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Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean**

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

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A. PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS

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**Final Report of the First Meeting of
Specialists in Public Management of
Environmental Education in Latin
America and the Caribbean**

**Margarita, Venezuela
22 - 26 November 2004**

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I. Introduction

1. The First Meeting of Specialists in Public Management of Environmental Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on Margarita Island, in the state of Nueva Esparta, Venezuela.
2. The meeting was held at the invitation of the Government of Venezuela and pursuant to the mandate handed down by the Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Panama in November 2003. In decision 10, the Forum expressed the need to carry out an Environmental Education Plan to implement the Environmental Education Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter referred to as PLACEA). Background on the Programme and the meeting appear in **Annex I** to current document.
3. Official representatives of 15 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean took part in this activity, including participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. Dr. Enrique Leff, Coordinator of the UNEP/ROLAC Environmental Training Network, was also present. A List of Participants appears as **Annex II** at the end of this document.
4. The meeting was aimed at achieving the following objectives:
 - a) preparation of the organizational, communication, financial and programming guidelines necessary to implement the Programme;
 - b) establishment of a process to link the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development and the Latin American and Caribbean Programme on Environmental Education in the Framework of Sustainable Development; and
 - c) strengthening of communication and cooperation ties among the entities that manage national policies on environmental education in the region.
5. To attain these objectives the participants were divided into four working groups.
 - a) *Programme implementation strategy*. This group's work included a discussion of orientation and guidelines for establishing coordination, decision-making and communication mechanisms among the focal points in each country, as well as for follow-up on the activities to be carried out by the Programme.
 - b) *Funding mechanisms*. This group discussed orientation and strategies for seeking additional resources to fund the Programme's activities.

- c) *Programme linkage processes.* This group was aimed at establishing mechanisms for effective linkage between the Programme and the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC), the Barbados Programme of Action and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
- d) *Programme dissemination and actor incorporation strategy.* This strategy should promote the incorporation into its activities of a wide range of public entities, including both environmental and educational management bodies, as well as non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and other institutions that can contribute to and support the Programme.

6. A space was also opened up for the presentation and discussion of preparations for the Fifth Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education by the representative of the Government of Brazil and organizers of the event.

II. Programme Guidelines

7. The PLACEA is founded on a set of guidelines based on a Latin American and Caribbean identity in environmental education. These guidelines are intended to give the proposal a political and ethical sense in a spirit of mutual cooperation, social solidarity and development in the framework of sustainable development.

8. The Programme only makes sense if, when we talk about environmental education, we are referring to a process that is not limited to the promotion of learning some techniques to minimize the effects of environmental deterioration, but rather to an education that critically questions the economic, social and political bases that result in both environmental deterioration and human exploitation and exclusion. Environmental education should go beyond the academic approaches focused on the scientific and professional elite to rediscover vast grassroots knowledge and wisdom that form an inclusive and democratic vision of knowledge. It should also promote human development and fight against the causes of poverty and all forms of discrimination and exclusion.

9. Environmental education arises from an ethical commitment to life and people, and especially to the sectors traditionally excluded; its purpose is to promote the values, knowledge and skills needed to build responsible, sustainable and just societies.

10. Environmental education falls within ethical, theoretical and methodological approaches that give it a grassroots and inclusive nature, not only because of the broader social scope of the environmental education process, but also because it is the fundamental base for participatory inclusion and a leading role of grassroots sectors in decision-making and activities to build their own future.

11. The Programme is expected to:

- a) stimulate the participation and a leading role of all the social actors involved in the planning and implementation of environmental education programmes in each of the countries;

- b) facilitate the construction of new conceptual and methodological guidelines for environmental education in the region, so that environmental education will become a factor in helping to build democratic, inclusive, prosperous and environmentally responsible societies;
- c) link environmental education with the region's priority themes defined in the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative (ILAC) and particularly those related to preparedness against natural disasters, human health improvement, the fight against poverty and racial and gender discrimination, as well as the protection of biological diversity, water conservation and sustainable use, forests and sustainable consumption and production;
- d) establish permanent channels for exchange, communication and mutual support among the countries of the region in the field of environmental education.
- e) stimulate linkage and synergy among the different existing initiatives and projects in the field of environmental education in the region; and
- f) promote the development of a Latin American and Caribbean vision and voice in relation to environmental education in the framework of sustainable development.

III. General description of the decisions of the Meeting

12. Even though the work was carried out in four working groups, the participants decided to put all the proposals in a single document that would establish the main lines for the Action Plan.

13. Although the working group on funding mechanisms established cost estimates for some of the activities foreseen, the members decided the estimates should not appear in the final document, since the scope and objectives of some of these activities needed to be determined with greater precision before a realistic estimated budget could be established.

14. To fulfill Objective 1 of this meeting, an organizational structure for the Programme was defined and is presented further on.

15. Activities to be carried out by each member of the organizational levels of the Programme were also defined.

IV. Agreements and resolutions of the Meeting

A. General Agreements

- a) The participants reaffirmed the decision to develop the PLACEA in the framework of the Environmental Training Network. In this regard, they believed that the Network should be strengthened and reoriented to enable it to serve as a facilitator of the organization and implementation processes

of the Programme within the democratizing and participatory guidelines for the activities proposed in the Programme.

- b) The participants recommended that by-laws or terms of reference for the PLACEA should be prepared as soon as possible in order to specify its operating mechanisms, its implementation in the framework of the Environmental Training Network, equity in the distribution of resources, and the operation of the advisory groups, among other matters.
- c) The participants expressed their thanks and recognition for the efforts made by the Government of Venezuela to enable the holding of this meeting and the Programme in general.

B. Agreements regarding the organization and structure of the PLACEA

16. The participants of the meeting considered it necessary to give the Programme organizational and action capacity and, for that purpose, believed it should have an organizational structure that established levels of responsibility and coordination within a democratic, co-responsible and equitable work approach.

17. The organizational structure agreed to consists of four levels:

- a) the Plenary;
- b) a Regional Coordinating Unit;
- c) subregional Coordinating Units; and
- d) National Coordinating Units

18. This structure should be implemented systemically to guarantee vertical and horizontal interaction and integration among the four components so that synergy among their activities will be produced. The characteristics and functions of each of these levels is described below.

19. The Plenary shall be the maximum authority for guidance, direction, supervision and evaluation of the PLACEA activities.

- a) The Plenary shall be formed by representatives of all the focal points in each of the countries participating in the PLACEA.
- b) The functions of the Plenary shall be as follows:
 - i. to promote the linkage and consolidation of environmental education in the framework of sustainable development in all the countries of the region;
 - ii. to approve the institutional framework, terms of reference or by-laws of the PLACEA;
 - iii. to define policies and guidelines for the development of the action plans in each period;
 - iv. to elect the country that will form part of the Regional Coordinating Unit in each period;

- v. to designate the Subregional Coordinating Units;
 - vi. to approve the Regional Action Plan (RAP) submitted to it by the Regional Coordinating Unit;
 - vii. to convene, through the Regional Coordinating Unit, the meetings and activities necessary to design and implement the Regional Action Plan.
- c) a Plenary session shall be held every two years and shall be convened by the Regional Coordinating Unit or through any other mechanism that may be established in the by-laws regarding the operation of the Programme; and
- d) without prejudice to the preceding points, the work mechanisms of the Plenary, its being convened and its channels of action shall be defined in by-laws or terms of reference that should be established in the next few months.

20. The Regional Coordinating Unit shall be formed by the Coordinator of the UNEP/ROLAC Environmental Training Network and a member country elected by the Plenary:

- a) the Regional Coordinating Unit shall be the maximum authority between Plenary sessions. The parties shall meet whenever deemed advisable by its members;
- b) the functions of the Regional Coordinating Unit shall be as follows:
 - i. to coordinate execution of the PLACEA activities in the periods between Plenary meetings.
 - ii. to promote ongoing communication, cooperation and integration among the countries of the region in the field of environmental education.
 - iii. to promote mechanisms for the discussion and dissemination of Latin American and Caribbean thought in the field of conceptualization and methodology of environmental education, for which it may obtain support from *ad hoc* advisers or groups of advisers.
 - iv. to promote linkage of the PLACEA with other existing programmes, initiatives and projects in the field of environmental education and environmental management in the region.
 - v. to establish orientation, guidelines and methodologies for the design and implementation of the Regional Action Plan (RAP),
 - vi. to conduct follow-up and evaluation of the RAP through the Subregional and National Coordinating Units.
 - vii. to inform the Plenary and the region's governments of the results obtained through management by the Regional Coordinating Unit.
 - viii. to secure sources of funding to carry out the PLACEA activities.

- ix. to guarantee appropriate management of resources allocated to the implementation of the Plan.
 - c) the countries that form the Regional Coordinating Unit shall remain in office two years and may be reelected; and
 - d) without prejudice to the provisions in the previous points, the work mechanisms of the Regional Coordinating Unit, convening and action procedures, shall be defined in by-laws or terms of reference that should be established in the next few months.
- 21.** Approval was given to the election of Venezuela as the co-coordinator of the Regional Coordinating Unit for the 2005-2007 period.
- 22.** The Subregional Coordinating Unit shall be formed by five coordinators of the following subregions:
- a) Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay);
 - b) Northern Andes (Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru);
 - c) Northern South America (Colombia, Guyana, Surinam and Venezuela);
 - d) Mesoamerica (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama); and
 - e) Antilles (Cuba, the Bahamas, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago)
- 23.** Approval was given to the election of the following countries to serve as the Subregional Coordinating Units: ***Southern Cone:*** Chile; ***Northern Andes:*** Peru, ***Northern South America:*** (decision delayed until the countries that did not attend the meeting can be consulted); ***Mesoamerica:*** Guatemala; ***Antilles:*** Cuba.
- 24.** Jamaica was designated as liaison between the PLACEA and the English-speaking Caribbean countries.
- 25.** The countries that form the Subregional Coordinating Unit shall remain in office for two years and may be reelected.
- 26.** The functions of the Subregional Coordinating Units shall be as follows:
- a) to coordinate implementation of the PLACEA activities in each of the subregions;
 - b) to promote ongoing communication, cooperation and integration among the countries of the subregion in the field of environmental education;
 - c) to promote and coordinate the design and implementation of Subregional Action Plans, in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Regional Coordinating Unit;
 - d) to support and disseminate Latin American and Caribbean discussion and dissemination processes in the field of environmental education, for which it may obtain support from *ad hoc* advisers or groups of advisers;
 - e) to conduct follow-up and evaluation of the Subregional Action Plans through the National Coordinating Units;

- f) to report on the results of its management to the Regional Coordinating Unit;
- g) to secure sources of funding to carry out the Subregional Plan;
- h) to guarantee appropriate management of the resources allocated for the implementation of the Subregional Plans and other approved activities.

27. The National Coordinating Units shall be formed by the focal points of the Environmental Training Network selected in each country of the region.

28. The functions of the National Coordinating Units shall be as follows:

- a) to coordinate the implementation of the PLACEA activities in each of the countries in the region;
- b) to establish ongoing communication mechanisms between the countries of the region and the subregion and between the subregion and the Regional Coordinating Unit;
- c) to define, implement and evaluate, in accordance with the characteristics, needs and possibilities of each country, a National Environmental Education Plan based on the guidelines provided by the Regional Coordinating Unit;
- d) to support and publicize processes for the discussion and dissemination of Latin American and Caribbean thought in the field of environmental education, for which they may obtain support from *ad hoc* advisers or groups of advisers;
- e) to incorporate the actors and sectors that each country considers of priority into the development of the National Environmental Education Plans;
- f) to report periodically to the Subregional Coordinating Unit on the results achieved in the management of the National Coordinating Unit;
- g) to secure sources of funding to carry out the National Environmental Education Plan;
- h) to guarantee the appropriate management of resources that may be allocated to the implementation of the National Plans and other approved activities.

29. Approval is given to recommending that the focal points be represented in the environmental education entities in the environment ministry of each country or in the governmental agency to which environmental education matters are delegated, because of the functions and responsibilities that the PLACEA National Coordinating Units should assume.

30. The UNEP Environmental Training Network is asked to inform the Regional Coordinating Unit of the current status of the focal points of the countries that form the Network.

31. Each of the levels previously defined may form advisory groups or committees to support them in decision-making and development related to their activities.

C. Agreements regarding the PLACEA financing and distribution of funds

- a) it is recommended that the financial resources allocated to the Programme be distributed in an equitable manner among the countries that form the different subregions to ensure that the subregional and national plans are carried out in the framework of the activities established in the PLACEA;
- b) each subregion shall define how the financial resources allocated to it or obtained by its own means are to be used, and should report to the Regional Coordinating Unit on the use of such resources; and
- c) the by-laws or terms of reference to be established should define procedures for the transfer, mobilization and use of funds allocated to or obtained by the Programme.

D. Agreements related to the PLACEA action plan for the 2005-2007 period.

32. To carry out PLACEA activities, it is agreed that the following spheres and themes are of priority:

- a) *sphere*: the training of environmental managers, environmental education in communities and their schools, and training programmes in higher education centres. These three spheres should not be considered separate elements, but rather a system of relations and links that connect environmental problems with the problems of the communities (and their schools), as well as with environmental managers, and these with their training processes and knowledge of environmental dynamics and problems, as well as the social relations and processes in the communities where environmental problems arise.
- b) *themes*: Priority should be given to the educational processes involved in arriving at solutions to the environmental problems considered to be of priority in the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative on Sustainable Development (ILAC). These themes are: access to genetic resources and equitable distribution of benefits; water resources management in Latin America and the Caribbean; human settlements in Latin America and the Caribbean; renewable energy; trade and environment; economic instruments and fiscal policy; and climate change and environmental indicators. Each country and each subregion shall establish specific priorities to be developed in the National and Subregional Action Plans.

33. Three levels of action have been defined for conducting the activities to be carried out by each of the PLACEA components in the 2005-2007 period:

- a) *short term*, activities that can be launched now without the need for financing and are expected to be concluded within six months;
- b) *medium term*, activities that are to be carried out in a period of time no longer than one year and can be initiated on the basis of existing resources

in the countries, as well as resources that may be available in regional organizations during this period of time; and

- c) *long term*, activities that need to be financed or should be approved by the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

34. The Regional Coordinating Unit shall establish the priorities and scope of the following activities after consulting the countries that comprise the National and Subregional Coordinating Units. Since some of these activities are complex and need financing and support, follow-up mechanisms shall be established, if necessary, to reconsider time frames for the work.

35. The activities to be carried out by the Regional Coordinating Unit shall be:

35.1. *Short-term* activities:

- a) coordinate efforts to send the Margarita Meeting results to all the countries that were at the meeting;
- b) prepare and disseminate an information and communication campaign on the PLACEA achievements and advances; It should include the placement of Programme documents and advances on web pages, dissemination to international and regional organizations, dissemination to the mass media, and the development of a Programme identity, among other efforts;
- c) define a work strategy for the institutional and financial strengthening of the PLACEA through the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean;
- d) present the results of this meeting at the next Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, in 2005;
- e) prepare an updated and comprehensive directory of the National Coordinating Units, including the countries that did not attend the Margarita Meeting, based on the information provided by the Subregional Coordinators.

35.2. *Medium-term* activities:

- a) establish meetings with UNESCO to define orientation and guidelines for incorporating the meeting into the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development;
- b) carry out consultations to establish partnerships and financial support for the development of the PLACEA Action Plans. It is recommended that contact be made with the following cooperation entities: GEF, JICA, European Union, World Bank, Global Water Partnership, OAS and other participating agencies on the Inter-Agency Committee of the Forum of Ministers;
- c) design a conceptual methodological framework for linking the PLACEA to the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development and the Barbados Programme of Action;

- d) establish mechanisms to support holding the Fifth Ibero-American and Caribbean Congress on Environmental Education;
- e) hold a follow-up meeting of the Regional and Subregional Coordinating Units to take place at the Fifth Ibero-American and Caribbean Congress on Environmental Education.
- f) promote holding a Latin American and Caribbean event aimed at establishing work orientation and guidelines on environmental education in the framework of sustainable development with a regional vision and approach; it is suggested that this event take place in the framework of the Fifth Ibero-American and Caribbean Congress on Environmental Education.

35.3. *Long-term* activities (define orientation, guidelines and mechanisms to develop a Regional Environmental Education Plan). The following actions should be included:

- a) establish a mechanism to support the countries in producing national education materials in priority themes for different types of education and different levels;
- b) generate guidelines and mechanisms for the exchange of information and experiences on environmental education policies, strategies, successful experiences, research and publications at both the subregional and regional levels. Priority should be given to the use of existing mechanisms in the UNEP Environmental Training Network and to telecommunications tools such as existing portals and web pages in the region;
- c) strengthen national entities in charge of environmental education in the countries through the generation of horizontal training opportunities (in-service training, workshops and congresses) to enable the exchange of experiences in current environmental education in the following spheres:
 - i. environmental managers;
 - ii. communities and schools; and
 - iii. universities
- d) support the process for preparing prototypes of environmental education materials jointly developed by the Environmental Training Network and the PLACEA in a theoretical and methodological framework agreed on with the focal points;
- e) prepare a tool, approved by consensus, to evaluate the activities carried out in the PLACEA.

36. The activities to be carried out by the Subregional Coordinating Units shall be as follows:

36.1. *Short-term* activities:

- a) prepare and disseminate an information and communication campaign on the achievements and advances of the PLACEA;

- b) establish the identity of the focal points in the countries that were unable to attend the meeting and share the results of the meeting, as well as the identity of the agencies or institutions that manage public policy on environmental education in each country if they are not the same as the focal points or if the focal points do not exist or are not operating;
- c) establish, on the basis of the previous point, a subregional directory of focal points and public agencies that manage national environmental education; and
- d) support the definition of a work strategy for the institutional and financial strengthening of the PLACEA through the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

36.2. Medium-term activities:

- a) actively incorporate all the countries of the subregion in the PLACEA activities;
- b) conduct an inventory of resources in the subregion for the exchange of information such as web pages, portals and other existing mechanisms; and
- c) make a diagnosis of needs in the field of environmental education in the subregion.

36.3. Long-term activities:

- a) define orientation, guidelines and mechanisms for the development of a Subregional Environmental Education Plan. These plans may include the development of joint projects at the subregional level and the definition of terms of reference and financing needs for each case;
- b) implement mechanisms to evaluate the activities carried out by PLACEA.

37. The activities to be conducted by the National Coordinating Units shall be as follows:

37.1. Short-term activities:

- a) prepare and disseminate an information and communication campaign on the achievements and advances of the PLACEA; For that purpose, coordination and communication mechanisms, existing networks and web pages may be used, as well as collaboration of the information media;
- b) support the definition of a work strategy for the institutional and financial strengthening of the PLACEA through the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

37.2. Medium-term activities:

- a) prepare and disseminate an inventory of the supply of training in environmental education in the country;
- b) conduct an inventory of resources available for the exchange of information such as web pages, portals and other existing mechanisms; Establish its capacity to incorporate content such as documents and information related to the PLACEA activities;

- c) place documents of interest to the PLACEA on the web pages available, as well as information on successful activities and experiences carried out in different spheres;
- d) incorporate national education management agencies, such as education ministries and other organizations and institutions pertinent to the objectives of the Programme, into the PLACEA activities;
- e) promote fulfillment of the countries' obligations to the Trust Fund of the Environmental Training Network by noting that these resources will support implementation of the PLACEA;

37.3. Long-term activities:

- a) conduct national diagnostic studies on the state of development of environmental education;
- b) promote or update a National Environmental Education Plan, in accordance with the country's needs, priorities and possibilities;
- c) implement mechanisms to spread and replicate the content and methodologies received through the exchange opportunities and ensure that they reach the social actors involved in the environmental education programmes in the national sphere;
- d) implement the mechanisms to evaluate the activities carried out by the PLACEA.

E. Agreements related to the Fifth Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education

38. Mr. Philippe Pomier Layrargues of the Environmental Education Office in the Environment Ministry of Brazil made a presentation on the progress made in organizing the Fifth Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education, to be held in the city of Joinville, state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, in 2005 or 2006.

39. Mr. Layrargues explained the reasons for choosing the city in relation to opening up the Congress to environmental educators in the Southern Cone of South America. He also noted that the Organizing Committee has not yet made a final decision regarding the exact date for the Congress, but it now seems that it will most likely be held in the year 2006.

40. He also requested the support of the countries of the region in forming National Committees to Support the Congress. The purpose of these Committees is to serve as promoters of the event and facilitate the inclusion of successful experiences in environmental education from each of the countries.

41. In relation to this point, a discussion period enabled the following recommendations and suggestions for the Congress Organizing Committee to be gathered:

- a) the host countries of the previous Congresses (Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba) offered their support in organizing and promoting the event;

- b) the discussion ratified the need to continue holding the Symposia of Ibero-American Countries on Environmental Education Policies and Strategies that have been held in the framework of the Ibero-American Congresses on Environmental Education as a space for meetings among the officials in charge of public policies for environmental education; This recommendation will be included as a general resolution of this meeting;
- c) it was recommended that the Organizing Committee open up a space in the Congress for reflection and discussion on forming a Latin American and Caribbean identity in the field of environmental education;
- d) it was suggested that the Congress organizers should form partnerships with the countries of the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) to obtain economic and organizational support for the Congress;
- e) it was recommended that the Organizing Committee change the name of the event to Ibero-American *and Caribbean* Congress on Environmental Education, so as to open up the event to all the countries that form the PLACEA; For that purpose, the formation of a committee or focal point in the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean and the rest of the region was recommended; It would also be necessary to establish terms and conditions for the participation of these countries;
- f) it was suggested that the Congress open up spaces for interaction with representatives of environmental movements and environmental education in other regions of the world;
- g) it was suggested that the types of support that should arise from the Environmental Training Network and the PLACEA in relation to the Congress should be defined; This support, in turn, should form part of the work strategies in both institutions;
- h) it was suggested that, in recognition of the Congress's importance to the development of environmental education in the region, the environment ministers in the region should be asked to reinforce this event as a space for discussion and progress in concepts, methodologies and, above all, regional cooperation.



Annex I

Background of the Meeting

1. The Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Panama City in November 2003. At this event, the proposal of Venezuela to formulate a *Latin American and Caribbean Programme on Environmental Education in the Framework of Sustainable Development*⁽¹⁾ was approved. For purposes of this document, this programme will be referred to as PLACEA.
2. The approved initiative was the culmination of a discussion and work process that began during the *First Symposium of Ibero-American Countries on National Policies and Strategies for Environmental Education*, held in the framework of the *Third Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education* (Caracas, Venezuela, 2000), which brought together official representatives of nine countries of the region, plus an equal number of non-official observers from other countries.
3. During this Symposium, reports on the environmental education situation in the countries of the region were presented. Discussion on these papers brought recognition of the progress that had been made in this field in Latin America. It also showed that, in spite of these attainments, the region presented difficulties that prevented having any significant impact on environmental degradation processes. It was also clear that there were difficulties in communication, cooperation and exchange of experiences and projects among these countries, and even among those that border on each other.⁽²⁾
4. On that occasion, Venezuela presented for consideration a work proposal aimed at establishing a cooperation and exchange programme in the field of environmental education, to be implemented in the framework of the Latin American region.
5. The participants unanimously approved the proposal and, as a result, the Government of Venezuela was asked to develop a project profile that could be submitted to the different governments of the region for consideration through the regional forums in the field of environment and environmental education.⁽³⁾
6. Pursuant to this commitment, during the *Second Symposium of Ibero-American Countries on National Strategies and Policies for Environmental Education*, held during the Fourth Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education (Havana, Cuba, 2003), Venezuela presented a project for discussion. It was welcomed by the participants, and it was agreed to submit it to the entire region for participatory consultation. Venezuela was also asked to submit a final proposal document to the

⁽¹⁾ Resolution 10, point 9 Document UNEP/LAC-IG. XIV/4.

⁽²⁾ Proceedings of the Third Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education. Caracas, Venezuela.

⁽³⁾ Caracas Declaration. Proceedings of the Third Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education. Caracas, Venezuela.

Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Panama.⁽⁴⁾

7. On the basis of these guidelines, a final proposal document was prepared and submitted to this Forum for deliberation.

8. The proposal presented was consistent with the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative on Sustainable Development (ILAC), which included the following objective: *“To improve and strengthen the incorporation of the environmental dimension in formal and non-formal education and in society”*. It also recognized environmental education as a cross-cutting theme linked to the Regional Action Plan.

9. The proposal was also directly linked to the Decision of the Forum of Environment Ministers in Panama, which established the need to promote the systematic incorporation of civil society in the activities carried out to implement ILAC and the Barbados Programme of Action.

10. The PLACEA was expected to be a Latin American and Caribbean contribution to the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as to the Johannesburg Plans of Action and the Barbados Programme of Action.

11. The Programme was also expected to link up with and respond to other regional cooperation decisions and processes.

12. Among them were the decisions of the *Ibero-American Forum of Environment Ministers*, which, at its Second Forum Meeting, held in the Dominican Republic in July 2002, recognized the importance of education for all sectors in environmental themes, principally in the area of sustainable water use, as well as the incorporation of youth in environment-related themes. In its conclusions document, the Forum admitted the need for efforts to develop school textbooks that would enable the cross-cutting transmission of environmental education through initial, primary and secondary systems⁽⁵⁾.

13. In this framework there was a proposal for the establishment of a permanent regional mechanism aimed at boosting policy coordination, stimulating the development of programmes and projects and fostering communication, exchange and mutual support among the different social actors involved in the field of environmental education.

14. It would consequently be necessary to promote larger and better cooperation mechanisms among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of environmental education, to motivate the development of a regional voice and regional action in education matters and to establish mechanisms for networking and exchanging ideas and people within the theme of environmental education.

⁽⁴⁾ Conclusions of the Second Symposium of the Ibero-American Countries on National Environmental Education Policies and Strategies. Havana, Cuba, 2003.

⁽⁵⁾ Conclusions of the Second Ibero-American Forum of Environment Ministers. Bávaro, the Dominican Republic, 11 to 13 July 2002.

15. On the basis of these goals, the Latin American and Caribbean Programme for Environmental Education in the Framework of Sustainable Development proposed to achieve the following objective: *“to establish a permanent regional mechanism to further policy coordination, stimulate programme and project development and foster communication, exchange and mutual support among the regional governments, as well as between them and the other social actors involved in the development of environmental education programmes”.*⁽⁶⁾

16. For that purpose, specific objectives and some suggested activities to achieve them were established:

- a) Consolidate public environmental education policies in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean in the framework of sustainable development

17. As priority activities necessary to meet this specific objective, it was proposed that mechanisms be developed to promote: a) the exchange, communication and mutual support among entities that manage national policies in the field of environmental education; b) the compiling and analysis of education policies in the field of environmental education in the countries of the region; c) the compilation and dissemination of proposals in the field of environmental education that were being carried out or had been carried out in the region, as well as the linkage and synergy between educational aspects present in the different conferences, conventions, agreements and other global or regional instruments; d) the implementation of criteria and mechanisms to evaluate environmental education processes; e) the compilation and systematization of experiences in the field of environmental education in the region; and f) the establishment of a regional agreement to increase financial resources in each of the countries to strengthen the national environmental education programmes.

- b) Establish and consolidate mechanisms for networking, the promotion of integration and the expansion of communication between public and private entities in the region

18. Development towards this objective would call for: a) the consolidation of the environmental educator networks in the region; b) the establishment of a platform aimed at disseminating regional experiences in the field of environmental education and facilitating the development of forums and information exchange; c) the incorporation of existing networks in adopting decisions on the management of environmental education at the national and regional levels; and d) the preparation of a regional directory of organizations, institutions and professionals that carry out work in environmental education.

⁽⁶⁾ Technical Document to support the Proposal of a Latin American and Caribbean Programme of Environmental Education in the Framework of Sustainable Development, presented by Venezuela at the Forum of Environment Ministers, held in Panama in November 2003.

- c) Strengthen conceptual and methodological aspects of environmental education in the framework of sustainable development and from a regional viewpoint

19. The following activities were proposed for this objective: a) prepare regional proposals and projects in line with the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development; b) stimulate research programmes in the field of environmental education; c) establish an ongoing seminar for epistemological and axiological discussion to construct concepts in the field of environmental education in the framework of sustainability; and d) support or create regional specialized journals, as well as a helpful bibliography on environmental education topics.

- d) Strengthen ongoing training and refresher courses of educators and other actors involved in environmental education processes in the region

20. Priority activities for achieving this objective included: a) dissemination of existing training programmes in environmental education in the region, as well as links and communication among institutions that carry out these programmes; b) exchange of professionals and researchers in the field of environmental education; c) identification of focal points for the development of pilot programmes in the field of refresher courses, training and certification of staff in the field of environmental education; d) production, publishing and distribution of documents, materials and other bibliographic and non-bibliographic resources.

- e) Promote the development of financing and implementation mechanisms for execution of the agreement

21. To achieve this objective, it was proposed that mechanisms be established to seek and allocate funds to provide financial support for projects and programmes of regional interest. For that purpose, joint funds may be formed on the basis of existing resources in the countries and resources from multilateral organizations and bilateral cooperation agencies, as well as by strategic partnerships between different organizations and institutions.



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