

XXII MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT

OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE
CARIBBEAN



“The Environmental Dimension of the COVID-19 Sustainable Recovery Response for Latin America and the Caribbean.”

**Statement by the President of the XXII Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean on the occasion of the Civil Society Forum of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean
Held in Barbados
(Virtually on 29 January 2021)**

Madam Chairperson

Regional Director of UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Civil Society Facilitators

Ladies and Gentlemen

First let me thank you for organizing the Civil Society Forum as part of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean. My understanding is that your Forum will focus on two complementary themes. Firstly, the theme of the XXII Meeting of the Forum: *The Environmental Dimension of the COVID-19 Pandemic* and secondly, the *Strengthening of Regional Cooperation and Collaboration between Civil Society Groups in Latin*

America and the Caribbean. Both of these themes are quite apt given the current situation which our Region and the World faces with respect to COVID-19 and its impacts.

As you may be aware, we have been able to complete our agreement on eight Decisions and the Declaration of Bridgetown which will form the Outcomes of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean. Embedded in the Declaration of Bridgetown is the Communique on COVID-19. These are important outputs which I hope your Forum will have time to reflect on, particularly as it relates to their implementation.

I know that the preparatory work for both the organization of the Civil Society Forum and the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment have been held under very difficult circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would therefore like to thank you for the commitment you have exhibited in participating in this Civil Society Forum in spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19. As a consequence you have not been able to travel to Barbados for this Forum. I am positive that other opportunities will present itself for you to visit Barbados. Nevertheless, I would like to say a special thank you to the Civil Society Facilitators with the support of the UNEP Secretariat for organizing the Civil Society Forum.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has pulled back the curtain and exposed the weaknesses in our respective countries; it has also

underscored the need for greater cooperation between the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is therefore of great significance that one of your Dialogues for this meeting will focus on enhancing cooperation among Civil Society groups in our region. One of my wishes resulting from the Barbados Presidency of the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers is that of greater cooperation and interaction between the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. I believe that your movement—the non-governmental entities in our hemisphere—could be a vehicle for making this a reality. I therefore challenge you to **come up with and implement meaningful programmes and initiatives** to make this a reality. In my view the Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, recently declared by the United Nations General Assembly could be used as a starting point.

May I also suggest that in your deliberations some emphasis is placed on the youth of our region. In so doing, I am positive that my fellow Ministers would welcome a set of initiatives which target our youth. In this regard, some consideration should be given in your deliberations to explore the development of a **Youth Green Jobs Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean**. I urge you to consider seriously the formulation of such an Initiative.

Another area in which I would like to see you take action, is with respect to our indigenous peoples of our hemisphere. As one of the mega-regions in the world for biodiversity, we should consider how these resources could be used in a sustainable manner. In so doing,

we therefore need **to consider our indigenous peoples and the traditional knowledge they possessed and how can it not only be protected but used as a basis for the creation of sustainable livelihood.**

With these few words let me take this opportunity to wish you a fruitful and successful deliberations and I look forward to receiving the Outcomes of your session, so that our Ministers of the region can support your efforts.

I thank you.