



**Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of
Ministers of Environment
of Latin America and the Caribbean
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**Conclusions and recommendations of the Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of
Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**

The Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean held on 5-6 November 2019 hereby wish to present the following conclusions and recommendations to the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment, in the framework of the Latin American and Caribbean initiative for Sustainable Development, focusing on the themes addressed by the Ministers in their last meeting as well as considering priority issues for the environmental agenda of the region:

1. Chemicals, Marine Litter and Waste Management

a) Regional Cooperation on Chemicals and Waste

- A regional approach is recommended to properly address the sound management of chemicals and waste, in areas such as control of chemicals in imported products, labelling and classification, agrochemicals, mercury use, regulatory mechanisms as well as encouraging the synergistic implementation of the related Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
- The full implementation of the Action Plan 2019-2020 on regional cooperation on chemicals and waste is highly recommended. This can be achieved more effectively through the continued engagement of all national focal points a renewed effort at mobilizing further resources, and the promotion of coordination with other related initiatives. In addition, the process for developing the Action Plan for 2021-2022 should commence as soon as possible taking into consideration the lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2019-2020 Action Plan and emerging priorities. This should be submitted for consideration at the XXII Forum of Ministers.

b) Marine Litter

- The region has taken significant steps to prevent marine litter, through the adoption of national plans and regulatory measures such as bans and restrictions on single-use plastics, as well as awareness raising activities, including within the framework of the Clean Seas Campaign.
- There is an interest in learning from experiences implemented by different countries in the region, accordingly the compilation of adopted policies, regulations and strategies undertaken by member States to prevent marine litter and management of plastic waste is recommended. This will enable lessons learnt to be identified as well as provide the basis for the regional exchange of information, through suitable coordination and communication mechanisms.

c) Waste Management

- The establishment and progress made by the *Voluntary coalition of governments and relevant organizations for the progressive closure of dumpsites and the effective transition towards the integrated waste management in Latin America and the*

Caribbean is welcomed. The participation of countries and organizations in this initiative is encouraged, to support the implementation of its Work Plan 2019-2020, including the development of a roadmap with concrete targets and technical guidelines, to be presented at the XXII Forum of Ministers.

- UNEP should continue inviting donors and partners to support governments in the region in the development and implementation of regional, sub-regional and national plans to achieve integrated management of waste as well as promoting the prevention, minimization and recovery of waste over its final disposal.
- The identification, collection and disposal of chemicals after disasters such as hurricanes were identified as a serious challenge, particularly in countries which have limited capacity in these areas. The Secretariat will explore the possibility to formulate guidelines and implementation strategies to assist countries which face such situations.

2. Climate Change

- The “unconventional” Pre-COP in Costa Rica constituted, served to show solutions which, if escalated, will increase the level of ambition to meet the Paris Agreement’s goals, while in the negotiation segment there are still significant pending items most linked to article 6, loss and damage.
- The region supports Chile as president of the COP 25 and sends a message of appreciation to Spain for its generosity to offer Madrid as venue for COP25. It is expected that the Presidency will still address the priorities and special conditions of the region. Now, more than ever there is a recognition that the economic, social and environmental aspects need to be integrated to find solutions to climate change.
- The forthcoming Zero Carbon report will provide a vision of how a coupled decarbonization in the power and transport sectors can result in climate, social and economic benefits. It is important to integrate, in the report the different conditions of sub-regions in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as specifying gender specific nuances in ensuring a just transition for a decarbonized region. Various countries in the region expressed support to this vision and would welcome accelerated technical and financial support to make it a reality.
- Countries welcome the good progress in the implementation of the climate decision of the 2018 Forum of Ministers of the Environment which reflects the benefits of a regional coordinated action on climate. The region will welcome that international donors and partners, such as the European Union and others, enhance their cooperation and financial support to strengthen regional capacities and collaboration through the Regional Climate Change Platform of the Forum of Ministers Which is scheduled to host a meeting in April to address regional and suggestions ahead of the Forum of Ministers of Barbados.

3. Sustainable Consumption and Production: decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental impact

- Countries welcome the proposal for the development of a Regional Coalition on Circular Economy with the main objectives to develop a common regional vision and strategy on circular economy in order to have a bigger impact, to build cooperation and exchange best practices. UNEP was requested to build the coalition in close cooperation with international and regional partners (WEF, PACE, UNIDO, CTCN, among others). Some countries shared their activities on circular economy and highlighted the need to consider regional spaces/approaches for Circular Economy and not only national approaches, this is particularly important for the Caribbean. It was also requested to include the private sectors, in particular Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs), as well as emphasis on the consumer side and behavioral change.
- Countries support the work of Regional Environmental Alliance, in which Costa Rica, Colombia and Mexico are developing a regional Eco-labelling and environmental product declarations. Some countries expressed their interest to join this Alliance. It was requested to consider a sub-regional approach for the Caribbean context. Countries reaffirmed the interest to continue the work on sustainable public procurement and some members suggested to strengthen its linkages to the health sector. Countries welcomed the proposal for a new project to scale up work in sustainable public procurement, support cooperation and exchange of best practices between countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The Secretariat kindly requests assistance of all countries in responding and distributing the survey among government experts on the field of buildings and construction which will provide inputs to the elaboration of the regional roadmap on sustainable buildings and construction. Survey is available in the following link. <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18ilZdVCcdVehR7L40Q9jZ5-f32ZYt2iW-nULclhv-aM>
- The Secretariat of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) invites all countries to respond to the questionnaire on SDG 12.1. It aims to gather information about policies and activities contributing to the implementation of the SCP agenda at the national level. It is available here: <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/how-report-progress-sdg-12> Deadline to complete the report is 4 January 2020.
- Countries re-affirm their interest to have regional programmes similar as the “SWITCH Asia” and SWITCH Africa” as it was expressed at the Decision 3 (paragraph 2) of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment. Countries welcomed the progress made in this regard and welcome the positive feedback from the European Union (EU). The EU expressed their continued interest and informed that those programmes could be possible for the framework cooperation and funds available in 2021. These need to be crafted taking into consideration the

particularities and priorities of the regions. UNEP was requested to continue the dialogue with the European Union to follow up this request to develop a SWITCH Caribbean and a SWITCH Latin America Programmes.

4. Innovative solutions to enhance the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystems

- The meeting supports the Regional Cooperation Programme on Biodiversity and welcomed the roadmap as led by the Chair of the Working Group, the Minister of Environment of Costa Rica. The meeting of the Working Group to be held in January-February 2020, will strengthen regional cooperation and coordination towards finding common positions for the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; enhance south-south cooperation; promote exchange of knowledge and information; share best practices; and build capacities within the context of our regional realities.
- The meeting takes note of the timeline for the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and underscored the role of the region in leading and facilitating the discussions towards a successful biodiversity framework that is ambitious and action oriented. In this sense, the meeting welcomed the generous offer of the Government of Colombia to host the III Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to be held in July 2020 in Cali, Colombia.
- The meeting welcomes the outcomes of the Blue Economy Summit that took place in Roatán, Honduras, 6-7 June 2019, and call for effective actions that enable the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal resources towards the sustainable development of countries in the region. In doing so, an integrated approach to public policies in fisheries, agriculture, maritime transport, tourism and marine mining (minerals) was discussed.
- Countries recognize that oceans offer tremendous potential and need real partnerships to grow that potential however the countries must be conscious of emerging threats and new technologies that are posing difficulties in transitioning to blue economy. The meeting advised the creation of a working group and entrusted the Secretariat to take necessary steps to facilitate the creation of the group, to be constituted by countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region, to look at these challenges and opportunities of the blue economy.

5. Environmental Data and Information Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean

- The region supports the development of the Environmental Data and Information framework for Latin America and the Caribbean as this will provide evidence-based policy and decision making. This framework will standardise information and data and strengthen interface between science and policy. It will also be useful tool to monitor and report implementation of relevant programmes such as the SDGs, ILAC, Sendai, and SAMOA Pathway;

- It was recommended to design and develop a system that will complement what is already on-going in some countries of the region and avoid duplication and upscale what is already in existence and assess the capacity gaps in terms of data collection, processing and publication. In the spirit of cooperation PAHO/WHO informed the meeting that they were also developing an information system. In this regard PAHO/WHO invited UNEP to work with them on this issue.

6. Gender-Environment Gaps

- Recognizing the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental public policies, the meeting recommends the Forum of Ministers of the Environment to establish a defined action plan, setting objectives, timelines and expected results for future efforts at this regard. Within this action plan, the role of the Ministries of Environment needs to be defined, outlining coordination with other ministries and sectors as well to ensure advances on gender equality in the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. In the intersessional period before the XXII meeting of the Forum an expert group will be created to advance in finalizing a regional diagnosis and draft a regional action plan. The expert group will have the participation of voluntary countries as well as representatives from the Interagency Technical Committee, civil society and women's networks from the region.
- It is advisable that this analysis expands to include boys and men and also broaden it to look at trends and how these policies impact development e.g. on the labour market.
- The Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) acknowledges the importance of the analysis especially on the role of women in natural resources management and access. It was informed that CARICOM is collaborating with UN DESA and ECLAC on gender, water management and disaster risk to convene a meeting in T&T in Nov 2019. We should establish synergies between this initiative and the outcomes and analytical papers coming from this meeting.

7. Environmental Education

- The meeting welcomes the information on the progress and new work plan (2019-2020) of the Environmental Training Network (ETN). Ecuador as host of the last Meeting of the Network presented the "recommendations for action" prepared by the members of the ETN, highlighting the need to give higher priority to environmental education and recognize it as a cross-cutting, effective and transformative tool for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other national and global environmental agreements and policies. Countries are invited to evaluate and strengthen the position of environmental education within organisational structures, providing it with human and financial resources that allows it to interact in a cross-cutting way with other areas of their own ministries of environment, as well as with other relevant ministries and actors, working in a more coordinated manner and with greater impact and visibility in environmental education.
- It is recommended to hold a Ministerial dialogue on Environmental Education at the next meeting of the Forum. It was suggested to strengthen the governance of the Environmental Training Network, to give a more active role to countries and position

better the Network. Hence, countries are invited to designate a Chair and Co-chair of the Environmental Training Network, constituted on a voluntary and rotating basis, which may be the country that hosted the last meeting of the network and the host country of future meeting.

8. Montevideo Programme and Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental matters.

- The meeting welcomes the adoption of the Fifth Programme of Montevideo, which constitutes the intergovernmental agreed framework to guide regional and global work in the field of environmental law beyond 2020. It also encourages countries of the region that haven't done so to nominate their National Focal Points for the Montevideo Programme as soon as possible. This will facilitate a more regional approach to the programme's implementation which will provide a basis for expanding current cooperation and exchange among Latin American and Caribbean countries, thus strengthening environmental law development and implementation in our region.
- Access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters is recognized as a cornerstone of environmental governance, and a key point to connect environment with people.
- The adoption of the Escazu Agreement signals a firm commitment of countries of the region and has brought momentum for increased cooperation among different stakeholders. The meeting acknowledges the remarkable work undertaken by civil society representatives in the regional process of the Escazu Agreement and encourages further cooperation and partnerships towards this common endeavor.
- The meeting recognizes that while advances have been made towards the protection of environmental rights there are still many gaps, including the need for capacity building of key legal stakeholders. In this regard, a gap analysis with a view of building capacity in the region to implement the Agreement of Escazu is advisable. It was also suggested that a broad education platform for this should be established and could be linked to the Environment Training Network. The meeting welcomes UNEP and ECLAC coordinated work and requests further support to countries of the region in this matter.
- The meeting recommends that the Forum of Ministers addresses these issues at its next meeting, thus reflecting the political will to advance in the social dimension of the region's environmental agenda.

9. Enhancing the engagement of the region in shaping the environmental global agenda: opportunities that UNEA5 may bring

- The meeting appreciates the information provided and considerations made by the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador Fernando Coimbra who presented the progress made so far in defining the theme for the Fifth Environment Assembly and on the outcomes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the CPR,
- Based on the consultations and inputs, there is a strong preference from Member States for a theme that upholds the vital role of Nature and the solutions Nature provide for our ability to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, notwithstanding interest in the alternative themes. The meeting recommends that the issues of poverty and sustainable consumption and production underpin whatever theme is finally decided.

10. Enhancing the role of the Forum to address regional environment challenges, poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean: a stronger voice in the context of sustainable development

a) Regional Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration

- Countries welcome the proposal to develop a Regional Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration for Latin America and Caribbean, to be presented at the XXII Forum of Minister of Environment, to stop and reverse degradation to ensure that the ecological foundations of the region are maintained for the prosperity of its peoples and future generations.
- The Action Plan aims to build political momentum, consolidate potential investments from public, private and mixed capitals, allow the identification of prioritized degraded areas in both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, share information on best available science, build capacities on best practices, including technological advances to ecosystem restoration.

b) Strengthening resilience to environmental impacts of emergencies in Latin America and the Caribbean through the development of an Environment and Emergencies Preparedness Network

- The meeting supports the initiative noting the need to develop synergies with other initiatives in the region, such as the Regional Seas Programme and Cartagena Convention, in the case of marine oil spills. It is also noted the need to try to bring in country civil protection/disaster management agencies while being mindful of the fact that these can become overwhelmed during an emergency. Synergies with CDEMA's own Comprehensive Disaster Management framework were noted as well as the opportunity presented by the Regional Platform on DRR, to be held in Jamaica in 2020. A note of caution was also raised, considering the number of actors mandated by law in certain environmental emergencies (e.g. chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear events as well as health emergencies with environmental impacts). The aim should be to complement and avoid duplication.

- With the documents of the meeting, a request for expressions of interest will be circulated to countries to allow those who wish to present their interest to be members of the network.

c) Environmental Dimensions of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

- It is recommended that the Forum of Ministers of the Environment establishes a Programme on the Environmental Dimension of Caribbean SIDS focused on SIDS-SIDS Cooperation and Caribbean SIDS-Latin America Cooperation, involving as many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as possible, with a view of building on the existing trans-hemispheric structures.
- UNEP highlighted the growth of the programme for SIDS and suggested that we find ways to strengthen the programme in the coming months, leading towards the next Forum.

11. Enhancing the capacity of the Forum to foster cooperation among development institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean including the Interagency Technical Committee

The meeting acknowledges the recommendations made by the World Bank, the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):

- Strengthen the collaboration of ITC members-based coalitions that promote integrated policies which can be used to leverage partnerships and resources;
- Proposed to map the ITC actions and gaps and identify recommendations to fill these gaps;
- Promote nature-based solutions as a structural approach to sustainable agenda and share experiences with other countries which are already in this field;
- Highlighted the need to shift mind sets to be more efficient operationally and ensure projects are implemented and focus on actions in the functioning of this forum;
- The Forum should foster involvement of the private sector and civil society at regional and national levels in implementing the decisions/outcomes. This includes better and stronger performance in bringing new financial mechanisms, leverage funding and redirecting domestic financing;
- Improve policies and coherence between sectors adopting a whole-of-a-government approach to reach environmental goals. This includes building coalitions for systemic change, bringing in new technical skills. Engage other relevant ministries in the different processes of the Forum and adopt a programmatic approach to the projects funded by environmental vertical funds.

- The meeting takes note with appreciation of PAHO's request to be a member of the ITC to contribute with the perspective of the health sector. PAHO has a current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNEP.
- The meeting requests UNEP, as a follow-up and due to the depth of the discussion on this topic, to prepare a more specific proposal to be revised by countries.
- It was recommended for the Secretariat and the ITC to work more closely during the intersessional period with the Forum's President and Bureau to scale up and communicate the agreements and priorities discussed at the forum into regional and international process (such as the current inputs from the Forum to UNEA and the report of the Presidency to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development).

12. Towards strengthening the functioning of the Forum

- UNEP is requested to explore the development of a Latin America and Caribbean Heroes Award, within the framework of the Champions of the Earth. This award would recognize the work done by regular persons, scientists, civil society organisations and business enterprises in the stewardship of our environment.
- The meeting also recommends the establishment of an implementation framework with responsibilities, deadlines and a follow up mechanism, as a tool for advancing and mobilizing resources for the implementation of the decisions and outcomes of the Forum.
- There was also a call for the establishment of a dedicated Forum Secretariat in the UNEP Latin American and the Caribbean Office to further support on a continuous basis the follow-up of the outcomes of the Forum.
