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REALISING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT PILLAR
A STUDY OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT OF
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Abstract

This study explores Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (FME) as an institution working to articulate the national, regional and global dimensions of environmental governance and to promote sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean through regional cooperation. Drawing on current scholarship on Global Environmental Governance (GEG) and institutional interaction, it explores the opportunities and constraints that FME community members face in effecting these linkages. The study follows a case study approach and draws on data collected through interviews with FME participants, as well as documentary and archival sources. The findings point to a dearth of institutionalised conduits through which the FME's regional perspectives can be fed to global spheres. In addition, the absence of universal decision-making processes in some governance platforms at the global level, a lack of coherence in countries' policy platforms and deficits in the integration of environmental policy across sectors, are identified as potential obstacles to articulating national to global linkages. The latter may be related to the relative weakness of the environmental portfolio at the national level.

Key words: Environment, Global Environmental Governance, institutional interaction, regional, sustainable development.

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Foreword

I would like to thank all the individuals who contributed to this humble study with their time and insights. A special thank you to the PNUMA family, for so warmly welcoming me into their team and for sharing a big part of this journey with me.

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Abbreviations

ALBA	Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas
CAN	Andean Community of Nations
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EPI	Environmental Policy Integration
FME	Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean
GC	Governing Council
GEG	Global Environmental Governance
GMEF	Global Ministerial Environment Forum
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILAC	Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IO	International Organisation
ITC	Inter-Agency Technical Committee
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
RAP	Regional Action Plan
ROLAC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ROLAC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Introduction

"Ecological interdependence is perhaps even more extensive than the widely acknowledged economic interdependence among nations."
-Richard E. Benedick (1998:6).

Over the past four decades humanity has become increasingly aware of the scope and gravity of the environmental challenges we collectively face. This has been associated with a growing recognition of our interdependence as a species, and the knowledge that some environmental challenges cannot be effectively addressed by anything short of collective efforts that transcend national borders (Benedick, 1998).

As a result, in the past 32 years there has been an unprecedented proliferation of multilateral spaces for negotiation to address environmental issues, which touch upon almost every aspect of human life; from industrial activities, to transport, agriculture and fisheries. The wide-ranging nature of international efforts to address environmental issues points to what is perhaps the chief challenge of the environmental policy domain; its transboundary, cross-sectorial nature and the need to integrate environmental policy as a central axis of development- the essence of sustainability from the environmental perspective.

International negotiation spaces have been the birthplace of numerous instruments that advance this integration.[1] With the creation of each of these instruments and their associated organisational units, a multitude of institutions and policy mechanisms have emerged. These are aimed at assessing and fine-tuning national commitments in relation to evolving knowledge

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[1] These include, inter alia, the 1985 Vienna Convention Protecting the Ozone Layer, the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer; the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes; the establishment in 1991 of the Global Environment Facility; the 1992 United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development, from whence were derived Agenda 21 and the Commission on Sustainable Development; the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity; the 1993 UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks; the 1994 UN Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; the 1994 UN Convention to Combat Desertification; the1994 International Conference on Population and Development; the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

and emerging conditions, resulting in a complex, growing web of entities that today constitutes the system of international governance of the environment- a work in progress (Benedick, 1998:4).

In LAC, the environmental institutional landscape is composed of a multitude of spaces and entities, tackling a variety of –often overlapping- issues. These include a number of regular and sporadic meetings at the Ministerial level. Some, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Ministerial Conference on the Environment, and the Council of Environment Ministers of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, bring together member states from a specific sub-region. Others are associations formed on the basis of geopolitical ties (such as the Ministerial meetings on Environment held under the umbrella of the Southern Common Market [MERCOSUR] and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas [ALBA]). Others still are rooted in historical and cultural ties, such as the Iberoamerican Forum of Environment Ministers.

The FME is perhaps the most long-standing such space, and until recently had the distinction of being the only one to bring together all thirty three countries of the LAC region. Formally inaugurated in 1996, it was born out of annual regional meetings convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in preparation for its Governing Council (GC) Sessions (SADS, 2005). Rooted in these preparatory processes, the Forum has tended to be regarded as a place where countries could come together to lay the groundwork for meaningful participation in international negotiation processes,[2] and has been closely tied to UNEP and its governing mechanisms, with UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNEP/ROLAC) formally serving as the Forum Secretariat. In addition, the FME has positioned itself as a space to advance environmental policy integration (EPI) across sectors, thereby supporting the articulation of sustainable development. Overall, the FME's primary work has a two-fold orientation. First, it seeks to forge a regional agenda and promote it in global multilateral spaces. Second, it works through regional cooperation to advance the implementation of

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[2] This is a view echoed by various persons interviewed for this study, including representatives of states and IOs with in-depth knowledge about the history of the Forum.

environment and sustainable development commitments at the national level across a variety of sectors (see Appendix 1 for details on the functions of the FME).

Formalised in the late 1990s, the FME answered a call within LAC to coalesce around regional spaces to give its countries a stronger voice in global processes, and articulate the national, regional and global dimensions of development work (CR7, 2012). Today, regions are still regarded as a means to articulating the links between the national and global levels of governance (Thakur and Van Langenhove, 2006; Strand, 2002), and remain one of the key organising principles of the structure of many international organisations (IOs) (Thakur and Van Langenhove, 2006:235).

However, with the emergence of new institutions and mechanisms for cooperation, the question of the Forum's role within a dynamic institutional landscape has frequently arisen. In this sense, the regional picture presents a microcosm of the global challenges of environmental governance, including fragmentation and lack of coordination. As Stephan and Zelli note (2009:1), "the organisational network of global environmental governance mirrors the complexity of the planet's manifold and overlapping ecosystems." Over the past forty years, new IOs have continuously been created, in an attempt to address the many facets of the challenges that have emerged within this policy domain. These institutions have come into being within an "already institutionalised context," where key management tasks have already been apportioned, resulting in newcomers contributing to an ascending trend of organisational fragmentation (Ibid).

Managing this fragmentation and the institutional complexity it entails has become a central challenge of the international community's long standing efforts to reform the GEG system. These are informed by a growing awareness that only through drastic improvements can the aim of ensuring environmental security be attained, since in spite of the large number of instruments and organisations that tackle environmental issues, environmental degradation continues at an alarming rate (Swart and Perry, 2007). In this sense, EPI within other policy domains is at the heart of discussions about GEG (Oberthür, 2009:372), since it has long been

recognised that policies solely addressing the environmental domain fall short of attaining overarching environmental objectives and advancing sustainable development (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Kok, 2011:6104).

1.1 The Research Problem

This study focuses on the role of the FME as a regional intergovernmental space that seeks to (i) craft a regional agenda and promote it in global multilateral spaces; and (ii) work through regional efforts to advance the implementation of environment and sustainable development commitments at the national level, across various sectors.

The present juncture represents a critical point in the debate on GEG reform, with different proposals for the restructuring of the system being discussed, and the expectation that the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) will yield some progress on the matter. Within the context of preparations for the Conference, some of the debate is centred on the need to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, in large part by consolidating the environmental governance system. This is seen as a means of strengthening the environmental pillar, which is regarded as the one on which least authority has been vested (Swart and Perry, 2007:1). The goal is therefore to consolidate it so that it is as robust as, and can provide a balance to, the economic and social pillars- for only by integrating the three, it is argued, can the ideals of sustainable development be realised (UNEP/DELC, 2011).

One of the strategic ways of achieving this is by strengthening the capacities and influence of Ministries of Environment, which are seen as key advocates in the process of integrating environmental concerns across sectors, and play a key role at both the national and international level (UNEP/ROLAC, 2011a). As a well-established arena that brings together environmental authorities, the FME provides an entry point to study how the LAC community of environmental practitioners works together within a regional space to integrate environmental policy and advance sustainable development across levels of policy-making and sectors. A study

of the FME can therefore generate insights on this work, at a time when institutions' role and connections to the whole are under reform-minded scrutiny.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

Drawing primarily on current scholarship on GEG and institutional interaction, the study builds on the two-fold dimensions of the FME's work. It explores the FME's operation as an entity seeking to articulate the national, regional and global dimensions of environmental governance, and to promote sustainable development in LAC countries through regional cooperation. To do so, it explores the opportunities and constraints that its community members face in effecting these linkages, focusing on the experiences of the national environmental authorities that represent the FME's chief constituency.

Through this exploratory work, the study aims to answer the following research questions

- How do the FME and its actors interact with institutions at the global level to promote its regional agenda?
- How is the regional agenda of the FME crafted?
- How do national actors engaged in the FME work within the context of regional cooperation to advance EPI and sustainable development at the national level?

The research responds to a gap in the information base regarding the barriers and opportunities faced by actors in the international sphere working to integrate environmental policy across sectors and levels of operation. It focuses primarily on interaction with the global decision-making spaces with which the FME interacts by virtue of its connections with UNEP. The study also looks at interactions with institutions at the national level, through the perspectives of the national environmental authorities working to advance the FME's programme of work in their respective countries.

The study follows a case study approach, to facilitate an in-depth exploration of these processes. It draws on primary data collected through interviews with FME participants, as well as on documentary and archival sources pertaining to the FME and its institutional context.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

Following the introductory chapter, the second section provides general background information on the FME. Chapter three describes the analytical framework of the thesis and constitutes an overview of the theoretical concepts utilised. These include a review of literature on GEG and its regional dimensions, as well as theories on institutional interaction. Chapter four presents the study methodology. This is followed by the Findings and Analysis of the thesis, which are developed in Chapters five and six. These sections present the primary and secondary data collected for this study through the lens of the concepts and theoretically informed perspectives presented in Chapter three. Chapter five covers a discussion pertaining to the first two research questions, while Chapter six covers the third. Finally, the seventh chapter presents concluding remarks.

2. Background: History and structure of the FME

2.1 History

The FME began taking shape in 1982, as the I Ministerial Meeting on Environment in LAC. This meeting and the eight subsequent ones held over eleven years were convened by UNEP as the mainstay of regional preparations for meetings of UNEP's own GC. At its Ninth Meeting, held in 1995, the community began integrating the wider international environmental agenda into its activities, leading to the formal establishment of the FME in 1996, and its adoption of a biennial schedule (SADS, 2005).

With eighteen meetings held to date, the Forum has established itself as the most representative, long-standing regional political platform on environmental issues (UNEP/ROLAC, 2012), until recently being the only such space where all thirty three countries of the region participate.

2.2 Structure

The structure of the Forum is similar to that of most other international conferences of the sort. The Conference of Ministers is its highest authority, and has the final say on all matters. Decisions made by the Conference are followed up by the Intersessional Committee, composed of nine Ministers of Environment who are elected at FME sessions. The Committee convenes between meetings of the Forum and identifies priority issues for inclusion in the FME agenda. Initiatives requiring more work and follow-up than that allowed by regular sessions are referred to Working Groups. In addition, each member state designates a National Focal Point, responsible for following up on, and coordinating, the implementation of activities at the national level (Griffith and Oderson, 2010:46).

The role of Chair of the Forum is granted by consensus, on the basis of bids to host the following meeting. The proceedings of the Forum are presided by the host country for a full two-year cycle. The Chair also leads any meetings of the Intersessional Committee held during its tenure. The position is ceded to the succeeding country on their home turf, as part of the opening session of the FME meeting it is hosting (IOR3, 2012).

The FME works with the support of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC). Its main functions are to provide technical and operational support to the FME; and to facilitate resource mobilisation for the implementation of initiatives arising from the Forum (see Appendix 2 for further details). Today, the ITC is composed of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UNEP (UNEP/ROLAC, 2011b). UNEP acts as the coordinating agency of the ITC and the Forum Secretariat, which entails responsibility for overall coordination of Forum activities and the provision of financing for a proportion of FME activities.[3] See Figure 1 for a schematic of the FME's supportive structures and lines of communication.

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[3] The amount of these contributions varies from cycle to cycle, with part of the funding provided by the host country (IOR3, 2012).

Supportive Structure and Communication Lines of the FME

The Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

The FME brings together the highest environmental authorities of its LAC member states. It meets in biennial cycles. A major responsibility of the Forum of Ministers is the implementation of ILAC

The Secretariat

Secretariat functions are fulfilled by UNEP/ROLAC. The Secretariat has overall responsibility for coordinating the activities of the FME. It provides the link between the Forum of Ministers and the Governing body of UNEP.

The Intersessional Committee of Ministers

Made up of nine LAC Ministers of Environment elected for on biennial rotation. The Committee convenes between the meetings of the FME and is responsible for following-up on its decisions. It also presents and promotes regional interests within the different entities of the international system. In addition, it identifies and selects issues and projects of regional priority, based on the criteria determined by the FME

The Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC)

Made up of ECLAC, the World Bank; IDB and UNEP, the latter acting in its capacity as the Forum Secretariat.

Ad-Hoc Working Groups

The Working Groups support the preparation, implementation and follow-up of specific projects. They bring together experts from government; the private sector; civil society and international organisations. The size of a particular Ad-Hoc Working Group is determined by the nature and complexity of the project.

National Focal Points

Each Member State designates a national FME Focal Point. The link between the National Focal Points and the Forum of Ministers is provided by UNEP/ROLAC in its capacity as Secretariat to the FME.
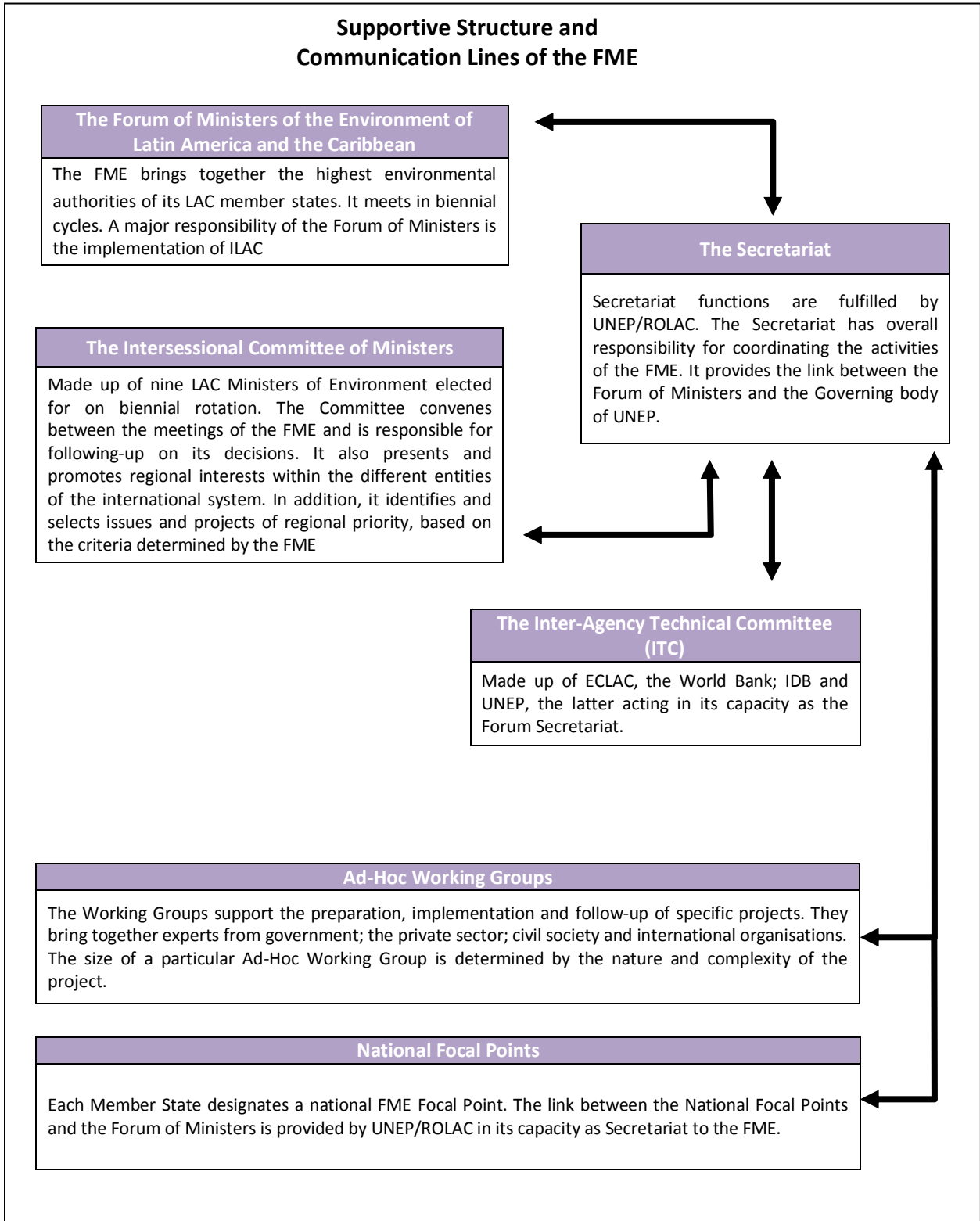
Figure 1: Supportive Structure and Communication lines within the FME-LAC. Adapted from Griffith, M. D. and Oderson, D. (2010:49). Please note that the diagramme shows lines of communication rather than hierarchy or reporting lines.

Forum meetings are attended by member states, ITC IOs, observer agencies, civil society representatives and special guests, who are sometimes invited to make presentations. Each meeting of the FME is preceded by a High-level Experts' Segment, which negotiates the agreements and decisions to emerge from the meetings. The Ministerial Segment then reviews these drafts, which may be modified and adopted, referred for later consideration, or rejected. The Ministerial Segment may also provide a space for open dialogue and exchange among the Ministers on additional issues (IOR2, 2011).

2.3 Instruments

The FME's chief framework for programmatic work is the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC). It was adopted by the Forum on the eve of the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. ILAC was designed as a framework of priority areas and specific activities aimed at integrating the environmental perspective in the social, economic and institutional dimensions of development (FME and UNEP/ROLAC, 2002). It is composed of regional goals, policies and actions outlined in key areas of environmental management and sustainable development (see ILAC focus areas in Appendix 3). The adoption of ILAC represents a turning point in the work of the FME, marking the consolidation of efforts to integrate environmental issues across policy domains and promote sustainable development (IOR1, 2011).

ILAC is mainly advanced through the Regional Action Plan (RAP), a biennial-cycle logical matrix primarily based on the priority lines of ILAC (see thematic lines in Appendix 4). The RAP establishes regional priorities, strategies, lines of action, projects, entities involved, and other elements.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Global Environmental Governance

As has been documented by various authors, there is as yet no agreement on how to define "Global Governance" (Biermann and Pattberg, 2008; Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006; Finkelstein,

1996), with various authors underscoring different dimensions of the concept. In its broadest sense, the term can be conceived as "the sum of the world's formal and informal rules systems at all levels of community" (Rosenau, 2002:4), including steering mechanisms through which goals are framed, directives are issued and policies are pursued (Rosenau, 1995:14). Such arrangements may comprise rules such as laws, norms or codes of behaviour, as well as formal and informal institutions or practices constituted for the management of "collective affairs" by a variety of actors (Thakur and Van Langenhove, 2006:2).

The system of GEG is composed of a diversity of actors and entities operating across levels and policy domains. Within the United Nations (UN) alone, a dizzying array of entities work on environmental issues, including UNEP, the UN Commission for Sustainable Development, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). International and regional financial institutions also hold environmental portfolios, alongside many other entities (see Strand, 2002:3 for a fuller account). There are also over two hundred IOs, in the form of independent secretariats and governing bodies, arising from international environmental treaties concluded in the past two decades alone (Biermann and Pattberg, 2008:281).

In assessing this complex institutional landscape, studies have focused on analysing existing architectures within a specific regime and providing policy recommendations (See Aldy and Stavins, 2007 on the post-Kyoto Climate regime). Other studies have centred on formulating principles for an overall framework of governance and identifying challenges to its formulation (Biermann, 2007); or reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of institutional diversity in GEG (Ivanova, 2007), to name but a few.

As Ivanova (2007:48-49) sums up, the overall thrust of the findings on the workings of the GEG system point to an architecture that lacks clarity and coherence. No single organisation has emerged as leader to advocate for the integration of environmental issues across all policy-domains and levels. In addition, while the extant institutional diversity may potentially reflect flexibility to tackle the multi-faceted nature of environmental issues, what obtains today are a

series of jurisdictional overlaps, gaps, "treaty congestion" and an overall lack of responsiveness. This situation has resulted in inefficiencies at the operational and implementation levels, inconsistencies and an overloading of national administrations across the board, limiting the capacity of both governments and IOs to attain desired environmental objectives (Ibid).

3.2 The Global and Regional Dimensions of Environmental Governance

The need for global governance arrangements is tied to the emergence of increasing interdependence among the members of international society and the complexity of political, social and economic issues emerging globally (Komori, 2010; Young, 1999). Within the environmental sphere, the transboundary, cross-sectorial nature of the challenges faced by humanity underscore the need for collective action and cooperation under an effective GEG system. Effectively addressing issues of such magnitude requires a coherent integration of activities among various levels and categories of actors. Thus, "good" global governance should not be equated with "exclusive policy jurisdiction;" rather, it is contingent on "an optimal partnership between diverse types of actors operating at the local, national, regional, and global levels" (Weiss and Thakur, 2009: 2). One of the key dimensions of the concept of global governance is framing world politics as a "multilevel system in which local, national, regional and global political processes are inseparably linked," with a particular interest in the linkages that bring together different policy levels (Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006:192). The global governance research programme therefore includes delving into how ideas communicated in international spaces inform, and are informed by, ideas and practices within national, regional or local sites, as well as questioning how responses to global problems can be arrived at in ways that do not obviate the needs and capabilities of communities at various levels (Ibid). Yet, the articulation of such linkages constitutes a significant challenge.

Some see the regional sphere as a potential "stepping stone" to this articulation, providing an intermediate level for cooperation that can connect the national and global spheres more effectively (Dua and Esty, 1997; Koh and Robinson, 2002; Strand, 2002; Thakur and Van Langenhove, 2006). Regions are a key dimension of the multilayered, multiactor structures of

governance that exist today. Regional organising principles can be seen in the composition of UN entities, and member states often form caucuses on the basis of regional groupings (Thakur and Van Langenhove, 2006:235). This is because regions often share policy challenges and approaches that are not applicable to all countries on a global scale. Integrating these issues into global processes and identifying means of adapting approaches for the implementation of commitments adopted at the global level is therefore a significant reason for organising around regional groupings.

The same logic applies to the emergence of regional governance arrangements, considered to be based on the recognition of collective interests among the members of the region (Komori, 2010). Such arrangements are recognised as essential components of global environmental governance, complementing national and global level efforts, and providing substantive links among the three (Ibid).

3.3 Institutions and Institutional Interaction

Because of the complexity of the institutional framework of GEG, a significant branch of research on the subject is devoted to the ways in which institutions interact and their implications for the environmental policy domain (Oberthür and Stokke, 2011:412). Institutional interaction is said to occur when one institution affects the development or performance of another (Oberthür and Stokke, 2011:393). This is particularly relevant to the environmental policy domain, where issue areas are typically co-governed by various institutions, and governance activities involve institutions at other levels (Young, 2002:83-138). This presents an interesting way of thinking about the FME; as an institution working to promote regional perspectives at the global level, and to advance the implementation of global commitments at the national level, its effectiveness largely depends on its ability to interact with institutions at these levels and foster the advancement of its agenda.

In the context of the literature on institutional interaction, institutions are defined as "persistent and connected sets of rules and practices that describe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations" (Keohane, 1989:3). Such institutions encompass "negotiated"

arrangements, specifically created by states or other actors with the aim of shaping behaviour or policy outcomes (Oberthür and Stokke, 2011:348-357). This definition is broad and includes entities such as the FME, which involves states and is focused on behaviour within a specific issue area, as well as IOs. The latter may also govern specific areas, but have distinctive features, including a physical location, a staff of employees and a legal personality (Young, 1986:110).

Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Kok (2011) have also identified *overarching institutions,* which work to infuse greater coherence into the activities of more specialised institutions internationally. They often create a "soft" overarching framework aimed at supporting the identification of priorities among development goals and enhancing coherence in the programmatic work of entities across a variety of issue-areas. Previous research suggests that when endowed with a pertinent resource base, such institutions may be able to bolster the diffusion of policy priorities across institutional boundaries separating levels of policy-making and entities operating on the same level (Ibid).

Theories of institutional interaction provide a series of typologies to explore the means through which interaction occurs (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:964). One distinction is made between horizontal and vertical interaction. Horizontal interaction takes place when the institutions involved operate at the same administrative scale, while vertical interaction refers to the influence of institutions across levels of administration or social organization. (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:992). Another relevant type of interaction is that wrought through political linkages, wherein a relationship is deliberately crafted to establish a link between two or more institutional arrangements (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:998). Interaction may also take place due to overlaps in membership; for instance, between a regional and a global institution that address the same issue area (Ibid).

These typologies provide a useful way of conceptualising the FME. As a regional platform working to integrate the national and global dimensions of environment and sustainable development, the FME works through vertical linkages with the global and national spheres. In

addition, in working to implement the FME's multi-sectorial programme of work at the national level, national authorities often attempt to work horizontally through institutional boundaries separating entities operating in different sectors in their respective countries.

3.3.1 Mechanisms of Influence

In addition to the analytical categories described above for exploring the pathways through which interaction may occur, theories of institutional interaction have devised a series of models and ideal types that delve into how and under what conditions an international institution can influence another (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1030). The typologies provide insights on how one institution -the source- can work to wield influence on another–the target (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1043). These dimensions set the stage for a later analysis of how the FME works to advance its agenda in global decision-making processes, as well as to articulate the links between global commitments and national implementation through regional cooperation.

Overall, four types of mechanisms of influence are identified by Oberthür and Gehring (2011:1049-1145). The first two, *cognitive interaction* and *interaction through commitment,* affect collective knowledge, norms prescribing behaviour or decision-making processes in the target institution. On the other hand, *behavioural interaction* occurs where behaviour changes sparked by a source institution affect the implementation efforts of the target institution. Finally, *impact-level interaction* refers to instances where interaction is due to effects on the ultimate target of governance. Because this study focuses on the ways the FME works to influence decision-making processes and preferences at global and national levels, only the first two interaction types are addressed.

Cognitive interaction derives from the "power of knowledge and ideas" (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1055). The causal mechanism in this type of interaction relies entirely on "persuasion" (Ibid). The mechanism posits that a source institution can influence decision-making processes within a target institution by feeding information, knowledge or ideas that inform the perspectives of decision-makers in the target institution (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1061).

Usually, the source institution communicates information that illuminates or resolves a particular challenge. This is introduced into the decision-making process of the target institution by an actor.

Where such inputs are successful in altering the views of pertinent actors within the target institution, the negotiation process, and thereby the output of the target institution may be influenced. This may be initiated intentionally by the source institution, possibly in the form of a request for assistance to the target institution. Acquiescence to such requests is only likely if the associated adaptation has salutary or neutral consequences for the effectiveness of the target institution. A request for assistance is normally aimed at producing positive effects in the source institution, allowing it to improve its own effectiveness through the support of another institution (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1062-1082).

As its name suggests, *interaction through commitment* is motivated by commitments of a normative nature, assuming that obligations adopted internationally by actors exert at least some influence on their actions. Here, a "prescription or proscription" adopted by one institution must affect the inclination or behaviour of the target institution. This must occur in a way that exerts some influence over its collective decision-making processes and output (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1092-93).

This type of mechanism occurs only if there is at least a partial overlap in the membership and issue areas covered by the source and target institutions. Otherwise, commitments established within the context of the source institution cannot be expected to affect the target. Where the membership of one institution coincides with that of another institution that is formally independent but with similar objectives and instruments of governance, interaction through commitment can generate synergies (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1099).

In cases where two institutions that work toward different objectives deal with the same issues, interaction through commitment is likely to generate mutual interference, leading to calls for a demarcation of jurisdiction. Usually, institutions assess policy measures under different

perspectives relevant to their own objectives, resulting in potential disagreement about appropriate means of addressing an issue. In such situations, institution members may share an interest in disentangling jurisdictions. This may prove challenging if there is conflict in the courses of action preferred by each side. Such cases call for establishing the means of responding to the objectives of both institutions. This may be through an overarching institution, through efforts to adapt institutional structures on both sides, or by jurisdiction-cautious implementation of commitments (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1105).

3.4 The FME as an Institution

Within the literature on GEG, most research on institutional interaction has been focused on the linkages and interaction between institutions that co-govern particular issue areas, or whose ambits overlap. For instance, the interaction between the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and MEAs, delving into how commitments adopted within the former influence the effectiveness of the latter (see for example Young, 2008); or the synergies and conflicts arising from interaction between the Kyoto Protocol and the Montreal Protocol (Oberthür, 2001), to name but a few.

As these examples suggest, previous research on institutional interaction is largely focused on institutions with a regulatory role, or those that contribute to an active resource management role within their given domain.

The FME, on the other hand, answers to a different raison d'être, and there appears to be a dearth of independent scholarship dedicated to it or entities like it. Specifically, the FME seeks to fulfil a coordinating role, articulating the vertical links between the national, regional and global spheres. This dynamic is illustrated through a model in Figure 2. On the one hand, it works to articulate an upward connection, from the national to the global. As the number one arrow shows, it interacts with decision-making institutions at the global level to promote a regional agenda. It crafts this agenda by channelling national inputs into its regional arena and consolidating them into a regional platform, illustrated by the number two arrow. On the other hand, it works to articulate a downward connection from the global to the national. It does this

by promoting regional cooperation for the advancement of environment and sustainable development commitments adopted at the global level, channelling them into regional cooperation instruments. This is shown by the number three arrow. Through the conduit of its cooperation instruments and member state representatives, it interacts with national
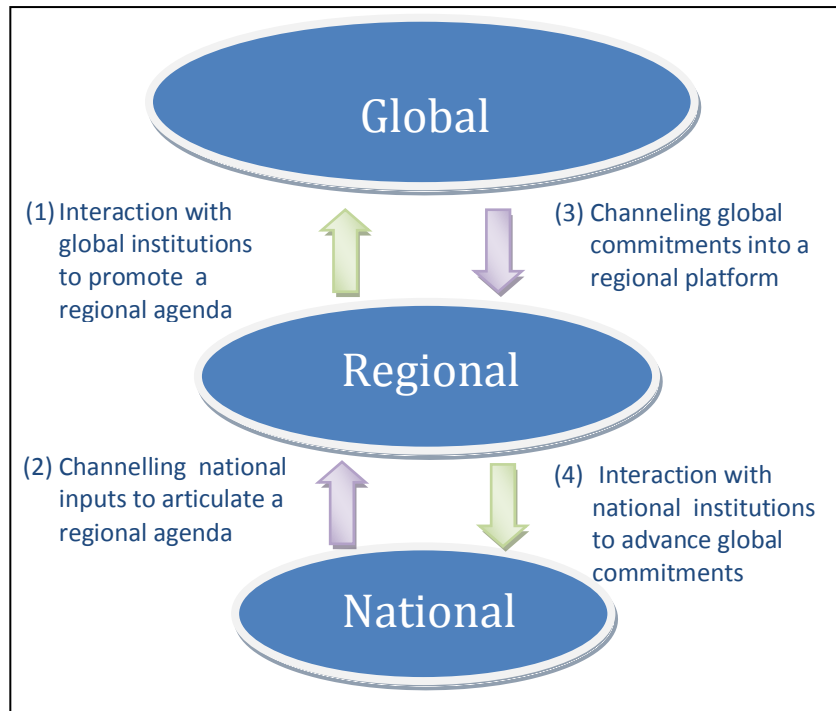

Figure 2: Model of the work of the FME (Source: elaborated by the author)

institutions to promote the horizontal integration of environment and sustainable development in decision-making across policy domains, illustrated by the number four arrow. These distinctions serve to structure the later analysis of the work of the FME. Chapter five covers arrows one and two, attempting to answer the study's first and second research questions. Chapter six addresses arrows three and four, covering the third research question.

3.5 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

The first part of this chapter shows the basis for the emergence of regional cooperation as a stepping stone to articulate the national and global dimensions of environmental governance. Within this broader context, the concept of institutional interaction has been introduced as an entry point for studying how an institution can affect the development or performance of another. Various institution types and typologies of institutional linkages relevant to the constitutive nature and work of the FME were then identified as potential conduits for this interaction.

The chapter then described two ideal types that illustrate how and under what conditions an institution can influence another, identified by Oberthür and Gehring (2011:1049). These are cognitive interaction and interaction through commitment. In later chapters, these typologies provide an entry point to analyse how the FME works to influence global and national institutions through the conduit of its community members.

The analytical framework that provides the basis for this study is therefore founded on a two tier structure which mirrors the two-fold work of the FME. The base tier of the framework focuses on the promotion of a regional agenda in global spaces, and on the work of crafting this agenda, combined to articulate an upward connection. The second tier of the framework looks at FME efforts to channel the outcomes of global processes and commitments into regional cooperation instruments to advance implementation at the national level, articulating the downward connection. These directional relationships give shape to the structure of the analysis, with chapters five and six devoted to the upward and downward connections respectively.

4. Methodology

The design framework draws on the tradition of constructivism, which sees the social world as being in continuous flux, a product of the myriad actions and choices of involved actors, who in turn confer meaning to the reality they inhabit through their own apprehension of it (Bryman, 2008:15-19). Within this view, the outlines of institutions are not simply decided on a collective basis or formally established, but are produced, reified and altered through ongoing interaction of relevant actors (Wendt, 1987).

The study is therefore qualitative in nature. It follows a case study approach, since it aims at an in-depth exploration of the FME. The FME has therefore been framed as a regional *case* among a variety of other institutions and platforms for dialogue, and also as a *bounded system*, with its own established timelines, protocols and procedures. However, in studying it, the purpose is to explore the operation of the FME as a particular construct or entity. This framing allows for

detailed explorations into a contemporary phenomenon that can be studied within its own setting or context (Yin, 2003:18; Creswell, 1998:15), rather than to make generalisations. It is an *instrumental* case study (Creswell, 1998), used to explore how a regional institution works to articulate the vertical dimensions of environmental governance, and to integrate environmental issues horizontally across sectors.

4.1 Sources of Data

The study draws on a variety of information sources, including documentation relating to the FME and its institutional environment, archival records, interviews, direct observation and participant observation. The research draws chiefly from participants' perspectives, complemented by additional analysis to "tell the story" (Creswell, 1998:20) of how the FME operates. Interviews with persons directly involved with the FME were therefore the chief source of primary data collected in the course of the study.

4.1.1 Interviews and Sampling

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with individuals directly involved with the Forum. Formulating the interviews as semi-structured was favoured in order to ask specific questions while allowing interviewees to be able to respond freely, providing open-ended answers if they so desired (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). Please refer to the interview guide at Appendix 5.

The use of interviews as the means to collect primary data for the study follows from the idea that the subject under study is largely concerned with tacit knowledge regarding the operation of the FME. As these are often related to unspoken aspects unlikely to be fully recorded in archives or other documents, the interviews sought to draw from the lived experiences of persons directly involved with the Forum.[4]

The selection of interviewees was undertaken in two phases. In the first phase, purposive sampling was used to identify individuals who have participated in two or more FME sessions.

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[4] This is in line with Kvale's (1996) chief aspects of a qualitative research interview.

Nine individuals were selected in this manner. Nine additional interviewees were selected on the basis of snowball sampling, for a total of eighteen interviewees (see Appendix 6 for anonymised list). The sample sought to include individuals who are part of the three main groups of actors within the Forum: state representatives, members of ITC IOs (including UNEP), and civil society.

Interviews were generally held over a 30-60 minute period, using the same basic framework of pre-formulated questions. Most interviews were carried out via telephone or Skype. They were conducted in English or Spanish- the native languages of the researcher and the official languages of the FME- according to the preference of interviewees. Overall, the interview process sought to achieve a balance between receiving interviewees' perspectives on the pre-formulated questions and encouraging an exploration of additional themes thought to be relevant to the research by respondents.

4.1.2 Review of Documentation and Archival Sources

These sources proved to be a vital link to understanding the institutional framework in which the FME operates, the structures that govern it and its place within them. The sources studied included international and regional treaties, policy documents, meeting reports and past evaluations, among others, going back to the late 1990s.

The methodology of qualitative content analysis was employed in reviewing these texts, assessing their purpose, their origin and intended audience, in order to facilitate a thematic analysis.

4.1.3 Direct and Participant Observation

Having been directly involved with the 2012 FME preparatory process as an intern with UNEP/ROLAC, the researcher had the opportunity to observe first-hand the institutional setting in which the Forum operates. In this context, the researcher took on the role of *observer as participant,* employing selective observation to focus on the work undertaken in preparation for Forum Meetings and the interactions among those involved.

Observation was instrumental in allowing the researcher to become familiar with the language and register of the FME, the sources of information that could be drawn upon for the document review, and the identification of potential interviewees. In this sense, observation was used less as a method for primary data collection and more as a means to ensure the latter is more attuned to the environment under study, as well as to verify the insights provided by the data.

4.2 Transcription and Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were undertaken as concurrent and recursive processes. As data collection advanced, the emergence of new findings oriented and distilled the identification of various foci and conceptual categories. In order to verify and further fine-tune them, these were discussed with interviewees and checked against theoretical perspectives.

The transcription of interviews was carried out in a verbatim or near-verbatim form, based on the use of recording equipment and/or the original short-hand notes generated during the interviews. A limitation to be noted in this regard is that since most interviews were held over telephone or Skype, it was impossible to note details, such as body language or facial expressions. As Kvale (1996:166-167) notes, there is hardly such a thing as an *objective* transcription, as written records are always removed from the context of the exchange and miss important cues. Where interviews were carried out in Spanish, the transcripts were translated by the author, who consulted with bi-lingual peers whenever doubts arose. This may constitute another limitation, since it adds another layer of interpretation to the process.

Coding and analysis were undertaken on the basis of the process described by Creswell (1998:153-154). Transcripts were reviewed to identify overall patterns and themes. These were divided into themes and subthemes distinguished through colour-coding. The overarching categories of upward and downward articulation of environmental governance were thus identified. Based on this, interviewee responses regarding institutional interaction or channelling efforts at each level were extracted and entered into different categories determined by their focus. The data was then further reviewed to identify patterns and

relationships between the categorised issues. Direct interpretation was then applied to identify opportunities and constraints reported at each level and, where possible, the reasons interviewees put forth as the source of these.

4.3 Considerations Regarding Quality

As previously mentioned, various data collection methods were employed in triangulation, in an effort to bolster the credibility of the data. Through the use of various source types, the study sought to attain an holistic understanding of the setting and issues at hand. Spending time within the institutional setting of the Forum itself was seen as a means of bolstering the coherence between direct observations and the theoretical ideas to which they contribute- the essence of credibility (Bryman, 2008:377). In terms of transferability, the fact that the study is based on a single case study means that the findings do not provide grounds for generalisability. However, it is hoped that the insights generated by the study may be able to add to the pool of knowledge on the subject, contributing to the formulation of theories which can then be tested in several contexts, revised and ultimately applied more generally (Creswell, 1998:15)

With regard to dependability, the study may encounter challenges, since its focus is a dynamic institution that is subject to myriad influences, such as the outcomes of wider decision-making processes (the upcoming Rio +20 conference, for example). However, having undertaken the research in good faith, and having the benefit of direct observation, access to official sources, and persons closely involved in the Forum, the findings should generally be congruent with the experiences of the FME as seen through the eyes of interviewees at the time of the study.

However, the biases inherent in the researcher's position must be acknowledged, particularly noting that, having undertaken the study individually, there were limited opportunities to consult with others regarding observations. While this has been done to some extent with interviewees, and persons involved in the institutional setting under study, the analysis and findings are shaped by the author's own thoughts and expectations, as well as the theoretical

standpoints that inform the approach of the research. This affects the confirmability of the study.

4.4 Ethical Considerations and Positionality

Some of the key ethical issues arising in the context of qualitative research are obtaining the consent of interviewees and maintaining confidentiality (Kvale, 1996). All respondents were invited to interview for the specific purpose of contributing to research on the Forum, thereby ensuring that participation was voluntary. However, the community of persons who work or have worked with the Forum in the past is quite small and interconnected. Thus, protecting the anonymity and privacy of the persons interviewed has been an important consideration in recording and presenting the data for this study. For this reason, responses are conveyed without making direct reference to names, job designation or the entities and countries the respondents represent.

The researcher's role as *participant observer* also merits mention in this regard. In recent years the Forum has been reflecting on how to improve its effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of the region. Within this context, the FME undertook an evaluation of its activities, presented in February 2012. Working with the 2012 FME preparatory process, the researcher was closely involved in this evaluative work. While the Forum Secretariat work team was aware of the author's dual role as a team-mate and researcher, when interacting with other persons it was not always practical to make a statement about this, especially in large meetings. In these cases, the researcher refrained from directly collecting data, relying instead on official meeting reports as data sources.

Aside from being relatively small and interconnected, the setting under study is highly political. The main actors within this sphere are generally cautious in their statements and unwilling to be overtly critical of anything in which their countries or organisations have a stake. In addition, some respondents may have been less critical in their responses because of the researcher's connection with UNEP. In this sense, it is important to reiterate that in spite of all efforts to be objective, a researcher is simply an instrument for data collection. The process is therefore

affected by personal biases and positions vis-à-vis the subject, as well as gender, ethnicity and class.

4.5 Additional Challenges and limitations

The relative lack of independent scholarship on the FME and its setting mean that many of the documentary sources used in the study are official documents, which often downplay criticisms and discord. Further, as the study took place on the heels of an internal evaluation of the FME and in the midst of much debate on GEG reform, it is possible that the reflections of interviewees are attuned to the overarching discussion and reflect the messages that the actors involved have been advancing within this context. In this sense, it should be noted that he FME is, after all, one intergovernmental forum among many, each with its own agenda and priorities.

Further limitations arise due to the use of a single case study. The use of multiple cases in a comparative approach is usually considered to yield richer insights, due to the possibility of utilising greater theoretical inputs and augmenting transferability. However, a greater number of cases comes at the cost of decreased depth of analysis (Creswell, 1998:63). In addition, the usual motivation for selecting a large number of cases is arriving at generalisability, which is not the objective of this study.

5. Findings and Analysis Part I: The Upward Connection

5.1 Promoting the Regional Perspective: Interaction with Global Institutions

Feeding into global decision-making processes has been a key component of the work of the FME since its inception. As has been briefly mentioned before, this is because the issues it defines are not simply meant to relate to the activities that it carries out at the regional level; they have historically been aimed at providing substantive inputs to global agendas and decision-making processes.

This is particularly true in the case of UNEP's governing structures; UNEP not only plays a central role as permanent secretariat of the FME, it is also the only ITC IO that sees environment authorities as its main constituency (IOR1, 2011). Indeed, UNEP/ROLAC has historically viewed the FME as a strategic point of reference in formulating its activities (UNEP/ROLAC, 2003). This approach fits into a wider call within the UN system, articulated in the late 1990s, to recognise the importance of integrating regional perspectives into the global agenda. At the time, UNEP Regional Offices were called upon to assist governments in defining priorities according to the specific needs of each region, with the aim of integrating them in the global agenda. In order to implement progammes of work on the basis of such priorities, UNEP was to involve specialised agencies and other entities, including financial institutions (UNGA, 1998:6). Engaging ITC IOs within its programme of work, the composition of the FME faithfully reflects this agenda.[5] The FME can therefore be seen as a negotiated arrangement, formalised by UNEP and LAC states with the aim of shaping policy. By bringing together states and IOs to formulate a regional agenda for inclusion in global spaces, the FME is *perceived* as politically linked with global decision-making processes on environmental issues (IOR1, 2011; IOR5, 2012).

5.1.1 Opportunities and Constraints

Yet, most interviewees assert that the FME has no formal connections with the governing bodies of the ITC IOs engaged in the Forum. In the case of UNEP, regional forums were seen as a means of bolstering countries' input into a global decision-making structure that does not feature universal representation (see for example UNGA, 1998). UNEP's GC is currently composed of fifty eight members, who are elected by the UN General Assembly for four-year terms, based on the principle of equitable regional representation (UNEP, 2011).[6] Following General Assembly resolution 53/242, a Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) is convened alongside GC sessions. The creation of the GMEF was aimed at bolstering UNEP's

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[5] Similar regional forums have been created in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and West Asia, each with their own dynamics and peculiarities. More details at:
http://www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/UNEPsWork/Multilevelsupport/tabid/420/Default.aspx
[6] Membership on the GC is distributed as follows: 16 seats for African States, 13 seats for Asian States, 6 seats for Eastern European States, 10 seats for Latin American and Caribbean States, 13 seats for Western European and other States.

efforts to include all countries in discussions pertaining to current and emerging environmental issues (UNGA, 1999:3), while the issue of universal representation in the GC was resolved (IOR7, 2012). Nonetheless, like the GMEF, within the internal decision-making structure of UNEP, the FME is simply a discussion forum with no direct lines of communication with the decision-making entity (IOR5, 2012).

Because of this absence of formal linkages, interaction between the FME and UNEP's GC in advancing the FME's agenda at the global level can be said to rely largely on cognitive processes. As previously noted, this mechanism is based solely on persuasion, feeding particular inputs into the decision-making processes of the target institution- UNEP's GC in this case. In this vein, the inclusion of regional perspectives is framed as a means of bolstering UNEP's responsiveness to country needs. This coincides with the previous discussion regarding the conditions under which cognitive interaction is successful, wherein a request is only likely to be met positively if the associated adaptation has salutary or neutral consequences for the effectiveness of the target institution. LAC environmental authorities therefore band together in the various deliberative and decision-making spaces of the GC/GMEF to put forward regional concerns. Such efforts have been particularly successful when the issue championed has a high degree of political salience and elicits a moral imperative, such as requests regarding the specific needs of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in terms of technical assistance and support (CR7, 2012).

These efforts are often most effective when the proposals already have the backing of a large group of states, such as the full assemblage of LAC countries (CR7, 2012; IOR1, 2011). In such cases, the region can leverage its weight in bringing ideas and proposals to the table, often successfully (IOR1, 2011; CR7, 2012). However, interviewees are also quick to point out the inherent difficulties in constructing a strong regional agenda, given the political, social and economic diversity of LAC, and the constraints of the FME (CR6, 2011; IOR5, 2012), an issue discussed in section 5.2 of this study.

The process is also subject to a series of other challenges. For instance, introducing the FME's agenda with the full support of LAC is at times constrained by shifts in position on the part of states themselves. In the words of one interviewee: "The same country will present different positions, according to the delegation [...] at the regional level Ministers construct one agenda, while at the global level they participate in decision-making and give different directions" (IOR4, 2012). This may be due to the fact that within the FME environmental authorities are the "empowered actors." However, in the context of UNEP's GC/GMEF sessions, a country delegation may be led by a different Ministry altogether, such as Foreign Affairs. This usually entails a shift in the tenor of positions and priorities presented (IOR3, 2012; echoed by CR7, 2012). This phenomenon is reflected in the literature on GEG, which points to an overall deficit in policy coherence on the part of states (Ivanova, 2007:63), as well as a lack of EPI beyond the environmental policy domain (Biermann et al., 2009).

A similar phenomenon applies to the FME's relationship with the governing bodies of other ITC IOs, with which it shares no formal links. This reflects previous findings regarding the fragmentation of global environmental governance, wherein a multitude of entities operate with few formal linkages among them (Biermann et al., 2009). Overall, ITC IOs do not count environmental authorities as a principal constituency, resulting in a weaker built-in membership linkage that sees environmental authorities directly involved in decision-making. Interaction through these actors is therefore limited, making it difficult to introduce the FME's agenda into deliberations. Even in the case of UNEP, which has a clearer membership linkage, the absence of a representative decision-making process where regional issues can be represented with the voice of all thirty three LAC states results in further fragmentations in the lines of communication between the regional and global levels (IOR5, 2012).

In sum, "the packages of decisions that emerge from the Forum do not have a voice to be carried to any [global decision-making bodies]" (IOR5, 2012; echoed by IOR3, 2012 and CR3, 2011). Among some interviewees, this situation is associated with an overall lack of responsiveness to the regional perspectives articulated within the FME, with questions subsequently arising regarding the effectiveness of the FME in diffusing policy priorities

between the regional and global spheres (CR1, 2011; CR3, 2011; IOR1, 2011). This corresponds with the idea that cognitive interaction is often aimed at producing positive effects in the source institution, allowing it to improve its own effectiveness through the support of another institution (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1062-1082). A particular question in this respect is centred on the role played by the bureaucracies at the centre of ITC IOs in channelling regional perspectives through the internal preparatory work undertaken for global decision-making processes, which could contribute to bolstering both the FME's effectiveness and the IO's overall responsiveness to regional needs (an issue discussed in section 6.1 of this study).

Thus, the overall situation regarding the FME's ability to effectively mobilise cognitive interaction processes in advancing a regional agenda faces a number of challenges. Firstly, there is a lack of coherence in the positions presented by a given country in different spaces. This may point to an overall lack of policy coherence in country positions, as well as to deficits in EPI in states' foreign policy platforms. In addition, there is an absence of institutionalised lines of communication with the governing bodies of the IOs with which the FME engages. Within UNEP, these factors combine with the absence of a representative decision-making process where LAC can speak with the full weight of its thirty-three members, resulting in a further disconnect between the regional and global spheres. In the case of other ITC IOs, there is a lower membership overlap that sees environmental authorities as active participants in decision-making. Introducing the FME's agenda into these processes therefore faces significant limitations, resulting in weak interaction.

Another constraint in successfully mobilising cognitive interaction is related to the difficulties of constructing a strong regional agenda, given the political, social and economic diversity of the LAC region, as well as the limitations of the FME. In the next section, this issue is explored in further detail.

5.2 Building the Agenda: Channelling National Inputs to the Regional Sphere

As noted in the preceding discussion, one of the key determinants of success in the case of cognitive interaction activated by the FME in global decision-making processes seems to rest on the strength of the agenda crafted within the FME itself. In order to build such a platform, the FME works to "evaluate, discuss and agree on regional positions on issues pertinent to the international environmental agenda" (UNEP/ROLAC, 2011b:29). Within this context, the FME can be seen as playing the role of an overarching institution, seeking to facilitate dialogue for the establishment of regional priorities among development goals. By channelling country inputs into a regional platform to be promoted at the global level, it works to diffuse policy priorities upwards, across vertical institutional boundaries. Indeed, in its early period the FME actively presented itself as a space where national inputs could be coordinated to construct regional positions for global processes (IOR1, 2011). Its main purpose in doing so was to strengthen LAC's voice at the global level, an orientation reiterated in the early 2000s (FME and UNEP/ROLAC, 2000:38).

The work of crafting a regional agenda begins with the gathering of inputs to determine items for discussion within the FME. As part of the preparation for each biennial meeting, informal consultations are carried out through the ITC (led by UNEP/ROLAC), the Intersessional Committee, and the prospective host country. The commitment infused into such efforts and the level of responsiveness they encounter vary significantly, depending largely on the personal initiative and engagement of those involved (IOR5, 2012). Another factor that affects regional engagement with the process is whether or not the timing of FME meetings coincides with events of broader importance that catch the attention of member states. For instance, the 2012 FME mobilised a lot of interest, due to the prospect of having an opportunity to discuss issues related to Rio +20, and the emergence of a new regional Ministerial environment forum created under the auspices of the newly established Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) (IOR2, 2012; IOR6, 2012).[7]

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[7] The form that this new Ministerial Forum will take is still to be determined, with deliberations ongoing within an FME Working Group and early indications that it will be merged with the FME.

Consultations are also carried out with civil society, in the context of wider regional meetings that gather inputs towards UNEP's Governing Council/GMEF Sessions. These discussions are part of the horizon-scanning undertaken to formulate the FME agenda. The extent to which this input is included in the FME's work varies from year to year, and would require an empirical study of its own to assess in depth. However, among the civil society representatives interviewed there is a perception that issues identified in these consultations are generally more readily taken up into the Forum agenda when the interest is shared by member states (CSR1, 2012; CSR4, 2012).

5.2.1 Opportunities and Constraints

Overall, the practitioners interviewed point to deficits in the process of channelling national inputs to the FME's regional arena, which has resulted in diminished capacity to build a common regional agenda. One interviewee directly relates this to a lack of responsiveness to LAC country concerns within the agenda of the FME itself: "the issues selected do not reflect those that are of greatest importance [to the countries]" (CR1, 2011). One reason for this is that the agenda of the FME is often largely occupied by follow-up on the technical work emerging from its previous decisions, with little room for open dialogue in a plenary. As the interviewee explains, "the current format is very bureaucratic, with no political discussion" (Ibid). Aside from reporting on previous work, a lot of time is dedicated to considering the declarations, decisions and reports that emerge as outcomes of the meetings (Ibid).

 In many cases the chief substantive interventions made by states are in the form of prepared statements on country positions and experiences to showcase (Ibid). One civil society representative remarked "We often find Ministers who speak exclusively from the perspective of their own country, and not from the regional or sub-regional perspective. Often the positions are based on the political stance of the day, so the holistic vision is lost" (CSR3, 2012). Country representatives also admit to this: "We should be preparing regional positions with regard to climate change, biodiversity [...] currently we are not taking advantage of opportunities for this type of political exchange" (CR6, 2011).

A recurrent theme emerging from most of the interviews is the fact that in each of its sessions the FME attempts to cover a large number of topics, encompassing numerous aspects of environmental conservation and sustainable development. This means that issues are addressed in a superficial manner.[8] A particular difficulty identified by interviewees in this regard is the relative lack of comparable data to gauge emerging and entrenched challenges faced by the region with regard to environment and sustainable development (CR3, 2011), which makes it difficult to identify priority issues on which to focus. While there is a wealth of data on environmental issues in the region, harmonised inputs are insufficient (Metternicht and Granados, 2010), and sustainable development issues are not as well represented in existing data sets (CR3, 2011). Further, materials constructed to feed into political dialogue are reportedly scarce (Ibid).

Within the FME, this information vacuum is largely filled by ITC IOs. This takes place through their work producing technical documents, reports, and other information sources that are the substantive backbone of deliberations. Through this work, the ITC IOs largely shape problem-definition and thus set the terms of the debate. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004:7) note, IOs "are often the actors empowered to decide if there is a problem at all, what kind of problem it is and whose responsibility it is to solve it." In this way, IOs have "social construction power," defining the world to be governed and setting the agenda for doing so. State representatives themselves associate this with IOs' expertise and role as producers of data, analysis and policy guidelines. At FME meetings ITC IOs make presentations regarding current and emerging issues, as well as on the approaches they propose for addressing them. They also present on the work they undertake within their environmental portfolios (CR1, 2011). While exchanges centred on the issues IOs wish to showcase to the region's environmental authorities are considered quite fruitful by over half of the interviewees, there is nonetheless the recurrent idea that the FME's

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[8] Various proposals have been tabled to address this issue, including the possibility of focusing deliberations on two or three issues that can form the core of the FME's work programme for a full biennial cycle (see UNEP/ROLAC, 2011:13). However, no decision has yet been made on the matter.

potential as a space for political dialogue to articulate upward connections among the three levels is not being realised.

Another reason for this is that in recent years the gap between the "mainstream" issues identified by IOs and those some of the region's most vocal countries wish to promote has widened (IOR3, 2012). This is in large part due to geopolitical changes in the region. These are associated with debates surrounding the growing emphasis on market approaches to environmental protection and sustainable development (see for example FME and UNEP/ROLAC, 2012:45). One example of this can be found in UNEP's adoption of the Green Economy framework, to which a handful of Latin American countries are at worse entirely opposed, at best ambivalent (IOR3, 2012; IOR5, 2012). This is rooted in the call articulated within the green economy approach to treat ecosystems as capital assets, as a means of deterring degradation (Rival, 2012:63). The approach contrasts strongly with some Latin American nations' vision of how to operationalise environmental sustainability, for example through the institutionalisation of the Rights of Mother Nature (FME and UNEP/ROLAC, 2012:45).

Yet another issue to be recognised regarding the work of the FME in building a common regional agenda is the diversity that characterises LAC. For instance, while Caribbean SIDS may be more interested in issues surrounding adaptation to climate change, many of the larger nations are more engaged with mitigation efforts (IOR7, 2012). Similarly, some country groupings, such as CARICOM and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), see disaster risk reduction as a more pressing issue than others, which might prioritise the management of environmental degradation arising from extractive industries or large scale agriculture (Ibid). In addition, there is a high degree of variation in the human, financial and technical resources at the disposal of different countries. This illustrates the inherent challenge of arriving at agreements that do not overlook the needs and capabilities of communities at different levels. As one interviewee commented:

> As a region we always have to start with the acknowledgement of a diversity of agendas; the South Cone, the Caribbean, Central America, the Andean Region, each have their own particular challenges, but we work on common denominators that can be agreed upon in order to advance proposals
>
> *CR6, 2011.*

According to another interviewee, this is an erratic process, requiring active engagement towards consensus-building as a community, with political will as a driving force, guided by individuals who can work creatively towards resolving points of discord (IOR1, 2011). In such instances, the dialogue presents opportunities for the countries of the region to identify areas for cooperation. Indeed, a handful of interviewees cited examples of dialogue within the FME serving as the starting point for further work around South-South Cooperation efforts, partnerships with IOs, and unified participation in international processes, such as treaty negotiations.

On the whole, the picture surrounding the FME's work in articulating vertical linkages through the channelling of national inputs into a regional platform is mixed. On the one hand, the dialogue has presented opportunities for cooperation and stronger participation in international decision-making processes. On the other hand, regional agenda-building within the FME has been hampered by a lack of meaningful dialogue around matters of common interest. This is partly due to the limited time allocated to open dialogue after attending to procedural and technical matters. In addition, the relative unavailability of comparable data on environment and sustainable development for the whole region makes it difficult to identify priorities and focus deliberations on LAC-wide, rather than country-specific perspectives. While ITC IOs work to fill this information vacuum, some of the issues they define and the approaches they promote are contentious from the perspective of a few countries. Further, the diversity of the region means that at times sub-regional or economic groupings more readily identify issues of common interest.

6. Findings and Analysis Part II: The Downward Connection

6.1 Channelling Global Commitments to the Regional Sphere

In working to articulate the vertical linkages between the global and regional levels of environmental governance, a key component of the FME's activities is providing a space where member states can evaluate how to advance the implementation of commitments adopted at the global level. This is seen as a priority by member states, who stress the large number of agreements and action plans related to the environment and sustainable development, the absence of linkages among them and the lack of follow-up mechanisms to accompany them (CR2, 2011; CR3, 2011). The main endeavour undertaken by the FME in this regard is the formulation of the ILAC and its sustainable development indicators. As noted previously, ILAC provides a framework of priority areas to guide activities aimed at integrating the environmental perspective in the social, economic and institutional dimensions of development. The Initiative is composed of guiding goals and indicative purposes, outlining policies and actions in key areas of environmental management and sustainable development (see Appendix 3 for full list).

The thrust behind ILAC was to give "a practical direction to the process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and to reflect the region's unique characteristics, visions and goals" (FME and UNEP/ROLAC, 2002:1). Further, it sought to "contribute, within a political framework, to identifying and prioritising financial, technical and institutional mechanisms to effectively implement Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action" (FME and UNEP/ROLAC, 2002:3). Here again the FME can be seen as playing the role of an overarching institution, creating a soft framework that channels a variety of global commitments into a single regional platform in order to improve coherence and support the downward vertical diffusion of environment and sustainable development policy priorities.

6.1.1 Opportunities and Constraints

Although ILAC is generally positively viewed among country representatives within the FME community, a recent review of the instrument as a regional cooperation mechanism identified

the issue of member state ownership and take-up as one of its main challenges (UNEP/ROLAC, 2011b:11). In the eight years that have elapsed since its adoption, only eight out of the thirty three countries of the region have generated national reports on its implementation. On the occasion of an assessment of the Initiative five years after its adoption, only ten countries submitted inputs (UNEP/ROLAC, 2011b:11). Moreover, only a handful of policy tools in the region directly mention the initiative (Ibid).

When asked directly about this disconnect between positive assessments and low take-up, interviewees overwhelmingly identified the lack of financial mechanisms to advance ILAC as a fundamental challenge. This is because budgeting considerations are largely absent from deliberations surrounding the ILAC. In the past, this vacuum was filled by ITC IOs. UNEP/ROLAC in particular was counted upon to mobilise resources for the FME's activities or to carry them forward as part of its own work programme. Other IOs also contributed, integrating initiatives born out of the FME into their work. However, with the shift to strategic results frameworks within international IOs in the past decade, planning for work programmes is carried out further in advance, and there is less flexibility to respond to ad-hoc requests for support (IOR1, 2011; IOR3, 2012; IOR4, 2011, IOR5, 2012). The challenge was articulated in a 2007 evaluation of the work of the FME, which took note of a lack of clarity with regard to the role and mandate of the ITC. Some see its IOs as providing technical guidance to the FME, facilitating activities by playing a coordinating role in mobilising technical and financial resources for activities mainly undertaken by countries. Another view sees the ITC IOs as entities that should follow the FME's guidance and carry out the activities formulated under its implementation instruments (Arensberg, 2007).

This has sparked a debate within the FME community. On the one hand, ITC IOs argue that their work programmes are determined by member states themselves, at the global level:

> All the agencies have work programmes, etc., set at the global level, with resources allocated. Agencies have a limit to the extent they can accommodate more precise demands made by countries at the regional level […] needs for technical assistance should be oriented to the overall work programme

Within this perspective, it is the coherence of country positions across levels and platforms that must be addressed (Ibid). On the other hand, some member state representatives have a different view. One interviewee asserts that IO mandates should be derived from country directives, and that those arising from the FME should generate a commitment to implementation on the part of ITC IOs (CR1, 2011). Others take a more moderate approach: "It's an issue of architecture. We can use the capacities of the IOs to inform FME discussions, but aside from that the IOs simply try to support however they can within the framework of already-planned activities" (CR3, 2011).

In the case of UNEP, this situation is particularly interesting; having transitioned to a strategic results framework in 2009, the implications of the shift are still fresh. Articulating its work programme within a results framework was seen as a way of enhancing the organisation's effectiveness, since its previous approach of responding to most *ad-hoc* requests led to the perception that it was not delivering results (IOR4, 2011). However, with more emphasis on advance-planning along pre-established priority areas, and the need for all activities to be approved by Headquarters, there seems to be a tug-of-war between organisational effectiveness and responsiveness to regional demands (Ibid). This feeds back into the previous discussion on the activation of cognitive interaction between the FME and UNEP's global structures. While increased responsiveness to regional needs may be thought to have "salutary consequences" for the effectiveness of UNEP as the target institution, this may conflict with the organisation's broader efforts to orchestrate its activities within a strategic framework more oriented towards global goals.

Much like the previous discussion in section 5.1 on the FME's linkages with the global level, this situation also raises questions about how institutions such as the FME are to position themselves vis-à-vis IOs, though in this case at the regional level. If there are no institutionalised linkages at the global level, and regional demands are to be fitted into an existing programme of work, how does the integration of regional perspectives occur? This is

related to the role played by the bureaucracies at the centre of IOs in feeding regional inputs into internal deliberations surrounding their work programmes. For one country representative interviewed, barring a fundamental redesign of the governing frameworks of IOs that formally links the regional level, and addresses issues of representation, harmonising regional inputs may be a question of timing. FME inputs would have to be gathered with enough time for IOs to feed those proposals into internal planning efforts so that they fit into, or inform IOs' strategic frameworks (CR3, 2011). One IO representative interviewed made similar remarks, but added that since these are approved in advance of a programming cycle, expectations at the regional level would have to change: "The idea that what the FME decides today, IOs will support tomorrow, needs to be addressed" (IOR3, 2011). In addition, the flexibility of these strategic frameworks varies significantly according to the organisation, meaning that some might be more amenable to the inclusion of regional perspectives than others (Ibid).

In spite of these challenges, for over half of interviewees ILAC holds the promise of serving as a platform to integrate global commitments into a regional vision for sustainable development. As one interviewee put it: "the ILAC is one of few spaces that provide an opportunity for [the whole] region to look at more general issues [beyond the environmental domain]" (CR2, 2011). In addition, they were formulated with the express aim of bolstering the regional information base for planning and decision-making (UNEP and World Bank, 2004; Metternicht and Granados, 2010). They can therefore contribute to filling the information gaps previously outlined as obstacles for the formulation of a regional vision that can be promoted in global spheres.

Overall, the FME's work as an overarching institution articulating a downward connection between the global and regional levels of environmental governance through ILAC addresses the need to integrate some of the numerous commitments that have been adopted by states at the global level into a single, more coherent framework with a follow-up mechanism. However, the realisation of this vision faces significant challenges, including a lack of funding originating from the FME itself. From a broader perspective, the limitations faced by member states and IOs in supporting ILAC work feeds into the wider discussion regarding the integration of

environmental concerns across policy priorities and the coherence of positions presented by states at the global level. In addition, it brings up questions regarding the ways in which regional concerns can be integrated into IO work programmes. A key challenge in this regard is balancing responsiveness to regional needs and overall strategic orientations.

6.2 From the Regional to the National Level: Interaction with National Institutions

As the previous discussion illustrates, the FME works through ILAC to integrate various commitments adopted by LAC countries at the global level, channelling them into a framework that articulates a regional vision for sustainable development. Under this framework, the FME formulates plans of activities of regional import to be advanced at the national level. These are primarily channelled through the RAP, which seeks to advance the attainment of ILAC goals through biennial cycles (UNEP/ROLAC, 2011b). Structured around ILAC priorities, the RAP covers a variety of areas in the domains of environment and sustainable development, thereby seeking to promote environment and sustainable development policy diffusion and integration across sectors at the national level.

RAP activities draw on the commitments adopted by FME member states, not only in the context of the biennial adoption of the Action Plan, but also of ILAC and the international instruments it subsumes. In this sense, in promoting the implementation of RAP activities at the national level, the FME community can be said to rely on a multilevel form of interaction through commitment. That is, the normative commitments adopted by states under ILAC (and the global commitments it takes up) are recalled as a means of influencing the behaviour of national institutions. Because the RAP is framed as the chief implementation instrument for ILAC, the activities of the Plan encompass areas that fall outside the traditional domain of the environmental authorities directly engaged with the FME. Thus, the sphere of influence to be mobilised in order for implementation to occur touches upon collective decision-making processes and output of national entities beyond the environmental policy domain. For instance, planning for activities related to the FME's priority area of improving technology to increase the efficiency of water use in agriculture, industry and domestic consumption entails

cooperation with various government sectors and entities, including those responsible for infrastructure, industrial development, agriculture and housing.

6.2.1 Opportunities and Constraints

The national environmental authorities interviewed for this study report significant challenges in marshalling other national entities to consider such efforts in their planning and decision-making processes. A particular difficulty in this regard is that the environment and sustainable development commitments that inform the RAP are all "soft" arrangements that exert little influence on non-environmental sectors, which often do not see the environment or sustainable development as their concern (CR2, 2011). Further, the absence of budgetary or financial commitments in the formulation of agreements within the FME makes it difficult to promote RAP activities at the national level. This is compounded by the scope of RAP work; the activities cover such a wide variety of areas that implementation often requires financial and human resources from other entities. However, as there are generally few mechanisms to systematically carry out EPI with other sectors, the efforts are largely dependent on a combination of political will, persuasiveness on the part of environmental authorities, and the receptiveness of their counterparts in other sectors (Ibid).

One country representative interviewed considers the whole project much too ambitious, emphasising that the ILAC and the RAP are "sustainable development instrument[s], not environmental one[s]" (CR1, 2011). The same representative brings up the question of jurisdiction:

> Our ministries have a mandate on environmental issues. We can seek a dialogue with others, but our purview is the environment […] For instance, in the dialogue on energy, what is the role of Environment Ministers? We have to clarify whether it's a Forum for environment or sustainable development.
>
> *CR1, 2011.*

Others see the dialogue that surrounds the RAP and its implementation at the national level as an entry point to begin incremental changes that must happen in order for environmental policy issues to be diffused and integrated at the country level (CR2, 2011; CR7, 2012; IOR4,

2011). However, effecting these linkages from the environmental portfolio alone is particularly challenging because of the position of environmental authorities at the national level. As one IO representative elaborates: "It is a very complex issue, though it is improving. Ministries of Finance, Environment, Foreign Affairs, each act on their own. Ministries of the Environment are comparatively small; they have few resources, less political weight at the level of cabinet" (IOR1, 2011). This view is supported by another IO representative, who refers to a "perception of Ministries of Environment being marginal at the national level" (IOR4, 2011). Other interviewees associate this situation with the weakness of the environmental sector itself (CR7, 2012; IOR3, 2012). As one country representative asserts:

> There have been great advancements in establishing and strengthening the institutionality for environment at the national level. We now all have Ministries, laws, norms, rules, control entities, public policies. However, there is a deficit in mainstreaming environmental concerns, seeing sustainability as the central axis of development. What we have are *post facto* and superficial arrangements. Agenda setting is still highly sectorial, privileging the economic and social dimensions
>
> *CR6, 2011.*

This is echoed at global levels of governance, where a growing body of institutions and environmental protection instruments has not yet translated into effective deterrence of ecosystem degradation (Najam et al., 2006). It also recalls the previous discussion on potential deficits in EPI within countries' foreign policy platforms, raising the possibility that the position of the environment-as a sector and a Ministerial portfolio- plays a role in the variance of positions vis-à-vis the FME agenda observed at the global level where environmental authorities are not at the helm.

Generally, in the absence of strong environmental institutions to effectively advance EPI, national authorities in non-environmental sectors often work to fulfil their own objectives, assessing policy options in light of their own priorities. As a result, these assessments may not take into account environmental issues (IOR4, 2011). This echoes the idea of interaction through commitment generating mutual interference when involved institutions work towards different objectives, resulting in divergent views about appropriate means of addressing an

issue and leading to calls for a demarcation of jurisdiction. As outlined in the theory, resolving such conflicts may prove tricky if differing courses of action are preferred by each side. Such cases call for establishing the means of responding to the objectives of both institutions, which constitutes a challenge of governance. This may take place through an overarching institution, through efforts to adapt institutional structures on both sides, or by jurisdiction-cautious implementation of commitments (Oberthür and Gehring, 2011:1105). One interviewee elaborated on this challenge of governance thus: "At the national level we must look at the governance framework [...] to look at development planning through [various] lenses, so that the trade-offs are not always, automatically, that the social and environmental are subordinated to maximise growth" (IOR4, 2011).

Overall, in working to promote horizontal environmental policy diffusion at the national level through the RAP, environmental authorities face a number of distinct challenges. Some of these speak to particularities in the way the FME itself works. For instance, the absence of budgeting considerations in the formulation of activities to be implemented makes the work programmes emerging from the FME more difficult to promote at the national level. The other challenges mentioned flow from these circumstances, but could also be related to deeper issues affecting the environment and sustainable development at all levels. In particular, attempts to influence non-environmental national institutions to advance work towards the sustainable development vision subsumed under ILAC are constrained by the wider issue of sustainable development being largely governed by "soft" arrangements where responsibility is not clearly vested in any entity or actor. The issue therefore becomes at once the business of everyone and no one. The situation is compounded by the relatively marginal position of Ministries of Environment at the national level, which puts them at a disadvantage in working to integrate environmental policy across sectors as a means of realising sustainable development. Without institutional mechanisms to systematically advance this integration or an overarching institution vested with authority and resources over sustainable development, the issue remains weak at the national level, largely reliant on the personal efforts and persuasiveness of environmental authorities, as well as the receptiveness of other sectors to take up the mantle of responsibility.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Interaction with Institutions at the Global Level to Promote a Regional Agenda

As discussed in Chapter 5, the FME was originally formalised as a means of integrating regional priorities into the global agenda, enlisting the support of UNEP for this task. In order to implement progammes of work on this basis, UNEP was to involve other IOs (UNGA, 1998:6). However, the findings suggest that at present the FME has no formal connections with the global levels of the governing bodies of the IOs that make up its ITC, and which are responsible for adopting the work programmes of these organisations. The FME therefore relies on cognitive interaction to promote its agenda in global spheres. The interaction is primarily activated by national actors that participate in both the FME and global decision-making processes. This is most apparent in the case of UNEP's GC/GMEF, since it is the only ITC IO whose main state-based constituency –Environment Ministries- have a high degree of overlap with the membership of the FME. Regional interests are thus introduced into UNEP's global decision-making process, framed as a means of bolstering the responsiveness of UNEP's work programme to regional needs. Efforts of this nature are most successful when the issues promoted have a high degree of political salience, elicit a moral imperative or have widespread support.

However, interaction between the FME and UNEP's global sphere is also affected by fractures in the lines of communication between the regional and global level, due to the absence within UNEP of a representative decision-making body. The process is also subject to shifts in the positions presented by the member states themselves, with inputs varying from platform to platform according to the composition of the delegations and the entities taking the lead. In the case of other ITC IOs, membership linkages that see environmental authorities directly involved in global decision-making processes are weak. Interaction with these institutions is therefore limited, making it difficult to introduce the FME's agenda into deliberations.

Further research would be required to elucidate to what extent these issues may be due to an overall lack of policy coherence in country positions, or whether this is specifically rooted in

deficits in EPI in states' foreign policy. The latter could be linked to the issues surrounding the position of Environment Ministries and the environment sector itself at the national level emerging from the findings of this study. Nonetheless, another possibility for further research is whether "forum shopping" has a role to play in the variance of positions. That is, states presenting a variety of positions across different forums according to their assessments of what will be viewed most favourably in each space. This is an aspect to which this study is largely blinded by virtue of its focus on a single case viewed through the eyes of its own community members.

This caveat aside, a significant number of interviewees identified an overall lack of responsiveness in global processes vis-à-vis the regional perspectives articulated within the FME, with questions subsequently arising regarding its effectiveness of in diffusing policy priorities vertically between the regional and global spheres. A facet of this undoubtedly lies in the debate regarding whether ITC IOs should be regarded as primarily responsible for implementation of FME activities. This opens up a discussion regarding the locus of authority from which IO programme activities arise. While it is arguably member states themselves that have final decision-making power within the governing bodies of IOs, these processes are largely carried out at the global level. This study reveals that meaningful regional participation in these spaces within the context of the FME may be subject to significant constraints. Further research would be required to identify the extent to which these findings may have wider applications.

In addition, the study of the interaction between the FME and UNEP's global sphere suggests a dichotomy between responsiveness to regional needs and IOs' efforts to orchestrate activities within a strategic framework more oriented towards global goals. This may point to the need to bolster the participation of regional groupings in establishing these goals. Further, it may be fruitful to explore the possibility of establishing results frameworks at the regional or sub-regional level that feed into the overall strategic orientation of the organisation. This could contribute to articulating an effective and responsive multilevel system of governance.

Overall, the case of the FME suggests that realising the vision of an optimal partnership between levels of governance articulated by Weiss and Thakur (2009) as part of the basis of "good" global governance may be at least partly contingent on the establishment of formal inter-institutional links to connect regional and global spheres. Greater representativeness within global decision-making bodies also emerges as a key consideration, as it would facilitate the work of regions organising around common goals to make global processes more responsive to their particular needs.

7.2 Crafting the Regional Agenda

However, the case of the FME also suggests that crafting an agenda through which LAC can speak with one voice presents a challenge of its own. In working to formulate a regional agenda, the FME acts as an overarching institution, supporting the identification of regional priorities among development goals. This process is based on consultations led by the ITC, the Intersessional Committee and the prospective host. Based on these inputs, the FME channels country inputs into a regional platform to be promoted at the global level. This constitutes an attempt to diffuse policy priorities across vertical institutional boundaries, thereby articulating the upward link between the national, regional and global spheres.

The dialogue surrounding agenda building within the FME has presented fruitful opportunities for cooperation and stronger participation in international negotiation processes. However, the findings suggest that the work of crafting an agenda within the context of the FME faces several distinct obstacles. Some of these may speak to broader trends in the region that hamper meaningful dialogue around matters of common interest. For instance, the diversity of LAC means that at times sub-regional or economic groupings more readily identify issues of common ground, an issue that is perhaps illustrated by the emergence of spaces for dialogue that embody these sub-groups, such as those that exist within CAN and CARICOM.

In addition, the relative unavailability of comparable data on environment and sustainable development for the whole region makes it difficult to identify regional priorities and focus deliberations. While ITC IOs work to fill this information vacuum, some of the issues they define

and the approaches they promote are contentious from the perspective of a few countries, pointing to diversity of approaches and normative standpoints. Such differences are likely only resolved in instances where political will meets with individual diplomacy work around consensus-building. Thus, arriving at responses "that do not obviate the needs and capabilities of communities at various levels" (Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006:192), may be largely dependent on the engagement of the individuals involved.

7.3 Regional Cooperation and National Implementation

Within the context of the FME, regional cooperation is framed as a stepping stone to advance the attainment of environment and sustainable development commitments at the global level. Through ILAC, the FME community has attempted to bring some of these commitments into a single, more coherent framework with a follow-up mechanism. In this sense, the FME again functions as an overarching institution, working to improve coherence in the programme activities carried out within the region under the framework of global agreements.

This is seen as a worthy endeavour by over half of interviewees, with one stressing that ILAC is one of few instruments that provide an entry point for the region to assess its progress in terms sustainable development, rather than focusing on other issues or on the environment alone. However, in practice, promoting the advancement of global commitments through the conduit of ILAC faces significant challenges. ILAC itself has low levels of ownership and take up, an issue overwhelmingly associated with the absence of financial mechanisms to advance it. This also applies to the RAP, ILAC's chief implementation instrument. The RAP draws on the regional commitments adopted under ILAC and the global commitments the latter channels. These are recalled as a means of influencing the behaviour of national institutions, drawing on a multilevel form of interaction through commitment.

Overall, national environmental authorities face significant challenges in engaging other national entities to include RAP efforts in their planning and decision-making processes. The RAP draws primarily on "soft" agreements that exert little influence on non-environmental sectors, which often do not see the environment or sustainable development as their concern.

At the same time, the relatively marginal position of Ministries of Environment at the national level generally means they are at pains to effectively champion EPI as a means of realising sustainable development. Without institutional mechanisms to systematically advance this integration or an overarching institution vested with authority and resources to articulate sustainable development, the issue remains weak at the national level, largely reliant on the personal efforts and persuasiveness of environmental authorities, as well as the receptiveness of other sectors.

On the whole, the responses of interviewees paint a picture of the environmental sector and its institutional framework as comparatively weaker, or even marginal to, other sectors and institutions. Sustainable development emerges as a jurisdictional "no man's land" at the crossroads of institutional boundaries. These findings echo the idea that the weakness of the environmental pillar, combined with the absence of sustainable development entities with authority to coordinate governance of the three pillars, translate into weak governance of both issues across the board.

In this sense, the case of the FME and the experiences of its community members illustrate many of the challenges involved in working towards articulating the different levels governance and advancing environmental issues as stepping stones to more effective environmental governance and realising the vision of sustainable development.

14,996 words

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CR1, 2011. Skype Interview, 19 October.

CR2, 2011. Telephone Interview, 20 October.

CR3, 2011. Skype Interview, 9 November.

CR6, 2011. Telephone Interview, 15 November.

CR7, 2012. Personal Interview 29 February.

IOR1, 2011. Personal Interview, 8 November.

IOR2, 2011. Personal Interview, 18 November.

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[9] The sources listed under this category are anonymised to protect the privacy of interviewees. Where interviews were carried out in the person, the location of the interview has been omitted for the same reason.

-------, 2012. Skype Interview, 17 January.

IOR3, 2012. Personal Interview, 17 January.

IOR4, 2011. Skype Interview, 16 December.

IOR5, 2012. Skype Interview, 24 January.

IOR6, 2012. Skype Interview, 2 April.

IOR 7, 2012. Personal Interview, 24 January.

CSR1, 2012. Personal Interview, 23 January.

CSR3, 2012. Email exchange, 6 March.

CSR4, 2012. Personal Interview, 10 April.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Functions of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

The **Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**, in its capacity as a high-level body, has the following functions (taken from the decisions of the Ninth and Eleventh Meetings of Ministers):

i. analyse, seek consensus, evaluate and monitor relevant issues related to sustainable development, within its jurisdiction;
ii. to guide and evaluate regional cooperation action on environmental issues within the context of sustainable development;
iii. evaluate, discuss and agree on regional positions on issues pertinent to the international environmental agenda;
iv. consider international financing issues related to implementation of the commitments of Agenda 21 in the region;
v. assess compliance with agreements and objectives arising from previous ministerial meeting;
vi. approve the four-year action plan, based on the proposal submitted for consideration by the Intersessional Committee;
vii. provide specific mandates to the Intersessional Committee to implement the projects to be executed in the first biennium, and to develop project proposals to be submitted for consideration at the next meeting;
viii. guiding and evaluating the actions of UNEP in Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of the terms set forth in resolutions adopted by the Boards of Directors of that organization.

Source: UNEP/ROLAC 2011. Review of Experiences: Modalities for Dialogue and Implementation of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. UNEP/ROLAC. (p. 29).

Appendix 2: ITC Functions and Mandate

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, LIMA, PERU - 10 TO 13 MARCH 1998

<u>DECISION 8: PARALLEL MECHANISMS FOR REGIONAL CONSENSUS</u>

Considering that the intergovernmental consultations among the maximum environmental authorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, held within the framework of the United Nations, began in 1982 with the secretarial support of UNEP,

Mindful that the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean has come to be considered the maximum body of regional environmental consensus,

Taking into account that there are other regional forums that examine environmental topics in connection with their agendas and mandates, such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO); and that there are other subregional forums directly or indirectly linked to the environmental agenda, such as the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS), the Treaty for Amazonian Co-operation, the Andean Community of Nations, the River Plate Basin Treaty and the Caribbean Environment Programme, among others,

Affirming that it is necessary for the Forum of Ministers, as the regional platform at the highest level in environmental matters, to define criteria and co-ordination mechanisms with inter-American bodies to ensure that efforts are not duplicated and that the agendas are complementary and compatible,

DECIDE

1. To establish an Inter-Agency Technical Committee under the co-ordination of UNEP as recommended in the document *"Proposal to Strengthen the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean and to Prepare and Implement a Regional Environmental Action Plan"* (**UNEP/LAC-IGWG.XI/4**). Within this Technical Committee, UNEP will encourage the participation of both the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and bodies of the Inter-American system, based on the partnerships formed with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), respectively.

2. To ensure that the composition of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee is flexible, so as to facilitate the technical co-ordination of the programmes that these organisations carry out in Latin America and the Caribbean and, thereby, to respond more effectively to the priorities agreed on by the Forum of Ministers. Thus, on the basis of the partnerships already established with UNDP and IDB, other agencies of both the United Nations system

and of the inter-American system will join the Committee, in accordance with the subject areas that form the regional environmental plan.

3. To request the Chair of the Inter-Sessional Committee of Ministers of the Environment to present agreements reached by the Forum of Ministers at other international forums on environment and sustainable development.

4. To provide international and hemispheric sectoral debates with guidance based on the regional environmental plan adopted by the Forum of Ministers.

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, LIMA, PERU - 10 TO 13 MARCH 1998

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SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERS OF ENVIRONMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC- 27TH JANUARY TO 1ST FEBRUARY 2008

DECISION 3: COMPOSITION AND MANDATE OF THE INTER-AGENCY TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

In the light of the process of reform of the United Nations, addressing the need to maintain progress in coordinating and supporting efforts to use resources more efficiently and to work together to produce concrete results responding to needs identified by the countries;

Ratifying the decisions adopted at the Eleventh Meeting of the Forum of Ministers in Lima, Peru, in March 1998, by means of decision 8 determining the composition and terms of reference of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee (ITC);

DECIDE:
[...]
4. To renew the mandate of the Inter-agency Technical Committee, on the basis of its terms of reference including the following:

  a) To work on a coordinated basis on the preparation, business and monitoring of the meetings of the Forum of Ministers.
  b) To submit alternatives for implementing the Forum's decisions regarding continued progress in the implementation of the ILAC.
  c) To seek technical support for design and development of projects to be implemented as part of the Regional Action Plan.
  d) To conduct activities aimed at identifying possible sources of funding for the projects.
  e) To obtain the agreement and coordinate the actions of the participating agencies and institutions, on the Forum agenda's priority issues.

f) To support the performance of specific tasks assigned to the relevant ad-hoc working groups.

Source: UNEP/ROLAC 2011. Review of Experiences: Modalities for Dialogue and Implementation of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. UNEP/ROLAC (p. 30).

Appendix 3: ILAC Priority Areas, Goals and Indicative Purposes

1.Biological diversity

- Increase of forested area.
    - i. *Ensure the sustainable management of forest resources in the region, significantly reducing present deforestation rates.*

- Territory included in protected areas.
    - i. *Increase significantly the territory in the region under protected area regimes and, when defining them, include buffer zones and biological corridors.*

- Genetic resources - Equitable sharing of benefits.
    - i. *Adopt regulatory frameworks for access to genetic resources, as well as for fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from their use, compatible with the Convention on Biological Diversity.*

- Marine biodiversity
    - i. *Ensure the conservation and proper use of the Caribbean Basin Countries' marine resources with particular emphasis on marine and coastal ecosystems.*

2. Water resources management

- Freshwater supply
    - i. *Improve technology for more efficiency in water use in industry and agriculture and for domestic consumption;*
    - ii. *Introduce modern desalination technologies; and*
    - iii. *Integrate the management of coastal aquifers to avoid saline intrusion.*

- Watershed management.
    - i. *Improve and strengthen institutional arrangements for the integrated management of water basins and aquifers, among other measures, by establishing water basin committees with the participation of all subnational levels of government, civil society, the private sector and all involved stakeholders.*

- Management of marine and coastal areas and their resources.
    - i. *Implement national and regional action plans for the integrated management of coastal resources and coastal ecosystems, with particular attention to the Small Island Developing States; and*
    - ii. *Adopt a holistic and Integrated approach to the management of Caribbean Sea trough the development of a comprehensive strategy for its protection and management.*

- Better quality of inland waters.
    - i. *Improve the quality of effluents and reduce the discharge of pollutants into surface*

water bodies, groundwater and coastal areas.

3. Vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities

- Land-use planning.
    - i. *Implement land-use planning policies and plans from a sustainable development approach; and*
    - ii. *Incorporate risk management instruments in land-use planning.*

- Areas affected by degradation processes.
    - i. *Reduce significantly the areas of the region subject to erosion, salinization and other soil degradation processes.*

- Air pollution.
    - i. *Reduce the concentration in the air of polluting emissions.*

- Water pollution.
    - i. *Increase coverage of drinking water services and wastewater treatment.*

- Solid wastes
    - i. *Reduce significantly solid waste generation (domestic and industrial) and, among other measures, promote recycling and reuse; and*
    - ii. *Implement integrated management of solid wastes (domestic and industrial), including appropriate treatment and final disposal.*

- Vulnerability to anthropogenic disasters and those caused by natural phenomena.
    - i. *Implement and strengthen regional risk management cooperation mechanisms to lessen the impact of anthropogenic disasters and those caused by natural phenomena, including setting up a regional early warning system and forming immediate response groups.*

- Vulnerability and risk management
    - i. *Refine and apply vulnerability indicators; and*
    - ii. *Incorporate indicators into national development plans*

4. Social issues, including health, inequity and poverty

- Health and environment.
    - i. *Implement policies and plans to reduce environmental risks that cause damage to health, in particular those transmitted by water, vectors, air pollution and exposure to chemical substances;*
    - ii. *Implement comprehensive measures to control and reverse the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic including development of coordinated approaches to research education and treatment and access to retroviral pharmaceuticals; and,*

iii. Increase the proportion of green and healthy areas per inhabitant.

- Environment and job creation.
  - *i. Promote the formulation and implementation of sustainable development projects and programmes that will help to create jobs and avoid migration and displacement.*

- Poverty and inequity.
  - *i. Reduce drastically poverty rates in the region's countries;*
  - *ii. Create sustainable livelihoods by developing micro-enterprises; and,*
  - *iii. Formulate and implement strategies for women, youth, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, migrants, disabled and other minority groups of the region in accordance with human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

5. Economic issues, including competitiveness, trade and production and consumption patterns (energy)

- Energy.
  - *i. Increase renewable energy use in the region to at least 10% of its total energy consumption by the year 2010.*

- Cleaner production.
  - *i. Install cleaner production centres in all the countries of the region; and,*
  - *ii. Incorporate the concept of cleaner production in a significant number of the main industries, with emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises.*

- Economic instruments.
  - *i. Establish a system of economic incentives for productive and industrial processing projects that will save natural resources and energy and eventually reduce the amount of effluents discharged into water, land and the air.*

6. Institutional arrangements

- Environmental education.
  - *i. Improve and strengthen the incorporation of the environmental dimension into formal and non-formal education, the economy and society.*

- Training and capacity building of human resources.
  - *i. Eradicate illiteracy and ensure universal enrolment in primary and secondary education;*
  - *ii. Build capacities to address vulnerabilities in the region; and,*
  - *iii. Establish, for the public and private sectors and for the community in general, programmes for capacity building in sustainable development management.*

- Evaluation and indicators.
  - *i. Develop and implement an assessment process to follow up the progress made towards*

attaining sustainable development objectives, including the results of the Johannesburg Plan, adopting national and regional sustainability indicators that respond to the region's unique social, economic and political features.

- Participation of society.
    i. *Create and strengthen participation mechanisms to deal with sustainable development issues, with representatives from government, non-government and major groups in all countries of the region.*

Source: FME and UNEP/ROLAC 2002. Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development. *First Special Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.* Johannesbourg, South Africa, 31 August 2002. UNEP/ROLAC. (pp. 6-10)

Appendix 4: ILAC Areas and corresponding RAP Thematic Lines

ILAC AREA	RAP Priority Thematic Lines
Climate change[10]	The linkages between climate change and all ILAC areas are recognized (including renewable energy and energy efficiency)
Biodiversity	Increase of forested area Genetic resources- equitable sharing of benefits
Water Management	Watershed management Management of marine and coastal areas and
Vulnerability, human settlements and sustainable cities	Vulnerability and risk management Waste management
Social issues, including health, inequity and poverty	Health and environment (pollution and chemicals)
Economic issues, including competitiveness, trade and production and consumption patterns (energy)	Sustainable Production and Consumption
Institutional arrangements	Evaluation and indicators Environmental education

Source: UNEP/ROLAC 2011. Review of Experiences: Modalities for Dialogue and Implementation of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. UNEP/ROLAC. (p. 33).

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[10] Added at the Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (held in Panama in 2003).

Thesis Interview Guide

Interviewee Name:

Organisation: **Date:**

Designation: **Place:**

Medium: ☐ Telephone   ☐ Skype   ☐ In person   ☐ Other

Introductory guidelines:

- Thank you for your time
- I am a Masters student in International Development and Management
- My research is exploring the FME as a regional entity articulating different dimensions of governance
- All feedback is anonymous
- Quotes will not be attributed to you
- Your organisation and/or country will not be identified either.

Question Guide

1. Can you please tell me a little bit about your participation in the Forum?
   (past and present)

2. Why does you country/organisation participate in the Forum?

3. What role do you think the Forum plays, particularly in light of the many other similar entities that operate within the region?

4. How does the Forum work as a space for regional negotiation to formulate positions towards global forums?

5. How do you see the deliberative processes of the Forum?

6. How are the Forum's activities implemented nationally?

7. How are common positions and joint policies formulated within the context of the Forum?

8. What do you think are the Forum's main strengths and weaknesses

9. What role do you see for civil society within the Forum?

10. How do you see the role of the ITC and its members?

Appendix 6: Anonymised List of Interviewees

Country Representatives (CR)

CR1, Skype Interview, 19 October, 2011

CR2, Telephone Interview, 20 October 2011

CR3, Skype Interview, 9 November, 2011

CR4, Telephone Interview, 12 November, 2011

CR5, Telephone Interview, 12 November, 2011

CR6, Telephone Interview, 15 November 2011

CR7, Personal Interview 29 February 2012

IO Representatives (IOR)

IOR1, Personal Interview, 8 November 2011

IOR2, Personal Interview, 18 November 2011
Skype Interview, 17 January 2012

IOR3, Personal Interview, 17 January, 2012

IOR4, Skype Interview, 16 December 2011

IOR5, Skype Interview, 24 January, 2012

IOR6, Skype Interview, 2 April, 2012

IOR 7, Personal Interview, 24 January 2012

Civil Society Representatives (CSR)

CSR1, Personal Interview, 23 January, 2012

CSR2, Skype Interview, 8 March 2012

CSR3, Email exchange, 6 March, 2012

CSR4, Personal Interview, 10 April 2012