



**XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers
of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**
Buenos Aires, Argentina

A. Meeting of High-Level Experts
9 - 10 October 2018

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Report of the Preparatory Meeting of High-Level Officials

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting

1. The Meeting began with an opening ceremony on Tuesday, 9th October 2018, at 9:00 a.m. with the participation of 26 of 33 countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean region, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The session began with a speech by Rabbi Sergio Bergman, Secretary of Government of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Argentina, as Chair of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers. During his welcome speech, he highlighted the importance of finding common regional perspectives and his expectation of having concrete recommendations for the Ministerial Segment arising from these two first days of the meeting. He also mentioned the need to link the environmental and economic agendas, emphasising circular economy, sustainable consumption, social inclusion and innovation. He also stressed the importance of regional platforms for exchanging information and enhancing the regional voice in other global platforms such as Climate Change and the Group of Twenty (G20).
2. Mr. Leo Heileman, Regional Director and Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme, in his capacity as Secretary of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, thanked the Republic of Argentina's leadership as well as the work of the Bureau of the Forum. He also congratulated Mrs. Mariela Chervín, Interinstitutional and Interjurisdictional Undersecretary, for her designation as Chair of this preparatory meeting.
3. The representative of the Regional Civil Society Main Groups was called upon to address the meeting, summarising the discussions of the previous consultation.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of work

2.1. Adoption of the rules of the meeting

4. In accordance with the practice of the Forum, it was proposed to adopt the rules of procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly, mutatis mutandis, to govern the proceedings of the meeting. In this sense it was explained that the practice and expectation is to have the decisions that are adopted by consensus. The Forum adopted the rules of procedure by consensus.

2.2. Approval of the Agenda and the calendar of sessions of the meeting

5. The provisional agenda and the annotated provisional agenda and its calendar of sessions proposed by the Chair were adopted after incorporating the modifications deemed necessary. In particular, as suggested by Cuba and Bolivia, it was agreed that agenda item 5 would be informative rather than focused on discussing the preparation of regional positions in advance of the Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). In addition, an extension was requested to discuss the political declaration, and in that regard, Argentina announced the upcoming creation of a Group of Friends of the Chair, which will be open to the countries willing to contribute to the drafting of the document.

Agenda Item 3: Brief summary of regional progress in the implementation of the decisions adopted at the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

6. The Forum Secretariat, represented by the Regional Director and Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme, provided a brief summary of the work carried out in the implementation of the decisions adopted during the past meeting of ministers, highlighting the ongoing programmes and projects in the region at regional, subregional and national level.
7. After this, the members of Interagency Technical Committee (ITC) were called upon. As part of the ITC the representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted the Escazú Agreement as well as mainstreaming of environmental issues in the 2030 Agenda and its support to the region with a portfolio of some 200 projects. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) commended the approach of discussions in proposing a modified development model, highlighted the collaborative interagency work with the United Nations Environment Programme, and invited the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in order to give the environment strong representation.
8. Barbados expressed thanks for the report and commented about the opportunity to give relevance to the work in the Caribbean and requested revising the membership of the ITC in order to include other relevant Caribbean stakeholders, such as the Caribbean Development Bank. The country identified the need to obtain more support in terms of environmental information and national statistics, sustainable consumption, and production, as well as the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, and stressed its work on environmental education and green economy.
9. Haiti requested to be included in projects and endeavours and expressed their willingness to develop more concrete proposals, specifically for the Latin America and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC).
10. Brazil highlighted the submission of more advanced and targeted developments related with the new ILAC and proposed to focus on urgent and practical matters, to better position regional messages at the upcoming United Nations Environment Assembly.

Agenda Item 4: Discussion of recommendations for the ministerial segment

4.1. Innovative solutions to detoxify our environment

11. The Chair invited the Secretariat to introduce the session from document UNEP/LAC-IG.XXI/4. Mr. Jordi Pon, Regional Coordinator of Chemicals and Waste, of the United Nations Environment Programme introduced the scope of the session, as well as the session's relevant documents.
12. Subsequently, Leticia Carvalho, General Coordinator of Environmental Quality and Waste Management of the Ministry of Environment of Brazil and Chair of the Steering Committee of the Intergovernmental Network of Chemicals and Waste, presented the results of the intersessional work of the Chemicals and Waste Network, in particular the action plan for regional cooperation in the management of chemicals and waste 2019-2020, and the resource mobilisation strategy 2019-2020. She also described the development process of the plan together with its scope, as well as the support notes to date (from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay). Finally, she recalled the need to agree on the new composition of the steering committee.

13. Mr. Jordi Pon also presented the report “Waste Management Outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean”, which responds to the mandate of the XIX Forum of Ministers of the Environment (held in Los Cabos, Mexico, in 2014) and the Decision 8 of the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment, held in Cartagena, Colombia, in 2016.

14. A large number of countries expressed their support, both in the work of the Intergovernmental Network and in the action plan. The importance of promoting local solutions was also mentioned, for example, Guatemala suggested considering the diffusion of a technology for the containment of waste in rivers, from a membrane called biobarda, which has already been applied in several countries to reduce marine pollution by waste. Some countries also expressed their agreement with the current draft decision, and several of them suggested new elements to be considered in the text, which will proceed to the Secretariat for consolidation.

4.2 Innovative solutions to decarbonise our environment

15. After a brief introduction by the Secretariat of the components of the working document on decarbonisation and adaptation, the governments of Costa Rica, and Argentina, with the support of the Secretariat, provided an introduction and contents of the four components of the proposed draft decision.

16. Comments were received from some countries on the conceptual difficulty of some of the components of the draft decision, such as long-term strategies, as well as clean transport and electric mobility that, according to these countries, do not correspond to the needs of the region, and require more discussions. Other countries suggested making the decision more generic in order to balance their components and reflect topics that have consensus.

17. Other countries emphasised the importance of basing the approach on long-term strategies, as well as in clean transport and electric mobility, as well as strengthening the regional climate change platform in order to provide political guidance to cooperation on climate initiatives of existing external donors. It was also suggested to introduce a sense of urgency to significantly increase cooperation and action on climate change, as well as to reflect with separate titles each of the four topics included in the draft decision.

18. Due to the different points of view expressed by various countries on the content of the draft decision, the Chair entrusted the plenary to move forward through informal consultations with interested countries, to conclude a new version of the text that could be submitted for consideration by the countries.

4.3 Innovative solutions for decoupling

19. After the presentation of a video on "Indicators of Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean", produced by the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Resource Panel, Mrs. Adriana Zacarias, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Forum, thanked countries in the region for their support and work on the topic of sustainable consumption and production, and introduced the concept note on decoupling, describing the environmental, social and economic benefits of resource efficiency. She added that consumption and sustainable production is an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable development and that this requires a systemic change. Lastly, she presented advances in several countries of the region, which included the development of National Plans for Sustainable Consumption and Production, sustainable public procurement policies, work with the private sector in areas of innovation, life cycle analysis, tourism, food loss, among others. She gave examples from the region of where South-South cooperation has been strengthened.

20. Following this, the Chair introduced the proposal for a decision on “Sustainable Consumption and Production: decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental impact”. She highlighted that the draft that was presented is the third draft that has been worked on in the last three months with the Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production, via four webinars, and indicated that this draft seeks to make a call for action for concrete initiatives, instead of making a list of priorities. The representatives of Barbados and Colombia presented the objectives of the points included in the decision, together with Argentina. Barbados highlighted the importance of this proposal to support the implementation of the Latin American and Caribbean Sustainable Development Initiative (ILAC) and the Regional Strategy of Sustainable Consumption or Production and added that the intention is to develop a cooperation programme with the European Union on sustainable consumption and production. Colombia highlighted the importance of replicating and scaling up best practices in the area of sustainable public procurement, eco-labelling, and green businesses.

21. Afterwards the plenary was opened for comments. Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador presented their comments in support of the draft Decision and several countries proposed topics to be included such as micro businesses, interculturality and transparency. They also made the request to the International Resources Panel that the documents be available in addition to English and Spanish, in Portuguese they also make available documents in Portuguese. Bolivia suggested that the circular economy be defined in the context of sustainable consumption and production.

22. Bolivia reflected on the importance of not only taking care of the environment, but also ensuring productive economies for the benefit of the people. They shared information on community economic organisations in Bolivia as a model for sustainable and community production, with a focus on the social value of the economy, and particularly the local economy. Ecuador reaffirmed the importance of promoting responsible consumption, sustainable lifestyles, environmental education and, bioeconomy as an opportunity to catalyze sustainable economy and good living.

23. The representatives of the countries expressed their appreciation for UNEP’s work and affirmed the importance of having a decision of this forum on this topic.

4.4. Innovative solutions to enhance the benefits of ecosystems

24. Mr. Alberto Pacheco Capella, Regional Ecosystems and Biodiversity Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme, of the Secretariat made a presentation reflecting the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems for the Latin America and the Caribbean region, highlighting that the region covers 50% of the world's biodiversity. It was mentioned that, through diverse ecosystems in unique areas such as lowland forests, coral reefs, mangroves, and wetlands, among others, the region has a wealth of natural resources and services. Emphasis was placed on the efforts made by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and taking that into consideration, more efforts from countries and IPBES will be needed to provide the platform with a report that is even more representative of the situation that Latin America and the Caribbean is currently facing.

25. Additionally, priority topics that were highlighted were landscape restoration, landscape management techniques and sustainable low-carbon agriculture, and how these offer opportunities to reverse some of the losses related to degraded ecosystems.

26. Mr. Jose Antonio Gomez, Coordinator of the Amazonian Protected Areas Integration (IAPA) project– (Amazon Vision) provided an overview of the work to increase the resilience of

one of the most important and biodiverse regions of the world, taking into consideration climate change and seeking to benefit the communities and local economies.

27. An important point highlighted was the efforts of the governments of the Latin American and Caribbean region who recognise the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystems in productive sectors.

28. The session also discussed the draft decision, and accordingly focus on the following topics: a) Support from the countries of the region for the proposed designation of the 2021-2030 period as the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly; b) Support for the development of a regional cooperation programme for biodiversity, promoting coordination and exchange of information, to develop specific strategies and plans that can carry out actions aimed at mainstreaming biodiversity in the different productive sectors of the countries, including fishing, agriculture, energy, forests, tourism and others prioritised according to national characteristics.

Agenda item 5: Regional preparation for the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly

29. The Chair begun this point of the Agenda recalling that in its previous meeting this Forum pointed out that the United Nations Assembly for the Environment is the space to seek joint visions and define concrete actions in favour of the environment and sustainable development, in which Latin America and the Caribbean must actively participate with proactive positions and take the decisions of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of the region so that integrate in the global environmental agenda and for progress made in the region to become visible and have a greater impact in the global agenda.

30. In this context, this session aims to follow up the results of the Third United Nations Environment Assembly and contribute to the preparation of the region for the Fourth Assembly of the United Nations for the Environment, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from March 11 to 15, 2019, whose main theme is "Innovative solutions for environmental problems, sustainable consumption and production the Chair introduced the main themes included in the programme of the 4th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

31. Mr. Jorge Laguna Celis, Director of Governance Affairs and Private Sector Relations gave a presentation about the preparatory process for the upcoming UN Environment Assembly informing countries regarding specific topics relevant to the region, which will be considered in the Assembly's programme. He introduced the main topic of the Assembly focused on the identification of innovative solutions to environmental challenges and the production and sustainable consumption in this context he introduced the three strategic priorities for the region identified for the discussion at the United Nations Environment Assembly, which include the eradication of poverty; and sustainable resources management innovation in the integrated Life-cycle approaches to chemicals and waste management and mainstreaming diversity in a circular economy approach.

32. The proposed programme of the Assembly has been structured taking into consideration findings and recommendations from the sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) assessment and the International Resource Panel. These include sustainable consumption and production and mainstreaming biodiversity sustainable tourism; bio-economy, gender mainstreaming and use of indigenous knowledge, global and national initiatives for ecosystem restoration. The discussion at the Assembly should also consider the role of sustainable financing schemes as a critical mechanism to sustain the advance of the region towards the adoption of innovative technologies and sustainable consumption and production.

- 33.** The roadmap for the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly include the deadline for 15th November to announce and explain draft resolutions and 12th January for the presentation of draft resolutions. Countries were invited to coordinate and liaise with their representatives in Nairobi to provide inputs and coordinate work in preparation for the Session. It was recommended to include private sector and the civil society.
- 34.** Mrs. Marta Juarez Eugenia Ruiz Ambassador of Costa Rica as Representative of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) provided the meeting with an update on the preparation process coordinated in the framework of the Latin America and the Caribbean Group (GRULAC) for the Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly. Ambassador Juarez stressed the importance of consolidating a common GRULAC standpoint on main themes proposed for the Assembly and invited the countries to work together in the elaboration of resolutions in order to present them before the Assembly. Additionally, Ambassador Juarez highlighted the importance of engaging in a constructive dialogue with civil society in order to communicate the progress of this process to the population in general.
- 35.** Cuba expressed the importance of receiving documents well in advance to their discussion at the Assembly. Countries including Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador expressed the need to provide concrete contributions to this theme.
- 36.** Mr. Laguna-Celis proposed the countries to send directly to interested delegates the documents produced for the Committee of Permanent Representatives, this will enhance communication and exchange between the Secretariat and those countries that do not have a delegation in Nairobi. Likewise, in order for the countries to have enough time to review the aforementioned documents, the proposed deadline of January 21 was set as the date for the submission of draft proposals for the Assembly.
- 37.** Barbados commented on the key role of the Secretariat for those countries that do not have representation in Nairobi. He also mentioned that the private sector should also be provided with a meaningful space in the Assembly to expose and showcase solutions and projects. In addition to this, he expressed the importance to highlights existing links between the UN initiative to forge a Global Compact on the environment and the UN Environment Assembly.
- 38.** Bolivia noted the difficulty that micro, small and medium enterprises experience in accessing innovation and technology.
- 39.** Mr. Heileman mentioned some projects being implemented in Africa (SWITCH) Africa Green, and funded by the European Union which can be replicated in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, regarding the interaction between the private sector and governments regarding technological advances, he mentioned that forums such as Science, Politics and Business could be of significant help for the region.
- 40.** H.E. Mr. Siim Kiisler, Minister of Environment of Estonia and President of the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly thanked the countries present at the meeting and mentioned that he was interested to learn about the priorities, expectations, and contributions of the region. Mr. Kiisler pointed out that the Fourth Assembly presents as a huge challenge, considering the success of the previous Assembly, whose presidency was under the responsibility of the Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica. He then reported on the meeting held in Tallinn, Estonia, last September. The main results of this meeting were to ensure continuity between sessions of the Assembly and, in the case of the upcoming Fourth session, ensure that the topic of pollution of the Third session continues to be present in all discussions and commitments. In Tallinn there was a consensus to focus the discussion of the Fourth Assembly on a few, but concrete, commitments and agreements. Also, other topics of special interest were the Swiss

proposal on geoengineering and the importance of communication with all interested parties, including the private sector and civil society.

41. He said it has been agreed to release the first draft of the ministerial declaration after this Latin American and the Caribbean Forum before the deadline of 15th October. The first draft has three priorities as proposed by the Chair: a) Common environmental information system providing full and open data to everybody including all stakeholders and the private sector. Transparency of data is critical to improve capacities of countries to monitor the environment and for decision-making. Such system may include data and information relevant to the consumers as, for instance, the origin of the materials used to produce goods and the processes adopted for their manufacturing (including use of toxic and chemical substances); b) efficient resource management, waste management, regulation and of production of single use plastics, public procurements. Circular economy is another theme to be included in the discussion; c) engagement with civil society and private sector. There is a clear need to engage and work closely with them, especially the private sector.

42. Brazil recognized the efforts of the Chair in putting together a robust initial draft for the Ministerial Declaration. The representative of Brazil recalled fellow colleagues that the implementation of commitments is challenging for many countries due to national and regional situations including financial constraints. He urged member states to support the presidency to boost the regional agenda.

43. El Salvador noted that the country is working on a draft resolution on the UN Decade of Restoration of Ecosystems 2020-2030 that they intend to present to the Assembly.

Agenda Item 6: Review and adoption of the recommendations and the draft Ministerial Declaration

44. In this session, the draft recommendations and the draft Buenos Aires Declaration were reviewed, to be presented as recommendations to the ministerial segment for their approval.

Agenda Item 8: Other matters

45. The representatives of the countries did not have any other matters to be included in the agenda

Agenda Item 9: Closing of the meeting

46. The meeting was closed on Wednesday 10 October at 20:00hs.

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