

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



The Escazú Agreement

Placing equality at the centre of sustainable development and **leaving no one behind**



Environmental
Information



Participation
in environmental
decision-making



Access to justice
in environmental
matters



Environmental
defenders



Capacity-building
and cooperation

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Structure of the presentation

1. Context and process
2. Content of the Agreement
3. Status and future developments
4. Linkages with the 2030 Agenda and VNR process

There will not be development without protecting the environment



Three development traps



LAC structural challenges



Triple environmental crisis



Social dissatisfaction and lack of public trust



2030 Agenda at stake

A REGION WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY BIODIVERSITY BUT HEAVILY THREATENED

Pre-pandemic

- 9/15 countries with **greatest loss of primary forests** (2000-2017) are in the region
- **31 areas with eutrophication and 19 dead zones**
- **25% of world's socio-environmental conflicts**
- **Environmental bodies with low budgets, weak or fragmented regulation**
- **Most dangerous region to defend the environment**

Pandemic

- **Greater use of natural resources for subsistence, food and energy**
- **Hike in illegal activities harming the environment**
- **Weakening of environmental laws and environmental impact assessment**
- **Significant decrease in environmental budget and staffing**
- **Growing attacks against defenders**

Why does the Escazú Agreement matter?

Central component for environmental protection and sustainable development

Access to Information

- More and better information
- Transparency and evidence-based decisions

Public Participation

- Clear rules and framework for engagement
- Partnerships and consensus-building for sustainability
- Increased trust in decisions
- Social cohesion and conflict prevention

Access to justice

- Legal certainty framework
- Accountability
- Strengthened institutions

Environmental defenders

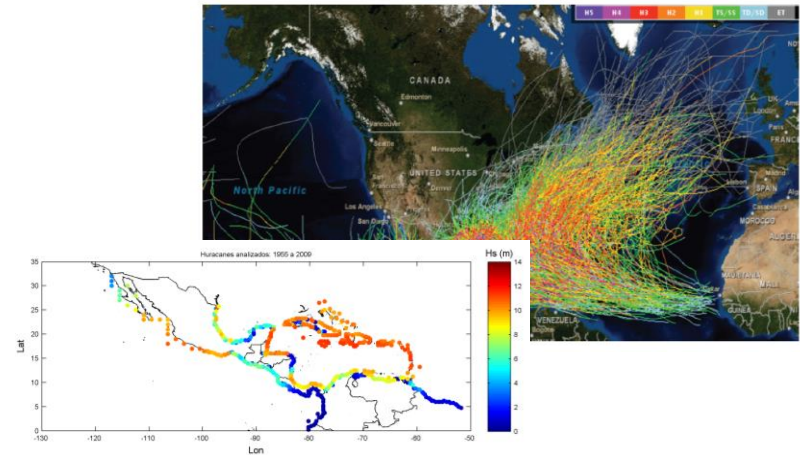
- Caring for those who take care of the environment

Underlying basis of the Escazú Agreement



Environmental issues are best handled with the active participation of all concerned

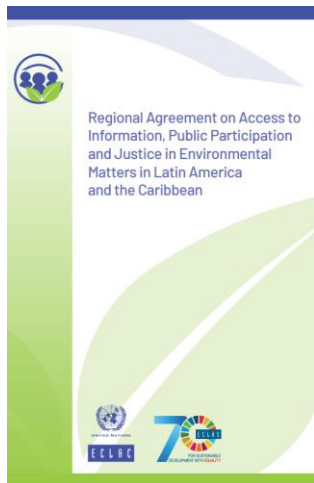
Access to environmental information is critical for sound policy-making



Environmental harm must be prevented and remedied

Regional cooperation is key

Basic facts about the Escazú Agreement



Adopted in Escazú (Costa Rica) on 4 March 2018

Entered into force 22 April 2021

- **Only treaty stemming from the UN Rio+20 Conference**
- **First regional environmental treaty** of Latin America and the Caribbean
- First treaty in the world with specific binding provisions on **environmental human rights defenders**

Open to the 33 LAC countries

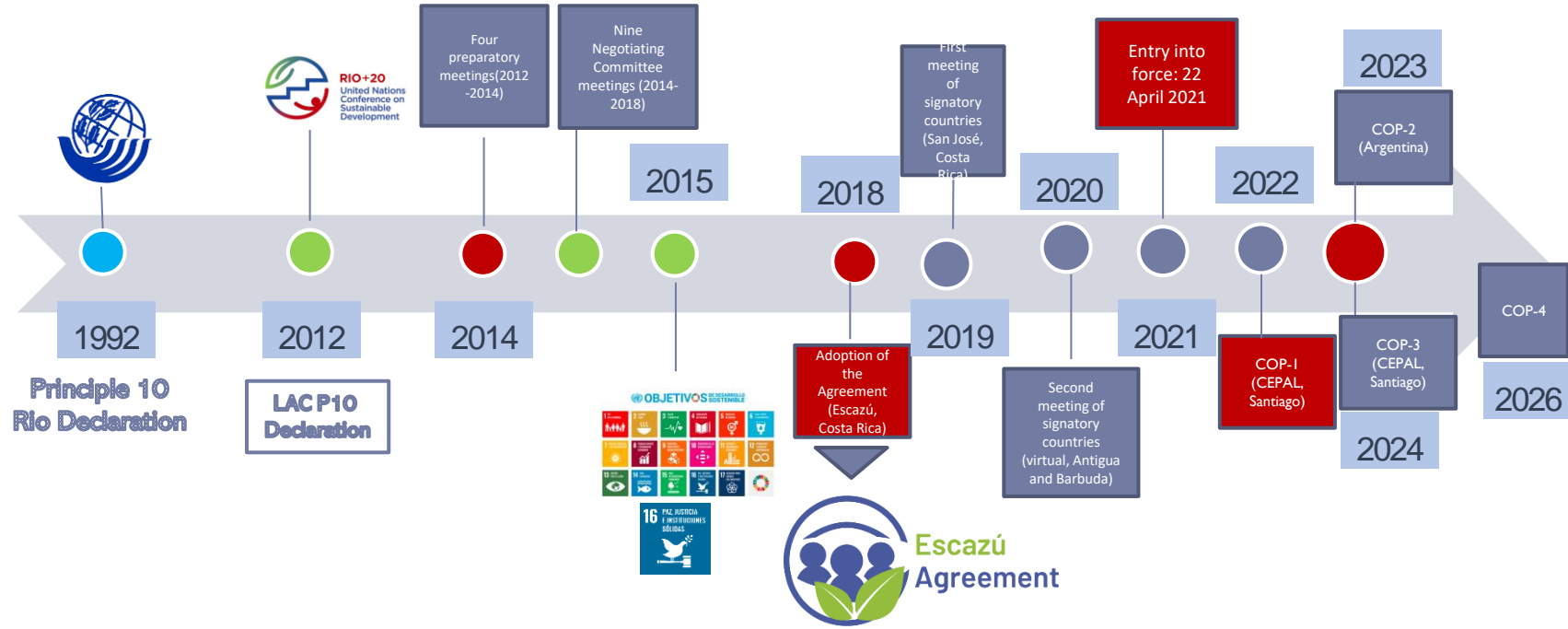
24 signatures

17 ratifications

Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Dominica Ecuador, Grenada, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Uruguay



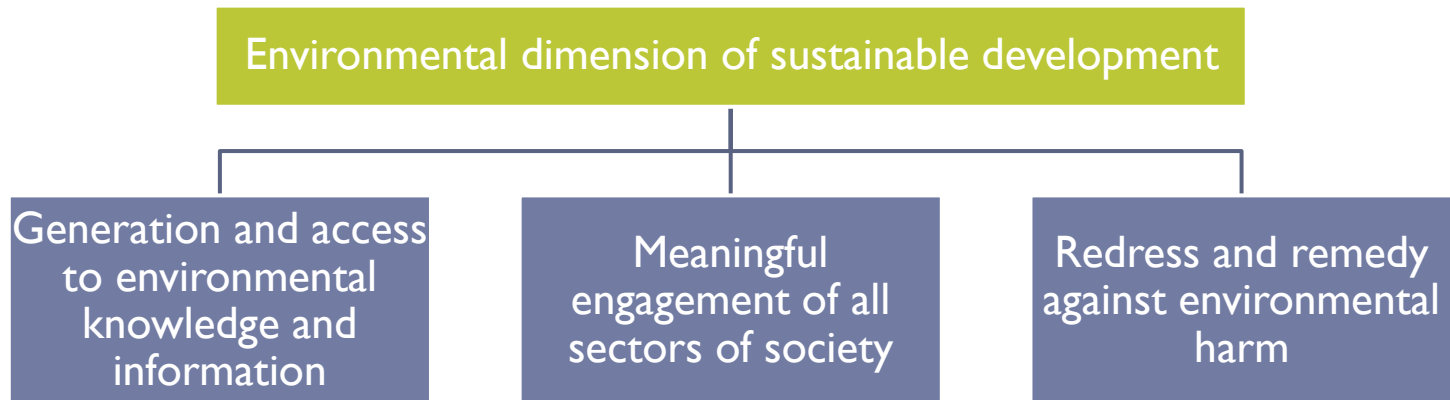
From Río to Escazú



Salient features of the Escazú Agreement



- **Rights-based**
- **People-centered**
- **Leave no one behind**
- **Capacity-building and cooperation**



Special consideration of Small Island Developing States

Implementation support

Progressive realization

Objective (art. 1)

Guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of environmental access rights *and* the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation



Information



Participation



Justice



Capacity-building
Cooperation



contributing to the protection of the right of every person of *present and future generations* to live in a healthy environment *and* to sustainable development.

Structure



General part

- Preamble
- Objective (art. 1)
- Definitions (art. 2)
- Principles (art. 3)

Operative part

- General provisions (art. 4)

First pillar
Access to
environmental
information
(art. 5 and 6)

Second pillar
Public participation
in the
environmental
decision-making
process (art. 7)

Third pillar
Access to
justice
(art. 8)

Fourth pillar
Human rights
defenders in
environmental
matters (art. 9)

Fifth pillar
Capacity-building and cooperation (art. 10-12)

Final provisions (art. 13-26)

- Institutional architecture
- Resources
- Consent to be bound and entry into force

Annex I



UNITED NATIONS

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Implementation guide



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

› IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



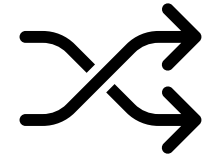
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ECLAC Observatory on Principle 10



- ✓ Treaties
- ✓ Laws
- ✓ Policy instruments
- ✓ Case law
- ✓ Resources
- ✓ Publications



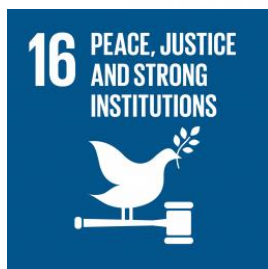


Next steps

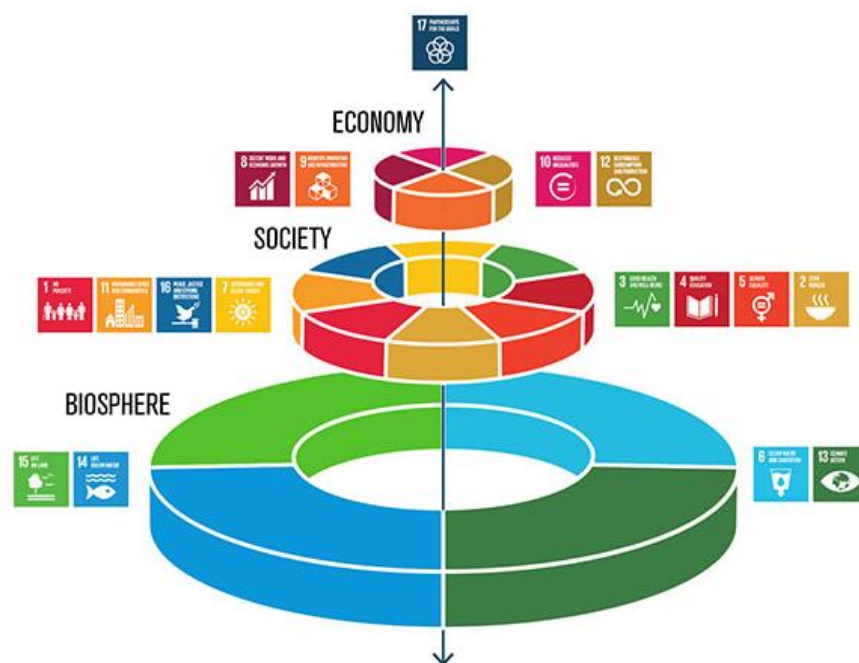
- ▶ Attain full membership
 - ▶ **Support national implementation in Parties**
 - ▶ National implementation plans
 - ▶ COP-4 (22-24 April 2026)
 - ▶ Committee to Support Implementation and Compliance
 - ▶ Human rights defenders in environmental matters
 - ▶ Ad hoc working group
 - ▶ Third regional forum: St Kitts and Nevis (7-10 April 2025)
 - ▶ Awareness-raising, capacity-building and cooperation
 - ▶ Interconnections with other multilateral processes
-

Sustainable Development Agenda and the Escazú Agreement

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



- Ensure equal access to justice
- Effective, accountable and transparent institutions
- Ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making
- Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms
- Non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development



Source: Stockholm Resilience Centre



The Escazú Agreement in VNRs

Examples:

- ▶ Antigua and Barbuda: 2021
 - ▶ Belize: 2024
 - ▶ Chile: 2023
 - ▶ Ecuador: 2024
 - ▶ Mexico: 2021
 - ▶ Panama: 2021
 - ▶ Uruguay: 2022
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Benefits of the Escazú Agreement

- ▶ **Sustainable development and environmental stewardship but much more**
 - ▶ Governance, transparency, accountability
- ▶ **Equality: leave no one behind**
- ▶ **Recognizes and sets out content of rights (HRBA)**
 - ▶ Deepens democracy
- ▶ **Mainly national obligations (towards own societies) with support from the region (assistance, cooperation and capacity-building among States)**
- ▶ **Shared priorities, values and interests**
- ▶ **Sets out regional benchmark**
 - ▶ Levels the playing field
- ▶ **South-South cooperation**
- ▶ **Enhances region's reputation**
- ▶ **Provides legal certainty**
- ▶ **Assists in garnering resources and capacity-building**
- ▶ **Supports implementation of international agreements**
- ▶ **Green/blue recovery**

Final take-away messages



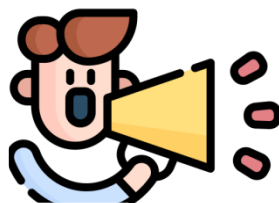
Human rights-environment
nexus



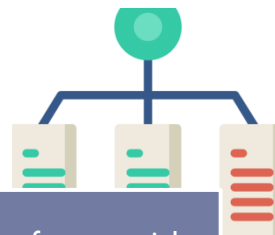
Tangible expression of the
2030 Agenda: leave no one
behind



Obligation of States towards
their societies with
cooperation



First treaty to protect
environmental human rights
defenders



Interconnection of access rights



Centrality of capacity-
building and cooperation

KEY ENABLER TO IMPLEMENT THE 2030 AGENDA

“The region has a valuable tool to seek people-centred solutions grounded in nature”: **the Escazú Agreement.**

By enhancing access to data, knowledge, and information, and by engaging vulnerable groups, **it upholds fundamental values of democratic life and fosters responsive public policies.**

When the agreement enters into force and is implemented, countries will be **better placed to preserve their strategic natural heritage through more inclusive and community-oriented actions**



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC



Acuerdo
de Escazú



Escazú
Agreement

Secretariat – Escazú Agreement

Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division
United Nations, ECLAC

<http://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>

<http://observatoriop10.cepal.org>

#AcuerdodeEscazú

#EscazúAgreement