

First Meeting of the Signatory Parties to the Escazú Agreement
Opening Speech of Elected Representative of the Public
October 11, 2019

Buenos dias.

I want to also express my happiness at the progress we have made in the region by adopting this historic treaty and to congratulate the countries that have signed and ratified the Agreement.

In the face of increasing crisis, we now have even greater hope and ambition for a positive change in our region.

Hope for environmental defenders, who are still being threatened and killed at an alarming rate: the latest statistics being three killed every week with Latin American countries being the top region for these murders. Hope brought through measures in the Escazú Agreement that will see these persons protected against persecution for being brave enough to protect their land and environment in the face of incredible adversity.

Hope that we can tackle the impacts of climate change and the environmental disasters wrought with increasing frequency, such as the devastating hurricane recently experienced by the Bahamas. We know that the Caribbean countries, as Small Island Developing State are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and because of their small economies have the least capacity to adapt. Hope brought through measures in the Escazú Agreement that call for the immediate dissemination of information to the public on how to prevent or limit damage where there is imminent threat to the environment or public health and the requirements for implementation of an early warning system. The Paris Agreement relies on transparency in implementation to ensure accountability – implementing the Escazú Agreement will help countries meet their obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Hope for our most vulnerable people: the poor, the young, the elderly, people with disabilities, the Afro-descendants in Latin America and so many more who because of their circumstances experience barriers in freely exercising their rights to information, participation and justice. Hope brought through the Escazú Agreement that includes

special measures to facilitate and provide assistance to people and groups in vulnerable situations so that they can stand on an equal footing in exercising their rights. Implementing the Escazú Agreement will also help us to ensure that we achieve the sustainable development goals leaving no one behind.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Escazú Agreement is fast becoming a household name in the region. We have set the tone and now the world is watching us. It is important that we maintain ambition in the implementation phase so that our hopes become a reality.

One of the most important and significant characteristics of this process has been the modalities of public participation, the Regional Public Mechanism and the election of public representatives. We must maintain and improve this System since it has served to contribute to the inclusion of progressive provisions in the Agreement and led to greater awareness of the treaty throughout the world and in various other forums. In the year since its adoption, civil society has staged a considerable number of workshops and outreach activities to increase understanding and knowledge of the Agreement.

A treaty whose very essence is to ensure transparency and public participation should include robust modalities for public participation in the rules and procedures for its implementation.

Borrowing the slogan Alicia Barcena mentioned during the side event on climate change and Escazú: *Nothing about us, without us.*

We look forward to forging ahead in the positive, collaborative and beautiful way we have been doing in partnership with government.

Gracias a todos!