

Free Trade Agreement between the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States

(CAFTA-DR)

Eighth Meeting of the Environmental Affairs Council

New Orleans, United States of America

April 2, 2014

Joint Communiqué

The Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) Environmental Affairs Council (Council) held its eighth meeting today in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States of America. The Council meets annually to oversee implementation of and review progress under Chapter 17 (Environment) and to consider the status of cooperation activities developed under the Dominican Republic—Central America—United States Environmental Cooperation Agreement.

During the meeting, each Council Member provided an update on progress implementing the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter and achievements with environmental cooperation in his or her country, including improving levels of environmental protection, strengthening environmental laws and effective enforcement of environmental laws, and engaging the public in environmental decision making.

The Council also reviewed the principal accomplishments and next steps in the CAFTA-DR environmental cooperation program. U.S. agencies implementing CAFTA-DR environmental cooperation programs highlighted ongoing initiatives including programs aimed at sustainable forest management and combatting wildlife trafficking. Examples of CAFTA-DR – wide environmental cooperation achievements since the agreement entered into force include:

- Improving over 178 environmental laws or regulations;
- Training over 27,100 people in enforcement and implementation of environmental laws, public participation, and cleaner production practices;
- Working with over 655 small to medium enterprises to help reduce their use of water, energy and raw materials, thereby limiting their production of waste, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including 1800 tons CO₂, and cutting costs;
- Bringing over 1.3 million hectares of land under improved natural resource management and educating 30,400 farmers in environmentally-friendly agricultural practices;

- Strengthening five wastewater laboratories in effective measurement and analysis of wastewater samples to become ISO-compliant and to decrease water pollution;
- Supporting local, non-governmental organizations through a small grants program to train over 3,000 people in the use of available public participation mechanisms and disseminate information on the importance of environmental protection to over 13,000 people; and
- Supporting the Central American Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAWEN) to hold national level meetings in six member countries, solidifying interagency national networks to combat wildlife trafficking and to support cross border and regional enforcement of wildlife trafficking laws. The meetings brought together hundreds of environmental prosecutors, law enforcement agents, judges, Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) authorities, scientists, and other key actors across 38 different agencies and international organizations.

The Council also received a report from the Secretariat for Environmental Matters (Secretariat) and recognized the high number of public submissions as a positive demonstration of increased public participation and awareness. The Secretariat has received 29 submissions since 2007 regarding effective enforcement of environmental laws by CAFTA-DR Parties; of these submissions, three factual records have been completed and five submissions are being analyzed. The Council discussed the third factual record that was published in October 2013, West Bay Roatan CAALA/11/004, which involved issues about environmental licensing in Honduras. The Council also discussed ongoing environmental cooperation programs aimed at building capacity to conduct environmental impact assessments, and how such training should be expanded. Honduras noted that it established a new system to improve transparency with respect to environmental licensing which will provide information about the status of environmental impact assessment evaluation processes.

The Secretariat also:

- Reported on progress towards selecting a proposal to complete a study on ensuring sustainable financing for the Secretariat; and
- Summarized its extensive outreach activities: it has provided information about the submission mechanism to approximately 2,700 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, the private sector, and governments through workshops, one-on-one meetings, and outreach events.

The Council received the fourth evaluation report from the Organization of American States (OAS) monitoring progress of the environmental cooperation programs in the CAFTA-DR countries. The OAS presented the key results from the fourth evaluation report and discussed the findings with the Council.

The Council Members underscored that CAFTA-DR demonstrates how trade policy can promote environmental stewardship, and reiterated their commitment to continue to work together to improve environmental protection while advancing sustainable

development. The Council also recognized the importance of communicating the significant environmental benefits achieved under the Environment Chapter and through environmental cooperation, and of continuing to promote transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making.

Following the closed session, the Council held a public session with three panels focused on the topics that were discussed during the Council meetings, including progress in each country to implement Chapter 17 (Environment), success stories in environmental cooperation, and experiences in the submission process managed by the Secretariat. Each of the panel sessions included presentations as well as opportunities for the public to ask questions and provide comments. Approximately 50 people from non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academia attended the meeting, and asked a range of questions about Environment Chapter implementation and environmental cooperation.

The CAFTA-DR Parties—Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the United States—established the Environmental Affairs Council in the Environment Chapter of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement.

Additional Resources

Secretariat for Environmental Matters (Secretariat) <http://www.saa-sem.org/>

CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation <http://www.caftadr-environment.org/>