

Thirteenth Meeting of the Environmental Affairs Council

Dominican Republic–Central America–United States

Free Trade Agreement

(CAFTA-DR)

Miami, Florida, United States

November 13-14, 2019

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 thirteenth annual meeting on November 13 and 14, 2019 in Miami, Florida, United States, to oversee implementation of, and monitor progress under, the Environment Chapter (Chapter 17).

On the first day of meetings, Council Members focused on monitoring and engaged in a robust discussion of implementation of the Chapter. Council Members also engaged in a dialogue on best practices related to solid waste management and recycling, including a discussion on used plastics and land-based sources of marine litter. Council Members used this discussion as a platform for considering options to improve regional collaboration to address emerging trends in waste management. Under the CAFTA-DR framework, countries have made important advances to improve solid waste management by strengthening regulations and policies building technical capacity and promoting public participation. CAFTA-DR parties also recognize the importance of addressing land-based sources of marine litter.

The Council received the annual report from the CAFTA-DR Secretariat for Environmental Matters and recognized the Secretariat's role in promoting environmental monitoring, public participation, and environmental awareness. Since 2007, the Secretariat has received 43 submissions regarding effective enforcement of environmental laws in the Central American parties 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 General Coordinator of the Secretariat provided examples of how the submission process has contributed to improved enforcement of environmental laws in CAFTA-DR countries and emphasized the importance of public engagement between civil society and the government in helping to address environmental enforcement challenges. The Council continues to stress the importance of the effective

enforcement of environmental laws, as well as opportunities to benefit from lessons learned in enforcement across the region.

The Organization of American States (OAS) provided the Council an overview of the Eighth Monitoring Report on results achieved and lessons learned through the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program. To date more than US\$98 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, regulations, and policies; illegal trade of wildlife; and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems.

During the second day of meetings, the Council held a public session to share information and exchange views between session participants on effective 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 participated in the session in response to a broad public invitation. Participants 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 [insert countries] to share their experiences and participate in the public forum.

The meetings were held in Miami, Florida, United States. The Council continues to stress the importance of ensuring high levels of environmental protection and to support effective enforcement by CAFTA-DR parties of their environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Additional Resources

- CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter:
www.ustr.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/agreements/cafta/asset_upload_file9_3937.pdf
- Secretariat for Environmental Matters (Secretariat) <http://www.saa-sem.org/>
- CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation <http://www.caftadr-environment.org/>