



**Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente
Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe**

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
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**Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of
Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**

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A. PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS
18 and 19 July 2011

**Minutes
Inter-Agency Technical Committee
Meeting
July 18-19, 2011**

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Background

1. In compliance with the mandate conferred by the Forum of Ministers, the Agencies comprising the Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC) have been working in a coordinated manner, providing technical and operative advisory services for the implementation of the regional agenda of the Forum.
2. During recent years, the ITC has been in the process of revising its experiences in order to improve its support to the Forum of Ministers. This process has been articulated based on the changing dynamics of the political, economic, and institutional context of the region, as well as its effects on the capacities and needs of the members of the Forum and the ITC agencies.
3. It is in this context that the Secretariat of the Forum of Ministers convened a meeting of the ITC agencies on 18 and 19 July, 2011. At this meeting, the ITC agencies analyzed the future role of the ITC, with a view to the Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers and the Rio Conference 2012. Strategies to contribute to the Forum providing greater benefits for its member states and the ITC agencies were discussed, as well as strategies to increase the Forum's influence on the environment and development agenda at all levels.

Participation

4. Present at the Inter-Agency Technical Committee Meeting convened by UNEP were representatives of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank (WB). The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) also joined in the discussions online. Annex I includes the List of Participants.

Welcome

5. UNEP's Director and Regional Representative, Ms. Margarita Astrálaga, welcomed the members of the Agencies present at the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

Beginning of the meeting with a brief historic perspective on the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

6. The Deputy Regional Director, Ms. Mara Murillo, gave a brief summary of the background and operation of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, since its creation in 1982.
7. She explained that from the Forum's meeting, held in Havana in 1995, the process of incorporating all topics of the international Environment Agenda was begun, as well as consolidating the forum as the highest political authority in environmental matters at the regional level. This process was strengthened in Lima in 1998, with the adoption of the Thematic Priority Lines for the

Region, building common positions regarding topics on the global environmental agenda, and harmonizing cooperation activities among the countries of the region, in order to strengthen the environmental management.

8. It was recalled that at the meeting held in Rio de Janeiro in 2002, the Forum adopted the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC), which drove the Forum's discussions and was adopted as the basis for work regarding the environment in the region. In this sense, ILAC's priority action areas were listed (included in Annex 2). Also, ILAC's three essential pillars were presented:

- a. The Regional Action Plan (RAP)
- b. The Working Groups (WG), listed in Annex II
- c. The Inter-Agency Technical Committee

9. Differences in interpretation of role of the ITC and its agencies were commented upon, particularly with respect to the implementation of the RAP, as explained by the Review of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee's Experience of Support to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (2007). On the one hand, some governments consider that the RAP constitutes a mandate for the ITC agencies, whether it be for implementation or funding of activities. On the other hand, the agencies' mandates are established by their own government entities, making it very difficult for agencies to effectively support the implementation of the RAP. The great challenge and the main question is how to achieve that the RAP, or any other mechanism that the countries define to determine their common commitments toward sustainable development, be reflected in the work programmes of the Ministries of Environment in the region, and that the priorities reflected there be included in the agreements and funding requests to the cooperation agencies and multilateral banks.

10. The difficulty of making direct contributions to the implementation of the RAP was discussed by the ITC agencies, since at the country level, activities are carried out based on the demand and interest of the national governments, which does not always take into consideration the commitments reflected in the RAP, missing the opportunity of using this document as a strategic negotiating tool, instead of a list of priority activities.

11. Likewise, it was noted that the environment theme has been somewhat relegated in recent years, as renewed interest in sustainability encompasses themes such as energy efficiency or climate change, distancing itself from what is usually included in the scope of the Ministries of Environment.

12. There was consensus that the forum can be a platform to strengthen the perspective of the Ministries of Environment. However, the discussion also emphasized that in order to advance towards sustainable development the debate must have a broader scope, since the process implies profound reforms that require joint efforts of all the sectors.

13. Taking this model to the Forum would provide an opportunity for the region to coordinate a significant dialogue at the international level. Similarly, the Forum could constitute its own entity in the region in order to agree on strategies and positions to be discussed in international fora. This model could enhance the strategic value of the Forum and strengthen the region's profile regarding the environment theme at the international level. The fact that, as opposed to other groups of Ministers, the regional Ministers of Environment do not have a coordination Forum highlights the relevance of a platform of this type.

14. This is in line with the recommendations of the ITC evaluation carried out in 2007, which suggests that the Forum return to its origins as a space where governments take the initiative to coordinate for other regional or international fora.

Experience of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee in Support to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

15. The Deputy Regional Director continued with a presentation detailing the background of the creation of the ITC, its mandate, and functions (contained in Annex IV). Likewise, Ms. Murillo underlined the key points of the Revision of the Experience of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee of Support to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, which emphasizes ITC's make up and work as well as its participation in the Forum. In this sense, it was reiterated that it is necessary to promote alternatives so the ITC can contribute toward strengthening the strategic value of the Forum of Ministers.

16. The discussions explored the competence of the mandate and current functions of the ITC to respond to the needs of the Forum. The question of how to promote changes in the role of the agencies, so that they reflect what is possible from the point of view of each agency's operating framework, was brought up. This is a key question, since the countries' perspective with respect to the relevance of the RAP and its expectations regarding the support that the ITC should provide to its implementation is very varied.

17. It was agreed that in order for the Forum's great potential to become a reality, the ITC should contribute toward modernizing it and emphasizing the debate on emerging themes. The indications received from several countries were deemed positive, in the sense that they want to have leadership in the definition of the Forum's agenda, adding that the ITC will support these efforts.

Perspectives of other environmental regional fora

18. The Director and Regional Representative for UNEP, Ms. Margarita Astrálaga, gave a summary of the different regional fora dealing with the environment theme. The following were mentioned:

a. The Inter-American Committee for Sustainable Development and its Inter-American Programme for Sustainable Development

- b.** The Iberoamerican Forum of Ministers of the Environment
- c.** The Meeting of Ministers of the Environment of the Latin America and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development (CALC)
- d.** The Central American Commission on the Environment and Development and its Council of Ministers of the Environment
- e.** The Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED)
- f.** The three entities belonging to the Andean Community of Nations: the Andean Committee of Environmental Authorities (CAAAM), the Andean Council of Ministers of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Attention (CAPRADE)
- g.** The Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)

19. The ITC members discussed the priority areas that these fora address, taking into account that these include many areas of synergy with the Forum of Ministers. However, also noted were the recent processes of divergence that have taken place in the national context, with some countries acting without the participation of the agencies, as was the case of the Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment held in Venezuela last April hosted by CALC. Initially in the Montego Bay Plan and according to conversations with the government which presides over its implementation, UNEP's participation was anticipated, particularly because topics related to the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean would be addressed. However, at the last minute, the government decided not to invite the United Nations agencies or other multilateral organizations to the meeting.

20. The exclusion of the agencies, especially UNEP, caused much confusion among the countries. Some ministers expressed disagreement with the unilateral creation of this forum parallel to the one already created by the ministers themselves. In light of the proposals which have been discussed in the framework of CALC about creating an international entity parallel to the OAS but limited to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, there is the possibility that another Forum of Ministers of the Environment be created that would compete or replace the existing one.

21. It was acknowledged that the motivation for this proposal resides in the fact that the inter-american governance machinery is heavy and difficult to manage or reform, which results in a need to start from scratch. The will, on the part of some countries, to work independently of the agencies comes in part from a lack of trust due to the fact that the agencies have not always been able to, or known how to adequately respond to the countries' expectations. The ITC agencies should then make an effort to respond to said needs and build a relationship based on trust.

22. The importance of the sub-regional fora, and the fact that they can reach positions contrary or parallel to those of the Forum of Ministers, was also highlighted. In this sense, it was agreed that it would be useful to map the themes and agreements that have arisen in the different fora to observe the

ideas that emerge from each one and provide a link among these fora and their agendas.

Dialogue on alternatives to enhance the relevance of the Forum of the Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

23. The ITC agencies then went on to discuss strategies in order to contribute to the Forum of Ministers having greater relevance and influence, both for the member countries as well as at the international level.

24. The topic of the Forum's strategic value came up again during this discussion since some countries attend other fora without a prior idea of what they want to achieve with their participation. Therefore, there is the opportunity to guide the Forum of Ministers toward a leadership in the coordination of positions and making many agreements operational.

25. One possibility would be to frame the Forum as an opportunity to drive change in the development policy, as well as the environmental one, with a view to the Conference of Rio 2012. In this sense, the formulation of a proposal specific to the region could be explored to take to the Conference. The formulation of Sustainable Development Objectives (SDO) could be an option, since it is expected that these be a key outcome of the Conference of Rio 2012.

26. The ITC can identify the necessary work documents for the Forum to provide an important contribution to the outcomes of Rio 2012, like the formulation of the SDO.

27. It was therefore agreed, that based on the outcomes of the regional preparatory meeting for Rio 2012, which will take place in September 2011 in Santiago, Chile, UNEP, UNDP, and ECLAC will draft a proposal on how the Ministries of the Environment can contribute toward the achievement of said outcomes and to the final result of the Conference. Areas of particular interest to the forthcoming negotiations will also be highlighted.

28. This preparatory meeting to take place in Chile could also serve as a source of inputs for the formulation of a message from the Ministers of Environment of the region with a view to Rio 2012. Likewise, the Preparatory Meeting for Rio 2012, which will take place in December, will be an opportunity to present or join in a proposal and negotiate preliminary agreements before the Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment. The former will allow the Ministers to define a position to be included in the March and May Preparatory Meetings.

29. A priority for the ITC and for the Forum would be to reconsider some themes that have been left aside in recent years and that represent the main activities of the Ministries of Environment, such as biodiversity, deforestation, and pollution beyond carbon, among others. In this sense, it is worth noting

that the region is at the forefront regarding awareness of the significance of biodiversity and forests.

30. On the one hand, these specific themes on the agenda of the Ministries of Environment should be strengthened through support to its institutions and competencies. Additionally, it is necessary to mainstream these dialogues formulating strategies to influence other sectors so that they take into account the environmental theme. At the same time, it is necessary to conceive strategies so that, after this re-definition and cross-cutting integration, the agenda stays firmly within the scope of the Ministries of Environment.

31. Regarding the next meeting of the Forum of Ministers, it was mentioned that the Government of Suriname informed that unfortunately it will not be able to host the Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean due to circumstances beyond their control.

32. Since the next Forum's agenda is open, it was proposed to promote consultations among the countries to identify matters to be addressed in the Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum. It was noted that, taking advantage of the upcoming meetings that will be held in Panama in October, the Chairman of the Forum (Panama) could convene an Intersessional meeting to analyze this matter.

33. Regarding ILAC and its modalities of operation, it was commented that for Rio 2012 it would be relevant to undergo an evaluation of ILAC and its implementation to take advantage of lessons learned in the new phase of activities of the Forum.

34. It was agreed that the Secretariat would formulate the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the formulation of a revision document and possible rethinking of ILAC. This document would conduct a study of lessons learned which will establish the basis for the design of the new phase of the initiative. Likewise, the document will propose strategies to increase the influence of the Forum of Ministers in the environment and development agenda at all levels. It will also make proposals regarding the potential role of the ITC in promoting dialogue among the Ministries of Environment and other Ministries (Treasury, Planning, etc.)

35. It was expressed that when rethinking ILAC or another regional instrument, it is important to favor goals that the Ministries of Environment can continuously monitor and whose follow-up will allow the clear identification of gaps and areas which require support.

36. As a general comment it was mentioned that topics that are important to the countries should be presented at the Forum. Some of the more current relevant questions are: How will the Ministries of Environment be in the future? What mechanisms or structures are necessary to drive the green economy and green growth? What strategies can be applied to promote dialogue between the environmental sector and other sectors? The ITC should work to contribute toward responding to these types of questions that arise in the region, making of the Forum a platform for exchange and generation of

innovative ideas. The experiences of the countries of the region that have made great progress in environmental matters can be very valuable in this sense.

37. Therefore, it was agreed to convene an Intersessional Meeting with the objective of presenting the experiences of the region and to consult the countries on the challenges they face. As commented earlier, the meeting could take place taking advantage of the UN Conference on Climate Change that will be held in Panama City from October 1-7, 2011.

38. It was suggested that, in the long term, the ITC should continue actively working toward the formulation and identification of new elements for regional policy based on what arises from the discussions in the Conference of Rio 2012. Likewise, it was agreed that the ITC, together with the member countries, continue working on proposals to increase the Forum's influence on the environmental and development agenda at several levels.

Dialogue on ways that the Inter-Agency Technical Committee could contribute more significantly to the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

39. Those present at the meeting discussed numerous concrete proposals to reorient ITC's support toward more convincing and appropriate ways within their capacity. The following ideas were highlighted:

- a. **Promote inter and intra-regional South-South cooperation**, emphasizing lessons learned, possibly through a demonstration of practical and positive experiences. A key aspect of this effort would be to highlight emerging themes, such as green cities and the diversity of experiences with payment for ecosystem services schemes. Speakers from China or Africa could be invited to the Intersessional meeting planned for this September, especially to address the theme of how to manage the mining industry in a sustainable manner.
- b. **Apply Knowledge Management** to these optimum practices and innovations and compile methodologies and lists of experts so that they are accessible to the Ministries. ECLAC's Observatory for Emerging Policies could contribute to this goal.
- c. **Drive the mainstreaming of environment** in all sectors, mainly through a dialogue on how policies, decisions, and plans from other sectors affect the environment. In this sense, it is important to provide the Ministries of Environment with tools to establish dialogues with other Ministries.
- d. **Articulate linkages between different themes**, such as green cities and decent housing, which would allow for a better understanding on

how some elements of the regional development agenda mutually complement and drive each other. The example of UNEP's Sustainable Urban Social Housing Initiative (SUSHI) was mentioned, which has supported the progress of decent housing and the residential aspect of green cities.

- e. **Prioritize activities with an operative value in the framework of the Forum.** This would imply limiting the formulation of statements or communication only for cases where substantive agreements are reached, which would allow dedicating more time for the exchange of ideas.
- f. **Promote joint work,** emphasizing instruments that strengthen common positions, treaties or agreements such as the one on atmospheric pollution being worked on at the regional level.
- g. **Make use of more opportunities to establish dialogue spaces among the region's Ministers of Environment,** extending ITC's activities to other formats. This could include organizing small meetings or breakfasts with the ministers while they are in conferences in order to present emerging themes. Part of this effort would be aimed at mobilizing the ministers so that they use the opportunity of other conferences of ministers to meet as a regional block.
- h. **Promote the re-thinking of the dialogue on the environmental theme** so that it takes into account challenges that go beyond climate change and energy. Driving the governments to carry out the environmental regulation agenda would be of special significance, starting by providing the Ministers with tools to advocate change.
- i. **Promote training at the sub national level,** since much of what is left to do in the region regarding the environment is addressed at the local level. It is also necessary to present options on how to work with sub national governments, which generally are not aware of the implications of international agreements signed at the national level. A revitalizing instrument in this sense is the sustainable development committee or some type of similar organizing mechanism that allows a flow of information and the formulation of country positions.

At the end of this discussion it was agreed that ITC will continue fine tuning specific proposals on the role it will have in the future.

Conclusions and Agreements

40. Taking into account the deliberations and interventions of all the participants, the following was decided at the meeting:

- a. The ITC will continue fine tuning specific proposals on the future role of the ITC, as well as on strategies to promote dialogue among the Ministries of the Environment and other Ministries.

Responsible: ITC

b. Propose ways in which the Forum of Ministers can influence the environmental and development agenda at several levels.

Responsible: Member countries, ITC.

c. The Secretariat will start discussions with the country who assumes the Chairmanship of the Forum of Ministers to provide the region the opportunity to formulate an action agenda for the Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, also reviewing ILAC and its implementation.

Responsible: Member countries, with UNEP's support regarding ILAC's review

d. The Secretariat will formulate Terms of Reference (TOR) for the formulation of a Review Document for the purpose of: (i) designing ILAC's new phase based on lessons learned; (ii) propose strategies to increase the influence of the Forum of Ministers in the environment and development agenda at several levels; and (iii) formulate proposals on the potential role of the ITC in promoting dialogue among the Ministries of the Environment and other Ministries. A TOR project will be finalized by 26 July 2011, with the view of producing a preliminary version of the Review Document by **9 September 9 2011.**

Responsible: UNEP

e. Based on the outcomes of the regional preparatory meeting for Rio 2012 (September 2011), a proposal on how the Ministers of Environment can contribute toward the achievement of said outcomes will be formulated.

Responsible: UNEP, UNDP, and ECLAC.

f. Convening of an Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers in October in Panama taking advantage of the UN Conference on Climate Change to be held in the City of Panama from 1-7 October 2011.

Responsible: UNEP, with the Chairman of the Forum

ANNEXES

- I. List of participants

Annex I: List of participants

List of Participants

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