

Twelfth Meeting of the Environmental Affairs Council

Dominican Republic–Central America–United States

Free Trade Agreement

(CAFTA-DR)

Hotel Intercontinental Real, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

June 20–21, 2018

Joint Communiqué

**Central America, Dominican Republic, and the United States Review Implementation
of the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter**

The Environmental Affairs Council (Council), established pursuant to the Dominican Republic–Central America–United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), held its twelfth annual meeting on June 20 and 21 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to oversee implementation of and monitor progress under the Environment Chapter (Chapter 17).

During the first day of meetings, Council Members engaged in a robust discussion of implementation of the Environment Chapter, including a dialogue on best practices related to collaboration among law enforcement agencies and institutions, with an emphasis on wildlife protection and combating illegal logging. Under the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program framework, countries have made important advances on wildlife protection, such as strengthening the Central America and Dominican Republic Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAWEN, known as ROAVIS in Spanish) and creating national public awareness programs on the impact of illegal wildlife trade.

The Council also examined the role of environmental courts and tribunals in the enforcement of environmental laws. In addition, Council Members discussed opportunities and challenges associated with interagency and intergovernmental coordination, the importance of data collection and sharing, and how technology can help to address these challenges. They also exchanged views on legislative, institutional, and procedural revisions that can help improve effective enforcement and promote high levels of environmental protection.

The Organization of American States (OAS) provided a summary and reflections on the evaluations of the small grants program and the strengthened wildlife enforcement and public participation program, both supported under the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program.

To date over US\$ 95 million has been invested in cooperation projects to address shared challenges facing CAFTA-DR countries, including the degradation of natural resources, management of water resources, enforcement of environmental laws, illegal trade of wildlife, and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems. In addition to these issues, future cooperation will focus on strengthening air quality monitoring programs, improving wastewater and solid waste management, including marine debris, and continuing to support public participation programs to combat illegal wildlife trade and the exchange of good practices.

The Council received a report from the CAFTA-DR Secretariat for Environmental Matters (Secretariat) and recognized its role in promoting environmental monitoring, public participation, and environmental awareness. Since 2007, the Secretariat has received 39 submissions regarding effective enforcement of environmental laws in the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, including submissions related to environmental impact assessments, management of water and other natural resources, conservation of protected areas, threatened or endangered species, land management, noise pollution, and hazardous waste. The General Coordinator of the Secretariat also provided examples of the contributions of the submission process to improved enforcement of environmental laws in CAFTA-DR countries and how engagement between the governments and their citizens is contributing to address environmental enforcement challenges.

During the second day of meetings, the Council held a public session 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 Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala to share their experiences and participate in the public forum.

Both meetings were convened in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, where the Council reiterated the importance of ensuring high levels of environmental protection and effective enforcement of environmental legislation.

Additional Resources

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

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

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

CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Infographic

https://www.facebook.com/pg/caftadr/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1879028442156995