

Eleventh Meeting of the Environmental Affairs Council

Dominican Republic-Central America-United States

Free Trade Agreement

(CAFTA-DR)

San José, Costa Rica

June 21 - 22, 2017

Joint Communiqué

The Environmental Affairs Council (Council), established pursuant to the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), held its eleventh meeting on June 21 and 22 in San José, Costa Rica. The Council meets annually to oversee implementation of and monitor progress under the Environment Chapter (Chapter 17) of the CAFTA-DR.

During the meeting on June 21, Council Members engaged in robust discussion on implementation of the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter, including dialogue on best practices and ongoing challenges in the implementation of environmental impact assessment processes. The Council also discussed monitoring and enforcement challenges related to air quality, waste management, and lessons learned in addressing these challenges. Council Members reviewed how technologies, as well as legal and administrative policy responses, such as sanctions applied to violators, are used to monitor and enforce compliance with air quality and waste management laws, regulations, and standards. They also exchanged views on potential legislative, institutional, or procedural reforms that can help improve enforcement and promote high levels of environmental protection.

The Organization of American States (OAS) provided the Council an overview of the Seventh Monitoring Report on results achieved and lessons learned through the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program. To date over \$89 million has been invested in cooperation projects to address shared challenges facing the region, including conservation of natural resources, management of water resources, enforcement of environmental laws, illegal trade of wildlife, including marine resources, and conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems. In addition to these areas, upcoming cooperation will focus on the development of air quality standards, including urban air monitoring systems, waste water and solid waste management, emphasizing the cost-benefit in improving these norms, and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

In addition, the Council received a report from the Secretariat for Environmental Matters (Secretariat) and recognized its role in promoting public participation and environmental awareness. Since 2007, the Secretariat has received 38 submissions

regarding effective enforcement of environmental laws in the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, including submissions related to environmental impact assessment, management of water and other natural resources, conservation of protected areas, threatened or endangered species, land management, noise pollution, and hazardous waste. The Secretariat reported on its fourth factual record, related to the Cuyamel II hydroelectric project in Honduras, which was published in May 2017. The General Coordinator of the Secretariat provided examples of the contribution of the submission process to a better understanding of enforcement issues in CAFTA-DR countries and engagement between the governments and their citizens.

The Council held a public session on June 22 at the Marriott San José, Costa Rica, to share information and exchange views on implementation of Chapter 17 and the Environmental Cooperation Program. Representatives of non-governmental and international organizations, the private sector, academia, and members of the public at large attended the meeting, where they had the opportunity to engage directly with Council Members on environmental matters in the region. Non-governmental organizations benefitting from CAFTA-DR environmental cooperation joined the session via video conference from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Nicaragua to share their experiences and participate in the public forum. In both meetings the Council reiterated the importance of ensuring high levels of environmental protection and effective enforcement of environmental legislation.

Additional Resources

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

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

CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Infographic [\[add link\]](#)

CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter www.state.gov/e/oes/eqt/trade/caftadr/131248.htm