



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

**Report of the
Third Meeting of the Bureau
of the Forum of Ministers of Environment
of Latin America and the Caribbean**

25 November 2020

Background

The Bureau of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean has celebrated two virtual meetings in preparation for the ministerial forum. On 29 May 2020, the Bureau held its Third Ministerial Dialogue and Exchange, followed by indications about the political message of the forum and the planning of the XXII Meeting.

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, Preliminary agenda of the XXII Meeting and the roadmap for negotiation of the forum's outcome documents, as well as to be briefed on the work of the Interagency Technical Committee and their proposals.

It was decided that the Ministerial Forum would take place in a virtual setting on 18-19 January 2021, and that the negotiations of the outcome documents would be conducted virtually during the months of October and November 2020.

Accordingly, a Negotiating Committee was established and important progress has been made in the recent weeks in the discussion and negotiation of the Forum's outcome documents, as well as in the organization of the work for the ministerial sessions.

The main objective of the Third Meeting of the Bureau was to take stock of the progress made so far in the drafting of the decisions and to provide guidance for the rationalization of the decisions, including the number and scope of the outcome documents of the Forum and the organisation of the agenda, the expansion of the Interagency Technical Committee and the establishment of a dedicated Forum and financing mechanisms.

The Third Meeting of the Bureau was chaired by the President of the Forum, The Hon. Adrian Forde, M.P., Minister of Environment and National Beautification in Barbados, and had the participation of the Hon. Minister Simon Stiell, Minister of Environment of Grenada the Hon. Mario Roberto Rojas Espino, Minister of Environment of Guatemala, and representatives of Argentina, Chile, Honduras, and Peru.

Agenda item 1. Input of the Regional Forum for UNEA5

The meeting began at 10 am ET - Panama time, with welcoming remarks by the President of the Forum Minister of Environment and National Beautification the Hon, Adrian Forde, MP, who then invited Mr. Leo Heileman, Regional Director and Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme to introduce the Secretary of UNEA and the Governing Bodies of UNEP, Mr. Jorge Laguna to present the first agenda item, on the progress in the preparation of the Fifth Session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA 5). Mr. Laguna gave a brief outline on the UNEA 5, and invited the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador Fernando Coimbra of Brazil to make a more detailed presentation on the process and preparation for UNEA, the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy and UNEP's Programme of Work. He explained that the CPR had agreed to hold the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly in two parts, the first part to be held in a virtual format in February 2021, this meeting would look into administrative and budgetary issues, and a second meeting proposed to be held in a present format in 2022 to discuss substantive issues. He further informed that in the most recent meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) it was decided that three decisions would be presented for adoption in the first part of UNEA 5: i) the adoption of UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS), ii) the approval of the budget, and iii) the Date and format of the second part of UNEA 5.

A final decision on the modality for both the UNEA 2021 and the second part UNEA 2022 were to be made, this would be finalized on 1st December as in the last meeting there were different views towards the agenda, as some countries had reservations on the possibility of participating in virtual negotiations for the development and works towards adopting ministerial outcome documents for the UNEA.

After his intervention, the President expressed that our region stood ready to cooperate in any manner which is expected, to ensure that UNEA 5 is a success; and, invited Ambassador Coimbra to participate in the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers. To bring this Agenda to a close, he invited the Regional Director to make a few comments on what was to be expected with respect to arrangements for the participation of our region in the UNEA 5.

Mr. Heileman took the floor and explained that the countries of the region have provided inputs in writing to the MTS and POW development process, on topics that would be discussed during the first part of the UNEA 5 in 2021. He informed that celebration of the Forum of Ministers in a virtual manner would allow a broader participation of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) in the Meeting of the Forum. He suggested that the Bureau should continue its engagement in the UNEA 5 preparation process and send written inputs as required to the UNEA Secretariat. He further suggested that the Bureau should also coordinate with Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo Vice President and Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, and H.E. Mr. Reggy Nelson Vice President of UNEA, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Suriname, who are the two members of the UNEA Bureau from the region.

Agenda item 2: Update on the Progress of the Negotiations for the XXII Meeting.

Under this agenda item, the Presidency invited Mr. Travis Sinckler, Senior Advisor of the Presidency to present the status of the discussions on the number of Decisions and the Chairs' recommendation for consideration.

He explained that the Bureau at its Second Meeting agreed to a list of nine indicative decisions. During the First Meeting of the Negotiating Session, Cuba expressed concern about the large number of decisions and proposed for a reduction to be made, recalling the four decisions that were adopted at the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment. On the direction of the Chair of the Presidency of the XXII Meeting of the Forum, Cuba and Barbados conducted bilateral meetings. Cuba thereafter by way of Diplomatic Note, recommended five consolidated decisions. During the Second Meeting of the Negotiating Committee Brazil raised a similar concern about the number of Decisions and continued to do so in all the Working Group Meetings they participated in thus far.

Taking the foregoing into account, the Presidency presented a proposal to rationalize the amount of decisions as follows:

- 1. *Sustainable Consumption and Production***
- 2. *Biodiversity***
- 3. *Chemicals, Waste, Pollution including the Progressive Closure of Dumpsites in LAC***
- 4. *Climate Change***

5. *Caribbean SIDS*

6. *Omnibus Decision “New and Emerging Matters of Strategic Environmental Importance to the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean” covering the following decision: Data management, Action Plan on Ecosystem Restoration; Emergencies and Gender*

Rationale: These were called for specifically by the Intersessional as new and emerging streams of work. These matters would require significant follow up.

7. *Increasing the Implementation Effectiveness of the Forum of Ministers*

Rationale: Establishment of a Forum Secretariat, enhancing the role of the ITC and the effectiveness of implementation of the Forum’s Decision; Resource Mobilisation Strategy.

After this, the floor was opened for comments on the foregoing proposal for streamlining of the decisions. The Minister of Grenada, had a general comment on the proposed decisions, he emphasized the importance of these being action oriented, and pointed out the logistical challenges from the Caribbean perspective in terms of the provision of inputs to the different documents and processes. He requested that the Secretariat make the inputting process more dynamic so that the comments could be incorporated and reviewed in a more efficient manner.

The representative of Peru asked when the final versions of the draft Decisions would be sent to the high-level officers in preparation for their next meeting and underlined the importance of submitting them with enough time for countries to review and make internal consultations as required.

The Secretariat clarified that regarding the working dynamic, there was significant progress in the finalization of the draft Decisions. The Secretariat committed to send the comments and revised versions to all countries in the most expeditious way and stated appreciation for the patience of the High-level Officers. The Secretariat stated that a significant amount of communication was sent to the countries practically on a daily basis. It was also conveyed by the Secretariat, that as soon as the Coordinators of each of the Working Groups submitted the final draft of the Decisions, they would be shared in both English and Spanish versions, at least one week before the next meeting of the Negotiating Committee to be held on 10 and 11 December.

The representative of Argentina commented regarding the rationalization of the draft Decisions that some of them were very advanced and in some cases they were already closed, and asked in this case why they would be included in an omnibus project if the understanding was that the draft decisions that were still being discussed would be the ones that would be included in an omnibus decision. The Secretariat clarified that the omnibus proposal was presented by the Presidency to attend the concern of a high number of decisions. The Secretariat would continue the work in the different working groups and was willing to work on the proposal of the Presidency, as the decisions that are being proposed for the omnibus comprised mostly new priorities that resulted from the Intersessional Meeting held on 5-6 November 2019 in Bridgetown, Barbados and that are not continuing from prior decisions. In this regard, work can be done to have a common introductory paragraph, keeping entirely the text that have been agreed by the countries. The Secretariat further clarified that in addition to the SIDS and the Gender and environment decision, the Environmental dimension of emergencies and crises draft decision was also finalized.

The Chair indicated that as much as possible the operative portions of the decisions and some of the preambular parts would be kept.

A group of countries including Argentina, Chile and Peru considered that the gender and environment decision was very important and should be kept as a stand-alone decision but will remain open to the option of keeping it in the omnibus, and await the proposed decision. The Chair indicated that the gender decision may be kept separate.

Agenda item 3. Conclusion of communique/ declaration on environmental dimensions of COVID19

Under this agenda item, the Chair informed that a consolidated version of the Communique was circulated to the members of the Bureau. In order to move forward he recommended the following:

That the Communique be annexed to the Political Declaration and be presented as a set of strategic commitments and actions for mainstreaming the environmental dimension of a Sustainable Recovery Agenda for the Region to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In addition to this, he suggested that the theme of the XXII Forum of Ministers be “The Environmental Dimension of COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery Response for Latin America and the Caribbean.”

In this regard, he also recommended to hold a session on the first day of the XXII Meeting of the Forum which would be attended by the Head of the Interagency Technical Committee Agencies to discuss an Environmental-focused Sustainable Recovery Response to COVID-19. It was proposed that the session be Chaired by the Prime Minister of Barbados, who was also the Chair of the Joint Meeting of the IMF-World Bank Meeting.

After these proposals, the floor was opened for comments.

The representative of Peru requested clarification on the amount of outcome documents of the Forum of Ministers to be held in January next year. She also enquired if the Communique would be a separate document from the Political Declaration, or if elements of the Communique would be used as a basis for formulating the Declaration. She proposed that the Communique should be included in the Agenda for the next meeting of High-Level Officers; and, prior to this meeting that it should be circulated in Spanish and English versions to countries for final inputs and closing the document.

The Chair clarified that the suggestion is for the Communique to constitute an Annex of the Political Declaration.

The Minister of Grenada took the floor and expressed that the Communique should not be adopted as an attachment to the Declaration, because it would dilute the strength of the message. He suggested that this issue should be left open until a discussion could be held in the upcoming meeting of High-Level Officers. He indicated it would be best to have it as a separate document instead of having it as an Annex of the Declaration. The representative of Argentina agreed with Grenada, and highlighted the important work that was done in drafting the Communique as it integrated the challenges and priorities for the region with respect to the environmental dimension of COVID-19, as a document that could then be presented as a regional message to UNEA. He requested the Secretariat to circulate the Communique again to the countries for final comments with the aim of finalizing the document in time to be presented to the Meeting of the Forum.

The Chair informed that the High-Level Officers in the last meeting expressed that there should only be one outcome document of the Forum of Ministers and not two. In this sense, he proposed for the Communique to be included as an Annex, and for an Action Plan to be developed as a set of strategic

commitments to translate these priorities into action. This was to be seen in the framework of the recommendation of the theme of the XXII Forum of Ministers, as well as the proposed session on the first day of the XXII Meeting which would be attended by the Head of the ITC's Agencies to discuss an Environmental-focused Sustainable Recovery Response to COVID-19. The conclusions of that discussion would then be incorporated into the Communiqué as specific Actions.

The Secretariat informed that the consolidated Communiqué with the integrated comments received, was circulated in both languages to the members of the Bureau and would be circulated again

Agenda item 4: Enhancing the Implementation of the Outcomes of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Chair explained that this agenda item deals with three interrelated areas: Enhancing the Role and Expansion of the Inter-Agency Technical and (Advisory) Committee (i) Review of the Terms of Reference, and Consideration of the New Applicants ; ii) Establishment of a Forum Secretariat and Modalities for Enhancing Implementation of Forum Outcomes, and iii) Resource Mobilisation for the Implementation of the Forum's Outcome.

On enhancing the role and expansion of the ITC, he informed that the context for this consideration is based on the conclusion of the 2019 Intersessional Meeting to the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, which called for the involvement of the private sector and civil society at regional and national levels in implementing the decisions/outcomes" of the Forum. He also noted that this issue had also been raised at the XIV Meeting of the Forum of Ministers Environment of LAC held in Panama City, in 2003, pursuant to its Decision 3, "*Regional Implementation of the Programme of Work of the United Nations Environment Programme*"

He recalled that the Inter-Agency Technical Committee is mandated to establish and strengthen partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels with other United Nations bodies, development banks and other institutions, including civil society, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the development and delivery of the programme of work of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this sense, also taking into account the entities that have submitted requests to join the ITC, the Presidency proposed for consideration the review of a mixed composition of Agencies, namely: Implementing Agencies, which comprise of essentially the UN Agencies such as UNEP, UNDP, ECLAC, PAHO/WHO (of which we have an application for membership); Financial Institutions such as the World Bank; the Inter-American Bank, the Latin American Bank (CAF) (of which we have an application for membership) the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) etc.; and iii) Executing Agencies, which are currently absent, which have the experience of working with countries to execute activities with resources provided by or leveraged by the groups (1) and (2) above and which can include specialized inter-governmental entities (of which we have an application for membership) and/or regional/sub-regional technical civil society groups; Sub-regional Secretariats such as the Central American Integration System¹ ([Spanish](#): Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, or SICA); Caribbean Community (CARICOM)²; the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR for

¹ [Guatemala](#), [El Salvador](#), [Honduras](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), [Belize](#), and [Dominican Republic](#)

² Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Co-operative Republic of Guyana Grenada, Republic of Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Republic of Suriname and Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

its Spanish initials)³; Andean Community⁴ ([Spanish](#): Comunidad Andina, CAN), and Private sector representation.

After this explanation, the floor was opened for comments. Argentina took the floor and asked if the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had also been considered in the regional mechanisms to be invited to the ITC.

The Secretariat, represented by Ms. Andrea Brusco took the floor and called attention to the Informative Document for the Agenda item which included revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the composition of the ITC which were prepared and agreed by the current members of the ITC on their meeting held on 9 September 2020.

Ms. Piedad Martin, UNEP's coordinator of the work with the ITC was invited to provide further details on this topic. Ms. Martin clarified that the revision of the ToRs were made as a technical proposal with an action oriented approach, and the entities that were and/or would be part of the ITC are expected to be international not for profit organizations with regional work that can align their programme, priorities and resource mobilisation efforts to support the implementation of the results of the Forum. The idea was to expand the Committee but only to an extent that would not affect its functionality. She expressed that it would be interesting to expand the ITC to regional banks, but we could not expect them to make a request to join, we needed to make an approach to these entities and invite them to take part of the Forum of Ministers.

She further explained that participation of regional mechanisms was not considered to join the ITC, but due to their nature it would not be recommended to include these in the Committee. A different approach for a different kind of participation perhaps to support in the communications with the member countries of these sub-regional entities would be more appropriate. The objective set in the proposed TOR is based on the need for international technical agencies and regional banks that would support in the operation, resource mobilisation and financing of the outcomes of the Forum.

The Chair requested further consideration on this, and indicated that the expansion of the ITC went beyond Development Banks, and requested the approval for incorporating the following entities: the Pan-American Health organization/OPS, the Latin American Development Bank (CAF), Caribbean Development Bank, the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management, and the Caribbean Youth for the Environment Network. The Chair opened the floor to countries for comments on this proposal, and no comments was made in this regard.

Mr. Heileman took the floor and noted that, as there were no interventions nor deliberations among the countries on this issue, and he underscored the importance of exercising caution, as they were hundreds, if not thousands of civil society organizations in the countries of the region, and this could create an issue for the objective and functionality of the ITC, and also a precedent if some organisations were included and others were not. He emphasized that there should be a separation between the organizations from civil society that belonged to the Major Groups and Stakeholders, and the technical or financial organizations that should be part of the Interagency Technical Committee.

The Chair indicated that the background note should be revised as well as the ToR in this regard.

Moving on to the next two sub items of this agenda item on the Establishment of a Forum Secretariat and Modalities for Enhancing Implementation of Forum Outcomes, the Chair called attention to the informative document circulated for this agenda item. In this regard, he proposed for the

³ This body was initially established by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and subsequently joined by Venezuela and Bolivia

⁴ Include the countries of [Bolivia](#), [Colombia](#), [Ecuador](#), and [Peru](#)

establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the Forum of Ministers to facilitate the organisation of the meetings and the follow up of the implementation of the decisions and outcomes of the meetings. He highlighted that there is a precedent of this type of secretariat for other regional fora, as UNEP finances the Ministerial Conference of Environment for Africa. He proposed for a request to be made for the creation of a UNEP post that would be called Secretary of the Forum of Ministers for the Latin America and the Caribbean region, and two consultants to be appointed, one from Latin America and another from the Caribbean, to support the translation and preparation of documentations for the meetings. This would be supported also by voluntary contributions from the countries of the region. The floor was opened to the countries and there were no comments.

The Chair concluded and informed that a Draft Decision to be captioned “**Enhancing the Implementation of Forum Outcomes.**” would be circulated for review of the Bureau for further inputs prior to submitting to the Negotiating Committee.

Agenda item 5. Organisation Modalities for the Convening of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment

The President of the meeting called attention to the proposed agenda and the organization of works of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. The following outline of the agenda for the XXII Meeting of the Forum was presented

**XXII MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT
OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
BARBADOS, 18-19 January 2021**

	18 JANUARY	19 JANUARY
MORNING 2 hs 1/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceremonial Inauguration • Approval of the Agenda • High Level Session: The Environmental Dimension of the COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery Response for Latin America and the Caribbean • Adoption of Conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial Panels: A Transformational Change for Nature and People
RECESS 30 minutes		
AFTERNOON 2 hs 1/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial Session on Enhancing the Implementation of Forum Outcomes • (Adoption of the Decision on Enhancing the Implementation of Forum Outcomes) 	Initiatives of Bridgetown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Data Framework • Environmental dimension of Emergencies and Crises • Gender and the Environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of the High-Level Officers /Negotiating Committee • Approval of the Decisions of the XXII Meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the Declaration of Barbados • Election of the Bureau of the XXIII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers • Closure

He detailed that the intention was to have a High Level Session on "the role of the environmental dimension as an integral part of COVID-19 Recovery," on the first morning of the Meeting, in order

to attract resources to the region to assist with post COVID-19 recovery. The rationale was to develop a post COVID-19 Investment Recovery Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean. He informed that the thinking was that this Session would be Chaired by the Prime Minister of Barbados and have in attendance representation from the Heads of the IADB, Latin American Bank, World Bank, IMF, Caribbean Development Bank; the Heads of Regional Secretariats at the political level (e.g. CARICOM etc.) and the Heads of key UN Agencies (e.g. UNEP etc.), with the objective of raising the profile of the Forum of Ministers and more specifically to underscore the importance of the environmental dimension in the COVID-19 Recovery Process.

He continued and detailed that in the afternoon session on the first day of the Ministerial Meeting, it was recommended that a Ministerial Session be convened on “Enhancing the Implementation of Forum Outcomes.” On the second day, emphasis would be placed on Ministerial Panels as outlined in the above table.

On the next sub-item under the Agenda “*Elements for the Political Declaration.*” The Chair recalled that Member States were requested to submit recommendations on the elements that could be incorporated into the final Ministerial Political Declaration. He informed that to date we have only received one submission from Cuba. Because of its political nature, he presented it to the meeting, the proposal is from a paragraph of the Andorra Declaration from the Ibero-American Meeting of Ministers of Environment and reads as follows:

The financial recovery of the crisis caused by COVID-19 needs to integrate the environmental dimension, without allowing the impact of the pandemic to slow down the ability of the governments to assign resources to promote sustainable development, ensuring the Principle of Non Environmental Regression. We should take advantage of the present context to establish the foundations of a sustainable, financial, inclusive system, without obstacles, respecting the countries` rights to development and international cooperation. The public and private investment and the international financial system, including the multilateral financial institutions, funds, banks, and investors, play an important role in the financial recovery and should include this variable, participating in the promotion of solutions for environmental conservation and climate action.

The Secretariat recalled that a request was made to all countries to send inputs to the draft Declaration. He indicated that we needed to encourage countries to collaborate, and in this sense, a reminder would be sent requesting countries for elements for input in order to prepare the draft Declaration.

Agenda item 6. Other matters.

Under this agenda item, the Secretariat introduced another matter for consideration of the Bureau. He informed the meeting that a request from the Cartagena Convention for the protection and development of the marine environment of the Wider Caribbean area, was received to launch two landmark reports during the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, namely, the State of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, one of the first reports with empirical data on many countries on the pollution of the Wider Caribbean, and the State of the Marine Habitat.

No other matters were presented under this agenda item and the Bureau agreed on the matter presented.

Agenda item 7. Closure

The Chair thanked the members of the Bureau for their participation and welcomed all for continuing on the organization of the XXII Meeting of the Forum. The Meeting was closed at 12.00 pm ET-Panama time.

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Annex I
List of participants

PRESIDENT - Barbados

- Hon Adrian Forde., MP, Minister 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

Chile

- Meilin Leon, Jefa de la Oficina de Asuntos Internacionales

Guatemala

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

Grenada

- Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell, Minister of Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management, and Information
- Kerricia Hobson, Ministry of Tourism Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience, and the Environment
- Christopher Joseph, Ministry of Tourism Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment

Honduras

- Dr. Rosibel Martínez, Director External Affairs and Resource Mobilisation
- Ing. Juan Carlos Izaguirree – Ministry of Environment

Peru - Rapporteur

- Mrs. Martha Cuba de Cronkleton, Director International Affairs Cooperation, Ministry of Environment
- Mrs. Lourdes Loayza Bellido, International Affairs Specialist of the Office of International Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Environment.

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Committee of Permanent Representatives

Ambassador Fernando
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United Nations Environment Programme (ROLAC)

Secretariat of the Forum of Ministers of Environment

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