

Joint Communiqué of the CAFTA-DR Environmental Affairs Council Meeting

March 10, 2009

**Dominican Republic- Central America- United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR)
Environmental Affairs Council Meeting
San José, Costa Rica**

The Environmental Affairs Council (Council), established pursuant to the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), met in San Jose, Costa Rica on March 10, 2009.

The Council devoted a great deal of time to the issues of transparency and public participation in the CAFTA-DR countries. The Council underscored the importance of transparency and public participation in furthering the mutual supportiveness of trade and environmental protection.

An important achievement of the meeting was the Council decision appointing Mr. Jorge Guzman of El Salvador as the General Coordinator of the CAFTA-DR Secretariat for Environmental Matters for a two-year term, starting May 1, 2009. Mr. Guzman brings to this position several years of experience working on issues under the CAFTA-DR, including environment and dispute settlement. This experience will be invaluable to his duties as General Coordinator.

The Council also approved an outreach plan to improve civil society's understanding of the opportunities provided under CAFTA-DR for enhanced public participation.

The Council met with representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, members of academia and the private sector, to gain a better understanding of expectations, concerns and interests. The Council also provided information on important results achieved through CAFTA-DR environmental cooperation. Presentations were given on model wastewater regulations and activities aimed at achieving cleaner production. These activities, taken together with other aspects of the CAFTA-DR environmental cooperation program, have yielded important results helping to promote increased environmental protection in the CAFTA-DR countries.