



CONCEPT NOTE

Regional meeting on progress and challenges in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean: towards an early entry into force

Medina Room, ECLAC, Santiago
Thursday, 25 April 2019 (8:30am-5pm)

Background

The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (“Escazú Agreement”) was adopted on 4 March 2018 in Escazú, Costa Rica, concluding six years of preparatory work and negotiations. The Escazú Agreement is considered one of the most important human rights and environmental instruments in the last twenty years, since the adoption of the Aarhus Convention. The Escazú Agreement is also the first regional treaty of Latin America and the Caribbean, the only one stemming from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the first in the world to provide for specific provisions for the promotion, protection and safeguarding of human rights defenders in environmental matters.

Its objective is to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, as well as to strengthen capacity-building and cooperation. As indicated in the Agreement, its ultimate aim is to ensure the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development.

The Escazú Agreement emphasizes the linkages between human rights and environmental protection. The rights developed by the treaty significantly contribute not only to environmental stewardship but are also essential to protect other fundamental rights such as the right to life and health. In this regard, the Escazú Agreement puts in practice Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, offering an unparalleled platform to strengthen the capacities of States and their cooperation to protect and manage the environment and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights.

Furthermore, the Escazú Agreement is fundamental to implement the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies. It also seeks to ensure equal access to justice, effective, responsible and transparent institutions and adopt inclusive, participatory and representative decisions. The Agreement likewise supports the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Paris Agreement.

Most importantly, the Escazú Agreement reflects the particularities, strengths and challenges of Latin America and the Caribbean. Being the world’s most unequal region, the Agreement focuses on overcoming barriers in the exercise of rights, particularly of persons and groups in vulnerable situations, aiming to leave no one behind. Considering the worrying situation of environmental human rights defenders, the Escazú Agreement includes specific provisions to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for persons, groups and organizations that promote and defend the environment.

Open to the signature of the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on 27 September 2018 in the framework of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Agreement has been signed by 16 countries to date: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. It requires the ratification by 11 countries to enter into force.

With the aim of reaffirming the value and relevance of the Escazú Agreement and exchange good practices and experiences between countries, the public and other stakeholders, the regional meeting will offer a space for dialogue on the progress and challenges in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement and support national efforts for an early entry into force and implementation.

Objectives

- Discuss from a multi-stakeholder approach the scope, implications, progress and challenges in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, with a view to accelerating its entry into force
- Exchange good practices and experiences between countries, with the support of the representatives of the public, international organizations and other stakeholders, in the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements
- Devise intermediate steps until entry into force and identify opportunities for cooperation and support

Expected results

The effective exchange of knowledge and good practices on the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements as well as on access rights enshrined in the Escazú Agreement, that will allow to design common visions, guidelines and strategies for an early entry into force and implementation. Devise intermediate steps until entry into force and identify opportunities for cooperation and support and establish synergies to support State efforts in this matter.

Date and venue

The meeting will take place on Thursday, 25 April 2019, in the Medina Room at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, in the margins of the Third Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

Target audience

The workshop is aimed at representatives of the governments and public of Latin America and the Caribbean. **Limited spaces available.**

Language

Spanish and English (with interpretation)

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

8:15 - 8:30am	Registration of participants
8:30 - 9:00am	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary, ECLAC • Pamela Castillo, Vice-minister of Environment, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica • Sergio Bergman, Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development, Argentina • Gale T. C. Rigobert, Minister of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, Saint Lucia • Andrea Sanhueza, elected representative of the public for the Escazú Agreement
9:00 - 9:30am	<p>General overview of the Escazú Agreement: background, state of affairs and next steps Presentation by the Technical Secretariat of the Escazú Agreement</p>
9:30 - 10:00am	<p>Session 1: Developments in ratification processes and entry into force of the Escazú Agreement – Moderated by ECLAC</p> <p>Interventions by signatory countries of the Escazú Agreement Interventions by the public</p>
10:00 - 10:30am	<p>Session 2: Sharing good practices for the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements – Moderated by ECLAC</p> <p>Presentation by Costa Rica Presentation by Saint Lucia Presentation by Uruguay Presentation by UN Environment Other interventions</p>
10:30 - 11:15am	<p>Session 2: Sharing good practices for the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (continued): The experience of the Aarhus Convention – Moderated by ECLAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ella Behlyarova, secretary of the Aarhus Convention, UNECE (by videoconference) • Thomas Legoupil, focal point of the French Government for the Aarhus Convention
11:15 - 11:30am	Coffee break
11:30am – 1pm	<p>Session 3: Challenges and priorities: strategies and roadmaps for an early entry into force and implementation of the Escazú Agreement – Moderated by Costa Rica</p> <p>Interventions by signatory countries of the Escazú Agreement Other interventions</p>
1pm – 2:30pm	Break
2:30 – 3.15pm	<p>Session 5: Cooperation and synergies for the entry into force and implementation of the Escazú Agreement – Moderated by Costa Rica</p> <p>Intervention by UN ECLAC Intervention by UN Environment Intervention by OHCHR Intervention by civil society Intervention by CAF Intervention by CARICOM Intervention by the Caribbean Court of Justice Intervention by the Andean Parliament Intervention by the European Investment Bank</p>
3:15-4pm	<p>Session 6: Roundtable on the intermediate steps until entry into force: expectations and results – Moderated by Costa Rica</p>
4-4:30 pm	Conclusions and closing remarks