**Principles for the INC Processes**

MEPA Trust is contributing this submission to ensure human rights based principles are fully integrated and mainstreamed and to strengthen the element of building partnerships and collaboration in the INC processes. Implementation of the Escazu Agreement which came into force in 2018 is ongoing so efforts to prioritize the building of synergies with this International Human Rights Agreement will auger well for principles of access to information, inclusion and participation. These actions tie in with the recent recognition by the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council of the **human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.** This is a powerful new tool to address the human rights impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and ensure rights-based environmental action. MEPA has and is building ongoing partnerships and collaboration with governments and CSO groups in the Caribbean to support ratification and implementation of the Escazu Agreement.

Parities and stakeholders need to be currently engaged in robust country-wide public education and awareness campaigns, to sensitize all relevant stakeholders and the Public in a manner that they can understand on the importance of the Plastic Treaty and the implications of the harm to people and the environment. We can build partnerships and collaborations to get this done.

Clear guidance for the Road Map for the Plastics INC was provided 26 years ago at the 1992 RIO SUMMIT when 179 countries meeting in Rio de Janeiro decided that environmental issues because they were cross-cutting in nature should not be handled by governments alone, but should involve input from all requisite stakeholders and the public especially civil society, should be central to all levels of the decision-making process. Further, that environmental information especially the kind that may prove hazardous to the health of the environment and that of the people, that is in the custody of public authorities should be disseminated to the public in a timely manner.

The Escazu agreement formerly called Principle 10 came out of the Rio + Conference after nine (9) rounds of intense negotiations which lasted many years. The Agreement was adopted and endorsed on March 4, 2018, at a town called “Escazú” in San Jose, Costa Rica hence its namesake, “The Escazú Agreement

**Article 10 of the Escazú Agreement which focuses on Capacity-Building** states:

“ Each Party in line with its capacities, may take inter alis, the following measures:

(a) Train authorities and civil servants on environmental access rights.
(b) Develop and strengthen environmental law and access rights, awareness-raising and capacity-building programs, for inter alia, the public, judicial and administrative officials, national human rights institutions and jurists.
(c) Acknowledge the importance of associations, organizations or groups that train the public on or raise public awareness of access rights.
**Article 11 of the Agreement which deals with Cooperation** states:

1. The Parties shall give particular consideration to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States from Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. For the purposes of implementing paragraph 2 of the present Article, the Parties shall promote activities and mechanisms such as:
   (a) Discussions, workshops, expert exchanges, technical assistance, education and observatories.
   (b) Developing, sharing and implementing educational, training and awareness-raising materials and programs.
   (c) Sharing experiences of voluntary codes of conduct, guidelines, good practices and standards.
   (d) Committee, Councils and forums of multi sectoral development stakeholders, to address cooperation priorities and activities.
3. The Parties shall encourage partnership with States from other regions, intergovernmental, non-governmental, academic, and private organizations, as well as civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders to implement the present Agreement.
4. The Parties recognize that regional cooperation and information sharing shall be promoted in relation to all aspects of illicit activities against the environment.

It is in this spirit of Articles 10 (Capacity Building) and 11 (Cooperation) that MEPA proposes that for the INC processes that Governmental and NGO stakeholders begin to explore ways in which we could help bridge the gaps and enhance education, sensitization and public awareness in all regions to move towards progress of the INC plastic treaty.

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