

DECLARATION ON THE APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLE 10 OF THE RIO DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Statement by the Governments of Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay:

Twenty years on from the Earth Summit, we reiterate that, as recognized in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens. To this end, each individual should have appropriate access to information, the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings. To comply with this Principle, States should facilitate and encourage public education, awareness and participation by making information widely available and providing effective access to the above-mentioned proceedings.

We also recognize and reaffirm that the rights of access to information, participation and justice regarding environmental issues are essential for furthering sustainable development, democracy and a healthy environment. With these rights come many benefits, such as helping to reach better decisions and implement them more effectively, involving the public in dealing with environmental challenges, furthering accountability and transparency in governance and helping change patterns of production and consumption.

We feel called upon to emphasize that, in keeping with our commitment to Principle 10, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have invested substantial human and financial resources towards its fulfilment. As a result, we have made considerable progress in the legal recognition of the rights of access to information, participation and justice regarding environmental issues through substantive dialogue with civil society and intergovernmental institutions.

Despite our efforts and progress thus far, however, we recognize the need for agreements to ensure proper fulfilment of these rights to access. We are well aware that the environmental challenges faced by our nations, our region and the world require far more concerted, proactive and effective action by the community of nations and international organizations. For this reason we are willing to undertake an in-depth exploration of ways to enhance fulfilment of these rights with the active involvement of the key stakeholders of society and society as a whole.

So, bearing in mind that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development calls for firm political will on our part to face existing and emerging challenges, we declare that:

Commitments must be made to ensure proper fulfilment of the rights of access to information, participation and justice regarding environmental issues as enshrined in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration of 1992. To this end, we declare our willingness to launch a process for exploring the feasibility of adopting a regional instrument, which can go from guidelines, workshops or best practices, to a Regional Convention open to all the countries of the region with significant participation by all concerned citizens. Latin America and the Caribbean can and must take a meaningful step on this front.

The above-mentioned Governments therefore commit to drafting and implementing a Plan of Action 2012-2014, with the support of ECLAC as technical secretariat, to work towards such a Regional Convention or another instrument. As input for such a plan, our Governments hereby request ECLAC to conduct a study of the situation, best practices and needs concerning access to information, participation and justice regarding environmental issues in Latin America and the Caribbean.