



UNEP in Latin America and the Caribbean

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

A new stage for UNEP

First universal membership Governing Council

Governing Council

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UNEP Strengthened and Upgraded to Implement *The Future We Want*

Starting from an office above a supermarket 40 years-ago, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) was modernized into a strengthened and upgraded institution better able to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The decision, by ministers of the environment meeting at the UNEP Governing Council, implements the call by Heads of States and governments in the Future We Want forged at the close of Rio+20 last June.

Governments also backed more predictable, stable and increased funding for UNEP from the UN Regular Budget by 2014.

Ministers meeting for the first time under universal membership of 193 member states— again as a result of the decisions taken and adopted last year at Rio+20 and the UN General Assembly later in the year—adopted a welter of other decisions.

Governments called for the transformation of the existing Governing Council into a UN Environment Assembly of UNEP and to build stronger links between UNEP's science-based Global Environment Outlook process and its ministerial meetings.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said at the close: "The theme at this historic, universal membership Governing Council was Rio+20: From

Outcome to Implementation—and that was precisely what happened over the past five days".

"Ministers responsible for the environment implemented the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP to an institution better equipped and resourced to serve the planet and its people to meet the ever growing challenges posed by ecosystem degradation to the growth of greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere while catalyzing transformational change to seize the equally fast growing opportunities for a sustainable development path change," he said.

Among the wealth of other decisions taken at the first Universal Membership of the UNEP Governing Council were:

- A UNEP-led consortium will host and coordinate the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) which will be the implementing arm of the Technology Mechanism of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Full operationalization of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP for SCP).
- Governments also decided to convene in October this year an intergovernmental diplomatic conference to formally adopt the Minamata Convention on Mercury, aimed at reducing releases and emissions of the health-hazardous heavy metal.
- UNEP unveiled the Partnership for Action on a Green Economy (PAGE) in order to implement the outcomes of Rio+20 and meet the needs of countries keen to join such a transformation. It will initially support 30 countries on Green Economy work.

The complete press release on the outcome of the Governing Council is available at:

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2704&ArticleID=9417&l=en>



Active participation of representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean

At the first UNEP Governing Council meeting held under the universal membership formula, representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean participated very actively. Of the 33 countries of the region, 27 were represented by ministers, vice ministers, ambassadors or senior officials.

The plenary of the Governing Council elected Antonio Otávio Sá Ricarte, permanent representative of Brazil to UNEP in Nairobi, as one of the vice-chairpersons of the meeting. At the end of the meeting, he was relieved by Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Minister of the Environment of Peru.

Luis Javier Campuzano, permanent representative of Mexico to UNEP, co-chaired the working group on institutional arrangements and rules of procedure. Konrad Paulsen, ambassador of Chile to Kenya, chaired the contact group in charge of the budget and work programme of UNEP during the 2014-2015 biennium.

On 18 February, the Ministers of the Environment of Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay held a working lunch with the Secretary of the Environment of Spain and the advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Sea, Environment and Spatial Planning of Portugal. The gathering, which was attended by the UNEP regional director and representative in Latin America and the Caribbean, provided an opportunity to analyze the priorities of Ibero-



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American cooperation in the future on topics related to the environment and sustainable development and to share experiences and accomplishments in dealing with environmental challenges.

The Major Groups at the Governing Council

The UNEP Governing Council invited the United Nations General Assembly to change the Council's name to "United Nations Environmental Assembly", a body that "would ensure" the active participation of all stakeholders and explore new mechanisms to promote the transparency and effective participation of civil society in its work and that of its subsidiary bodies. To bring this about, among other initiatives, a proposal was tabled for a process to be underway by 2014 for the accreditation and participation of stakeholders based on current rules of procedure and taking into account the experience of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies of the United Nations.

Civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean was represented by Flavia Cherry, of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), and Luis Flores, of Consumers International, both of whom were elected at the last Regional Consultation Meeting for Major Groups and Stakeholders.

International youth meeting

Prior to the meeting of Governing Council, the TUNZA International Youth Conference on the Environment was held, with the attendance of 250 youth delegates from more than 100 countries. The gathering, at which delegates from Latin America and the Caribbean actively participated, addressed the relationship between human health and environmental degradation, among other topics. The youth representatives drafted a final statement that they forwarded to the Governing Council.



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Biosafety moves forward in the region

On 25 February, Costa Rica was the venue of the first meeting of the Central American Biotechnology and Biosafety Initiative (ICABB), made up of the coordinators or chairs of the National Technical Commission on Biosafety (CTNBio) from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. UNEP Programme Officer Marianela Araya gave a presentation on opportunities for projects on biosafety with UNEP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The meeting provided an important space for coordinating and strengthening national and regional biotechnology actions regarding ICABB, which aims to ensure access to and the safe use of agrobiotechnology, coordinate the definition of priorities and regulatory frameworks and promote public awareness of biotechnology in Central America.

Further information is available at:
<http://infoagro.net/pages/VisualizarActividadIIICA.aspx?IdRecurso=2>

Photographic tribute to the natural wealth of the insular Caribbean

More than 400 persons attended the 24 January inauguration of the digital photograph exposition "Biodiversity, Caribbean Biological Corridor", held in the Sala de la Diversidad, in Havana, Cuba, and organized in connection with the Project for the Demarcation and Establishment of the Caribbean Biological Corridor with assistance from UNEP and the financial support of the European Union.

The more than 300 photographs on display by Nicasio Viña Dávila, Freddy Rodríguez Santana and Eugenio Pastó Botta offered a tour of the fauna, flora and other features of the different ecosystems of the insular Caribbean, one of the most biodiverse places in the world. "It is important to bring nature close to people, because we don't always have the means or the time to discover it first-hand, in such detail", noted Freddy Rodríguez Santana.

The exposition will remain open to the public for two months.

Further information is available at: <http://cbcinfo.wordpress.com>

Costa Rica approves a biotechnology education strategy

In January, Costa Rica's National Biosafety Technical Commission (CTNBio) approved and forwarded to the Public Education Ministry a Biotechnology Communication and Education Strategy for the country, formulated in keeping with the National Biosafety Framework Implementation Project, which was financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNEP.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) was asked to devise the strategy and support the project's educational component, which aims to integrate biotechnology and biosafety into high school and college curricula, as well as to build awareness among the population on the different safe uses of biotechnology and its importance for the country's development.

Biotechnology is any technological application that uses marine biological systems, living organisms, or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use.



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© Eugenio Pastó



© Freddy Rodríguez



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Guatemala National Forum: Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability

On 13 February, the Guatemala National Forum: Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES) was held. It was organized by the Guatemala National Environmental Training and Research Network (REDFIA) with the support of the Environmental Training Network of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. This is one of the events agreed on between UNEP and the Partnership of Ibero-American Networks of Universities for Sustainability and the Environment (ARIUSA) under GUPES, for 2013.

The national forums promote coordination between ministries of the environment and universities to improve support for environmental policies with a solid scientific and social foundation, as well as to encourage sustainable practices within universities.

The forum was attended by some 50 professors and researchers from universities in Guatemala and an expert from the Conference of Spanish University Presidents.

The results will be presented in December at the Latin American Forum of Universities and Sustainability in Chile.

Further information is available at: <http://www.pnuma.org/publicaciones.php>

The national GEO process in Honduras begins



From 4 to 6 February a workshop to launch the national GEO (Global Environmental Outlook) process in Honduras was held, facilitated by UNEP and the Secretariat of Natural Resources and the Environment (SERNA).

At the workshop, the GEO methodology for integrated environmental assessments was explained and the principal thematic areas for the country were identified: the earth (forests and urban areas), water, biodiversity, atmosphere and energy.

In addition, an exercise was carried out to analyse possible future scenarios, and environmental indicators currently available on the Internet were presented. The event was attended by 50 representatives of government agencies and universities and other stakeholders.

The GEO report on the state of the environment in the country will be a tool for decision-making on environmental policies in Honduras.



Explanatory video: Steps to improve management of the Apurímac River

An educational video was released in February on the Study on the Water Balance of the Upper Basin of the Apurímac River until its Confluence with the Salado River (EBHICA), a project being carried out in Peru. The purpose of the video is to explain aspects of the study to the public at large. The project is being executed within the framework of a cooperation agreement between the Regional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and UNEP, and aims to analyze the amount of water in the basin and its potential sustainable uses.

The links to the video, in Quechua and in Spanish, are: <http://youtu.be/QUPZunTUcOs>, <http://youtu.be/54AvMBhub4U>

In addition, in January, the official web page of the EBHICA project was also launched: <http://www.balancehidrico.org/cuencarioapurimac>



Green economy makes strides in the Caribbean



Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia have been selected as pilot countries for the national component of the project "Advancing Caribbean States' Sustainable Development Agenda through the Green Economy", implemented by UNEP and financed by the European Union.

As part of this project, green economy studies and capacity building activities will be carried out in each country to support the different governments of the region. The project also includes

a regional component—with the participation of other Caribbean island countries—consisting in a regional green economy platform and the establishment of an excellence centre.

The general objective of the project is to help Caribbean island countries achieve sustainable development by designing and implementing policies that will translate into a sound, low-carbon and sustainable economy that is environmentally responsible and socially inclusive.



The Study on the Green Economy of Mexico takes shape

Pavan Sukhdev, UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, visited Mexico on 21 and 22 January to become familiar with the progress, the principal findings and the key messages of the Green Economy Study for Mexico, which will conclude in April.

He also met with representatives of the Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit (SHCP), senators and deputies, among other authorities, so as to begin the process of disseminating the report among stakeholders in order for the results of the study to translate into progress in the transition of the country towards a green economy, into timely decision-making on regulations and into a modification of the arrangements that currently limit such progress.



The Second Itinerant Film Festival FICMA: Cinema and Environment comes to the region

Screen 3 at the Cinemark-Multicentro, in Panama City, was painted green from 31 January to 6 February. The Second Itinerant Film Festival FICMA: Cinema and Environment came to Latin America and the Caribbean with the help of the Barcelona-based FICMA, UNEP, the city council of Barcelona, the government of the Spanish region of Catalunya as well as the Mexican company Promotora Ambiental. In Panama, the festival was supported by the Mar Viva Foundation, Cinemark movie theatres and several media outlets.

The seven documentaries and four short films, which were viewed by 600 persons during the week, provided many answers, as well as many questions: Can a group of children save a rainforest in a faraway country? Are some products designed to stop working after a given amount of time? How can a basin be sustainably managed? Could we live with only renewable energy within a few decades?

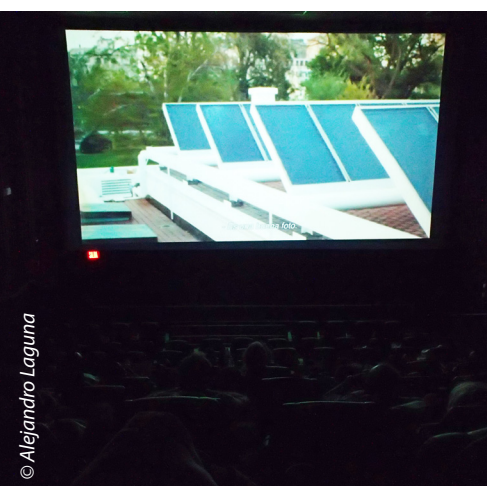
Further information is available at: <http://ficma.com/unep/>

REGATTA supports climate change vulnerability studies

REGATTA (Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action in Latin America and the Caribbean), a project implemented by UNEP with the support of the Government of Spain, facilitated the meetings of the technical groups charged with studying the vulnerability to climate change in the Andean region of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, which were held in February at the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), in Colombia.

The meetings were preparatory sessions for the regional workshop that will take place in Panama from 23 to 25 April. The technical teams were able to certify methodological aspects as well as to share approaches and preliminary results.

The vulnerability analysis processes being carried out in the region seek to include different government, civil society and community stakeholders. REGATTA promotes these processes by providing not only technical support but also the resources for the technical teams to conduct studies in the framework of activities carried out by the REGATTA Knowledge Centres and the Communities of Practice.



World Wetlands Day to a Caribbean beat

On 2 February, as part of the celebration of World Wetlands Day, the Nicaraguan city of Bluefields hosted the grand finale of the Song Contest of the Mangrove Sustainable Management Campaign. The contestants, between 15 and 25 years old, disseminated messages in favour of protecting mangrove swamps through different rhythms, from reggae and hip-hop to romantic melodies.

The activity was promoted by the Mangrove Project, a UNEP initiative, in coordination with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) and with financial support from the Government of Spain.

Since 1997, on 2 February the Convention on Wetlands in Ramsar, Iran, has been commemorated. Mangrove, a type of wetland, is an important resource for producing foods such as fish, crustaceans and shellfish, and affords protection against extreme weather events.

Further information is available at:
<http://www.pnuma.org/manglares/nicaragua.php>

The winning songs can be heard at:
<http://www.pnuma.org/manglares/canciones/>



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Valuation of the services provided by the Jeannette Kawas National Park, in Honduras

Jeannette Kawas National Park—a seacoast wetland in Honduras—offers numerous benefits and provides important goods and services for communities not only in surrounding areas but elsewhere as well. In economic terms alone, it provides services with an estimated value of US\$ 46 million a year. This is the conclusion of the economic valuation study on the ecosystem services of this protected area conducted in connection with the Mangrove Project, an initiative being implemented by UNEP in coordination with Honduras' Secretariat for Natural Resources and the Environment with the financial support of the Government of Spain.

The study—which also proposes implementing a series of financial instruments that could contribute to the sustainability of the park—was shared with the national and local governments and the country's private sector and civil society, in three workshops held in the first week of February in Honduras.

The study aims to furnish information for decision makers to consider including when they devise and develop policies as well as when they make decisions on investments, so as to promote the conservation of the marine-coastal ecosystems.

Further information is available at:
<http://www.pnuma.org/informacion/comunicados/2013/20130204bis2/index.php>

Relocation of the UNEP Brazil Office

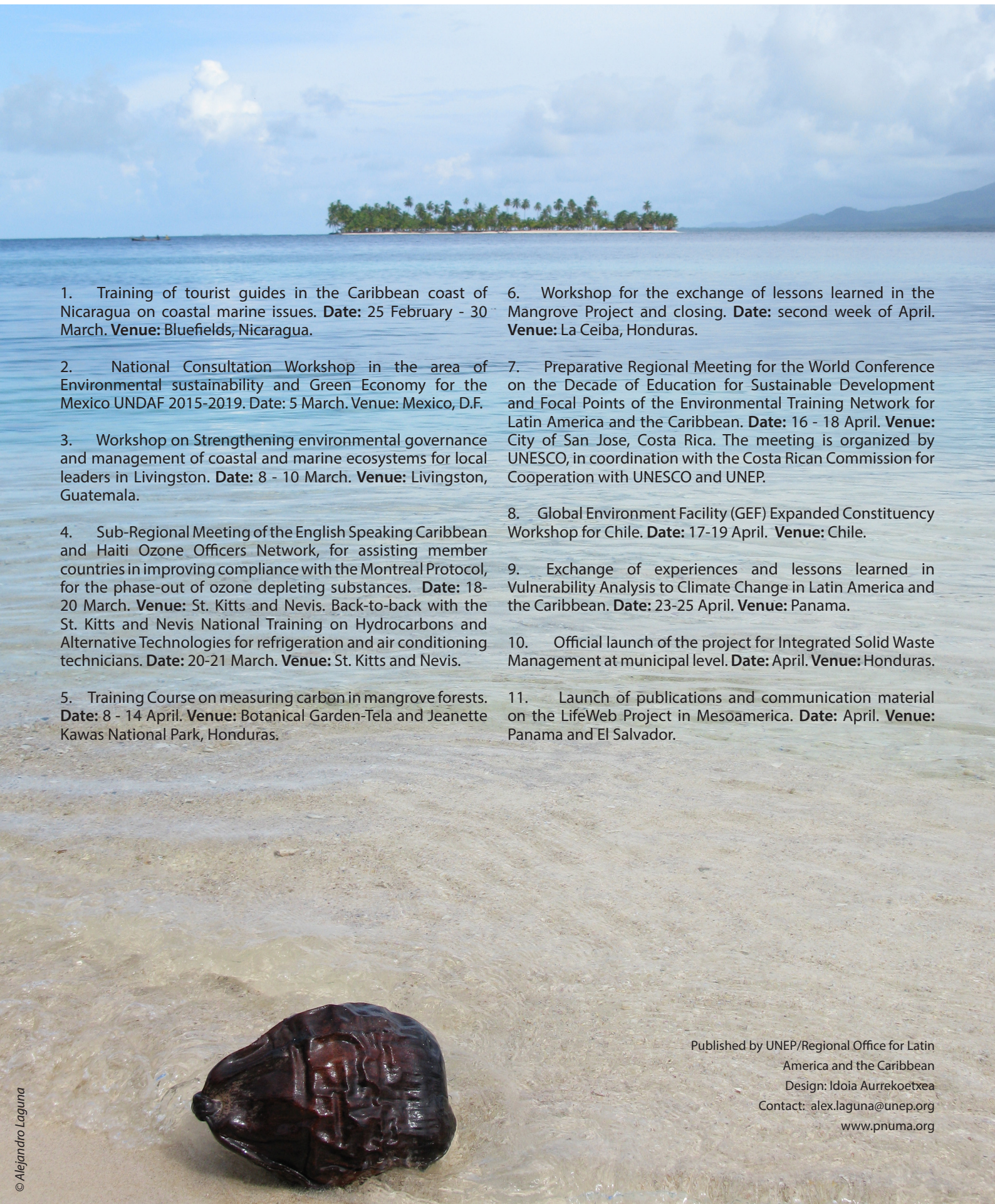
The UNEP Brazil Office will be in a new location in March. UNEP will be joining the UN House- Sérgio Vieira de Mello Complex, in Brasília, together with other agencies, namely, UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA and UNAIDS. Initially, UNEP will be in a temporary facility, while the new wing is under construction.

Please note the new address:

Setor de Embaixadas Norte, Quadra 802, Conjunto C, Lote 17,
Módulo B, CEP 70800-400, Brasília – DF, Brazil
Phone number: 00-55 21 3038.9233.



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1. Training of tourist guides in the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua on coastal marine issues. **Date:** 25 February - 30 March. **Venue:** Bluefields, Nicaragua.
 2. National Consultation Workshop in the area of Environmental sustainability and Green Economy for the Mexico UNDAF 2015-2019. **Date:** 5 March. **Venue:** Mexico, D.F.
 3. Workshop on Strengthening environmental governance and management of coastal and marine ecosystems for local leaders in Livingston. **Date:** 8 - 10 March. **Venue:** Livingston, Guatemala.
 4. Sub-Regional Meeting of the English Speaking Caribbean and Haiti Ozone Officers Network, for assisting member countries in improving compliance with the Montreal Protocol, for the phase-out of ozone depleting substances. **Date:** 18-20 March. **Venue:** St. Kitts and Nevis. Back-to-back with the St. Kitts and Nevis National Training on Hydrocarbons and Alternative Technologies for refrigeration and air conditioning technicians. **Date:** 20-21 March. **Venue:** St. Kitts and Nevis.
 5. Training Course on measuring carbon in mangrove forests. **Date:** 8 - 14 April. **Venue:** Botanical Garden-Tela and Jeanette Kawas National Park, Honduras.
 6. Workshop for the exchange of lessons learned in the Mangrove Project and closing. **Date:** second week of April. **Venue:** La Ceiba, Honduras.
 7. Preparative Regional Meeting for the World Conference on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and Focal Points of the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean. **Date:** 16 - 18 April. **Venue:** City of San Jose, Costa Rica. The meeting is organized by UNESCO, in coordination with the Costa Rican Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO and UNEP.
 8. Global Environment Facility (GEF) Expanded Constituency Workshop for Chile. **Date:** 17-19 April. **Venue:** Chile.
 9. Exchange of experiences and lessons learned in Vulnerability Analysis to Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean. **Date:** 23-25 April. **Venue:** Panama.
 10. Official launch of the project for Integrated Solid Waste Management at municipal level. **Date:** April. **Venue:** Honduras.
 11. Launch of publications and communication material on the LifeWeb Project in Mesoamerica. **Date:** April. **Venue:** Panama and El Salvador.