



*For Immediate Release*

**CANARI urges T&T Government to join ranks of progressive Caribbean nations and become party to landmark, regional environmental treaty**

**Port of Spain, November 19, 2020** – Today, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is calling on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to join the ranks of forward-thinking, progressive Latin American and Caribbean nations by becoming party to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (widely known as the [Escazú Agreement](#) because it was signed in Escazú, a suburb of San Jose in Costa Rica), which is about to come into force.

The Escazú Agreement is a first-of-its-kind, people-centred regional environmental treaty. Nine progressive nations, including Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda have already ratified. The treaty comes into force 90 days after the 11th ratification, which is imminent with Mexico and Argentina now moving to complete the final formal steps. Even as these and other Caribbean nations who have signed on to this landmark treaty prepare for its implementation, the Trinidad and Tobago Government has yet to act on the Escazú Agreement.

"This is a watershed moment for the Caribbean and the way we view and treat with environmental management throughout the region. It is a sign that governments throughout the region are prioritising their nations' sustainability as well as the well-being and livelihoods of their citizens," said Nicole Leotaud, Executive Director of CANARI.

The Escazú Agreement supports public access to timely information about issues affecting the environment, public participation in environmental decision-making, guaranteed protections for environmental defenders, and access to justice in environmental matters. These provisions are what makes this Agreement, as the first environmental treaty developed in the region, especially attractive to leading environmental civil society organisations (CSOs). These CSOs have been instrumental in the embrace of the Escazú Agreement throughout the region; they have worked and continue to work tirelessly to educate stakeholders about the importance of this landmark treaty to their nations and the region as a whole. CANARI has been engaged in doing so both regionally and locally.

Leotaud noted that, "It is extremely disappointing that, despite early leadership by the Ministry of Planning and Development in the negotiation process, Trinidad and Tobago has not yet signed on to this Agreement, which will support international environmental commitments the Government has already made on climate change, biodiversity and pollution. Trinidad and Tobago already has strong policy and legal frameworks in place that will support implementation of this treaty. Committing to the Escazú Agreement will provide opportunities for capacity building and improving the practice of good environmental governance in the country. CANARI is calling

on the Ministry of Planning and Development to take action for Trinidad and Tobago to urgently join on to the Escazú Agreement to affirm their commitment to the environment and our sustainability."

In partnership with The Cropper Foundation, EquiGov Institute and Environment Tobago and supported by at least 60 other national and local CSOs, CANARI has issued letters to the Prime Minister and public petitions, held workshops, webinars and meetings as well as made numerous appeals via media appearances to raise public awareness and to call on the Government to commit to the Escazú Agreement.

"A healthy environment is critical for Caribbean economies and people, yet our region is one of the world's most environmentally vulnerable. Trinidad and Tobago unfortunately does not have a good track record in many areas – for example it is one of the worst nations in the world per capita for carbon emissions and plastic pollution and we continue to have ecosystems being degraded. The Escazú Agreement provides a key foundation which could improve our 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," said Leotaud.

**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/>.

**Connect with us:**



**For further information, please contact:** Nicole Leotaud [nicole@canari.org](mailto:nicole@canari.org)