

Statement of the Major Groups and stakeholders for the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Buenos Aires, 2018).

From LACEMOS, the Latin America and the Caribbean Engagement Mechanism, a platform and mechanism that serves as an interlocutor to link civil society to the different decision-making spaces at local, national, regional and international level, comprised by accredited organizations, not accredited to the UN Environment, and at the same time activists and representatives of the Major Groups and relevant stakeholders of different countries of the region:

We affirm the importance of creating opportunities for the participation of the Major Groups and Relevant Stakeholders of civil society in decision-making, and we celebrate the progress that has been made in the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, in relation to increasing the participation of civil society. Thanks to the Regional Consultation held prior to the Forum, inputs were developed and at the same time more spaces were available to have an active voice in the Ministerial Dialogues that preceded the Forum.

We recognize the role and efforts of UN Environment as the Secretariat of the Forum to achieve the aforementioned progress by making a path for effective and inclusive participation, and as Civil Society we hope to continue forward without setbacks maintaining the acquired spaces.

We affirm the importance of the Resolutions and Decisions of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the United Nations Environment Assembly as instruments to accelerate and deepen the implementation and fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the NDCs of the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the Montevideo Consensus on population and development, promoting international and regional cooperation through broad South-South and Triangular Cooperation schemes.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

In relation to Sustainable Consumption and Production, we recognize the importance of working on the transformation of production and consumption patterns as a fundamental axis to achieve a sustainable production and consumption model to live in balance and harmony with Mother Earth and thus restore the health and integrity of ecosystems, and at the same time developing of plans, programs and systems to achieve SDGs 1 and 2 (Zero Hunger and Ending Poverty).

In that order of ideas, we invite the States to join efforts for the development of plans, programs and public policies to promote sustainable production initiatives; for this, the efficient management of shared natural resources and the way in which toxic waste and pollutants are eliminated are important. It is also important to urge industries, businesses and consumers to recycle and reduce waste, as well as to support developing countries to move towards sustainable consumption patterns by 2030, and we believe it is urgent to

invest resources in the scientific sector for the promotion of research aimed at the creation of sustainable production systems.

RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

Regarding the Human Rights and Environmental Governance axis, we celebrate the progress made with the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, adopted this year in Escazú, Costa Rica. In line with this, we call for all of the States present to give a clear message to the public through their subscription, ratification and early implementation, with the consequent adaptation of their regulatory frameworks.

In virtue of the role that civil society organizations play and the growing vulnerability that this implies, we ask governments to establish mechanisms for the effective protection of Earth defenders, contemplating the guarantee of the right to fight for a dignified life, as well as the elimination of all type of political persecution of which we are subject to as major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the community. We celebrate the UN Environment Environmental Rights initiative, as well as the session dedicated to the theme of The Guardian newspaper, to raise awareness and expand the dissemination of this topic

On the other hand, the recognition of our valuable contributions to sustainable development must be translated into concrete and transparent mechanisms for the participation of civil society in decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels - with particular emphasis on this Forum, the UNEA and its subsidiary bodies - from the beginning of negotiations to the stages of agreement, implementation, control, accountability and improvement. In this regard, we request that these key messages be incorporated as an annex to the Political Declaration that emanates from this meeting.

DETOXIFICATION

Regarding the axis of detoxification, it is essential to accelerate commitments and decisions for the protection of the oceans from the process of acidification and pollution, considering their vital contribution to the balance of the global climate, their relevance as a way of life and habitat for many species. In this context, progress must be made towards the full implementation and promotion of synergies between the Rotterdam, Stockholm, Basel and Minamata Conventions.

More specifically, the reduction of plastic marine pollution should be based on the precautionary principle, aiming at promoting integrated waste management in each community and guaranteeing that the waste that cannot be avoided, is done through a final environmentally sound disposal process, with a view to prevent its entry into the water flows towards the sea.

We recognize the commitments and the progress made in the Ozone Convention (Montreal Protocol), for the detoxification of air, however greater commitment and international cooperation in the region is required to achieve the development,

implementation and monitoring of air detoxification programs and the change in consumption models to reduce pollution with the use of renewable energies.

Each year, more than 4 million people die prematurely from diseases attributable to household air pollution as a result of the use of solid fuels, which is why the implementation of public policies is necessary, as well as health programs that encourage the reduction of air pollution

ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY

Taking into account decision X / 33 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in which Parties and other governments were invited to, in accordance with national capacities and circumstances, integrate ecosystem-based adaptation approaches into relevant strategies, such as adaptation plans and strategies, national action plans to combat desertification, national strategies and action plans for desertification, biodiversity, and sustainable land management strategies on biodiversity. We highlight the importance of enhancing international cooperation in the management of special natural areas, and promote comprehensive management with an ecosystem approach, relying on experiences from the Corridors of Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and the Amazon and Andean regions.

Based on Article 14, numeral "a", of the Convention on Biological Diversity, we ask States to establish the appropriate procedures to demand the evaluation of the environmental impact of their proposed projects, which may have important adverse effects for biological diversity, in order to avoid or minimize such effects and, where appropriate, allow public participation in these processes, especially when the proposed project is located in areas considered as natural reserves or with great biological diversity.

In addition, it is important to have natural green accounting standards and instruments in economic decision-making, recognizing the great importance of the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity.

The restoration of ecosystems and environmental services should aim at food security, the conservation of systems in a sustainable way, access to water as a fundamental right and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Regarding climate change, the recent report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights the urgent need for governments to increase their reduction commitments in order to achieve the objective of keeping the global temperature increase below 1.5 °C and ensuring the care and continuity of community life in all its expressions and forms. To that end, cooperation policies between countries are urgently needed in order to achieve adaptation, mitigation and resilience mechanisms according to the particularities of Latin America and the Caribbean.

On the other hand, the accelerated effects of climate change will lead many inhabitants of our region to levels of vulnerability that will force them to involuntary displacements and will lead to the emergence of climate refugees. In view of this scenario, we believe it is necessary to increase regional solidarity to face the challenges and migrations linked to the effects of climate change in a joint and humanitarian manner.

Likewise, cooperation policies among countries urgently need to achieve adaptation, mitigation and resilience mechanisms.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

We believe that timely, inclusive and informed citizen participation is one of the main means of implementing international agreements and national public policies. To this end the promotion of environmental education from the States and with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme and the entire UN System is a prerequisite.

Finally, we call on the international financial system not to promote levels of indebtedness that put the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the States at risk, thus conditioning the full development of countries and peoples.

We thank and note the remarkable effort and leadership role of Costa Rica in the Third United Nations Environment Assembly and Argentina in this Forum giving us a space to not only participate, but to collaborate in the decision-making process. In addition, we reiterate our profound gratitude to UN Environment for the efforts made to achieve the participation of Civil Society in the Regional Consultation Meeting and in the Forum of Ministers.