



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente
Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

联合国环境规划署



XVII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

Distribution:
Limited

Panama City, Panama
April 26 – 30 , 2010

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March 16, 2010.
Original: Spanish

Information Note for Participants

Information on Panama City

There are different theories about the origin of the name "Panama". Some say it was taken from a tree very common in this region, named "Panama".

Others attribute it to the village been founded in the month of August, when there are lots of butterflies, and therefore "Panama" means in the native language, "abundance of butterflies." The best known of these versions is the one that establishes that the name was given to a village of indigenous people dedicated to fisheries, which was adjacent to the beach that the fishermen called "Panama", referring to the abundance of fish.



Location: Panama is located in the center of the Western Hemisphere, limited to the N by the Caribbean Sea, to the S by the Pacific Ocean, to the E by Colombia and W by Costa Rica. Panama is considered a link between Central and South America.

Official Language: Spanish.

Currency: The U.S. dollar is the paper currency in Panama, and it circulates freely in the country. The fractional currency is the Balboa, which has the same value of the dollar coins, but is valid only in Panama.

Entry requirements

VISAS

Government representatives, officers from international organizations and representatives of non-governmental organizations should have their respective visa granted by the Government according to the procedures established. Participants are requested to visit the Panamanian Embassy or nearest Consulate to obtain their visas. If a Panama consulate is not present in your country, please contact the Consular Department of the General Management of Foreign Policy to obtain additional

information, at the following emails: consular@mire.gob.pa and mmartin@mire.gob.pa.

AIRPORT

The Tocumen International Airport is located 17 km from Panama City. The airport has ATM machines in the exit area, bank, and fax and telephone services.

TRANSFER TO VENUE

Upon arrival to the Tocumen Airport, members of official delegations will be attended by identified personnel for their transfer to the Hotel El Panama.

The airport also has authorized taxi cabs (tourism cabs). The cost for this service is approximately US \$30.00 (thirty dollars).

VACCINES

Panama's Ministry of Health has reassess the regulation established on August 5, 2008 referring to the implementation of vaccination against yellow fever, and has instructed that:

- The application of vaccination against yellow fever, from 1 November 2008 will be a RECOMMENDATION and not a requirement for travelers coming from or going to countries with risk of transmission of this disease.
- The Ministry of Health of Panama, after analyzing the epidemiological situation of yellow fever of the countries with transmission risk, recommends the application of vaccination against yellow fever for passengers coming from or going to the following countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela in South America.

Accommodation

The official venue of the **XVII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean** is the Hotel El Panama, from 26 to 30 April 2010. The Hotel information is as follows:

HOTEL EL PANAMA

Via España, Eusebio Ave A. Morales

PO Box 1753-1

Panama City 1, Panama

Tel: (+507) 215-9000

Fax: (+507) 223-6080

Email: reservas@elpanama.com

Site: www.elpanama.com

UNEP, in its capacity as the Secretariat of the Forum, will ensure coordination of hotel reservations and air ticket for the delegates that have funding from that agency. These delegates will have a reservation at the Hotel El Panama and must fill out the attached form and send it to the Secretariat of the Forum to the attention of Ms. Zuleika Hinds: zuleika.hinds@unep.org.

For organization and logistics purpose and the smooth outcome of the work of the XVII Meeting of the Forum, participants are encouraged to stay at the official venue of the meeting.

The delegates who are not funded by UNEP should make their own hotel reservation by sending the attached form duly signed to Ms. Ludy Guerra, at the following e-mail: lguerra@elpanama.com and Ms. Alice Duke at grupos@elpanama.com, in order to obtain the preferential rates that the Hotel El Panama has set for participants.

Accreditations

In all cases, accreditation of official delegations and invitees to the XVII Meeting of the Forum must be sent by E-mail to the Secretariat of the Forum to vilma.aguina@unep.org and zuleika.hinds@unep.org, clearly stating the names and posts of the delegate, the meeting they are to attend and itineraries.

Registration and Timetable

The **Preparatory Meeting of High-Level Experts** of the XVII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers will take place from Monday 26 to Wednesday 28 of April, 2010. Registration for this Segment will take place on Sunday 25 of April from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Lobby area of the Centenario ballroom and on Monday 26 of April, beginning at 8:00 am.

The **Ministerial Segment**, in turn, will be held on Thursday 29 and Friday 30 of April, 2010. Registration for this Segment will take place on Wednesday 28 of April from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., in the Lobby area of the Centerario ballroom, and on Thursday 29 beginning at 8:00 a.m.

DOCUMENTS

The documents for the XVII Meeting will be prepared by UNEP. The Latin American and Caribbean countries have been notified via email of the documents needed to support the deliberations of the XVII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Region.

We kindly request all participants to bring with them the working documents available at the Forum's site. The idea is to save paper and then minimize the environmental impact associated with document printing and reproduction.

The working, informative and reference documents of the XVII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers are accessible via the following links:

<http://www.pnuma.org/forodeminstros/17-panama/html/documentos.htm>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

ABOUT THE COUNTRY

Area: 75,517 km² (29,208 square miles).

Topography: Mountainous to the Caribbean coast, with soft hills and vast savannas towards the Pacific.

Population: 3,450,349 (last estimate 1 July 2009 according to the National Institute of Statistics and Census Office of the General Comptroller of the Republic of Panama).

Government: The Republic of Panama is a sovereign and independent State. Its government is republican, democratic and representative.

Current President: Excellency Mr. Ricardo Martinelli.

Religion: Catholic 85%, 15% Protestant.

Time Zone: Panama is in the same time zone as New York, 5 hours behind Greenwich Meridian (GMT), and an hour ahead on Central America.

Climate: Panama's climate is tropical and the temperature is almost uniform throughout the year. The average temperature is 27 ° C. The rainy season starts in April.

Electricity: 110 volts, 60 cycles.

Communications

Long distance calls can be made from any phone using phone cards (denominations of U.S. \$ 5.00, \$ 10.00 and \$ 20.00). The international dialing code for access to Panama is "507".

Tips

Hotels: hotels generally include the cost on the invoice, except waiters and other personal services such as laundry, room service.

Restaurants: tipping is at your discretion, but normally in Panama is the 10% of what you have consumed.

Taxis: not expected to be tipped, but most passengers round of the cost of the fare if satisfied with the service.

Help at the airport and hotels: US \$1.00 per piece of luggage.

Services

Participants will have access, with a charge to your own account, to international calls, fax services, internet access, postage, photocopies, travel agencies, medical service, etc. These services are available in the Business Center at the Hotel El Panama.

Hospitals

Hospital Centro Médico Paitilla
Ave. Balboa y calle 53
Tel: 265-8800 / 265-8890 / 269-5222

Hospital Nacional
Ave. Justo Arosemena y calle 38
Tel: 207-8383 / 207-8100

Clínica Hospital San Fernando
Vía España, Las Sabanas
Tel: 305-6300/305-6408

Hospital Punta Pacífica
Punta Pacífica
Tel: 204-8000 / 204-8041

Important Telephones

The United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean	305-3100
Emergencies	911
National Police	104
Fire Fighters	103
Civil Protection (24 hours)	231-2067
National Civil Protection System	316-0080/0050
Information	102
International Operator	106
Panamanian Red Cross	315-1388 / 228-2187



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

HOTEL RESERVATION
HOTEL EL PANAMÁ, Panama City, Republic of Panama
April 26 - 30, 2010

SPECIAL RATE

Single room US\$143.00 / Double room US\$165.00 (Includes breakfast and taxes)

Please choose from the following options:

Single room _____	Double room _____
Arrival date _____	Departure date _____
Name _____	
Address _____	
Country _____	E-mail _____
Tel _____	Fax _____
Please guarantee reservation with the following credit card:	
Amex _____ Visa _____ Master Card _____ Cash _____	
No. _____	Expiration date _____
Signature _____	
Flight Information: Airline _____	
Arrival Date/Time _____	Departure date/time _____

***** Deadline 15 April 2010*****

Please send reservation to the following emails:
Alice Duque grupos@elpanama.com and Zuleika Hinds zuleika.hinds@unep.org
Tel. (507)215-9443 - Fax (507) 269-3309.

Note: According to the Anti-Tobacco Law, smoking is banned in all of our rooms. Breaking and ignoring this law, will result into a penalty of a US\$200.00 charge to your account.

Check in Time is at 3:00 pm - Check out at 1:00 pm