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# Building Bridges between Region on implementation of Principle 10 Rio Declaration

REPORT November 4-6, 2014 in Santiago de Chile

Fourth Focal Point meeting in Santiago, on the LAC regional instrument

**Countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region agree to launch negotiations on a regional instrument on access to information, public participation and access to justice rights**

Representatives of 19 Latin American and Caribbean signatory countries of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration agreed on November 6<sup>th</sup> in Santiago, Chile, on the launching negotiations to create a regional agreement promoting access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters.

The Fourth Meeting of the Focal Points [appointed by the governments of the Signatory Countries of the Declaration on the Application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), - an initiative started in 2012 at the Rio+20 Conference, - took place in Santiago at ECLAC Nov.4-6, 2014. At this meeting the countries agreed that that the regional agreement will be based on the [contents of San Jose document](#) drafted in the working group meeting on the instrument held in Costa Rica on September 10-11, 2014.

The delegates agreed to start talks about the regional instrument based on a “zero draft” to be prepared by the ECLAC Secretariat by the end of March 2015. The negotiations should be concluded by December 2016 at the latest. In order to achieve that goal, a negotiation committee was created consisting of representatives from the signatory countries and the public, including two representatives of CSOs/ An Executive Board co-chaired by Chile and Costa Rica was created to coordinate the negotiations the committee will hold. Since the decision on the nature of the instrument was not taken at this meeting, this question should be determined during the upcoming negotiations. The so called “Santiago decision” adopted at the end of the FP meeting includes the decisions on the starting of the negotiations. It also refers to the further assistance needs, urging “international organizations and cooperation agencies to support these efforts and continue working with the Commission to promote regional and national capacity-building, taking account of the needs of the region overall and of each signatory country”, as well as requests “ the Presiding Officers to identify and put forward, with the support of the technical secretariat, means of financing for the negotiation process and for the implementation of the regional instrument”. It also suggests continuing efforts “to bring more countries into the process, strengthen synergies with other international processes and evaluate, in a timely fashion, modalities for institutionalizing the process, including integration into existing regional mechanisms”.



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Alicia Bárcena, ECLAC's Executive Secretary, sent a message to the meeting in which among others she said: "I would like to congratulate you and highlight this practice that is enabling governments and the public to advance together in the construction of a path for the comprehensive implementation of the rights of access contained in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration," She also stressed that the future instrument must not be merely declarative but must be ambitious and establish clear and concrete legal responsibilities that effectively guarantee the three pillars of the rights of access in environmental matters: information, participation and justice.

During the meeting, Jonas Ebbesson, the Chair of the Compliance Committee of the Aarhus Convention participated in a panel discussion on "The current status of the international debate: environmental justice, equity and the environment", giving an overview also of the Compliance Committee of the Aarhus Convention. The representatives of the Regional Environmental Center (REC), Tsvetelina Borissova Filipova, Head of the Participatory Governance Topic Area, and Magda Toth Nagy, adviser, also attended the sessions and contributed to the discussions with their experiences. The participation of Ms Toth Nagy and Ms Filipova was made possible with the kind support of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, The Netherlands within the "Building Bridges project"

The meeting was held with significant participation of the public. Approximately, 40 representatives of civil society groups from the region and other stakeholders attended the sessions.

The Focal Points' meeting also provided opportunities for discussions with the ECLAC and the LAC stakeholders on the further needs and activities which could promote the success of their regional initiative.

Background information: Since 2012, the Declaration on the Application of Principle 10 has been signed by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay. Antigua and Barbuda, Nicaragua and Saint Lucia participated in the meeting as observers. The attendees celebrated the recent incorporation of Bolivia and El Salvador and reminded that the process is open to all Latin American and Caribbean countries.

See more information at [ECLAC website on Principle 10](http://www.cepal.org/rio20/principio10/default.asp?idioma=IN)  
<http://www.cepal.org/rio20/principio10/default.asp?idioma=IN>

