



RELEASE

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COSTA RICA'S SHELVING OF ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT IS BELIZE'S OPPORTUNITY FOR REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

WITH SENATE APPROVAL NOW IN HAND, BELMOPAN CAN RATIFY ESCAZÚ IMMEDIATELY

On February 10th, Belize's Senate authorized the Government of Belize to ratify the Escazú Agreement. Belizean conservation non-governmental organizations therefore call on Belmopan to take the necessary steps to bring the agreement into force.

To date, thirteen (13) other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have ratified the Escazú Agreement. The regional treaty was adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in March 2018, and is open to all thirty-three (33) countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. But it must be noted that Costa Rica was *not* one of the State Parties who helped to bring the agreement into force on April 22nd, 2021. Several States, civil society organisations and international organisations, as well as the UN Secretary-General, have welcomed the legally binding agreement, which aims to translate into legal terms Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on informed public participation in environmental matters.

Within this context, to delay ratification based on decisions made by the Government of Costa Rica would undermine Belize's repeatedly stated endorsement for the Escazú Agreement. On January 12th, 2023, Minister of Sustainable Development, Disaster Risk and Climate Change, Orlando Habet told the media, *"I am happy that I could have taken that document to cabinet. We already signed the agreement, but it needed (to be) ratified. Cabinet gave its full support showing that our government is certainly willing and truthfully engaging the public because it provides information, accessibility and justice. So as you mentioned what we have to do now is to see how*

the department can look at the areas that have to be strengthened. I think during the past administration the Attorney General had identified some areas that need to be strengthened. We already have some acts like the Freedom of Information act that provides some of that accessibility to information. But we have to strengthen all legislation that will guide the effectiveness of the Escazú agreement.” (Transcript courtesy Love News)

The Belizean conservation community looks forward to collaborating with the Government of Belize to design the required mechanisms necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the Escazú agreement as soon as possible.

ENDS.