

Regional Declaration from Latin America and the Caribbean for the UNEA 3

Pollution

Regarding the theme of UNEA 3, *Towards a pollution free planet*, the inputs included in this declaration were made by the contributions from collaborators at the Regional Consultation Meeting held in Puntarenas, Costa Rica during the month of June 2017; and the Regional Consultation on Pollution, launched by LACEMOS from October 2017 to November 2017 with more than 100 collaborators from 17 countries from the region.

We make an urgent call to States and Governments, the United Nations System and multilateral official and public institutions, to raise the level of commitment and the ethical and political will to adopt actions and decisions that put a halt to global pollution. Pollution, together with the impacts of resource extraction, the development of megaprojects and the effects of climate change, are causing irreversible damage to freshwater and oceans, as well as the accelerated loss of biodiversity, the livelihoods of communities, the deterioration of ecosystems, as well as deepening the conditions of inequality, impoverishment and vulnerability in which people live, especially in the South of the Globe.

We note that the consultation held within the dynamics of the Earth system, based on the GEO methodology, water and oceans are the most affected from the perspective of regional citizenship, followed by the loss of biodiversity. We consider water, oceans, and biodiversity valuable natural common goods and heritage of the region, which unfortunately are being destroyed by pollution caused by various activities such as industry, extractive activity, and general unconscious human activity. Pollution does not recognize borders and affects the entire region; this is why we request decisions and actions in favor of ecological integrity and the community of life.

We insist on the need for the creation of a legal framework that regulates pollution, and that encompasses any activity that could generate negative environmental impacts, such as extractive activity, monocultures and the use of agrotoxins for agriculture. It is also necessary that the existing legal framework in countries of the region, should establish the obligatory and systematic local consultation prior to the implementation of the extractive activity, or any activity that could generate a negative environmental impact, respecting the principle of the self-determination of the people's. We emphasize the importance of preparing environmental impact studies to which the citizens of the affected areas should have access, thus guaranteeing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. Additionally, the legal framework must promote incentives for good practices, promoting Sustainable Development as well as sanctions for legal or natural persons that pollute or deteriorate nature.

We consider the implementation of fiscal measures and the application of sanctions to those who pollute the environment and damage nature, as an efficient mechanism to reduce pollution levels. Concrete actions for environmental protection are necessary, through legal mechanisms that guarantee the Environmental Rule of Law, with follow-up processes against legal or natural persons that cause damage to nature, and respect for the polluter-payer principle, coercing those who pollute to the restitution of the damage.

We insist on the transformative capacity of formal and informal environmental education at all levels, beginning at an early age, to inform and educate citizens about the care of the global common goods. We propose the promulgation and stimulation of environmental education based on the conservation of natural resources, which intentionally assumes the principles of precaution and prevention, as well as common but differentiated capacities. In addition, promoting usage of the waste generated by each individual on the planet, promoting techniques of development friendly with nature, taking ancestral knowledge as the basis of local production practices, and supporting the development of sustainable technologies, through investment in research and science.

The impunity in the cases of environmentalists murdered in the region is alarming, in fact, the figures of environmentalists killed increases every year. Cases like the case of Berta Cáceres worry us. These acts mean that in Latin America and the Caribbean, being an environmentalist or defending the Pachamama can cost you your life. We ask for justice for the victims and their families, and we urge States to create policies for prevention and protection for those who exercise the activity of caring and defending the environment.

We request that access to environmental information be full and transparent, in compliance with Principle 10 and the resolution of the Rio + 20 Summit "The Future We Want" along with all its principles, and we regret that these have not been adopted as a whole in many signatory countries.

We emphasize that access to information and participation, the role of the law, and non-regression in environmental law issues, all are central issues for the advancement of justice and democracy in environmental matters in the region. Therefore we request for compliance of laws and international agreements on environmental matters.

REGIONAL PARTICIPATION AND THE NEED FOR REVISION OF THE POLICY OF INVOLVEMENT OF THE MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN UNEP

We make an urgent call for the revision of the stakeholder engagement policy. We are concerned about how UNEP has been handling the issue, such as the arbitrary alteration of the name of the unit related with us of Major Groups and Stakeholders Unit, to Civil Society Unit.

Since the presentation of the report of the Regional Participation Consultation 2015-2017, promoted by the regional representatives of the Major Groups of the United Nations Environment Program for Latin America and the Caribbean, we have highlighted our reality of participation, which we find to be not representative and very limited. We thus present a more profound exposition related to the subject:

The asymmetric difference in participation and involvement between the subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean is remarkable. Likewise, the difficulty of promoting dialogue and cooperation between Spanish speakers and those who speak English (Caribbean) and

Portuguese (Brazil), is a reality that needs dedication and mutual commitment on all sides to achieve common goals.

In addition, we observed that the degree of response and effective participation of accredited organizations is very limited and low; out of 16 organizations accredited in the region at the time of consultation, only 6 are active in the processes.

It is necessary that UNEP updates the consultative status of accredited organizations, and to find ways to keep participation more accessible to organizations and citizens. In the region we are proud to be managing citizen processes, which are open and inclusive.

We are concerned that of the 16 accredited organizations, only 5 of the 9 Major Groups are minimally represented, which means that there are groups without any representation in the region. The Major Groups to follow, until June 2017, never had any formal participation or representation in the regional participation mechanisms of the United Nations Environment Program: Children and Youth, Trade and Industry, Workers and its Unions, and Local Authorities.

We need participation processes guided by the principles of effective participation, ethics, cooperation, and dialogue between the agents of the Major Groups and other agents, with special importance to UNEP and Governments. This is to raise and amplify the voices that have been historically and systematically excluded from global public decisions, honoring the principle "that no one be left behind" of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and making visible the capacities of proposals and solutions of social movements, the territorial networks, and the civil society before the challenges that lay ahead for the care of the environment and of nature.

About LACEMOS

We are committed to the promotion of our organization to revitalize the current participation in an intentional, informed, educated, and effective way. We, regional citizens and agents of the Major Groups, created LACEMOS: the Latin America and the Caribbean Engagement Mechanism. This mechanism will serve as a platform for accessing information, and will promote consultations and synergies to create shared paths among the various agents operating in the region, in cooperation with Mother Earth.

We recognize the leadership in self-organization, and inspiration from the RCEM Asia Pacific Engagement Mechanism and the Women's Major Group who are creating a healthy path for effective participation.

We affirm that UNEA 3 represents an opportunity to lay meaningful foundations, promote cooperation, and develop initiatives and platforms that effectively engages all Stakeholders towards working for a healthy planet and humanity in a sustainable world that promotes lasting peace. We understand that it is a human right to guarantee the care, defense and continuity of life and nature in for the global common good with a focus on justice and intergenerational equity.