



# Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC)

The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), located in Panama City, works closely with the 33 countries of the region - including 16 Small Island Developing States. ROLAC is responsible for coordinating the implementation of UNEP's Programme of Work in the region and assisting countries to mainstream their environmental priorities into development planning processes. Latin America and the Caribbean is a region rich in diversity of ecosystems, species and cultures and it is home to six of the world's 17 mega-diverse countries. The region is divided into four sub-regions (Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, the Andean Region and the Southern Cone), each with a unique set of characteristics and environmental challenges. UNEP has country offices in Brazil and Mexico. The Wider Caribbean Sea, one of UNEP's Regional Seas Programmes, has an office in Jamaica. More recently, a programme office was established in Haiti.

*Latin America and the Caribbean is a region rich in diversity of ecosystems, species and cultures and has a unique set of environmental challenges*

## Highlights:

- The Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action (REGATTA) is an online platform to strengthen capacity and promote knowledge sharing of climate change technologies and experiences for both adaptation and mitigation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The platform is available at: [www.unep.org/energy/Activities/REGATTA/tabid/79490/Default.aspx](http://www.unep.org/energy/Activities/REGATTA/tabid/79490/Default.aspx)
- The Spain-UNEP LifeWeb Initiative for the "Effective Management of Mesoamerican Terrestrial Protected Areas" is implemented in the Volcán Barú National Park (Panama) and La Montaña Conservation Area (El Salvador). This project delivered a valuation study of the biodiversity and the most relevant ecosystem services in each protected area and estimated the costs of the loss or degradation of these ecosystems. Implemented in the Volcán Barú National Park (Panama) and La Montaña Conservation Area (El Salvador), this project delivered a valuation study of the biodiversity and the most relevant ecosystem services in each protected area and estimated the costs of the loss or degradation of these ecosystems. These studies are helping to develop economic and legal mechanisms for the sustainability of the national protected areas.

## Regional Facts

**Population:** 588 million

**Land Area:** 21 million km<sup>2</sup> or 15% of the earth's surface

**Environmental Challenges:** growing urbanization, lack of land use planning, rising levels of pollution, inadequate waste management, land and ecosystem degradation, overgrazing, deforestation, groundwater depletion, over-exploitation of fisheries, chemical pollution and vulnerability to climate change.

## Regional Forums and Consultations on Environment



### Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Consultations of Major Groups and Stakeholders

The latest consultations, which were held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in November 2012, called upon countries in the region and UNEP to implement the results of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), and to define the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the full and effective participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders.

**The Forum of Ministers of the Environment** is the most representative and important political gathering on environmental policies and responses in the region. The support provided by UNEP as Secretariat of the Forum contributes to narrowing the gap between national, regional and global environmental agendas.

### UNEP and UNDAF

In 2012, UNEP supported the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability into the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) of Belize, Cuba, Costa Rica and Mexico. UNEP has recently produced a Green Economy Scoping Study for Barbados as a contribution to supporting the country in its transition to a resource efficient, low-carbon Green Economy. In 2013, UNEP will participate in the elaboration of UNDAFs in seven countries in the region.

## Post-2015 Development Agenda

UNEP has been working with pilot countries in the region to identify their needs and the best way for UNEP to support them regarding the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability issues as part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.



## UNEP's work on the ground

### Countries in the region strengthen their national capacities on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources

The Access and Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources (ABS) project assists Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama and Peru to develop and/or comply with national policy and legal frameworks regarding ABS and the protection of traditional knowledge. The project includes activities for the prevention of bio-piracy and other illegitimate uses.

### Environment and Climate Change Outlooks underpin environmental governance in Mexican cities

UNEP supports state and municipal governments in strengthening their environmental agendas and structuring projects within UNEP's sub-programmes and initiatives. As a result of this cooperation, four Environment and Climate Change Outlook (ECCO) reports are being developed for the cities of Aguascalientes, Poza Rica, Tampico and Zihuatanejo.

### Implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) is improved in Small Island Development States

The European Union/UNEP/MEAs project increases the capacities of Caribbean states and the CARICOM Secretariat in negotiations and lobbying skills, legal drafting competence, information management and exchange, and the synergistic implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. This helps Caribbean countries to address development challenges associated with the adverse effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, drought, land degradation, waste management and other threats to the environment.

### Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua reduce vulnerability to natural disasters

UNEP works closely with the governments of Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters through an ecosystem-based approach and integrated coastal management along the Caribbean coast of the three countries. The project has assisted in harmonizing legislation on mangrove ecosystems in Guatemala, developing a toolbox for municipal coastal planning in the Pearl Lagoon municipality of Nicaragua, and undertaking an economic valuation study of the Jeanette Kawas National Park in Honduras.

### Inter-agency cooperation to improve water management in Peru's Apurímac region

UNEP and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) have joined their expertise and efforts in the Apurímac River Project, aimed at strengthening institutional capacities to improve integrated water resources management and addressing the equitable and sustainable use of water. This cooperation is focused on the development of the water balance of the Apurímac upper basin with the involvement of local, sub-national and national institutions and stakeholders.

### New early warning systems help to address vulnerability to climate change in Panama

Darién province in eastern Panama is fed by the mighty Chucunaque River and is lush with vegetation and renowned for its great biological and cultural diversity as well as its abundance of water. But the Chucunaque River basin is also home to some of Panama's poorest regions, making its inhabitants extremely vulnerable to climate change, especially to drought and flooding, which are happening more frequently and with greater intensity. The UN Joint Programme under the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) introduced an early warning system as well as a climate change monitoring system using the latest meteorological technology around the Chucunaque River basin, all of which helped to limit the impacts of the flooding and protect the local population. In 2011, these systems prevented the loss of human lives during a major flood.

### Rural communities in Colombia and Peru benefit from microfinance tools for ecosystem-based adaptation

Many large-scale climate change adaptation efforts in the region have been held back by the lack of mechanisms to attract private capital and efficiently channel resources to the mostly rural beneficiaries. The Microfinance for Ecosystem-based Adaptation (MEbA) project aims to strengthen the resilience of key ecosystems and of communities that depend upon their environmental services in the face of climate change impacts by fostering and piloting innovative private sector microfinancing tools for ecosystem-based adaptation options.

### The Caribbean Biological Corridor

The objective of the Caribbean Biological Corridor project, financed by the European Union, is to contribute to the reduction of biodiversity loss in the Caribbean region and the American Neotropics, through environmental rehabilitation, particularly in Haiti, and the alleviation of poverty as a means of reducing the pressure on biological resources. Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti have actively engaged in this South-South Cooperation initiative.

### UNEP engages in the promotion of sustainable consumption and production in Brazil

Through the Sustainable Production and Consumption project, UNEP fosters a continuous process of dissemination of actions aligned with the concept of sustainable consumption and production established by the Marrakech Process. Its priorities include increasing the recycling rate in Brazil, promoting education on sustainable consumption, strengthening the environmental agenda in national administration and consolidating sustainable public procurement, sustainable consumption and green buildings.

*The region is taking clear steps towards sustainable development through the adoption of innovative environmental legislation, national climate change policies and sustainable consumption and production strategies, among other initiatives*