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**United Nations Environment Programme  
Regional Office for Latin America & the Caribbean  
Communications & Public Information Department**

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

## Press Release

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Reference: PNUMA/ORPALC- CP 04 /2008

28 January 2008

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**The XVI Forum of Environment Ministers of Latin America & the Caribbean  
is to take place in the Dominican Republic**

**Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 28 January 2008. United Nations Environment Programme, Regional Office for Latin America & the Caribbean.** The XVI Meeting of the Forum of Environment Ministers of Latin America & the Caribbean will be held on 30 January - 1 February in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The inaugurating session will take place on Wednesday 30 January in the 'La Fiesta' theatre at the Hotel Jaragua, Santo Domingo, and will be attended by the President of the Dominican Republic, Leonel Antonio Fernández Reyna, who will welcome ministerial and governmental delegations from the region's 33 participating nations, as well as the UN Development Programme's Executive Director, Achim Steiner.

Events preparatory to this ministers' meeting have been held to refine views and proposals on various topics surrounding environmental safeguarding. The first was a Meeting of High-Level Government Experts (Panama, 30 & 31 August 2007), which was followed by the Civil Society Forum of Latin America & the Caribbean (Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, 12 & 13 October 2007).

Meetings of the Environment Ministers of Latin America & the Caribbean are held every two years. On this occasion, the agenda includes a review, five years since its approval, of the Latin American & Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC). A report on progress in implementing this regional initiative, as reflected in the indicators selected for the purpose, will be submitted.

Other matters to be discussed by the region's environmental authorities will include approval of a Regional Action Plan for implementation in Latin America & the Caribbean during the two years 2008 and 2009.

Also to be debated within the framework of the Forum will be the issue of international environmental governance and reform of the United Nations. UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner will report on

this programme's efforts to play a more decisive role, within the framework of its medium-term strategy (2010-2013).

Among other questions to be addressed by this international gathering will be: integrated management of ecosystems; Latin America & the Caribbean's approach to climate change, and cross-border aspects of environmental policy.

According to UNEP Regional Director Ricardo Sánchez Sosa, the accords on approaches and lines of joint action adopted at the meeting will help ensure that the Forum continues to have a catalytic and organizing role in the policies on environmental safeguarding and sustainable development adopted at both regional and international levels

He adds that "The ministers' dialogue at this edition of the Forum will address topics such as climate change and its effects, as well as integrated ecosystem management - issues of special importance to our region".

At the end of the three days, the ministers present are expected to approve a declaration recording the main items of consensus reached at the Forum.

The meeting will be held in the **Hotel El Embajador**, Avenida Sarasota 65, Ensanche Bella Vista, Santo Domingo - Dominican Republic

**Note for editors:**

- On the strength of its 15 meetings over the last 35 years, the Forum of Environment Ministers of Latin America & the Caribbean has consolidated its status as a platform for analysis and discussion and an effective mechanism for promoting regional cooperation on matters of environmental safeguarding and sustainable development.
- The support lent by UNEP-ROLAC, as the Forum's secretariat, has not been confined to organizing meetings and preparing the supporting documents: over the years, an alliance has been built up between the governments and UNEP-ROLAC which has helped close the gap between the regional and global environmental agendas.
- In cooperation with the international agencies that participate in the Forum as part of its Inter-agency Technical Committee (ITC) (UNEP, UNDP, ECLAC, the IDB and the World Bank), the Forum has been able to channel international cooperation activities relating to environmental matters in the region. The agencies mentioned help both in identifying sources of funding for projects and studies, and in coordinating rapid, flexible responses to national and regional environmental needs.
- The Forum has also been successful in increasing the participation of Latin American and Caribbean countries at international conferences and other multilateral environmental accords. Illustrative of the significant degree of development reached is the Latin American & Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC). This was the chief outcome of the regional process preparatory to the Sustainable Development summit conference held as part of the Forum's work programme 2001-2002.

- The importance of the ILAC lies in the significance of its regional goals relating to sustainable use and development of biodiversity, and to energy, with an increase to a target 10% of the region's total energy supply to be derived from renewable sources. The development of technologies to maintain the quality of water and its proper management, as well as plans and policies aimed at reducing urban environmental vulnerability to man-made and natural disasters, also lend value to this regional cooperation platform..
- The ILAC was specifically included in the Johannesburg Implementation Plan and involves regional managerial goals and recommends actions in key areas of environmental management and sustainable development. It also seeks viable compromises relating to the Johannesburg Implementation Plan and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- The Ministers Forum has repeated its demand in various international forums that the industrialized nations honour their commitment to allocate 0.7% of their GDPs to official support for development and the implementation the Barbados Action Plan, which addresses the question of the special needs of the region's Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- Aware that the challenge for the region is to stem the rising tide of poverty and inequality while dealing effectively with environmental and social problems, the Forum has stressed the need for action that cuts across various sectors. Issues that have emerged relating to trade and the environment, vulnerability to climate change, public health and use of economic tools in environmental management, among others, have dictated cooperation arrangements with several of the sub-regional ministerial forums and their secretariats.
- Given the need to develop joint initiatives at sub-regional, regional and international level, as well as to make full use of the available resources, the Forum has strengthened its working relationships with sub-regional agencies such as the secretariat of the Comunidad Andina de Naciones, the secretariat of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and with the cooperation mechanism of the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development (CCAD). Relations with groups of parliamentarians, judges and civil society networks have also been improved.

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