



For Immediate Release

**Civil society calls on the Government to sign and ratify the Escazú Agreement for good environmental governance in Trinidad and Tobago**

**Port of Spain, September 6, 2019** – On September 6, 2019, 60 civil society organisations (CSOs) working on environmental management across Trinidad and Tobago (TT), and other interested CSOs, delivered an open letter to the Honourable Prime Minister of TT, Dr Keith Rowley, calling on Government to signal its commitment to good environmental governance by signing and ratifying the *Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean*, known as the Escazú Agreement.

The Escazú Agreement is the first regional environmental treaty for Latin America and the Caribbean and the first treaty in the world with specific protection mechanisms for environmental defenders. It was adopted on March 4, 2018 in Escazú, Costa Rica. It aims to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters. This will be achieved through the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development.

The Escazú Agreement was opened for the signature of the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on September 27, 2018 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, coinciding with the General Annual Debate of the United Nations General Assembly. So far, there are 17 signatories and only one country (Guyana) has ratified. It needs to be ratified by 11 States to enter into force.

CANARI's Executive Director, Nicole Leotaud notes that TT's Government played a leading role in the negotiations of the Escazú Agreement and was widely commended for having strong legal, regulatory and policy mechanisms in place to support implementation of this internationally ground-breaking treaty. "Unfortunately," she said, "our Government has not yet signed and ratified this critical Agreement which can help support civil society's role in environmental management as a fundamental part of sustainable development of the country."

Civil society notes that the Agreement would be a key step forward for environmental protection in our country, helping us to combat key issues such as climate change and reduce socio-environmental conflicts. It would strengthen environmental policies and projects in the country through greater transparency and citizen participation. "Moreover," Leotaud added, "civil society must be key allies for environmental protection and climate action. The Escazú Agreement would support and facilitate more constructive and effective contributions of civil society in environmental governance."

The upcoming 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly in New York later this month (September 17-30) presents a clear opportunity for affirmative action by our Government. UN Secretary General, António Guterres, has highlighted the Escazú Agreement as one of the four environmental treaties to be signed/ratified during this General Assembly. Several countries within the Latin America and

the Caribbean region have already signaled their intention to sign/ratify the Escazú Agreement on September 26, 2019.

**The 60 CSOs who have signed the open letter to the Honourable Prime Minister have called on the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to sign the Escazú Agreement at the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly in September 2019 and to submit it to the appropriate national authorities for its immediate ratification.**



*Members of civil society organisations in Trinidad and Tobago who attended the "People Protecting our Planet" workshop on July 23, 2019 at the Lloyd Best Institute. CSOs are calling on the Government to sign and ratify the Escazú Agreement.*

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The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for 30 years. Our mission is to promote and facilitate stakeholder participation in the stewardship of natural resources in the Caribbean.

**Connect with us:**



More information on the Escazú Agreement is available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>.

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