



**WECAN**  
Women's Earth & Climate Action Network, International



## **Ratifying the Escazú Agreement: Women for Human Rights & the Defense of Nature**

Wednesday, September 23, 2020, 2:00pm EST / 6:00pm UTC

*Please check your own time zone to coordinate!*

**Register here:** <https://bit.ly/3lXMzjb>

### **Introduction**

In 2018, countries of Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Regional Agreement for Access to Information, to Public Participation and Access to Justice on Environmental issues in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as Escazú Agreement. [The Escazú Agreement](#) is a historic multilateral accord guaranteeing access rights on environmental matters, and the protection of human rights and environmental defenders.

Latin America is one of the deadliest regions for environmental land defenders. In 2019, [212 land and environmental defenders were killed](#) – with over two-thirds of killings taking place in Latin America. Combined with entrenched colonial and patriarchal policies, individuals threatened are oftentimes Indigenous peoples and Women Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (WEHRD) fighting for the protection of their communities and territories. Frontline and Indigenous women are often the backbones of their communities, knowledge keepers of the forest, and lead resistance efforts to defend their lands.

With 80% of the biodiversity left on the planet existing within the territories of Indigenous Peoples, it is imperative to implement policies and frameworks, such as those included in the Escazú Agreement, that ensure Human Rights and the protection of Environment Defenders, including their access to decision making, public information, and justice mechanisms. [Several studies have shown](#) that the most effective ways to protect biodiverse regions is to protect the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. By protecting the rights of Indigenous land defenders, the Escazú Agreement is helping to protect the planet from further climate collapse and ecological degradation. Additionally, we know that when [women are at the forefront of decision making](#) - the planet and our communities are prioritized.

As we approach this year's United Nations General Assembly, The Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) International and Reacción Climática are organizing an online education and advocacy forum, featuring women leaders and activists discussing the importance of the Escazú Agreement, and how everyone—the international community and global movements—can advocate for the ratification and full implementation of this vital piece of

legislation that can protect diverse ecosystems and defenders of the land, and is essential to our global climate and environment.

Please continue reading to learn more about the Escazú Agreement and the online Forum. We hope to see you there!

## **Online Forum: Women for Ratifying the Escazú Agreement**

Please be invited to join The Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) International and Reacción Climática for this online forum to learn about the game-changing Escazú Agreement, and how you can advocate for the ratification and full implementation of this vital piece of legislation that can protect land defenders and Mother Earth.

Spanish and English simultaneous translation services will be provided during the forum. Durante el foro se brindarán servicios de traducción simultánea en español e inglés.

During this online forum women policy makers, Indigenous leaders, and human rights defenders will highlight the challenges women face in securing human and Indigenous rights, participating in climate policy, and sharing the importance for the ratification of the Escazú Agreement. Our goal is to engage regional stakeholders, with the backing of civil society, in the Escazú Agreement with the aim of securing two more countries to ratify the agreement in order for it to enter into force next year (2021). We will also discuss how the Escazú Agreement can be a powerful tool for Women Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (WEHRD) to protect their human rights and to be able to analyze legal frameworks that allow WEHRD to carry on with their work with the awareness that Escazú Agreement can help them accomplish their work in a safe and more effective manner.

Speakers to date include: **Patricia Gualinga**, Kichwa leader from Sarayaku, Spokeswoman for Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva (Ecuador); **María Luisa Rafael**, Quechua leader, Human Rights and Environmental activist (Bolivia); **Taily Terena**, Terena Nation, Indigenous rights activist (Brazil); **Andrea Sanhueza**, public representative for the Escazú agreement (Chile); **Ruth Spencer**, GEF/SGP National Coordinator (Antigua and Barbuda); **H.E. Ms. Patricia Madrigal Cordero**, Ex-Vice-minister of Environment (Republic of Costa Rica); **Ana Llácer**, Journalist, Filmmaker & Environmental Activist (Spain & USA); **Carmen Capriles**, Founder of Reacción Climática, WECAN Coordinator for Latin America (Bolivia); **Paloma Costa**, youth climate leader (Brazil); with facilitation and comments by **Osprey Orielle Lake**, Executive Director of WECAN International (USA). [Full speaker bios available here.](#)

The women speakers are representing the leaders on the frontlines, international policymakers, and Escazú advocates who are also the inspiration for alternatives and solutions for a healthy and just world at this critical time of multiple expanding crises.

## **Background: The Escazú Agreement**

Adopted on March 4, 2018 in Costa Rica, and expanding to all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Agreement for the Access to Information, to Public Participation and Access to Justice on Environmental issues in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as Escazú Agreement, [has as its main objectives](#) the guarantee of the full and effective implementation of the access rights understood as:

- ❖ Access to information
- ❖ Access to participation especially
- ❖ Access to remedy or justice on environmental matters

Grounded in [Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration of the Earth Summit of 1992](#), the Escazú Agreement is the most important progressive initiative on environmental issues and the protection of rights for land defenders in the region. [The Escazú Agreement is a legally binding agreement](#) that does not allow reserves by any of its Parties and takes into account vulnerable populations and environmental defenders as a central focus.

Under the support and guidance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), it took over 3 years and 9 negotiation periods to achieve the Agreement, [including a comprehensive Public Mechanism](#), engaging more than 2,000 individuals and organizations in the civil society consultation process. While the process lacked robust Indigenous representation, strong participation of the public in over 24 countries led to influential proposals from civil society, including the precedent-breaking Article 9: Human rights defenders in environmental matters.

The Escazú Agreement carries the dedication and spirit of women's defense of the land at its core, since its adoption was two years after the murder of Honduran activist and land defender, Berta Cáceres. The Agreement aims to carry on the legacy that Berta Cáceres has left as well as the struggles of thousands of land defenders, especially women across the Latin American region that stand up against extractivism. Unfortunately in a region where femicides, domestic violence and insecurity rises every day, the voices of front line women are not heard loud enough, their lives threatened and criminalized. These women are not only the warriors on the front lines, but also the inspiration for alternatives and solutions for a healthy and just world at this critical time of multiple expanding crises.

We hope that with a proper implementation of the Escazú Agreement, no more women land defenders voices will be violently censored, and furthermore that States should be provided the needed guarantees in order for every woman land defender, fighting for their communities, the environment, and our global climate.

---

### **About WECAN International:**

The Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) International is a solutions-based organization established to engage women worldwide in policy advocacy, on-the-ground projects, direct action, trainings, and movement building for global climate justice. We focus on short-term and long-term systemic change and solutions to address the climate crisis and the root causes of environmental degradation and socio-economic inequalities.

### **About Reacción Climática:**

Reacción Climática is a group of volunteers, established in the city of La Paz, Bolivia on February 20, 2010. Given the socio-economic and environmental context in which the Bolivian population lives and the great threat posed by climate change, REACCIÓN CLIMÁTICA is in charge of promoting the participation of the population to propose solutions to the problems that climate change means within the national context and international and what it implies at a social, economic and environmental level. At the same time, we promote both mitigation and adaptation, by raising awareness, developing capacities, research, supporting debate and action. The organization focuses especially on youth, because they are the ones who will be affected in the long term by the impacts, in the same way its mission is to provide solutions and alternatives in the fight against this problem.