ministries' forums have the necessary political relevance so that the environmental dimension is duly considered.

47. The representatives of Mexico and Brazil echoed this concern, noting the need to respect integration as the central principle of Agenda 2030, as well as the mandate of the Chair of the Assembly to convey the voice of the international community on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. They recalled that the Assembly is the main instance at multilateral level that has the political representation of the highest environmental authorities of the countries and not of the agencies, urging the need to universalize the importance of the environmental dimension.

Decision 5: Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration - Access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters.

48. The Secretariat represented by Andrea Brusco, introduced the background to the Decision, both internationally and regionally, recalling that access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters has been a central element of environmental governance since the Rio Declaration in 1992. The common elements of the decisions of the Forum of Ministers and the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolutions on this subject are the emphasis on implementation, recognizing the important progress at the national level, and the need to strengthen capacities as well as opportunities for cooperation at all levels, mainly at the regional level. Some progress was made, including the development of the guidelines for implementation of the Bali guidelines, including progress, good practices and challenges faced by countries of the region.

49. The representative of ECLAC reported on the regional process that was initiated with the Regional Declaration on Principle 10 in Rio + 20, informing that there are already 24 countries in the region, St. Lucia being the last one to join, negotiating a regional agreement on the implementation of Principle 10, under the co-presidency and permanent leadership of Costa Rica and Chile. He described the work, calendar, and organization of the work, noting that important advances are already being made in the negotiating drafts, thanks to the leadership of several countries in the region. The creation of the observatory of Principle 10 by ECLAC and UN Environment was also underlined. The objective of this observatory is to contribute to knowledge, dissemination and implementation of the rights to access to information and public participation, and access to justice on environmental matters. He finally encouraged the countries to conclude the negotiation process at the next meeting to be held in Santiago, Chile, from 27 November to 1 December.

50. The representatives of Chile and Costa Rica reported on their support for this process as well as on the national actions being taken, noting that this process is not confined to environmental issues but is related to the development agenda in general.

51. Before continuing with the discussion on the decisions, the delegates considered the inclusion of an item in the agenda related to UN Environment's work in the region and an overview of regional and sub-regional

projects. UN Environment's Regional Representative, Mr. Leo Heileman provided a comprehensive presentation regarding the presence of UN Environment in the region, including, in addition to the regional office located in Panama, the country offices, namely the ones in Mexico and Brazil, the new subregional offices, namely the Subregional office for the South Cone, established in Uruguay two years ago, and the subregional office for the Caribbean established a year ago in Jamaica, the project office in Haiti and two new project offices in Colombia and Guyana. Mr. Heileman also highlighted the growth in human resources in these offices, the growth of the project portfolio for the region, as well as the visibility through social media. Mexico acknowledged the strengthening of the regional programme of UN Environment as a clear sign of the progress made in the decentralization of the organization.

52. Followed by this a panel was organized to present some of the projects that have been developed and that have been supported in the regional office, that show the involvement and participation of different actors such as governments, donors as well as other international organisations. Namely four projects were presented and commented on by key stakeholders from the governmental sector (Dominican Republic, Cuba and Ecuador), the donor sector (European Commission) and International Organizations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UN Environment).

53. The projects presented an ample range of topics, such as Climate Change (EUROCLIMA+¹ programme), Waste management in Small Islands Developing States, and Biodiversity Conservation (Amazon View and Caribbean Biological Corridor); all of them had a common approach on the importance of intersectoral collaboration, interconnectivity and the strong linkage between livelihoods and environment.

54. Cuba emphasized their participation in the Caribbean Biological Corridor Initiative and its commitment to ensure the implementation and interest in exchanging experiences with other countries.

55. Ecuador and Dominican Republic stressed the importance of designing and implementing initiatives such as the Caribbean Biological Corridor or the Amazonian Initiative through a fully integrated approach, involving in their implementation not only the Ministries of Environment but all the actors that are part of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the countries.

56. It was noted that participation of civil society is critical in this aspect, since the sustainability of such initiatives are strictly related to their capacity of engaging citizens and local economies in their implementation. Mexico recognized the role of FAO as a key regional partner for mainstreaming environmental aspects in the productive sector.

57. After this panel, the discussion on the progress in the implementation of the decisions of the Forum continued.

Decision 6: Sustainable Consumption and Production

58. The representative of UN Environment, Adriana Zacarías, made a presentation on the progress that has been made in this decision. She highlighted some of the most important achievements during the past year, including: (i) The "Meeting on South-South Cooperation for SCP" held in Brasilia in April 2017, bringing participants and experts from Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting was attended by 200 participants from 45 countries, 9 cooperation agencies and 5 development banks; and facilitated the exchange of experiences and identification of areas of cooperation and funding for SCP. ii) Online CPS course, launched on October 2, in Spanish and English. 60 fellowships have been given to region. (iii) review of ILAC indicators, aligning them with ODSs and prioritizing 13 CPS indicators; (iv) seven countries have already developed their national plans on sustainable public procurement plans and sustainability criteria, and a sustainable online public procurement platform is being developed in the Southern Cone. v) Development and / or implementation of national sustainable consumption and production plans in more than 10 countries in the region.

¹ EUROCLIMA is a regional cooperation programme between the European Union and Latin America, focused on climate change.

59. UN Environment, also presented the relevance of the Decision 6 on SCP in the global and regional agenda, in particular in Agenda 2030, the High Level Policy Forum, the United Nations Environment Assembly, and the Latin America and the Caribbean Forum on Sustainable Development. Sustainable Consumption and Production is of great importance given its transversal inclusion in the agenda 2030, and not only in goal 12.

60. Finally, some recommendations and areas to be strengthened were mentioned, such as: a) implementing SCP in a more integrated and coherent way, bringing together different policies and initiatives, which allow bigger impacts and co-benefits. b) Private Sector Involvement - Promote high-level dialogue, and work more with associations and chambers. c) Implement sustainable public procurement by prioritizing goods and services that address the reduction of contaminants included in multilateral agreements, conventions and regulations. d) Promote business models that generate eco-efficient and eco-innovative goods and services – which could reduce pollutants, promote circular economy and create green jobs.

61. The presentation on progress on this decision resulted in interventions from Mexico, Brazil and Colombia.

62. The interventions highlighted the connection between the state of the environment and its challenges in the region and the decisions promoted in the framework of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment. They highlighted that the results are very encouraging given the fact of concrete changes that can be achieved in order to halt negative environmental impacts. The data in the presentation and the examples applied to the whole region. In addition, the importance of the involvement of the private sector and the influence through small and medium enterprises was noted.

63. Also, it was mentioned that, for the ministries of the environment, the topic of sustainable consumption and production is an area which provides the opportunity for synergies and integrated approaches. It was also highlighted that the region is generating many solutions and therefore there are many possibilities to share good practices at a reasonable cost.

64. The topic of sustainable consumption and production is one that the region of Latin America and the Caribbean should take to the Third United Nations Environment Assembly. Needless to say, this decision is a great contribution to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production.

65. Finally there was a word of caution on the promotion of the circular economy approach that is taking relevance in Europe. There are market considerations that could imply limitations to the region's exports.

Decision 7: Regional Platform on Climate Change

66. Initiating the discussions for this decision, the representative of UN Environment, Elena Pita gave a presentation on the progress that has been made on this decision. She indicated that in 2016 two meetings of the Board of Directors were held, as a result of which a Platform Work Plan is available. It aims to create a space for South-South exchange, learning and cooperation in three main areas of intervention: (i) political dialogue, (ii) climate action (adaptation and mitigation), and (iii) funding and other means of implementation. These areas of work are subdivided into concrete activities. It was emphasized that, despite the lack of specific financing for the platform, the countries of the region have made substantial progress in this work program by taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the existence of climate change platforms that already have funding and a track record of work on climate change, mainly the Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (REGATTA) and Clima Lac in the framework of Euroclima. The activities carried out are aligned with the priorities expressed by the countries. They are aimed at multiple actors (decision-makers, legislators, planners, technicians, the scientific community, civil society and other institutions) in order to link information and knowledge generators with users. As for the modalities of intervention, technical assistance, learning exchanges, face-to-face workshops, on-line communities of practice, studies and publications have been carried out to adapt to the type of content and knowledge to be transmitted.

67. After this, Colombia took the floor, and emphasized the Andean Mountains Initiative and the important progress made in creating the Strategic Agenda on Climate Change in the Andes Mountains developed jointly by all Andean countries and facilitated by UN Environment and the Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN). It reaffirmed the importance of mountain ecosystems, which provide key ecosystems services and are highly vulnerable to climate change. It proposed having mountains as part of the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum of Ministers, taking into account that duplications with other initiatives should be avoided.

68. There was consensus in taking advantage of existing networks, such as the Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action in Latin America and the Caribbean or the EUROCLIMA programme, in the implementation of the work plan of Decision 7. Mexico added the proposal of summing up the various existing initiatives in order to avoid duplications and achieving better results. Activities of information exchange among Chile and Mexico were highlighted.

69. Costa Rica acknowledged the work done by the climate change platform and requested that its objectives remain: facilitating knowledge exchange; supporting intergovernmental negotiations; and helping identify finance opportunities to fight climate change.

Decision 8: Chemicals and Waste

70. On Decision 8, Chemicals and Waste, Jordi Pon, on behalf of the Secretariat, introduced the presentation, which was made by Ms. Leticia Carvalho from the Ministry of Environment of Brazil. Ms. Carvalho provided an overview of the Intergovernmental Network and invited those who had not joined yet to consider joining. She outlined who were the representatives for each sub-region at the Steering Committee of the Network, which is chaired by Brazil and Jamaica, and the schedule of meetings held as well as results established. These included agreements on operational mandates, structures (including working groups and steering committee) and rules of operation. A working group to develop the regional action plan of the network was established, and a survey to identify the chemicals and waste priority issues in the region has been conducted.

71. Initial information exchange activities have been developed (including convening webinars and preparation of documents). She outlined that outreach was able to impact on 190 participants in 30 countries. Finally, Ms. Carvalho reflected on the international chemicals and waste agenda, including SAICM; Basel, Rotterdam & Stockholm Conventions; and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the opportunity provided by the upcoming the Third United Nations Environment Assembly on pollution.

72. In response to the presentation, the delegation from Chile thanked Brazil for its leadership in the field of chemicals. Noting chemicals are a cross-cutting issue, he cautioned not to treat this topic in an isolated manner. He further highlighted the need for technical expertise and capacity building, considering the important effort required to implement at national level the international conventions, which now includes Minamata. Accordingly, he welcomed the mechanism provided by the network to facilitate joint cooperation. The need to consider the relation between chemicals, trade and production in countries as a relevant dimension was also mentioned.

73. The delegate from Mexico also thanked Brazil for the progress report and congratulated the Regional Office (of UN Environment) for its support and guidance throughout the process. The delegation from Uruguay echoed these acknowledgements and informed of steps taken in Uruguay, such as the development of a national and municipal waste strategy and promotion of pilot programmes for management of different wastes. Uruguay has also established technical criteria for closing older waste facilities. These were only some of the initiatives included in its work.

74. In response, Brazil considered that the network is one of the successes of the Latin American and the Caribbean Forum, and called for further consolidation of this subject in future forums.

75. The representative of the Secretariat also recalled that in relation to the mandate to prepare a report on waste management in Latin America and the Caribbean, progress has been made and it was expected that the final document would be ready by the end of this year and submitted at the next forum.

Decision 9: Regional Action Plan on Atmospheric Pollution

76. The representative of the Secretariat, Jordi Pon, described the progress in the region in the field of air quality, including activities in five priority areas: i) improvement of data (monitoring devices, modelling programmes); ii) synergies with other agendas (e.g. Climate and Clean Air Coalition); iii) awareness raising (BreatheLife Campaign); iv) cleaner technologies (electro-mobility, vehicle standards), and v) regional cooperation (regional network; bilateral and trilateral cooperation). He also pointed out some opportunities for this agenda, such as the upcoming UN Environment Assembly, the interest of the region in electric mobility, as well as the next meeting of the regional network (Mexico, March 2018).

77. The delegate from Paraguay pointed out two issues: (i) monitoring devices, where in response to the lack of guidance from UN Environment in Nairobi, some local capacities were developed to facilitate the start of the process; (ii) BreatheLife campaign – data from 2010 was used, while more updated data was available, which created some concerns when communicated to the population. Currently, this is being amended through contacts with the Pan American Health Organization.

Decision 10: Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Sustainable Development in Harmony with Nature

78. The representative of UN Environment, Mr. Alberto Pacheco Capella gave a presentation on the implementation of decision 10 on "Integrating Biodiversity for Sustainable Development in Harmony with Nature".

79. In his presentation, he highlighted the opportunity presented in 2016 by the conference of the parties of two of the most important conventions related to biodiversity, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity. He stated the progress made in the Latin American and Caribbean region to coordinate actions within the context of each convention through the organization of the preparatory meeting for both conferences of parties held jointly in the city of Antigua, Guatemala in August 2016. This meeting allowed the analysis of each decision to be debated by each conference of parties, as well as to discuss possible synergies between the two conventions, focused on concrete coordination at the national level.

80. He underscored the milestone represented by the Convention on Biological Diversity COP 13 in the region, under the leadership of the Government of Mexico. The conference of the parties successfully advanced the concept of integration of biodiversity in productive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism. In this sense, the importance of biodiversity in the productivity of sectors that have traditionally had a significant impact on the alteration and destruction of vital ecosystems was highlighted.

81. He also mentioned the importance of involving the private sector through national dialogues on biodiversity and business that allow the domestic productive sectors to establish a common understanding around the value and importance of biodiversity and ecosystems for their operations. He articulated the importance of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and how they continue to be an important platform for national biodiversity priority-setting.

82. Regarding the Biodiversity Strategy for the Caribbean, he mentioned progress with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to identify and harmonize the various initiatives, programmes and projects that currently interact in the Caribbean region to ensure a linkage that facilitates the identification of action plans based on cooperation and capacity building to implement the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

83. He ended by mentioning the articulation of a regional programme of cooperation on biological diversity, as decided by the XX Forum of Ministers, paragraphs 4 and 7 of decision 10. In this respect, he mentioned

that this cooperation programme is already under discussion with the countries of the region, focused on the exchange of technical, scientific and legal information on the integration of biodiversity in the productive sectors, as well as the importance of creating a network of experts on biodiversity for the region.

84. Mexico expressed appreciation for the regional support to continue with the first paragraph of the Cartagena Declaration and support for Mexico to hold the biodiversity conference in Cancun, with the theme of biodiversity integration for well-being, noting that what most impacts biodiversity are: agriculture, forestry, tourism and fishing.

85. Mexico also commented that integrating other sectors into the biodiversity discussions, other than environmental, is a process which includes a dialogue recognizing differences and seeking common ground to collaborate.

86. The Cancun event was an unprecedented event, having ministers other than that of the environment, talking about biodiversity with enthusiasm. During the COP, Mexico organized other forums, such as the civil society and youth alliances forum, indigenous experiences forum, etc. and thus opening spaces with other actors to create change.

87. Mexico began the task of coordinating with other sectors (especially with fishing, tourism) and agreeing on the lines of work, and they are now taking the opportunity to invite colleagues from the region to do similar exercises. Perhaps next year a workshop to follow up on the Cancun declaration could be held, which goes hand in hand with the integration of biodiversity for well-being. More sectors were also added to discussions: mining, energy, infrastructure, manufacturing as well as health.

88. Mexico commented on the regional platform mentioned by the Secretariat and that it is already elaborating the national reports (NBSAP) and for that reason should be careful to avoid duplication in reporting. In addition, Mexico has been very active after the conference in other fora such as FAO (Food Security Committee and Genetic Resources Secretariat).

89. Brazil congratulated Mexico on its leadership and organizing the Cancun conference and embraced the cause of mainstreaming biodiversity. From Brazil, the Ministers of Environment and Agriculture were together for the first time and announced Brazil's participation in the Bonn Challenge for the restoration of forests. Brazil considers it necessary not to miss the excellent platform as a result of the conference.

90. Brazil also commented that the region has a very special voice which needs to be heard in the international community, and that there is a very great congruence of positions, taking into account the great wealth that the region has (social, cultural, environmental).

91. Brazil also indicated that it is not possible to continue the conversation without including the issue of connectivity - some more analysis would be welcomed in this field.

92. In relation to the COP on migratory species, Brazil proposed to prepare a report on cetaceans in the South Atlantic. This proposal was well received and they hope to be able to count on the support of the countries of the region in the next COP in the Philippines, since the importance of cetaceans in terms of the balance of marine ecosystems and their conservation has influences on biodiversity and climate change by reinforcing the carbon absorption capacity, for example.

Decision 11: Oceans

93. The representative of UN Environment, Mr. Alberto Pacheco Capella gave a presentation on the implementation of Decision 11 on oceans. He began by highlighting how oceans has taken prominence since Rio + 20, and successively through international forums such as the one hosted by the Government of Chile at the *Our Oceans* conference, and the World Oceans Summit of The Economist. Similarly, the launch of the first global assessment of the oceans, under the mandate of the United Nations General Assembly, was a great milestone. He stated that the major challenges facing the oceans were a result of four main factors: habitat destruction, over-fishing and illegal fishing, pollution from land-based sources (nutrients and pesticides, sewage and marine litter), and climate change and its effects on the acidification of the oceans.

He emphasized that the cumulative effects of these factors at the same time is the reason why the health of the oceans is so degraded.

94. In terms of progress, he mentioned the importance of marine protected areas and the need to ensure sustainable governance through management plans. He also mentioned that it is important to develop capacities on ecosystem-based management and marine spatial planning. He further noted that several South-South cooperation workshops have been held in the region on these issues. He also highlighted the importance of combating marine litter and its effects on tourism, fisheries, water quality and ultimately, public health. The elaboration of national action plans on marine litter is an area where UN Environment has been working, through the clean seas campaign, which counts with the participation of 10 countries of the region.

95. He concluded by proposing a series of emerging issues for consideration by the countries of the region. These issues were: land-based sources of pollution, including nutrients, pesticides, plastics and sewage; blue carbon; use of marine spatial planning; blue economy; and regional governance of oceans, including marine protected areas.

96. After his presentation, Ambassador Marta Juarez made a presentation on the Global Dialogue on Oceans held in Costa Rica in June 2017, in celebration of the World Oceans Day – 8 June. The Ambassador presented on the organization of the dialogue which consisted of moderated panels on tourism, marine transport, marine conservation, and marine litter, among others. She discussed some of the main outcomes of the dialogue that ended with the Costa Rica Commitment.

97. Chile mentioned the great importance of the oceans for the sustainable development of the countries and emphasized the importance of coordination of related sectors. The Fourth International Congress on Marine Protected Areas (IMPAC - 4) held in September was highlighted, with the participation of representatives of the government, the private sector, civil society and academia, and thanked the participants in the region for their assistance. During this activity, the creation of 1.6 million km² of marine protected areas in Chile by 2018 was announced, reflecting the country's interest in continuing to contribute in this area.

98. Mexico commented that issues such as climate change, marine ecosystems, protected areas and carbon are all related and also the theme of CITES and they have a GEF project focusing on the marine ecosystem, which includes new species of concern, this requires training and collaboration to estimate the populations.

99. Related to the conservation of protected areas, Mexico now has 181 protected areas. In Cancun with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO), new protected areas were included: 90 million hectares, of which 69 are marine, are doubling the Aichi target for marine protected areas and also have several programmes on conservation (sea turtles, whales, coral reefs), and its national priority is to reduce illegal fishing.

100. Mexico also mentioned that it has a project in the Gulf of California on ghost nets to avoid accidental death/catch and mentioned as one of their new focuses is a collaboration with China related to international trade.

101. Mexico would like to know if tools are available to avoid marine litter and marine noise and how to improve implementation in the region in this sense.

102. Barbados called for attention to the Aichi target of 10% of marine protected areas, but also emphasized the importance of effectiveness of protection as an issue which needs more attention; not only the amount of the area but also the effectiveness of the protection. Barbados is also calling for a report on marine protected area governance.

103. Barbados further mentioned that the Blue Economy has been surfacing for quite some time, and is sometimes called sustainable ocean based economy, which is looking at all those sectors generating employment and investment. Hence, we actually do have ocean-based economies already, but there is a need to engage relevant sectors in discussions.

104. Barbados reaffirmed that this resolution on oceans is very important and should be kept on the table. However, Decision 11 goes beyond the mandate of UN Environment and other agencies should be brought in, such as FAO.

105. Cuba mentioned the recent effort in scientific research related to deep coral reefs and the vertical as well as regional connectivity of the corals. Mesozoic reefs, sheltered from the effects of climate change are a reservoir for research. Some results of a recent joint effort are the discovery of new species, and results will be publicly available.

106. Panama made itself available to continue as a meeting platform for issues related to oceans since they have 103 years of experience connecting the Caribbean and the Pacific, which gives them a lot of useful data from successes and mistakes.

Agenda Item 5. Cycle of meetings of the Forum of Ministers including exercise of the Chairmanship during the intersessional period.

107. Colombia explained the logic of aligning the cycles of the Forum of Ministers with those of the United Nations Environment Assembly, given the changes in the periodicity of the latter, and requested recommendations to the intersessional meeting in this regard. Additionally, they put on the table the possibility of changing the Presidency of the Forum, according to the rules of procedure, to one of the Vice-Presidents of the Forum in the face of the XXI Forum of Ministers.

108. Argentina, Vice-President of the Forum, expressed their willingness to assume the Presidency of the Forum until the next ministerial meeting, which would be prior to the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly. Paraguay, who had been proposed to lead the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean along with Argentina, indicated that because of their internal political calendar, they give up the initial proposal to co-chair the Forum and support the idea for Argentina to exercise the transitional chairmanship. Colombia thanked Argentina for its offer and showed its readiness to support the transition process.

109. In all statements, delegations expressed thanks for the work of the Presidency of Colombia, supported the alignment of cycles of times of the Forum of Ministers with the United Nations Environment Assembly, and supported the idea of having a transitional Presidency by Argentina.

110. Mexico raised the need for annual meetings (with an intersessional meeting in the years in which there is no meeting of the Forum of Ministers) and that UN Environment is in charge of directly feeding the discussion on the environmental dimension to the regional meeting on sustainable development, complementing the work and role of ECLAC.

111. The relevance of annual meetings was seconded by a large number of delegations, although the Minister of Costa Rica acknowledged that this option would require additional financial resources.

112. Argentina indicated that it will be opening possibilities to create spaces for work and dialogue during 2018, although in such a short presidency it is difficult to think of holding an intersessional next year.

113. Bolivia raised the need for the Forum not to depend on a single United Nations body as a Secretariat and drew attention to addressing the outcome of the next United Nations Environment Assembly and the forthcoming COP on Climate Change. He said that the Forum is a space where the region can decide how to address environmental challenges.

114. The Dominican Republic launched the idea of also thinking if it is pertinent to renew not only the Presidency, but also the Forum Bureau.

115. Colombia announced that it will call a meeting of the Bureau for the following day with the objective of formally discussing: the change of Presidency, how to address the work of the Forum in 2018 and the composition of the Bureau in the interim period of the Argentine Presidency.

Agenda Item 6. Regional Dialogue in preparation for the United Nations Environment Assembly

6.1 Reports and discussion on the preparation of the Assembly "Towards a pollution-free planet"

116. The session began with the intervention of the Minister of the Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Environment Assembly summarizing the activities carried out in preparation for the Third Assembly and the draft resolutions prepared by the bureau for the Assembly. He announced that all the decisions and documents produced by the bureau are available to the public on the Assembly website. The draft Ministerial Declaration has been designed to reach a large audience, simplifying the language and being as direct as possible. Mr Gutiérrez Espeleta reported that the statement was an open document and that all Ministers, especially those from countries that did not have permanent representatives in Nairobi, were cordially invited to provide contributions.

117. The session continued with the intervention of Ambassador Marta Juarez Ruiz, representing The Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) countries in Nairobi, who, in her intervention passed on the message of GRULAC to the delegates of the intersessional meeting, emphasizing the need for a regional consensus and thus providing clear guidelines to GRULAC in preparation for the Third United Nations Environment Assembly. The full text reads as follows:

118. *"We consider that this is a space of great importance that must be maximized and used to achieve the best results for our region. We emphasize the importance of the follow-up to the decisions adopted at the XX Meeting of Ministers of the Environment, so as to establish the level of progress in compliance, and if necessary, adopt measures to promote what corresponds. We also emphasize the need to have a space in this intersessional meeting, a regional dialogue in preparation to the Third United Nations Environment Assembly and we welcome all the discussions that take place in the search for regional consensus that will allow us to reach the next UN Environment Assembly as a solid and consistent block. It is our hope that GRULAC-Nairobi will have clear guidelines from this forum in Latin America and the Caribbean for all previous discussions and during UN Environment Assembly, and in particular, on the ministerial declaration being coordinated by Costa Rica. Having a unified position and precise elements of consensus, will facilitate constructive participation as a region in the negotiations that we will have to carry out with other regional groups on contentious issues. Considering the importance of the ministerial declaration, which will also serve as a contribution to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, GRULAC-Nairobi suggests that, during the development of the present forum, work should be done at a technical level on the contributions that our region can make to the aforementioned ministerial declaration. At the moment, approximately 20 draft resolutions have been submitted to UN Environment by different Member States and it would be advisable to take advantage of this necessity to agree, as far as possible, on those initiatives that we could support as a regional group. Finally, I would like to express, on behalf of GRULAC, our gratitude to the Colombian Government and to the UN Environment for facilitating this meeting, as well as to the Chair of UN Environment Assembly for their continuous, arduous and determined effort".*

119. Brazil reiterated its firm commitment to and support for the above, and emphasized the importance of having a robust and common declaration with a central theme of sustainable development.

120. Mexico expressed their support for the presidency of Costa Rica for the forthcoming Third United Nations Environment Assembly and reiterated the country's commitment to the development of a robust and meaningful Ministerial Declaration for the region, which could also guide the work of UN Environment in the region. He also acknowledged GRULAC - Nairobi 's great contribution to the work done in Nairobi in preparation for the United Nations Environment Assembly, highlighting the alignment with Mexico' s commitments and expectations for the Assembly.

121. Barbados reiterated the support of the Caribbean region to the president and urged delegates to support a strong position for the elaboration of a meaningful and actionable Declaration at the Third United Nations Environment Assembly. A statement should reflect the work that has been done in the region. Barbados noted that the Caribbean is one of the most devastated areas in the world, and a joint effort is needed to

ensure sustainability, so that coordinated and transparent work between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and a distribution balance of funds are essential.

122. The Chair, Mr. Gutierrez Espeleta, reported a budget deficit for the celebration of the Assembly, meaning that UN Environment could only finance the participation of the representatives of the least developed countries. The Chair, considered that the presence of all the countries of the region should be ensured and urged to seek a solution.

123. The Secretary of the Governing Bodies of UN Environment, Mr. Jorge Laguna Celis, joined remotely (video) and sent a message of acknowledgement to the United Nations Environment Assembly 's Chair, to promote preparations for Assembly in a transparent, inclusive manner and identifying concrete actions to combat pollution. In response to the president's concern about financing and participation in the Third Assembly; Mr. Laguna Celis reported that some funding had been secured to allow the participation of the middle-income countries of Latin America and the Caribbean which have no representation in Nairobi. Further information will be provided in the coming weeks, through the Regional Representative, Mr. Leo Heileman. Mr. Laguna Celis also urged delegates to disseminate in their countries the importance of the United Nations Environment Assembly for the environment.

124. The Chair, Mr. Gutiérrez Espeleta, reiterated his commitment to allow the participation of all Latin American countries in the Third United Nations Environment Assembly, and expressed his intention to contact the Regional Development Banks to explore financing opportunities.

6.2 Discussion of draft resolutions

125. The Costa Rican ambassador to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) in Nairobi introduced the work carried out under the CPR and listed the twenty draft resolutions submitted, including 15 substantive resolutions and 5 resolutions dealing with procedural or administrative aspects. Substantive resolutions address different dimensions of pollution, such as air, water, soil, chemicals, as well as cross-cutting issues such as environment and health. Three of them have been presented by countries in the region:

- Contributions of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (Mexico)
- Pollution Mitigation by Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Key Sectors (Mexico)
- Clean water for all, Leaving no one behind (Colombia, Costa Rica)

126. The ambassador also reported on the next steps in the negotiation process, which will culminate in the 3rd meeting of the open-ended CPR, where texts for adoption in the United Nations Environment Assembly will be prepared. It was pointed out that the purpose is to reduce the total number of resolutions by grouping them.

127. As general comments, the representative of Nicaragua indicated that they are all interesting resolutions but that they should be properly analyzed by the teams of experts. The Chair clarified that it was not the intention of the present meeting of the Forum to take decisions but to move forward in regional positions leading to the work in Nairobi. Mexico, for its part, reported that they had already put forward a collective Pollution-Free World- resolution, and in view of the high number of proposed resolutions, they suggested that this approach should be withdrawn. Mexico also requested the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Assembly to ensure the functionality of the online resolution platform where the inputs and changes can be tracked.

128. Mexico proceeded to present the draft resolutions on the United Nations Environment Assembly's contribution to the High Level Political Forum, as well as the resolution related to mitigating pollution by mainstreaming biodiversity. Mexico appreciated all the contributions received to date and recognized possible pending adjustments to improve the respective texts. For its part, Costa Rica introduced the resolution on clean water for all, presented jointly with Colombia, noting that there are two other resolutions on water resources (submitted by the US and Africa).

129. The representative of Brazil emphasized the importance of progressing as far as possible in common positions, and with respect to the three decisions presented, indicated that they would not have great difficulty, but suggested some changes, such as avoiding concepts that are not objecting to international consensus, and rather focusing on agreed concepts such as sustainable consumption and production under the 10YFP, instead of circular economy. He also expressed concern about the large number of draft resolutions, emphasizing the need to group projects into major themes. He also suggested moving forward with the suggestions with permanent representatives in Nairobi as soon as possible.

130. Regarding the draft resolution proposed by Mexico on pollution and biodiversity, Colombia announced that they fully endorse the resolution and expressed interest in being co-sponsors. Brazil also supported the resolution, but expressed some doubts about paragraph 3, suggesting avoiding the use of listings, which are usually problematic in resolutions given the risk of leaving some elements out. They also pointed out some possible improvements in the preambular part and general structure, as well as some elements that would require more precision. Ecuador also endorsed the resolution, suggesting possible reference to the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol and other related instruments. Mexico expressed its appreciation for the comments and indicated that they would consider all of them and send an updated version.

131. Regarding the resolution on the United Nations Environment Assembly contributions to the High-Level Political Forum, the concern from Colombia explained that there is a mandate for the Chair of Assembly to forward the Assembly's messages to the High-Level Political Forum, and this will be drafted more clearly in the resolution. Brazil, together with Costa Rica, expressed support for the draft resolution, pointing out some aspects that require greater clarity, as well as the need to consider the fact that the Assembly meets every two years, while the Political Forum is held annually.

132. Regarding the resolution on clean water for all, Brazil again suggested replacing the concept of circular economy with sustainable consumption and production, and together with Nicaragua and Mexico, suggested referring to the World Water Forum to be held in Brazil in 2018.

133. The Philippines' resolution regarding the possible synchronization of meetings of the various governing bodies of international conventions was discussed next. Several delegations, including Costa Rica, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia, pointed out that while the need for mechanisms to optimize the use of resources and the presence of ministers is welcomed, they highlighted some practical difficulties of taking this approach into practice. Nor is it considered appropriate to synchronize the objectives and activities, due to the need to respect the sovereignty of the different conventions and their governing bodies. Rather, it was suggested to take into account synergies approaches, such as the cluster of chemicals.

134. While discussing the other resolutions, Chile reported that they chose to complement Sudan's proposed air quality resolution by adding a number of elements such as short-lived atmospheric pollutants, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) efforts and the Breathelife campaign. Paraguay indicated that they support the proposals of Chile and will join with some ideas to enrich the text.

135. Minister Gutiérrez also briefly reported on the procedural or administrative resolutions, such as the organizational arrangements for the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly, the administration of trust funds, and the submission of the GEO-6 report. On this last point, Mexico emphasized the interest for the GEO-6 to be available in sufficient time to prepare for the United Nations Environment Assembly.

136. Finally, the possible draft resolution related to the decision of the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme on using the name UN Environment instead of UNEP was discussed. The Secretariat recalled the Memorandum which had been sent to inform the member states of the proposed change, explaining it to be purely for communicative purposes, without necessarily implying changing the name of UNEP. Minister Gutierrez reported that there are countries that have expressed great disagreement in the way this was carried out, and emphasized the need to prevent this issue from reaching the assembly.

137. Several delegations, including Mexico, Brazil and Colombia, agreed on the importance of the fact this topic should not affect the substantive discussions of the forthcoming the United Nations Environment Assembly, and recommended that the Executive Director should address this issue with the member states that have expressed the greatest disagreement. Mexico also suggested the possibility of gathering evidence

on the possible benefit of the change, for example in the context of social networks. Brazil emphasized the importance of preventing this issue becoming something that is not limited to a communication strategy but rather reopening other, more political debates on the issue.

6.3 Discussion of the Draft Political Declaration

138. The proposed declaration was read in plenary and was well received. The Chair of the United Nations Environment Assembly was congratulated for his work in reaching to the current text as all recognized the global environmental challenges related to pollution as well as the challenges in adapting the text to national realities. Nevertheless, representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean valued the accessible language of the declaration in a positive way indicating that the text is clear and easy to understand by the general public.

139. Valuable comments were received from Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay. These comments referred to the need for this declaration to emphasize international cooperation with clearly defined means of implementation, and also the need to better define the form and function of the Global Coalition and Common Platform referenced in this Declaration. It was also recalled that the first version of the document had concrete objectives and specific dates for its fulfillment, which was subsequently discarded, suggesting that some of the concrete commitments be reconsidered, despite the difficulties. It was suggested to reconsider the wording of numeral 6, because even though its objective is understood, the form can be improved, to avoid wrong interpretations. On numeral 8, a sequence that emphasizes the enthusiasm of the statement was proposed, since starting with commitments on indicators leaves the section emotionless, suggesting that this section begin with a wording that mobilizes the reader, pointing to specific commitments and the importance of solving the problem of pollution.

140. In particular, Chile requested for one of the observations in the process of discussion to be considered, which was to seek for convergence on global climate change mitigation policies and pollution prevention policies at local level.

141. Several aspects that shall be taken into consideration were indicated, such as eliminating the term armed conflict from the text, to include references to electromagnetic contamination, to take into account the governance of oceans, to emphasize sustainable consumption and citizenship co-responsibility and in voluntary commitments for caring for the planet. Also, comments were made in relation to having this declaration taken to other multilateral instances such as the United Nations High Level Political Forum.

142. The Chair of the United Nations Environment Assembly appreciated the comments of the countries and requested for specific comments to be sent via e-mail in the course of one week.

6.4 Discussion of the elements for the intervention during the opening the Third Assembly

143. Prior to initiating discussion on the substantive agenda items for Day 3, the Chairperson provided a summary of the decisions of the Bureau, which met prior to the start of the day's activities. This included housekeeping matters related to the preparation and finalization of the meeting report and timelines for providing comments. It also included a decision on how the Forum would be chaired in future and when meetings would take place.

144. The Chair informed that inputs had been received regarding the draft elements for the intervention of the GRULAC at the Third United Nations Environment Assembly and invited further comments prior to finalization.

145. Many interventions referred to the nature of the document under discussions. In this regard, the representative from Chile requested clarification on who would present on behalf of the Forum – be it the new President of the Forum (Argentina) or the chair of GRULAC (Colombia). Similarly, Nicaragua called for clarification on whether the proposal is on behalf of the Intersessional meeting or on behalf of GRULAC because if it is on behalf of GRULAC there would be need for round-robin consensus, which would be very

difficult Mexico suggested that a footnote be included in the statement, clarifying that the text was derived from the Intersessional meeting, followed by Brazil, who suggested that the footnote could say: “discussed at the intersessional meeting”.

146. Costa Rica, as a representative of GRULAC, noted the role of GRULAC in Nairobi, and suggested that the statement be firmer and “endorse” (rather than just “support”) the political declaration (re. para 7). In terms of the Resolutions, she referred to efforts to consolidate Resolutions by GRULAC, through discussions with other delegations, and reinforced the need to reduce the number of Resolutions to be approved by the Third Assembly.

147. With regard to the reference to UN Environment and UN Environment ‘s work, Nicaragua and Venezuela felt that, while recognizing the work of UN Environment and the Secretariat, it was not important to promote the agenda of UN Environment in the document. In terms of the transmission of concerns to ECOSOC, it was felt to be inappropriate for the declaration to include such reference. Also issues of Assembly management should not be included in the document, such as submission of Resolutions to UN Environment Assembly.

148. On the process for consolidation and enrichment of the document, many countries agreed that that new items might need to be included or taken into account in the period preceding the Third Assembly and enquired whether there was leeway in modifying the text prior to the assembly. The delegate from Nicaragua agreed with previous comments from Chile on the need for flexibility which would allow the statement to be updated prior to the Third Assembly, based on current and future events in the region (such as recent hurricanes) and did not support the idea that the Intersessional meeting could take a firm position this far in advance of the Third Assembly. Similarly, Brazil felt that since the draft document was only being read for the first time, that further reviews should be allowed prior to finalization, with some discretion being given to the chair.

149. On the content of the document, there was a general feeling that the document should be a strong political message, contextualized in the situations of the region, including reference to events such as hurricanes and disasters that devastated counties of the region.. He further suggested the inclusion of reference to the upcoming World Water Forum in 2018 in Brazil. He also felt that the declaration should focus more on pollution, as the theme of the Environment Assembly, and the social impacts of pollution should be highlighted. The delegate suggested that the declaration move beyond “reaffirmation” of what is already known and greater reference to the SDGs should be included. In effect, he considered that more work on the document was needed.

150. Referring to paragraph 6 on pollution, Mexico suggested that the meeting would benefit from data presented by the Secretariat, specific to the region. Nicaragua suggested that reference be made to replenishment of the Green Climate Fund.

151. In response, the chair felt that the statement should be flexible and serve as a basis for the intervention points (calling it “elements for an intervention”). She felt that Colombia, as the chair of GRULAC would be best placed to make an intervention in the Assembly taking into account the suggestions for the intervention.

152. He also felt that since the draft document was only being read for the first time, that further reviews should be allowed prior to finalization, with some discretion being given to the chair. He further suggested the inclusion of reference to the upcoming World Water Forum in 2018 in Brazil. He also felt that the document should focus more on pollution, as the theme of the Environment Assembly, and the social impacts of pollution should be highlighted. The delegate suggested that the declaration move beyond “reaffirmation” of what is already known and greater reference to the SDGs should be included. In effect, he considered that more work on the document was needed.

153. Venezuela, in making its first intervention, mentioned in respect of the nature of the document, felt that the word “elements” should be strengthened, since the proposal was to be representative of the members of GRULAC. While recognizing the good work of the Secretariat, he felt that a focus on the Secretariat was not necessary in the document. He also felt, as did previous speakers, that the document needed to be strengthened, with greater reference to the needs of humanity and also climate change concerns.

154. Argentina also considered the need to reflect priorities of the region in the proposed document, while agreeing on the nature of it as GRULAC intervention. He suggested that the revised text integrate all comments and that we seek to achieve consensus.

155. Cuba insisted that the document should be used as a guide for elements for the declaration to be made on behalf of GRULAC and that the chair has flexibility in presenting the text at the Third Assembly. Referring to the situation in Cuba, he highlighted the severe impacts of hurricanes, including on the environment, and insisted on the importance of context. He endorsed many of the suggestions made by previous speakers noting that the document was a work in progress.

156. Chile referred again to the text and noted that there was much consensus (e.g. need for flexibility; need to be stronger and more political; and need for context to be included). He suggested shortening the document by removing “desires”, “aspirations” etc. He also suggested that the document should focus more on “ways of life”, using as an example the reference to pollution, where more reference could be made to lifestyles, rather than sustainable consumption and production.

157. Bolivia agreed with previous speakers that this Forum is one regional space for political dialogue, exchange and cooperation, but not the only one, and therefore references should be more precise. He made reference to the United Nations Environment Assembly being “a” global environmental agenda rather than “the” global environmental agenda. In general he supported the text and suggestions made during the previous interventions.

158. Mexico welcomed the debate on this document of elements for the GRULAC intervention, which reflected ideas from the region to inform the Assembly, and which would be flexible and alive.

159. Barbados concluded that it should be an informative document but that it would never be perfect. The Minister suggested that the Forum should be a “marketplace of ideas”, and that the chair would have a role in finalization of the statement and conveying ideas expressed, while allowing (and not excluding) additional inputs prior to the Third United Nations Environment Assembly. He highlighted the recent devastation in the region and the challenges being faced by the region. In this regard, he insisted that space be reserved in the intervention for conveying a sense of the significant devastation suffered by the region and lessons learned during the recent hurricanes and the solidarity of countries in the region in response. He linked the devastation to the theme of the Third Assembly, particularly the issue of waste management. He further reinforced the point made by Chile, about impacts on “way of life”. In conclusion, he urged for a strong, common message be conveyed, by the chair. In this regard, Ecuador emphasized the need to express that the most important challenge that we address as a specie is to change the dominant patters of production and consumption, and to make reference to important concepts and essential elements for any public policy on the environment as access to information, public participation, co-responsibility, transparency and solidarity.

160. The Chair noted all comments with appreciation and undertook to convey a consolidated version of these elements for the GRULAC intervention in the United Nations Environment Assembly

6.5 Voluntary commitments by Governments, private sector entities and civil society organizations to clean up the planet.

161. The Chair of the United Nations Environment Assembly introduced the topic of voluntary commitments by relating an example of Costa Rica on single-use plastic bags voluntary ban, which seems to be working. For example, two major companies had just announced the decision not to use the plastic bags. He expressed the need to share these experiences in order to encourage others.

162. Commitments from private sectors can be very relevant as the example of the 2 big malls in Costa Rica can also encourage others, and this is exactly what is needed to be communicated in Nairobi. Also, public-private partnerships are important as well as working with the people as also mentioned by Ecuador.

163. The Director of ROLAC also forwarded a message from the Deputy Executive Director of UN Environment stating that some 430,000 commitments are being made in the system. However, he

encouraged countries to reach out to their governments, private sector entities, institutions and the general public to express their commitments to combat pollution in order to get all sectors on-board.

164. Mr. Heileman also wanted to emphasize that the private sector as well as the Governments are already doing a lot in terms of reducing environmental impact, but not all is shared publicly.

Agenda Item 7. Review and approval of the main conclusions of the meeting

165. Under this agenda item, the Rapporteur of the meeting, delegate from Peru, Mr. Fernando Leon, announced that the draft report of the meeting was available on the web of the meeting and that delegations would have up to seven (7) days to review it and send their adjustments or comments to the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 8. Other business

166. Under this agenda item, the countries did not discuss any additional issues.

Agenda Item 9. Closure of the meeting

167. Under this point in the agenda, the Chair of the meeting, Mrs. Claudia Vásquez applauded the positive spirit and collaboration shown by the delegations and deeply appreciated the support received from the members of the Forum bureau; of the United Nations Environment Assembly Bureau as well as its Chairman; the Minister of Costa Rica, Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez and, from UN Environment as Secretariat of the Forum.

168. Several delegations took the floor to acknowledge Colombia's work by presiding over the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America, as well as the excellent organization of the meeting and the immense hospitality provided to the countries. They also congratulated and offered support to Argentina for the interim Chairmanship they will be holding of the Forum of Ministers soon.

169. Argentina expressed their hopes in rising to the challenge of the Chairmanship.

170. The Regional Director and UN Environment Representative expressed his satisfaction with the development and results of the meeting.

171. The meeting was officially closed on Friday, October 13 at 1:30 by the Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Mr. Murillo.

□□□□□□

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