

Communique of the Environmental Affairs Council of the Dominican Republic- Central America- United States Free Trade Agreement

BUREAU OF OCEANS AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS
July 24, 2007

Guatemala City, Guatemala
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· The Environmental Affairs Council (Council) of the Dominican Republic--Central America--United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) met for the third time today in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The Council is pleased to hold this meeting in Guatemala and to carry out its obligation to oversee implementation of the CAFTA-DR's Environment Chapter.

· In this meeting we highlighted the Council's commitment to transparent, democratic and participatory implementation of the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter. We are especially pleased to announce that we have agreed in principle to the Working Procedures for the Secretariat for Environmental Matters. These procedures provide the public with important guidance on how to file submissions alleging that a CAFTA-DR Party is failing to effectively enforce its environmental laws. They also will ensure effective, efficient, and transparent processing of submissions.

· The Council discussed efforts to enhance public participation and how each Party is implementing specific obligations of the CAFTA-DR Environment Chapter. Each Party reported on its national advisory committee, comprising members of its public, including representatives of business and environmental organizations, to provide views on matters related to the Chapter's implementation.

· Today's meeting provided an opportunity for the Council to hear a report from the General Coordinator of the Secretariat for Environmental Matter on his activities since his appointment on July 27, 2006, including his current and planned activities to promote public awareness and understanding of the public submission process. In that regard, the Secretariat informed the Council it received its first submission.

· The Council also was pleased to receive reports detailing the status of implementation of cooperative environmental activities. We are impressed with the scope and breadth of these cooperative activities. We were especially pleased to hear about our work together to strengthen and improve enforcement of our environmental laws, protect and conserve our biodiversity and natural resources, and help the private sector improve its environmental performance. Our cooperative environmental work tangibly demonstrates that economic growth and environmental protection are mutually supportive.

· Today, in fulfillment of its obligation to provide for public participation in its work, the Council held a session with the public, which included civil society representatives. The session was a productive exchange of perspectives between the Council and Civil Society representatives.