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First meeting of the negotiating committee
of the regional agreement on access to information,
participation and justice in environmental matters
in Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, 5-7 May 2015

**ORGANIZATION AND WORK PLAN OF THE NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL AGREEMENT ON ACCESS TO
INFORMATION, PARTICIPATION AND JUSTICE IN ENVIRONMENTAL
MATTERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

1. Pursuant to the Santiago Decision, the negotiating committee of the Declaration on the application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter “the Committee”) will have the objective of negotiating a regional instrument for the full implementation of the rights of access to environmental information, participation and justice enshrined in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992).
2. The Committee will likewise continue efforts to bring more countries of Latin America and the Caribbean into the process and strengthen synergies with other international processes.
3. With a view to concluding negotiations by 2016, as provided in the Santiago Decision, the Committee will meet periodically in both face-to-face and virtual formats. The meetings of the Committee are open to non-signatory observer countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and the public. During 2015, the following meetings will take place:
 - 5-7 May 2015: First meeting of the Negotiating Committee (face-to-face). Place: ECLAC, Santiago, Chile.
 - 28 July 2015: Intersessional meeting of the Negotiating Committee (virtual).
 - 3 September 2015: Intersessional meeting of the Negotiating Committee (virtual).
 - 27-29 October 2015: Second meeting of the negotiating committee (face-to-face). Place: Panama.
4. To advance in the negotiations, the agenda of the meetings with their corresponding objectives will be circulated in due time (six weeks) so as to facilitate the decision-making process of the Committee. Decisions will be taken by consensus in face-to-face meetings. Meetings of the Committee in which decisions are taken must have a quorum of half plus one of the signatory countries.
5. If necessary, the meetings for 2016 will be determined at the second face-to-face meeting of 2015.
6. The public will have significant participation in the negotiation process in accordance with the provisions and modalities set forth in the Santiago Decision and the Plan of Action adopted in Guadalajara, Mexico, which shall be reviewed, as appropriate, in order to facilitate their application.
7. If necessary, one or more ad hoc working groups may be established to support the negotiations of the Committee and advance towards the regional instrument. The aim of the ad hoc working groups will be to advance discussions on particular matters and prepare proposals for the consideration of the Committee. The meetings of the ad hoc working groups will be virtual and steered by one or two countries in coordination with the Presiding Officers.
8. The ad hoc working groups may comprise all countries serving on the Committee, which may be represented by their delegates thereat or another representative designated by them. Non-signatory observer countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and members of the public may participate in the ad hoc working group meetings per paragraph 3 above. If necessary, the ad hoc working groups may also seek the advice of experts.
9. Each country will undertake such activities and consultations as it requires to prepare for participating in the negotiation of the regional instrument, with a view to enhancing the work of the Committee.
10. So as to favour the participation of the public in the activities and consultations, each signatory country will establish mechanisms and modalities of participation, taking into account its specific circumstances, norms and practices.

11. To carry forward the negotiations, the Committee will be steered and coordinated by the Presiding Officers, comprising Chile and Costa Rica as co-chairs, and Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago as vice-chairs. The Presiding Officers will meet every three months, preferably virtually, or when the circumstances require. The decision to convene special sessions of the Presiding Officers will be taken by consensus.

12. The responsibilities of the Presiding Officers will be to:

- Steer dialogue and the negotiation process of the regional instrument on the basis of this work plan;
- Coordinate with any ad hoc working groups that may be established regarding meetings and other relevant matters and support their work;
- Support the implementation of this work plan;
- Maintain a dialogue, in the framework of the meetings of the Presiding Officers, with the two representatives designated by the public as established in the Santiago Decision;
- Convene, together with the technical secretariat, the meetings of the Committee;
- Chair the meetings of the Committee and ensure that the participation modalities are observed;
- 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;
- Perform other functions arising from agreements adopted at meetings of the process;

13. In its capacity as technical secretariat of the process, the responsibilities of ECLAC will be to:

- Support public participation in the negotiation process;
- Promote and leverage synergies with entities of the United Nations system;
- Continue and intensify the efforts under way to build capacities and cooperation regarding the effective application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in coordination with the Presiding Officers, the signatory countries and the interested public, and subject to the availability of resources and in parallel with the work of the Committee;
- Prepare, in consultation with the Presiding Officers, the documentation for meetings of the Committee, including working documents, the provisional agenda and the annotated provisional agenda, including the objectives and agenda items;
- Ensure that documents for the meetings of the Committee are translated, copied or printed and distributed sufficiently in advance to the countries so that they can make comments and carry out the corresponding consultations;
- Prepare meeting reports;
- Support participation efforts at the national level on the part of the countries, by creating and maintaining a public participation mechanism;
- Maintain a website for the process;
- Report at each meeting of the Committee on activities carried out in the framework of the process, on the basis of reports from the signatory countries;
- Support the identification of financing to ensure the participation of the public in the meetings of the Committee; and,
- Perform other functions arising from agreements adopted at meetings of the Committee.

14. In addition, in preparation for the second meeting of the negotiating committee, the representatives of the participating countries agree to:

- (a) *Initiate or continue* internal activities and consultations, including with the public, on the preliminary document, taking into account the specific circumstances, norms and practices of each country;
- (b) *Submit* language proposals to the secretariat, by 31 August 2015, in relation to the preamble and articles 1 to 10 of the preliminary document;
- (c) *Invite* the public to submit language proposals to their governmental national focal points or to the secretariat by 31 August 2015, in relation to the preamble and articles 1 to 10 of the preliminary document;
- (d) *Request* the Presiding Officers to compile, with the support of the secretariat, language proposals from the countries into the preliminary document and produce a compilation text, and ask the secretariat to compile contributions by the public into a separate document;
- (e) *Negotiate* on the basis of the text compiled by the Presiding Officers at the second meeting of the negotiating committee of the regional agreement on access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in October 2015.