



GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, INNOVATION, GENDER RELATIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Department of Sustainable Development

Statement

By

Minister the Honorable Dr. Gale T.C. Rigobert

**Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice
in
Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (“Escazu Agreement”)**

Meeting on April 25, 2019,

Santiago, CHILE.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), distinguished Delegates of Member States who are signatories to the **Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean**, Representatives of Environmental Interest Groups, Other invited persons, Civil Society, Ladies and Gentlemen, Buenos Dias mi Amigos! (Good Day my friends!)

It is indeed a pleasure to bring you best wishes from my Government and people of Saint Lucia. My Government is indeed thrilled to be one of the first fourteen countries thus far to have signed the **Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as the Escazu Agreement** when it was opened for signature on September 25, 2018 at the Treaty Event, on the Kuwaiti Boat, United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Our signature is but our first step in our commitment to making access rights to requisite environmental information, especially that of hazardous substances affecting our communities, accessible to the people of Saint Lucia and the wider region.

My Government has begun and continues to make public participation a necessary part of decision-making at all levels, and to this end all stakeholders in the environment can be assured of a secure place at the discussion and negotiating table.

Before I highlight some of the steps taken by my Government on the Escazu Agreement, let me first congratulate ECLAC for its excellent leadership and organization as the Technical Secretariat to the Agreement, as well as the Co-Chairs of Chile and Costa Rica and other members of the Negotiating Committee, for the excellent work in putting together such a forward looking text. The Agreement is in line with the 2030 agenda which espouses true democracy, justice and fairness, and the commitment to leave **“no one left behind”** and that should be commended.

In Saint Lucia, my Department namely, the Department of Sustainable Development has taken the lead to encourage us as political leaders, and to sensitize the general public on the Escazu Agreement on the need for its ratification and entry into force.

To this end, a vibrant work plan has been put in place to ensure speedy dissemination and education. Some public service announcements (PSAs) have been prepared and are now being publicized. Several press releases and newspaper articles have also discussed the Agreement.

We have held town meetings and we will continue around the island to make everyone aware of the provisions of the Agreement and what it can mean for our people. All stakeholders like the Judiciary, the Bar Association, The National Workers Union, the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufactures Association, the Saint Lucia Media Workers Association and others, have been called upon to join the conversation in discussing this Agreement.

As Minister for Education, I am even more pleased to note that as of this coming month of May, we will also be bringing the message to the schools all over the island and at all levels from pre-school to tertiary.

My Government is extremely proud to tell of the strides taken to establish data collection and information systems in Saint Lucia. To date, my Government has launched the first phase of the National Information Systems (NEIS), and Online Data Portal as well as an official Data Policy and Ms Teshia Jn Baptiste is here and will be able to answer all questions in that regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen, several other exciting activities are in place to keep the conversation going and we have no doubt that the team will continue to keep you apprised of all that is happening.

I wish to thank the organizers of this forum and wish you a very productive and inspiring discourse. In closing I wish to thank my Department of Sustainable Development for continuing to raise the bar, as we all strive for excellence.

I thank you.