



**XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment
of Latin America and the Caribbean
Bridgetown, Barbados**

1-2 February 2021

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REPORT

XXII MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

February 1-2, 2021

Background

At the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), held in Buenos Aires, Argentina 9-12 October 2018, it was decided to convene the XXII Meeting of the Forum in advance of the Fifth United Nations Environment Programme (UNEA 5).

During the intersessional period, an Inter-sessional Meeting of the Forum was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, on 5-6 November 2019. The Meeting provided direction on the implementation of Decisions adopted in Buenos Aires and initiated the preparations for the XXII Meeting of the Forum.

In the advent of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is having a devastating global and regional impact and caused the cancellation of travel and in-person meetings, the Bureau of the Forum (Barbados (President), Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru (Rapporteur), took the decision that all meetings, including the actual XXII Meeting of the Forum would be conducted virtually in advance of UNEA 5, with the overall theme of “the Environmental Dimensions of COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery for Latin America and the Caribbean”. The dates had been set for 18 and 19 January 2021, but in early January 2021 due to an outbreak of COVID-19 in Barbados, the Bureau decided to hold the meeting on 1 and 2 February 2021.

With the aim of organizing the works of the Forum and to adapt the dynamics to the virtual Forum, in view of not having face to face meetings, the Meeting of the Bureau on 2nd October 2020 also took a decision that the Meeting of High-Level Officials would assume the role of a Negotiating Committee, charged with the responsibility of preparing and negotiating the Decisions and the Declaration. This method replaced the regular Meeting of High-Level Officers which, under normal circumstances, would take place on the two days preceding the Meeting of Ministers. The Negotiating Committee conducted seven online meetings and concluded its work on 19th January 2021.

For the first time the meeting of the Forum of Ministers was held in an online format. The XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment was held online, via the Webex virtual platform in the course of two days, including a High-Level Session on the Environmental Dimension of the COVID-19 Pandemic, a High Level Dialogue on the Strengthening of the Forum of Ministers and Environment, and three Ministerial Panels on (1) The Urgency of Climate Action in Latin America and the Caribbean in the Midst of the COVID Emergency and Recovery; (2) Circularity, Sustainable Development and Pollution Prevention; and (3) the Role of Nature and Ecosystems Restoration in Building a Sustainable Recovery

The meeting was attended virtually by 21 Ministers of Environment and Heads of Delegation of the region, namely, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. A complete list of participants is appended as Annex III.

Agenda Item I: Opening of the meeting

The Meeting began with an Opening Ceremony on Monday 1st February 2021 at 9:00 a.m. (EST) with welcome remarks by the Hon. Adrian Forde, Minister of Environment and National Beautification of Barbados, in his capacity as President of the XXII Meeting of the Forum. The ceremony was opened with the National Anthem of Barbados, and the observance of a minute of silence for all of those who have lost their lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his opening remarks, the President highlighted the consensus in the region among the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, that the environmental dimension of our development had to be at the core of any COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery Strategy in our respective countries. He expressed that the expectation of this meeting was to lay the foundation for a new regional multi-partnership and practical roadmap for a robust cooperation and investment programme that could help our Member States, to address some of the structural issues which the COVID-19 pandemic had more vividly brought to light.

This was followed by welcome remarks by Mr. Leo Heileman, Regional Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, as the Secretariat of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

He expressed deepest gratitude to Barbados for their leadership and dedication as Presidency of this Forum, as well as to all Bureau members, High Level Officers and country representatives who over the last months worked tirelessly in the negotiations and preparations for this XXII Meeting of the Forum.

The Regional Director expressed solidarity with all the countries of the region, for the immense suffering that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought to all our people, as well as to those who suffered loss and devastation due to hurricanes, floods, landslides, fires and other disasters. He highlighted that the meeting showed how important environmental issues were for the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean and demonstrated the confidence in multilateralism to agree on common goals and to work together towards regional solutions.

He underscored that, despite significant progress in environmental policies and measures over the last decades, multiple negative trends persisted that demanded urgent attention and collective action, and that was in sharp contrast with the economic value of nature's contributions.

He ended by underlining that it was precisely in that context that the Ministerial Forum, under the leadership of Barbados, aimed at positioning the action for the climate, for nature, and for a pollution free planet, at the centre of the region's sustainable recovery pathways.

Agenda Item II: Organization of work

2.1. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

It was proposed to adopt the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly, *mutatis mutandis*, to govern the proceedings of the Meeting. This was accepted with no objections.

2.2. Approval of the program and calendar of sessions of the Meeting

The Provisional Agenda and Calendar of Sessions and Annotated Provisional Agenda was adopted with no changes.

Agenda Item III: High- Level Session: Dialogue on the Environmental Dimension of COVID-19 Sustainable Development Recovery

The President of the Meeting introduced this agenda item acknowledging the general consensus among the countries of the region, that in Building Back Better post-COVID-19, the environmental dimension must be a central part of any Sustainable Recovery Strategy undertaken by the individual countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

He proceeded to introduce Her Excellency the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley QC MP, to chair this High-Level Dialogue. She was then invited to address the XXII Meeting of the Forum.

Her Excellency Mia Mottley noted that Caribbean countries had been at the front line of the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to reflect on what the region needed to focus on in moving forward and underlined that the Forum provided a political space for the region to reflect on progress in pursuing its environmental goals, within the context of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

She stressed the need for fundamental reforms of the Forum such as strengthening governance and efficacy and the work of the Inter Agency Technical Committee, in order to translate decisions into tangible action, and urged the need for strengthening of the relationship between the Forum and the UNEA: to reflect on how the environmental issues in this hemisphere could be more explicitly reflected in the work of the UNEA and by extension, the work of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. She also stressed that there should be a closer relationship between the Forum of Ministers in its capacity as the pre-eminent policy forum on environmental issues in our hemisphere, and the Ministers of Environment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

She stated the need to elevate the status of this Forum of Ministers of the Environment within the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, which was charged with the responsibility of leading the region's review and follow-up for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

The Prime Minister remarked on the COVID-19 pandemic and how a coordinated rather than individualistic approach would have led to greater success in the region and globally in fighting the pandemic. She made the case for multilateralism as a way of addressing issues that would make a difference to the lives of people.

She noted that the language barrier hampered cooperation between countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and that if the Forum was to be a vehicle of cooperation, there was need to bridge the language divide by teaching the languages to young persons and using the technological tools to assist in addressing the language barrier.

She also stressed the need for bilateral action, catalysed by the existence of the Forum and noted that the building blocks already existed to concretize a pragmatic and impactful regional cooperation programme amongst countries of the region.

The Prime Minister indicated that Barbados, like many other countries of the region was considering the establishment of Mission in in Nairobi at UNEP and UN Habitat, to ensure better coordination between efforts in Barbados with global efforts.

She spoke of bilateral actions which were already taking place, but which were not widely reported, and she cited the case of Cuba which had provided large numbers of medical personnel to Barbados and many countries of the region to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. She urged that this should be globally recognized.

She said that the region must move forward in solidarity and with compassion in addressing COVID-19 to ensure that no one is left behind. Political will was needed to support the work of technocrats, scientists and ordinary people who desired a better life.

She closed her remarks by stating that the importance of the Forum should not be underestimated for expressing the region's needs and urgencies, with a single voice on the international stage. She urged a stronger, more impactful, and more strategic Forum that could catalyse regional efforts to deliver more and better results for the citizens of the region.

After her opening statement the Hon. Mia Amor Mottley welcomed the members of the panel for the High-Level Session: the Honourable, Juan Cabandie, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina; the Honourable Simon Stiell, Minister for Climate Resilience, The Environment, Forestry, Fisheries and Disaster Management of Grenada, the Honourable Elvis Rodas, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Honduras; the Honourable Ricardo Salles, Minister of Environment of Brazil, the Honourable Sumaya Castillo Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Nicaragua, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme- Ms Inger Anderson; the European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, European Commission- Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius; Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Alicia Barcena; and the Regional Director for Sustainable Development for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Bank -Ms. Anna Wellenstein.

She explained the objectives of this session were: a) To identify the environmental challenges caused, or exacerbated by, the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean; b) To identify public policy and programme interventions and actions for enabling an environmentally responsible and resilient Post-COVID Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean; and c) To identify opportunities for strategic intervention and partnerships by multilateral financial institutions to support environmental resilience building and mainstreaming in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Before the intervention of the panel in discussing the above, the Hon. Mia Amor Mottley presented some programme ideas to the meeting for consideration:

- A Latin America and Caribbean Ecosystems Restoration Sustainable Investment Programme, with the objective of restoring ecosystems, to reduce the potential risk of more zoonotic diseases, while at the same time addressing the immediate and underlying pressures of biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation, as well as creating livelihood options,
- A Latin America and Caribbean Low-Carbon Research, Development and Innovation Business Support Initiative which would focus on de-risking, capacity development, partnership development and trade facilitation,
- A Sustainable Food and Health Security Hemispheric Cooperation Initiative as an engine for boosting interregional trade, and building our resilience to climate change,
- A Sustainable Tourism Value Chain Reactivation Strategy, that would support countries in designing and implementing the changes needed, including the formulation of strategies for building a more sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism industry, which is more environmentally sensitive, and finally.
- A New Latin America and Caribbean Political Compact for an Environmentally Responsible Economic Diversification, Cooperation and Market Integration.

Following the introduction of the panel and introductory comments for this session, Ms. Inger Andersen, UNEP's Executive Director was invited to give opening remarks.

Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP complimented the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable Mia Mottley for her leadership in environmental dimensions, pointing out that the Forum sets the standard for other regions and its priorities have influenced the overall UNEP Agenda.

She noted that Poverty and Environmental Sustainability are two sides of the same coin, in that countries are focused on the pandemic while trying to keep economies afloat.

Recovery should not be circling back to "normal" if normal meant continuing on a path which has brought three planetary crises, namely the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and pollution and waste. She noted that some issues for consideration towards recovery that are forward looking were: Stimulus packages introduced by some countries if applied

correctly, can lead to shaving off 25 percent of emissions; Cessation of subsidies for fossil fuels and Investments in climate resilient infrastructure. She reminded countries that with the designation of the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, investments must be made into nature's infrastructure and that resources allocated for sustaining the economy should be linked to a green recovery.

She urged countries to embrace the Circular Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production in order to meet the targets of SDG 12, highlighting the launch of the Regional Coalition for Circular Economy and the Progressive closure of Dumpsites which UNEP would continue to support and which the Forum must adopt. She noted that domestic and household emissions represent one third of global emissions, thus supporting the maxim that life choices matter. She further informed of the issue of over and under consumption among countries, thus requiring those with larger footprints to reduce it in an effort to assist those suffering from poverty and to preserve equity.

She continued her intervention by focusing on Biodiversity, and mentioned the progress made by the region in the protection of land from destructive use and the more than 150 restoration projects implemented to meet the Bonn Challenge. She further indicated that UNEP was looking to the region to tackle deforestation and to protect Environmental Defenders who were threatened or killed. She noted the need for stronger enforcement and legislation to address illegal land conversion and the need to preserve the important role of indigenous people in managing protected areas.

She noted the power of women who were involved in all sectors of society and who represent half the world's population, but whose global participation rate was very low globally, especially in areas such as agrarian reform. She mentioned the Expert Group on Gender and the Environment which prepared the Regional Plan on Gender and the Environment which she urged the Forum to adopt.

She mentioned a number of ongoing but delayed global actions such as the Climate COP and the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration which were tools for setting policy to underpin recovery and put the planet on a sustainable path.

After the intervention of the panellists, Ministers were invited to take the floor. The Ministers of Environment of Cuba, Dominican Republic, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Chile presented their views on the discussion.

As a conclusion of this session the meeting took note of the initiatives presented by the Government of Barbados which would be further discussed during the Intersessional period.

- *A Latin America and Caribbean Ecosystems Restoration Sustainable Investment Programme, with the objective of restoring ecosystems, to reduce the potential risk of more zoonotic diseases, while at the same time addressing the immediate and*

underlying pressures of biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation, as well as creating livelihood options,

- *A Latin America and Caribbean Low-Carbon Research, Development and Innovation Business Support Initiative which would focus on de-risking, capacity development, partnership development and trade facilitation,*
- *A Sustainable Food and Health Security Hemispheric Cooperation Initiative as an engine for boosting interregional trade, and building our resilience to climate change,*
- *A Sustainable Tourism Value Chain Reactivation Strategy, that would support countries in designing and implementing the changes needed, including the formulation of strategies for building a more sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism industry, which was more environmentally sensitive, and finally,*
- *A New Latin America and Caribbean Political Compact for an Environmentally Responsible Economic Diversification, Cooperation and Market Integration.*

Agenda Item IV: UNEA 5 Preparations

This session initiated with the remarks of the President of the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5), the Honourable Sveinung Rotevatn, Minister of Environment and Climate of Norway, who was invited to provide the Presidency's views and message to the region in the framework of the preparations of the UNEA-5. It was proposed that the first session of UNEA be convened next month on 22-23 February, and the second session, on a date to be determined in 2022. He highlighted the role of UNEA-5 in supporting the Decade for action with climate change biodiversity loss and pollution in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondly, the Regional Facilitator of the Major Groups and Stakeholders, Ms. Lorena Terrazas Arnez, Director of PAZINDE in the Pluractional State of Bolivia, transmitted the message of the civil society regional consultative process.

As a conclusion of this session,

It was noted that the Bridgetown Declaration, which was adopted in this meeting, called upon the Minister of Environment and National Beautification of Barbados, as President of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment, to present the outcomes and messages of this Forum, in UNEA-5, the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development, as well as in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

In relation to the Civil Society engagement in the regional forum, it was proposed to continue the practice of convening the Major Groups and Civil Society Regional Forum

prior to the Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, and to promote the participation of government representatives in them, to facilitate the discussion and exchanges among the Ministries of environment of the region and the civil society.

Agenda item V: High Level Dialogue on Implementation of the Forum's outcomes

To introduce this agenda item, the President explained that the “Strengthening of the outcomes of the Forum of Ministers of Environment” was one of the recommendations that resulted from the Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, held on 5-6 November 2019, in Bridgetown, Barbados, which included the establishment of a dedicated Forum of Ministers Secretariat, the establishment of an implementation framework, and the review of the role and functions of the Interagency Technical Committee (ITC). He mentioned that there was also a ‘Proposal of the Presidency on Enhancing the Implementation of the Outcomes of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean’, which had been presented to the Bureau, on their meeting held on 25 November 2020.

The President also added that the Regional Forum of Ministers served to define collective responses for the provision of regional environmental goods and the management of regional, sub-regional and transboundary/ multi-country issues, as well as promoting joint-up analysis and monitoring of regional trends, gaps, opportunities and risks; scaled up collaboration on data and policy support; and the establishment of partnerships and joint resource mobilization efforts, among others.

To advance the implementation of regional agreements, he mentioned that it was fundamental to collaborate with regional and sub-regional integration entities, other regional partners and facilitate cooperation among multiple stakeholders in order to enable and multiply result-oriented actions.

The members of the Interagency Technical Committee took part in this panel to provide their views, ideas, and lessons learned in this context. The ITC was represented by the following members: Linda Maguire, Director of Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Mr. Juan Pablo Bonilla, Manager of the IDB's Climate Change and Sustainable Development Sector of the Inter -American Development Bank.(IADB); Mr. Paul Martin, Practice Manager of the Environment and Natural Resources Global Practice of the World Bank (WB); and the Dr. Marcelo Korc, Unit Chief, Climate Change and Environmental Determinants of Health of the Pan American Health Organization.

The panel focused on discussing mechanisms for enhancing the regional cooperation strategies for implementing and increasing the effectiveness of the decisions adopted in the Forum.

After these interventions, countries were invited to take the floor. Representatives of Panama and Mexico offered their views on this particular topic.

As a result of this session;

The President informed that, during the sessions of the Negotiating Committee/High-Level Officers Meeting, it was agreed to establish a Working Group tasked with developing a proposal on the way forward during the intersessional period, in terms of strengthening the implementation of the outcomes of the Forum including the expansion of the composition of the Interagency Technical Committee, and the enhancement of its role . The Working Group was comprised by Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Grenada, Mexico, Panama, Peru, who volunteered to working on this together with Barbados.

Agenda item VI: Approval of the Forum Decisions

The Presidency informed that the Decisions of the Forum were going to be presented for formal adoption and reminded that the Negotiating Committee held seven meetings spanning almost 55 hours, to organize, discuss and negotiate the Outcome Documents of the 22nd Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment.

The President invited the Minister of Environment of Peru, the Hon. Gabriel Quijandria, in his capacity of Rapporteur of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, who provided a summary of the package of 8 Decisions of the Forum being presented for formal adoption. In presenting the Decisions, he briefed the Meeting on the work of the Negotiating Committee explaining that this Committee replaced the High-Level Segment of the Forum of Ministers which was usually held two days prior to the Ministerial Segment of the Forum, and where negotiations of the outcome documents would usually take place. The Decisions presented for adoption were:

1. Pollution;
2. Sustainable Consumption and Production and Circular Economy – Key Drivers for Post COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery;
3. Climate Change;
4. Preventing future pandemics and accelerating sustainable recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean through the adoption of regional strategies for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;
5. Environmental Information Integrated System;
6. The Environmental Dimension of Emergencies and Crises - A Critical Issue to Address to Facilitate Sustainable Development;
7. Promotion of Gender Equality in Environmental Management; and
8. The Environmental Dimension of the Sustainable Development of SIDS.

With no objections or comments raised, the President announced that Decisions were adopted unanimously. (Annex I)

Thereafter, the floor was open for comments, and the Ministers of Chile, Haiti and Bolivia took the floor.

The President closed this important agenda item by thanking all who participated in the negotiations meetings for their work and expressed that the Decisions would guide the work of the Forum for the upcoming period, providing a clear direction to orient the region to a more sustainable and inclusive development; one in which environment is placed at the centre.

Before ending this segment, the President invited Ms Lorna Inniss, Coordinator of the UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat, the UNEP administered Regional Seas Programme for the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR), to introduce a short presentation on two recent landmark reports – The State of Convention Area Report on Marine Pollution and the State of Marine Habitat Report for the Wider Caribbean Region- to be formally launched at this meeting. These reports were the first of their kind in the region and were considered landmark reports.

Agenda item VII: Ministerial Panels

The President introduced the topics to be addressed in the panels and introduced the Moderator who presided over each of them, this was followed by statements by Ministers and High-Level speakers with relevant expertise and experience, and finally comments and views from the Ministers of Environment.

- **Ministerial Panel 1: Urgency of Climate Action in Latin America and the Caribbean in the Midst of the COVID-19 Emergency:**

The President introduced the first panel and underlined that climate change was increasing its effects in the region year by year, creating enormous infrastructure losses, sea level rise, decrease in agricultural productivity, dramatic wildfires and ocean acidification with the subsequent impacts on food security and tourism.

He explained that the objective of this panel was to identify what kind of economic recovery was needed post-COVID, and what could be done by Environment Ministers to influence it towards a climate-proof recovery.

This panel was chaired by Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, the Hon. Ms. Andrea Meza, and the members of the panel were the Hon. Javier Naranjo, Minister of the Environment (a.i) of Chile; Mrs. Milagros de Camps, Vice-Minister of International Cooperation of Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Dominican Republic; the Hon. Teresa Ribera, Vice President and Minister of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge of Spain; the Hon. Alok Sharma, President of the Convention of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

COP26; Mr. Selwin Hart Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General on Climate Action, and Assistant Secretary General; Mrs. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC; Mr. Ricardo Mourinho Felix, Vice-president, EIB; Mr. Luis Javier Castro, President of Mesoamerica Fund; Mrs. Nicole Becker, Founder of Youth for Climate; and Mr. Philipp Schonrock, Director, International Centre for Strategic Thinking (CEPEI for its initials in Spanish).

After the conclusion of the presentations of this panel, Ministers were invited to make their comments. Interventions were made by the Ministers of Panama, Peru, Vice Minister of Guatemala, and Bolivia, and Representative of Argentina.

- **Ministerial Panel 2: Circularity, Sustainable Economy and Pollution Prevention;**

The Chair introduced the second Ministerial Panel on Circularity, Sustainable Economy and Pollution Prevention, defined the objectives of the panel which were to discuss how sustainable consumption and production and circular economy could support countries and the private sector in their post-COVID-19 recovery; what were the key challenges and opportunities for circular economy in the Latin America and the Caribbean region; what strategies could be more effective to tackle key pollution related challenges like plastic pollution, air pollution, or the eradication of dumpsites in the region; and what strategies could be implemented to speed up behaviour change and citizens' participation in the adoption of sustainable consumption patterns and a pollution free planet.

This panel was chaired by Mr. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and the panellists were Hon. Gabriel Quijandría Acosta, Minister of Environment, Peru; the Hon. Gerardo Amarilla, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment, Uruguay; the Hon. Pearnel Charles, Jr., Minister of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment & Climate Change, Jamaica; H.E. Chad Blackman, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the WTO; Mr. Sergio Campos, Chief, Water and Sanitation Division Inter-American Development Bank; and Ms. Jhannel Tomlinson, Caribbean Youth Environmental Network.

The President opened the floor for the views of the Ministers, which was taken by the Minister of Ecuador, the Vice Ministers and Representatives of Panama, Bolivia and Argentina, as well as Chamberlaine Emmanuel representative of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

- **Ministerial Panel 3: The Role of Nature and Ecosystems Restoration in Building a Sustainable Recovery**

This Ministerial Panel of the Forum was introduced by the President of the meeting, who recalled the related Decision adopted in this meeting, which included a pioneering regional action plan for the UN Decade of Ecosystems Restoration, whose implementation over the

next ten years would accelerate the ecological recovery of degraded marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems across the region. He informed that the objective of this panel was to open a high-level dialogue about how to put nature back at the centre of the sustainable development of our region.

The President proceeded to introduce the Moderator for this Panel, the CEO of the Global Environment Facility, Mr Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, who then welcomed the members of the panel: the Hon. Elba Rosa Pérez Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, Montoya; the Hon. Fernando Andrés López Minister of Environment of El Salvador; Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw Executive Secretary of the Convention to Combat Desertification; Mr. David Cooper Deputy Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Mr. Julio Berdegué, Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Food and Agriculture Organization; Mr. Patricio Lombardi, Minister of Climate Change of the Misiones Province, Argentina; and Mr. Calvin James, Executive Director of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land; Management in Caribbean SIDS.

Interventions made by the floor included the Minister of Environment of Peru, and the Undersecretary of Environment of Mexico.

A summary of the three Ministerial Panels will be made available on the Forum's website.

Agenda item VIII: Adoption of the Bridgetown Declaration and Communique

The President of the Forum introduced this important outcome of the Forum and described the extensive consultation process that took place in the recent months, the Bridgetown Declaration of the XXII meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and Communique on the Environmental Dimension of Covid-19 Sustainable Development Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was presented for formal adoptions.

The document was read by Mrs. Donna King–Brathwaite, National Coordinator for the UN Supported Partnership for Action on Green Economy. The Bridgetown Declaration was adopted by acclamation (Annex II)

Agenda Item IX: Election of the Bureau

The Chair offered the floor to the Secretariat, who informed the meeting that nominations from all the subregional groups had been received, and hence the Bureau of the XXIII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean was integrated as follows:

Costa Rica (President), Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras and Peru.

The President extended an appreciation to the Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica the Hon. Ms. Andrea Meza and welcomed her as Chair and Host of the XXIII Meeting of the Forum. Minister Meza expressed her country's gratitude for the election to chair this Forum and to host its next meeting, she further expressed the desire to work collectively with the entire region towards the achievement of a successful forum.

Agenda Item X: Closure of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

After the closing remarks the Regional Director of the United Nations Environment Program and the closing message of the Chair of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, the meeting was concluded on Tuesday, 2 February 2021 at 5:15 p.m.

Statements of Ministers, Keynote Speakers and Panellists that have been made available can be accessed at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/es/events/evento-de-onu-medio-ambiente/xxii-foro-de-ministros-de-medio-ambiente-de-america-latina-y-el>

Annex I – Decisions

Annex II – Bridgetown Declaration

Annex III - Participants



Annex I – Decisions

Decision 1 Pollution

The Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Noting that pollution is pervasive and poses a direct threat to human health and the environment, and recognizing that a more integrated approach is needed to address the various forms of pollution that are found in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we live on;

Recalling the ministerial declaration “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”, adopted at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), and the subsequent Implementation Plan Towards a Pollution Free Planet, which was welcomed at the fourth sessions of UNEA, including five key action areas for addressing the gaps and challenges associated with pollution: Knowledge, Implementation, Infrastructure, Awareness, and Leadership;

Taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the social, economic and health factors of countries in the region; and **highlighting** the relevance and linkages between pollution prevention and the capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the strengthening of waste management as an essential service and key sector to better recovery, the increased demand of single-use plastic items, or the possible correlation between exposure to air pollution and vulnerability to COVID-19;

I. Regional Cooperation on Chemicals and Waste

Recalling Decision 1 XXI Forum Decision 8 of the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment, through which the Intergovernmental Network of Chemicals and Waste for Latin America and the Caribbean was established; as well as Decision 1 of the XXI Meeting of the Forum, where the Action Plan 2019-2020 of the Network was adopted;

Recalling also Agenda 2030 and the related Sustainable Development Goals; the UNEA Resolution 4/8 on the sound management of chemicals and waste; the on-going intersessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020; and the sub-regional plans within this area¹;

¹ For instance, the Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA) or the MERCOSUR Plan of Action on the Management of Chemicals.

Reiterating the need for concerted action by all countries in the region to effectively address the health and environmental risks arising from the unsound management of chemicals and all waste;

Highlighting results, progress, and contribution of countries in the implementation of the first Action Plan on regional cooperation on chemicals and waste 2019-2020²; as well as the lessons learnt in its implementation, and considering the priorities and emergent issues in the region³;

Decide to

1. **Adopt** the *Action Plan on regional cooperation for the management of chemicals and waste 2021-2024*⁴ within the framework of the Intergovernmental Network, which addresses priority issues for the region;
2. **Encourage** countries in the region to support the implementation of activities included in the Action Plan, promoting the exchange of experiences and information, and fostering resource mobilization actions to facilitate the effective implementation of the Plan⁵;
3. **Develop** the necessary efforts to strengthen the Intergovernmental Network, with the support of the Secretariat and other relevant stakeholders;
4. **Encourage** to member countries of the Network to express their interest to join the next Steering Committee for the period 2021-2022;

II. Waste management

Recalling Decision 1 of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment, through which the Secretariat was invited to promote the establishment of a voluntary Coalition of governments and other relevant organizations, to develop a roadmap for the progressive closure of dumpsites and the effective transition towards the integrated waste management in Latin America and the Caribbean;

Highlighting the progress in the implementation of the Work Plan 2019-2020⁶ of the Coalition for the closure of dumpsites, including the development of a baseline document on the status and trends of final disposal of waste in the region⁷;

² Progress Report of the Plan: [link](#)

³ Report on the survey on priorities and emergent issues: [link](#)

⁴ Document of the Action Plan 2021-2024: [link](#)

⁵ In accordance with the [Resource Mobilization Strategy of the Network](#)

⁶ Progress Report of the Work Plan of the Coalition: [link](#)

⁷ Reference to the Baseline report on the situation of dumpsites in LAC, developed within the framework of the Coalition: [link](#)

Recognizing the need to accelerate the process of eradicating the unsound waste management practices in the region, such as dumpsites and open burning of waste, in order to prevent the adverse effects on health and environment, and to facilitate the transition towards models based on waste prevention and recovery;

Decide to

1. **Intensify** efforts to prevent and minimize waste generation, promoting responsible consumption and sustainable production practices, such as circular economy as well as the early implementation of environmentally sound policies and measures to convert waste into a resource and to increase recycling rates, including gradual reduction and/or substitution of single-use plastics, prevention of food loss and the treatment of organic waste, according to the capabilities and possibilities of each country;
2. **Call** upon countries in the region to progressively eradicate inappropriate final waste disposal practices, according to the specific circumstances and conditions of each country, with the support of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC) and guided as appropriate by the Roadmap for the progressive closure of dumpsites in Latin America and the Caribbean⁸, which includes a set of technical, environmental, economic, and social inclusion considerations;
3. **Invite** the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC) to continue supporting countries in the region to advance the work of the voluntary Coalition for the closure of dumpsites, by mobilizing resources to enable the coalition to update and implement its Work plan for the period 2021-2022, including the development of technical guidelines, and activities related with capacity building, information exchange, and awareness raising;

III. Marine litter and microplastics

Noting with concern the magnitude and increasing levels of marine litter, particularly plastic litter and microplastics, and the related impacts on the ecosystems and societies;

Recalling the Sustainable Development Goal 14.1 "by 2025, to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution" and underlining the need for a stronger global response for the effective implementation of measures to achieve this target while also preparing for action in the period beyond 2025;

⁸ Roadmap for the progressive closure of dumpsites in LAC, developed within the framework of the Coalition: [link](#)

Recalling the international and regional calls for concerted action to tackle marine and plastics pollution, including UNEA resolutions 3/7 and 4/6, Basel Convention Decision BC-14/13, Decision 1 of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment, the CARICOM St John's Declaration⁹, and the X Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Environment Declaration¹⁰;

Taking into account the outcome of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG)¹¹, including the review of the present situation, barriers to combating marine plastic litter and microplastics, and possible global and effective response options;

Recognizing the related work and efforts within existing global and regional frameworks, such as the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions;

Acknowledging progress in the region to address marine plastic pollution, including policy and regulatory measures on single-use plastics, improvement of waste management systems, increased awareness, or development of regional and national marine litter action plans¹²; but also noting that further actions across the lifecycle, including but not limited to the circularity approach, and increased coordination of efforts are needed;

Decide to

1. **Call** upon Governments in the region and other related actors to urgently address the issue of marine litter and microplastics, through a preventive and whole life-cycle approach, including a combination of policy, regulatory, financial, technology, educational and monitoring measures, at different levels, and to support global action and international cooperation to address pollution;
2. **Stress** the need of enhanced regional coordination and cooperation to more effectively respond to this issue, taking into account existing initiatives and mechanisms, promoting coordination and cooperation in the region, including the analysis of possible emerging global option responses.
3. **Invite** the Secretariat, in coordination with other entities and relevant stakeholders, including the Chemicals and Waste Intergovernmental Network, and within available resources, to facilitate the establishment of a suitable mechanism to promote regional cooperation and coordination, such as a working group or regional node, including

⁹ Adopted by CARICOM Heads of Government during their 40th session held in St. Lucia July 3-5, 2019.

¹⁰ Adopted in Andorra on 16 September 2020, within the framework of the XXVII Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government.

¹¹ The AHEG completed its UNEA mandate at its fourth meeting held 9-13 November 2020.

¹² Information document on the compilation of policies and regulatory developments in countries of the region: [link](#)

exchange of information on best practices, capacity building, awareness raising, and multi-stakeholder engagement, and present a compilation of financial resources and available technical assistance mechanisms, no later than the next Intersessional meeting of the Forum of Ministers in 2021;

4. **Encourage** regional and international donors and partners to support the Governments of the region to address existing barriers and facilitate the implementation of concrete actions and measures to reduce marine litter and microplastics, including development and implementation of regional and national action plans, through financial and technical assistance, capacity building and technology transfer.

IV. Atmospheric pollution

Considering that a significant part of the population lives in environments with air pollution levels higher than the guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization¹³ and that the scientific evidence is extensive about the air pollution effect on public health with elevated costs for the Latin-American and the Caribbean region¹⁴;

Considering also that this problem has been recognized in recent developments of the international and regional agenda on air quality such as the Resolution 3/8 of the United Nations Environmental Assembly about preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally;

Recalling Decision 7 of the XVI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean that established the Intergovernmental Network on Atmospheric Pollution for LAC, as well as Decision 8 of the XIX Meeting of the Forum that adopted the Regional Action Plan of Intergovernmental Cooperation on Atmospheric Pollution for LAC;

Recalling the Declaration of Buenos Aires of the XXI meeting of the Forum of Ministers in 2018 that called on the Intergovernmental Network on Atmospheric Pollution for Latin America and the Caribbean to update the Regional Action Plan and the Resource Mobilization Strategy, given the importance of air quality matters in the region;

Decide to

1. **Invite** the Secretariat to re-establish the Network activity including the update of the focal points as well as its governance structure;

¹³ WHO (2020). Air pollution. https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1

¹⁴ World Bank & IHME (2016). The Cost of Air Pollution: Strengthening the Economic Case for Action. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/pt/652511473396129313/pdf/108141-v2-SPANISH-WP-PUBLIC-Cost-of-Pollution.pdf>

2. **Request** the Intergovernmental Network to update the Action Plan with the support of the Secretariat and other relevant organizations, and to prepare a resource mobilization strategy before the next intersessional meeting of the Forum of Ministers in 2021;
3. **Promote** the development of initial information exchange and capacity building actions on priority related issues, within the framework of the Network;
4. **Call** on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC) to support efforts by countries to establish low-cost ambient air quality monitoring networks and air quality pollution control policies and strategies recognizing the linkages with the work on energy conservation and climate change.

Decision 2

Sustainable Consumption and Production and circular economy – key drivers for post COVID-19 sustainable recovery

The Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Considering the Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA A/Res/75/L.1) of September 2020, entitled *Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations*, whereby Member States recognize that, amongst other things: i) “The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us in the most powerful way that we are closely interconnected and only as strong as our weakest link”; ii) Only by working together and in solidarity can we end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences; and iii) “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our road map and its implementation a necessity for our survival. Urgent efforts are required”;

Reaffirming subparagraph 8) of the UNGA Res/A/75/1, whereby Member States declare that amongst other things, “we need to adapt to the circumstances and take transformative measures. We have a historic opportunity to build back better” as well as that “we need to immediately curb greenhouse gas emissions and achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns in line with applicable State contributions to the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This cannot wait”;

Recalling the commitments adopted in the framework of *Agenda 21* at the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro in 1992; as well as in the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation* during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002; and in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, which reaffirms that changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production is one of the three overarching objectives and essential requirements for sustainable development;

Taking into consideration the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 1 ([UNEP/EA.4/Res.1](#)) on *Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production*, which recognises that “achieving sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is an essential requirement for sustainable development, invites Member States to consider approaches and policies for achieving SCP including, but not limited to improving resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy, when developing relevant national plans and policies”;

Recognising the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5 ([UNEP/EA.4/Res.5](#)) on *Sustainable Infrastructure* which “encourages Member States and other stakeholders to apply appropriate sustainability criteria to all infrastructure as a means of ensuring sustainable consumption and production and maintaining connectivity of the natural environment”;

Stressing the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 19 ([UNEP/EA.4/Res.19](#)) on *Mineral resource governance* which “encourages governments,

businesses, non-governmental organizations, academia and international institutions, within their different areas of competence, to promote technological innovation and sustainability in the mining and sourcing of raw materials in order to move towards decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation through approaches including but not limited to resource efficiency and the circular economy;

Recognizing the *Ministerial Declaration of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*, which expresses its concern that “decoupling economic growth from resource use continues to be challenging; and acknowledges the midterm review and progress achieved in the implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (A/CONF.216/5), including the development of the *One Planet Network*, which is an important implementation mechanism for Sustainable Development Goal 12; and agrees to further accelerate action on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes of Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP)”;

Recalling what was established in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 313 (A/RES/69/313) of July 2015, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development about “continuing the support of developing countries to strengthen their scientific, technological and innovative capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production, in particular through the implementation of the 10YFP”; and the UNGA Res/A.75.1 that which “calls to ensure sustainable financing and to further enhance transparency, accountability and efficient use of resources”;

Reaffirming the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4 on “*Addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices*” (UNEP/EA.4/Res.4) regarding the request to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director “to facilitate learning, exchange of information, and North-South and South-South cooperation between the Small Island Developing States, regions and other developing countries, particularly with regard to how they have adapted and implemented approaches such as sustainable consumption and production patterns and resource efficiency”;

Further recalling the 2018 San Pedro Declaration of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean adopted during the Regional Preparatory Meeting of August 2018, which reaffirms that, amongst other things, i) the Caribbean SIDS remain an special case for sustainable development, given their unique vulnerabilities and their constraints in achieving all three dimensions of sustainable development; ii) underscores its support for the principles of sustainable consumption and production as means of addressing issues related to waste, chemicals, food, energy, sustainable lifestyles and land management in an integrated manner; and iii) calls on the United Nations Environment Programme and other regional organizations to support the establishment of a framework initiative to address the sustainable consumption and production priorities of Caribbean SIDS in the SAMOA Pathway.

Acknowledging the progress made on the *Decision 3: Sustainable Consumption and Production: decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental impact* of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the

Caribbean; and the Call for Action of the UN General Assembly;

Recognizing the challenges that all countries are facing with the current crisis triggered by COVID-19 and the unique opportunity to rethink our economies and the linear consumption and production patterns, as well as the benefits of moving them to a more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Decide to

- 1. Reaffirm** the commitment of the Latin America and the Caribbean region to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with special emphasis on *SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth*, *SDG9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure* and *SDG12 Sustainable Consumption and Production*, through the promotion of innovation, sustainable infrastructure, an inclusive and sustainable economy and sustainable consumption and production, which are all central areas to the post COVID-19 economic recovery to “build back better”. We also reaffirm, the Forum’s commitment to support Caribbean SIDS in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, in particular the paragraph 69 related to sustainable consumption and production.
- 2. Accelerate** the regional policies and initiatives addressing the unsustainable consumption and production patterns, which have additional adverse impacts on the three environmental crises we face today – climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss – and affect our well-being. The crisis triggered by COVID-19 is an opportunity to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns as well as to inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- 3. Strengthen** the current work of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, build on the lessons learnt, experience, tools and partnerships of the 10YFP and its One Planet Network over the 2012-2020 implementation period; and reinforce an approach that prioritizes and offers more emphasis and support to regional, subregional and national priorities and initiatives (as stated in the 10YFP document adopted by the UNGA -A/CONF.216/5), taking into account their respective mandates and legal autonomy, as well as the special needs of developing countries, This can be achieved by strengthening the cooperation and synergies with relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), as well as other global and regional initiatives (voluntary for the countries and taking into account the mandates and legal autonomy of each initiative) such as the International Resource Panel, the Global Opportunities for SDGs (Go4SDGs), the Regional Coalition on Circular Economy and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), among others. This will help to accelerate action and implementation of SCP.
- 4. Reaffirm** the request to UNEP to engage in a dialogue between the countries of the region and the European Union, to explore the development of cooperation programs on sustainable consumption and production for Latin America and the Caribbean,

taking into account, amongst others, the Multi-Annual Financing Framework 2021-2027, as well as the region's priorities and its progress on SCP and circular economy, among others.

5. **Encourage** countries to promote resource efficiency approaches such as circular economy and lifecycle assessments, as powerful mechanisms to promote practices that embrace eco-design, innovation, and promote value retention processes which enable to reduce, reuse, repair, revalue, recover and recycle materials within the value chains. These approaches recognize the importance of reducing natural resource extraction and the transition towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns, fostering conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. Which contributes as well to minimize pollution and improve people well-being; thorough collaborative work between governments – national and local – companies and society as a whole.

6. **Welcome and recognise** the establishment of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Coalition on Circular Economy, which will be led by a Steering Committee composed of four high level government representatives on a rotating basis, and eight permanent strategic partners: the Climate Technology Centre & Network (CTCN), the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy Coalition (PACE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Economic Forum (WEF). We request that the Coalition to focuses its work on the following areas and activities:
 - a. Building a common regional vision on sustainable production and consumption, including but not limited to circular economy.
 - b. Serving as a platform to exchange best practices and promote South-South and North-South cooperation,
 - c. Providing science-based knowledge on the opportunities and co-benefits of a circular economy approach to post COVID-19 economic recovery, including its potential to create new jobs, promote innovation in resource efficiency practices and accelerate the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns. All this as an important contribution to achieve the goals under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.
 - d. Increasing dialogue and access financing for innovation and circular economy by governments and the private sector, with special emphasis on small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
 - e. Supporting resource mobilization for the operationalization of the Regional

Coalition on Circular Economy and the implementation of projects in the region.

f. Requesting UNEP to serve as Coordinator of the Coalition.

- 7. Welcome** UNEP's new initiative "*Global Opportunities for Sustainable Development Goals (GO4SDGs)*" as a platform to accelerate action and to scale up and replicate regional solutions and to promote more policy coherence – bringing sustainable consumption and production, circular economy, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth together – advancing innovation and financing for SMEs and empowering youth and universities to promote the adoption of more sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles in harmony with nature (according to the SDG12 target 12.8). Invites countries to participate, on a voluntary basis, in the initiative and use its Menu of Services.
- 8. Calls for** more efforts and support in establishing more coherent product policy frameworks in the region, while acknowledging the findings of the regional consultation of UNEA-4 Resolution 1 (UNEP/EA.4/Res.1) on "*Innovative ways to achieve sustainable consumption and production*", and recognizing the good practices in the region including, amongst others, the promotion of lifecycle assessments and the initiative for the development of a regional eco-label (Environmental Alliance of America), promoted by Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico – including the recent participation of Ecuador and Paraguay. The members of this initiative invite other countries to join the Alliance.
- 9. Stress the request** made to the International Resource Panel (IRP) to provide science-based knowledge to inform on the co-benefits of resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production, which contributes to the science-policy interface and informs the public and private decision-making processes, the design of business models and education programs that promote the transition towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, including but not limited to circularity, and inclusive and sustainable growth. All this aligned with the Agenda 2030 and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement. This is an important contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation actions.
- 10. Call to expand** the implementation of sustainable public procurement practices as an important policy to increase resource efficiency and guide the post COVID-19 economic recovery. Recognizing that infrastructure will certainly be at the heart of many countries' post COVID-19 recovery packages, as an effective means of creating jobs, it's imperative that governments leverage their purchasing power in a strategic manner – in accordance with respective capacities and their national circumstances – to deliver public works projects that not only provide jobs and drive economic growth, but also that generate the lowest possible environmental impacts

consistent with the contributions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement, as well as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

- 11. Generate and encourage** enabling conditions for youth to adopt lifestyles in harmony with nature and more sustainable consumption patterns – responding to the SGD12, particularly its target 12.8 – taking into account different approaches, visions, models, and instruments to achieve sustainable development, respecting the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as promoting action, research and education for sustainability in schools, universities and other centres of knowledge.
- 12. Strengthen** the work of the Environmental Training Network to articulate environmental education and training processes into the development of policies and technical-operational tools to generate more responsible citizens and shift towards sustainable development, as well as to build more partnerships with schools, universities and other education institutions. In addition, promote environmental capacity development in the governments, including local governments, to develop skills for optimal environmental management practices.
- 13. Request** that Secretariat of the Forum and the Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production to develop a Regional Action Plan that promotes the implementation of this Decision, taking into consideration and updating the priorities of the Regional Strategy of Sustainable Consumption and Production (2015-2022).
- 14. Call upon** cooperation of the Inter-agency Technical Committee (ITC) and other regional and international intergovernmental organizations to support the implementation of this Decision in light of the SCP relevance for the post COVID-19 economic recovery.
- 15. Ratify** the members of the Executive Committee of the Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production, for the 2021 – 2022 period, as indicated below:
 - Caribbean Subregion: ...
 - Mesoamerican Subregion:...
 - Andean Subregion: Colombia and ...
 - Southern Cone Subregion: Argentina and ...
- 16. Ratify** the members of the Steering Committee of the Regional Coalition of Circular Economy for the first period of two years (2021-2022) as indicated below:

- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Peru
- Dominican Republic
- And the eight strategic partners: The Climate Technology Centre & Network (CTCN), the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy Coalition (PACE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

17. Approve the appointment of the President and the Vice-president of the Environmental Training Network, constituted on a voluntary and rotating basis by the host countries of the last and the upcoming Annual Meeting. In this sense, the Ministry of Environment and Water of Ecuador and the Ministry of Environment of Uruguay are designated respectively, as President and Vice President of the Environmental Training Network, until the host country of the next Annual Meeting of the Environmental Training Network is announced.

Decision 3

Climate Change

The Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Considering with great concern the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming above 1.5°C, and the Special Reports on Climate Change and Land Use and the Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere, which require urgent and ambitious action to address climate change related impacts.

Recalling the last two Climate Change Decisions of this Forum regarding the Regional Platform for Cooperation on Climate Change, which aims to promote capacity building and cooperation among the countries of the region, considering it a necessary tool to enable regional efforts to address climate change in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery.

Recognizing the current pandemic context and its direct impacts on livelihoods, society, the economy, and the daunting financial context that implies impacts on the soundness of national financial systems through increased expenditures and reduced income.

Noting that post-COVID-19 economic recovery plans will require large amounts of financial and technical resources, which will increase the region's already high external debt and inflation and add a significant burden to the region's economies and societies.

Recognizing the "UN Comprehensive Response Report on COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Building Back Better" which states that post-COVID economic recovery must go hand in hand with climate action, and that countries must not postpone climate action, because climate change does not stop and that post-pandemic recovery efforts should not imply a reduction in resources for climate finance.

Emphasising with concern the continuing impact of climate-related disasters in the region, such as hurricanes, floods and droughts, forest fires, ocean acidification and sea level rise, and noting that the severity of these impacts is increasing exponentially.

Stressing the importance of sustainable and inclusive recovery and the adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change, and that ecosystem-based solutions have never been more important than now to improve the resilience of our societies, create decent jobs in sustainable sectors, promote innovation, economic development and be better prepared for the future climate.

Recognizing the specific challenges of the region to strengthen their adaptation capacity, including landlocked developing countries, considering their geographical disadvantage that

reduces the possibilities of economic growth and the achievement of sustainable development goals, which increase their vulnerability to regional and global threats.

Taking into account that countries should integrate climate-aligned responses into their post-COVID-19 recovery plans, enabling the creation of decent and quality jobs, in line with country-defined development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recognizing the importance of multilateralism and the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the main global instrument for implementing climate action and its Paris Agreement, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities, to fight climate change, through country-led Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and strive to formulate and communicate Long Term Strategies towards carbon neutrality in accordance with national circumstances, while seeking complementarity with the actions being carried out to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Committed to the necessary the balance and synergy required between adaptation and mitigation actions to address climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean and recognizing the priority of adaptation for many countries in the region and the special attention required to build resilience and reduce vulnerability in the region.

Convinced of the urgency of the prompt and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and the need to make it fully operational at the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), including the completion of outstanding issues such as the regulation of Article 6 and Article 13.

Convinced of the need to promote country cooperation to strengthen systems and capacities for the production, compilation, and reporting of information on actions related to the implementation of the NDCs and climate finance.

Strengthen capacities and continue regional exchanges for the proper implementation of carbon mechanisms that are in line with the long-term objectives of the Paris Agreement.

Considering the importance of managing climate risks in a context of innovative and comprehensive adaptation measures such as ecosystem-based approaches, among other relevant approaches¹⁵ that provide adaptation benefits, mitigation co-benefits and foster the conservation of biodiversity.

Recognizing the significance of a comprehensive adaptation approach, ecosystem-based approaches, and country-specific approaches, under the common understanding of the need to innovatively integrate climate adaptation and mitigation issues, biodiversity, land use and traditional and local knowledge for an integrated and climate-resilient recovery.

¹⁵ Although Nature based solutions do not have an internationally agreed definition, some countries consider that the concept is a potential adaptation and mitigation measure.

Considering the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region and, taking into account the scientific data linking atmospheric pollutants with increased deaths from COVID-19.

Considering the slow progress on the provision of climate finance and the fulfilment of the \$100 billion target by developed countries, and that COP26 aims to initiate deliberations towards a new collective climate finance target, key for the region, providing a unique opportunity to maintain the momentum for total economic transformation systemic, to be in line with the concept of science-based ambition and the long-term goals set out in the Paris Agreement.

Recognizing the need to increase and align climate finance for the effective formulation and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions, the formulation of Long Term Low GHG Emission Development Strategies in line with article 4.19 of the Paris Agreement, and National Adaptation Plans complementing them with technology transfer and capacity building.

Recognizing that women are amongst the most vulnerable groups and bear a greater burden of climate change impacts due to historical and current gender inequalities, the situation of poverty and lack of access to equal participation in climate decision-making processes. Likewise, recognizing that the full, effective, and substantive participation of women and their leadership are vital to achieving medium and long-term climate change goals, the importance of countries' commitment to the implementation of the Lima Enhanced Version of the Work Programme and its Gender Plan of Action, adopted at COP25, is identified.

Considering the emissions gap between the mitigation objective of the Paris Agreement and the NDCs presented by the countries, and the urgency of addressing and dealing with the negative impacts of climate change; non-state actors, such as cities, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society, can contribute to closing the gap, as well as contribute to the implementation of while concrete adaptation measures.

Decide to:

Strengthen regional and south-south cooperation on climate change, including capacity building and exchange of information and experiences in the field of adaptation, resilience, vulnerability, ecosystem approaches, and in the sectors prioritized by the countries of the region for the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases through the active work of the initiatives and activities derived from the Forum of Ministers of the Environment.

Encourage countries to develop and submit updated and ambitious NDCs, according to their national circumstances before COP26, considering the climate urgency, and strive to submit Long Term Low GHG Emission Development Strategies ensuring that these instruments are aligned with science, while urging greater ambition for climate mitigation from developed countries of Annex I to the UNFCCC.

Strengthen the capacities and promote the best practices of the Member States in particular the least developed countries of the region and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to maximize rapid access to Green Climate Fund financing, inviting the Green Climate Fund to jointly develop with countries the necessary capacities, to address adaptation and mitigation priorities, and to streamline the project preparation and approval processes.

Recall the collective commitment of Annex I countries to the UNFCCC to mobilise funds for adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country-driven strategies and the priorities and needs of developing countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and have significant capacity constraints, and re-emphasise the commitment of developed countries to jointly mobilise US\$ 100 billion per year by 2025 and set a new collective quantified target from a US\$ 100 billion per year floor.

Build on and promote the early implementation of the UNFCCC Santiago Network to prevent, minimize and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change; a network that aims to catalyse technical assistance from member countries organizations and stakeholders for the implementation of appropriate approaches in developing countries and to enable access to climate finance.

Strengthen regional capacities and exchanges on Articles 6 and 13, enabling conditions and implementation, increasing financial resources, financing climate change priorities, and improving implementation of NDCs.

Support the strengthening of climate change resilience and adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable communities, including indigenous peoples and local communities, where there is a high dependence on the ecosystem services, integrating the approach of ecosystem-based adaptation, where necessary, into national planning and development processes, and encourage regional and international financial institutions to support these efforts.

Promote sustainable land management strategies, considering regional, gender, social and ecological differences, recognizing that climate change may have detrimental effects on livelihoods, habitats, and infrastructure through increased rates of land degradation.

Invite Ministries of Environment to promote synergies with other financial entities to develop innovative financial mechanisms that fight climate change, and promote financial flows for climate action, recognizing that access to financing should also be the backbone of recovery plans to strengthen the environment and social dimensions in the real economy, by helping the transition of productive sectors, the creation of jobs and development of resilient infrastructure projects with the view of meeting the objectives of the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement.

Promote international, regional, and South-South cooperation to share lessons learned, exchange best practices, and promote scientific research with real and timely data on how economic recovery measures can be aligned with the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

To actively implement regional cooperation on climate change, through capacity building and cooperation among the countries of the region, as a fundamental pillar for the implementation of climate action in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery, giving special

consideration to Ecosystem-based Approaches as integrated measures, flexible and holistic, while restoring biodiversity, preventing desertification and land degradation, among other benefits that allow the full implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Request the different financing mechanisms, cooperation programmes, partners, and donor countries to join this Forum of Ministers in providing financial support to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of this Decision of the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Decision 4

Preventing future pandemics and accelerating sustainable recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean through the adoption of regional strategies for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems

The Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Taking note of the findings of the Fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook¹⁶, which indicate that none of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets were fully achieved, that biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate, and the pressures driving this decline are intensifying.

Noting the key messages of the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Regional Assessment Report on Biological Diversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas¹⁷, as well as the Report of the Workshop on Biodiversity and Pandemics¹⁸ of the Intergovernmental Science and Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Services of the Ecosystems (IPBES), and the ten recommendations of the latest report *Preventing the next pandemic: Zoonotic diseases and breaking the chain of transmission* of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which provide evidence on the linkages between human health and the degradation of ecosystems.

Recognizing the role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in achieving Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of advancing in a coherent and comprehensive manner in the implementation of the Rio Conventions, in order to prevent future pandemics and to generate alternatives for the sustainable socioeconomic recovery with social inclusion of the countries in the region.

Emphasizing the call of the X Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of the Environment¹⁹, especially regarding “Urge countries to make a greater commitment in the construction and implementation of the Post-2020 Global Framework for Biodiversity, establishing goals and objectives that allow us to respond to the magnitude of the challenge of biodiversity loss” and “Invest in nature as a source of health and employment promoting actions for the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems with incentives to

¹⁶ CBD (2020). Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 (Vol. 5). Montreal, Canada: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Retrieved from <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5>

¹⁷ IPBES (2018) The IPBES Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas. (J. Rice, C. S. Seixas, M. E. Zaccagnini, M. Bedoya-Gaitán, & V. N., Eds.). Bonn, Germany: Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Retrieved from https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2018_americas_full_report_book_v5_pages_0.pdf

¹⁸ IPBES (2020) Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Daszak, P., das Neves, C., Amuasi, J., Hayman, D., Kuiken, T., Roche, B., Zambrana-Torrel, C., Buss, P., Dunderova, H., Feferholtz, Y., Foldvari, G., Igbino, E., Junglen, S., Liu, Q., Suzan, G., Uhart, M., Wannous, C., Woolaston, K., Mosig Reidl, P., O'Brien, K., Pascual, U., Stoett, P., Li, H., Ngo, H. T., IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany, DOI:10.5281/zenodo.4147317.

¹⁹ <https://www.segib.org/?document=declaracion-de-la-x-conferencia-iberoamericana-de-ministras-y-ministros-de-medio-ambiente>

avoid deforestation, foster the recovery of degraded soils and promote sustainable agriculture ”.

Recalling the scope of decisions XIII/3 and XIV/3 of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in which it was agreed to advance in the integration of biodiversity in prioritized sectors.

Highlighting that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets expire in 2020, and that the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity requires the participation and ambition of all the governments of the region, for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention in a balanced and realistic way.

Recalling Decision 4 of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment, which invited countries to take concrete actions for the restoration of ecosystems, in recognition of the 2021-2030 United Nations Decade for Ecosystems Restoration.

Emphasizing that Decision 4 called to agree on the development of a Regional Cooperation Programme for Biodiversity, inviting the Secretariat of the Forum to support the establishment of a working group to prepare a roadmap with mechanisms of joint actions among countries.

Recalling Decision 10 of the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment, which invited countries in the region to reinforce efforts for the effective management of natural protected areas, to ensure their ecological integrity and, consequently, the provision of environmental services in favour of the people.

Highlighting the efforts and actions that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have undertaken to promote the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and biodiversity, and to promote connectivity and functionality among ecosystems and countries, in particular the role of women, indigenous peoples and local communities.

Recalling the principles of environmental law enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992, which establishes that human beings have the right to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

Recognizing the importance of innovative financial mechanisms, as efficient strategies for the economic valuation of natural resources, which contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Recognizing also that some of these mechanisms, such as payments for environmental services, among others, encourage private sector participation in resource mobilization, while stimulating economic development and opportunities for local communities.

Recognizing that the failure of developed countries to comply with financial support obligations set forth in Article 20 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, regarding the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, continues to be one of the greatest challenges in achieving the three objectives of the Agreement in a balanced way.

Recognizing that REDD+ Result-Based Payments are a valuable tool to contribute to the financing of efforts to conserve and restore forest ecosystems, within the framework of a sustainable, fair and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Underlining the important synergies that exist between this Decision on Biodiversity and the Decision on Climate Change, which recalls the collective commitment of the Annex I countries of the UNFCCC to mobilize funds for adaptation and mitigation, and which considers the importance of managing climate risks through adaptation measures, such as ecosystem-based approaches²⁰, among other relevant approaches that provide adaptation benefits, mitigation co-benefits and foster the conservation of biodiversity.

Highlighting that synergies and coherence between the biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, desertification, and disaster risk reduction and mitigation agendas result in increased capacity to design multiple benefit interventions that can address the links between biodiversity and zoonotic diseases as defined by the One Health approach, and from other holistic approaches, to climate change and disaster risk reduction, in a way that respects the mandates of multilateral environmental agreements.

Recognizing the differences in conditions and the additional challenges that countries face in terms of conservation, management, and restoration of biodiversity, particularly small island developing states.

Underscoring the importance of achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) to support ecosystem functions and services, providing safe, healthy, and sustainably productive natural spaces for the livelihoods of society and enhancing food security in the region.

Decide

1. **Adopt** the Action Plan for Ecosystems Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean, included as Annex 1 of this decision, with a view to strengthening collaboration among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for conservation actions, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity.
2. **To request** UNEP, as Secretariat of the Forum and global co-leader of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, to develop project proposals to assist countries in the implementation of the Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular those focused on innovative financial mechanisms, capacity building, and scientific and technical cooperation and transfer.
3. **To request** UNEP, together with the Working Group on Biodiversity of the Forum of Ministers, to advance in the design of the Regional Cooperation Program on Biodiversity, including a gender perspective, for its presentation for approval at the XXIII Meeting of the Forum.

²⁰ Although Nature based solutions does not have an internationally agreed definition, some countries consider that the concept is a potential adaptation and mitigation measure.

4. **To invite** the Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean to adopt ambitious, practical, realistic, and balanced goals for the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, within the framework of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the 2050 Vision of living in harmony with the nature.
5. **To invite** the Member States of the region to strengthen, as soon as possible, their schemes for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biological diversity (taking into account the representativeness, connectivity, and functionality of ecosystems, management effectiveness, financial sustainability, as well as Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) and/or protected wild areas), and to adhere to different initiatives and existing alliances based on scientific evidence, according to their priorities and national policies.
6. **To encourage** Member States to apply ecosystem-based approaches to achieve the commitments of the Rio Conventions and the SDGs.
7. **To strengthen** the financial and non-financial means of implementation, as well as improve the mobilization of public and private resources, in order to expand support for the implementation of the CBD, as well as for the achievement of the Action Plan on Ecosystem Restoration, encouraging developed countries to contribute financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity building within the framework of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the provisions of article 20 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
8. **To strengthen** the integration of biodiversity in the productive sectors with a view to increasing their participation and role in the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as in the voluntary financing of such management, taking into account, when appropriate, CBD decisions on mainstreaming biodiversity, and considering different national circumstances.
9. **Adopt** measures, in accordance with national capacities and legislation, that ensure that the recovery from the economic and health crisis is sustainable and has a strong focus on respect for biodiversity and its links to climate change, integrating biodiversity into the efforts to end poverty, achieve gender equality and social inclusion and the achievement of the other goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
10. **Promote** actions to identify and gradually work to eliminate incentives that negatively impact biodiversity and to create positive incentives that promote the sustainable use of biodiversity, and the transitions towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns, including, among other alternatives, the circular economy.

11. **Promote** the strengthening of capacities to carry out strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments, as well as other measures that help reduce the negative impacts of the productive sectors on biodiversity.
12. **Strengthen** the role of the private and financial sectors in financing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as urge to strengthen the role of multilateral and commercial banks.
13. **To urge** the Member States to adopt cooperative and joint action among the countries in the fight against illegal wildlife trade, within the framework of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
14. **Encourage** Member States to apply the “One Health” approach, and other holistic approaches, which consider the management of ecosystems, including agricultural and urban ones, as well as the use of wildlife, in accordance with national legislation, through a comprehensive vision, to promote healthy ecosystems and people.
15. **To encourage** the different financing mechanisms, cooperation programs, partners and donor countries to join this Forum of Ministers in supporting and increasing their financing to facilitate the effective and timely implementation of this Decision of the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and Caribbean, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Annex 1. Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean

Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

Action Plan for the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean

Final Version Approved by the Negotiating Committee of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, on 18 December 2020



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

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I. Executive summary

In 2019, the UN General assembly declared the 2021-2030 as the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. The motivation is the understanding that none of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved unless a significant effort in ecosystem restoration is implemented. This declaration emanated from a proposal from the governments of El Salvador and the other countries in the Central American Integration System (SICA) and was supported by the 21st Forum of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a diverse region in many dimensions: biological, geographic, political, social and cultural. It is also a biologically rich region, with seven of the most diverse countries in the world. Yet, in spite of protecting 20.3% of the terrestrial and marine areas, many ecosystems have been significantly degraded, threatening the region's, well-being, potential for a sustainable future, and potential for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. Ecosystem restoration can revert many of the negative impacts that are already manifesting and are likely to emerge in the near future.

The initiative taken by the region to promote and support the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration is indicative of the region's understanding of the need to advance on this front and of the importance of recovering the region's natural capital. It is also the result of several decades of previous work in ecosystem restoration both in terms of developing and strengthening the institutional and legislative infrastructure to promote and regulate the activities and in terms of the technical capacity to implement solutions on the ground.

This document describes the Action Plan that the region wishes to undertake for the next ten years promote, improve, accelerate and scale up ecosystem restoration in the region. It is a regional-level voluntary effort that focuses on cooperation mechanisms and enabling conditions designed to effectively support countries according to their national needs, priorities and capacities, while promoting synergies and complementarity with existing initiatives. The Action Plan follows the approach and structure of the global strategy for the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, in particular regarding 10 region-specific actions under three pathways: i) a regional movement, ii) generating political support, and iii) building technical capacity. As recommended by Barbados as Presidency of the XXI Forum of Ministers of Environment, this Action Plan should also lead to project proposals to mobilize large-scale investments for ambitious ecosystem restoration initiatives, such as a Caribbean-wide project for coral reefs restoration.

The overarching vision is that, by 2030, Latin America and the Caribbean have significantly advanced in defining policies and plans and implementing projects in restoration of marine, terrestrial and inland water ecosystems at a spatial scale relevant to revert the negative impacts of degradation and, as a result, ecosystems and natural habitats across the region are in process of being restored, protected and managed sustainably.

The Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean in a nutshell

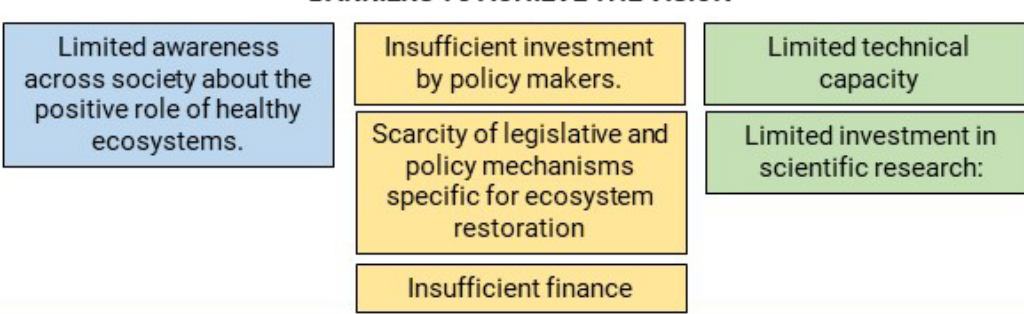
THE ISSUE

Latin America and the Caribbean are affected by degradation and loss of ecosystems. A significant effort is required to halt ecosystems degradation and to ensure that healthy ecosystems underpin Sustainable Development across the region.

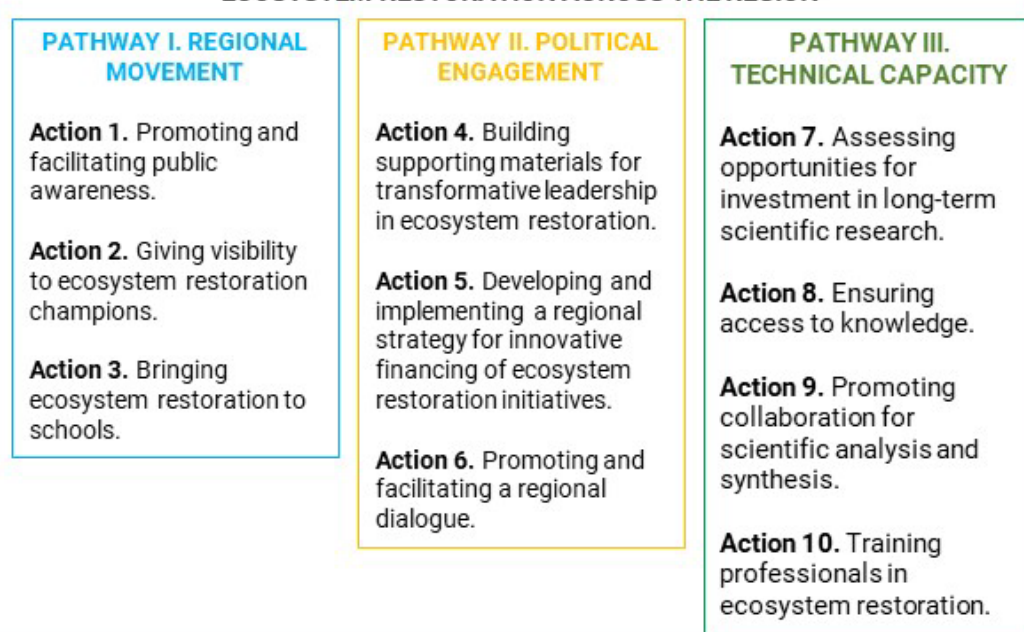
THE VISION

By 2030, Latin America and the Caribbean have significantly advanced in defining policies and plans and implementing projects in ecosystem restoration at a spatial scale relevant to revert the negative impacts of degradation and, as a result, ecosystems and natural habitats across the region are in process of being restored, protected and managed sustainably..

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION



THREE PATHWAYS AND 10 ACTIONS TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT AND ACCELERATE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION ACROSS THE REGION



II. Introduction

The 21st Forum of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Buenos Aires 9-12 Oct 2018) approved, in the Buenos Aires Declaration, Decision 4: Innovative solutions to enhance the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystems. This decision invites "... the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region to take concrete actions for the restoration of ecosystems at the national and regional level during this decade, integrating them into policies and plans to address the current development challenges following established guidelines in the decision of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/COP/DEC/XIII/5) on the Short-term Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration" and encourages "...commitments and partnerships among countries, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, as well as among sources of financing, to address the restoration of degraded ecosystems through efficient production systems, in particular agro-ecological approaches, conservation agriculture, agroforest and cattle ranching systems, among other sustainable agriculture practices".

In addition, Decision 4, supports "...the proposal of the Government of El Salvador and the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA), calling on the General Assembly of the United Nations in its 73rd session to designate the decade of 2021-2030 as "The United Nations Decade for Ecosystems Restoration". On March 1st, 2019, The General Assembly of the United Nations, declared the 2021-2030 decade as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration with the aim to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide (UNGA 2019). An overview to the contributions of Ecosystem Restoration to achieve the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is presented in Appendix 1.

In the context of the UN Decade, ecosystem restoration encompasses a wide continuum of activities that contribute to protecting intact ecosystems and repairing degraded ecosystems (Gann et al. 2019). Such activities include, for example, enhancing organic carbon in agricultural soils, increasing fish stocks in overfished zones, remediating polluted sites, restoring ecological processes, restoring biodiversity, and conserving fauna and flora that can assist in the restoration process.

The Action Plan for the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean is a response to Decision 4 of the 2018 Minister's Forum, and it is framed within the UN's Strategy of the Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (UNEP & FAO 2020). It describes the regional vision and road map to catalyse ecosystem restoration in the region. This Action Plan is formulated within the conceptual framework described in the Strategy of the UN Decade, which recognizes the wide continuum of restorative activities aimed at repairing degraded ecosystems (Gann et al. 2019), the major role that ecosystem restoration will play in achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development because of its cost-effectiveness, compared to activities in other sectors (Blignaut et al. 2014, BenDor et al. 2015a), and its potential role in opening opportunities for the post Covid-19

pandemic socioeconomic recovery. This Plan has been formulated taking into consideration the various existing ecosystem restoration initiatives and installed capacities across the region, as well as the potential for consolidation and expansion of these activities (see Appendix 2 for an overview of the current situation and potential in the region).

This Action Plan for Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean aims to help countries to initiate, improve or accelerate the implementation of their national restoration policies, programs and plans for marine, terrestrial and inland water ecosystems, and to identify opportunities to leverage public and private finance, while at the same time tackling poverty and improving human sustainable development. It is a regional-level effort that focuses on voluntary cooperation mechanisms and enabling conditions designed to effectively support countries according to their national needs, priorities and capacities, while promoting synergies and complementarity with existing initiatives. The Action Plan follows the approach and structure of the global strategy for the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, in particular regarding the three pathways for action: i) a regional movement, ii) generating political support, and iii) building technical capacity.

The overarching goal is that by the end of the decade, ecosystems of Latin America and the Caribbean are on the pathway of recovery, in particular those ecosystems that are critical for the long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability and wellbeing of the region.

This Action Plan is also designed to ensure that Member States are fully involved in the design and implementation of the proposed objectives and activities. The plan will have a mid-term review (after four years), under the revision of the Regional Cooperation Programme on Biodiversity, to guarantee that it is adequately adapted to the needs and evolving conditions of Member States (Member States will approve proposed activities, but their participation in these activities and adoption of the resulting products is voluntary). UNEP as Secretariat of the Forum will engage with Member States in leading the formulation of project proposals to mobilize the funds needed for the implementation of the Action Plan.

III. Vision and Theory of Change

The vision for this Action Plan is that, by 2030, Latin America and the Caribbean have significantly advanced in defining policies and plans and implementing projects in restoration of marine, terrestrial and inland water ecosystems at a spatial scale relevant to revert the negative impacts of degradation and, as a result, ecosystems and natural habitats across the region are in process of being restored, protected and managed sustainably.

A. Barriers

Latin America and the Caribbean is a complex and heterogeneous region from the economic, social and ecological points of view, and the direct and indirect barriers and enablers of ecosystem restoration are expressed differently among countries, even among neighbouring ones (Murcia et al. 2017a). Despite this heterogeneity, the following six barriers are common to the region:

Limited awareness across society about the positive role of healthy ecosystems.

Public support and participation are significant success factors in advancing policy and consolidating national and regional efforts (e.g., DeAngelis et al. 2020). However, public support of and participation in conservation and restoration are weak for lack of awareness of the current level of land degradation (IPBES 2018b, UNEP & FAO 2020) and its extent regarding the planet's carrying capacity (*sensu* Steffen et al. 2015).

This lack of public awareness is in part explained by the current level of urbanization that disconnects urban dwellers from the ecosystems that support them (Sanderson et al. 2018). Urban dwellers are often unaware of their dependency of nature because they supply their needs through the marketplace (Sanderson et al. 2018). Thus, they are spatially removed from the sources of water, food and other ecosystem service on which they rely and do not experience many benefits of green space and natural elements first-hand, nor are they aware of the environmental impacts of their own consumer patterns (IPBES 2018a). In Latin America close to 83% of the population lives in urban centres (most under poverty and in precarious living conditions), and in the Caribbean urbanization is now close to 75% (UNEP 2016). In contrast, indigenous peoples and traditional rural communities and fishermen are well aware, through work and labour, of their dependency on nature and the impacts of ecosystem degradation and ecosystem restoration on their livelihoods (Tomblin 2009). For them, culture and nature are intertwined. In this sense, the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in policy and decision-making processes could be enhanced.

The effort required addressing ecosystem degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean requires significantly scaling up current ecosystem restoration efforts and engaging all sectors of society to ensure its sustainability. Awareness among all stakeholders about the role of healthy ecosystems in sustaining life on earth and their contribution to human well-being is the first step in generating public support and participation in ecosystem restoration. Furthermore, increased awareness that

“renewable resources” are actually limited when their source is degraded could induce a shift of social and cultural norms to foster sustainable production and consumption patterns that would reduce pressure on ecosystems.

Insufficient investment by policy makers.

Ecosystem restoration generates direct benefits to many sectors of the economy and society (BenDor et al. 2015a, BenDor et al. 2015b) yet, in Latin America and the Caribbean, investment and public expenditure in environment (for all environmental activities) could be enhanced. Only three countries, Mexico, Brazil, and Costa Rica spend about 0.6% of their GDP (Quiroga et al. 2016). Ecological restoration, as a strategy for increasing the provision of ecosystem services, may be an efficient approach for poverty reduction (Suich et al. 2015; Levy 2017). However, for the past decade the region has dealt with poverty levels that have been relatively stable around 30%, but with an increase in extreme poverty to 11.5% in 2019 (CEPAL, 2019). Ecosystem Restoration it is not strategically positioned as an investment option for economic and social development. The low investment in restoration is also due to a lack of articulation in sectoral and land planning, in which other economic interests planning prevail over environmental planning, which has repercussions on the allocation of smaller budget items for biodiversity.

Lack of, or insufficient, investment in ecosystem restoration can be the result of several factors: One is insufficient awareness that the long-term solutions offered by ecosystem restoration address in a more permanent way many societal and sustainability challenges because they help recover the countries' natural capital (Blignaut et al. 2014), gain competitiveness (Quiroga et al. 2016), and reduce vulnerability to climate change and other threats (UNEP 2016). A second factor is the lack of incentives for the development of an economy of ecosystem restoration, including in relation to novel investment strategies that tap into both existing and non-traditional funding sources. A third factor is the difference in time scales between investment, funding, budgetary and political cycles (1-6 years) and ecosystem regenerative processes that take longer than two or three decades (Murcia et al. 2016, Murcia et al. 2017a, Brancalion et al. 2019). Finally, although ecosystem restoration is demonstrably cost-effective, the initial investment can be sizeable, especially at large scales, (BenDor et al. 2015a, BenDor et al. 2015b) potentially surpassing public spending capacity.

Scarcity of legislative and policy mechanisms specific for ecosystem restoration

Legislative and policy frameworks take time to build and revise and are always challenged by new technological and scientific developments that tend to move at a faster pace. Ecosystem restoration is a relatively new concept, with less than 20 years in the political lexicon (10 years in most of Latin America and the Caribbean) and with a quick conceptual evolution. In Latin America, for example, most legislation pertaining to ecosystem restoration has less than 20 years (Schweizer et al. 2019). At the global level, there is a “... relative scarcity of legislation, policies, regulations, tax incentives and subsidies that incentivize a shift in investments towards large scale restoration and production systems, value chains and infrastructure that do not degrade ecosystems” (UNEP & FAO 2020).

Latin America and the Caribbean are no exception to this appreciation (Chaves et al. 2015). Although most LAC countries have specific legislation on priority environmental issues, such as environmental management (25 of 25), water (15 of 25), forestry (23 of 25), protected areas (20 of 25) or biodiversity (19 of 25), few have legislation pertaining to soil (6 of 25), fisheries (12 of 25), or land use planning (13 of 25) (Quiroga et al. 2016). Even fewer have legislative and policy mechanisms pertaining directly to ecosystem restoration or a broader class of restorative activities (Schweizer et al. 2019). Brazil, for instance, is one of the few countries to include restoration in its Federal Constitution. Argentina also managed to make restoration a priority issue in environmental policy, including it as one of the application guidelines of its national law for the protection of native forests (Law No. 26,331) and as one of the mitigation measures contained in the National Action Plan for Forests and Climate Change. In addition, it formalized its National Restoration Plan through Resolution 267/2019. It is also important to note that several National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) have restoration targets, especially in the countries with relatively strong policy frameworks. However, the capacities to implement them have been insufficient, as well as the promotion of regulatory efforts to enable their achievement.

Schweizer et al. (2019) classified 17 Latin American countries in three groups, based on data available in 2017: Countries in the first group (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala y Mexico) have a wide array of legal frameworks, inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms and mechanisms for implementation. The second group (Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru) are in the process of developing their legal frameworks but are still lacking implementation mechanisms. The third group (Bolivia, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela) have yet to start addressing this need. Even if some progress may have been achieved, countries in the first group still need to fill gaps with respect to mechanisms to incentivize, evaluate, monitor, regulate and finance ecosystem restoration, especially at large scales (Ruiz-Jaén & Aide 2005, Murcia et al. 2016, Murcia et al. 2017a, Murcia et al. 2017b, Schweizer et al. 2019). A notable example of a good practice is the State of Sao Paulo (Brazil) that has a legal instrument to regulate in sufficient detail restoration practice (SMA 08-2008) (Aronson et al. 2011).

In addition to legislative and policy mechanisms and legal frameworks that address ecosystem restoration specifically, a further step is necessary in LAC. When they exist, coordinated implementation of other environmental instruments across agencies as well as enforcement are still weak (Quiroga et al. 2016, UNEP 2016). Challenges to progress include the development of standards and of programs for evaluation and monitoring (UNEP 2016). It follows that development of legislative and policy mechanisms in ecosystem restoration must be complemented with instruments to ensure and improve implementation.

Insufficient finance

Ecosystem restoration requires significant investment of financial and human resources over several decades, with returns manifesting in the medium and long-term. This departure from fast-paced investment-return timings creates a perception of uncertainty and risk associated with investment in ecosystem restoration. The consequence is the relative small amount of funding (both public and private) that society is willing to allocate in such endeavor. This is even more noticeable in Latin America when financial constraints and uncertainty exacerbate risk-averse financial behavior (Cardenas & Carpenter 2013).

Ecosystem restoration is expensive, especially when soils or water are very contaminated, and the substrate is severely disturbed. The Bonn Challenge estimates that circa USD 36 billion are need on an annual basis to restore 150 million hectares for terrestrial ecosystems. There is a significant gap between the amount of finance required to restore degraded ecosystems and the amount that is readily available for doing so.

Latin America and the Caribbean harbor an extraordinary wealth in Natural Capital, but lack sufficient funds to invest in restoration, which demands considerable financial resources, therefore, International cooperation, and Official Development Assistance in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities taking into consideration, inter alia, Article 20 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which remains a relevant source of financial resources to complement national efforts. Countries should strive to develop, in accordance with national capacities and circumstances, innovative financial mechanisms with the necessary ambition, to implement the action plan. In addition to the extraordinary biodiversity, the region has five million km² of arable land, 23 % of the world's forests, 29% of the rainfall and approximately 30% per cent of the world's renewable water resources (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 2019), as well as significant oil, gas, mineral and other non-renewable resources. Nevertheless, LAC has based its growing economy largely on primary sectors and it has maintained a tendency to unsustainably exploit nature-based goods (IPBES 2018a). Meanwhile, societal needs such as health care, education and food security that demand significant public resources continue to impose increasing and competing demands on already strained central budgets.

Efforts needed to scale up ecosystem restoration require financial mobilization from all sources, including through international cooperation, to cover the costs of implementing ecosystem restoration, particularly given the high return on investment shown in many restoration projects that can reach at least 13:1 (Strassburg et al. 2020, World Economic Forum 2020) and may go as high as 35:1 for some ecosystems, especially those less degraded (de Groot et al. 2013). A number of mechanisms have been proposed that incorporate novel entrepreneurial approaches and that weigh the cost of restoring against the cost of no action (Holl & Howarth 2000). In addition, new techniques on sensitivity analyses allow more refined cost-benefit estimations to inform policy making and investment (e.g., Logar et al. 2019), and potentially unlocking private capital.

Limited technical capacity

The design and implementation of ecosystem restoration initiatives requires technical knowledge and capacity of national and subnational governments, as appropriate, indigenous peoples and local communities, private companies and other related actors.

In Latin America and the Caribbean there is a high degree of variability in installed capacity and technical expertise in ecosystem restoration. Many countries are in the process of gaining familiarization with the relevance of ecosystem restoration for their wellbeing but lack local technical capacity in how to adapt solutions and approaches within local management contexts. Nevertheless, Brazil and Colombia have been developing the scientific knowledge, technical expertise, institutional structures and legal frameworks to advance in ecosystem restoration for several decades (Meli 2003, Rodrigues et al. 2009, Murcia et al. 2016, Murcia et al. 2017a), but costs and financing issues are crucial and a bottle neck for the process. Other countries like Mexico, Ecuador, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Argentina, and Cuba are already making significant progress in at least some of these components (Rovere 2015, Zuleta et al. 2015, López-Barrera et al. 2017, Murcia et al. 2017a). Furthermore, in addition to national level networks (REDCRE In Colombia, SOBRADE in Brazil, REA in Argentina, REPARA in Mexico, RECRE in Chile), there is already a regional network of experts (Sociedad Ibero-Americana y del Caribe para la Restauración Ecológica -SIACRE) that meets regularly to share lessons learned, discuss new ideas and bolster their collective capacity. Lessons learned are also disseminated through other networks such as Red Latinoamericana de Bosques Modelo.

Notwithstanding the rapidly growing expertise in ecosystem restoration, the capacity to scaling up the projects to a meaningful size requires additional capacities that are yet to be developed or disseminated (Rodrigues et al. 2011, Murcia et al. 2016, Murcia et al. 2017a). So far, only one large-scale ecosystem restoration project (15 million hectares) exists in LAC, after 30 plus years of research, i.e., the Pact for Restoration of the Mata Atlantica in Brazil (Rodrigues et al. 2011). Most of this expertise is focused on forested ecosystems. There is a paucity of technical expertise in restoring non-forest systems such as peatlands, high- elevation puna and paramo, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and coastal and marine ecosystems.

Thus, the challenge is to assist with (a) creation of new capacity on ecosystem restoration in some countries, (b) enhancing capacity and access to tools in countries that are already developing their own ecosystem restoration agendas, (c) bolstering the capacity of countries to develop and implement large scale ecosystem restoration programs, and (d) enhancing technical capacity of non-forested terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystem restoration.

Limited investment in scientific research and monitoring

The development of the field of ecosystem restoration is advancing at a quick pace, with significant engagement from developed nations in social and natural sciences. Lack of technical capacity was the highest barrier identified by the Regional Working Group on Biodiversity during the second technical meeting on October 3rd, 2020, and by a diversity of stakeholders polled in other events

(Murcia et al. 2017a). However, because of the site-specific nature of restoration, defined by the idiosyncratic combination of ecological, social, cultural and economic context of each site, direct translation of technological packages or lessons learned in other countries is not necessarily appropriate or convenient. Latin American and Caribbean countries require science-based innovation and long-term research in ecosystem restoration that is tailored to their unique and diverse ecosystems as well as the unique and diverse cultures in which they are immersed (Armesto et al. 2007). International cooperation, including academic cooperation and technological transfer, can be very beneficial in this regard. Academics in Brazil (Rodrigues et al. 2009), Colombia (Murcia & Guariguata 2014), Mexico (López-Barrera et al. 2017), Argentina (Zuleta et al. 2015), and Costa Rica (Holl et al. 2000) have been conducting scientific research in ecosystem restoration for two to three decades, mostly focused on the ecological aspects of restoring forested ecosystems. However, the region's allocation to research and development is less than 2% of GDP, well below developed countries that invest 2-20% of their GDP (UNEP 2016). Future research into restoration should also encompass social and economic aspects, in addition to ecological ones, trying to address and solve the region's sustainable development challenges.

Ecosystem restoration involves more than planting trees; it applies to all ecosystem types and it is a transdisciplinary effort that transcends ecology. It requires knowledge on the social and economic milieu, understanding the drivers of degradation and designing tools for socioeconomic recovery and sustainability of the restorative effort (e.g., Aguiar & Román 2007), and the need to understand where there are opportunities for restoration (large-scale, and also scaling up). It also requires methods for evaluation and monitoring (Murcia et al. 2015), and for quantification of the return in goods, services and intangible benefits, both at the project scale and beyond its boundaries (Gann et al. 2019).

In addition to increasing the level of investment on research projects, further developments are required. The first is an adjustment related to grant cycles. A typical research grant lasts 1-3 years. However, due to the long-term nature of ecosystem restoration (e.g., Brancalion et al. 2019), grant cycles should span at least 5-year periods, but costs are high and investments amount must increase to achieve good results.

Secondly, there is a need to synchronize information needs by policy and decision makers with scientific research and of a mechanism to ensure direct and effective flow of information among the two (e.g., Murcia & Kattan 2009). Thirdly, there is a need to periodically synthesize and consolidate information through to generate broad science-based recommendations based on accumulating research. So far, none of these enabling mechanisms are sufficiently mature across many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and there is a lack of a regional vision and approach to scientific and technical cooperation in the region, in particular for Caribbean countries.

B. Implementation: Three pathways of change and proposed activities

In alignment with the global strategy of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, this action plan is structured along three pathways of change: (1) Generating a regional movement that engages society in ecosystem restoration, (2) Fostering the political will so that decision makers in public and private entities champion restoration, and (3) Catalyzing research and development so that there is technical capacity to restore ecosystems at the relevant scale. The theory of change, highlighting barriers, pathways and associated activities is illustrated in Figure 1.

Pathway 1. Regional movement toward societal commitment or engagement.

Ecosystem degradation is largely the result of a confluence of human activities driven by multiple social and economic conditions and motivations, among other causes. It is related to changes that reduce the functionality of the ecosystem. The ways we produce and consume may have an impact in our ecosystems. Soil erosion and desertification affect 15% and 41% respectively in Bolivia, 43% and 14% respectively in Cuba, 50% and 15% respectively in Ecuador, 49% and 62% respectively in Chile, and 80% of the Andean region and 17% of the national territory in Colombia (UNEP 2016).

Recovering ecosystem health and reverting the negative effects of their degradation requires a comprehensive cross-sectoral solution anchored in public support. Pathway 1 seeks a shift in societal norms and perceptions based on increased and widespread awareness of the need for, and the social, economic and environmental benefits of, ecosystem restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean. The ultimate goal is to place ecosystem restoration at the core of its socio-economic recovery and transition towards sustainability through participative engagement.

To achieve this, it is necessary to increase the amount of information and its availability to all elements of society regarding the importance of restoring the region's natural capital, the needs and opportunities associated with ecosystem restoration, and the benefits to society. It is expected that this improved awareness will result in stakeholder's-initiated calls for action to divest from activities and businesses that degrade the remnant ecosystems and invest in sustainable ones. This pathway address barrier 1 (Limited awareness across society about the positive role of healthy ecosystems) and lays the foundation through public support to address barriers 2 (insufficient investment by policy makers), 3 (scarcity of legislative and policy mechanisms specific for ecosystem restoration), 4 (insufficient financial resources) and 6 (limited investment in scientific research).

The objective is that by 2030, ecosystem restoration will be a widely understood and appreciated concept in Latin America and the Caribbean, associated with health, well-being, prosperity, and a connection with nature. This should translate in ecosystem restoration actions initiated by both civil society and local and sub-national government agencies throughout the region, and undertaken in rural and urban settings, at all spatial scales, and stemming from a cultural shift of reconnection with nature and from an intergenerational commitment that positively involves all stakeholders.

To achieve this objective, the following voluntary actions are proposed.

Action 1. Promoting and facilitating public awareness. As a starting point to facilitate a regional movement on ecosystem restoration, a toolkit based on the communication materials developed by the UN Decade but approved by countries and customized and adapted to the specific needs and conditions of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean will be developed. This toolkit will provide materials and guidelines for undertaking regional and national campaigns to increase awareness on the general public and all stakeholders on the importance of ecosystem restoration. It is particularly focused on urban dwellers whose lives are most removed from nature, but that represent most of the region's population. Such campaigns will focus primarily on: (a) young people (14-25 years old), (b) teachers and schoolchildren, (c) women, (d) mid- to high-level decision makers, (e) private sector, (f) indigenous peoples and local communities, (g) and subnational governments, as appropriate. Other sectors of society may be engaged, but at this point, these three are proposed as starting points.

These campaigns will also contribute to improve environmental awareness across the region (particularly on the contribution of nature to people, i.e., the link between ecosystem health and human health and the importance of healthy ecosystems (even distant ones like open seas) for human health, well-being, prosperity and economic development), and will help increasing general knowledge about ecosystem restoration.

In addition to the toolkit, strategic alliances with communication organizations and experts will be established, to create relevant content and choose the best outlets and dissemination channels in the region. Topics, activities and materials will be approved by the countries and once produced, the campaign materials will be available to the countries to adapt and tailor to their own needs and to disseminate and implement them internally according to their own priorities and capacity.

Action 2. Giving visibility to ecosystem restoration champions. This is a program to bestow public recognition to restoration leaders. Depending on the mobilization of funding, supporting donors and approval by the countries, a special award would be created and conferred at the meetings of the Forum of Ministers during the 2021-2030 period. The purpose is to provide visibility and stimulus to restoration community leaders. The awards would have different categories. Specific attention would be placed to groups such as: children, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities, local NGOs, the private sector and religious groups. The awardees would receive the title of restoration champions and would be invited to record communication materials that would be used in the public awareness campaigns described above.

Action 3. Bringing ecosystem restoration to schools. A basic curriculum on ecosystem restoration for different school levels (K-12) will be developed in collaboration with the

Environmental Training Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, Biodiversity Focal Points of the Forum of Ministers, and key strategic partners from the region. The basic curriculum shall also be approved by the countries. This curriculum will be designed to be easily adopted and adapted by schools across the region, and it will include education materials as well as guides for schoolyard restoration practical exercises to promote hands-on learning. In addition to fundamentals of ecosystem restoration, the course content will cover topics such as fundamental concepts of ecosystem ecology, ecosystem services, ecosystem's carrying capacity, the contribution of nature to people, the link between human health and ecosystem health, the role of all individuals in contributing to a healthy planet, sustainable ecosystem management and sustainable development.

Success along Pathway 1 would result in the following expected changes:

- ⇒ Ecosystem restoration becomes a widely understood and appreciated concept with a positive connotation.
- ⇒ The general public and decision makers (governmental and private) understand what ecosystem restoration is, are aware of the urgency to engage in ecosystem restoration and of the long-term benefits for society and the planet and promote and support ecosystem restoration.
- ⇒ Ecosystem restoration initiatives are spearheaded by leaders in all societal groups throughout the region, and their efforts are recognized and commended.
- ⇒ There is active community and private sector participation in ecosystem restoration initiatives.

Pathway 2. Political will to drive action.

This pathway will create the necessary conditions to promote political support and commitment to the restoration of degraded ecosystems in Latin America and the Caribbean. The objective is to facilitate improvements in legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks to reduce degradation of ecosystems and catalyze ecosystem restoration, focusing on the implementation of existing legislation and commitments such as national legal frameworks, NBSAPs and NDCs. This involves (a) providing decision makers with the necessary information and the tools to facilitate the incorporation of ecosystem restoration in public and private policy and (b) fostering regional dialogues across sectors, within and between governments, and with the private sector, on the most appropriate interventions that are necessary to halt ecosystem degradation and promote ecosystem restoration within each country.

Dialogues will be informed by commissioned studies, analyses and syntheses of innovative and alternative ecosystem restoration strategies, including on the cost effectiveness of ecosystem restoration in different terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems of the region, and on optimal ways to engage productive sectors (such as agroindustry, infrastructure and extractive industries) in ecosystem restoration as part of their transition to sustainability. It is expected that the dialogue and ensuing exchange among countries regarding policies, regulations, incentives, subsidies, lessons

learned, and good practices; will result in enhanced cooperation and joint work in the design of innovative instruments. This pathway addresses barriers 2 (insufficient investment by policy makers), 3 (scarcity of legislative and policy mechanisms specific for ecosystem restoration) and 4 (insufficient financial resources).

The first objective is that, by 2025, country leaders, their Ministers (Secretaries) of Environment, State, Finance, Agriculture, Fisheries, and other relevant areas, and leaders of regional and local governments, business, guilds and productive associations have access to information and tools to position Ecosystem Restoration as a relevant issue in national sustainable development programs and have access to information on funding and investment portfolios. This pathway will focus on providing technical assistance and information to promote changes in legal, regulatory, financial and public policy frameworks conducive to reducing stress on ecosystems and promote restoration of degraded ecosystems. It will also focus on promoting political inter-sectoral dialogue in search for common ground on the need to, and the benefits of, incorporating Ecosystem Restoration in development strategies.

A second objective is that by 2030, at least 50% of the countries in the region are in the process of integrating ecosystem restoration in regional and national development policies, plans and programs.

To achieve these voluntary objectives, the following actions are proposed.

Action 4. Building supporting materials for transformative leadership in ecosystem restoration. In the context of the Action Plan a series of commissioned studies selected and approved by the countries to inform decision makers across the region will be developed. These on the following topics:

- a. **The economy of ecosystem restoration in LAC.** During the first two years of implementation of this plan, and depending on available funding, a panel of experts will be chosen by the countries and established to conduct a suit of studies to assess the economic and social benefits and impacts of ecosystem restoration in the region. These studies should produce practical, relevant realistic and not mandatory recommendations on how to use ecosystem restoration to promote sustainable development and achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns. To strengthen the policy relevance of these studies, the approval from the countries and transparent methodologies that reflect the broad range of concerns shared by LAC countries regarding restoration will be required. This includes selecting and vetting a panel of experts through an inclusive selection process and ensuring a multidisciplinary composition. The panel will hold party-led consultations for approval of study topics and scope and for endorsement of potential summaries. These studies should consider the linkages between restoration activities and the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, in order to provide a

better understanding on how restoration policies could help LAC countries tackle the most pressing socioeconomic challenges of the region, such as poverty alleviation and generation of employment. Guide to alternative political, administrative, legislative and regulatory frameworks that could catalyze ecosystem restoration. This document will stem from an in-depth review and analysis of different model frameworks, and the requisite conditions for their voluntary applicability in national sustainable development, economic recovery, and territorial and sector planning. The analysis will consider principles of ecosystem-based adaptation, environmental risk reduction, and the contribution of nature to people. The resulting guide will explain the different mechanisms used in different countries, analyze the requirements for implementation, and make recommendations.

- b. **Guide to tested and innovative strategies for shifting investment.** This document will review and analyze the existing strategies for shifting investment towards sustainable projects. It will explain the context under which each strategy has been applied and the necessary conditions to implement each one, and the risks and benefits. Based on a series of workshops with focal points, it will assess and discuss the applicability to different LAC countries according to their predominant economies.
- c. **How-to guide for governments on formulating national or subnational Ecosystem Restoration Plans.** A process to facilitate cooperation and exchange of knowledge, best practices and lessons learned between countries in the region will be designed and implemented, aligned with National Ecosystem Assessments (NEAs) and with the NBSAPs. This process will lead to the development of a guide that will provide basic concepts, detailed information on the necessary steps for developing or revising national or subnational restoration plans, such as evaluating and prioritizing needs and opportunities for ecosystem restoration. It will also provide available tools for conducting baseline assessments, spatial prioritization, and strategic and operational planning, as well as guidance on establishing a national evaluation and monitoring program.
- d. **How-to guides for monitoring and evaluating Ecosystem Restoration Projects.** These documents will provide Latin American and Caribbean decision makers, government agencies, donors and investors with a list of criteria and some templates for evaluating the progress and impact of ecosystem restoration projects along ecological, social and economic dimensions. These documents will be based on existing initiatives, in particular those led by FAO, such as the System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring (SEPAL), among others. The intention is to promote tools that will assist countries in

investment prioritization and in discriminating among projects in national restoration accounting and reporting.

Action 5. Developing and implementing a regional strategy for innovative financing of ecosystem restoration initiatives. Based on the financing mechanisms developed in the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (such as the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, or the Restoration Seed Capital Facility), and taking into account the priorities and needs of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as relevant existing initiatives (like the Global Fund for Coral Reefs or Terra Match), a strategy for innovative financing of ecosystem restoration in LAC will be developed. The strategy will focus on the development of two main portfolios three main areas (described below) that can be used by countries in the region to expand their options for financing ecosystem restoration projects. It will seek to add value and integrate existing platforms and mechanisms, responding to the specific circumstances of the countries in the region.

- a. **Portfolio of investment opportunities in ecosystem restoration.** Through an online platform (available in four languages) ecosystem restoration initiatives will be able to present their projects, explain their objectives and accomplishments, convey their expected impact and communicate their funding needs. This portfolio will be presented and advertised to potential donors and investors through different mechanisms, as well as in the context of a Regional Ecosystem Restoration Portfolio Roundtable (described below). Special attention will be given to the identification and facilitation of investments in large-scale ecosystem restoration initiatives.
- b. **Portfolio of innovative financing mechanisms for ecosystem restoration.** In partnership with the finance sector, new financing mechanisms will be developed to catalyze investment in ecosystem restoration. Such mechanisms may involve global and local impact funds, microfinance, credit lines in banks, payment incentive schemes, public private partnerships, state budget lines (national and sub-national) and official development assistance projects. It will build upon the experience and solutions developed by initiatives such as Microfinance for Ecosystem Based Adaptation or BIOFIN. Bankable business plans and value chains that facilitate ecosystem restoration will also be developed and supported.
- c. **Round Table of Investment Portfolios for Ecosystem Restoration.** Depending on the mobilization of funds and the engagement of strategic partners, it is proposed to hold a meeting that will bring investors, donors, financial institutions and international cooperation agencies together with government representatives, large-scale ecosystem restoration project developers and leaders, as well as key international restoration experts, to discuss investment and financing options for the region. The round tables will be also an opportunity to organize special sessions for ecosystem restoration entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Action 6. Promoting and facilitating a regional dialogue. Mechanisms to promote and facilitate a regional conversation and high-level discussions about ecosystem restoration.

- a. **High level events.** To promote political engagement, five high level events to discuss about progress and impact of ecosystem restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean will be organized during the 2022-2030 period. These events (which, if so decided by the countries could be included in the agenda of the meetings of the Forum of Ministers), will be designed for Ministers of Environment to have peer-to-peer discussions about ecosystem restoration policies, initiatives and challenges in the region, as well as developing capacities in mainstreaming biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services into sectoral development planning. Dialogue with other leaders from public and private sectors will be considered as part of these events. A methodological guide to replicate these events at the national level will be produced. The intention is that governments and organizations across the region have access to a standardized format to hold their own high-level events, making it possible to share notes, recommendations, agreements, commitments and conclusions between these events as part of a region-wide and ongoing conversation.

- b. **TED-ER talks.** A series of periodically scheduled short talks (15 min) modeled after the TED talks. The “-ER” suffix stands for ecosystem restoration. They would differ from standard TED talk format in that it allows for a Q&A session afterwards allowing clarification and discussion. These talks would focus on topics of interest to LAC countries regarding ecosystem restoration, followed by 30-40 minutes of questions and answers by the audience. International and regional experts on specific topics would be invited to explain a concept a challenging issue related to restoration, or propose a new idea, or present a successful project in ecosystem restoration. These would be conducted on a virtual platform and recorded, archived, and posted online afterwards. Countries could submit proposals or requests for topics to be addressed. Presentations of successful projects would follow a standard format to ensure that all three dimensions of the projects (ecological, social and economic) are covered.

Success along this pathway will result in the following expected voluntary changes:

- ⇒ New or updated National Restoration Plans, in accordance with national capacities and circumstances, and explicit strategies for financing and ensuring a long-term sustainability of the initiatives, as well as coordination between biodiversity and climate co-benefits.
- ⇒ New economic approaches that foster sustainable economies and productive systems, create jobs and reduce their environmental footprint.
- ⇒ Explicit policies that regulate what is acceptable as a restorative action, and thus eligible to be considered towards national goals or incentives.

- ⇒ New or revised legal structures that create incentives for ecosystem restoration and disincentives for ecosystem degradation.
- ⇒ Increased investment in ecosystem restoration for large, medium and small-scale projects.

Pathway 3. Technical capacity for developing and implementing solutions.

Designing, implementing and sustaining large-scale ecosystem restoration projects requires site-specific relevant knowledge. This involves, in first place, the capacity for ecosystem restoration planning that optimizes needs and opportunities. This needs baseline ecological, social and economic information such as, but not limited to, ecosystem distribution and degradation status, land tenure, land use and land change, and existing and projected infrastructure. In second place, technical capacity is required to design methods to implement sustainable projects in complex socio-economic landscapes and to generate scientifically-based and tested techniques and protocols that are enriched with indigenous and traditional land stewardship knowledge, and informed by long-term monitoring of restoration projects, and that allow upscaling ecosystem restoration regionally. In third place, it requires careful operational planning to manage the complexity of an interdisciplinary project. Finally, technical capacity is required to design and implement evaluation and monitoring tools at the project and national level, to allow countries to track their progress relative to baseline information and improve and adapt to more effective techniques.

To increase a country's technical capacity it is necessary to (a) create training structures for different stakeholder types, from restoration practitioners, to decision makers, to the public in general; (b) strengthen, support and empower the scientific community responsible for generating locally relevant information that addresses the country's needs; and (c) create new platforms to facilitate the generation of this scientific information, its dissemination and application to decision making. This pathway addresses Barriers 5 (limited technical capacity) and 6 (limited investment in scientific research).

Thus, actions along this pathway will focus on (a) supporting the generation of scientific information, (b) supporting information management and systematization, exchange and transference, (c) promoting the technical training of a new generation of professionals and technicians that participate in the design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of ecosystem restoration projects and programs. In particular, this pathway will focus on equalizing technical capacity across the region by leveraging installed capacities in countries with longer experience in ecosystem restoration. It will also focus on non-forested ecosystems, and in particular fresh water and marine ecosystems.

The objective is that by 2025 there is (a) an information management structure that allows for generation, dissemination, synthesis and exchange of scientific, technical and traditional knowledge as appropriate on ecosystem restoration and (b) a platform to facilitate formal and non-formal training for different stakeholders at technical and professional levels.

A second objective is that by 2030, there is (a) a critical mass of researchers conducting long-term research on ecological, social and economic aspects of ecosystem restoration, (b) a significant body of ecosystem restoration know-how supported by scientific research and traditional knowledge as appropriate, (c) a vibrant network of practitioners in all ecosystems, that are capable of designing, implementing, evaluating and monitoring ecosystem restoration projects at all spatial scales, following clear best-practice principles and (d) effective mechanisms for transferring knowledge to inform regulation, motivate business practice and foster adoption of best practice.

To achieve these objectives, the following actions are proposed.

Action 7. Assessing and identifying opportunities for investment in long-term scientific research in ecosystem restoration. The objective of this assessment is to identify best practices, modalities, institutional arrangements for resource mobilization and investment in long-term research in ecosystem restoration, that can be used by science ministries and research and development institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. The assessment will also look into different models used worldwide that can be adapted to the specific conditions of the countries in the region. The goal is to assist countries in the development of their internal capacity to invest on research projects that address national information needs on ecosystem restoration, as well as to develop capacities in the private sector for a greater understanding of the opportunities of restoration in the context of corporate strategies to achieve financial return, social responsibility, and/or environmental performance.

Action 8. Ensuring regional access to knowledge in ecosystem restoration. This is an information facility designed to manage information on ecosystem restoration and promote its dissemination and knowledge exchange. It will be based on a policy of open access and will use emerging solutions and technologies from UNEP's digital transformation strategy, including data mining and analysis tools. The platform will enable access to several types of information, such as, but not restricted to: (a) data generated by scientific research and monitoring programs; (b) photographic records of projects - images of before-and-after intervention and along the life of a project are highly valuable records that cannot be reflected in numeric databases or narratives, and may be re-used for further research; (c) scientific publications and reports- this component will operate as a reference library on research conducted in the region and allow document downloading; (d) documents based on traditional knowledge, as made available by (or with the free, prior and informed consent) of indigenous peoples and local communities, in particular those that describe their ecosystem restoration and species propagation experience and techniques. In the development of this platform special attention will be given to the identification of existing solutions that could be adapted or that could provide the main functionalities to cater for the needs regarding access to technical information on ecosystem restoration in the region.

Action 9. Promoting collaboration for scientific analysis and synthesis in Ecosystem Restoration. During the first year of implementation of this Action Plan, a series of meetings with leading biodiversity research centers in the region will be convened to agree on collaboration modalities to create a virtual environment to monitor and analyze patterns and trends of ecosystem restoration and conservation in the region. This collaborative environment will operate as a regional think tank based on open science principles, facilitating the participation of experts and research groups in the production of documents that distil available information, draw general conclusions supported by the evidence and make practical recommendations. This mechanism will allow scientists in ecosystem restoration from the LAC region, to work with professionals in the social and economic sciences, managers and implementers, and with support from guest international experts. The objective of this initiative that the Forum of Ministers as well as key stakeholders have access to the scientific information needed to inform policy and decision making in the region. UNEP will work with science and research partners in the region as well as other strategic partners, to design the modalities and mobilize the funding needed to initiate the activities of the collaborative and voluntary environment around the preparation of high-level scientific analysis such as ecosystem restoration opportunity maps for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Action 10. Training professionals in ecosystem restoration. In collaboration with universities from the region and abroad, a series of training curricula that follow a training sequence will be designed. This platform will contain two levels, one at the technical level for technicians and operators that are responsible for day-to-day project implementation and field tasks, and another for professionals that will be responsible for designing, supervising, evaluating and monitoring projects. These programs would have a modular structure and be comprised of formal and non-formal courses that are already available at different institutions or that are created as stand-alone events. Distance learning will be promoted to reduce costs and improve accessibility. UNEP, and other agencies, produces a vast number of guidelines and experience documents which can be transformed into online learning resources. In the short term, a MOOC (Massive Open On-line Course) available in Spanish, English, Portuguese and French, will be produced, as a “signature virtual classroom” which can contribute to the professional and educational development of students and organizations. UNEP will mobilize the funding necessary to pay the costs of this training initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Success along this pathway will result in the following expected changes:

- ⇒ Scientific research on ecosystem restoration is actively supported, and results are published and well disseminated.
- ⇒ There is available scientific information on ecological, social and economic methods and approaches for ecosystem restoration for most ecosystems in the region.

- ⇒ Information is accessible to researchers, professionals, technicians and anyone interested.
- ⇒ Programs and decisions are based on the best scientific knowledge available, which synthesizes and integrates knowledge produced regionally and elsewhere.
- ⇒ A new generation of professionals and technicians are trained on methods, techniques, and best practices for designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating ecosystem restoration projects.

IV. Implementation Mechanisms.

General approach

UNEP's Office for Latin America and the Caribbean will serve as the Secretary for this Action Plan together with FAO as co-lead agencies for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The Working Group on Biodiversity of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean will steer, guide and oversee the implementation of this Action Plan. This will ensure that Member States are fully involved in the planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of the activities and initiatives under the Action Plan. Progress reports on the implementation of the plan will be presented at the official meetings of the Forum of Ministers. Such reports, which will be prepared by the Secretariat and approved by the Member States in the region, will also be presented to the Secretariat of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to inform about region-wide outcomes and outputs contributing to the Decade.

Once approved, the Secretariat will use this Action Plan to prepare a project document that will be presented to donors as to ensure that the general activities of the Plan can be implemented. Specific actions proposed in the Plan will be converted into child projects. This modular approach gives flexibility to the options and modalities for the implementation of the Plan.

Member States in the region will set the priorities for the implementation of the Action Plan. The Secretariat will ensure that the implementation effectively adds value, is participative and delivers according to the needs and priorities of the countries. It will avoid any kind of duplications, it will promote synergies and region-wide cooperation, and it will not add burdens regarding reporting (or of any other kind) to the countries.

Participation of the countries in the activities of the Action Plan, and in the use of the products and services provided by this plan will be voluntary and will be adapted to the specific conditions of each country.

The Action Plan will also foster strategic partnerships relevant for Latin America and the Caribbean, and according to the guidelines of the Partnership Framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Support to the development of specific ecosystem restoration projects

In addition to the actions towards the development of cooperation mechanisms and enabling conditions at the regional level, this Action Plan will also seek to support the development of ecosystem restoration projects across the region, especially at the subregional level in transboundary biomes or ecoregions. As requested by Barbados, in their role as Presidency of the XXI Forum of Ministers of Environment, the overall approach is to translate the framework into project proposals to help mobilizing large-scale investments for ambitious ecosystem restoration

projects, such as for instance a large-scale project to restore coral reefs in the Caribbean. Such projects should aim at attracting development and commercial banks, international cooperation agencies, and other potential donors, interested in working with governments in supporting these ecosystem restoration and recovery initiatives.

Such projects might follow the structure and approach proposed by Barbados:

Component 1. Voluntary identification of Target Areas for Ecosystem restoration

⇒ **Component 2. Support by UNEA for restoration areas identified voluntarily by each country.** For each of the identified areas an Implementation Plan will be prepared, with suggestions, as appropriate outlining policies and plans to prevent ecosystem degradation, in line with national laws, capacities and priorities.

Countries might consider the following criteria, when voluntarily defining the identified areas

- The importance of the ecosystem approach for the integrated and sustainable management of land, water and living resources and the need to step up efforts to tackle desertification, land degradation, erosion and drought, biodiversity loss water scarcity, climate change, and agricultural productivity and food production, which are seen as major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development, in accordance with national circumstances, capacities and priorities.
- The contribution to the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as appropriate.
- The need for collective efforts to promote sustainable development in the following dimensions—innovative, integrated, coordinated, environmentally sound, open and shared approaches.
- Achievement of the several targets related to ecosystem restoration contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strategies for achieving them.
- The role of ecosystem restoration in climate change adaptation and its co-benefits for mitigation, in accordance with the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement.
- The presence of social, cultural, administrative, productive, and economic conditions that favour the implementation of restoration actions.

Component 3. Development of alternative livelihood strategies for maintaining, creating, and improving livelihood opportunities in each of the identified ecosystem areas by Member States in the region: To build on and reinforce existing restoration initiatives to scale up good practices.

Attention will be provided to those initiatives developed by indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as projects that are co-developed by actors such as governments, non-governmental institutions, academy, local communities, private sector, and ongoing projects with long histories on restoration action, as appropriate.

Component 4. Increasing the adaptive capacity of the Identified Ecosystems through mainstream ecosystem restoration into policies and plans to address current national, regional, sub-regional and hemispheric development priorities and challenges: To facilitate synergies and a holistic view of how to achieve international commitments and national priorities through the restoration of ecosystems. To increase the appropriation of restoration projects by local communities, in order to enhance restoration impact and facilitate its endurance for the long-term.

⇒ **Component 5.** Building Capacity including Financial Support, Promotion of Scientific Research and Regional Cooperation for ecosystem restoration at the local, national, regional, sub-regional and hemispheric levels:

- To support financially Latin America and the Caribbean countries
- To promote the sharing of experiences and good practices in ecosystem conservation and restoration.
- Development of a Knowledge Platform.
- Development of financing mechanisms dedicated to ecosystem restoration for the long-term, and better engagement of the private sector, the academy, and indigenous peoples and local communities in restoration initiatives, at the national and regional level.
- Documenting and incorporating local knowledge on restoration actions.

V. Financial mechanisms

Implementation of this Action Plan for the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean will require financial resources both for the regional initiatives detailed here as well as for the activities carried out by each country.

The Secretary of the Action Plan will formulate a proposal (or proposals) to seek funds to implement the activities described in this Action Plan. As part of the implementation, it is envisioned the identification of mechanisms to facilitate access to financial and other resources to catalyze access by the countries to untapped funding sources, so that they can implement their national activities. In particular, efforts to implement this Action Plan will seek to leverage public finance and unlock large scale private capital by strategically mobilizing international environmental funds such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) as well as different types of private investors.

A zero draft of the resource mobilization strategy will be developed with the support and guidance of the Working Group on Biodiversity and will be presented at the next intersessional meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment. The strategy will be formulated acknowledging the need for resources to scale up ecosystem restoration initiatives across and recognizing the common but differentiated responsibilities of Member States, and the role of developed countries in supporting the financial national efforts of developing countries to implement these actions, as stated in Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration of 1992. Financing options must include clear social and environmental safeguards, including with regards to protecting native biodiversity and ecological processes.

VI. Appendices

Appendix 1. The role of Ecosystem Restoration to achieve the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

Large-scale ecosystem degradation, transformation and loss affect earth's life support system. Large scale changes in biogeochemical cycles affect water availability, soil fertility, atmospheric composition, and climate regulation mechanisms (carbon sinks, evapotranspiration dynamics and atmospheric rivers) (Rockström et al. 2009, IPBES 2018a). Worldwide, forest and wetland loss continues on a net loss trend (FAO & UNEP 2020) increasingly jeopardizing the sustainability of life on earth. Furthermore, 14 of the 18 categories of ecosystem services recently analyzed by IPBES have a negative trend over the last 50 years (IPBES 2019b). Consequently, the current state of natural ecosystems is such that land degradation is already affecting negatively 3.2 billion people (over 1/3 of the global population) (UNEP & FAO 2020).

Ecological restoration has been recognized as critical to maintain or recover biodiversity, natural capital, and human wellbeing (Costanza et al. 1997, Aronson et al. 2007, Blignaut et al. 2014) in both marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Furthermore, available evidence shows that it is possible to halt and reverse the current degradation trends by scaling up restoration and conservation efforts and an overall transitioning towards sustainability (CBD 2020). Therefore, there is hope of achieving well conserved land and aquatic ecosystems that sustain life and provide services such as clean water, climate and disease outbreak control. In other words, the end result should be one where humans ensure the health of ecosystems and ecosystems support healthy human life.

The United Nations General Assembly has acknowledged that the current Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved unless a significant effort is made to halt and reverse marine and terrestrial ecosystem degradation (UNGA 2019). Most importantly, it recognizes that Ecosystem Restoration will contribute significantly to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, i.e., it will "support Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15) by enhancing the quality and area of habitats for wildlife" which "... will in turn help societies mitigate and adapt to climate change (SDG 13), improve the health of societies in rural and urban environments (SDGs 3, 11), and increase the supplies of clean water (SDG 6) and sustainable food (SDG 2, 12). Investments in restoration that adhere to principles of gender equality and restorative justice will also provide and improve: work opportunities and income streams (SDGs 1, 5, 8, 10, 16); and cross-sectoral collaboration, learning and innovation on the use of ecosystem goods and services (SDGs 4, 7, 9, 17)" (UNEP & FAO 2020).

The transition towards sustainable pathways requires a significant effort on conservation and restoration of ecosystems with a concerted and integrative cross-sectoral effort (World Economic Forum 2020). In the last decade, ambitious goals have been established throughout the world. Noteworthy is the Bonn Challenge, where more than 30 countries, including 13 from the Americas, committed to restore 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded lands by 2020

(including 44.9 million hectares in the Americas), and 350 million hectares by 2030 (Sizer et al. 2015, Seixas et al. 2018).

In this context, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021-2030 as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNGA 2019). The aim is to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems worldwide. The rationale is that ecosystems support all life on Earth, and that support is only possible if ecosystems retain or recover their health (UNEP 2015), i.e., their capacity to maintain over time their composition, processes and services (Costanza & Mageau 1999).

The UN's strategy for the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration is a call to Member States to scale up existing ecosystem restoration efforts, raise awareness of the importance of restoration, and build synergies between different economic sectors, urban development, and conservation and restoration initiatives. More specifically, it asks that Member States "...foster political will, mobilize resources, build capacities, mainstream ecosystem restoration into national policies and plans, implement plans to protect and restore ecosystems, and undertake collaborative scientific research..."

The actions proposed as part of the UN's Strategy for the Decade in Ecosystem Restoration will not happen on a vacuum. Rather, they aim to contribute to meeting targets established by the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, the UNCCD's Land Degradation Neutrality Program, the Bonn Challenge and UNREDD+, as well as CBD's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Simultaneous with the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, three other new complementary initiatives are taking place: The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028) and the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018–2028). The actions proposed also build upon expertise emanated from a growing community of scientists and practitioners in Ecosystem Restoration and from many member countries that have been making big strides in learning how to halt degradation and catalyze restoration. Finally, a number of international stakeholders are already committed to contribute to the success of this international initiative, e.g., the Rio Convention Secretariats, the Regional Seas Convention Secretariats, IUCN, UNESCO, the Global Landscapes Forum, the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, the World Resources Institute, and UNDP (UNEP & FAO 2020).

[Appendix 2. An overview to Ecosystems Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean: progress and potential](#)

Latin America and the Caribbean is a highly diverse region, biologically, geographically, politically, socially and culturally. Seven of the most biodiverse countries in the world are in the LAC region (IPBES 2018a), which is collectively comprised of 14 units of analysis (terrestrial biomes) that span from the northern temperate in Mexico to the austral forests of Patagonia, and from sea bottom to unique and extremely endemic high-elevation tropical ecosystems in the Andes and Guiana shield. A quarter of the world's forests and 40% of the Earth's known biodiversity are contained in South

America, as well as the large extensions of the most diverse wetland and temperate grasslands. The Caribbean is home to 12% of the world's mangroves and 10% of the coral reefs, with 90% endemism levels (UNEP-WCMC 2016). Chile and Peru are among the top ten fish capture producers, with 3% and 8% of the world's total respectively (FAO 2020). The region also supports a human population of over 626 million (in 2015), highly concentrated in cities (80%) and with an increasing urbanization trend (UNEP 2016) that is likely to increase the demand of water and energy by 25% and 50% respectively by 2030 (Quiroga et al. 2016).

Although 20.3% of the terrestrial and marine areas are under protection, the region's natural ecosystems continue to be transformed by degradation or replacement (UNEP 2016). Transformation into human dominated landscapes has occurred in 66% and 72% of Caribbean and Central America dry forest respectively, 88% of the Atlantic tropical forest, 70% of the Rio de La Plata grasslands, 50% of tropical savanna (Cerrado) and Mediterranean forest, 15% of Mediterranean forest, 17% of the Amazon forest (IPBES 2018a), 40% of the mangroves (Valiela et al. 2001) and 66% of the coral reefs (Quiroga et al. 2016). It has been estimated that by the end of the 20th century, forest cover in the region was already below 50% (UNCCD 2019).

Although South America's rate of net forest loss decreased by about half during the 2010-2020 (relative to the previous decade), forest area in the region is still declining, with a net loss of 2.6 million hectares of forest every year in the 2010-2020 period (FAO & UNEP 2020). The exception to this downward trend is the Caribbean, where forests increased by 45% in the last 30 years, mostly due to natural regeneration after agricultural abandonment following a transition to a tourism-based economy (UNCCD 2019). Marine and coastal ecosystems have been significantly affected as well, with only 10% coral reef remaining, and a significant loss of sea grass beds and mangroves (IPBES 2018a). Negative trends in these ecosystems are largely linked with direct exploitation (IPBES 2019b).

In spite of advances in delimitation and conservation of protected areas (CBD 2020), the high levels of loss and degradation impose a heavy burden on LAC economies (e.g., growing environmental debt on Natural Capital) and competitiveness (e.g., missed innovative business opportunities and environmental investment) (Quiroga et al. 2016). Ecosystem degradation also reduces resilience to extreme climate events. For example, mangroves and coral reefs protect beaches from erosion and infrastructure damage that result from high energy events (i.e., hurricanes and tropical storms). The frequency and intensity of these events have increased in the last few decades, causing severe beach erosion and economic loss in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean (UNEP/GPA 2003, Paneque & Finkl 2020 and references therein).

Ecosystem degradation reduces Nature's Contribution to People (NCP) represented in ecosystems goods and services and human health and quality of life through non-material contributions and environmental regulation (IPBES 2019a). Ecosystem restoration, in turn, has been demonstrated to revert some of the negative impacts of nature's degradation (Gann et al. 2019). Restoring terrestrial ecosystem areas and connecting corridors promote the maintenance of species in multiple-use

landscapes and the potential for adaptation of natural ecosystems, because corridors allow species migration across the landscape and improves their resilience to climate change (Robillard et al. 2015). Ecosystem restoration at the scale of the landscape may include urban or sub-urban settlements. In Colombia, for example, the Medellín Green Belt project's seeks to restore landscape connectivity through ravine restoration and eventually support native biodiversity and improve quality of life, while ensuring that urban centers enjoy better water availability and a closer connection of people to nature (Patiño & Mirallesi Garcia 2015).

Ecosystem restoration is also essential to preventing and mitigating the impacts of climate change and to increase resiliency after extreme climatic events. Mangrove restoration is an ecosystem-based approach to reduce beach erosion and protect coastal areas, especially estuaries, from extreme weather events (Barbier 2016, Huxham et al. 2017). The interest in recovering historical ecosystems is implicit; however, it is pertinent to note that we must consider that climate change is one of the major drivers of biodiversity loss and create new environmental conditions, where current species and ecosystems may not find optimal conditions.

The link between human health and ecosystem health is well demonstrated, and the evidence is mounting. Aside from the more obvious effects of extreme climatic events on human health, a wide range of health conditions, such as allergies and immune disorders, emerging zoonoses (diseases that cross from animals to humans, as suspected with SARS-CoV2), and mental health disorders, have been linked to environmental degradation (Breed et al. 2020). As urbanization removes humans' bond to natural ecosystems and as ecosystems degrade, threats to human health will only accumulate, with their concomitant reduction in quality of life, loss of lives and negative economic impacts. Restoring ecosystems restores and secures human well-being, including that of urban dwellers. In Brazil, for example, the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve, which started with a community-based fish population restoration, has resulted in a significantly improved quality of life that includes improvement in health parameters (Moura et al. 2012, Peralta & Lima 2013). Furthermore, the GEO-6 overarching theme "Healthy Planet-Healthy People" recognized the merit of this connection (UNEP 2016).

While starting and scaling up ecosystem restoration is challenging for the region, it also opens many opportunities beyond the recovery of species and ecosystem attributes and services. In the LAC region, many countries have moved forward with the elaboration of their national REDD+ Strategies and the corresponding analysis of the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. For example, Ecosystem Restoration programs begin with an analysis of the factors that contribute to the degradation in the first place. This analysis is conducive to addressing baseline societal and economic issues (Gann et al. 2019, Ceccon et al. 2020). An effort to restore arid zones in Patagonia, for example, Argentina has initiated a process to consolidate sustainable productive units that aim to resolve the drivers of the initial arid zone degradation and provide ecological literacy to the local community (Busso & Pérez 2018).

Community engagement is among the key foundations of restoration success. Community-based restoration and management not only improve ecosystem services and benefits but is integral to income security and increasing social capital (Jacobs et al. 2015). In Colombia, for instance, ecosystem restoration engages local communities that include indigenous peoples, rural communities (recently involving also reintegrated FARC ex-combatants), academics, and government agencies in a collective development of ecosystem restoration in a productive landscape (Ceccon et al. 2020). Two of its goals are to “facilitate the social understanding of the meaning of ecological restoration and its ecological, human, socio-economic, and cultural values” and to “promote a collective learning process about basic concepts of ecology related to environmental problems in rural communities”.

Finally, in light of the undeniable severe effects on society and the global economy, ecosystem restoration rises as an alternative of hope, in the post-CoVid19 recovery phase. Ecosystem restoration provides excellent opportunities to quickly reactivate local economies through new jobs that may evolve as ecosystems develop and project stewardship and management needs change. In the US, for example, restoration supports on average 33 direct jobs per \$1 million invested, which exceed by 6 the oil and gas industry with 5.2 jobs per \$1 million invested (BenDor et al. 2015a, BenDor et al. 2015b); in Ghana, it is estimated that restoring 2 million hectares by 2030 will create about 89,000 jobs (Dave et al. 2019).

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Decision 5

Environmental Information Integrated System

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation participating in the XXII meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

WHEREAS Decision 1 of the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment (Cartagena - Colombia, 2016) introduces a revision of the Latin American and the Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) to strengthen its fundamental role in positioning sustainable development as one of the main priorities in the region, to facilitate the integration of social, economic and environmental dimensions at different levels, from local to national and regional, as well as to serve as a regional platform for the implementation of global agreements on sustainable development;

WHEREAS Decision 2 of the XX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment (Cartagena - Colombia, 2016) recognizes that among the objectives of the ILAC is the periodic evaluation of the progress made by the region in its transition towards sustainability, in particular through the adoption and implementation of a common framework of indicators of sustainability that takes into account the social, economic, environmental, legal and political conditions of each country;

WHEREAS Decision 3 and Decision 4 of the Declaration of the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment (Buenos Aires - Argentina, 2018),, request the Working Group on Environmental Indicators to support the review of the priority themes of the ILAC, as well as the definition and documentation of environmental indicators relevant to the region, harmonized with the Sustainable Development Goals as well as drawing the attention of countries to the importance of developing and sustaining systems for the production, analysis and dissemination of environmental information, including primary and geospatial data, statistics and indicators that satisfy regional reporting and monitoring frameworks, providing support and articulating with the ILAC Working Group on Environmental Indicators;

WHEREAS at the Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Bridgetown - Barbados, 2019), the Secretariat presented a proposal to establish an Environmental Data and Information framework to strengthen the science-policy interface of Latin America and the Caribbean;

WHEREAS the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (Bridgetown - Barbados, 2019) call for the need to support the development and maintenance of an Environmental Data and Information Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean that facilitates the monitoring and dissemination of information on the implementation of relevant programmes for the region;

Decide:

1. To **promote** the development and establishment of an Integrated Environmental Information System to strengthen the science-policy interface of Latin America and the Caribbean and to support monitoring of the implementation of the environmental dimension of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Integrated Environmental Information System will be fed with relevant data, statistics, assessments, and reports produced by countries of the region and supplemented by global data and information;
2. To **ask** the Secretariat to liaise with countries, UN agencies funds and programmes and relevant scientific organizations to develop a Party-led biennial report on the State of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean, supported by information integrated through an Open Data, Information and Knowledge Platform, with emphasis on the use of indicators produced by countries to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the ILAC initiatives, and taking into account Latin America and the Caribbean's differentiated capacities and gaps;
3. To **support** strengthening of technical capacity in government institutions, such as Ministries of Environment and National Institutes of Statistics for the production and dissemination of reliable and relevant statistics and information for decision and policy making. These activities should be conducted in close coordination with UN system and regional organizations, including the voluntary participation of ILAC countries for the feeding and use of the Integrated Environmental Information System, and giving special consideration, including financial support, to those countries in the region suffering from data constraints.

Decision 6:

The Environmental Dimension of Emergencies and Crises - A Critical Issue to Address to Facilitate Sustainable Development

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation participating at the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Recognising the diversity of crises affecting the region, including those caused by natural and environmental hazards, by the insufficient land-use planning, by human activities, industrial and chemical accidents, social conflicts, among others; and, that all of these have environmental implications of interest for the Forum of Ministers.

Bearing in mind that Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most disaster-prone region on the planet, with 152 million people affected by 1,205 crises between 2000 and 2019²¹. In the same period in the region, floods were the most common phenomenon; there were also 23 category 5 hurricanes during that time and an average of 17 hurricanes per year; in addition, during that period, 20 earthquakes of magnitude 7.0 or higher²² occurred. At the same time, other phenomena such as wildfires and extreme droughts have increased recently, both in frequency and magnitude, and have caused significant damage to the environment, causing social and economic impacts, and negative effects on the health of the population.

Recalling that industrial and chemical accidents in the region have included agrochemical spills²³, chemical fires²⁴, landfill fires, oil spills, contamination with heavy metals and potentially dangerous substances and the effects of unstable and compromised dams, both hydroelectric and tailings dams²⁵.

Recalling that as developing economies Latin American and Caribbean countries have specific needs with regard to funding, capacity building and transfer of technology to build resilience to the environmental dimensions of emergencies and crisis;

Noting with concern the effects caused by violent natural phenomena such as hurricanes and earthquakes, which in the region have led to major pollution events²⁶ due to waste generated during crisis situations²⁷ which has affected natural resources. This crisis waste has increased human exposure to hazardous substances that affect human health, leave long-term environmental legacies, and threaten the progress made towards the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. These and other environmental dimensions of crises also affect the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Minamata Convention, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, the United Nations Convention

²¹ <https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/01/1467501>

²² https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA-DESASTRES_NATURALES_ESP%20%281%29.pdf

²³ <https://www.eecentre.org/resources/un-environment-ocha-joint-unit-jeu-environmental-assessment-of-river-contamination-in-guatemala>

²⁴ <https://www.eecentre.org/resources/mission-report-paraguay-pcb-fire>

²⁵ <https://www.eecentre.org/2018/05/22/radio-story-on-colombia>

²⁶ <https://www.eecentre.org/resources/un-environment-ocha-joint-unit-mission-report-equador-earthquake/>

²⁷ <https://www.eecentre.org/resources/waste-management-mission-report-dominica/>

to Combat Desertification the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and its Paris Agreement.

Recognising that in Latin America and the Caribbean 80% of the population lives in urban areas; that there are also rural areas characterised by chronic poverty and areas that concentrate activities of industrial and chemical risk, which means that a large number of people are exposed to these types of risks. Likewise recognising that the region faces other scenarios such as the rise of zoonotic diseases, urban areas exposed to seismic and geotectonic threats, weather events such as El Niño – potentially exacerbated by climate change –, the degradation of ecosystems and their ecosystem services, and food insecurity with possible impacts on migration.

Considering that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, emergencies and crises were part of the environmental reality of most countries in the region, and that addressing these environmental dimensions is a key part of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and "leaving no one behind". The COVID-19 pandemic has also generated a negative impact in the region that adds to the existing social and environmental problems, causing a series of problems that are exacerbated, such as food insecurity, unemployment and extreme poverty.

Understanding that the environmental impacts²⁸ of crises further undermine the efforts of those affected, increasing their humanitarian needs and weakening their resilience, which implies that the time available for recovery is shorter. Also, noting how humanitarian crises and environmental degradation affect the most vulnerable people. For example, those most affected by humanitarian crises also depend significantly on the environment for livelihoods. Action must be taken proposing inclusive and sustainable recovery.

Noting with concern the deficiencies that the region presents in terms of the environmental dimensions of emergencies, related with mandate gaps at governmental level, different levels of development amongst countries, and funding, that limit the availability of resources to address such situations both on international cooperation on environmental issues and on the donors and humanitarian agencies.

Bearing in mind the adoption of the 2018 Buenos Aires Declaration highlighting that *"the region has suffered and continues to suffer environmental emergencies, including climate-related and other disasters caused by natural hazards, and industrial accidents, which impact the ability of countries to effectively pursue the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the ILAC "* and *"the importance to respond quickly to environmental emergencies with the support of United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant organisations, and commit to work on actions to reduce the risk of these events"*²⁹.

Identifying the existing weaknesses and capabilities among countries of the region in disaster risk management, incorporating a preventive approach and the environmental management, including intergovernmental agencies and technical excellence centres and

²⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/global-increase-climate-related-disasters.pdf>

²⁹ https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26515/BuenosAires_Declaration.pdf

the active network of members of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination System (UNDAC)³⁰.

Appreciating the support that the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU), provides to the countries in the region requesting assistance in environmental emergency preparedness and response and the different response missions that the JEU and the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean have undertaken in the region (more than 24 emergency response missions since 2008).

Recognising the work that UNEP has done with the aim of strengthening the humanitarian response system, also benefiting other UN agencies, in the integration of the environmental dimension in their responses. For instance, the management of environmental risks, mitigating the environmental impacts of displacement, and. Likewise recognising that disaster response provides an opportunity to improve current practices and build back with safer and more sustainable processes with the objective of addressing the root causes of crises.

Celebrating the inception of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean in early 2020, in which more than half of the countries in the region have focal points as their representatives, presenting an important achievement towards better preparedness to address the environmental dimensions of crises.

Thanking UNEP for leading the establishment of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean as a space with a lot of potential to address the environmental dimensions of any crisis situation in the region.

Decide

The Regional Network for Emergency and Environment Preparedness:

- 1. Request** UNEP as the Secretariat of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, and together with its focal points, to coordinate the development of the Network work plan for the period 2021 - 2022, identifying responsible actors, actions, work schedule, indicators, and necessary financial resources, as well as synergies with other regional and sub-regional programmes and initiatives. The plan should have as one of its objectives to strengthen the knowledge of natural hazards, prevention, preparedness and response to the environmental dimensions of emergencies based on the situations of the countries of the region, intergovernmental organisations and United Nations agencies, and covering the mandates of environment, health, civil protection and other sectors as appropriate.
- 2. Facilitate** and strengthen the activities, work and objectives of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, through the implementation of best practices, innovation, collaboration, and formalised partnerships.

³⁰ <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/coordination/un-disaster-assessment-and-coordination-undac>

3. **Promote** capacity-building, baseline assessments of status of environmental emergency systems in the region and research activities for members of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean and relevant actors in the region with regard to the environmental dimensions of emergencies;
4. **Ensure** that, in the implementation of the activities of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, efficiency, coordination, communication, participatory processes, and best practices are priorities, while avoiding duplication of efforts between this and other networks and programmes in the region. In addition, these actions must be monitored under a system of process and impact indicators;
5. **Highlight** the leadership and work carried out during the first period by the members of the Network and encourage them to maintain participation for the coming periods;
6. **Motivate** countries that have not yet nominated focal points to the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean to nominate their focal points on environmental and civil protection issues;

Synergies between mandates and spaces of environment and civil protection at the national level:

7. **Emphasise** the importance of developing or creating ways of working that generate synergies and direct coordination between environmental, health and civil protection mandates at the governmental level in accordance with national capabilities and circumstances and strengthen the mechanisms and capacities of staff currently assigned to such responsibilities;
8. **Strengthen** levels of synergy, as well as improve in coordination and capacity between legal frameworks and national ministries or agencies specifically addressing environment and civil protection.
9. **Explore** a closer integration between national environment, health and civil protection spheres in aspects related to disaster risk management and response to the environmental dimensions of emergencies and develop initiatives to provide this support, which may include joint planning for the environmental dimensions of all hazards and crises as appropriate.

Collaboration and coordination at multilateral and (sub)regional levels:

10. **Promote** access and exchange of information, knowledge, experiences and technical resources, as well as South-South cooperation, including possible bilateral and multilateral agreements, between Latin American and Caribbean countries on the environmental dimensions of emergencies and regional technical organisations and agencies specialising in issues related to the environmental dimension of crises;

11. **Identify**, emerging challenges and common national and regional objectives to work effectively on the environmental dimensions of emergencies;
12. **Collaborate** with other relevant multilateral organizations to facilitate the identification and mapping of needs for regional contingency plans to address the environmental dimension of crises and identify those plans that already exist, and support the development, and testing of new plans where necessary;
13. **Call on** donors, international cooperation organisations (both environmental and humanitarian) and humanitarian forums, for the inclusion of the environmental dimension in humanitarian assistance plans, their programmes, priorities, funding and technical support in a manner fully respectful of the independent nature of the mandates and legal regimes of each organisation and initiative.
14. **Call upon** donors and international cooperation actors coordinating post-disaster needs assessments of damage and loss to identify physical and economic impacts, damage and loss in environment and natural resources in all assessments and include this analysis and calculation as part of resource mobilisation efforts for recovery and reconstruction, aiming to build back better, when the affected country specifically requests environmental damage and loss to be assessed.

The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean:

15. **Encourage** the creation of spaces at future meetings of the Forum of Ministers and intersessional meetings to facilitate regional policy dialogues addressing environmental management, civil protection, and public health;
16. **Call on** UNEP to prioritise, continue and expand its support to the countries of the region on the environmental dimensions of emergencies and crises in the region and continue the work after UNEA5, as highlighted in the 2018 Buenos Aires declaration and in Decision 2 of the XXI Meeting of the 2018 Forum of Ministers;
17. **Request** UNEP in its role as secretariat of the Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, together with its focal points, to define areas of action that allow the development of tangible elements in emergency preparedness and response to the environmental dimension of crisis, such as documents, databases, maps, images, capacity building, among others;
18. **Request** UNEP to ensure, continue, maintain and expand support to countries in the region and other agencies of the United Nations system to prepare, respond and manage the environmental dimensions of emergencies and crises through its "Disasters and Conflicts" programme when the countries request it.
19. **Request** UNEP and Interagency Technical Committee agencies to support countries of the region in identifying gaps in the emergency management systems for the

environmental dimension of crises, competence-based capacity building, and the creation and maintenance of information management system on national capacities for emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Decision 7:

Promotion of Gender Equality in Environmental Management

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation participating in the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, meeting from January 18th to 19th, 2021:

Recalling that in the XXI Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Ministerial Declaration of Buenos Aires included for the first time, the consideration of the gender perspective as a relevant variable in public policies on environmental matters; and, that additionally, at the Intersessional Meeting in Barbados in November 2019, the creation of a Regional Working Group on Gender and Environment was approved.

Reaffirming that the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean constitutes a space that contributes to integrating the environmental dimension in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and its Sustainable Development Goals in our region.

Recognizing the gender perspective as a relevant variable that must be considered in the designing and implementing of public policies on environmental matters, addressing the inequalities that are observed today in the region and the challenges and opportunities that open up in the exchange of experiences on this issue, to advance in the compliance with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Noting that various studies have identified gaps for women and girls in the use of and access, control, and benefit to natural resources, as well as a set of negative differentiated impacts derived from their exploitation. This has meant historical conditions of vulnerability for a very important segment of the population.

Considering that the Convention on Biological Diversity; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants include Gender Action Plans; that the main vertical environmental funds also include policies and guidelines on gender equality and women's empowerment; and that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urges countries to achieve "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" across sectors (SDG 5).

Recognizing that gender mainstreaming is central to projects being financed by international environmental funding instruments such as the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund, and that both consider guidelines in the gender approach, which is applied to all its climate mitigation and adaptation activities.

Welcoming the adoption at the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, of the Enhanced Lima Work programme on gender and its gender action plan, which promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and encouraging Parties to promote their implementation.

Underlining that the latest UN Women studies have shown that COVID-19 has had differentiated and negative impacts on women and girls, which is related to the high burden of care that women already have in the region and that has increased by confinement measures.

Further noting that the May 2020 CARE+ and UN Women, LAC Rapid Gender Analysis for COVID-19³¹ report, also addressed several issues of significance to the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) including inter alia, water, sanitation, shelter and the issue of care in relation to natural resources.

Decide to:

1) **Recognize and value** women and girls as agents of change with differentiated needs, knowledge and contributions in the use, management and conservation of natural resources, climate action and sustainable development; as well as with differentiated and important roles in the management of biodiversity and the generation of ecosystem goods and services.

2) **Urge** all the countries of the region to develop affirmative actions within the framework of environmental public policies, that make it possible to make visible and value the women's contributions in sustainable development, as well as the existing gaps in access, use, control and benefit to natural resources and the negative impacts on women and girls, derived from the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. The following considerations, among others, are especially important:

(i) **The generation of information** disaggregated by sex.

(ii) The integration of **gender-sensitive approaches** in public policies, plans, programs, and projects for the environmental sector.

(iii) **Achieve a balance** in participation and decision-making mechanisms on environmental matters, both of operational organizations and of public institutions. Seek to have equitable representation of males and females in natural resource decision making and leadership at all levels.

(iv) **Policies that support the elimination of any legal or social barrier** and that promote the empowerment of women in environmental management, as a fundamental human right and prerequisites for achieving the sustainable development goals.

³¹<https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20americas/documentos/publicaciones/2020/05/enlac%20rga%20report%20english%20final%20junio2%201comprimido.pdf?la=en&vs=250>

(v) **Identify and address cultural or social norms** that restrict women's rights to be environmental managers or landowners and seek to remove these.

(vi) Access to **financing and capacity building** to promote actions to improve the livelihoods of women and girls.

(vii) **Increase access to and control** of natural, productive and heritage resources for women.

3) **Recognize** the initiatives carried out by the Gender and Environment Working Group of Latin America and the Caribbean.

4) **Approve** the continuity of the Group's operation, its terms of reference, as well as its Work Plan 2020 - 2022.

5) **Encourage UNEP with the support of the Interagency Technical Committee (ITC)** through the mechanism of the Forum of Ministers, to deliver targeted capacity development for Member States on socioeconomic and gender assessment, complementary to the environmental and social safeguards (ESS) process, which is a key requirement in accessing finance from environment vertical funds such as the Green Climate Fund.

6) **Assist** countries with the support of the ITC and through South-South Cooperation in strengthening their environmental statistical systems, where necessary, to include disaggregation of information by sex; given its importance to strengthening public policies and decision making, and in mobilising resources for environmental and sustainable development programmes and projects in LAC.

7) **Call** for the mainstreaming of the gender dimensions in the implementation of the decisions of the XXII Forum of Ministers of Environment LAC in the face of COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC).

8) **Recognizing** the importance of the use of an inclusive language it is proposed that this Forum be called the Forum of Ministers of the Environment (*distinction of feminine and masculine in the word Ministers in Spanish version*), seeking the congruence of these decisions from the use of language.

**2020 - 2021 Work Plan for the
Gender and Environment Workgroup of Latin America and the Caribbean
Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**
(3rd version. December 10th, 2020)

1. Introduction

During the XXI meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) held in Argentina in 2018, ministers discussed topics regarding pollution, decarbonisation, and sustainable use of natural resources, among others. The Ministerial Declaration of Buenos Aires (3rd page) includes for the first time the agreement:

“To consider the gender perspective as a significant variable for the development and implementation of public policies on environmental issues, considering the gaps that are present in the region today and the opportunities that arise from the exchange of experiences on this matter to meet the 2030 Agenda requirements and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

Later the 4th UN Environmental Assembly adopted in 2019 a decision to **promote gender equality, the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance** (UNEP/EA.4/RES.17, 2019). Additionally, during the Intercessional meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Barbados in November 2019, **the creation of a Gender and Environment Workgroup of a voluntary nature was approved**, with the mission of drafting a Work Plan on the subject, to be presented at the next Forum meeting. In line with these agreements, the responsibility of the group's Technical Secretariat and its convocation was assigned to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

As a first step of this initiative, in the second quarter of 2020, UNEP convened the Ministries of the Environment of LAC and their peers, interested in voluntarily become part of this Group, requested to delegate focal points, a call to which twelve (12) countries reply.

The first meeting of the group took place on July 30th, 2020 with the participation of two countries, Argentina, and Guatemala. As of November 2020, six sessions have been held with growing participation, currently having delegates from seven (7) nations: Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru, actively participating.

On a preliminary proposal prepared by UNEP, the delegates of these seven countries have provided feedback, adjusted and complemented a Work Plan for the period 2020 - 2022, with results and key deliverables to reduce the gaps for women and the environment in Latin America and Caribbean. The Plan consists of 4 focus areas, 6 main products, 19 indicators and 16 activities.

In the activity 5.1, the Group has preliminarily defined six (6) topics to be discussed during the next two years:

1. Women in environmental decision-making.
2. Access to water and sanitation and access and use of forest resources in a sustainable way.
3. Integration of the human rights approach and the gender perspective in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
4. Policies for the sustainable management of biodiversity.
5. Sustainable economy and bio entrepreneurship (economic empowerment).
6. Development of productive capacities and value chains of rural women.

Additionally, and in parallel, since 2019, UNEP has been preparing the document *“Gender and the environment: a preliminary analysis of gaps and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean”*, in which it identified important gaps, conclusions and preliminary recommendations for the region. This information is aimed at policy makers, government actors, stakeholders and international entities to better mainstream and implement comprehensive gender approaches in environmental legislation, project implementation and research.

The document also highlights the role of women in addressing environmental gaps, in 10 topics: (i) Right to land and women`s role in agriculture; (ii) Women in small scale mining; (iii) Women in fisheries; (iv) Women`s role defending environmental rights; (v) Disasters risk and climate change impacts; (vi) Sustainable consumption and production: waste management; (vii) Women in environmental decision-making; (viii) Access to water and sanitation; (ix) Access to clean cooking energy; and (x) Access to energy.

Among the conclusions of this study is that all these gaps are determined and exacerbated by traditional gender roles, which are often directly related to the division of labour by sex, the relationship and interaction of women with resources and interrelationships accepted between men and women. In addition, the document identifies several cross-cutting issues such as the climate change effects, differentiated impacts on health and gender violence. However, data gaps are generally persistent. The limited collection, dissemination and application of gender and environment statistics, even at the national level, affects the knowledge and ability of decision-makers to develop and adopt well-informed and effective policies and programs at all levels. Other possible existing gaps need more research to really understand the depth of the problem, such as the effects of poor sanitation systems, sustainable consumption and production patterns, the use of public transportation, access to food, nutrition and food security, and

differentiated vulnerability to polluted urban air, issues that have been shown to have different effects on women and men in regions such as Asia and Africa.

The 10 topics approach was from a gender perspective, including some positive examples from the region and recommendations from the Forum of Ministers of Environment. A draft document was presented during the intercessional meeting of the Forum in Bridgetown, Barbados, in the 5 – 6th of November of 2019, with the aim to introduce a comprehensive examination of the region and guide future national and regional efforts to tackle environmental problematic with an integrated gender approach.

This document has continued to be updated and improved in 2020, with the contributions and experiences of the countries that are part of the Gender and Environment Workgroup of Latin America and the Caribbean. A new version is expected to be shared within the framework of the XXII meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, scheduled virtually for the month of January 2021.

Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, closing gender gaps and addressing gender inequalities is considered essential to achieve truly sustainable development and maintain peaceful and prosperous societies. Failure to address these gaps within the gender - environment nexus would set back one of the core commitments of the SDGs: “leave no one behind”. This is particularly true for women who are already in a vulnerable position, such as lower-income indigenous and peasant women.



**XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment
of Latin America and the Caribbean
Bridgetown, Barbados**

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**2020 - 2021 Work plan Results and Key Deliverables of reducing women’s and
environment’s gaps**

Gender and Environment Workgroup of Latin America and the Caribbean

Participating countries (12): Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras,
Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
Area of Focus 1: Gender’s good practices systematization					
Output 1: Collect examples (study cases) of environment’s and gender’s good practices and gaps from countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.				Indicator 1. Number of study cases collected.	
Activity 1.1. Make a mapping of new good practices implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean for integrating a gender perspective into environmental issues and environmental policies.	Semester II / 2020 – Sem II/2021	Member countries of the gender and environment group and UNEP	Interagency Technical Committee from Forum of Ministers of Environment of LAC (ITC) and other LAC countries	Indicator 1.1. Number study cases identified and described.	Have a base format to collect information on good practices that include specific topics such as: name, objective, period, application of the gender approach, benefits, data disaggregated by gender,

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
					resources, narrative summary, impacts and monitoring. Define what is meant by good practices and perhaps divide by scope: institutional arrangements, programs to promote female participation, etc.
Activity 1.2. Prepare documentary information for socializing good practices.	Sem II/2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	Interagency Technical Committee (ITC) and other LAC countries	Indicator 1.2. Number of documents prepare.	
Activity 1.2.1. Define and apply mechanisms for the socialization of good practices.	Sem II/2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	-	Indicator 1.3. Number of socialization mechanisms created and carried out.	Such as, website, Forum, webinar, among others.
Activity 1.3. Apply some of these good practices in other countries of the Regional Working Group on Gender and Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries	-	Indicator 1.4. Number of actions to integrate the gender approach in environmental issues and policies, in the member countries of the Group.	The application of good practices in the countries will depend on alignment with planning and programmatic instruments (for example development plan, national and sectorial programs, etc.) and national budgets or on resources from international organizations

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
					(GIZ, IKI, IDB, among others).
Area of Focus 2: Incidence					
Output 2: Positioned the message and links between gender and environment in spaces of construction and generation of information and knowledge, as well as in platforms of incidence on public policies.				Indicator 2. Number of changes resulting of environment's and gender's incidence.	
Activity 2.1. Prepare technical notes for integrating gender and environment approach for Ministries and policy makers.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	-	Indicator 2.1. Number and kind of technical notes adopted by Ministries.	
Activity 2.2. Identify priorities to promote transformative and gender-sensitive actions through exchange of experiences, webinar or meetings jointly with platforms of incidence on public policies.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	Interagency Technical Committee (ITC)	Indicator 2.2. Percentage of actions promoted in relation to the priorities identified.	Explore the possibility of a virtual diploma.
Activity 2.3. Formulate and implement joint initiatives on the issue of gender and the environment and others that are complementary and useful.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	Interagency Technical Committee (ITC)	Indicator 2.3. Number of activities jointly implemented.	Joint initiatives among LAC countries, especially those that are part of the Gender and Environment Group.
Activity 2.4. Approach and collaboration with other partners , such as scientific, academic and social networks working on gender and the environment.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	-	Indicator 2.4. Number of identify partners.	
				Indicator 2.5. Number of collaborations established and implemented	Take into account that it is important not only the approach, but the collaboration for the

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
				with identified partners.	implementation of specific actions
Area of Focus 3: Gender statistics (Funds to be discussed)					
Output 3: Collect and generate information for the preparation of gender statistics					
Activity 3.1. Prepare a diagnosis to identify what information is available on the subject of gender indicators.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	Interagency Technical Committee (ITC)	Indicator 3.1. Number of diagnoses made.	
Activity 3.2. Identify the sources of information for the preparation of gender indicators.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	Interagency Technical Committee (ITC)	Indicator 3.2. Number of sources of information identified.	Verify that qualitative and quantitative information, as well as statistical data come from official sources.
Output 4: Strengthen the gender indicators of any planned action (including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels) strengthened (Funds to be discussed).				Indicator 4. List of mechanisms and indicators defined to reduce the gaps of environmental information disaggregated by gender at the national and local levels.	
Activity 4.1. Review the indicators that are available to modify, enhance or, where appropriate, generate new indicators.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	-	Indicator 4.1. Number of indicators generated and modified (including management, impact or result indicators).	Take into account the indicators that already exist and those that have been developed in other exercises and approved in other Forums (for example: Gender Action Plan within the framework of the biodiversity agreement and the Gender Action Plan within the framework of the United

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
					<p>Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, especially in REDD+), instead of creating new indicators.</p> <p>The indicators should allow diagnoses of the situation regarding the exercise of women's rights.</p>
Activity 4.2. Identify and promote workspaces, synergy and coordination with other United Nations organizations, on gender and environment issues.	Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022	Member countries and UNEP	-	Indicator 4.2. Number of workspaces, synergy and coordination with other United Nations organizations, on gender and environment issues.	
Area of Focus 4: Priority issues					
Output 5: Identify environmental gender gaps (priority issues to discuss).				Indicator 5. List of priority issues of gender's environmental gaps to be addressed by the Workgroup.	
Activity 5.1. Define priority topics to be addressed by the Workgroup.	Sem II / 2020 – Sem II/2021	Member countries and UNEP	-	Indicator 5.1. Number of priority topics to work on.	Preliminary proposals (it is recommended to select 2 - 3 priority themes):

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
					<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women in environmental decision-making. 2. Access to water and sanitation and access and use of forest resources in a sustainable way. 3. Integration of the human rights approach and the gender perspective in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). 4. Policies for the sustainable management of biodiversity. 5. Sustainable economy and bio entrepreneurship (economic empowerment). 6. Incorporate the gender perspective to develop productive capacities and value chains of rural women.
<p>Activity 5.2. Establish specific actions to develop in each priority topic that is selected.</p>	<p>Sem II /2020 – Sem II/2022</p>	<p>Member countries and UNEP</p>	<p>-</p>		<p>It is important to review the actions that are being developed in the countries to</p>

Results	Timeframe 2020 - 2022	Responsible/s	Potentials partners	Indicators	Observations
					direct specific efforts.
Activity 5.3. Design a check list for the incorporation of gender in environmental programs, projects and policies.	Sem II /2020 - Sem I/2021	Member countries and UNEP	-		
Output 6: Manage the operation of the Gender and Environment Working Group					
Activity 6.1. Carry out a mid-term review / evaluation of the Plan, with the possibility of making adjustments to activities and indicators	01/06/2021 - 01/09/2021	Technical Secretariat of the Group - UNEP and members of the Group	-	Indicator 6.1. Percentage of compliance in the execution of the group's Work Plan.	Consider the review in the framework of any of the meetings or Intersessional meetings of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of LAC.

**Decision 8
on the Environmental Dimension
of the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

Recognizing the international community in 1992 agreed that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is a special case for environment and development and should benefit from special assistance from the international community,³²

Recalling Decision 4 of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment on “*Sustainable Development of SIDS*” and subsequent Decision of the Forum of Ministers, including, *inter alia*, and also recalling Decision 5 of the Nineteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 69/15 of 14th November 2014, in which the General Assembly endorsed the SAMOA Pathway, adopted at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which *inter alia* reaffirms that “small island developing States remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities and that they remain constrained in meeting their goals in all three dimensions of sustainable development” and recognizes “the ownership and leadership of small island developing States in overcoming some of these challenges”, while stressing that, “in the absence of international cooperation, success will remain difficult”,

Also recalling UNEP/EA.2/Res.4 of the United Nations Environment Assembly on the “Role, functions and modalities for United Nations Environment Programme implementation of the SAMOA Pathway as a means of facilitating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals” and, *inter alia*, the requests to Member States and the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme, to support and contribute respectively to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway;

Further Recalling the Buenos Aires Declaration of the Twenty-first Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Argentina in 2018, supporting the Caribbean Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) in the ongoing review of the SAMOA Pathway and their call for scaled-up international cooperation and support for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the SIDS Sustainable Development framework,

Recognizing that Small Island Developing States are amongst the most vulnerable countries to the adverse impacts of climate change, ocean degradation and more frequent natural disasters and also face particular resource and capacity constraints when it comes to the implementation of their national sustainable development goals,

Taking into account the new and emerging challenges faced by small island developing states in coping with the socio-economic challenges resulting from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including, *inter alia*, disruption to key economic sectors such as tourism and transport, disruption in supply chains for critical medical and food supplies, and the inequalities experienced due to access to digital technology constricting delivery of education and e-commerce services, ,

Acknowledging that the establishment of the Caribbean SIDS Programme established pursuant to Decision 4 of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean resulted in a more focused and coordinated assistance to Caribbean SIDS; as well as, tangible results, including *inter alia*; the establishment of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) for Caribbean SIDS and the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) Project including its funding from the EU,

³² Agenda 21, 17.G

Reaffirming that South-South and triangular cooperation underpin the implementation of the updated Latin America and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development and have been identified as key modalities for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway;

Welcoming the General Assembly Resolution 74/217³³ of 19th December 2019 which reaffirmed the international community's commitment to the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and that³⁴ **further** calls on the international community to mobilize development finance from all sources and levels to support SIDS, as well as strengthen their national institutional capacity to access sustainable development finance including grant, concessional, climate and disaster relief finance;

Decides

To formulate a Caribbean SIDS Programme II to contribute to enhancing the implementation of the Environmental Dimension of the SIDS Sustainable Development Agenda in Caribbean SIDS, taking into account and building on the SIDS instruments which have been agreed by the international Community, namely, the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA); the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA (MSI/BPOA); and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway;

To further consider, that in formulating the Caribbean SIDS Programme II, specific attention is given to; *inter alia*, the establishment of a SIDS Framework Initiative to implement the sustainable consumption and production priorities of Caribbean SIDS, as called for in the 2018 San Pedro Declaration of Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean (SIDS), the rationalization of UNEP's technical assistance to Caribbean SIDS, coordination and prioritization of the implementation of the decisions of the Forum of Ministers within the Caribbean SIDS and the promotion of synergies with other SIDS Initiatives being undertaken by other UN Agencies to ensure complementarity and minimization of duplication.

To build on and scale up ongoing South-South and Triangular cooperation involving Caribbean SIDS and countries of the Forum through a dedicated Caribbean SIDS Horizontal Technical Cooperation Programme that enables SIDS-SIDS and LAC-SIDS Technical Cooperation, pursuant to Decision 4 of the 14th Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment for LAC to **improve resilience and enhance capacity-building initiatives, and to improve the diversion of resources devoted to these cooperation agreements in order to meet sustainable development needs.**

To support the development of a Caribbean SIDS COVID-19 Recovery Response to address issues relevant to the economic health of Caribbean SIDS, including, *inter alia*, protocols to support sustainable tourism recovery; and enhancing food security through the sustainable use of land and marine resources.

To encourage Caribbean SIDS to advance new scenarios and development models inculcating more fully the environmental dimension of the sustainable development of SIDS, to devise new innovative policies and new frameworks of governance to support Caribbean SIDS in reducing their vulnerabilities including, *inter alia* promotion of increased deployment of digital technology.

³³ General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/217

³⁴ General Assembly Resolution 74/3

To request UNEP to continue to work with other partners to provide technical and financial support to SIDS in order to access finances and resources for the implementation of the Decisions.

To call upon the ITC, in particular, its development financial institutions; and other relevant financial institutions and its relevant partners to review, where appropriate, their financing instruments in order to maximize accessibility, effectiveness, transparency, quality and impact in the context of a complex funding environment which presents challenges for SIDS.

To support Caribbean SIDS with the establishment of a Regional Modality or Institutional Mechanism in Caribbean SIDS, in the form of a SIDS Cooperation and Knowledge Hub preferably within a regional university, with the support of the ITC Agencies and others financial institutions such as the GEF, regional and hemispheric banks (e.g., CDB; Latin American Bank, IADB etc.) and UN Agencies.

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Annex II – The Bridgetown Declaration and Communique

THE BRIDGETOWN DECLARATION
OF THE XXII MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

AND

A CALL FOR ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF COVID-19
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RECOVERY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE
CARIBBEAN

General Introduction

1. The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean met on the 1st and 2nd of February 2021, virtually for the first time in its history, during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has impacted severely Latin America and the Caribbean, claiming many lives in the region and negatively affecting our economies and environment.³⁵
2. *Conveys* our deepest regret to and solidarity with the countries of the region that were severely impacted by hurricanes during 2020, in particular, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Colombia, that add to the difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and reiterate that as the global mean temperature increase and the effects of global climate accelerate and deepen the effects of climate change, Latin America and the Caribbean will increasingly continue to experience, more frequent and intense meteorological phenomena including, droughts, floods, hurricanes, , as well as sea level rise, loss of productivity in crops among others, which is a constant reminder of the threats posed by global climate change to all countries, in particular those that more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the potential it has to undermine Sustainable Development Goals.
3. *Alarmed* by the devastating economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean, which affected many economic sectors on which the peoples of the hemispheres' livelihoods depend, including but not limited to the tourism sector, unveiled how fragile the international value chains are.
4. *Consider* that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted inequalities which exist in our countries; and amongst countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and the world, stressing the importance of global multilateralism to advance our sustainable development efforts and solve global problems, more than ever and the need to reinforce solidarity links and international cooperation between peoples, strengthen, and ensure the adequate provision of means of implementation to help the most fragile countries to tackle the crisis, reinforcing the resilience of people and communities, in particular in developing countries;

³⁵ As of 27 December 2020 there have been over 79.2 million cases and over 1.7 million deaths reported since the start of the pandemic at global level <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update---29-december-2020> . In the region at least 18,287,000 reported infections **and 576,000** reported deaths caused by the novel coronavirus in Latin America and the Caribbean as of 26 January 2021. <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/regions/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>

5. *Emphasize* the role of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals as fundamental roadmaps to achieve sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions, and reiterating that eradicating poverty remains the core objective of our sustainable development efforts.
6. *Reaffirm* the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including principle 7, about common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.
7. *Reaffirm* the international cooperation to contribute to the national efforts for the implementation of the decisions that are approved in the framework of this Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Rebuilding Better While Tackling Many of the Underlying Weaknesses in our Countries

8. *Underline* that the regional COVID-19 economic and social recovery strategies should consider sustainability at their core, in its three dimensions - environmental, social, and economic -, guided by inclusive and resilient development growth and focusing on accelerating environmental and climate action.
9. *Stress that* the support for economic sectors that rely on the sustainable use of natural resources, including but not limited to tourism, should be one of the priority areas in the COVID-19 sustainable recovery strategies, and protocols in order to support local livelihoods and address the environmental, social and economic challenges of our region, while considering the need to ensure the protection of travellers and workers, as well as ensure conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the promotion of sustainable tourism.
10. *Underscore* that at the core of the Latin America and the Caribbean COVID-19 pandemic sustainable recovery strategies, countries of the region need to turn this crisis into an opportunity to urgently and sustainably integrate the environmental dimension and include better conservation and sustainable use of natural resources into economic and social development planning of the countries, as well as across economic sectors, in accordance with national circumstances and priorities.
11. *Highlight* that in the current pandemic scenario, transfer of technology, capacity building and the access to adequate financial support will play a central role in fostering a sustainable and resilient approach to our regional recovery efforts.
12. *Highlight* the need to develop innovative financial mechanisms to foster sustainable development, such as payment for environmental services schemes, taking into account the importance of natural resources and their economic valuation and benefits of human activities that contribute to the provision of environmental services, as well as encouraging public and private sector participation in resource mobilization.
13. Also *highlight* the need to develop innovative financial mechanisms to support the transition of the current production systems towards sustainable development, integrating environmental externalities that contribute to the provision of goods and

services, as well as encouraging public and private sector participation in resource mobilization.

14. *Consider* that the economic recovery from the crisis generated by COVID-19 needs to integrate the environmental dimension, without the impact of the pandemic slowing down the ability of governments to allocate resources to promote sustainable development, guaranteeing the Principle of No Regression Environmental. We must take advantage of the current context to establish the foundations of a sustainable, inclusive and without obstacles economic system, respecting the right to development of countries and international cooperation. Public and private investment, and the international financial system, including institutions Multilateral financial institutions, funds, banks and investors play a key role in economic reactivation and must also incorporate this variable, participating in promoting solutions for environmental conservation and climate action.
15. *Consider* that the economic reactivation *seeks* social inclusion, promoting low carbon and resilient economies, conservation and management and sustainable use of natural resources, considering joint synergies in search of harmony among the actions implemented in the different sectors.
16. *Consider* that economic, fiscal, and financial packages and recovery investments should be strategically designed and planned to stimulate sustainable development efforts bringing short-term high economic impact and long-term sustainable consumption and production patterns to ensure the region meets the goals of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity and the ongoing negotiations on the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
17. *Recognize* the importance of strengthening the mechanisms that make it possible to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in environmental matters for people, groups and organizations, taking into account applicable international law and the respect of the sovereignty of all our countries.
18. *Further* recognize the need to continue working towards the strengthening of environmental governance and the enforcement of environmental law in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, including but not limited to mechanisms for the access to information environmental participation and justice and elaboration of public environmental policies, with a view to providing access to the benefits of ecosystem services and ensuring a healthy and sustainable environment for present and future generations.

Contextualising the linkage between emerging infectious diseases and the need for Ecosystem Restoration

19. *Conscious* that the pandemic generated by COVID-19 falls within the category of emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) known as 'zoonotic diseases', and that EIDs can significantly impact global economies and public health.
20. *Recognise* that in order to reduce the risk of future pandemics originating from zoonotic diseases Latin American and the Caribbean need to improve the state of knowledge on the linkages between environmental degradation and human health,

taking into account developing countries' circumstances and capacity needs and their social and economic challenges; undertake greater efforts in the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife; and fight illegal wildlife trade, being conscious that environmental degradation increases the risk of emergence of zoonotic diseases.

21. *Highlight* that social vulnerability increases the risk of disease transmission and emphasize that poverty alleviation through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods plays a significant role in reducing the risk of emergence of zoonotic diseases.
22. *Highlight* that food and nutritional security is essential to strengthen societies' capacity to respond to zoonotic diseases and that efforts to reduce the risk of emergence of zoonotic diseases should aim to secure global food supplies, while improving and consolidating sustainable food systems;
23. *Undertake* efforts in the fight against illegal trafficking in order to reduce the risk of future pandemics caused by zoonotic diseases, at the same time strengthening the conservation of wildlife, taking into account that ecosystems degradation increases the risk of appearance and spread of zoonotic diseases.
24. *Highlight* the importance of generating environmental and territorial data and information for decision-making by governments and policymakers, in the comprehensive management of the territory that promotes the conservation, recovery and sustainable use of ecosystems and natural resources, and the reduction of vulnerability and climate change impacts.
25. *Recognise* the importance of promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns to achieve resource efficiency and reduce environmental degradation, through access to evidence-based information and citizen participation, and promoting environmental education, environmental governance and environmental awareness.
26. *Further Recognise* that in order to reduce the risk of future zoonotic diseases, both the immediate and underlying pressures of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation must be addressed in an integrated, effective, targeted sustained manner, and with the largest levels of international cooperation to tackle wildlife trafficking and illegal deforestation while reinforcing sustainable forest management in accordance with national legislation.
27. *Hereby* welcome the *Latin America and Caribbean Action Plan on Ecosystem Restoration*, which aims of supporting and scaling up efforts at all levels to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems in Latin America and the Caribbean and raise awareness on the importance of successful ecosystem restoration and commit to facilitate mobilization of adequate resources, including from multilateral funding mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF); thereby contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and multilateral environmental agreements, leaving no one behind.

Underscoring the importance and necessity of Regional Cooperation

28. *Reiterate* the importance of international and regional cooperation that would serve as a mechanism to mitigate the countries' vulnerabilities, build resilience and maximize opportunities for sustainable development and contribute to the economic and environmental recovery of our Region.
29. *Take note* that the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic teaches us to work together to combat the common challenges to planet and humanity, recognising that coordinated and time-oriented efforts can strengthen sustainability and form the basis for the creation of adequate strategies for long-term benefit including sustainable environmental management and joint efforts between countries and organizations, oriented to such objectives, alike.
30. *Strengthen* sustainability efforts and formulate strategies among countries and multilateral organizations for long term benefits, recognizing joint and coordinated efforts, including a global response to address common challenges that threaten ecosystems and humankind due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
31. *Stress* the need to promote on-going dialogues and exchange of information among Latin America and the Caribbean on best practices for natural resource management, including sustainable forest management, and the implementation of ecosystem-based approaches, among other relevant approaches³⁶ that provide adaptation benefits, mitigation co-benefits and foster the conservation of biodiversity.

Enhancing the Implementation Outcomes of the Forum of Ministers

32. *Underscore* the need to strengthen the implementation of the decisions and results of the Forum of Ministers of Environment as well as the overall functioning of this forum, and towards this end decide to explore flexible options for the strengthening of the Forum of Ministers with increased engagement of countries, as well as the optimization of the role of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee, through an intergovernmental consultation process to be conducted during the intersessional period.
33. *Establish* a Working Group to enhance the outcome effectiveness from the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean. This Working Group shall present recommendations to the next Intersessional Meeting.
34. *Call* upon UNEP and other Members of the Interagency Technical Committee, to the extent practicable, support with the mobilisation of resources to facilitate the strengthening of a Forum of Ministers as a means of increasing the implementation capacity of the forum.
35. *Further Agree* that the Bureau of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean shall provide oversight of the functioning of the Forum along with the Director of UNEP/ROLAC and hence is required to meet, at a minimum, every six months to provide oversight, monitor and review the implementation of the

³⁶ Relevant approaches include Nature based solutions, which does not have an internationally agreed definition, some countries consider that the concept is a potential adaptation and mitigation measure.

outcomes of the Forum, and to conduct the work of the Forum during the intersessional period.)

Responding to the Needs of the Situation

36. *Conscious* of the gravity of the current situation, acknowledge the leadership driven by the Bureau of the XXII Meeting and the work done by the Argentine Republic and Grenada in consolidating a COMMUNIQUE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS, which is hereby adopted as part of this Declaration.
37. *Further acknowledge* the work undertaken by the Negotiation Committee of the XXII Forum and commit to work towards the implementation of the Decisions adopted at this Forum, which express our common ambition to contribute to the advancement of sustainable development in our region.
38. *Request* the Minister of Environment and National Beautification of Barbados as President to the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment to representing and transmit the Forum's regional outcomes to the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly which will take place in February 2021 and early 2022, as well as to the Forum of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and the High Level Political Forum, and other relevant regional and subregional fora.
39. *Appreciate* the support of the Regional Office of Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme as Secretariat of this Forum and request the Regional Director and the Interagency Technical Committee of the Forum to support the implementation of the actions set out in this declaration and decisions adopted by the Forum.
40. *Express* our deepest gratitude to and to commend the Government and the people of Barbados for the exceptional leadership and hard work during the intersessional period, considering the challenging times that we are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the adaptation of our work to the virtual modality to carry out the works and obtain a successful outcome during the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

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COMMUNIQUE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF THE COVID 19 CRISIS

The world faces an unprecedented crisis due to the current COVID-19 pandemic which forces us to reflect on the importance of **human health** and its interrelation with unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. This crisis further evidences that the equilibrium of our ecosystem is impacted by the way we use our natural resources.

Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have made great efforts in securing the health of our population while at the same time trying to preserve jobs and reactivating the economy. In this difficult scenario, where preserving lives is the foremost priority for States,

we consider that the social, environmental and economic dimensions must be incorporated also as a central axis to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, the pandemic has unleashed various crises that challenge us and allows us to promote innovative approaches to take advantage of a **window of opportunity** to integrate the environmental dimension during and into post-pandemic economic recovery packages.

The need to **accelerate environmental and climate action** has become evident and require the incorporation of environmental considerations and solutions, integrated into the post COVID-19 recovery plans as a priority, while at the same time addressing the social and economic challenges of our region and developing innovative mechanisms to foster the sustainable use of natural resources and support local livelihoods . In this framework, the articulation of multilateral agendas can be a key factor to boost national efforts in the wake of the current crisis.

The region holds natural resources or elements which are the basis of livelihoods of millions of people and are essential to the functioning of a diversity of productive sectors. In this sense, it is necessary for countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to place fair, equitable and inclusive transition in the center of their agenda, to ensure the creation of jobs, and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services and products, through adequate actions and policies.

Considering the current and future impacts of climate change throughout the region, our capacity to respond and adapt to the climate crises will need to increase significantly, as we incorporate the environmental dimension into national policy, we would promote the wellbeing of the population.

Mainstreaming sustainability , promoting good practices, and the integration of biodiversity in productive sectors, sustainable infrastructure projects, technological scientific advancements and ecosystem-based approaches³⁷ have never been more important , to improve and consolidate a balanced approach) between the economic, social and environmental dimensions, pursuant to the 2030 Agenda, which places the eradication of poverty at the centre of global efforts to promote sustainable development.

Furthermore, strategies for post-COVID-19 sustainable recovery provide an opportunity to enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and could deliver benefits both for the economy and the environment, opening new avenues for investment opportunities that would foster innovation, promote new businesses, and create new sustainable jobs.

In this sense, it is important to establish the decisions of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment that highlighted the importance for regional cooperation focused on priority topics including the sound management of chemicals and waste, sustainable consumption and production , climate change and biodiversity and ecosystems.

Considering that COVID-19 has a major impact on a global scale and in Latin American and Caribbean countries, so it is imperative that countries articulate effective and strategic responses that provide solutions to combating rising inequalities due to regional and global economic slowdown, and that at the environmental level the implementation of national

³⁷ Relevant approaches include Nature based solutions, which does not have an internationally agreed definition; some countries consider that the concept is a potential adaptation and mitigation measure.

sustainable development programmes and the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement will not be jeopardized, including the participation of women and minority groups, must be strengthened both institutionally and at the community level. Environmental, economic, and social empowerment, given the above, will therefore be promoted with a gender approach to the participation of social groups in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and care for the environment.

It should also be noted that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have engaged in significant regional cooperation efforts³⁸ to strengthen the region's capacity to address environmental challenges, to improve and implement good management practices of protected areas, and to achieve the goals set out in international instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Aichi Targets and the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, and other regional and subregional initiatives, through ecosystem-based approaches and other relevant approaches, to the problems afflicting global society.

Within this context, the **Bureau of the Forum of Ministers of Environment in its meeting of 29 May 2020** reflected on the environmental dimensions of the crisis and asked the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) support in the recovery from the crisis caused by COVID-19.

These deliberations are the **basis for the consolidation of the following commitments:**

- **An integrated view of health.** COVID-19 is a reminder that human health is dependent on sustainable patterns of consumption and production. To prevent future crisis, we must address the threats to ecosystems, including habitat and biodiversity loss, illegal wildlife trade, illegal deforestation, pollution, and climate change.
- **Our lives have changed, but our goals remain even more valid and urgent.** The pandemic has exposed the many fragilities of our economies, and has widened social inequalities, highlighting the need to improve our sustainable relationship with the environment, implement more resilient and innovative actions, and to increase regional and international cooperation and solidarity and provide adequate means of implementation, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. The economic consequences of the pandemic, which have mostly affected developing countries and have proven financially burdensome across our region, recall the need for developed countries to fulfil their development assistance obligations. In light of the current scenario, transfer of technology, capacity building and financial support will play a central role in fostering a sustainable and resilient approach to our recovery efforts.
- **Regional cooperation.** The pandemic also underscored the need to enhance and maximize cooperation between our countries. The scale and complexity of the challenges requires concerted and tailored regional and sub-regional efforts. The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean provides a framework of action to achieve common positions. The development of regional networks, including the recent recommendation to UNEP on a voluntary regional

³⁸ In pursuit of the objectives of the aforementioned environmental agreements, countries of the region are parties to several regional initiatives aimed at such ends, related to protected areas, terrestrial and marine natural areas, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, among others.

Environment and Emergency Preparedness Network, is part of a drive to strengthen regional cooperation in all dimensions of environmental management and integration.

- Likewise, collaboration on environmental governance ,inter alia, strengthening the enforcement of environmental law, access to information and citizen participation and access to environmental justice, based on the respect of the sovereignty of all our states, environmental education, the promotion of gender equality and environment, the implementation of public policies on environmental issues, research, and the exchange of experiences and knowledge and good practices that can contribute to implementation of Multilateral Environmental agreements in the region, needs to be strengthened and extended.
- **Ecosystem-based approaches.** The need to address the threats to ecosystems and wildlife, and implications for human health is a matter of urgency. Ecosystem-based approaches and other relevant approaches for environmental management and climate actions can be effective to promote healthy ecosystems and provide benefits for human health and the social and economic development of communities, where restoration of biodiversity and implementation of ecosystem-based approaches are essential to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **The measures that incorporate climate proof-actions** can be an important dimension of the post-COVID-19 recovery plans, through the implementation of a climate-resilient, low-emission regional economy that generates sustainable jobs, produces short-term high economic impact, attracts investments in the region and leaves no one behind.

In this regard, we request UNEP to provide technical assistance and transfer of methodologies for the design and planning for post COVID-19 recovery response measures, providing information to serve as a basis for decision-makers.

- **It is necessary to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production models,** as well as the development and implementation of integrated urban and territorial planning approaches to achieve sustainable, efficient, resilient, and inclusive cities. Sustainable Consumption as well as the creation of regional value chains and the promotion of regional trade with added value should be incentivized.

In this regard, we request UNEP to draw on evidence as to how the measures steering towards sustainable consumption and production patterns deliver more growth, more jobs, higher short-term returns per dollar spent, leveraging higher private investments, increasing long-term cost savings, improving health, and reducing environmental and climate impacts as compared to conventional stimulus packages.

- **Sound Waste management needs to be consolidated as an essential service and key sector to better recovery.** The sound management and final disposal of waste, including biological-infectious waste, is essential to respond to emergencies such as the COVID-19 outbreak, in order to minimize secondary impacts on health and the environment. At the same time, strengthening the sector, by addressing and reducing inappropriate management practices, such as dumpsites, waste incineration, and transitioning to integrated models based on waste prevention and resource recovery, in accordance with national priorities and capacities, provide opportunities for sustainable growth and the creation of jobs. At the same time, access to clean water and sanitation remains a fundamental area of work for the environment and health agenda.

- **The countries of the region place a significant amount of importance on ensuring food security.** Restoring degraded lands in the region is a priority and we welcome the Regional Plan for Ecosystems Restoration.
- **Sustainable ocean-based economies** should be considered for effective actions that enable the conservation and sustainable use of ocean, 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 minerals is needed.
- **Tourism** has been drastically affected by the pandemic. For the Caribbean, the most tourism dependent region of the world, the reactivation of the tourism industry is a critical component of economic recovery. Ongoing Sustainable Tourism programmes should be adapted, and new ones have to be put in place to assist countries in designing and implementing the needed changes, including the formulation of strategies towards a sustainable, innovative, and resilient tourism industry within the recovery plans.
- **The promotion of the strengthening of the Science - Policy interface**, is a fundamental instrument for objective and well-informed decision-making, using science and technological evidence, monitoring of policy responses and outcomes, particularly in the context of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other global and regional agreements.
- **The access to financing** should also be the backbone of recovery plans to strengthen the environmental and social dimension in the real economy and address the financial constraints that affect our countries' capacity to foster sustainable development including but not limited to reducing the debt burden, by helping the transition of productive sectors, the creation of jobs- and development of resilient infrastructure projects. States should consider innovative financial mechanisms that could support local communities, such as the payment for ecosystem services, among others.
- **The uncertainty that we face, offers hope for the future.** We can make decisions that generate substantial long-term changes and serve as the impetus to move towards more sustainable lifestyles, including consumption and production. In this sense, the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean is determined to work at these points of convergence. To do this, we commit our best efforts towards coordinated and joint action that allows us to transform this vision into concrete actions to recover and transform the social, economic, and environmental reality of our region.

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