



**United Nations Environment Program
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean**

PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT

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

Bavaro, Dominican Republic

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Agenda Item 6: Ministerial Dialogues about emerging
and relevant issues for the implementation of the Latin American
and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development

**6.2. General information that can be
used by the Ministers and Heads of
Delegation for the Ministerial Dialogue on**

Integrated Ecosystem Management

Integrated Ecosystem Management

1. The natural wealth of the countries of the Region represents one of the alternatives for improving the population's welfare; for this reason its sustainable management is crucial for achieving said objective with an intergenerational perspective. The Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC) is extremely bountiful in natural resources. LAC has the greatest reserve of arable land in the world: 576 million hectares, 30% of the total regional territory ⁽¹⁾. *The aforementioned reserve is being damaged due to the effect of erosion and the loss of nutrients, the salinization, and the agrochemical contamination. Desertification affects 313 million hectares, causing losses that amount to 2,000 million US dollars per annum.*

2. Notwithstanding the abundance and diversity of its natural resources, and environmental outlook of the region will be exacerbated by equity gaps and poverty with adverse impacts on stability, resilience and productivity of natural systems:

- a) over the last 30 years over 40% of the region's natural forests have been lost as a result of the worst deforestation rates;
- b) the major threats to biodiversity come from the loss of habitats, land degradation, changes in land use, deforestation, un planned urbanization and marine pollution;
- c) 31 eco-regions in Latin America and the Caribbean are critically endangered;
- d) more than 300 million hectares of land are degraded in the region;
- e) 40% of the population lives in areas where only 10% of the region's water resources are available;
- f) the important water resources of the region are affected in their management and surface water and ground aquifers have been seriously deteriorated;
- g) the destruction of habitats and pollution of marine coastal areas is significant.

3. One of the main mechanisms for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity is the Natural Protected Areas (NPAs). Latin American and Caribbean countries have devoted significant efforts to administrative reorganization, under the concept of National Systems and the establishment of new protected areas in their respective territories. These actions have allowed for advancing toward the juridical and operational protection of ecosystems and wildlife species that were being threatened by demographic growth, expansion of the agricultural frontier and the overexploitation thereof⁽²⁾. While protected areas have grown in the last ten years, important ecosystems are not represented adequately and new pressures are affecting the conservation areas as a result of the economic growth based on the intensive use of natural resources.

4. One of the Indicative Purposes of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development under the Goal relative to Biological Diversity is the one

⁽¹⁾ GEO ALC 2003.

⁽²⁾ Current Status of Natural Protected Areas of Latin America and the Caribbean. UNEP/ROLAC. September 2003.

corresponding to *“Territory within protected areas”*, in order to *“significantly increase the surface of the regional territory within protected areas, considering in its definition, transition zones and biological corridors.”*

5. ILAC and the Millennium Development Objectives identify the percentage increase of Protected Areas with respect to the total territory as a goal to pursue. At the same time, the increase in surface of these areas, as well as the management of the already established ones, face various difficulties of a political, institutional and legal nature. Consideration of these issues may contribute to clarify the ways for promoting and improving the Protected Areas Systems in the Region.

6. On the other hand, the negotiation of an International Regime on access and distribution of benefits is still in progress. The next round of negotiations has been planned to take place in the city of Bonn in 2008.

7. The LAC countries decided, through decision 8 of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, to further the actions required to insert in the negotiation of the International Regime the policies and priorities of the Latin American and Caribbean region, as a follow up on decision VII/19 from the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which conferred the mandate to develop and negotiate an international regime on the access to the genetic resources and the participation in the benefits, so as to adopt an instrument/instruments to effectively apply the provisions from Article 15 and Article 8 (j) of the Convention.

8. The Forum of Ministers pronounced itself in favor of creating regional discussion spaces for the negotiations of the International Regime, which take into account the relevance of the traditional knowledge and the one concerning genetic resources, and the promotion of regional and subregional activities, including the development of meetings, workshops, and other means aimed at deeply looking into the knowledge and exchange on the subject of access to genetic resources, distribution of benefits and traditional knowledge, in the identification of the priorities and demands of the region and its better positioning in the International Regime's negotiation process.

9. In this respect, and complying with the decision adopted by the Fifteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, UNEP organized a “Meeting of the Working Group on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from their Use” (Paipa, ColombiaM; 21st and 22nd September 2007), with an aim to approach the agenda issues from the meetings of the special open-ended Working Group on this subject, established in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, thus facilitating the exchange of information, perspectives and points of view vis-à-vis the aforementioned international process.

10. The results from the open-ended Working Group discussion, in their Fifth Meeting (Montreal, Canada, 8th to 12th October 2007) and Sixth Meeting (Geneva, Switzerland; 21st to 25th January 2008) shall be submitted to the consideration of the Conference of the Parties in its Ninth Meeting, to be held in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008.

11. The Ministerial dialogue on this issue shall allow for the revision of the progresses made in the negotiation, and assist evaluate up to which point the perspective and priorities of the region have been incorporated in said process.

12. On the other hand, the land management implies a process for planning the use of the land and natural resources, based on ecological principles, environmental management and handling of natural resources, for the purpose of determining the most adequate way of using the land and resources of a specific area, based on the characteristics of the physical-geographical conditions and the current use of the land and natural resources, considered jointly with population, economic and social factors, as well as the significant increase in the risks associated with considerable climate changes.

13. The debate as to how to render operational in the Region the Territory Ordering Tool is still in a very early phase, and for this reason an exchange of information and viewpoints is considered useful and necessary. ILAC, on referring to "*Vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities*", aims at the need to "implement territorial ordering plans and policies, based on a sustainable development approach" and to "Incorporate instruments for risk management in the ordering plans".

14. *The concepts entailed by the land-use management are of great relevance to the Region. When appreciated from the urban environment, the Latin America and Caribbean is the largest urban region of the developing world, with three fourth of its population living in cities. These cities not only concentrate large amounts of population, but also the consumption of energy, water and food, as well as the generation of environmental impacts such as contamination. Between 1970 and 2000, the urban population grew from 158,6 million to almost 383 million people, and the urbanization level went from a 57,4 to a 75,3 per cent. At the onset of the XXI century, a 79,8 per cent of the South Americans (273,2 million), a 67,3 per cent of the Mesoamericans (92,2 million), and a 63 per cent of the Caribbean people (17,2 million) lived in urban areas.*

15. *If land-use management is considered from the perspective of natural resource management, said tool of environmental management becomes necessary for the adequate management of soils, forests, waters, and marine and coastal resources of the Region.*

16. The Forum of Ministers could exchange information concerning the lessons and experiences related to successful practices of Land-Use Management within the Region, as a tool to continue promoting and developing that tool itself.

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