

REPORT

REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

23 NOVEMBER 2020

in preparation of the

XXII MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (18-19 January 2021)

AND THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

The 5th Session of the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment - the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) - will be divided in two events: a "procedural UNEA" to discuss the Medium-Term Strategy, the Programme of Work (POW) and the budget is to be held virtually in February 2021. A resumed session of the UNEA has been planned for taking place early in 2022.

"Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" will be the central focus of attention for the Assembly. Through this topic the Assembly will bring leaders together to take concrete environmental initiatives for building back better from the COVID-19 emergency.

The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean meets every two years to decide on regional priorities of the environmental agenda and to coordinate action and cooperation on these issues. The XXII Meeting of the Forum, under the Presidency of Barbados, will be held on 18-19 January 2021, with its focus on "Environmental Dimension of COVID-19 sustainable recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean".

The Assembly and the Regional Forum are preceded by regional and global gatherings aimed to mobilize support and actions for sustainable solutions from governments, Major Groups and Stakeholders, the private sector, and citizens across the planet.

The first global forum in the lead-up to the Assembly was convened from 6-10, June 2020, with the support of H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, President of the UN Environment Assembly and Minister of Climate Change and Environment of Norway, and Ms. Inger Andersen, Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme.

At the regional level, following the election of the two new Regional Facilitators for Major Groups and Stakeholders, Lorena Terrazas and Joseph Severe, an introductory meeting took place on 27 August 2020, focusing on promoting spaces for participation with UNEP of those organizations engaged with environmental matters in the region.

1. Participants and Target Audience

The regional consultation was coordinated by the elected Regional Facilitators Lorena Terrazas and Joseph Severe and brought together Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) accredited to UNEP as well as non-accredited regional Major Groups and Stakeholders partners, including from foundations or other relevant Stakeholders aiming to bring more meaningful participation of all parts.

The Caribbean Youth Environment Network has been invited to play an active role and coordinate inputs and messages from the Youth of the region. (See Annex II: List of Participants).

2. Purpose and Objectives of the Meeting

The objective for the Latin American and Caribbean Major Groups and Stakeholders consultations is to prepare their inputs and engage in the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and UNEA-5 and promote the dialogue and synergies between the Stakeholders of the region. The outcome of the meetings will be a regional statement by the participating Civil Society and a contribution for the official document of the compilation of all Civil Society regional statements to the UNEA. By promoting the participation of Youth, the meeting will also provide a space for youth from the region to express their concerns and perspectives, and discuss and present the roles that they can play in changing the narrative around nature.

3. Main Outcomes

- Updated information on the context and development in preparation of the Assembly and the Regional Forum was shared among all participants.
- A space for the presentation and consolidation of views from the Youth of the region was open for participation of engaged organizations.
- To organize the process for collection of inputs towards the consolidation of a statement from the Civil Society of the region to the Forum of Ministers and the UNEA.
- Key messages from the Latin American and Caribbean Major Groups and Stakeholders to the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of LAC and to the UNEA to be held virtually in February 2021.
- Enhanced cooperation and partnerships among Stakeholders of the region to embark on regular exchanges on the way to the resumed UNEA (planned in February 2022).

4. Agenda

Opening and Welcoming

According to the Agenda of the Meeting (Annex I), UNEP Regional Director, Mr. Leo Heileman welcomed the participants thanking them for their involvement in the participatory processes that UNEP offers to dialogue with the Major Groups and Civil Society.

He noted that the convening of this meeting is based on the recognition of the importance of involving Major Groups as partners. Intergovernmental decisions will have stronger and broader public recognition and support if governments consider the views of Major Groups and other Stakeholders as early as possible in policy-making and decision-making processes.

He indicated that the purpose of the regional and the global consultations is guaranteeing transparency and inclusion in the intergovernmental decision-making process in UNEP, therefore we seek to guarantee an effective and balanced participation of the Major Groups and the Stakeholders, valuing everyone's relevant experience and knowledge, and above all placing an emphasis on channeling the voices of those most likely to be directly affected by environmental issues and related policies.

He recalled that the interaction between UNEP and Civil Society has grown significantly in the last decade and more than 500 non-governmental organizations now have formal consultative status, but it is still important that the number of organizations in our region grows, with a greater and more systematic participation.

He emphasized that this regional consultation in preparation for the Forum of Ministers of the Region and the UNEA has special characteristics, and the virtual work modality has limitations, but at the same time offers the opportunity to potentially reach a greater number of participants.

He specified that the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of the region will be held in two months with the leadership of Barbados who holds the presidency of the Forum, and the first part of the UNEA in three months, which raises a temporary scenario of certainty, in which Civil Society is proposed to discuss and agree on a roadmap so that Regional Facilitators can consolidate solid messages that focus on the central and most pressing issues for the global environmental agenda, with a vision from the Latin America and the Caribbean region. We also want to encourage the Young to get actively involved and have their voices featured prominently in regional messages.

He concluded by recalling that the belief that a prosperous natural world is critical to human health, societies and economies has always been the cornerstone of our work at UNEP, but now that commitment is even stronger and we must all work for reducing the risks of future pandemics by restoring lost ecosystems and biodiversity, fighting climate change, and reducing pollution.

Mrs. Laetitia Zobel, from Civil Society Unit in UNEP, also gave introductory remarks and welcomed participants, expressing appreciation for their engagement in the regional consultation. She highlighted that after the global consultation that took place in June, and the election of the Regional Facilitators, several regional consultations are taking place in the different regions.

Session I - Introduction to UNEA-5 and The XXII Forum of Ministers of the Environment

Under this session, presentations were delivered by Laetitia Zobel on Introduction to UNEA, and Andrea Brusco on the XXII Forum of Ministers of Environment of LAC. The presentations provided an overview of the ongoing processes in preparation for the UNEA-5 and the XXII Meeting of Ministers, respectively.

Mr. Mark Griffith, on behalf of the presidency of the Forum, expressed the willingness of the Presidency to request Civil Society inputs to the draft outcome document of the XXII Meeting of the Forum. To this end, draft decisions will be shared in advance for comments and inputs.

Session II - Dialogue on priority matters for Civil Society in the context of the Forum of Ministers of LAC and UNEA-5

In this session moderated by Lorena Terrazas, the main issues for Civil Society were discussed, in the context of the UNEA and the Forum of Ministers, with the aim of reaching a conclusion regarding the issues on which the message of society will focus Civil Society of the region for the Forum of Ministers and the UNEA, with an initial highlight on central elements for each of them.

As an initial element for the dialogue, the five Action Areas for UNEA-5 (four transformative and strategic action areas, focusing on the implementation of the SDGs, and the recovery of COVID-19 (to which environmental governance is added as a crossed aspect) were presented. From there, it was sought to identify other topics that are especially important for the Latin American and the Caribbean region.

The questions for guiding the interventions were:

- Why is this topic important for our region?
- What working experience we have for contributing with?
- How do we think decisions should be guided?
- What do we want to ask the Forum of Ministers and the UNEA?

The participants mentioned various topics of interest and agreed to hold a follow-up meeting to discuss in greater depth and assign the coordination of the compilation of comments according to the thematic axes identified.

Other topics mentioned were:

1. The nature-based solutions approach. It is not an internationally agreed term but is part of a broader concept from the very formulation of the main theme of the Assembly, "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals". In this regard, it was mentioned that there is some objection within the Negotiating Group to the use of the **green** and **nature-based** concepts, which is why they are not included in any information shared by the Presidency of the Forum. **Sustainable recovery** is the term adopted by consensus by several Member States, as the nature-based concept is not one agreed at the global intergovernmental level.
2. Generation of jobs to reduce poverty and contribute to a solid economy. There was talk of focusing on the importance of nature-based microenterprises in local communities, which do not receive support, technical assistance, or financing. It was suggested to make strong recommendations to strengthen support for these companies and highlight the important role of Civil Society organizations as solutions providers that offers positive benefits on how nature can address poverty and create strong economies.

3. It was proposed that community groups and their local Civil Society organizations work together to build local resilience and promote the implementation of nature-based solutions at the community level.
4. The Forum was noted as an important opportunity for Civil Society to challenge governments in the region to see if they are truly taking a green and nature-based approach to recovery from COVID-19.
5. It was highlighted as an important point that Civil Society organizations in the region can organize themselves in such a way that they get to convene among themselves to have much more in-depth dialogues and thus collect the opinions and proposals of the region to be taken to the Forum.

Session III - Organization of further consultations and next steps

In this session, a roadmap was discussed and agreed to reach a final meeting on December 14, where the consolidated contributions of each topic will be presented and the central message for the Forum of Ministers will be adjusted.

Based on the comments of the previous session, the following could be proposed:

- **23 November 2020:** Agreement on the topics on which the messages will be organized (we suggest the previous five + two, or three additional ones that are relevant to the region and that we want to work closely + a focal point for the messages that the Youth wants to present). Election of focal points for each topic.
- **24 November 2020:** the secretary sends an email with the contact details of the focal points.
- **24 November to 7 December 2020:** Focal points receive comments and input.
- **11 December 2020:** the focal points send to the Regional Facilitators and the secretary the consolidated contributions on each of the topics.
- **14 December 2020:** Consultation meeting, where the focal points of each topic will present the contributions received, they are discussed among all.
- **18 January 2021:** Regional Facilitators present the message to the Forum of Ministers and the report of the Civil Society consultations is sent to Nairobi to include in the document for UNEA.

From UNEP it was explained that even when organizations are encouraged to be accredited by this body, not being accredited is not an impediment for them to participate in these processes, and it is trusted that the messages of the region will be very solid thanks to the regional networks.

Participants agreed to continue consultations before the next meeting, to effectively collect messages from groups on the way to the Forum.

Following the agenda, the meeting was closed at 12:00 pm.

ANNEX I

AGENDA

9:00 - 9:15	Opening and welcome	Leo Heileman UNEP - Regional Director Lorena Terrazas and Joseph Severe Regional Facilitators UNEP Civil Society
Session I		
9:15 - 9:40	Introduction to UNEA-5	Laetitia Zobel
9:40 – 9:50	The XXII Forum of Ministers of the Environment	Andrea Brusco
9.50 – 10:00	Questions and comments	Open participation
Session II		
10:00 – 11:15	Dialogue on priority matters for Civil Society in the context of the Forum of Ministers of LAC and UNEA-5	Open participation moderated by Regional Facilitators
Session III		
11:15 – 11:30	Organization of further consultations and next steps	Regional Facilitators
11:30 – 11:45	Questions and Comments	Open participation
11:45 – 11:55	Brief on the accreditation process for UNEP	UNEP
11:55 - 12:00	Closure	UNEP

ANNEX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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