



Opening Remarks by Joara Marchezini, the Access to Information Officer at Article 19, Brazil and Representative of the Public (Brazil), at the 6th Meeting of the Negotiating Committee for a Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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Good morning to everyone, welcome to Brazil.

We are very excited to have the sixth round of negotiations about Principle 10 here in my country.

It was here that Principle 10 was born, at the Rio-92 Conference. It was also here, at Rio + 20, that the declaration which started the construction of the regional agreement was signed, so I am confident to say that Principle 10 came back home. It has returned home to structure itself, to become more robust and strong, before going out to face the world.

The truth is that Principle 10 will find a complicated world, a world that builds walls between countries and threatens our natural wealth, ecosystems and the quality of everyone's lives, but especially of the vulnerable populations and indigenous people. That is why we are here in Brasilia, to provide the resources and the tools so Principle 10 is able to make a difference in the world, to reduce environmental conflicts, face the problems and respond to the needs of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This is its role: realizing rights, reducing conflict and supporting sustainable development through participatory and democratic management of the environment. And that is why we are here. If we forget why we are doing this during these days of negotiations, between tiredness, the innumerable versions of the text and the many meetings, we should remember: the objective is to create an agreement that guarantees that environmental democracy reaches all. Only environmental democracy will lead us towards sustainable development.

But Principle 10 is like a boy. A young boy, born in one of the largest cities of Brazil, empowered, studied, traveled, and with support to choose who he wants to be. He's a boy with privileges. It is clear that this profile does not refer to the most vulnerable groups in our region, but at the same time, that is their goal. So, how can we do it? How can we respond to the challenges of the region if those present today are not affected by them? You have to listen, you have to be supportive. I am not affected by the Mariana disaster, but I hear those who are and I share their pain, and so, I will advocate that access to justice must consider restoration and reparation for damages. I am not indigenous, but I am in solidarity with their suffering and I say, I hear them and so, I will advocate for them to participate early and while all possibilities are still on the table. I am not a traditional environmental advocate, but I hear them, and I will defend their right to assistance, free of any cost, in requesting access to information. Let us all be united and remember that our obligation is to defend the interests of the population of our countries. That has to be the conduct of a representative of a democratic country: to respond to people and not to the system. Let's make the change and let's do it now.

