

CARACAS' DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Shortly after the closing of the Warsaw Climate Change Conference 2013, the Venezuelan Academy of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences organized in Caracas the First National Symposium on Climate Change: Perspectives for Venezuela.

About 200 participants, including students, academics and representatives of governmental agencies, private sector and organized civil society, gathered on November 28th and 29th at the Faculty of Sciences of the Universidad Central de Venezuela, to talk about the state of climate change sciences in the country, the country's commitments, anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and the plans to reduce or control such emissions.

Plenaries, oral presentations and posters covered topics such as energy, biogeochemical cycles, biodiversity, health, food safety, mitigation and adaptation. Public transportation alternatives were examined, as also were the opportunities for international cooperation, the human dimensions of climate change, and the impact on natural resources, coastline and urban areas, as well as the importance of communication, education and citizen engagement.

It was made clear that there exists a critical mass to approach scientifically the climate change at a national level, but that the country is in debt with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Venezuela is not up to date with its National Communications (NC) and the Greenhouse Gas Inventories. Out of 20 Latin American countries, México is the only one that finished its fifth NC and is preparing the sixth one. Brazil and Uruguay are advancing with the fourth NC, eleven other countries are working or have concluded the third one, and Cuba, Guatemala and Venezuela are yet to present the second NC.

The good news were that the Venezuelan government has established a National Focal Point for Climate Change, responsible for preparing the governmental commentaries to the documents proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and for facilitating the participation of local scientists in IPCC activities, be it in the proposal of members to integrate the IPCC, organizing meetings in the

country, and disseminating and promoting the diffusion of the results generated by the IPCC. With the activation of the focal point, it is expected that Venezuela will be able to conclude the second NC, in close collaboration and support from the scientific community. The results of the First Symposium on Climate Change, whose proceedings will be published shortly, are a concrete contribution of the Academy of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences to the focal point. The main actors have been identified, conversations among them have started, and there exists a concrete proposal to advance in the fulfillment of the country's commitments.

The event ended with the presentation of the *Caracas Declaration* and the invitation to all those present to endorse it. Through this symbolic act, the Venezuelan Academy urged the signatories to 1) Promote and support joint efforts among public and private institutions and organizations of the country, for the generation and wide dissemination of knowledge about climate change; 2) Promote the multidisciplinary study of climate change; 3) Promote and support the creation of a National Observatory of Climate Change as a monitor of the research needs, analysis and preparedness in this area, as a platform for the identification of viable options of adaptation in view of the country's realities, and as critical observer and alerting factor facing the national commitments with the UNFCCC; and 4) Promote ties between the government and all the knowledge-generating institutions in the country, as a natural channel for the effective and integral attention to the problem of climate change.

We believe that the conditions are given for the Latin American Academies to become actively involved in the generation, compilation and dissemination of the necessary knowledge to approach the problem of climate change and to contribute to its solution. Not only as an academic exercise that will allow us to become up to date with the National Communications, but also as a recognition of the fact that we have forced the climate system to its planetary boundaries and that it is better to act early, before the ecological, economic and social costs become larger than those that we are willing to pay.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
First National Symposium on Climate Change:
Perspectives for Venezuela
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