

2021-2024 United States - Colombia Work Program for Environmental Cooperation

Introduction

The Environmental Cooperation Commission (ECC), established pursuant to Article III of the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) which seeks to undertake cooperative environmental activities to advance implementation of the United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA), its Side Letters, and its Understandings, and which was negotiated between the Governments of the United States and Colombia (hereinafter the Governments), hereby defines a Work Program through 2024 that establishes specific goals and objectives and areas for cooperation that reflect national priorities for each Government.

Background

On April 19, 2013, the Governments of the United States and Colombia signed the ECA. In so doing, they recognized that cooperation is the principal means for ensuring that trade and environmental policies are mutually supportive and promote the optimal use of resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development.

The objective of the ECA is to establish a framework for strengthening bilateral and/or regional environmental cooperation between the Governments aimed at enhancing environmental protection, effective enforcement of environmental laws, and the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, including through the development and improvement of environmental practices and technologies.

The ECA establishes an Environmental Cooperation Commission (ECC) and obligates the ECC to define a Work Program, establishing specific goals, objectives, and areas for cooperation in a way that reflects national priorities of each Government.

The first Work Program was effective during the period 2014 – 2017. In 2021 – 2024, the Governments intend to build upon previous environmental cooperation work and to intensify focus on certain priorities, such as combating wildlife trafficking and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; addressing pollution; improving water management and drought resilience; tackling the climate crisis; and advancing environmental justice through their respective domestic laws, regulations, and policies.

Work Program Goals

The ECC recognizes that through implementation of this Work Program it is striving to achieve the following long-term goals:

- Compliance with obligations in Chapter Eighteen (Environment) of the United States-Colombia TPA
- Protection and conservation of the environment and natural resources, with an emphasis on combating illicit and illegal activities associated with the exploitation of and trade in natural resources such as: wildlife trafficking; illegal logging and associated trade (ILAT); IUU fishing; and illegal mining of gold and other precious metals and gemstones

- Enhance ambition and opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Support strong, low-emissions, resilient economies and green growth and reducing pollution
- Strengthen efforts to assess marine mammal bycatch and seek to adopt measures to avoid or reduce marine mammal bycatch in fishing operations
- Environmental education, transparency, and public participation in environmental decision-making, including vulnerable and underserved communities
- Advancement of environmental justice, domestically, by identifying and addressing disproportionate adverse human health and environmental impacts in vulnerable and underserved communities, and seeking equitable distribution of public health and environmental benefits
- Opportunities for the private sector to improve compliance with environmental laws and resource efficiency, and adopt good practices and strategies to address pollution, water management, waste management, and air quality challenges in production
- A culture of environmental protection and compliance with environmental laws through, among other things, the promotion of economic opportunities, voluntary measures to improve environmental performance, and job creation.

Priority Areas for Cooperation

This Work Program focuses on the following priority areas, with the following corresponding general objectives.

A. Encourage high levels of environmental protection through the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations

Objectives: To work with national, regional and local governments to: (1) strengthen the ability to effectively enforce environmental laws; (2) exchange best practices on enforcement of environmental laws; (3) strive to improve the implementation of environmental laws, regulations and other measures, including obligations under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and laws that protect environmental defenders; and (4) exchange information and experiences on legal, policy, regulatory, enforcement and compliance regimes for, and approaches to environmental protection and natural resource management, including through market-based mechanisms. (See ECA A.IV.2. a, d, t).

Potential Activities:

1. Support regulatory entities in the development of, enforcement of, and compliance with environmental laws (e.g., inspection, investigations, prosecutions, and permitting); and facilitate information exchanges and sharing of best practices regarding adjudication of environmental laws, permits and regulations.
2. Exchange information and best practices on implementation of relevant MEAs, including those listed in the Environment Chapter and other MEAs to which the Parties are parties and other regional and multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

3. Exchange information and best practices on environmental management and environmental permitting, including between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Autoridad Nacional de Licencias Ambientales (ANLA).
4. Exchange information and promote interagency and transboundary cooperation for investigations and prosecutions of wildlife traffickers, including through the South American Wildlife Enforcement Network (SudWEN) and prioritizing the goals of the 2019 Lima Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade.
5. Exchange best practices, law enforcement strategies, and implement activities, to reduce environmental degradation and chemical contamination, including reducing mercury pollution, from artisanal and small-scale mining activities and recovery of mercury in Amazonian ecosystems.
6. Enhance collaboration on cooperative activities to promote best practices for conservation of living marine resources, prevention, and removal of marine debris and to combat IUU fishing.
7. Provide technical assistance and support to combat IUU fishing, prevent overfishing, promote sustainable fisheries, and protect coastal zones.
8. Combat illicit and illegal activities associated with the extraction of and trade in natural resources, such as: wildlife trafficking; ILAT; IUU fishing; and illegal or unregulated extraction of and illegal trade in gold and other minerals; and any associated violence against environmental defenders working to protect their communities from such illegal activities.
9. Exchange information and best practices to improve capacity to conduct investigations to identify and take appropriate action with those engaging in or facilitating illicit and illegal activities associated with natural resources.
10. Exchange best practices to address structural challenges in environmental governance in rural communities to improve processes for effective consultation, environmental quality monitoring, and enforcement actions.
11. Exchange best practices to assess marine mammal population abundance, estimate marine mammal bycatch, and mitigate such bycatch in commercial fishing operations.
12. Exchange best practices for identifying and addressing disproportionate impacts in vulnerable and underserved communities in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental and human health-related laws and regulations.
13. Exchange information and best practices to catalyze greater global ambition to drive a pathway to net zero global emissions by mid-century or before, and a pathway to reduce anthropogenic methane emissions by 30 percent from 2020 levels by 2030, and increase opportunities to build resilience in addition to adaptation and mitigation measures in response to climate change impacts.

B. Promoting the sustainable management and use of natural resources while conserving and protecting biodiversity and habitats

Objectives: To work with national, regional, and local governments, and seek opportunities for multilateral cooperation to: (1) promote and encourage the conservation and sustainable use¹ of biological diversity and all of its components; (2) promote the sustainable use and management of natural resources; and (3) promote effective management of terrestrial and marine protected areas and other ecologically important ecosystems to realize the economic benefits of conservation, including through community-based conservation and natural resource management by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. (See ECA Art. IV.2. b, c, j).

Potential Activities:

1. Share experiences in working with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to improve park and protected area management, and biodiversity and habitat conservation while managing economic benefits from related natural resources; in particular, support efforts to conserve tropical dry forests, marine and coastal ecosystems, *páramos*, and the Colombian Amazon.
2. Promote marine protection and foster coastal restoration to protect against vulnerabilities related to climate change and rising sea levels.
3. In coordination with relevant governmental authorities, assist in conducting technical exchanges on U.S. requirements under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) import provisions.
4. Promote forest conservation programs to reduce emissions from degradation and deforestation, protect migratory bird and wildlife habitat, and deter illegal logging, including using economic incentives such as the development and sale of carbon credits generated by REDD+ programs and promotion of ecotourism.
5. Exchange information and share experiences relevant to domestic approaches to biodiversity offsets.

C. Promoting environmental education, transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making and enforcement

Objectives: To share experiences on: (1) involving the public in decision-making regarding environmental matters; (2) enhancing openness and transparency in regulatory and program implementation; and (3) implementing environmental education strategies and programs (See ECA Art. IV.2. h, i; and Art. VI)

Potential Activities:

¹ For purposes of this Work Program, sustainable use means non-consumptive or consumptive use in a sustainable manner.

1. Exchange best practices in promoting and increasing inclusive public participation in environmental decision-making and enforcement, especially by women and vulnerable groups.
2. Facilitate information exchanges on strategies to promote public access to information and transparency in regulation and program implementation.
3. Support environmental education activities to promote community involvement in environmental services and biodiversity conservation.

D. Supporting strong, low emissions, resilient economies

Objectives: To support the development goals of the Government of Colombia by: (1) encouraging investment in clean and advanced energy as well as energy efficiency and energy access for remote areas; (2) working with private enterprises to develop and adopt energy efficient technologies; and (3) supporting the development of tools such as carbon taxes and emissions trading schemes in a manner consistent with protecting the environment, building climate resilience and maintaining international competitiveness (See ECA Art. IV.2. e, g, k).

Potential Activities:

1. Promote Colombia's domestic affordable, reliable, clean and advanced energy, as well as energy efficiency.
2. Encourage effective strategies to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, including black carbon and methane from all sectors, including agriculture, landfills and wastewater reuse, and to continuously improve the accuracy, transparency, consistency, comparability, and completeness of greenhouse gas inventories.
3. Facilitate relationships, exchange information, and explore public-private partnerships opportunities between Colombian and U.S. private sector and industry associations to strengthen industries' compliance with greenhouse gas mitigation policies and the development and adoption of environmentally friendly and economically efficient practices and technologies.
4. Under the auspices of Global Methane Initiative (GMI), exchange information about best practices, tools and lessons learned on quantifying, tracking and reducing methane emissions, particularly related to the oil and gas sector, among others.

E. Supporting Green Growth and Sustainable Development

Objectives: To encourage the adoption of technologies that address pollution, water management, waste management, and air quality challenges that undermine economic growth and commerce.

Potential Activities:

1. Exchange best practices on policy and regulatory approaches to promote clean production and address water management, waste management, and air quality challenges in the private sector.
2. Facilitate information exchanges on commercial opportunities for environmental technologies, goods, and services to support adoption of clean production practices.

Resources

The objectives and activities set forth in this plan may be updated and modified by future consultations between the Governments, and the implementation of activities is contingent upon the availability of funding and other resources.

Benchmarks, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Governments recognize that a variety of government agencies and civil society groups could be involved in implementing the programs and projects under this Work Program, and that the agency or group that leads implementation for a particular program or project will strive to be responsible for public participation, information disclosure, and performance tracking related to that program or project. As the Governments more narrowly define cooperative programs, projects, and activities under this Work Program, the Governments intend to identify performance indicators and benchmarks to measure appropriately the progress made in accomplishing or otherwise furthering the goals and objectives of such programs, projects and activities and intend further to facilitate public reporting of that progress. To the degree that the Governments use independent sources of monitoring data and evaluation to assess progress, they intend to collaborate with those other sources in identifying suitable performance indicators and benchmarks.

The Governments intend to consider input from relevant local, regional and international organizations regarding cooperation under this Work Program. The Governments also plan to encourage public participation in setting goals and implementing environmental collaboration, and plan to make information on activities carried out under this Work Program available to the public.