



**INFORMAL DIALOGUE ON THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT FOR
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
QUITO, ECUADOR, 18 NOVEMBER 2005**

ANNOTATED AGENDA

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and opening remarks United Nations Environment Programme Organization of American States
9:15 – 10:45	Discussion of needs and identification of priorities for the region This session will focus on the main capacity-building needs and priorities related to trade and environment for the region
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:30	Brief overview of current capacity-building activities in the region This session will provide an opportunity for capacity-building providers to briefly discuss their current activities in the region
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15:30	Potential Working Group objectives and activities This session will discuss the possible establishment, objectives and activities of a regional Working Group
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 17:15	Next steps This session will identify the next steps to be taken with respect to the possible establishment of the Working Group
17:15 – 17:45	Final remarks

BACKGROUND NOTES

The Latin American and Caribbean region is exceptionally rich in biodiversity: containing 68% of the world's tropical rain forests and 40% of the plant and animal species. The region also has a dynamic economy with growth rates projected at 4% in 2005 and 2006, and has undergone considerable trade liberalization and economic integration through such regional agreements as MERCOSUR, the Central American Common Market and the Andean Community, not to mention the numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements.

The regional economic expansion has, however, often resulted in environmental degradation, such as the over-exploitation of land and marine resources, nutrient depletion of the soil, deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Regional efforts have been made to respond to these challenges through the establishment of institutions focused on regulating and addressing environmental management. However, the central challenge facing these institutions, and the region in general, is how to ensure environmental protection while also promoting economic growth and sustainable development.

This informal dialogue hosted by UNEP and the OAS will consider the possible establishment of a Working Group on Trade and Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean. Such a Working Group could provide a forum for stakeholders, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector in the region to discuss capacity-building needs, exchange experiences and develop responses to regional challenges. The participation of various stakeholders in such dialogues may also enhance partnerships and help to ensure that capacity-building activities respond to regional needs and are undertaken in a coordinated manner.

The specific objectives of the informal dialogue are:

1. To review and discuss regional priorities related to trade and environment.
2. To identify and review relevant initiatives currently being undertaken by various actors related to trade and environment.
3. To explore the feasibility and relevance of establishing a regional Working Group on Trade and Environment.

The dialogue is structured around four sessions:

- Session I will focus on capacity-building needs with the aim of identifying priorities related to trade and environment for the region.
- Session II will provide a review of current capacity-building activities being undertaken in the region.
- Session III will consider the possible establishment of a regional Working Group and identify potential objectives and activities.
- Session IV will identify the next steps to be taken with respect to a possible launching of the Working Group, including practical considerations such as participation and funding.

SESSION I – DISCUSSION OF NEEDS AND IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES FOR THE REGION

This session aims at identifying capacity-building needs, priorities and possible responses in the area of trade and environment for the region. Participants are encouraged to discuss specific issues and areas in the trade and environment field that have particular relevance to the region.

In small groups, participants will be asked to consider the following questions:

- What are the main challenges facing the region in relation to trade and the environment?
- What are the main capacity-building needs based on these identified challenges?
- What could be some useful ways to respond to these needs?
- How should these responses be prioritised?

SESSION II– BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CURRENT CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

This session will provide an opportunity for participants to briefly discuss their current capacity-building activities in the region. The aim of the session is to identify what capacity-building activities are currently being undertaken in the region in order to gain insight into whether the scope of these activities adequately responds to the needs and priorities identified in Session I.

In plenary session, participants will be asked to discuss the following question:

- What capacity-building activities are currently being undertaken in the region?

Then, in small groups, participants will be asked to consider the following questions:

- What needs and priorities are not being addressed by current capacity-building efforts?
- What is required to strengthen future capacity-building efforts in the region?

SESSION III – POTENTIAL WORKING GROUP OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Based on the needs and priorities identified in Session I and the current initiatives being undertaken as identified in Session II, participants in this session will consider whether there are any potential benefits to establishing a Working Group on Trade and Environment for Latin American and the Caribbean. Assuming a need is identified, this session will then aim at identifying the structure and objectives of such a Working Group, identifying specific types of capacity-building activities that could be undertaken or supported by Working Group members.

In a plenary session, participants will be asked to discuss the following questions:

- Based on the needs and priorities identified in Session I, what are the potential costs and benefits associated with the establishment of a regional Working Group?
- Assuming the establishment of a Working Group is beneficial, what are some feasible objectives for the Working Group?

- What kinds of activities should the Working Group focus on in order to meet its objectives?

SESSION IV– NEXT STEPS

The launching of a regional Working Group requires a discussion about the means for achieving its objectives and implementing its activities, including practical considerations related to implementation.

In plenary session, participants will be asked to discuss the following questions:

- Who should be invited to participate in the Working Group?
- If not part of the Working Group, is there a potential role for other key stakeholders?
- How often should the Working Group ideally meet to carry out activities in support of its objectives?
- What are the most urgent next steps?