

Side Event: Environmental Dimension of the SDGs and Agenda 2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean, within the framework of the VII Forum of the Countries of LAC on Sustainable Development 2024.

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During the event, attention was drawn to the importance of the environmental dimension of Agenda 2030, which should not be relegated or subordinated to the economic dimension, but rather is a fundamental part for the fulfillment of international obligations and responsibilities for the intentional and effective addressing of the triple planetary crisis.

Hunger, accelerated loss of biodiversity, droughts, Amazon destruction, COVID-19 aftermath, deforestation, thawing in southern areas like Chile and Argentina, problems with water scarcity and over-exploitation, unprecedented environmental pollution, among other similar issues, should lead us to question the prevailing and imposed development model based on the plunder and exploitation of peoples and nature.

Latin America and the Caribbean are regions marked by inequality regarding access to natural common goods, which are constantly in dispute due to corruption and impunity in environmental matters that subjugate the peoples of the region in favor of economic and transnational groups. Moreover, it is the most dangerous region in the world for environmental human rights defenders; defending and protecting the environment, water, and land is a task for which hundreds of people lose their lives every year, according to annual reports and global analysis by organizations such as Global Witness and Front Line Defenders.

It was emphasized that high levels of water, air, and soil pollution persist in the region, making it urgent and necessary to transform production and consumption patterns, as well as the energy matrix based on fossil fuel use, as necessary measures to work towards a just transition and a safe climate, allowing for a progressive reduction in greenhouse gas concentrations, plastics, and other pollutants.



There is a strong citizen commitment to promoting the rooting of environmental education in the territory and in sectors of society, considering the important role it plays in involving children and youth in this process, giving them a voice and access to participation in decision-making, ensuring full and effective inclusion at all levels and stages of the

public policy cycle as a significant contribution to achieving the SDGs.

The faces of poverty and hunger are very present in our region and are mainly represented by the exclusion of women, youth, indigenous Afro-descendant peoples, older adults, and LGBTQ+ community, who have been and continue to be historically and systematically left behind.

It is important for the countries of the region to work together to stop patterns of destruction of strategically important ecosystems worldwide, due to the biodiversity and water nuclei that persist there thanks to the care and protection of indigenous peoples and local communities, who have been custodians of this natural heritage through intangible cultural heritage, which represents the living heritage of the peoples of the region.

92% of the surplus greenhouse gas emissions come from the Global North, with the main contributors being the USA, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan.

It is concerning that false solutions to the climate crisis are being promoted, such as carbon markets, which do not guarantee emission reductions but rather promote greater injustices.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) only receive 17% of international climate financing and face limitations because the majority of countries are considered to have medium to high incomes by the World Bank.

Some of the highlighted demands for COP29 include:

- It is an obligation of countries in the Global North to address the "climate debt" to countries in the Global South, which are currently the most affected by the climate crisis.
- Countries in the Global North must meet the goal of mobilizing USD 100 billion annually, which actually should be higher given the financing needs.
- The promotion of the use of instruments and mechanisms that do not increase the current levels of debt of developing countries: "FAIR FINANCING"
- Political will to promote systemic transformations and real solutions that finally halt the climate crisis.

The Escazú Agreement stands as an environmental milestone in the region, concretely expressing the ultimate goal of Agenda 2030: Leave No One Behind, with a particular focus on people and

groups in vulnerable situations, seeking to overcome barriers to the exercise of access rights and prevent all forms of discrimination. It is also the only international human rights instrument that establishes binding provisions for States for the protection of environmental defenders.

It is important to visualize and affirm the connections between the Paris Agreement and the Escazú Agreement and how this linkage serves to energize and deepen the environmental dimension of the SDGs.

A Regional Action Plan on environmental human rights defenders in Latin America and the Caribbean was approved at the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 3) of the Escazú Agreement in April 2024 in Chile.

The objective of the Regional Action Plan is to implement a set of priority axes and strategic actions to advance towards the full and effective implementation of Article 9 on environmental human rights defenders.

Advancing Towards the Final Stretch of the SDGs in 2030

Most of the SDGs, in terms of their level of fulfillment, are on track to achieve only 22% in LAC, considering that we only have six years left to reach the final goals proposed by the SDGs.



SDG 11 was analyzed and how it intertwines and can work synergistically with SDGs 5, 4, and 13, linking aspects such as participation and participatory management, green areas and safe and inclusive public spaces (here connecting with SDG 5 regarding harassment, violence against women, especially in Central America), adequate housing and basic services (there are countries with a huge gap like Colombia, Mexico, Brazil), safe, affordable, and accessible transportation systems (Chile being one

of the countries that has advanced the most), reducing the environmental impact of cities (Costa Rica being a country that has made significant progress in this aspect), and reducing disasters and vulnerabilities.

Conclusions:

Human rights are the fundamental basis for the implementation and achievement of the Agenda 2030 and reaching the SDGs.

There was a widespread consensus on the need to raise awareness about the dangers facing humanity and the planet, dangers that jeopardize the continuity of life as we know it to ensure the rights of current and future generations.

At the close of the event, a strong call was made to elevate the level of commitment and ethical and political will with the environmental dimension of the Agenda 2030, recognizing that the climate crisis is the quintessential existential issue, demanding decisive actions with a sense of urgency to work towards lasting solutions that allow for intentional and effective responses to the challenges faced by peoples so that life as we know it can continue.

