



For Immediate Release

Caribbean CSOs call on their Governments to give citizens a voice on environmental issues by enacting the Escazú Agreement

Port of Spain, September 23, 2020 – Environmental civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Caribbean are eager to see a first-of-its-kind, people-centred environmental treaty—the Escazú Agreement—enter into force. With the support and guidance of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), four of those organisations—the [Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation](#) based in Jamaica, the [Saint Lucia National Trust](#), the [Environmental Awareness Group](#) based in Antigua and Barbuda and the [Newcastle Bay Foundation](#) based in St. Kitts and Nevis—are leading a sustained effort in support of the Agreement and calling for the Governments of their nations to take immediate action to ratify and move towards implementing the treaty.

The Escazú Agreement is a regional treaty which supports public access to timely information about environmental projects, public participation in environmental decision making, guaranteed protections for environmental defenders, and access to justice in environmental matters for Latin American and Caribbean citizens. These provisions are what makes this Agreement, as the first environmental treaty developed in the region, especially attractive to leading environmental CSOs.

The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation and Saint Lucia National Trust have been calling on their Governments to proceed with ratification of the Escazú Agreement.

"We applaud the Government of Saint Lucia for being one of the first to sign the Escazú Agreement back in 2018. This shows exceptional political will. We call on them now to take it a step further and be one of the 11 countries to ratify the agreement by September 26, 2020," the Trust's Communications and Advocacy Officer and Alternate Elected Representative of the Public, Karetta Crooks Charles, said. "Let us start putting things in place to show that we genuinely want to improve how environmental issues are handled in Saint Lucia. Let's build on what we already have!"

The Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation has taken a similar stance and is working with Jamaican Government officials and other vested stakeholders to ensure that Jamaica also ratifies the Agreement in the near future.

The Environmental Awareness Group and the Newcastle Bay Foundation support the leadership shown by their Governments in early ratification and have been raising awareness about this important treaty and building readiness of stakeholders to partner with the government in implementation once the treaty enters into force.

As a part of the CANARI-led, European Union (EU)-funded US\$1.12M *Powering Innovations in Civil Society and Enterprises for Sustainability in the Caribbean (PISCES)* project (ENV/2016/380-530), the Institute galvanised the four CSOs, helped them build their capacity to engage in effective advocacy on this issue and continues to support them as they champion the benefits of the Agreement in their respective nations.

"A healthy environment is key for Caribbean economies, livelihoods, well-being and culture yet our region is one of the world's most environmentally vulnerable where ecosystems continue to be destroyed and degraded. The [Escazú Agreement](#) provides a key foundation which could drastically improve the region's chances for long term sustainable development by recognising the rights of stakeholders to a healthy environment and supporting their participation in decisions that might negatively impact their lives and livelihoods. It can help them to hold those in power accountable for the impacts of their decisions on the environment. CANARI categorically endorses the Agreement and efforts by our colleagues throughout the region to bring it to fruition as soon as possible," said Nicole Leotaud, Executive Director of CANARI.

About CANARI: The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit institute which has been working across 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. Our work focuses on Equity, Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Resilience, and Participatory Governance. See here for more information on CANARI: <http://www.canari.org/>.

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