



**Forum of Ministers of Environment
of Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Report of the
Second Virtual Meeting of the Bureau of
the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of
Environment of Latin America and the
Caribbean**

2 October 2020

Introduction

The First virtual meeting of the Bureau (29 May 2020), consisted in a ministerial dialogue and exchange, followed by indications about the political message of the forum and next steps in the planning of the XXII Meeting.

The meeting concluded with the agreement of three action points:

Action point 1: the preparation of a concise political message to be approved by the Bureau, before circulation to all Ministers of the region for consideration of adoption by the Forum.

Action point 2: Continue implementation of the workplan, with the convening of technical preparatory meetings in the coming months following the virtual format.

Action point 3: to welcome the announcement of the Regional Coalition on Circular Economy at the World Environment Day, and the commitment of Colombia to serve as Chair of its Steering Committee, request UNEP to continue the work with member states to complete the setting of the Steering Committee.

Following up on these action points, and to continue the work and progress towards the XXII Meeting of the Forum, the second virtual meeting was convened to adopt decision on the dates, modalities and Preliminary agenda of the XXII Meeting, as well as the roadmap for negotiation of the forum's outcome documents., and to inform the Bureau on the work of the Interagency Technical Committee and their proposals.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon, Adrian Forde, Minister of Environment and National Beautification of Barbados, with the participation of the Hon. Simon Stiell, Ministers of Environment of Grenada, , the Hon. Mario Roberto Rojas Espino, Minister of Environment of Guatemala, , Mr. Gabriel Quijandria Acosta, Vice minister Strategic Development of Natural Resources of Peru, Ing. Carlos Pineda Fasquelle, Undersecretary of State for the Environment of Honduras, Mr. Mariano Nascone, National Director International Cooperation of Argentina, and Ms. Meilin Leon, Director National Cooperation of Chile

Agenda item 1 - Opening of the Meeting

The meeting began at 10 am ET time, with welcoming remarks by the President of the Forum Minister of Environment and National Beautification the Hon, Adrian Forde, MP, and the Secretariat of the Forum represented by Mr. Leo Heileman, Regional Director and Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Minister of Environment and National Beautification Adrian Forde, MP, informed that he was assigned Minister of Environment as of 27 August 2020, and commended the work did by Former Minister Trevor Prescod, as President of the Forum. He also reiterated the commitment of the Government of Barbados in ensuring that we have a successful XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean.

He called attention to the documents presented and circulated in preparation for this meeting:

1. A 'Working Document for the Second Virtual Meeting of the Bureau' that addresses agenda item 2 to 4, and

2. An 'Informative Document for the Second Virtual Meeting of the Bureau of the Forum of Ministers: Report of the Interagency Technical Committee', which relates to agenda item 5.

Agenda item 2 – Report on the preparation for the XXII Meeting of the Forum

The Secretariat, represented by the Regional Director of UNEP, Mr. Leo Heileman, was invited to the floor to introduce the working document.

Mr. Heileman took this opportunity to congratulate Minister Forde on his assignment as Minister of Environment and National Beautification of Barbados and taking over the responsibility as President of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

He summarized the main elements of the working document:

- 1) An Overview of Intersessional Work and Status of the Communique
- 2) The options on the dates, modality of the XXII Meeting.
- 3) The Preliminary agenda
- 4) An indicative list of decisions
- 5) The proposed roadmap for negotiation of the outcome documents

The Regional Director also gave an update on the status of Communique which was crafted within the Bureau and submitted to all countries in the region for comments and inputs. He informed that the preparation of the Draft communique was led by the Ministers of Argentina and Grenada, was circulated to the members of the Bureau for first round of comments on 17 July, and after receiving the final revisions of the Presidency it was circulated to all the countries of the region on 8 September. He informed that comments had been received from: Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago.

After this intervention, the Chair opened the floor for comments.

The Undersecretary of State of Honduras expressed his agreement with the contents of the Communique.

An exchange took place concerning the way forward for the adoption of the communique. The representative of Argentina asked if the Communique will be circulated to all with consolidated comments and be taken as the outcome document, or would it be attached to the Declaration and will serve as the basis for the Declaration.

The Minister of Grenada also requested clarification on the draft Communique which originally was entitled a Declaration. He noted that the original title communicated a stronger political statement than a Communiqué. He emphasized the importance of this message from the Region, underlined the uniqueness of the present moment and was an opportunity that articulated the feeling of the Region. He further noted that for the first time the Region expressed consensus on the approach, in terms of a green recovery post COVID-19 and this opportunity should be seized. This message was echoed by the representative of Argentina, and was supported by the Vice-Minister of Peru, the Minister of Guatemala, as well as the representative of Chile.

Minister Forde clarified that the Presidency wanted to facilitate the process of adoption of the document during the intersessional period. He further explained that the Communique would form the basis for a political statement in the form of a Declaration which would be an outcome document of the Meeting of the Forum of Ministers. and would also serve as a Strategy for Green Recovery of the region.

UNEP's Regional Director reaffirmed that the elements of the Communique may be used for the preparation of a Declaration and that the Bureau had to decide if the Communique with the comments should be shared with the wider countries of the region. The Secretariat could consolidate a revised version of the Communique to be presented to the countries for consideration, with the aim to have an agreed draft before the meeting of the Bureau. He recalled the experience of the Conference of the Ministers of Iberoamerica, where the outcome documents were negotiated prior to the Conference to facilitate the process.

The Chair further added that the revised communique should be finalized and presented to the countries as a political message that would provide direction in drafting the Decisions of the XXII Forum, and the political Declaration as mentioned before.

He explained that the abovementioned Covid-19 Green Recovery Strategy would be another output of the meeting, on how the environment should be integrated into the region's post-covid-19 recovery plans.

Agenda item 3 – Dates, Modalities and Preliminary Agenda

The Chair informed that after taking into consideration a number of factors, and to allow for at least two months for negotiations to occur, Barbados recommended that the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean would take place on the 18 and 19 of January 2021, including a commemoration ceremonial event of the XXII Forum in Barbados. He informed that the logistics of this would be concretized in the near future.

The Undersecretary of Honduras informed on this point that the modality for the meeting should continue in a virtual manner, as restrictions are still in force on mobility in many countries. On the date he informed that in January the agenda would be full since the Climate Change Convention activities would also take place in January and suggested to hold the meeting in December. The Minister of Guatemala also expressed that a virtual format would be adequate for participation of Guatemala in January. Argentina supported the virtual modality. After this it was acknowledged that the meeting will be held on 18-19 January in a virtual modality.

Following this, the Presidency continued with the revision of the proposed Agenda for the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, which was circulated in the Working Document. No comments were made by the countries on the proposed preliminary agenda and it was approved as follows:

Preliminary Agenda of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

- 1. Inauguration**
- 2. Approval of the Agenda**
- 3. Report of the Meeting of High-Level Officers**
- 4. Adoption of the Declaration and Decisions**
- 5. Ministerial Session: Green and Inclusive Recovery for People and Planet**
- 6. Ministerial panels:**

A transformational Change for Nature and People

Natural foundations for a sustainable recovery

Circularity, sustainable economy and preventing pollution

Building back better for a resilient future

7. Election of the Bureau of the XXIII Meeting

8. Any other matters

9. Closure

Agenda item 4 – Consideration of the Outcomes of the Forum and Calendar for negotiations:

For item 4 of the agenda, the meeting was presented with an indicative list of Decisions and timetable for the negotiations of the outcome documents of the XXII Meeting. The indicative list of Decisions proposed include : Pollution - Chemicals and Waste with a Specific Focus on the Implementation of the Action Plan; Environmental Dimension of Emergencies; Environmental Data Framework; Circular Economy, including issue relating to SCP and Funding Possibilities (e.g. SWITCH-Caribbean and SWITCH-Latin America); Biodiversity - Adoption of the Action Plan on Ecosystems Restoration with Indicative Indication of Resource Mobilisation; Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; and Climate Change.

The floor was open for comments of the members of the Bureau. The representative of Argentina asked for clarifications on how the negotiations would take place and requested the Secretariat to send a list of the proposed decisions to all the countries of the region, with indication on the teams and team leaders who would guide the discussions in each team. He further indicated that for example for climate change he had received no information on the working group. Regarding chemicals he asked if the progressive closure of dumpsites would be included under this decision as it was a very important topic in waste management. He added that the topic of gender was not reflected in the possible decisions and suggested it to be included, as the working group had 11 country members and a lot of work and progress had been made in the work on gender and environment. With regard to Biodiversity he requested background information for a meeting that would be held on October 6 in this working group.

In response to these questions, UNEP Regional Director clarified that the list of proposed decisions was not final and not inclusive. Other decisions can be proposed, and this can be discussed in the future virtual meetings that would be held for negotiations with all the countries. Information would be shared on the status and contents and contacts from the Secretariat for each decision.

Ms. Piedad Martin, Regional Coordinator for Development, and Deputy Regional Director i.e. as focal point of the Gender and Environment Group, informed that the gender and environment theme was reflected in the Buenos Aires Declaration, and the idea was to also have the topic reflected in the Declaration for the XXII Meeting. She welcomed the proposal and took note for the preparation of a draft decision on this topic.

Agenda Item 5: Report of the Interagency Technical Committee Meeting

The Secretariat gave an account of the progress made so far by the Interagency Technical Committee, and a summary of the report on the Inter-agency Technical Committee Meeting held on 9 September 2020. Ms Piedad Martin, Regional Coordinator for Development, and Deputy Regional Director i.e. made a summary of the work done and the updated Terms of Reference for the membership of the committee. She highlighted that the ITC had decided to work on the basis of a biannual work plan describing the responsibilities of each member organization, that would

be presented to the Forum of Ministers for consideration in each session. The ITC also developed a proposal of TORs criteria for membership, modality of work, scope, and communication activities targeted to other UN agencies and organizations. The ITC would also provide a common narrative on “Post COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery in LAC” with recommendations from the ITC members on how sustainable investments would benefit countries in terms of employment and economic growth post COVID. This would be a useful process for ministers of environment and ministers of finance and planning to support on decision making processes.

It was requested for the Bureau to provide guidance on the TORs and on criteria on a final list of members of the ITC.

After the presentation, the floor was opened for country reactions. The Minister of Grenada, commended the work of the Secretariat and highlighted that the ITC is a body of significant value, and highlighted the importance of defining how to make it work best for the Forum, and to have a clear understanding in practice and how to put the resources available in place.

Based on the deliberations,

- i) The ITC is requested to consolidate a final version of the proposed Revised TORs, for submission to the next meeting of the Bureau.
- ii) The Secretariat is also requested to prepare a list of new applicants for membership to the ITC, based on the revised TORs for the consideration of the Bureau.

Agenda item 6 – Other matters.

Under this agenda item, the Chair raised three matters: Secretariat of the forum; More effective means of implementing of de Forum Decisions, and Enhanced Communication on the activities of the Forum.

On the first issue, the view of Barbados is that in order to increase the effectiveness of the Forum of Ministers of Environment there is a need for a small Forum Secretary within the office of the UNEP Regional Office. This obviously would have financial implications for the organisation, but in the view of the Presidency this was necessary.

The Chair invited the members of the Bureau to share their views on this idea, with the aim to prepare a Background Note on this issue for consideration at the next Bureau Meeting.

UNEP’s Regional Director mentioned that the idea of having a dedicated Secretariat for the Forum has financial implications. He explained that UNEP depends on the voluntary contribution of the members states to the Environment Fund and this has not been received from all the countries of the region. He urged for a decision or guidance on this in terms of increasing the resources to the organization as the proposed dedicated small secretariat will not be possible without resources. He explained that the Regional Office has a Secretariat, but they have other tasks in addition to the works of the Forum. Regarding the ITC he underlined the progress that has been thus far. He further informed that the ITC was created through a decision of the Ministers, and there was and never has been an application process for membership.

On the second issue—the more effective means of implementing the Decisions of the Forum—the Chair also proposed the preparation of a Background Note including consideration on how the expanded Interagency Technical Committee can play a more active role in this regard. With regard to enhancing communication he explained that a communication strategy is important to better inform the activities of the Forum.

The Chair also concurred that financial resources are necessary for the implementation of a dedicated Forum Secretariat and echoed the request on the financial support and contributions to the UNEP Environment Fund. He finalized suggesting that proposals be submitted prior to the next Bureau meeting, presenting suggestions of ways to implement a dedicated Forum Secretariat.

Agenda item 7 – Closing of the meeting.

The Chair expressed his appreciation for the fruitful exchange and agreements that were reached. The Secretariat will consolidate the report of the meeting, which will be communicated as soon as possible to countries of the region for them to fully engage and participate in the preparatory process.

The meeting concluded at 11.15 ET time.

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Annex I
List of participants

PRESIDENT - Barbados

- Hon Adrian Forde., MP, Minister of Environment and National Beautification
- Daphne Kellman
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Environment and National Beautification
- Travis Sinckler
Senior Environmental Officer
Policy Research, Planning, and information Unit
Ministry of Environment and National Beautification
- Nicole Scholar-Tasker
Environmental Officer
Policy Research, Planning, and information Unit
Ministry of Environment and National Beautification
- Dr Mark Griffith
Regional Environmental Governance Expert
Ministry of Environment and National Beautification

Argentina

- Mr. Mariano Nascone, National Director International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
- Mr. Cristhian Pérez, Legal Advisor International Cooperation

Guatemala

- Hon. Mario Roberto Rojas Espino, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
- Lic. Juan Carlos Díaz Contreras, International Affairs Coordinator/Coordinador de Cooperación Internacional

Grenada

- Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell, Minister of Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management, and Information

Honduras

- Ing. Carlos Pineda Fasquelle, Undersecretary of State – Environment
- Ing. Luis Rivas, Ministerial Advisor

- Dr. Rosibel Martínez, Director External Affairs and Resource Mobilisation

Peru - Rapporteur

- Mr. Gabriel Quijandría Acosta, Vice Minister of Strategic Development of Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment
- Mrs. Martha Cuba de Cronkleton, Director Office of International Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Environment
- Mr. Jimpson Dávila Ordóñez, Advisor for the Vice-Minister of Strategic Development of Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment
- Mrs. Lourdes Loayza Bellido, International Affairs Specialist of the Office of International Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Environment.
- Mr. Juan Pablo Ramírez, Press notes Communications Office and Institutional Image of the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Environment