



Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean



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Alicia Bárcena

Executive Secretary

This publication contains the full text of Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted in Escazú, Costa Rica, on 4 March 2018. This document is published for information purposes only and does not replace the original authentic texts of the Regional Agreement that are held by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his capacity as depositary.

Updated information on the Regional Agreement and related activities can be found on the website <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>.

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Foreword

In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Member States of the United Nations charted a path towards greater dignity, prosperity and sustainability for people and planet, and pledged to leave no one behind.

Latin American and Caribbean countries have played an important role in advancing this vision through multilateral efforts that have resulted in the only legally binding agreement stemming from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the region's first treaty on environmental matters and the world's first to include provisions on human rights defenders in environmental matters. Adopted at Escazú, Costa Rica, on 4 March 2018, and negotiated by States with the significant participation of civil society and the wider public, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters affirms the value of the regional dimension of multilateralism for sustainable development. By linking global and national frameworks, the agreement sets regional standards, fosters capacity building —particularly through South-South cooperation— lays the foundations of a supporting institutional architecture and offers tools for improved policy- and decision-making.

Above all, this treaty aims to combat inequality and discrimination and to guarantee the rights of every person to a healthy environment and to sustainable development. In so doing, it devotes particular attention to persons and groups in vulnerable situations, and places equality at the core of sustainable development.

In this year in which we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

as well as the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, this landmark agreement has the potential to unlock structural change and address key challenges of our times. It is a powerful instrument to prevent conflict, achieve informed, participatory and inclusive decision-making and deepen accountability, transparency and good governance.

I commend the adoption of the first agreement ever concluded under the auspices of the regional commission, and congratulate all who made it possible. It is now up to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to bring this agreement into effect, for the benefit of present generations and those to come.



António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Preface

On 4 March 2018, the Latin American and Caribbean region made history when it adopted the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, at Escazú, Costa Rica.

Initiated at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and rooted in the tenets of Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Regional Agreement is the fruit of a two-year preparatory phase and nine intense meetings of its negotiating committee. Led by Chile and Costa Rica, as co-chairs, and five other Presiding Officers (Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago), the negotiations brought together government delegates, representatives of the public, experts, academics and other interested stakeholders who participated actively on a collaborative basis and an equal footing.

The result of such an innovative process could not be more inspiring. At a time of increasing uncertainty and profound economic, social and environmental imbalances, and when multilateralism is under intense scrutiny, Latin American and Caribbean countries demonstrated the value of regional action. To advance towards greater environmental rights and protection at the local level

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