

Stakeholder Engagement- Monday, 11/12/23 Plenary session

Local Communities representative- Ruth Spencer

Madame Chair and colleagues-thanks for this opportunity to make a statement. I am-Ruth Spencer, a local community representative from Antigua and Barbuda and my organization is the MEPA Trust.

Effective Stakeholder engagement is fundamental to ensure we do it right as was said by Shiela this morning in her opening address.. Since we have been implementing the principles of the Escazu Agreement which is the daughter of the Aarhus Convention for Europe- our first international Human rights agreement for LAC was adopted in 2018 and we have been able to bring new voices into the environmental decision making processes. Access rights have been improved- more timely access to information and documents and in a language/communication that we can dialogue , get understandings for public education and awareness and we are pushing for more localized consultative processes on chemical waste and pollution.

The relationship is not only with CSO's but have been extended to governments and our advocacy has grown by leaps and bounds not only in our island but have built new relationships, partnerships and collaborations with the governments which to date include Grenada, St Lucia and Dominica and in 2024 will reach out to countries that need to ratify as solutions for the global crisis requires the all of society approach where we respect ideas, solutions and innovations from the women, the youth the children, vulnerable and marginalized groups and they are given a voice.

Diversity and inclusion brings in different knowledge and skill sets and contributes to new and various kinds of capacity building that the SPP will benefit from especially the local knowledge and best practices which bring with it new local data sources which can now go into our national reporting required for the convention processes.