

## Key Recommendations on the Role of Parliamentarians for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters

In line with the implementation of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (“Escazú Agreement”)

*Developed during the Parliamentary Caucus that took place within the framework of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean’s (ECLAC) Second Annual Forum on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters in Latin America & the Caribbean*

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We, the Members of Parliament participating in the Parliamentary Caucus on Protecting Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters:

*Expressing gratitude* to ECLAC for co-organizing this conversation, to experts for sharing their knowledge, to every person promoting and defending human rights in environmental matters, and to donors for their support to Parliamentarians for Global Action’s (PGA) work in the promotion of human rights, democracy and the Rule of Law;

*Recognizing* the invaluable work of the public and of human rights defenders in environmental matters to strengthening democracy, access rights and sustainable development and their fundamental contributions in this regard;<sup>1</sup>

*Acknowledging* the key role that parliamentarians play in their capacity to legislate, scrutinize government actions, and champion issues as elected representatives closest to their communities, and their shared goal to promote and protect human rights, democracy, and peace for a more equitable, safe, sustainable, and democratic world;

We agree on the following recommendations:

### On an effective legal framework:

1. Safeguard the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by ratifying the Escazú Agreement and harmonizing its commitments in the legal framework, including through legislative reform and/or Constitutional amendment.
2. Analyze existing legal frameworks: (1) in States who have ratified the Escazú Agreement to ensure implementing legislation is effective and includes enforcement mechanisms; and (2) in States who have not yet ratified the Agreement, identify opportunities in existing legislation to strengthen a framework in line with the Agreement.
3. Promote dialogue with local communities to ensure the term of human rights defenders in environmental matters appropriately encompasses their inherent cultural heritage, customary rights, and diversity as afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, and women as well as their different roles and expressions as community leaders, journalists, lawyers, among others. Remain mindful of intersectionality and intergenerational approaches.
4. Use exiting processes and mechanisms in Parliaments to, meaningfully and regularly, engage with civil society, academia and the public on environmental matters.
5. Consider campaign finance reform or introducing campaign finance legislation to promote transparency and accountability in Parliament.

### On strengthening capacity and cooperation:

6. Increase regional cooperation through parliamentary networks, such as PGA to share lessons learned and concrete examples of effective implementation of the Escazú Agreement between countries who have ratified it, and to encourage discussions with those countries who have yet to ratify.
7. Engage in international and regional platforms and fora that allow parliamentarians to exchange experiences and develop innovative strategies to address common challenges, reflecting the cooperative model created by the Agreement and other international human rights instruments.

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<sup>1</sup> P2, *Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean* (“Escazú Agreement”)

8. Commit to cross-party cooperation on the protection of the environment and related human rights and craft messages that provide accurate information on the Escazú Agreement.
9. Improve coordination among parliamentary committees with prerogatives beyond the environment to ensure an intersectional approach with an emphasis to protect human rights defenders in environmental matters.

On improving oversight:

10. Elaborate parliamentary questions and request information from relevant Ministries to encourage the establishment of national qualitative and quantitative measures and indicators, with strong accountability and reporting mechanisms on environmental matters.
11. Maintain as priority in the legislative agenda and thus, in the allocation of funds during budgetary sessions, programs and policies that encourage multi-stakeholder cooperation between government and civil society on environmental matters both at the national and regional levels. Such programs should ensure transparency and accountability for a progressive decision-making process.

On becoming a champion:

12. Use our platforms to educate our societies about human rights and to create a culture respectful of the environment.
13. Raise awareness on the need for the access rights to information, public participation, and justice in environmental matters through the Escazú Agreement.
14. Amplify each other's work to alert about violations of rights to environmental defenders at the national, regional and international levels.