

UNEP Newsletter

Latin America and the Caribbean



September - October 2011



UNEP Executive Director visits the region

UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner visits Mexico, Colombia and Brasil

Environmental Journalism Workshop on Integrated Water and Coastal Area Management



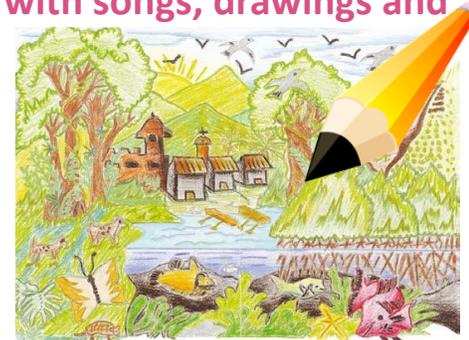
Interview with Helena Caballero

“‘Revolution’ is succeeding in using water resources for multiple purposes while preserving the fluvial ecosystem”

An environmental report with songs, drawings and poems



An analysis and proposals for action by more than 800 young people



The region is preparing itself for Rio + 20

Workshops:

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Environmental Journalism Workshop on Integrated Water and Coastal Area Management
Strategic environmental assessments: a crucial tool for political decision-making

Basel Convention renewed in Cartagena

Historic agreement ends 15-year deadlock over banning North-South movements of hazardous waste



Mexico - The secretary of the Environment announced that Mexico will have a Green Economy Centre. The Centre will encourage synergies between the government and the private sector and consolidate information to allow companies to obtain financing from carbon bonds.

Caribbean - The Dominican Republic and Grenada signed the Nagoya Protocol on biodiversity protection, bringing to eleven the number of Latin American and the Caribbean signatories of the agreement.

Jamaica - Andrew Holness was named prime minister. The 39-year-old Holness became the youngest prime minister in the country's history.

Haiti - Haiti's Senate named Garry Conille as prime minister. Conille has served as an advisor to former United States President Bill Clinton. Ronald Toussaint was appointed minister of the Environment.

Guatemala - Retired general Otto Pérez of the rightist Patriotic Party won the first round in the country's presidential elections, although with 36% of the votes he failed to win outright. Centrist Manuel Baldizón, a hotel entrepreneur and former congressman, received 23% of the votes and will face off against Otto Pérez in the second round on 6 November.

Colombia - President Juan Manuel Santos appointed economist Frank Pearl to head up the new Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, created through the recent split of the Ministry of Housing and Environment.

Bolivia - President Evo Morales announced that the highway against which hundreds of indigenous marchers had protested for 65 days will not be built through the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS).

Argentina - Cristina Fernández, leader of the Justicialist Party and widow of former President Néstor Kirchner, was reelected in the first round of the country's presidential elections with 54% of the votes. This was the largest margin of victory for a presidential candidate since the country's return to democracy in 1983.

Regional - The value of exports from Latin America and the Caribbean will jump 27% in 2011, similar to last year's increase, according to a report presented by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Brazil - Several hundred indigenous protestors and environmental activists occupied the site deep in the Amazon jungle where the Belo Monte hydroelectric plant is being constructed, demanding a halt to the work. A federal judge in Pará had previously banned work that would alter the course of the Xingu River, although the decision may be appealed. The ruling allows work that does not interfere with fishing to continue.

The region is preparing itself for Rio +20

The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) took place at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) headquarters in Santiago, Chile, from 7 to 9 September, 2011. The participating countries presented and discussed their positions on the two major themes of the conference, green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

The discussion promoted by the meeting highlighted the difference in the attitudes toward the concept of green economy. While some countries are already envisaging the potentials associated with green economy as a vehicle towards sustainable development, others are still expressing concerns about its implications. Aspects which raise concerns in the countries of the region include the consequences of green economy on trade, aid conditionality, technology transfer and intellectual property rights.

UNEP continues supporting the LAC countries in their preparatory process towards Rio +20

On 20 September, UNEP Deputy Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Mara Murillo, participated in a National Consultation Meeting for Major Groups and Stakeholders towards Rio +20, organized by the Government of Colombia. UNEP delivered presentations on the two main themes of the Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20: Green Economy (GE) in the

The meeting recognized the need to develop and adopt a new metric to monitor progress towards sustainable development, and Colombia and Guatemala presented a related proposal to define Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which would translate the Green Economy/Sustainable Development debate into tangible goals.

Regarding the institutional framework for sustainable development, a proposal presented by Cuba highlighted the need to strengthen UNEP and replace the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) with a Global Ministerial Forum on Sustainability to address, from a broader perspective, the issues of sustainable development.

As reflected in their conclusions, the countries of the region agreed on the need to identify among the priorities of the sustainable development agenda, the transition towards Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) patterns.

Countries reaffirmed their commitment to address the challenges to achieve sustainable development, which include fostering: the eradication of poverty, the access to safe and appropriate technologies, the fulfillment of mitigation and adaptation commitment, and the restoration of harmony with nature.



framework of sustainable development and poverty eradication and Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. Specific attention was given to the examples from Colombia and the Latin America and the Caribbean region, where countries already demonstrated leadership in the promotion of GE aspects.

This meeting allowed:

- Exchanging information on the preparatory process for Rio+20;
- Initiating the national consultation process and exchanging views on the expected results of the forthcoming

summit and approaches to the Conference;

- Promoting an active participation of representatives of major groups and stakeholders in the national preparatory process

During the meeting, the government of Colombia made reference to its proposal on the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, which was welcomed by the representatives of Colombia's civil society.

Regional Consultation Meeting of representatives of the main civil society groups

UNEP, through its Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, held an important meeting with representatives of the major civil society groups on 5 September in Santiago, Chile. The headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was the venue of the Regional Consultation Meeting for Major Groups and Stakeholders. In attendance were representatives of all the Major Groups: women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers.

Participants from various countries of the region addressed relevant issues on the environmental agenda, in particular the topics to be analysed at the next Conference on Sustainable Development, known as Rio+20: the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the institutional framework for sustainable development, and such issues as the process of developing GEO 5, among others.

In addition to the proximity of the historic Rio+20 meeting, the regional meeting was important because its conclusions will help enrich the discussions of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum and of the sixteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, at UNEP Headquarters in February 2012.



Moreover, the participants reaffirmed that the commitments agreed on twenty years ago (Agenda 21, the Principles of the Rio Declaration and the Rio agreements) remain in effect, and called for their fulfilment. Although they stated that a consensus has not been reached

on the concept of “green economy”, they recognized the need for a transition towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, and called on the United Nations System to step up support to governments in favour of sustainable development.



Strengthening women's leadership



The United Nations System is aware of the importance of fostering leadership among employees, and especially among women. Hence each year the United Nations organizes a course titled “Preparing Women for Leadership”.

Until now, the course was taught in Nairobi, Kenya, and was attended by participants from the different agencies of United Nations System with offices there. This year, with a view to offering the course to a broader audience and avoiding the cost —both financial and ecological— of bringing participants to Nairobi, UNEP proposed holding it in Panama where a number of United Nations regional offices are located.

From 5 to 8 September, 26 women met in this Central American country to analyse their leadership styles and teamwork, the challenges they face in their work, the characteristics of a good team, as well as the importance of networking and setting personal goals. The participants were very satisfied, and stressed the importance of taking the initiative and encouraging and motivating a group to do its work each day.



More information is available at: <http://philipmerry.com/pmcg/>

United Nations Climate Change Conference in Panama



The main objectives for the Panama session, held in Panama City from 1-7 October, were to prepare drafts for Durban Climate Change Conference decisions on as many aspects of cooperative action as possible, and to advance on emission and financial accounting issues and further clarify policy issues related to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. One of the two ad-hoc working groups focuses on further commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, while the other has a broad mandate to enhance cooperative action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Parties under the Convention advanced on decision texts on the modalities and activities of the Climate Technology Centre and Network component of the

new Technology Mechanism. The Transitional Committee on the design of the Green Climate Fund provided an update on the preparations for its final meeting to be held in Cape Town, on 17-18 October. Participants underlined the importance of reaching agreement on key issues related to long term finance in Durban.

Within this context, UNEP was invited to present two important projects financed by the Government of Spain: MultiCriteria Analysis for Climate Change (a methodological tool to help developing long term GHG emissions reduction policies) and Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action in Latin America and the



Caribbean (designed to coordinate climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts and offer support through a broad range of capacity building activities and advisory services to countries of the region).

The Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) On The Move

The Second Meeting of the CBC Technical Group and the CBC Ministerial Policy Group of the UNEP/EC/CBC Project was convened in Barahona, Dominican Republic, on 26-27 and 28 October 2011, respectively. The CBC Technical Advisory Group Meeting was preceded by a meeting to Support the Implementation of a Marine Action Plan for the CBC organized by The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

On the basis of the recommendations made by the CBC Technical Advisory Group, the CBC Ministerial Policy Group adopted a number of decisions to ensure

the effective implementation of the project and its contribution to the broader programme of the Biological Corridor of the Caribbean. The decisions would promote synergies between the project and the GEF financed Protected Areas Projects in Haiti and the Dominican Republic; the official opening of the Propagation/Training Centre at Dosmond, Haiti, before the end of the year; and the establishment of formal links between the Caribbean Biological Corridor initiative and the Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), a programme supported by UNEP, FAO and the Global Mechanism/United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (GM/UNCCD).



The CBC Ministerial Policy Group also approved the Work Programme of the Tri National Project Unit for the second phase of the project up until June 2012. The CBC Ministerial Policy Group welcomed the commitment expressed by the World Food Programme to fully participate in a number of areas of the UNEP/EC CBC Project, in particular the development of livelihood options and rural development.

Moving towards an international agreement on mercury

For one week, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean work to identify priorities and adopt common positions

Mercury was first used in Latin America and the Caribbean more than 500 years ago in gold and silver mining, and it later spread to numerous other applications, owing to its unique qualities. However, mercury release and exposure today cause concern because of the metal's adverse effects on health and the environment.

This led the international community to begin work in 2010 on formulating a legally binding global instrument on mercury, in order to protect human health and the environment from the release of mercury and its compounds. In November, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which was created with this purpose in mind, will meet for the third time, in Nairobi.



The meeting aims to see that the countries adopt the text of the agreement in 2013.

In preparation for the INC meeting, UNEP organized a Regional Consultation Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Panama, from 19 to 23 September. Funding for the meeting was provided by the Government of Spain, and it was attended by a total of 75 participants from a majority of countries of the region as well as representatives of NGOs and various international agencies.

This high degree of participation is an example of the strong interest this issue has elicited among the countries of the region, which have been very active during the entire process.

The countries worked intensely throughout the meeting to review the current draft of the future agreement, in order to identify critical points for the region and adopt common positions, which will be relayed to the Nairobi meeting. In addition, different initiatives and projects that the countries are implementing in the region were presented. The topics included, for example, improving conditions in small-scale and artisanal gold mining. Although this type of mining provides a livelihood for families in certain countries, it also entails a risk to the population because of mercury exposure.



For more information on UNEP efforts regarding mercury, visit:

<http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Mercury/tabid/434/Default.aspx>

Basel Convention renewed in Cartagena

Historic agreement ends 15-year deadlock over banning North-South movements of hazardous waste

Cartagena Conference adopts a package of strategic decisions for waste avoidance and management

It is Friday, 21 October, the final day of meetings of the Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal—a convention whose Secretariat is administrated by UNEP. An expectant silence sets in at the plenary of the Convention Centre in Cartagena, Colombia. Only when the COP chair, Paula Caballero (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia), bangs the gavel do the delegates from 118 countries rise in an emotion-filled, resounding applause.

A week of intense negotiations was thus capped by the adoption of a decision ending a 15-year deadlock on an amendment to ban the export of hazardous waste from Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries to other countries. The decision includes a series of measures to strengthen control over transboundary hazardous waste movements and improve the effectiveness of the Convention in general. It is the result of a work process initiated at the last Conference of the Parties in 2008 and was led by the Governments of Switzerland and Indonesia.

The Conference, which after 20 years has returned to the Latin America and the Caribbean region—COP 1 was held in Uruguay in 1992—, adopted more than 25 decisions, including a new Strategic Framework for the implementation of the Convention over the years 2012-2021, as well as a series of technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of different types of waste, including mercury.

Also noteworthy is the adoption of the **Cartagena Declaration** on preventing, minimizing, and recovering hazardous waste. The Declaration calls for decoupling economic growth from waste generation through prevention at source, design, and cleaner production. The Declaration also recommends that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) include waste prevention and recovery as a key contribution to the three pillars of sustainable development.



In addition, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) met over the weekend prior to the Conference (with the support of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean) to discuss the Conference's strategic topics and adopt common positions, in particular regarding the need for greater financial and technical support for developing countries. The group also stressed the need to recognize and reinforce the training and technology transfer work of the regional centres.



Clearly, “in Cartagena we have demonstrated that multilateralism works”, said Paula Caballero, in reference to the countries' ability to reach agreements on common challenges. UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner added that this outcome sends a positive message for other ongoing negotiation processes, such as the international treaty on mercury. Steiner added that this sets an example of how environmental protection reduces poverty and promotes social equity in addition to promoting a green and sustainable economy, which will be the central topic of next year's Rio+20 Conference.





UNEP Executive Director visits the region

UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner visited the region during these two months. His agenda in Colombia was not limited to his participation at the Conference of the Parties of the Basel Convention. His activities included meetings with the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, the Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Frank Pearl, the Senior Advisor for Biodiversity, Climate Change and Environmental Management, Sandra Bessudo, and the Director of Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paula Caballero. Among other issues, the meetings focused on the ways in which the country could move towards a green economy as well as on Colombia's

proposal for the establishment of sustainable development goals in the framework of the Rio +20 Conference.

From Colombia he travelled to Brazil for a three-day visit, from 23 to 25 October, to gain more insight into preparations for the upcoming Rio+20 Conference. The UNEP Executive Director met with government and non-government representatives of the National Commission for Rio+20, created to coordinate the participation of the different sectors of Brazilian society in the Conference.

Mr. Steiner also met with the Minister of the Environment, Izabella Teixeira, and with Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministries of the Environment and of Foreign Affairs are both playing an especially important role in coordinating international negotiations and handling the country's preparations for Rio+20.

Among other activities, the UNEP executive director attended a meeting with the United Nations team in Brazil at which there was a debate on green economy. In addition, he signed an agreement with the Ministries of Sports and the Environment to make the 2014 World Cup in Brazil "greener".

Before his trips to Brazil and Colombia, the head of UNEP had an equally productive visit to another country in the region, Mexico, on 12 and 13 September. In Mexico, Mr. Steiner took part in the Ministerial Meeting on Short-Lived Climate Forcers (SLCF), organized by the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), the Government of Sweden and UNEP. The meeting was attended by ministers and representatives of 22 countries.



In the words of Mexico's Secretary of the Environment, Juan Rafael Elvira, "this first meeting was a multiregional effort that laid the foundations for moving forward on reducing these pollutant gases that have a great repercussion on human health and the environment".

Achim Steiner emphasized that quick action on the SLCFs can help keep the temperature rise to less than 2° C, and perhaps even less than 1.5° C, according to UNEP scientific reports. The participants agreed that any SLCF initiative on gases should complement the long-term process of CO2 reduction, and both types of measures should be considered and simultaneously reinforced through the implementation of low-CO2-emissions development strategies.

Within the framework of the Ministerial Meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Green Economy was signed between UNEP and SEMARNAT. The agreement aims to facilitate the country's transition towards low-carbon sustainable development. To this end, it was announced that a Sustainable Economy Centre will be created and operated, along with a climate change adaptation programme and a similar cooperation network in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The UNEP Executive Director also met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa, with representatives of the Secretariat of Energy and with other Mexican authorities to dialogue on the process towards Rio+20, energy efficiency, renewable energies and the green economy.

During his visit, Mr. Steiner took part in a **meeting with private sector leaders to focus on** companies' important role for the achievement of a green economy and the country's great challenges in environmental matters.



The UNEP executive director was also invited to a **meeting with senators**, in which he emphasized the potential for the Senate to make a contribution by enacting laws to promote the country's agenda towards achieving a cleaner, more equitable economy that will mitigate environmental risks.



Achim Steiner's visit to Mexico concluded with a **meeting with Mexican President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa**. The meeting focused on issues related to the green economy, Rio+20 and Mexico's leadership in international negotiations on climate change. Mr. Steiner recognized the Mexican government's important progress in the last five years on the environment and sustainability, especially regarding climate change.



Sustainable Morning Dialogues

On October 7th, the Ministry of Environment hosted the first meeting of a series of six “Sustainable Morning” dialogues that will be promoted monthly in the road towards Rio+20. The main objective is to share knowledge and disseminate information among officials of the Ministry on the key-issues that will be discussed at the Conference. Each meeting will deal with a different theme. The UNEP Brazil Representative delivered the speech on Green Economy, which was the theme of the opening dialogue. The participants were able to learn about the concept as well as the international context. The next meeting will focus on “Sustainable Production”.

Can a Football World Cup leave a green legacy?



On September 28-29, the Coordinator of UNEP’s Office in Brazil took part in a conference organized by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Brazilian Ministry of Sports in Manaus. The event, entitled “World Cup 2014: Sustainability and Legacy” dealt on how major sports events can leave a positive and sustainable development impact and share experiences from past events. The World Cup 2014 to be held in Brazil represents a unique opportunity for the country to maximize the economic, environmental and social benefits well beyond the event itself.

The conference brought together officials from the 12 Brazilian host cities and international experts from past and future hosts such as Korea, Germany, South Africa, England and Spain, as well as experts from the private sector, from the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and civil society organizations.

Sustentável 2011



Sustentável is the main event carried out by the Brazilian Business Council on Sustainable Development (CEBDS), in which representatives of corporations, governments, academy, and civil society gather for a debate about the latest issues in sustainability.

On September 28th, UNEP ROLAC Director, Margarita Astrálaga, participated in *Sustentável 2011*, as part of the panel on the perspectives of Rio+20. She presented the findings of the UNEP report *Towards a Green Economy*.

Sustentável 2011 is supported by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), in partnership with UNEP, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - Brazil, the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Worldwatch Institute (WWI). The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss with relevant stakeholders the agenda of sustainable development and its implication for the national and regional context.

Brazilian Environmental Envoys

Each year, Bayer Brazil, in partnership with UNEP Brazil, promote a national process in order to select four young environmental envoys to participate in a week-long study tour at the Global Headquarters of the Bayer Group in Germany, to experience how environmental protection is practiced by people, government and industry.

This year, however, Bayer Brazil chose eight envoys, four of which participated in a week-long study tour in Brazil, as a way of awarding the young ambassadors who presented great projects but do not speak English. UNEP delivered a presentation on its work to the Young Environment Envoys as one of their local activities. UNEP also took part in the awards ceremony. Both events were held in Sao Paulo, on 22 September.



Environmental cinema continues to make its way through Mexico



On 5 September 2011, the festival was presented in the city of Mérida, Yucatán.

Taking part in the event were Dr. Eduardo Batllori, Yucatán State Secretary of Urban Development and Environment, the Yucatán regional office of the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) and the Mérida City Council.



The Itinerant Film Festival "FICMA: CINEMA AND THE ENVIRONMENT" continues to be a hit in its screenings in several countries of the region and, in particular, in several cities in Mexico.

This selection of full-length and short films of the International Environmental Film Festival (FICMA, by its initials in Spanish) and UNEP has not left moviegoers indifferent. Adults and youngsters alike have felt moved, laughed, enjoyed themselves and thought about the environment and the relationship between human beings and their natural, social and cultural setting.

The Seventh Art has served to showcase the history of the modern environmental movement, investigate what we really know about plastic or introduce us to Green, a female orangutan who is the victim of deforestation and the overexploitation of natural resources.

UNEP Representative in Mexico Dolores Barrientos stressed the importance of educating the up-and-coming generations and raising their awareness of environmental matters and their responsibility to act in favour of sustainable development.

On 21 September 2011, it came to Mexico City

The inauguration included the participation of the Centre of Education and Training for Sustainable Development, the International Affairs Coordination Unit of SEMARNAT, the Mexican Institute of Cinema, the Mexican Youth Institute, the National Museum of Art and the UNEP Mexico office.



On 26 September 2011, the festival surpassed expectations in the cities of Tuxtla Gutiérrez and San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas

The event was organized by the Chiapas State Youth Institute, which invited the National Chamber of the Manufacturing Industry (CANACINTRA) to the inauguration along with the Chiapas Secretariat of



the Environment, the SEMARNAT regional office in Chiapas and the Descartes School of Cinema in Tuxtla Gutiérrez.

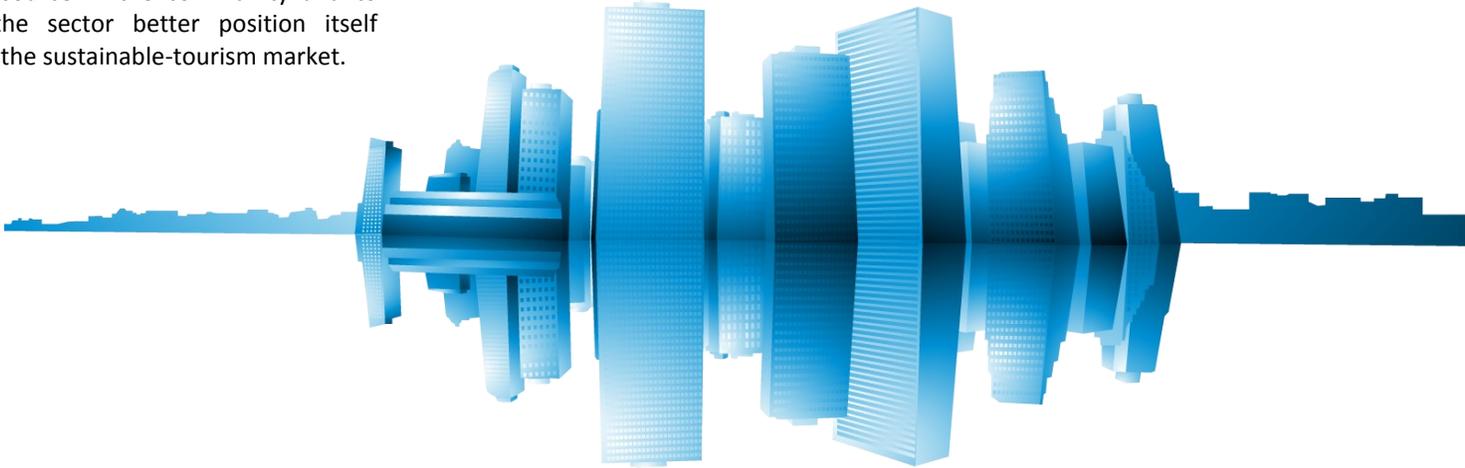


Emblem for Hydro-Sustainable Hotels in Mexico

The Hydro-Sustainable Hotel Emblem is a new initiative to promote sustainable water management in hotels in Mexico in order to reduce water consumption and costs, so as to ensure the availability of this resource in the community and to help the sector better position itself within the sustainable-tourism market.

The Alliance for Water Sustainability in Tourism, comprising the Ministries of Tourism and Environment of the Federal District, the Mexico City Water System, Universidad Anáhuac, the European Network for Sustainable Tourism Development (ECOTRANS), UNEP and the Helvex Foundation, launched the Hydro-Sustainable Hotel Emblem at the International Tourism Trade Show in Mexico City.

The initiative will gradually spread throughout Mexico. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that the emblem becomes a tool to promote not only water sustainability but also energy efficiency, renewable-energy use, waste management and good labour practices.



Proposed Climate Change Law in Mexico

Few countries have legal instruments on climate change. Mexico has just taken an important step to join the group of countries that have such legislation. The UNEP office in Mexico participated in the presentation of the draft General Law on Climate Change proposed by the Special Commission on Climate Change of the Senate of the Republic.

The bill was presented by Senator Alberto Cárdenas Jiménez before more than 120 experts from donor countries, international cooperation agencies, specialized consultancy firms and representatives of the public and private sectors and civil society.

The purpose of the General Law on Climate Change, as Senator Cárdenas explained, is to define the powers of the Federal Government and of states and municipalities to formulate and implement public policies that will regulate plans and actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. It also seeks to lay the groundwork for coordination with society on measures in favour of a transition towards a competitive and sustainable low-carbon-emissions economy. The proposed law would encourage research on climate change and support efforts by public institutions to curb it.



Institutional collaboration in Uruguay, to reduce poverty and protect the environment

When campaigns are carried out jointly, they sometimes reinforce each other and obtain better outcomes. Such is the case of fighting poverty and protecting the environment. On 9 and 27 September, the national partners of the Poverty and the Environment Initiative (PEI) conducted Joint Strategic Planning Sessions in Uruguay. This is a joint project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP, with the collaboration of several Uruguayan institutions: the Office of Planning and Budget (OPP, by its initials in Spanish), the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES, by its initials in Spanish), the Ministry of Housing, Land-use Management and the Environment (MVOTMA, by its initials in Spanish) and the Montevideo municipal government.

The joint effort aims to strengthen, at the level of the Uruguayan State, the linkage between the two issues —poverty and environment— in the public-policy life cycle.

Starting with a concrete programmatic area —housing— partners will incorporate tools of strategic planning, communication, negotiation and assessment of public policy. Within this

area, the focus will be the National Relocation Plan, promoted by the MVOTMA, to generate a new methodological design that will guide the Ministry's interventions starting in 2012 and allow for the construction of a common framework for joint action for the remainder of the current government's term, which runs from 2010 to 2015.

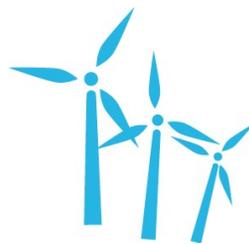


A chance for sustainable housing in Uruguay

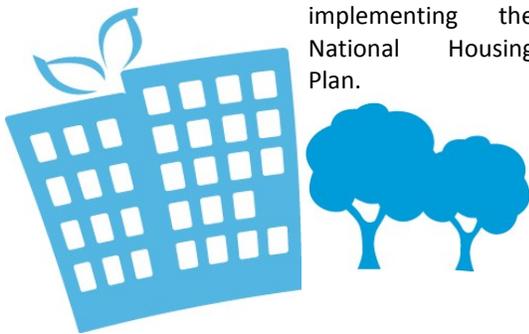
As part of the dialogue ahead of Rio+20, and in the context of the green economy, UNEP and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) are supporting the Ministry of Housing, Land-use Management and Environment (MVOTMA, by its initials in Spanish) in a bid to promote construction according to sustainability criteria. The objective is to incorporate sustainable social housing as one of the emerging themes in implementing the National Housing Plan.

To this end, an open call was made for the hiring of a professional to support the ministry by formulating recommendations for sustainable

These efforts will make it possible to draw up the rules for a contest to propose ideas and a preliminary project for sustainable housing in four different locations in Montevideo selected by MVOTMA. Each of the locations will be in a different neighbourhood, and therefore the guiding principles in each context will vary, with different solutions for constructing social housing being offered in each case.



practices to be incorporated into the design, construction and implementation of different social-housing solutions promoted by the public housing system and, in particular, by MVOTMA, in the framework of the National Housing Plan 2010-2014.



First regional report on resource efficiency

On 20 September, UNEP gave the global presentation of *Resource Efficiency: Economics and Outlook for Latin America*, after consultations on the final version of the report were opened to the countries of the region at the June meeting of MERCOSUR ministers, in Asunción, Paraguay. The importance of the report lies in that it transcends conventional economic analysis, focusing on the key role of sustainable resource management for socio-economic development, for the well-being of the population and for the international integration of the countries of each

The analysis presented in the report is accompanied by a description of four possible future scenarios, based on how changes in variables affect resource efficiency and sustainability. These scenarios can be very useful tools for formulating and implementing policies, given that changes in the variables produce very different outlooks for our development from 2010 to 2030.

Presentation in Mexico of the Resource Efficiency: Economics and Outlook (REEO) report.

Brazil also welcomes the launch of the REEO report.

In Brasilia, the press conference included the participation of Mr. Volney Zañardi, representing Brazil's Ministry of the Environment, Ms. Maria Amélia Enriquez, member of the UNEP International Panel on Resources, and Ms. Elisa Tonda, UNEP Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency.

At the press conference, recommendations for the report and its implications for Brazil's mining sector were examined along with environmental



region.

The design and formulation of public policies oriented towards resource use efficiency can play an instrumental role in these efforts. Greater resource efficiency would contribute to achieving greater sustainability along with competitiveness, to improving the profile for productive specialization and to allowing the countries of the region to better position themselves in the global economy.

The study focuses on energy and climate change and on water and land use, and examines these issues in the light of several case studies of policies and initiatives carried out in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The press conference was organized by the UNEP Mexico office. Taking part in it were Dolores Barrientos, UNEP representative in that country; Carlos Muñoz, of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana; and Iván Islas, Director of Environmental Economics for Mexico's National Ecology Institute.

Ms. Barrientos said that one of Latin America's greatest environmental challenges is to greatly raise energy consumption efficiency. She added that Mexico needs to make a transition towards a model of clean energy development and use that will put the country on the path to a green economy.

development strategies in the context of the MERCOSUR region and the connection with UNEP's REEO report on Decoupling natural resource use and environmental impact from economic growth.



Aligning efforts for the sustainable management of critical resources in the region

On 14 and 15 September 2011, while the Fifth Congress on Development and the Environment (V CISDA 2011) was taking place, UNEP and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) held the third training workshop and the close of the “Strengthening National Capacities for Sustainable Resource



Natural resources are the key for the development of the region, in both its economic and its social dimensions. The role of Latin America and the Caribbean in the global economy is largely shaped by the fact that it provides natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable. This means that it is essential that the countries of the region be given the tools and knowledge that will allow them not only to exploit and use these resources but to do so while focusing on sustainability.



Sustainable resource management includes plans and actions to guarantee the use and continuous provision of resources in order to meet the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs, taking into account environmental, social and economic impacts throughout the life cycle of material resources.

Management” (GESRE, for its Spanish abbreviation) project, in Santa Fe, Argentina. The workshop aimed to encourage the stepped up coordination of initiatives in the region in the sphere of sustainable resource management and to share studies and tools available for this purpose. Argentina, Barbados, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Peru presented examples of good GESRE practices —which were promoted throughout the regional project— in order for them to be replicated, as well as guidelines on designing public policies that will allow the region to make progress in adopting more solid and consistent sustainable development processes.

Attending the workshop were 43 participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Venezuela, in addition to experts from Canada and Spain.

Further information is available on the event’s web page: http://www.pnuma.org/eficienciarecursos/Taller_GESRE_Ar.php

Justices of the region focus on environmental protection and defence

The Third Meeting of Justices of the Andean Community and MERCOSUR, held from 4 to 6 October in Buenos Aires, was organized by the Court of Justice of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the Supreme Court of Justice of Argentina with support from the General Secretariat of the Andean Community. The meeting brought together Supreme Court Justices from the four CAN members (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) and from the four MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), as well as Magistrates of the Andean Court of Justice and arbitrators of the MERCOSUR Permanent Review Tribunal.

Because the Third Meeting centred on environmental protection and defence, and in view of the long history of joint efforts, UNEP was invited to present an overview of legislation and environmental responsibility in the region. The conclusions drawn and the recommendations made at the meeting underscore the importance of the environmental topic for the region’s judicial agenda and of the key role played by justices in preventing the emerging socio-environmental disputes in our countries from entailing a violation of our peoples’ environmental rights and their right to development.



Participants noted that the judiciary has a legal and ethical responsibility and that it has been called on to exercise leadership in promoting and safeguarding citizens' right to a healthy environment in addition to the rights of nature. They also emphasized the need to move forward in implementing the rights of access to information, public participation and access to justice in the regulatory development of the principles of environmental law, in awareness building and training, and in cooperation among all State bodies in order to meet the challenges of sustainable development.



In addition, the recommendations included practical proposals for assisting justices in dealing with the growing, and increasingly complex, judicial cases involving environmental issues, such as the creation of a portal of environmental jurisprudence based on contributions from judges and courts in the region.



The genes of nature: shared wealth

Launch of a regional project to facilitate implementing the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing

Grenada is the most recent country of the region to sign a protocol whose name is as long as its objectives are broad: The "Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity".

Eleven countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have now signed the protocol, thereby initiating the process to ratify it. One of the greatest challenges facing all of the countries that join the Protocol, especially developing countries with high genetic wealth, which is the case of many in the region, is the need to enhance their capacity to develop and implement the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol related to the access to and sharing of benefits and the traditional knowledge associated with them.

The regional project "Strengthening the Implementation of Regimes on Access to Genetic Resources and Sharing of Benefits in Latin America and the

Caribbean" was launched to help them meet this challenge. The project is being carried out by UNEP and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Regional Workshop in Panama

The first activity in the project was the Regional Induction Workshop, held from 30 August to 2 September in Panama, with close to 30 participants, including national authorities and regional experts on access to genetic resources.

The workshop provided an opportunity to exchange knowledge, opinions and experiences on topics of regional interest in the field of genetic resources; examine participating countries' progress in regulating this issue; prepare an initial list of instruments, policies and case studies; identify stakeholders, etc.

The encounter was a unique occasion to address crucial issues: How is the great wealth of genetic resources in our region to be valued and protected? What challenges and opportunities does bioprospecting entail? How is the traditional knowledge of our local communities and indigenous peoples recognized?

The project is being carried out in eight countries of the region: Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Panama, and Peru.

Journalists as protagonists of change

Environmental Journalism Workshop on Integrated Water and Coastal Area Management

Communication is a tool for change. It is the tool that we all use for debating, for reflecting, and for networking with those around us and for constructing and nurturing the culture to which we belong. For UNEP, communication is essential, because, with its efforts, it seeks to construct a new culture: a culture centred on the environment and sustainability.

What role do the media play in constructing a culture centred on the environment and sustainability?



That was one of the ideas that characterized the debate at the Environmental Journalism Workshop on Integrated Water and Coastal Area Management, in Panama City, from 14 to 16 September. UNEP organized the event, although the participants —31 journalists from 16 Latin American countries— and the speakers set the pace of this interesting exchange of knowledge and experiences regarding one of the most pressing challenges for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean: water resources management.

The scarcity of water, the degradation of the quality of water as well as the management of water are crucial issues for our environment. Fresh water is essential for the maintenance of life, for development and for the environment, but it is a vulnerable and finite resource. Sustainable water management requires an integrated approach, from the mountaintops to the coasts, based on understanding the water cycle.

Over the three days that the workshop lasted, debate centred on the recognition of the values —social, environmental, as well as economic— of water and of natural resources in general. This is the work that UNEP has been carrying out with its reports on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity. Nature performs services of great environmental, social, economic, and cultural value, but if we fail to appreciate the cost-benefit of these services, they risk being ignored in decision-making.

The journalists who took part in the workshop have created virtual platforms for sharing knowledge, debating and networking. The news, reports or interviews that they publish and broadcast reach decision makers and help raise the awareness of society overall in Latin America and the Caribbean. Their work is a key element of environmental protection.

“The environment is a social product, and therefore a mirror that nature places before us, reflecting the type of society that we are”, noted Guillermo Castro, academic director of the Panama-based Ciudad del Saber Foundation, during the workshop. Creating a different society is up to us; on the road to this different society, the journalists workshop is now bearing fruit.

Interview with Helena Caballero, one of the speakers at the workshop

Helena Caballero, a Spanish national, is an advisor to UN Water and a specialist with a long and distinguished career in water resources management.



In one of the workshop presentations, you described Integrated Water Resources Management as “revolutionary”. Could you explain why?

'Revolution' is succeeding in using water resources for multiple purposes such as water supply and sanitation, agriculture, industry, urban development, hydroelectric power generation, inland fishing, transport, recreational activities, land management and other activities, preserving at all times the fluvial ecosystem and ecosystems associated with freshwater bodies. That is, achieving the sustainable community development, clearly understanding that preserving the ecosystems that provide us with an essential service such as water, and on which our lives depend, is absolutely essential and imperative.



Sustainable water management cannot take place without integrated water resources management.

What are the main challenges of water management with regard to the green economy and your expectations ahead of Rio+20?

At Rio+20 we hope to see the undertaking of commitments to set aside at least 0.16% of global GDP for moving forward on the following challenges:

Securing water for people. One fifth of the world's population lacks access to safe drinking water, and half lacks access to adequate sanitation.

Securing water for food production. Irrigation agriculture currently accounts for more than 70% of water consumption. If additional needs for irrigation water arise in coming years, there could be serious conflicts among water users (agriculture, other human uses and ecosystems).

Carrying out other activities that create decent and socially inclusive work.

Protecting vital ecosystems. Aquatic ecosystems produce economic benefits. Water and land resources management must guarantee that ecosystems remain alive and that adverse effects on other natural resources are considered for decisions on development plans.

“Irrigation agriculture accounts for more than 70% of water consumption”

What is your perception of the priorities and advances regarding water resources management for Latin America and the Caribbean? How do they differ from those of other regions of the world?

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is the planet’s richest in terms of biodiversity, which is the main social-protection network of rural populations in the region, helping control malnutrition and large-scale urban immigration; nevertheless, the rate of



deforestation in Latin America and the Caribbean is twice the world average.

The region has progressed in access to the water supply and sanitation. But exponential population growth, the high concentration of the population in urban areas and unsustainable land use patterns have resulted in a large number of informal settlements with severe deficits in providing basic services and infrastructure.

In addition, serious cases of water pollution persist, and accelerated glacier retreat in the continent (in Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile), with evident consequences on the watersheds that they feed, is alarming. Climate change is a serious problem in the region, which has had a high proportion of natural disasters, many linked to water,

and their consequences are aggravated by the vulnerability of large sectors of the population.

Could you speak of the challenges you faced as president of the Duero Hydrographic Council?

In my experience as president of an international basin, the Duero Basin, one of the main challenges I faced was, in fact, promoting the formulation of the new basin plan according to the premises of Integrated Water Resources Management, as required by European regulations inspired in the Rio principles —the Water Framework Directive.

This entailed integrating environmental concerns into the planning of the basin's uses, promoting strict compliance with the required impact assessments and undertaking another type of interventions in the rivers of the basin — or river restoration— under a concept that has subsequently been called “investment in natural capital”. In addition a system to verify the actual amount of water given up along the basin was introduced, to determine how much water was available to be assigned to new uses, as well as the need, or lack of a need, for new infrastructure.

Another highlight was a plan called “zero tolerance with dumping”, to help communities find the most appropriate solution to avoid dumping, as well as the implementation of new citizen participation mechanisms that included representatives of all basin users. In addition, collaboration links in the management with Portugal were established, since the basin that I managed is Hispano-Portuguese, and there is much private production of hydroelectric power on the border between the two countries along with severe problems with fires in both territories.

Water in the Green Economy in Practice

UNEP took part in UN-Water's International Conference, held in Zaragoza, Spain, from 3 to 5 October, under the theme "Water in the Green Economy in Practice: Towards Rio 2012".

UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean collaborated with UNEP Headquarters in conducting a session on Investments and fiscal measures for the protection and improvement of biodiversity to promote green growth. Elisa Tonda, UNEP's Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency in Latin America and the Caribbean, took part in the meeting.

Two innovative cases were presented in the session:

Case 1: Payment for Environmental Services pilot project in Lake Naivasha basin, Kenya

This case introduced the pilot Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme, which provides a financial mechanism for

payments for watershed services in Lake Naivasha Basin, Kenya.

This scheme is developed by WWF-Kenya and CARE-Kenya, together with local partners. Lake Naivasha Water Resource Users Association –on behalf of ecosystem service beneficiaries– agreed to compensate small-scale landowners and farmers, to forego some potential income for managing their land to provide good quality water to downstream users. The first incentive rewarded 470 farmers, and the second benefited 504 farmers.

Case 2: FONAG – The Fund for the Protection of Water, Ecuador

The private trust provides a stable, long-term financial mechanism, using revenues (interest and investments) derived from its equity to co-finance activities aimed at maintaining the hydrographic basins that supply the water needs of Quito Metropolitan District and its surrounding area of influence. The Fund for the Protection of Water (FONAG, by its initials in Spanish) works to ensure the provision and quality of water by supporting actions directed

at protecting water resources, based on the principles of long-term natural sustainability. Maintenance of water quality and quantity in river and associated ecosystems improves the conservation status of freshwater habitats and the species that depend on them.

Josefina Maestu, Coordinator/Director of the UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication, thanked UNEP for its contribution, and stressed that "the session showed that although the PES schemes have different levels of maturity and sophistication, all of them were interesting for different reasons. Everybody was discussing how interesting it was to find out how well PES is doing in Latin America and the Caribbean (paying for public goods through the water and sanitation services tariffs and developing into a financing mechanism for the River Basin Plans)".

Further information: http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/green_economy_2011/

Learning to harvest rainwater in rural communities of Guatemala



The BASF-funded project on Capacity Building For Rainwater Catchment In Rural Communities Of Guatemala is coming to an end after successful implementation.

During 2011, the project has been accomplishing all activities originally planned, namely:

- i) creation of the Regional Rainwater Capacity Building Center (CERCALL, by its initials in Spanish) at the University of San Carlos, Centro Universitario de Oriente (CUNORI, by its initials in Spanish) in the Department of Chiquimula;
- ii) development of modules on rainwater harvesting training techniques;
- iii) training on rainwater harvesting techniques of approximately 300 local public institutions (including representatives of the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Health), women and community leaders, cooperative organizations, etc.;

iv) building a demonstration rainwater harvesting system in CUNORI and two rainwater harvesting systems in two rural communities.

In addition, the implementing partner, CUNORI, contributed with two other activities that were not part of the project: the approval of a professional specialization course on rainwater harvesting techniques as part of the University curricula, which was delivered in July and September; and, on 27 September, they also organized the first encounter of trainers on rainwater harvesting techniques to share experiences on knowledge gained and applied.

The results and impact of the project have been so highly valued by the Department of Chiquimula, that on 9 September, the Departmental Development Council (Consejo Departamental de Desarrollo, CODEDE (*), by its initials in Spanish) approved approximately USD 203,000 to entrust CUNORI with the promotion and implementation of rainwater harvesting projects and training in the Department of Chiquimula, in 2012.

UNEP's Global Universities Partnership for Environment and Sustainability

Over 50 Universities from around the globe came together on 5-6 September in Santiago, Chile, to follow up on UNEP's Global University Partnership for Environment and Sustainability (GUPES).

GUPES aims to promote the integration of environment and sustainability concerns into teaching, research, community engagement and the management of universities, as well as to enhance student engagement and participation in sustainability activities both within and beyond universities.

During this two-day meeting, a position paper on Universities and Sustainability as a contribution for the Rio+20 Conference was discussed, with specific emphasis on the Green Economy. Feedback on ongoing initiatives, such as the Greening Universities Guidelines, Curricula Sourcebook on the Green Economy and Ecosystems Management, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) guidelines was provided. Options for the official launch of GUPES in 2012 were also discussed. The meeting was organized by UNEP, in close coordination with the host institution, Universidad Andres Bello. This is the first GUPES meeting organized in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Further information:

(University Massachusetts Boston: <http://www.environmentalgovernance.org/featured/2011/09/umass-boston-participates-in-uneps-global-universities-partnership-on-environmental-sustainability-gupes-conference/>). http://www.unep.org/training/News_events/gupes_santiago_meeting.asp

(* CODEDE is the primary means of public participation in decision-making processes at the Departmental level. The Council brings together community representatives, municipal authorities and other public institutions to plan and decide on social investment plans, including health services and infrastructure.



The commitment of Honduras' National Mangrove Committee heralds greater recognition for these important ecosystems in the near future

At 7:00 p.m. on 27 September, in La Ceiba, Honduras, the members of the National Advisory Committee of the Project for Integrated Management of the Coastal Areas and Mangrove Swamps of Honduras continued debating the contents of a declaration that a few hours before, in a completely spontaneous manner, they had decided to draft to increase the project's political influence.

The objectives of the meeting, which had begun at 8:30 a.m., did not include drafting that declaration. The idea was to restructure the project through social mechanisms, in keeping with the national priorities that had been discussed at the first meeting, and to implement those priorities in small workgroups, in a more specific and truly participatory manner.

Over the course of the day, the objectives were achieved, thanks to the motivation of the assorted group of participants from all along the Atlantic coast of the country and representatives of municipalities and central government



agencies as well as of NGOs and community groups of Honduras' different ethnic groups.

“The project should have political influence”

But an idea emerged that led the participants to a long, fruitful dialogue: “the project should have political influence”.

Committee members expressed their concerns over mangrove swamp and coastal lagoon degradation and destruction in places from Omoa to Moskitia, including Jeannette Kawas National Park and Balfate. The concerns

that the participants added to the unending list of problems, which later became part of a declaration, included the effects of African palm monoculture, land encroachment, deforestation, the lack of local capacities —often because of insufficient human and financial resources—, the poverty of adjacent communities that cut each other's trees and poach in each other's waters, and erosion and silting.

Finally, the idea emerged of drafting a declaration recognizing the wealth and value of marine-coastal ecosystems and stating the concerns of users and resource co-managers. Hence, the drafting of a document that underscores the interest of inhabitants of the coast of Honduras in promoting the protection and conservation of their resources began with the promotion of spaces for dialogue and participation, of greater coordination between State entities and grass-roots organizations, of stronger environmental impact evaluation systems and of greater efforts to ensure that the country's laws and regulations and the international agreements that it has signed are abided by.

7:30 p.m. The remaining 25 participants who have stayed for the end of the meeting of the mangrove project committee sign the declaration in order to have it disseminated by different media outlets, to promote the protection of mangrove swamps and to achieve the “policy influence” that they had sought.



Panama analyses benefits of forest conservation

Important opportunities for the country's avoided deforestation programme

Panamanian law recognizes carbon capturing as an environmental service. There is a need for a more in-depth examination of this topic and for public policies that will reverse deforestation and forest degradation in the country.

With the focus on the REDD+ proposal (Collaborative Initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) for Panama, the first meeting was held. The title of the meeting was: Scenario and cost analysis of REDD+, and it was held on 1 and 2 September, at the Ciudad del Saber Holiday Inn, in Panama City.

REDD+ adds sustainable forest management to the objectives of the REDD programme, which attempts to assign an economic value to the carbon stored by forests through incentives for developing countries to avoid and reduce deforestation.

The meeting, held in Panama City, was attended by key stakeholders for developing and implementing the programme in the country, such as the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), the Tropical Agricultural Research and Training Centre (CATIE, according to its initials in Spanish) and the Water Centre for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC, according to its initials in Spanish).

Important opportunities and relevant information for the REDD+ programme in Panama

Meeting participants acknowledged the

significant opportunities for the REDD+ programme in Panama, and stressed the advantage of having relevant and adequate information to carry out studies and work to implement it.

In addition, on 28 and 30 September, representatives of more than 35 countries came together at the semi-annual meeting of the International Partnership of REDD+. Attendees were told of progress in gathering information for the REDD+ database, and the multilateral agreements of this initiative were reviewed. Participants stressed the advances made by the REDD+ Partnership, both in substance and financial resources, and expressed optimism regarding a fluid and smooth transition towards 2012.

For more information on REDD and REDD+:

<http://www.un-redd.org/Home/tabid/565/Default.aspx>



Latin America and the Caribbean make progress on environmental indicators

Indicators are elements that make environmental information relevant. Consequently, they are essential for decision-making as well as for providing the underpinnings of sustainable development policies and evaluating those policies.

The Environmental Indicators Working Group was created in the framework of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development, known as ILAC. The initiative was approved by the regional Forum of Ministers of the Environment during its extraordinary meeting at the World Summit on Environment and Sustainable Development in 2002, and is part of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, approved by the Heads of State and Government at the Johannesburg Summit the same year.

Since then the Group has been developing a series of indicators in the thematic priority areas established in ILAC:

- Biological diversity
- Water resources
- Vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities

- Social themes, including health, inequality and poverty
- Economic aspects, including trade and patterns of production and consumption
- Institutional issues

On 12 and 13 October, the Group met in Mexico City to draft its 2012–2013 Work Plan, make changes to the current indicators structure and make proposals to strengthen the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative. These proposals are expected to be approved by the Forum of Ministers in early 2012.

One element of the Work Plan calls for continuing to formulate and define methodology sheets for the indicators. The meeting, coordinated by the GEO Centre, Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT, by its initials in Spanish) and UNEP, was preceded by a day of technical training in the field of geomatics, in which participants used applications to create cartograms, digital libraries and maps, through participatory cartography.

Strategic environmental assessments: a crucial tool for political decision-making

Much effort is still required for strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) to be used in Latin America owing to the lack of experience with them, both at a conceptual and practical level. This is one of the main conclusions of the regional course on SEAs held in Chile, from 3 to 7 October.

Instructors from Brazil, Chile, Portugal and Spain shared their experiences and knowhow with representatives of environmental ministries and academic institutions from 18 Ibero-American countries.

The course was organized by UNEP and Spain's Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, with the collaboration of Chile's Ministry of the Environment and the support of the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo (CED).

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are widely used in countries throughout the world to mitigate and offset significant environmental impacts at the project level. By contrast, SEAs take a different tack, focusing on policies, plans and programmes. They arose from the need for an instrument allowing decisions to be taken in a given geographic region or sector.



The course consisted of several modules supported by conferences, workshops, practical cases and spaces for dialogue aimed at developing technical capacities to promote the use of the SEA in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.

“As a result” —noted one of the participants— “I am taking back a lot of information, applications, methodologies, and an openness in the work methodology that I will undoubtedly try to replicate in my country”.

UNEP expects to offer the same course in a distance-teaching format in 2012, mainly targeting government representatives and academic institutions in the region.

For more information: <http://www.ced.cl/ced/2011/10/curso-evaluacion-ambiental-estrategica-pnuma/>

An environmental report with songs, drawings and poems



GEO Youth Panama: An analysis and proposals for action by more than 800 young people

"Yes, but" was all Gloria Saez heard when she began to "reach out" in schools to encourage other young people to collaborate and participate in drafting the GEO Youth Panama report. "They didn't accept me because I was going to take up class time, or there was no group to listen to my talk", Gloria recalls, adding, "you're young and they don't want to pay attention, or [they tell you that] what you're saying is nonsense, or that isn't going anywhere".

Gloria Saez is the focal point of GEO Youth Panama in the provinces of Herrera and Los Santos. She belongs to a group of young people who have coordinated the more than 800 students between ages 15 and 30 who have undertaken this ambitious initiative.

Before a standing-room-only audience, on 19 October at the Technological University of Panama, these young people presented the fruits of their work: *GEO Juvenil Panamá, Estado del ambiente desde la perspectiva de los jóvenes* [GEO Youth Panama: State of the environment from the perspective of young people].



Action manual for young people: "we have broken the mold"

"Global Environmental Outlook" (GEO) refers to the process of integrated environmental assessment devised by UNEP. The participatory methodology through which the report was prepared has made it possible to obtain data on the status of the environment of all provinces in which, as is indicated in the document, young people have identified very specific problems: from the state of marine and coastal areas and the islands, waste management in Bocas del Toro, the black market for selling and exporting endangered species, the highways that cut through natural parks in Chiriquí, to pollution or a lack of appropriate land management in some areas of the country.

But the contents don't stop there, as was noted by the national focal point for the project, Ennio Arcia: "We have broken the mold with GEO Youth Panama: not only are we conducting the assessment of the state of the environment, but we are also going deeper, with a chapter, the youth action manual, that lets young people know what they can do to conserve our environment".

"The manual includes advice on how to create an environmental youth group, how to get an ecoclub going, how to organize a beach cleanup, etc.", explains Juan Gabriel Pérez, GEO Youth focal point in the province of Chiriquí.



The report contains drawings, paintings, colours, songs and poems

And all of these contents are presented in a very special format: "with drawings, paintings, colours, songs, poems, a little of everything, and without overlooking the scientific and the serious, knowledge-related side. Any young person who sits down and looks at GEO Youth, from cover to cover, is going to feel attracted", said Juan Gabriel.

Lastly, these young people have included a section titled "Outlooks for the future". The section outlines, from the perspective of young people, two possible scenarios for Panama in 2035: either there will be changes in attitudes, in production and consumption patterns, and in the policies of the various sectors, including government sectors, ensuring the protection and, if need be, restoration of important ecosystems, or the current model will be maintained, with the consequent environmental degradation.

"When we began to draft the report", says Gloria Saez, "we realized that Panama was twice as lovely, twice as beautiful, and that human beings were not appreciating it as they should".

<http://www.geojivenilpanama.org/>



Tools to prevent and manage socio-environmental conflicts in Peru



According to reports from Defensoría del Pueblo, or the Office of the Ombudsman, the Government of Peru is dealing with 234 social conflicts. In March 2008, the number was 93. Most of the conflicts centre on socio-environmental demands; 68% are active while 32% are latent. In addition, 48% have to do with socio-environmental issues and 12% involve disputes with local governments.

The departments of Cusco and Apurímac are not removed from this situation. Peru is one of the twelve megadiverse countries in the world and has the eighth largest forest area on the planet, sizeable fishing reserves and considerable mineral resources. The causes of the disputes centre on access to and control and use of these resources, such as in the case of water, or confrontations between campesino communities and formal and informal mining companies.

Under the auspices of the United Nations Joint Programme on Climate Change — an initiative that coordinates the efforts of four agencies of the United Nations System (the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO; the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, PAHO/WHO; the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP; and the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP— two studies were carried out to evaluate the socio-environmental situation in Peru's Andean highland communities.

The studies detected smouldering conflicts and the need to strengthen the capacities of the different social actors to prevent and manage them.

Accordingly, UNEP is conducting a series of training workshops on socio-environmental conflicts with the participation of local authorities and leaders of the Andean highland communities of the Río Santo Tomás subbasin, located between the regions of Cusco and Apurímac, in southeastern Peru.

The workshops are composed of theoretical and practical modules that examine study cases. Specialists use a training guide, prepared in advance in a participatory manner, to propose alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms such as environmental mediation.

The Joint Programme's general objective is to increase the capacity for integrated and adaptive management of environmental resources and to minimize climate vulnerabilities in microbasins of Peru's Andean Highlands.



New Municipal Environmental Commissions to reduce impact of climate change in Peru

In Peru, the Andean highland communities have been affected the most by climate change, as their residents are very aware. With a view to preserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable natural resource use, authorities and leaders of the municipalities of the Río Santo Tomás subbasin created Municipal Environmental Commissions in the districts of Tambobamba, Haqira and Ccapacmarca, located between regions of Cusco and Apurímac.

The creation of these commissions by local governments will allow leaders and representatives of campesino communities, of the health, education, and agriculture sectors and of private institutions to coordinate and plan local environmental policy and promote dialogue and agreement on environmental issues between civil society and the public and private sectors.

“We must stress how committed the authorities and leaders of the communities and civil-defence organizations in rural areas have been, with their interest in promoting biodiversity conservation through the municipal environmental commissions, as well as their interest in countering the effects of climate change, promoting organic agriculture and providing incentives for environmental education, among other objectives”, said Carlos Salazar, a Ministry of the Environment representative in Cusco.

The Municipal Environmental Commissions were introduced as part of the activities under the Plan to Strengthen Environmental Management Capacities with a Climate Change Approach, promoted by the United Nations Joint Programme on Climate Change through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) are also taking part in this joint initiative.

The Joint Programme will continue to actively promote the formation of these commissions in the Río Santo Tomás subbasin, located between the regions of Cusco and Apurímac, in southeastern Peru.



Upcoming events

Online regional course on Integrated Water Management

Date: 31 October-4 December 2011

Location: (online) <http://www.pnuma.org/agua-miaac/index.php>

Páramo Andino Encounter: "Bridging Heights", of the Páramo Andino Project

Date: 7-10 November 2011

Location: Conocoto, Ecuador

2nd Regional Programme on Coastal-Marine Areas Management

Date: 8-18 November 2011

Location: Cartagena, Colombia

Tunza Regional Meeting

Date: 24-25 November 2011

Location: Bogotá, Colombia

Meeting of the Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production

Date: 24-25 November 2011

Location: Panama City, Panama

Presentation Workshop on Progress in Executing the Mesoamerican Terrestrial Lifeweb Project in the Montañona Conservation Area

Date: 21-22 November

Location: San Salvador, El Salvador

National Workshop of Presentation of Progress in Executing the Protected Areas of Mesoamerica Support Project: Implemented at Volcano Barú National Park

Date: 24-25 November

Location: Cerro Punta, Panama

Regional Workshop for Mesoamerica on the National Strategy for Biodiversity and Updating of Action Plans

Date: 28 November-2 December 2011

Location: San José, Costa Rica

XVIII Meeting of Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

Date: 24-27 January 2012

Location: Quito, Ecuador

Participation of UNEP:

13th Conference of Ibero-American Water Directors (CODIA), organized by Spain's Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs

Date: 1-3 November 2011

Location: Buenos Aires, Argentina

2nd International Conference on Marine Mammals Protected Areas

Date: 7-12 November 2011

Location: Fort-de-France, Martinique

Seventh Inter-American Dialogue on Water Management

Date: 17-18 November 2011

Location: Medellín, Colombia

Regional Meeting on Ecolabelling for MERCOSUR countries and Chile

Date: 17-18 November

Location: Santiago, Chile

Conference on "Delivering as One"

Date: 7-11 November 2011

Location: Montevideo, Uruguay

6th Statistical Conference of the Americas

Date: 16-18 November 2011

Location: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Second stage of the training programme for authorities and the general population on socio-environmental conflict resolution and negotiation

Date: Third week of November

Location: Cotabambas, Apurímac, Peru