



## **Regional multilateralism to implement access rights: The leading example of the Escazú Agreement**

**June 4, 2024 // 1.30 – 2.30 pm Nairobi time**

*Organized by the Government of Uruguay and St. Lucia*

*Co-organize by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - Latin America and the Caribbean Office, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)*

*“The Escazú Agreement represents a historic milestone not only for the Latin American and Caribbean region, but for the world. It is the first treaty to create a regime for the protection of environmental human rights defenders –a key issue under my Call to Action for Human Rights. Humanity faces a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Civil society, including youth and indigenous human rights defenders, plays a vital role in advocating for the right to a healthy environment and holding decision makers to account.”*

António Guterres – Secretary-General of the United Nations

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### **Introduction**

Adopted at Escazú, Costa Rica, on 4 March 2018, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup> has as its objective to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters, and the creation and strengthening of capacities and 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. It is the only binding agreement stemming from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the first regional environmental agreement of Latin America and the Caribbean and the first in the world containing specific provisions on environmental human rights defenders.

Its objective is to guarantee the full and effective implementation in the region of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters, and the creation and strengthening of capacities and 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 (article 1). The Escazú Agreement expressly links environmental matters with human rights and ensures procedural rights that are essential to achieve the right to a healthy environment and sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> Thus far, the Escazú Agreement has been signed by 24 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and features 16 States Parties: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Dominica, Ecuador, Grenada, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Uruguay.



As a treaty, the Escazú Agreement is governed by international law and establishes legally binding obligations for States parties. It has been deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, is open to the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and is subject to the ratification, acceptance or approval of the States that have signed it, and to accession by any other country of the region.

At the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-3) held in April 2024, in Santiago, Chile, the States Parties approved a 6-years Action Plan to advance the implementation of Article 9 on human rights defenders in environmental matters and welcomed a Decision to integrate and strengthen the gender perspective in matters related to the Escazú Agreement.

The Escazú Agreement represents a regional effort to strengthen environmental democracy and protect those who defend the planet. It is an example of how countries can join forces to tackle common challenges and strengthen environmental governance with social and economic development, based on dialogue, cooperation, and capacity-building. Its successful implementation could serve as a model for other parts of the world working to develop and implement their own environmental treaties.

## Outcomes

The event seeks to raise international awareness of the Escazú Agreement, share valuable insights and good practices from the region, and facilitate dialogue among national focal points and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Agreement's provisions relates to access rights and the protection of environmental defenders.

- 1) Demonstrate the importance of access rights for environmental protection and sustainable development
- 2) Present the latest development of the Escazú Agreement
- 3) Inspire other regions to prioritize these issues in their own environmental governance frameworks.
- 4) Highlight the critical role of environmental defenders and the need for their protection.
- 5) Identify potential areas of commitment, regional priorities and avenues for enhance collaboration.

## Audience

The event seeks to engage stakeholders from different regions. The broader participation is crucial for enhancing international cooperation to advance environmental access rights and support national efforts and initiatives concerning environmental human rights defenders in environmental matters: national focal points of the Montevideo Programme, youth people, environmental defenders, legal actors, civil society, other UN agencies, etc.

## Format

The event will be held in a hybrid format in **English**, with both **in-person** and **virtual participation**. The event will last approximately **1 hour**.

## Provisional agenda

<b>Side Event</b>	Regional multilateralism to implement access rights: The leading example of the Escazú Agreement	
<b>Date and time</b>	June 4, 2024 – 1:30 – 2:30 pm Nairobi Time (GMT+3)	
<b>In-person participation</b>	Conference Room 9 at the United Nations Office in Nairobi	
<b>On line participation</b>	Microsoft Teams: <a href="https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/3d58ca8c-42d7-4211-ac7c-9b2f7f8970dd@0f9e35db-544f-4f60-bdcc-5ea416e6dc70">https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/3d58ca8c-42d7-4211-ac7c-9b2f7f8970dd@0f9e35db-544f-4f60-bdcc-5ea416e6dc70</a>	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
	<b>Moderator</b> <b>María Candela Zaffiro Tacchetti</b> , Associate Legal Office, UNEP Latin America and the Caribbean Office	
1:30 – 1:40	<i>Welcoming remarks</i>  <i>10 min</i>	<b>Andrea Brusco</b> , Deputy Regional Director, UNEP Latin America and the Caribbean Office.  <b>Carlos de Miguel</b> , Secretariat of the Escazú Agreement, ECLAC.
1:40 – 1:45	<i>The links between ensure procedural rights and the right to a healthy environment and sustainable development.</i>  <i>5 min</i>	<b>Soo-Young Hwang</b> , Legal Officer, United Nations Environment Programme.
1:45 – 2:15	<i>Thematic Panel</i>  <i>30 min</i>	<b>Speakers</b>  <b>Presentation of the Escazú Agreement and main results of the COP 3</b>  <b>Marcelo Cousillas</b> , Ministry of Environment of Uruguay, Co-Chair, Steering Committee of the Montevideo Programme V; Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Escazú Agreement.  <i>10 min</i>  <b>Leading example of national implementation: Roadmap for the implementation in Saint Lucia of the Escazú Agreement</b>

		<p><b>Kate Wilson</b>, National Focal Point of St. Lucia for the Montevideo Programme; Steering Committee of the Montevideo Programme V; Focal Point of the Escazú Agreement</p> <p><i>10 min</i></p> <p><b>Environmental Defenders and the role of the Escazú Agreement</b></p> <p><b>Andrés Troncoso Hormazábal</b>, Lawyer, Department of Environmental Regulation. Law Division of the Ministry of Environment of Chile; Member of the open-ended ad hoc working group on human rights defenders in environmental defenders.</p> <p><i>10 min</i></p>
2:15 – 2:25	<p><i>Discussion panel with intervention of the audience: Perspectives from other regional processes: Aarhus Convention, and recent developments in Asia-Pacific and Africa</i></p> <p><i>10 min</i></p>	<b>Audience</b>
2:25 – 2:30	<p><i>Closure of the meeting</i></p> <p><i>5 min</i></p>	<b>Andrea Brusco</b> , Deputy Regional Director, UNEP Latin America and the Caribbean Office.

## References

- Escazú Agreement: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/items/86cae662-f81c-4b45-a04a-058e8d26143c>
- Implementation Guide of the Escazú Agreement: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f34aaed7-be43-4588-b79b-c769168fa729/content>
- Third Conference of the Parties – Final documents: <https://acuerdodeescazu.cepal.org/cop3/en>
- Roadmap for the Implementation of the Escazú Agreement in Saint Lucia: <https://observatoriop10.cepal.org/en/document/road-map-implementation-saint-lucia-regional-agreement-access-information-public>