



## CEDA Local participation for better governance in Latin America

*Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental (CEDA)*'s efforts to promote multi-stakeholder decision-making in environmental matters led Ecuador to ratify a regional declaration on public participation.

**SETTING THE SCENE** —The 1992 United Nations *Conference on Environment and Development*, held in Rio de Janeiro, resulted in the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*. This short document consisted of 27 principles designed to guide sustainable development. One of these, Principle 10 on public participation, is based on the concept that environmental issues are best handled when concerned citizens have access to environmental information held by public officials and are able to participate in decision-making processes. This Principle has the potential to enhance transparency and expand the right of access to information to those who are traditionally marginalized in decision-making, as well as to lead to more participatory processes for public policy-making.

The United Nations hosted the 2012 *Conference on Sustainable Development* (also known as Rio +20) as a follow up to the 1992 conference and expectations were very high. The resulting document “The Future We Want” introduced Sustainable Development Goals as a means of replacing the Millennium Development Goals post-2015 but established only minimal commitments. In parallel, through the efforts of civil society groups and the Government of Chile, a proposal for a stronger commitment and political will on Principle 10 evolved. This created an opportunity for enhanced implementation of Principle 10, and it was at this stage that CEDA became involved.

**WHAT CEDA DID** —Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental (CEDA) is a non-profit organization in Ecuador specializing in environmental law and policies. In advance of Rio +20, CEDA generated information, ran campaigns, and promoted debates, meetings, and forums as a means of facilitating dialogue with members of civil society.

Working with partner organizations, CEDA collected input from diverse stakeholders in government, civil society, academia, and the private sector on two key issues pertinent to Rio +20: (1) the green economy and (2) the governance framework for sustainable development, specifically the importance of ratifying and promoting Principle 10. The institution shared its findings with the Government of Ecuador through the Ministry for Cultural and Natural Heritage, and with Rebeca Grynspan, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. CEDA also developed two related policy papers and book chapters, which provide the perspective of leading experts in environmental sustainability, organized a training workshop for representatives of civil society organizations and the private sector, and held two discussion forums. In addition, at the regional level, CEDA implemented several campaigns aimed at encouraging the Ecuadorian government to commit to strengthening transparency, access to information, participation in decision-making, and accountability in environmental matters.



CEDA is a member of the *The Access Initiative*, a global network promoting access to information, participation, and justice in environmental decision-making. As part of its affiliation with this network, CEDA hosted an *East-West Exchange and Learning Meeting* in Quito in 2013, using Think Tank Initiative Matching Funds. The exchange between organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean and European representatives aimed to promote civil society as part of the discussion process on the *Declaration on the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*. Through this event, CEDA successfully created an environment that fostered an exchange of ideas and allowed organizations promoting Principle 10 to learn from a similar European experience.

**THE OUTCOME** —CEDA's efforts ahead of Rio +20 Conference generated several important results. The institution collected input from civil society and the private sector through a multi-stakeholder process aimed at informing the Government of Ecuador's position. The inputs and suggestions helped to strengthen the country's position leading up to Rio +20 and to substantiate proposals promoting the enhanced participation of civil society in forums. Importantly, they also led to the signing of the *Declaration on the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* by Ecuador in 2012, along with Brazil, Chile, Costa

Rica, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

The signing of this Declaration launched a process to create a regional instrument on Principle 10 to promote transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability in environmental decision-making. The Government of Chile and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in its role as Technical Secretariat of the process, organized a 2012 meeting at which point governmental representatives reaffirmed their commitment to develop an instrument and to create a plan for moving forward. Signatory governments have since adopted a *2014 Action Plan* that promotes the incorporation of new signatories, creates working groups to advance the achievement of a regional instrument, and sets actions for public participation in the process.

CEDA remains involved in these processes, both at national and regional levels, through its strong involvement with *The Access Initiative*. The institution has actively participated in working groups on capacity building, cooperation, and the regional instrument, and attended meetings with governmental representatives in 2012 and 2013. Overall, CEDA's commitment to supporting Principle 10 has been instrumental in facilitating transparency and accountability in environmental decision-making in Ecuador.

---

For more information on CEDA, visit <http://www.ceda.org.ec>

---

### TTI's Stories of Influence Series

This series, produced by TTI, shares stories about the impact Southern think tanks have on policy initiatives. All the think tanks featured in this series are supported by the [Think Tank Initiative](http://www.thinktankinitiative.org), a multi-donor program dedicated to strengthening the capacity of independent policy research organizations in the developing world. At [www.thinktankinitiative.org](http://www.thinktankinitiative.org), you can find profiles on the organizations in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia supported by the program, as well as publications, working papers, and general information about TTI.