

Statement by

**Joseluis Samaniego,
Chief, Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UN ECLAC**

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Welcome remarks

- On behalf of the Executive Secretary of UNECLAC, Mrs. Alicia Bárcena, I would like to especially thank the Government of Montenegro and the Aarhus Convention Secretariat for providing ECLAC the opportunity to address the Parties at the Sixth Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.
- During the past five years the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have been benefiting from the lessons learned and the exchange of experiences coming from the Aarhus Convention, a very unique treaty that explicitly links environmental protection, human rights and access rights.
- As you know, our region has chosen to initiate its own path to strengthen the environmental democracy. And has also agreed to benefit from other experiences, such as the Aarhus Convention, widely recognized as the most far-reaching elaboration of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. We would like to express our recognition and high appreciation for the continuous support provided by the **UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat** to date.

Update of the LAC Principle 10 process

- Initiated in Rio+20 by 10 countries, the LAC process has currently 24 countries negotiating a regional agreement on access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters, with the support of UN ECLAC as Technical Secretariat.

- The regional agreement aims to establish obligations so that Latin American and Caribbean States improve their laws, policies, institutions and practices to guarantee that people’s rights to information, participation and justice in environmental matters— enshrined in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration—are respected and fully implemented.
- The process is at a crucial moment. After the last round of negotiations, in Buenos Aires, Argentina countries are getting close to concluding negotiations. During the next meeting, countries will address the pending issues and negotiate the architectural structure and governing bodies of the future agreement. The opportunity to learn more about the Aarhus Convention governing bodies is and has been much appreciated by LAC countries.
- Let me take this opportunity to thank Ms Ella Belayarova and Mr. Jerzy Jendroska for sharing the institutional aspects and the experience of the Aarhus Convention and its innovative compliance Mechanism. Thank you both.
- While we are approaching the end of negotiations, with the significant participation of the public, and countries are giving shape with great detail to the text of the future agreement, the cooperation and exchange of information with our sister regional commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the signatory countries of the Aarhus Convention, will be greatly appreciated.
- And we will also need your support to help countries of our region get ready to implement the future agreement. The exchange of experiences between regions and the provision of assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean has proven to be key for countries and the public to actively participate in negotiations and will be more needed in the coming years to implement the agreement.
- During the past years, the region has also benefited from the project “*Building Bridges*”, led by the **Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)** with the support of the Government of The Netherlands. More recently, we have undertaken several capacity building activities in Grenada, Dominica and Saint Kitts and Nevis jointly with the REC and with the support of the Ministry of Environment of Italy.

- This is the right moment to get involved in this regional process, in line with the Almaty guidelines, and help maintain the current impulse and the political will strong.

Environmental Democracy and the 2030 Development Agenda

- For UN ECLAC, the ultimate objective of the regional agreement is the strengthening of environmental governance and the realization of the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment through the full application of the access rights enshrined in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration.
- In other words, the Principle 10 process means giving society the opportunity to discuss and decide the direction of their economic development, under the direction of social values, which must prevail over blind market forces.
- Our approach is based on cooperation and capacity-building, contributing also to fostering the regional integration.
- Therefore, capacity building will continue to be a priority in the near future, offering multiple opportunities for bilateral/regional cooperation among Aarhus Parties and the Latin America and the Caribbean region.
- In this line, ECLAC has put in place an observatory on Principle 10 in Latin America and the Caribbean as a clearinghouse of regulatory frameworks, experiences and international related agreements. We thank the government of Germany for the support to this endeavor.
- The timing for intensifying the implementation of Principle 10 regionally could not be more appropriate.
 1. The rights of access enshrined in this principle are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and permeate and are manifested in all the sustainable development goals.
 2. The SDGs expressly link human well-being with environmental quality and just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

3. The standards to be adopted under the regional agreement on Principle 10, as well as the verification mechanisms to ensure its fulfillment, will certainly help the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda.
- The process, in which ECLAC serves as the technical secretariat, is an example of how the countries of our region can face global challenges and bolster regional environmental governance, contributing to social and economic progress as well as environmental sustainability. The process is based on values like a participatory approach, concerted efforts, autonomy, progressivity, cooperation and capacity strengthening.
 - Let me finalize by inviting you to follow with us the ***Eight Meeting of the Negotiating Committee of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Participation and J in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean***, to be held in Santiago, Chile, between 27 of November and December 1st, 2017 at ECLAC's headquarters, where we expect to finalize the negotiation stage of this regional process.
 - Thank you very much for your attention.