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**“There can only be one plan, because there is only one planet:**

**to reach a global agreement”**

Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC

**Global climate change leaders discuss challenges and solutions at the 19th Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**

*13 March 2014. Los Cabos, Mexico.* “Climate science is at the heart of sustainable policy making. Without appropriate measures of climate change, poverty will increase, it will be a threat multiplier, and climate change certainly adds to the list of stresses that challenge our ability to achieve the ecological, economic and social objectives that are very much a part of sustainable development,” said [Rajendra K. Pachauri](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FRajendra_K._Pachauri&ei=IxoiU9vpOIbaoATZzoDYAg&usg=AFQjCNGrOySbnuCpAhhc366T-p7-VkJ0BQ&sig2=TQQjs-Yaf94EC_tCfgND0A&bvm=bv.62922401,d.cGU), President of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intergovernmental_Panel_on_Climate_Change) (IPCC), recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mr. Pachauri was one of the high-level panelists who participated in a Ministerial Dialogue on climate change in the framework of the 19th Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, in Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, Mexico. Convened by the Government of Mexico, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in its capacity as Secretariat of the Forum, representatives from 31 countries in region engaged with key international experts to analyse this compelling challenge.

Mario Molina, Nobel Chemistry Prize laureate, referred to the consequences of reaching certain thresholds in temperature increase: “If there is a risk of 5, 10 or 20 percent that there will be very costly disasters, that risk is unacceptable for society. That is what the scientific community is evaluating with more certainty. As an example, the Amazon rainforest could disappear or monsoon rains could change”. Making an analogy, the Director of the Mario Molina Centre added that “a 10 percent probability that a building will collapse is totally unacceptable.”

Climate Change impacts fall most heavily on those who are least able to respond, and often on those who have contributed very little to its causes. Although the region accounts for only 12 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, it is already experiencing the adverse consequences of climate change: extreme weather patterns and climatic events are increasing in frequency and intensity, and sea levels are rising, with a considerable risk for the most vulnerable countries.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, climate change impacts are evident in the catastrophic loss of corals, affecting fisheries and tourism in the Caribbean basin; sea level rise impacting coastal aquifers and ecosystems; and hurricane intensification threatening coastal populations and infrastructure.

“We are trying to convince economic policy makers that there is profit to be made through adaptation and mitigation, that we could identify the cumulative costs for loss and damage in Latin America throughout the XXI century, and we have policies that make no social, economic or environmental sense, such as subsidies to fossil fuels,” highlighted José Luis Samaniego, Director of the Division of Sustainable Development and Human Settlements of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

According to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), if unabated, the economic impact from climate change in the region by 2050 is likely to have devastating effects: the combined impact of sea level rise, loss of fisheries and tourism is calculated to equal from 5 to 30 per cent of GDP in the Caribbean; water supply to cities will be affected (Quito may see water supply costs increase by 30 per cent and La Paz, Lima and Bogota would also be affected by diminished supplies caused by climate change); health costs will be affected by increased exposure to tropical diseases; the cost of hurricane impact has increased by two orders of magnitude in the Caribbean basin in the last 20 years and hurricane intensity is expected to continue increasing; and the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

**2014, an opportunity for the region’s leadership on climate change**

The international community has agreed to finalise a global and legally binding agreement on climate change by 2015. But there is a steep climb ahead and 2014 is a pivotal year for generating the momentum that will propel the negotiation forward. The role of Peru will be crucial as host of the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 20) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 10th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

“The Lima COP, which will take place from 1 to 12 December, is a central element. There is no way to be successful in 2015 if we are not ambitious and we don’t achieve a solid—a very solid—draft, which will be agreed on next year as a result of the Lima COP. We know and we believe that Latin America and the Caribbean and Peru can prove their ability to achieve that draft climate agreement,” said the Minister of the Environment of Peru, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal.

“There can only be one plan, because there is only one planet. We don’t have any other option but to reach a global agreement,” stressed Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). “I encourage you to set a goal to have 144 ratifications of the Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol before the COP in Lima, and ratification is something that imposes no further obligations for any developing country, it only sets obligations for developed countries, so that you can say in Lima: what is agreed is executed and implemented,” added Christiana Figueres.

“Today's special session on climate change helped to focus attention on the reality that climate change is already affecting the lives and economies of the Latin American and Caribbean region. Countries have begun to respond with national programmes and policies such as Mexico's pioneering climate law, but the dialogue confirmed that national action must be complemented through a global framework for action. The next climate COP in Lima represents a critical milestone in the renewed effort to achieve a global agreement in 2015. Failure to do so was repeatedly highlighted by the distinguished group of panellists as imposing unacceptable risk to the future development of the region," said Achim Steiner, United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The number of countries with climate legislation is rising worldwide, and in Latin America and the Caribbean several countries are already taking decisive steps on this path. Mexico, host of the Los Cabos Meeting, is a clear example.

The Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico, Juan José Guerra Abud, stated that the position of his country was to “not wait until 2015 for countries to start acting. Mexico is already acting. Mexico is assuming its commitment to reduce its green house gas emissions. Not only because it is a mandate of the General Law on Climate Change, but also because that is the will of the President of the Republic, Enrique Peña Nieto”. The Mexican official also underlined that the largest beneficiary of the energy reform in the country would be the environment.

**Climate change, at the core of UNEP’s work in the region**

Climate change is at the core of UNEP´s Programme of Work. UNEP is deeply committed to actively supporting Member States in taking action to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

UNEP has placed a high priority on helping countries gain direct access to international sources of climate finance. Through its Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action in Latin America and the Caribbean (REGATTA), UNEP is also facilitating technology transfer and action on climate change, with funding from Spain and Norway.

A major focus of UNEP’s support in this region is for tangible “on the ground and in the water” projects that pilot ecosystem based adaptation (EbA). UNEP has joined efforts with the governments of Colombia and Peru, in partnership with the private sector, to catalyse capital for investing in microfinance for EbA actions by small scale farmers. This innovative project called *Microfinance for EbA (MEbA)*, funded by the Government of Germany through the International Climate Initiative, is pioneering a new approach to achieving large scale adaptation results that are localized to small scale producers, with private capital. UNEP is also promoting ecosystem-based approaches to adapt to climate change in cities, mountains and coastal areas.

The Climate Centre and Network (CTCN), which is the operational arm of the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism, is now open for business. Countries in this region are among the first to have submitted and received confirmation of support for their requests for technology transfer priorities.

Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have an opportunity to avoid the mistakes of others and to pioneer new development paradigms and technologies that vitalize green economies while mitigating climate change. Through the *en.lighten* project, in December 2013, all of the Ministers of Energy of Central America approved an efficient lighting strategy for the sub region.

Transformative  Reducing Emissions from Deforestationand Forest Degradation (REDD+) strategies and finance approaches are developed and implemented by developing countries in the region that aim at reducing emissions and bringing multiple benefits for biodiversity and livelihoods in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Live streaming of the 19th Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean:** <http://www.semarnat.gob.mx/transmision-en-vivo>

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