

Landmark Escazú Agreement can now enter into force

LONDON, 6 November 2020

The Elders welcome the news that with the eleventh ratification of the Escazú Agreement by Mexico, the landmark regional agreement can now enter into force across Latin America and the Caribbean.

[Juan Manuel Santos](#), Member of The Elders and former President of Colombia, explained:

“The ratification of the Escazú Agreement by Mexico marks an historic moment for the people of Latin America and the Caribbean. With this, the 11th ratification of the accord, this pioneering instrument can come into force. This is the region’s first environmental treaty, and is the first treaty in the world to contain specific provisions regarding human rights defenders in environmental matters - it is not possible to preserve the environment without also protecting those who defend it.”

“The signing and ratification of this Agreement by so many nations shows a commitment in the region to achieving egalitarian, just sustainable development that protects both people and our planet. It is important not only to congratulate Mexico as they ratify this Agreement, but also to thank the thousands of indigenous people, environmental defenders, and young people who have championed its ratification since its adoption in 2018.”

“I sincerely hope my country, Colombia, soon ratifies this agreement as well.”

[The Escazú Agreement](#) is the first legally binding regional environmental and human rights agreement designed to ensure rights to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and [access to justice](#) in environmental matters. Because environmental defenders who expose ecological destruction and human rights abuses are at particular risk, the agreement uniquely provides special protection for them across the region.

The agreement initially opened for signatures during the UN General Assembly in September 2018 following three years of negotiations under the supervision of the UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 24 of the 33 countries in the region signed the treaty, it remains open for ratification and a minimum of 11 countries were needed

to ratify to bring the treaty into force. Recent quarantines, social distancing and other emergency measures taken by countries to prevent the spread of COVID-19 slowed the pace of legislative procedures, but the ratification by Mexico now makes the treaty binding.

The Elders commend leaders who have signed and ratified this agreement and now urge countries to swiftly take the concrete measures needed to ensure the treaty lives up to its ambitious ideals.

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The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

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[Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chair from 2013 to 2018.

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