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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF GOVERNMENT EXPERTS FROM
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES MEMBERS OF ECLAC
(Mexico City, 1-6 March 1991)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of meeting

1. The Meeting of Government Experts from Developing Countries Members of ECLAC was held in Mexico City from 1 to 6 March 1991 as part of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Attendance

2. The following developing countries members of the Commission were represented: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. Aruba, British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, associate members of the Commission, were also represented.

Opening meeting

3. At the opening meeting, statements were made by Mr. Andrés Rozental, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, and by Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

4. The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico extended a cordial welcome to the delegations on behalf of the host Government and expressed his appreciation to ECLAC for having convened the Meeting as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly. He noted the concern shared by the countries of the region over the deterioration of the environment and the decline in the quality of life of their people.

5. He suggested that, in order to overcome that situation, the region should set itself the following objectives: to study and conceptualize in greater depth the dimensions and implications of the close relationship between environment and development; to define common goals and concrete measures which could be adopted within the framework of sustainable development; to help speed up the process aimed at imparting a new dimension to co-operation in

the economic and technological fields and in the area of scientific research and development; and to identify mechanisms for obtaining the resources required to finance sustainable development.

6. In conclusion, he wished the participants every success in their deliberations aimed at achieving the paramount objective of the Meeting, namely, the preservation of a healthy environment in accordance with society's aspirations for well-being.

7. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC thanked the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Mexico for attending the Meeting and noted that his presence was further evidence of the unwavering support which the secretariat had received from the host country during the negotiations of which the Meeting was a part.

8. The Meeting revolved around two key ideas. The first was that the environmental dimension should be integrated into the economic development process in such a way that it was elevated out of the realm of pure ecology and became a pivotal and vital issue in the development of the countries of the region. The second was that the environment issue could not be dealt with in isolation but had to be regarded as part of the agenda for international economic co-operation. New room was thus being created for introducing the issues that had been in the forefront of the aspirations pursued by Latin America and the Caribbean in the international debate.

9. In his view, the region had a major contribution to make to the international debate on the environment and development, and the objective of the current meeting was to work towards the formulation of a common Latin American and Caribbean position on what the region hoped would emanate from the United Nations Conference. Such a position would be useful in the activities carried out in each country and in the negotiations on international economic co-operation.

Election of officers

10. The Meeting was presided over by the following officers:

Chairman:	Mexico
First Vice-Chairman:	Uruguay
Second Vice-Chairman:	Barbados
Third Vice-Chairman:	Ecuador
Fourth Vice-Chairman:	Cuba
Rapporteur:	Costa Rica

Agenda

11. The Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the provisional agenda
3. Changing production patterns, social equity and environmental sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean
4. Conclusions and recommendations
5. Adoption of the report of the meeting

B. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The experts in attendance discussed agenda item 3, on changing production patterns, social equity and environmental sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean. A drafting group was set up, which met from 1 to 6 March and, after exhaustive deliberations on the basis of a text submitted by the delegation of Mexico, prepared a draft proposal, which was adopted by consensus. The draft proposal, annexed to this report and entitled "Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development", was to be submitted to the Ministerial-level meeting for consideration, in order to introduce it into the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/228, part II, paragraph 13.

13. It was also recommended that ECLAC should circulate the document widely so as to make it known in other spheres, and distribute it as an official document at the next meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference.

14. As decided by the Meeting of Government Experts, meeting in plenary session, the subject of drug trafficking and its impact on the environment was not included in the Platform because it was not among the points covered in United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/228. Nevertheless, note was taken of the concern expressed by the delegation of Peru, and shared by a number of other delegations, that the cultivation, processing, trafficking and illicit consumption of coca caused irreparable damage to the environment, in particular through soil and water contamination and deforestation; it was suggested that, by replacing it with other crops and adopting international instruments pertaining to the problem, the situation could be partially corrected.

15. The representative of Paraguay noted that, in addition to protecting, conserving and sustainably developing Latin American and Caribbean forest ecosystems, it was essential to reverse the current processes of qualitative and quantitative degradation of forest resources and, in that connection, to make a considerable

effort to promote reforestation programmes for purposes of solving the energy problems of the rural sector and for soil recovery, the production of raw materials for various forest-based industries and other uses.

16. The region therefore needed technical and financial resources to undertake afforestation and reforestation programmes, which should be of sufficient quantity to have a significant impact, and should be provided on soft enough terms to encourage expectations of achieving self-sustaining programmes over time, both economically and environmentally speaking.

17. Lastly, a number of delegations drew attention to the importance of the topic of population and demographic pressures on the environment.

Annex

TLATELOLCO PLATFORM ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The ministers and representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean countries members of ECLAC assembled at the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Mexico City from 4 to 7 March 1991:

1. Reaffirm the scope of United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/228 on environment and development in the quest for a new, just and equitable international order, and General Assembly resolutions 45/211 and 45/212; also reaffirm the Brasilia Declaration and the Call to Action issued by the Seventh Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean and request the countries of the region, the developed countries and international organizations to give their unwavering support for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean. Welcome the document Sustainable Development: Changing Production Patterns, Social Equity and the Environment prepared by ECLAC and the report of the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment entitled Our Own Agenda.

2. Express their deep concern that 20 years after the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration, there has been a severe deterioration of the state of the environment and a serious degradation of global ecosystems. Such degradation is closely linked to the unsustainable models of development that have prevailed mainly in developed countries.

3. Stress that significant achievements have been made in the region in consolidating its democratic processes, preserving peace and promoting respect for human rights.

4. Recognize that, in spite of the great efforts made to overcome the economic crisis, the causes that have given rise to the economic and social problems in the region, inclusive of the external debt problem, still persist, leading to a disturbing lag in the level of well-being of the majority of the population, and

an increase in the number of inhabitants living below the poverty threshold, as well as a deterioration in environmental quality. Hold that without a just and lasting solution to the external debt problem the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean will be unable to achieve lasting and environmentally sustainable economic and social development.

5. Recognize further the peculiarities and vulnerability derived from the size of small island States, which are exposed to the vagaries of the global economic and environmental climate.

6. Emphasize that the sustainability of development, necessary to reverse environmental degradation, calls for an effort on the part of the whole international community. The fundamental contribution to this international effort should be made by the most highly developed and affluent regions, in view of their greater responsibility for the global process of environmental degradation.

7. Stress that, in this global effort, the region has a contribution to make in protecting and enhancing the environment, in view of its resource potential. Express their commitment to avoid continued environmental degradation in the interests of present and future generations.

8. Recognize the need to strengthen horizontal technical co-operation to support the adoption of regional agreements with the view to reaching greater participation by the region in the solution of global and regional environmental problems.

9. Stress also that the environmental dimension is an integral part of the process of development and therefore should not be treated separately. Emphasize that in addition to the domestic efforts a favourable international context is essential for development to be environmentally sustainable.

10. Hold that the promotion of sustainable development is incompatible with the imposition of environmental and economic conditionalities and with restricted access to technology. The international commitment to the protection and enhancement of the environment requires access to environmentally sound technologies on a non-commercial basis. Also stress that the largest part of the cost of transferring environmentally sound technology must be borne by the developed countries.

11. Affirm that environmental issues should not serve as unjustified barriers to international trade.

12. Affirm that the international, regional and subregional legal instruments for solving global environmental problems should include provisions for the effective transfer of technology, institutional arrangements to strengthen mechanisms to integrate

the environmental dimension into development and specific funding mechanisms and financial resources on concessional terms to enable developing countries to meet their commitments.

13. Affirm their conviction that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development provides a unique opportunity to adopt relevant agreements to ensure the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and the flow of fresh, additional financial resources so that the developing countries may duly incorporate the environmental dimension into their development objectives and plans.

14. Express the need to promote scientific and technological research and development aimed at strengthening national and regional management capacities of technologies for sustainable development. Reaffirm the usefulness of undertaking global and sectoral research projects, aimed at clearly identifying the obstacles which impede the development and access to these technologies. Consider further that the institutional and organizational foundations and scientific and technological information systems in this area should be improved. Consider that a special international fund should be set up to ensure that the developing countries receive access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen their capacity to generate their own technologies.

15. Consider that it is essential to strengthen the capacity to train human resources, with emphasis in specific areas related to the management of the natural resources of the region, in terms of their potential, use and conservation.

16. Stress that the solution of environmental problems and the promotion of sustainable development at the national level depend largely on international co-operation, including financing. Affirm, in this connection, that a special fund should be established in order to provide the developing countries with new, additional and concessional resources to enable them to implement environmentally sound development programmes and projects according to their national development objectives, priorities and plans. Contributions to this fund should not be diverted from resources presently allocated to international co-operation in the field of economic development. Emphasize that eligibility criteria for funding to implement such programmes and projects should not be exclusively based on the per capita income criteria currently utilized by multilateral financial institutions.

17. Agree that the current patterns of production, distribution and consumption, which prevail mainly in the developed economies, should be redesigned in order to permit the countries of the region to improve the standard and quality of life, and to match greater efficiency in production with the principles of environmental improvement and social equity.

18. Stress that the joint fight against poverty, especially extreme poverty, requires profound changes in economic and social policies. Stress further that efforts to link environmental improvement and development should take into account both local and global responsibilities and the close interrelationship between poverty and environmental deterioration. These efforts will be successful in so far as they are the result of, inter alia, access to decent living conditions, adequate levels of social organization, political representation and genuine participation of the population in the determination of their own development paths.

19. Recognize that the sound management of the natural patrimony is essential for economic growth and sustainable development, and affirm that retrospective and prospective methods should therefore be devised for quantifying the value and depreciation of this natural patrimony.

20. Agree on the need to complement the existing national instruments for environmental control and regulation in the region with economic and financial measures, policies and incentives of broader scope, which incorporate into the decisions of all sectors the social and environmental costs of the activities of each one of them, and which help to satisfy the economic, social and environmental objectives of development.

21. Recognize that, in view of the urgent need for active commitments on the part of all sectors of society in promoting environmental protection and enhancement and sustainable development, opportunities must be given to the co-ordinated participation of non-governmental organizations and other sectors of society in the preparation of and during the Conference and in the execution of its mandates.

22. Express the view that current models of development have failed to take account of the importance of cultures which have evolved outside the framework of such models. The achievement of sustainable development requires the full recognition of the importance of these cultures, since they have accumulated extensive knowledge of the natural world and have developed modalities for its sustainable use and management.

23. Affirm that in the entire preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and in the international negotiations related to it, in particular those aimed at solving global environmental problems, an effort should be made to ensure, inter alia, the observance of the following postulates: principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 on respect for the sovereignty of countries over their natural resources and all economic activities conducted in them; the integration of the environmental dimension as an inherent part of the sustainable and equitable development process; the interdependence of global and

local problems, in particular those of a social, economic and environmental nature; refusal of imposition of economic and environmental conditionalities; equity in responsibility; and the precautionary principle.

24. Declare that, bearing in mind decision 1/25 of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in addition to the matters stated above, the following environmental issues are of paramount importance for the Latin American and Caribbean region, and should accordingly be dealt with in the Preparatory Committee as well as at the Conference.

a) Protection of the atmosphere and climate change

The Latin American and Caribbean countries base their participation in the search for a solution to the global environmental problems affecting the atmosphere on the fact that these countries bear little responsibility for the emergence of these problems. Their participation in any agreed solution should be consonant with the economic and technical resources available to the developing countries.

The negotiation of a framework convention on climate change for subsequent adoption by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, on the basis of the best scientific evidence available, should be aimed at minimizing the anthropogenic causes of climate change and its possible adverse effects. Although the consequences of climate change could be far-reaching in global terms, the Latin American and Caribbean archipelagos, islands and low-lying countries would be particularly vulnerable to them.

In this joint approach, consideration should be given to the specific role of sources and sinks of greenhouse gases, and obligations under the agreement should be determined in accordance with the contribution each of them makes to the problem or to its solution.

The agreement should recognize the main responsibility of the developed countries for the net concentrations and emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and for the effects deriving from transboundary pollution. It should also recognize the need of the developing countries to benefit from their natural resources in an environmentally sustainable way, in order to improve the standard of living and the quality of life of their peoples.

Under the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol and its amendments, the region should implement the objectives of these agreements with the primary aim of replacing substances which deplete the ozone layer, and it should therefore benefit

from all the financial and technical assistance needed to undertake scientific and technological programmes, without being required to contract additional external debt.

b) Biodiversity and biotechnology

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean attaches great importance to the conservation and sustainable management of its ecosystems in order to protect its biological diversity, which constitutes a fundamental and sovereign part of the national patrimony of those countries endowed with such diversity.

Knowledge on biodiversity, at both the scientific and popular levels, is part of the scientific and cultural patrimony of each nation; its use at the international level should therefore be duly regulated and controlled by the country of origin. The region should promote in international forums the adoption of legal instruments for the protection of its genetic patrimony and of its population and ecosystem resources as well as for the proper regulation of the trade deriving therefrom.

Advances in biotechnology and the economic potential for the exploitation of biodiversity make it necessary to have an international agreement which establishes transparent mechanisms, subject to the express consent of the country endowed with the original genetic resources, for controlled access to the commercial exploitation or scientific use of such resources. These mechanisms should also include explicit provisions for the equitable sharing of benefits deriving from such exploitation or use. Moreover, the developing countries should have access to advances in biotechnology on concessional terms, and to information concerning the biological and ecological safety of technologies already developed.

A convention on the conservation of biological diversity should include obligations for the conservation of biodiversity and should cover the benefits and obligations deriving from biotechnology.

c) Protection and management of land-based resources

The problem of protection and management of land-based resources should focus on integral, forward-looking and long-term environmental planning and management, based on the principles of environmental and developmental integration and public utility.

Plans for specific resources, areas or activities should be focused on and adjusted to the main lines of national environmental management and economic plans, and should thus serve as a guideline for the harmonious occupation of the national territory.

Problems relating to deforestation, desertification and drought require comprehensive measures which, while respecting the countries' sovereignty over their natural resources, reverse these processes and ensure the conservation and proper management of ecosystems.

i) Forests

The economic and ecological potential of austral, temperate, tropical and boreal forest ecosystems should be a central item of consideration in discussions aimed at reaching agreements on multilateral measures for environmental protection and support of sustainable management by the countries in which these natural ecosystems are located.

These measures, which do not necessarily have to be of a mandatory nature, should complement international instruments referring to the forest/climate and forest/biodiversity interrelationships on which specific legal instruments are being negotiated.

The measures should provide for the economic valuation of forest resources, for the needs of the populations who depend on them and for the formulation of strategies for rational use, protection and restoration of these ecosystems, with consideration given to support for the participation of local communities. To this end, international co-operation arrangements, including financial and technology transfer mechanisms, must be established as a support for these activities.

Forest management should be a primary objective of actions aimed at preventing deforestation, to be taken into account in negotiations and in the establishment of financial agreements concerning the use and conservation of forest ecosystems. Trade in timber and non-timber commodities should be based on products obtained from forests under sustainable management in accordance with the criteria of each country.

ii) Soil degradation: acidification, erosion and salinization

The serious problem of soil degradation, to a greater or lesser extent, affects all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Soil degradation is the consequence of inappropriate styles of rural and agricultural development, characterized mainly by the overexploitation of soils in order to maximize income in the short term and, where the peasant sectors are concerned, in order to ensure survival. The process of degradation is clearly favoured by the predominant technologies applied, both in the agricultural systems that seek to promote more intensive use of the land, and in the processes of expansion of the agricultural frontier. A greater effort in support of the developing countries to prevent and combat soil degradation should be a priority aim of international action, through technical co-operation, the generation and transfer of indigenous and environmentally sound technologies, as well as through scientific research, human resources training and financing.

d) Protection and management of oceans, seas and coastal zones

The region is characterized by great diversity in terms of marine, coastal and ocean resources which can be developed to the benefit of its population. The degradation of marine and coastal resources as a result of irrational exploitation and of marine and land-based contamination constitutes a grave problem for the countries which depend on these resources to reach their socio-economic goals and development targets. Programmes relating to regional seas (the Caribbean and the South-east Pacific) and other regional co-operation programmes, such as that relating to the South Atlantic, and the instruments provided for in legal agreements which already exist must therefore be strengthened.

In order to optimize the benefits from the use of the region's resources for its development, while at the same time minimizing the abuse of these resources, it is necessary to:

- Prepare an inventory of the region's living and non-living resources in order to assess their potential and their rate of extraction;

- Establish "special areas" on the basis of the characteristics of the resources they contain, the dynamics and sensitivity of those resources, the uses to which they can be put and the degree of the economies' dependence on them;

- Carry out a regional and international exchange of data obtained from national systematic monitoring stations on changes in the coastal dynamic;
- Elaborate and improve appropriate technologies between developed and developing countries in areas such as aquaculture, desalinization, sea-bed mining and others, including application of the precautionary principle and clean technologies approach;
- Increase the links and relations between regional and subregional bodies and programmes and develop sufficient scientific, technical and financial capacity to conduct research, monitoring, information exchange and technical assistance activities in order to ensure sound management of marine and coastal resources;
- Support the establishment of regional marine technology centres for the joint development of environmentally compatible technologies to ensure sustainable development in the region;
- Promote the use of integrated management approaches to marine and coastal areas and resources;
- Ban the discharge of toxic wastes into seas and oceans and provide mechanisms for the protection of these resources against exploitation by third party States;
- Urge the international community to create co-operation mechanisms for the conservation and optimal use of the marine resources found within the zone of sovereignty or jurisdiction of two or more riparian States, or on the high seas;
- Promote awareness of the need for an international agreement on the protection of the marine environment against land-based contamination, bearing in mind, in particular, the responsibility assigned to the regional economic commissions by, inter alia, General Assembly resolution 44/228.

e) Protection of fresh-water quality and supply

The need to protect the quality and supply of fresh water is vital to the countries of the region. It is thus essential to take steps to protect and conserve water resources and their development sites. The following proposals are therefore made:

- Financing and implementation of plans for administering and managing basins to promote the rational use of natural resources and the improvement of the living conditions of the populations settled in these areas.

- Establishment of regional strategies and programmes for the conservation and integral development of water resources which ensure that a balance is maintained between economic growth, environmental conservation and the management of national and international basins as a guarantee of sustainable development.

- Identification of availabilities and potentialities of water resources and appraisal of the environmental impacts of their use.

- Establishment of research and monitoring programmes aimed at reducing or eliminating fresh-water pollution.

f) Eradication of poverty in human settlements

In dealing with critical poverty and its links with environmental degradation at the national level, it will be indispensable to restore the growth rate, embark upon structural reforms and reformulate economic and social policy. The expeditious provision of adequate health and education services and the improvement of housing and related services in urban and rural areas are of priority importance.

In addition to the endogenous effort to eradicate poverty, there is need for international concertation and co-operation in the various interrelated aspects of commerce, external debt, additionality of financial resources and technology transfer.

g) Urban development and the environment

The cities of Latin America and the Caribbean generally suffer from a lack of resources, which is reflected in inadequate basic services, a high incidence of marginality and a deterioration of the urban environment. On the basis of land-use planning and management, the financial mechanisms for sustainable development should be aimed at improving the level and quality of life in both urban and rural settlements.

In this regard, the new mechanisms for the financing of sustainable development should give due priority to housing, sanitary conditions (provision of drinking water, sewage systems), elimination of solid and liquid wastes and air pollution.

h) Environmental management of waste, especially of hazardous and toxic wastes

The regional agreements supplementary to the Basel Convention should receive preferential attention concerning mechanisms for the monitoring and control of the illicit traffic in toxic and hazardous products and wastes, which represents a potential threat to the environment of the region and to the developing countries in general.

In order to reach a satisfactory solution to the problem, a protocol to the Basel Convention should be adopted as soon as possible, which would set forth appropriate procedures for the determination of liability and compensation for damage resulting from the transboundary movement and management of hazardous waste.

Since the developed countries continue to export to developing countries harmful or hazardous substances, products, processes and technologies which are banned in the countries of origin, a mechanism should be established to prohibit the marketing of such substances.

25. Reiterate their willingness to pursue their efforts to achieve concrete and positive results in the negotiations in the Preparatory Committee, and request the Secretary-General of the Conference to take into account the proposals contained in this Platform in the preparation of the documentation for the Conference and its preparatory process.

26. Thank the Government and people of Mexico for their generous hospitality and the excellent facilities provided, which contributed to the success of the Meeting.