

January 27, 2011

The Environmental Affairs Council (Council), established pursuant to the Dominican Republic—Central America--United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), held its fifth meeting today in Washington, D.C., to carry out its obligation to oversee implementation of and review progress under the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter and to consider the status of cooperation activities developed under the Dominican Republic—Central America—United States Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA).

Today, each Council Member reported on his or her country's progress in implementing the Chapter and on the impact of environmental cooperation. The Council took note of the relationship that exists between the CAFTA-DR environmental efforts and other internationally relevant issues, such as, climate change, environmental governance and security. The Council also heard a report from the Secretariat for Environmental Matters (Secretariat) and in particular took note of and welcomed the increased number of public submissions as a positive demonstration of public participation in meeting Chapter obligations. Since January 2010, the Secretariat received 11 submissions regarding effective enforcement of environmental laws by CAFTA-DR Parties and published the first Factual Record completed under CAFTA-DR.

During this meeting, the Council decided to reappoint Mr. Jorge Guzman, of El Salvador, as General Coordinator, and Mr. Mario Mancilla as his Technical Assistant to the General Coordinator, each for another two-year term.

In addition, the Organization of American States submitted its "Second Evaluation Report: Monitoring Progress of the Environmental Cooperation Agenda in the CAFTA-DR Countries." The results achieved underscore that increased trade and stronger environmental protection are mutually supportive.

Additionally, the Council was especially pleased to have the opportunity to interact with members of the public during the public session of the meeting. During this session, the Council met with representatives from civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector to gain a better understanding of their expectations, concerns and interests with respect to CAFTA-DR actions and activities. The Council provided the public with information on progress in implementing obligations under the Chapter, and on important results achieved through environmental cooperation. The Secretariat also provided the public with information on the process for filing submissions on enforcement matters and on the status of previously filed submissions.

The Dominican Republic, Central America and the United States reaffirmed their strong commitment to work together to preserve and protect the environment through implementation of the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter and Environmental Cooperation Agreement.

