

## **The SDGs and Principle 10**

### **A key partnership for achieving a sustainable development**

There will be no sustainable development without the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) or without the rights of access to information, participation and access to justice in environmental matters, known as access rights.

The Agenda for Sustainable Development began globally in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 with the Conference on Environment and Development. Firstly, there were Conventions; the Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, then Rio+20 with "The Future We Want" and now 25 years later, we have the SDG as a common global platform.

The Agenda 2030 and the Regional Agreement for Principle 10 saw the light together in Rio+20 and this Forum is an unparalleled opportunity for them to be strengthened and implemented together. Both processes are the result of the global political re-articulation of the environmental agenda that emerged from the Rio+20 Summit.

Access rights in environmental matters were adopted in Principle 10<sup>1</sup> in the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992. This Declaration understands that guaranteeing access rights is an inseparable and fundamental task in the pursuit of sustainable development, since the environmental dimension of development is manifested in all aspects of our lives.

Access rights are procedural rights and therefore facilitate the exercise of other rights such as economic, social and cultural rights. These rights should be a fundamental tool for civil society organizations working in various areas.

Our region is rich in natural and cultural resources but at the same time it grapples with great social inequality and environmental conflicts. Although environmental laws and institutions have been created, the challenges are still complex and varied; it is imperative to strengthen both the management and environmental institutions and for this objective P10 and SDG are key elements to reach not only the 2030 agenda but also to contribute to the national environmental management as well as compliance with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Convention on Biodiversity, Climate Change - and the Paris Agreement.

Today 23 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are negotiating a convention for the region, under the co-presidency of Chile and Costa Rica and with the support of ECLAC as Technical Secretariat, on the rights of access to information, participation and justice for

---

<sup>1</sup> "Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided."

sustainable development<sup>2</sup>. The negotiation process is open to the countries of the region that wish to join and it will aim to achieve a significant regional instrument by the end of 2017<sup>3</sup>.

Both processes, the implementation of the SDG and the negotiation of a regional convention on access rights, must be tackled in a comprehensive way from a short, medium and long-term political perspective that will bring together the voices and will of our peoples.

Information, participation and justice allow citizens to get involved in decision-making about public affairs that are of interest to, and affect them. People incorporate the social and environmental dimensions that today are dominated by the economic dimension.

Achieving a legally binding agreement on access rights means a key opportunity for the SDG in Latin America and the Caribbean because it will integrate and balance the three pillars to give them the priority they require in the decisions on the sustainability of our countries.

Access to public information, participation that influences the decisions regarding public affairs, and access to justice are fundamental to the pursuit of gender equality, biodiversity protection, urban planning, agendas to improve primary health services, and natural resource management policies, these are some key areas for sustainable development.

The SDGs are a renewed global effort to address the present and future citizens of our societies with a comprehensive view where environmental and social issues are not the "poor relatives" of development. To end poverty, inequality and degradation of the environment are objectives at the center of any public decision.

We congratulate the Government of Brazil for its proactive and committed presidency in the last round of negotiations of the P10 Regional Convention held in Brasilia from March 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> and the Government of Argentina to continue its commitment to a regional integration by hosting the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Convention to be held from July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 4<sup>th</sup> of this year.

We warmly welcome the launch of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries Forum on Sustainable Development as a long-term effort to exchange views and strategies on the achievement of the objectives of Agenda 2030.

We congratulate the Government of Mexico for the Presidency of this Forum. Given its long and active tradition and leadership in issues of sustainable development and South-South cooperation,

---

<sup>2</sup>The draft of the agreement has 25 articles. In addition to the key articles on information (Articles 6 and 7), public participation (Article 8), access to justice (Article 9) and capacity building (Article 10) there are others on the institutional architecture that will be in charge of supporting and accompanying the Signatory Countries for their proper implementation. More about the Agreement <http://www.cepal.org/es/temas/principio-10>

<sup>3</sup> The process has a Steering Committee that has been mandated by the Negotiating Committee to lead the negotiation with the expectation of finalizing it in December 2017. It is made up of: Chile and Costa Rica as co-chairs, and Argentina, Mexico, Peru , Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago

we encourage Mexico to provide the strongest political support for a robust and meaningful legally binding agreement on access rights in environmental matters for Latin American and the Caribbean, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our region is teaching the world that it is possible to tackle common challenges and strengthen environmental protection in a collaborative and concerted manner while ensuring social and economic progress and Mexico will convey this message to the whole world.

Concrete and strong commitments are required in both processes to achieve agreements that effectively address the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

In this regard, we request the States to:

1. Address the challenge of implementing the Agenda 2030 and Principle 10 with determined political will.
2. Achieve a legally binding agreement on access rights with an ambitious content.
3. Make an effort to integrate and coordinate both initiatives, and avoid addressing both processes separately.
4. In the following forums include the SDG compliance reports, information related to best practices for the implementation of Principle 10 and progress made in the negotiation of the Regional Agreement.
5. Integrate the most vulnerable populations, such as indigenous peoples, peasant communities and others, to P10 and SDG discussions, considering they are important stakeholders in counteracting climate change and achieving sustainable development.
6. Avoid approving legislation that weakens the social and environmental standards that our countries currently have, since they go contrary to implementing the SDGs, as well as violate fundamental rights of our peoples.
7. Address the current context of corruption in extractive enterprises, whose grave actions have been brought to the fore in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting where P10 and SDG can provide an opportunity to promote the highest transparency, accountability and participation in the utilization of natural resources.