

**IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
COMMITMENTS DOCUMENT
MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH
MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

Environmental security is part of the future, that is to say, of the viability of a society. The findings of the research that has been carried out on this topic [See: <http://www.fess-global.org/DR.cfm>] confront us with our future as a nation, showing us a set of dramatic risks that we must understand as challenges to overcome through the effective promotion of environmental security as a priority of the agenda of governance. In that sense, it is necessary to define a National Environmental Agenda that becomes a commitment of all to this generation and future generations of Dominicans.

Some of the points of that agenda have been set forth in this commitments document, formulated within the framework of the preparations for the Environmental Security Summit through the joint work of the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources, Public Health, and Tourism as well as the environmental commission of the National Chamber of Deputies. This work has been sponsored by Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability (United States), the Pan American Health Organization, the Centro de Estudios Políticos y Sociales [Center for Political and Social Studies] (CUEPS) of the Pontificia Universidad Madre y Maestra, and the Fundación Institucionalidad y Justicia [Institutionality and Justice Foundation].

I. With the objective of strengthening the implementation of the General Law of the Environment and Natural Resources, our institutions commit themselves to promoting social and technical processes that facilitate decentralization and participation and an increase in regulatory capacity, as well as greater coordination of public policies linked to the key sectors for environmental security.

Among the fundamental actions to promote such a strengthening are the following:

- a) Establishment of regional environmental management offices, starting with the environmental management office for the Atlantic region (Puerto Plata), the environmental management office for the Central region (Jarabacoa, La Vega), and the environmental management office for the Eastern region (La Romana). These environmental management offices will be grounded in the respective regional land use plans in order to contribute to the development of local environmental policies and agendas to confront problems such as basic environmental sanitation (disposal of excreta and garbage and supply of potable water) and the care of areas of greatest ecological and social vulnerability, marginalized urban and rural areas, the border, and buffer zones for protected areas.

The regional environmental management offices, working closely with the environmental management units that are being installed in the municipalities and state institutions with greatest responsibility for projects of public investment,

will become drivers of local environmental agendas as spaces of coordination for various social actors and as the foundation for investment plans.

- b) Strengthening of regulatory capacity for the application of environmental quality norms, the development of incentives to promote environmental responsibility among national productive sectors, and the heightening of citizen consciousness regarding the need to preserve the environment and natural resources.

II. The goal of improving the environmental security situation in the Dominican Republic requires the consolidation of major institutional capabilities, among them the system for monitoring environmental quality and the detection of sources of pollution, the system for responding to the people's demand for services, the effective assignment of resources as a function of established priorities, and the evaluation of results based on the establishment of indicators of environmental management.

The fundamental actions and deadlines for implementing the consolidation of such capacities are:

- a) Creation and equipping of a laboratory in the Sub-Ministry of Environmental Management (2 years).
- b) Strengthening the capacity to monitor environmental quality through a 15 percent increase in technical and support personnel and the provision of equipment for transportation, environmental measurement, and other needs (2 years).
- c) Establishment of a one-stop system.
- d) Improvement of the administrative and financial management of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.
- e) Strengthening the focus regarding environmental security in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, including a set of indicators, to enable it to monitor effectively the projects and activities it carries out.

III. It is also necessary to move forward a set of laws and basic norms to improve environmental security, including completing the sectoral laws and updating or formulating still pending environmental norms.

In that sense, it is crucial to carry out diverse essential actions in the short and medium term, such as:

1. Preparation and approval of the sectors laws pertaining to:
 - Marine and Coastal and Resources (1 year)
 - Forest Resources (1 year)
 - Biodiversity (1 year)
 - Biosecurity or biotechnology security (1 año).

As well the laws pertaining to:

- Solid Wastes (2007-08).
- Water and Sanitation (2007-08).
- Alternative Energy (2007-08).

These projects should be placed in the priority agenda of the Chambers and discussed in joint committees in order to expedite their approval. The Congress of the Republic, the Chamber of Deputies of which has explicitly committed itself to the work of this Summit, should play a fundamental role in these legislative actions for the improvement of environmental security.

An essential action for advancing in this direction is that of designing and establishing an interagency mechanism for the discussion and formulation of the legal instruments related to environmental security. SEMARN, SECTUR, and SESPAS as well as local governments, the National Emergency Commission, and other entities must commit themselves to participate in this interagency effort. In the case of SESPAS, the legislative agenda includes water, wastes, food, pesticides, vectors, emergencies and disasters, among other topics.

2. Implementation of the environmental norms for management of natural resources and the environment:

- Air quality and emissions control environmental norms (1 year)
- Norms for the environmental management of non-hazardous solid wastes (2 years)
- Norms for the environmental management of marinas and other facilities that service recreational craft (2 years)
- Norm for the transport of hazardous substances (2.5 years)
- Environmental norms for the reduction and elimination of the use of substances that damage the ozone layer. (3 years)
- Norms for non-metallic mining operations (1 year)
- Environmental norm concerning the quality of underground waters and discharges to the subsoil (1.5 years)

3. Revision and updating of existing norms and regulations pertaining to:

- Norm for the environmental management of solid wastes (1 year)
- Norm for the environmental management of radioactive wastes (1 year)
- Environmental norm for protection against noise (1 year)
- Environmental norm on air quality and emissions control (1.5 years)
- Environmental norm on water quality and control of discharges (1 year)
- Environmental norm for the integrated management of infectious wastes (2 years)
- Environmental norm on the quality of underground water discharges to the subsoil (2 years)
- Regulations for the operations of the wood processing industry (0.5 years)
- Norms and procedures for forestry permits (0.5 years)
- Norms and techniques for environmental forest management plans (0.5 years)
- Technical norms for the establishment and certification of forestry plantations. (1 year)
- National route for the transport of forest products (1 year)
- Norm for the emissions registry and the transference of contaminants (2 years)

4. Formulation of new norms and regulations:

- Environmental norm for avian farms (immediately)
- Environmental norm for hog farms (immediately)
- Regulation of the use and environmental handling of agrochemicals and their residues in horticultural production

From the standpoint of Public Health, it is important to promote and participate actively in the establishment of a single legal and normative framework (law, regulations, and norms) developed consensually by all the institutional and civil society actors. It is also relevant to insert in the normative framework such areas as recreational waters (beaches, rivers, and bathing areas) and waste waters.

IV. The fulfillment of this agenda assumes the strengthening of the inter-institutional cooperation now underway with the purpose of linking capabilities, initiatives, and resources. It is necessary to advocate for the design and establishment of a government policy of concentration and coordination toward the development of a wide regulatory framework that ties in all environmental security norms, both from the biotic as from the abiotic standpoints, but which defines responsibilities so as to avoid overlapping and conflicting interventions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to ensure that no areas are left without coverage.

In that context, the main priorities of interagency coordination among the Ministries of Environment, Tourism, and Public Health are the following:

- a) Definition of policies, plans, programs, and projects for the conservation of biodiversity in spaces affected by tourism.
- b) Coordination in the definition and granting of land use—land use planning—including by the municipal governments.
- c) Management of waste water and solid wastes.

The basic actions and deadlines for implementing the priorities of the inter-institutional agenda are as follows:

- a) Strategic environmental evaluation of the tourism sector (2 years)
- b) Formulation of a national land use plan to be made official through a law or decree (3 years)
- c) Creation an inter-institutional platform to follow-up on norms for the adequate handling of wastes (treatment) (1 year)
- d) Development of the General Water Law in which would be included (whether or not yet promulgated) the Potable Water and Treatment Law, taking into account aspects such as recreational waters, the prioritization of use, land use planning taking the watershed as the management unit, and the subsequent installation of a national system of payment for environmental services.
- e) Development of the General Law of Wastes (solid, liquid, common, hazardous, national, in-transit, municipal) fostering the development and implementation of a set of norms where the final disposition guarantees the minimum risk to the health of the population.
- f) Research and Technology. To strengthen the research side through training human resources and obtaining technology that allows for the fulfillment of laws, regulations, norms, and protocols.
- g) To develop and incorporate into the curricula at the different educational levels (pre-school, elementary, secondary, technical, university, and post-graduate)

- content regarding the social production of health based on environmental sanitation as a crosscutting factor for all social activity.
- h) To implement the collaborative agreement for the development of ecotourism between the Ministries of Tourism and Environment and Natural Resources (2007).
 - i) To strengthen the Health and Tourism Commission and the National Health and Tourism Plan.
 - j) Security and Tourism Commission.
 - k) Development of the Master Plan for the Development of Ecotourism in the Dominican Republic in collaboration with the Japanese Agency for Internacional Cooperation (2008).

As examples of the interagency coordination already achieved between the Ministries of Tourism and Public Health the following initiatives are under way:

- a. Repair and equipping of the country's medical dispensaries.
- b. Environmental health seminars for hoteliers.
- c. Seminars targeted to street vendors.
- d. Construction of the Sosua-Cabarete hospital and provision of 10 ambulances for hospital activities in the eastern region of the country.
- e. Training of hotel kitchen workers in norms of hygiene.
- f. Advice to all tourism centers concerning the handling of fumigation.

There are diverse joint activities being carried out between the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources and Tourism at the local level, such as the carrying out of joint development and land use tourism plans, the analysis of water quality, and renewable energy, among others.

These actions demonstrate the will for inter-institutional cooperation, to be consolidated shortly, which should foster a framework for coordinated actions as previously discussed.

We recognize as indispensable the mobilization and participation of civil society in order to improve the environmental security situation. The involvement of social and non-governmental organizations in all phases of the initiatives implies much more than informing society of terms and contents of initiatives once they have been completed. Instead, it means that we should have the participation of representative organizations of civil society in the development of the strategic agenda at the appropriate level (local, regional, or national).

Some of the initiatives and scenarios that should be strengthened with civil society should include:

- A. Identification of environmental problems and action priorities for budgeting (planning)
- B. Public hearings for the validation of environmental norms.
- C. Public hearings for the presentation of environmental impact studies and plans for environmental improvements.
- D. Monitoring of progress in environmental security.

A set of basic actions should be developed for the process of inclusion of civil society, among which the following stand out:

- a) Workshops with civil society for problem identification and prioritization of actions. (6 months)
- b) Carrying out meetings and workshops with civil society to validate new environmental norms (3 years)
- c) Development of spaces for participation to validate and identify actions that will further the achievement of the National Environmental Agenda (1.5 years)
- d) Production, at the local level, of a registry of proposals for social participation (civil society) toward the social production of health.
- e) Explicit inclusion of civil society in specific or general aspects of each proposal
- f) Fostering strategic alliances between government institutions of the environmental, health, and tourism sectors and civil society around environmental security initiatives

Our institutions commit themselves to taking concrete steps for the advancement of the environmental security policies and actions referenced herein, in the knowledge that these are a key element for the perdurability and welfare of Dominican society. Below, we undersign this commitments document:

Dr. Max Puig
Secretary of State for the Environment and Natural Resources

Dr. Bautista Rojas
Secretary of State for Public Health and Social Assistance

Lic. Félix Jiménez
Secretary of State for Tourism

Lic. Julio César Valentín
President
Chamber of Deputies
National Congress

Honorary Witnesses:

Dr. Max Castro
Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability
(FESS)

Dra. Cristina Nogueiras
Pan American Health Organization

Dr. Servio Tulio Castaños
Fundación Institucionalidad y Justicia (FINJUS)

Dra. Ramonina Brea
Centro Universitario de Estudios Políticos y Sociales
Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra