



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

**Enhancing the Implementation of the Outcomes of the Forum of Ministers of
the Environment for LAC: Establishment of a Permanent Forum Secretariat**

****Proposal of the Presidency****

Enhancing the Implementation of Forum Outcomes: Establishment of a Permanent Forum Secretariat

Background Note

Introduction

The 2019 Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment in setting out the Agenda for its XXII Ministerial Session made a number of recommendations for the “[...] *strengthening the functioning of the Forum.*” These included, *inter alia*,

- 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.¹
- 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.²

These are considered as essential elements, along with an enhanced role and expansion of the Inter-Agency Technical and [Advisory Committee], which need reforming to contribute to the enhanced implementation of the Outcomes of the Forum of Ministers.

Establishment of a Forum Secretariat

One of the key elements in enhancing the implementation of the Outcomes of the Forum of Ministers of Environment for LAC is the establishment of a Permanent Forum Secretariat. Currently, the Forum of Ministers does not have a Permanent Secretariat, *per se*, but its work is coordinated by the Deputy Regional Director of UNEP/ROLAC, with support from the technical officers in ROLAC. This function is carried out in addition to the work being undertaken in support of the implementation of UNEP’s Work Programme, which might not necessarily coincide with the priorities decided by the Forum of Ministers. The result of this, is that many decisions made by the Forum of Ministers over the years are not implemented in an efficient and effective manner. This situation is likely to change, with the establishment of a dedicated Forum Secretariat.

The Forum Secretariat will continue to be hosted by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, but operated independently of that office’s day-to day work, but have the flexibility to draw, as needed, on the technical expertise of the office. Based on the Forum Outcomes, the Forum Secretariat should be mandated **to translate them into a Costed Work Programme for approval** by the **Bureau** of the Forum, with input from the ITC. To facilitate its role as the

¹ See Paragraph 12 of the Conclusions and recommendations of the Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean; Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, Bridgetown, Barbados, 5-6 November, 2019, UNEP/LAC—IC.2019/8,6 November, 2019.

² Ibid

Overseeing Policy Body for the Forum; the Bureau will meet periodically, **but not less than its four prescribed Statutory Meetings over the Biennium**. By this way the Member States would be assured that Outcomes of the Forum would be given adequate implementation consideration.

A key question which arises, is how the Forum Secretariat would be funded. The first step would be for UNEP as the host institution to establish a Forum of Ministers of the Environment for LAC Trust Fund³ and to consolidate the resources which are usually assigned to facilitating the activities⁴ of the Forum of Ministers as part of the Forum of Ministers into that Trust Fund. In addition, UNEP could provide a full time Staff Member who shall be designated as Secretary to the Secretariat of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment. Furthermore, the Regional Banks which are part of the ITC of the Forum could be invited to make a contribution to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for LAC Trust Fund, on a voluntary basis, to facilitate the implementation of the Forum Outcomes as well as to provide financial support, wholly or partially, for the functioning of the organs of the Forum. Member States of LAC should also be invited to make contributions to the Trust Fund on a voluntary basis. The Secretary of the Forum of Ministers could be supported in the interim by two consultants on a short-term and interim basis to support the work of the Forum; one consultant to cover Latin America and the other the Caribbean.

In addition, as the debate continues on the extent to which the focus of UNEP work should be normative and or a combination of normative and project and programme implementation on the ground, on the one hand, and the increasing demand for practical action on the ground by Member States, on the other hand, increasing the effectiveness of the Forum to play a more critical role on the ground would be useful.

³ It should be noted that AMCEN at its 4th session, decided to set up a Trust Fund to ensure a sustainable financial base aimed at rendering its Ministerial Conferences more effective. The Trust Fund was established in 1991, on the basis of voluntary contributions.

⁴ Currently UNEP provides resources to facilitate the participation of Member States in the Meetings of the Forum as well as share some of the logistical and administrative costs with the host government of the Forum.