



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 May 2021

Original: English

2021 session

23 July 2020–22 July 2021

Agenda item 15

Regional cooperation

Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020–2021

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith a summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2020–2021.



Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020–2021

Summary

The present report contains highlights of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2020 and from January to April 2021. During that period, ECLAC continued to build on its tradition of innovative Latin American and Caribbean thought leadership on sustainable development and consolidate its role as a leading think tank of the United Nations Secretariat. In the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Commission has also continued to nurture its key convening role by fostering intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms, providing a space for policy dialogue, consensus-building, peer learning and normative discussion, as well as delivering operational support, technical cooperation, capacity-building and advisory services to member States upon request. To assist member States in taking stock and addressing the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECLAC launched the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, analysing the impacts of the pandemic on a broad range of sectors and monitoring, jointly with resident coordinators, the policy responses from member States. ECLAC also hosted a series of online thematic meetings with high-level authorities and prepared analyses to address the situation of specific groups and sectors in the context of the pandemic and to devise policy responses. ECLAC assisted member States as a technical secretariat for its subsidiary intergovernmental bodies and regional processes, which provide the platform for regional actions plans to enter into force, including the Santiago Commitment, a regional instrument to respond to the COVID-19 crisis with gender equality; the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement); and the political declaration on a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, which calls for the international community to take into account the specific problems of the region's middle-income countries and the small island developing States of the Caribbean. ECLAC has maintained the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as its blueprint for recovery with equality and sustainability at its centre. To support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and development agendas in the region, ECLAC has collaborated with member States, 19 entities of the United Nations system and resident coordinators in developing the comprehensive development plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, requested by the Presidents of the four countries to address the structural causes of migration. In the context of the roll-out of the reform of the United Nations development pillar, ECLAC has deepened its collaboration with other entities of the United Nations development system in the region, in particular through the newly created Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Regional Knowledge Management Platform for the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean is a case in point. It was developed under the technical coordination of ECLAC, in close coordination with all entities of the United Nations system in the region, as a common knowledge and data platform for all regional information related to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The report concludes with an overview of partnerships built by ECLAC with regional and subregional actors, United Nations entities and other regional commissions to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region and address the short- and long-term effects of the pandemic while keeping the 2030 Agenda in view.

I. Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and means of implementation of that Agenda, has continued to guide the work of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) while supporting member States in addressing the multidimensional effects of the pandemic. The programme of work of the Commission is structured around 13 subprogrammes to promote the economic, social and environmentally sustainable development of Latin America and the Caribbean through international cooperation, by undertaking applied research and comparative analyses of development processes and providing relevant normative operational capacity development, technical cooperation and advisory services in support of regional development efforts.

2. To achieve those objectives, ECLAC continued to offer its valuable assistance to member States by combining its three main functions: performing analytical and normative work in its role as a leading think tank for innovative thinking in the region; bringing together regional leaders and experts through its intergovernmental platforms and subsidiary bodies, thanks to its convening power; and, through its operational role, providing technical cooperation, advisory services and peer learning forums, anchored in data and rigorous, evidence-based analysis and understanding of the realities of the region. ECLAC has also continued to foster a multisectoral and integrated approach to development and provided a voice to countries in special situations, including the only least developed country of the region, Haiti, and to landlocked developing countries, the small island developing States of the Caribbean and middle-income countries.

3. ECLAC has also deepened its collaboration with the United Nations development system entities present in the region, in particular with the United Nations resident coordinators and through the new Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean, which unites all entities across the three United Nations pillars (humanitarian; peace, security and human rights; and development) working in support of development. The Chair of the Platform is the Deputy Secretary-General, and the Vice-Chairs are the Executive Secretary of ECLAC and the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Regional Collaborative Platform has set the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as its guiding blueprint in order to address key challenges that transcend country borders and facilitate joint work to maximize the potential, capacities and assets of its members in support of member States, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

4. In addition, to support the follow-up and monitoring of progress in the medium and long term of the 2030 Agenda, and in response to the request made by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, ECLAC launched the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, which compiles and presents information on the public policies that the 33 countries of the region have implemented to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the support of the United Nations resident coordinators, the Development Coordination Office and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in particular. It has become a regional knowledge platform that provides a source of information, geo-referenced data and analysis of the economic and social effects that the pandemic has at the national and sectoral levels. Further, ECLAC published 10 special reports on COVID-19 that focus on the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic and convened virtual intergovernmental meetings and policy dialogues with the ministers and high-level authorities of sectors such as finance, social development, science and technology, women and statistics.

5. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, the reform of the United Nations approved by Member States reflects the Secretary-General's vision and proposals for repositioning the regional architecture to support member countries as they strive to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, through collaboration and integration of all possible capacities and efforts at the global, regional and national levels. In this spirit, the Regional Knowledge Management Platform for the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean,¹ also known as the "SDG Gateway", of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean has been developed under the leadership of ECLAC and UNDP, and in coordination with all the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system in the region, as well as the Development Coordination Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Knowledge Management Platform, managed technically by ECLAC, is a meeting and reference point for all regional information related to the Goals, including activities, regional architecture, information resources, statistics, regional data and specific analytical tools developed and provided by the United Nations in response to the needs of member countries. It provides up-to-date information on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the global, regional and national levels and on progress towards achieving the Goals.

6. The present report describes the contribution of ECLAC from May 2020 to April 2021 to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with a wide of stakeholders in the region and beyond to achieve a transformative recovery, with equality and sustainability for all.

II. Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region

A. Shaping a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean within the context of COVID-19 and to build forward better

7. The pandemic is having a significant health impact on Latin America and the Caribbean. Since the first case of COVID-19 infection was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) in early 2020, all the countries of the region have reported cases. What began as a health crisis, however, became a large-scale social and economic crisis, with the region being one of the hardest hit and facing the worst economic recession in 120 years. The effects of the pandemic are influencing the socioeconomic projections and scenarios for the region. According to ECLAC, regional gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 7.7 per cent in 2020, which will have a negative impact on and slow the pace of progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 2030 targets. Although pre-pandemic trends are expected to reassert themselves in many cases over the coming years, that will not always be enough to make up lost ground. ECLAC estimates an extreme poverty rate of 12.5 per cent and a poverty rate of 33.7 per cent in 2020. That would imply that 209 million people were living in poverty by the end of 2020, or 22 million more than a year earlier. Of that total, 78 million people would be living in extreme poverty, or 8 million more than in 2019. The increase in extreme poverty and poverty due to the pandemic has consequences not only in the short term but also for the prospects of achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

¹ Available at <https://agenda2030lac.org/en>.

8. Within this context, the subsidiary bodies and intergovernmental meetings of ECLAC, which support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in synergy with other regional agendas, quickly adapted to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by switching from face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings in order to keep a channel of dialogue open with sectoral authorities and to make participation as broad and active as possible. Ministers and high-level authorities from member States and associate members of ECLAC, representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, resident coordinators, international experts, academics and representatives of the private sector and civil society, among others, have been invited to share lessons learned and experiences, and to identify areas for mutual technical assistance and international cooperation on urgent issues to address the short-, medium- and long-term effects of the pandemic while making progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and focusing on certain groups that are more vulnerable.

9. ECLAC has organized a series of online meetings and prepared analyses to address the situation of specific groups in the context of the pandemic. In its 2020 edition of the Social Panorama of Latin America,² ECLAC analysed the social impact of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and reviews of public social spending trends in the countries of the region, including the unequal effects of the pandemic on women, and made a call to invest in the care economy as a strategic sector for recovery with equality. In 2020, jointly organized by ECLAC and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in the framework of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the agreements adopted under the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, dialogues were held that focused on sexual and reproductive health, migrants, older persons, people of African descent and persons with disabilities, and a special dialogue was held on the Caribbean subregion.

10. Similarly, during the fourth meeting of the presiding officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held virtually on 13 January 2021, and as part of the XII Ministerial Forum for Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, jointly organized with UNDP, member States approved the implementation plan for the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development,³ in which they identified key priorities for strengthening social protection systems and social inclusion policies for a recovery with equality in the region. The meeting was also an occasion to present the ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is a wide database on non-contributory social protection interventions in the countries of the region to tackle the social impact of the pandemic. This public information repository has been a key resource for social policy analysis.

11. During the 60th meeting of the presiding officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held virtually from 23 to 25 February 2021, and jointly organized by UN-Women and ECLAC as the secretariat of the Conference, member countries reported on the progress made in the implementation of the Santiago Commitment,⁴ the regional instrument to respond to the COVID-19 crisis with gender equality.

² ECLAC, “Social Panorama of Latin America 2020”, March 2020, available at <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/46688>.

³ See the agreement adopted at the fourth meeting, available at https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/2100012_mds.4_agreements_adopted.pdf.

⁴ Available at https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/14/sites/crm14/files/20-00087_crm.14_santiago_commitment.pdf.

12. Of note is the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement),⁵ adopted at Escazú, Costa Rica, on 4 March 2018, which is the only treaty stemming from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the first environmental treaty for the Latin American and Caribbean region. It is also the first in the world to specifically require States of Latin America and the Caribbean to protect human rights defenders in environmental matters. After meeting the conditions required under article 22, with the ratifications of Argentina and Mexico on 22 January 2021, the Escazú Agreement entered into force on 22 April 2021.

13. In April 2021, the regional review of the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration for Latin America and the Caribbean was conducted jointly by ECLAC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with several other members of the United Nations Network on Migration, which sought to assist in identifying their achievements, priorities and gaps regarding the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in the region.

14. During its 2020 session, the first session in its history to be held virtually, ECLAC presented a comprehensive proposal for a transformed paradigm of development in the region post-COVID-19, which was endorsed by all member countries of the region. These proposals were presented in the document entitled “Building a new future: transformative recovery with equality and sustainability”,⁶ which calls for a new future to be built in the region through a big push for sustainability based on the 2030 Agenda. That requires social and political compacts to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals become state policies, with the participation of communities, businesses, women and youth. In turn, new forms of global governance are needed to provide global public goods, such as universal health care (including COVID-19 vaccines for all), climate security and atmospheric protection, financial stability, peace and the protection of human rights. Multilateralism, solidarity and international cooperation, which must be at the heart of international efforts, were highlighted as the only real way out of this unprecedented crisis. The 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind must continue to inspire the decisions taken by countries in the response and recovery phases, while they implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. At the ECLAC session, the foreign ministers of the region’s countries adopted a political declaration on a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean,⁷ which reflects a broad consensus that the pandemic has exposed the inequalities and fragilities of the region’s countries and that the international community must take into account the specific problems of the region’s middle-income countries and the small island developing States of the Caribbean.

16. In addition, during the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, chaired by Costa Rica and convened virtually under the auspices of ECLAC from 15 to 18 March 2021, ECLAC presented the document entitled “Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.⁸ The document was the fourth report on

⁵ Available at https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/43583/1/S1800428_en.pdf.

⁶ ECLAC, “Building a new future: transformative recovery with equality and sustainability”, 2021, available at https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46226/S2000665_en.pdf.

⁷ Available at https://periododesesiones.cepal.org/38/sites/pses38/files/political_declaration_of_latin_america_and_the_caribbean_-_final_23.10_ing.pdf.

⁸ ECLAC, “Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, 2021, available at https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/46696/S2100124_en.pdf.

regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and it highlights that the countries of the region have demonstrated their commitment to the 2030 Agenda with the establishment of national mechanisms for its implementation and follow-up, and that 28 countries in the region have already submitted national voluntary reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development and, in 2021, 11 will do so. Nevertheless, the crisis has increased the possibility that the Goals of the 2030 Agenda will not be achieved and puts their comprehensiveness at risk. All the trends described in the document show that only one third of the Sustainable Development Goal targets are on track to be met. During the event, the countries of the region reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda, which serves as a guide for addressing the needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlighted that the pandemic offers an opportunity to address two major structural problems in the region – poverty and inequality – and to revitalize multilateralism and the regional response to the pandemic, in particular with respect to vaccine access and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as reflected in the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations adopted by the countries of the region at the meeting.⁹

B. Example of progress towards the implementation of sustainable and inclusive development: the Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico

17. The Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, which the Presidents of the four countries requested from ECLAC, seeks to ensure that migration from the countries of Northern Central America and south-south-east Mexico is safe, orderly and regular, while tackling its structural causes. The Plan seeks, inter alia, to contribute to sustainable development by stimulating economic growth, promoting universal access to social services, fostering resilience to climate change and guaranteeing rights throughout the migratory and forced displacement cycle. The Plan has been coordinated by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, as Chair of the Plan's special coordination mechanism, established by the Deputy Secretary-General. The initiative has benefited from constant consultation with, and the support of, the national authorities and contributions from a number of institutions, including 19 agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, the regional Development Coordination Office and the resident coordinators and United Nations country teams of the four countries covered by the plan. The four governments expressed their interest in the joint convening, together with the Secretary-General and the President of the Inter-American Development Bank, of an international conference to launch the Plan, to be held in the first half of 2021. The four Heads of State and other relevant authorities, key cooperation partners, donor institutions and regional development banks will be invited.

III. Strengthening the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

18. With respect to data and statistics, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, at its 20th meeting, held online in April 2021,

⁹ Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, "Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the Fourth Meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development", 2021, available at <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2021/en/documents/intergovernmentally-agreed-conclusions-and-recommendations-fourth-meeting-forum-countries>.

urged countries to foster the production of national statistics to strengthen the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda in its three dimensions (social, economic and environmental), recognizing the need to consolidate methodologies and ensure the regular production of data for environmental indicators by, inter alia, integrating specialized units in institutional programmes and budgets, developing national strategies and plans for statistical development and establishing inter-agency coordination committees, which are essential given the cross-cutting nature of sustainable development. In 2020, the Knowledge Transfer Network of the Statistical Conference of the Americas held more than a dozen virtual meetings to share experiences and recommendations concerning the challenges faced and solutions adopted by countries in their efforts to continue producing statistics during the pandemic. The meetings acknowledged the role of official statistics in the development of public policies aimed at mitigating the effects of the health emergency and in the post-pandemic economic recovery. The Statistical Conference of the Americas encouraged agencies to produce official statistics to build on the good practices implemented during that period to strengthen statistical operations and the quality of official and disaggregated data and statistics. It also warned of the importance of countries securing the resources needed for the continuity of statistical production and, in particular, ensuring proper implementation of the 2020 round of population censuses, given how crucial they are for public policies and for other statistical operations.

19. Concerning sciences, technology and innovation, at the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, held in March 2021, the countries highlighted the need to close the technological gaps, taking into account data protection and cybersecurity and considering that one third of the population has limited or no access to digital technologies and 46 per cent of children from 5 to 12 years of age live in households that are not connected and therefore have no access to online education.¹⁰ Access to technology must be expanded, which will require building stronger links with the private sector, transferring technologies, investing in innovation, research and development, and developing capacities. At the seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC, held in November 2020, the countries also affirmed that digitalization was set to play a key role in the reconstruction and recovery of Latin America and the Caribbean while advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the event, the countries adopted the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean,¹¹ which identifies eight areas of action and 39 specific goals for implementation in the next two years and includes a section on the fight against the pandemic and economic recovery. Although digital technologies have been essential tools for social and economic resilience in the face of the pandemic, problems of access, use and affordability were also exposed during the crisis. There is therefore a need to universalize broadband access, boost productive digital transformation, promote trust and security, strengthen regional digital cooperation and pursue the creation of a digital welfare state. In July 2020, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of ECLAC addressed the challenges arising within the framework of the COVID-19 crisis to implement the 2030 Agenda with the objective of strengthening the regional integration of the health industry and digital ecosystems. Three areas of action were highlighted: (a) coordinating research

¹⁰ See ECLAC, “Universalizing access to digital technologies to address the consequences of COVID-19”, 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45939-universalizing-access-digital-technologies-address-consequences-covid-19>.

¹¹ ECLAC, “Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean”, November 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46440-digital-agenda-latin-america-and-caribbean-elac2022>.

and development efforts; (b) reducing gaps in the access to and use of digital platforms; and (c) strengthening the health industry at the national and regional level. The Conference is working with member countries to foster development of the capacities needed for health-care autonomy in the region through industrial policy measures, strategic integration partnerships and the creation of exchange networks for those engaged in research and development.

20. With respect to financing for development, the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified structural gaps in the region's countries while also increasing their need for financing to deal with the emergency. That has prompted a rise in debt levels that jeopardizes the recovery and countries' capacity to achieve a sustainable rebuilding with equality. During the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, the countries of the region highlighted the importance of rethinking the global financial architecture, promoting debt relief, increasing concessional financing, considering the concept of development in transition (as the classification of countries on the basis of GDP is not a multidimensional approach), and developing a vulnerability matrix (as per capita GDP does not reflect the vulnerability of small island developing States economies). ECLAC actively participated in the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond driven by the Secretary-General and the Governments of Canada and Jamaica, underscoring the specific requirements and challenges of middle-income countries and Caribbean small island developing States of the region. In addition to supporting the initiative launched by Costa Rica of the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics, ECLAC has proposed five policy actions to address the challenges that the financing for development agenda poses in the short, medium and long term, while also emphasizing initiatives that may be undertaken to build forward better. A first policy action consists of the expansion and redistribution of liquidity from developed to developing countries through a massive issuance of the International Monetary Fund special drawing rights. A hypothetical new issue and allocation of \$500 billion special drawing rights would amount to \$56 billion in additional international reserves for Latin American and Caribbean economies. A second policy action focuses on strengthening regional cooperation by improving the lending and response capacity of regional, subregional and national financial institutions, and reinforcing their linkages to multilateral development banks. It is also necessary to foster cooperation and coordination between regional, subregional and national development banks. National development banks have been key players in the provision of finance, committing the equivalent of \$93 billion in financial support for the COVID-19 response.

21. A third policy action consists of complementing access to increased finance with a drive to reform the international debt architecture, which would include the creation of a multilateral sovereign debt restructuring mechanism and the establishment of a multilateral credit rating agency. The Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the Group of 20 must also be widened in scope to include all relevant stakeholders (that is, the private sector and multilateral institutions) and vulnerable middle-income countries, and it must be extended beyond 2021.

22. A fourth policy action entails providing countries with a set of innovative instruments aimed at improving debt repayment capacity and avoiding debt distress. Those innovative instruments link countries' repayment capacity to their exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters (as in the case of hurricane clauses) or to the ups and downs of the business cycle (such as through income-linked bonds or state-contingent bonds).

23. As a fifth policy action, liquidity and debt reduction measures must be integrated into a financing for development strategy focused on building forward better. The current crisis should be seized not only as an opportunity to rethink the

financing for development agenda of middle-income countries, but also as an occasion to reach broad social and political consensus to implement ambitious reforms in order to engage in a sustainable and egalitarian building back process.

24. Additional specific recommendations have also been elaborated by ECLAC¹² to address the particular needs of Caribbean member countries, including during the twenty-eighth session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC, held virtually in September 2020, in which ECLAC has made proposals such as, for example, a special dispensation for the Caribbean so it can access concessional funding, debt relief and an enhanced Debt Service Suspension Initiative; the issuance and reallocation of special drawing rights; negotiations with bilateral creditors, including the Paris Club; the establishment of a Caribbean resilience fund; and the involvement of the Green Climate Fund in the ECLAC debt-for-climate swap initiative.

25. The Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC has emphasized the importance of such cooperation among the countries of the region as a means of implementing policies to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic while advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At its tenth meeting of the presiding officers, held virtually in March 2021, countries of the region stressed the need to expand and deepen information-sharing on the experiences of South-South cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions of the world. In this respect, the Committee on South-South Cooperation endorsed the project of the network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, aimed at strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of governments in the region that are establishing or seeking to establish national mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Goals. Meetings were held to analyse the statistical, institutional and South-South cooperation capacities of the region's countries and to identify strengths and gaps on which countries could cooperate in order to enhance the institutional and technical capacities of the region's governments.

IV. Spotlight on the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean big push for sustainability to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda

26. Latin America and the Caribbean is in a position to move towards a “big push for sustainability” through a combination of economic, industrial, social and environmental policies capable of driving a recovery with equality and sustainability and relaunching development in the region. A progressive structural shift is required for Latin America and the Caribbean to overcome the limitations imposed by its development style. Knowledge-intensive sectors with higher rates of demand and employment growth must form a larger part of the production structure. This must be achieved while preserving the quality of natural resources, the environment and the services they provide. These changes call for a coordinated set of policies, summarized by ECLAC as a big push for sustainability.

27. ECLAC has analysed seven sectoral systems that can provide the basis for a big push for sustainability in its three dimensions: (a) unconventional renewable energy; (b) urban electromobility; (c) digitization; (d) the health-care manufacturing industry;

¹² ECLAC, “The case for financing: Caribbean resilience building in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic”, February 2021, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46629-case-financing-caribbean-resilience-building-face-covid-19-pandemic>.

(e) the bioeconomy; (f) the circular economy; and (g) tourism. These could form the core of policies for a big push for sustainability and are areas in which there is ample scope to generate better quality jobs, pursue innovation, incorporate technological progress, diversify exports, adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and pursue regional cooperation efforts. That selection of sectors is meant as a guide on the basis of which each country, in accordance with its characteristics and priorities, can determine the activities on which it is to concentrate, the combinations between them, the approach taken to implementing development policies and the way other sectors are incorporated into the logic of progressive structural change and the big push for sustainability. Cooperation and the creation of synergies between State policies, the strategies of firms in the private or public sector and social and community initiatives must be at the heart of any economic development capable of bringing about progressive structural change likely to narrow the external, environmental and social gaps.

V. Leveraging partnerships for sustainable development

A. Collaboration with entities of the United Nations development system

28. The new Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean, established in November 2020, presents an opportunity, as an internal mechanism of the United Nations system at the regional level, that is aimed at providing strategic direction on common regional, subregional or cross-border priorities and ensuring coordination, collaboration and better use of the experience, expertise and assets of all United Nations entities dealing with development at the regional level so as to provide member States, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams with enhanced support in this decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. During the 4th meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, through the presentation of its 2020 system-wide results report, the consultation held with member States on the issue-based coalitions defined for the region (climate change and resilience, crime and violence, equitable growth, governance and institutions, human mobility and financing for development) and the presentation of the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean during the event, the United Nations system reiterated its readiness to continue to be at the forefront of supporting member States to leverage its capacity at all levels and provide more ambition, solutions and actions to speed up progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and to deliver high-quality outputs to address the socioeconomic emergency while fostering a transition to a transformative development model and exploring new partnerships with regional and subregional organizations.

29. Furthermore, ECLAC has also worked very closely with the United Nations entities to support member States in addressing the multidimensional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has issued a series of joint publications with policy recommendations on sectoral areas that are available from the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹³

30. ECLAC and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) prepared the joint policy report entitled “Health and the economy: A convergence needed to address COVID-19 and retake the path of sustainable development in Latin America and the

¹³ <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19>.

Caribbean”,¹⁴ which emphasizes that the economic reopening phase must be gradual and based on health protocols that allow the virus and its spread to be controlled, in addition to protecting workers, especially health workers.

31. In relation to employment, ECLAC and the International Labour Organization (ILO) produced a bulletin¹⁵ on the employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean and the joint publication entitled “Employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Work in times of pandemic: the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)”,¹⁶ in which they examine labour market trends in the region, including policies implemented by countries to protect formal and informal employment, income and the production sector, and highlight the importance of unemployment insurance. The publication also contains recommendations for transitioning economies towards greater formality and highlights good practices from the region on the simplification of procedures, improved data management and greater oversight, along with incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises. Both entities also prepared the document entitled “The COVID-19 pandemic could increase child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean. Technical Note N.1”,¹⁷ in which they discuss the strong negative correlation between the economic situation and the incidence of child labour.

32. ECLAC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization prepared the joint publication on “Education in the time of COVID-19”,¹⁸ which is aimed at shedding light on how measures adopted in response to the crisis will have various consequences on educational communities in the short and medium terms. They also issued a joint report entitled “Social protection for families with children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean: an imperative to address the impact of COVID-19”,¹⁹ in which they highlight the importance of social protection for families with children and adolescents and draw attention to the need to continue to strengthen the inclusion of a universal and child-sensitive perspective in the region’s social protection systems.

33. ECLAC, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children also

¹⁴ ECLAC, “Health and the economy: a convergence needed to address COVID-19 and retake the path of sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean”, July 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45841-health-and-economy-convergence-needed-address-covid-19-and-retake-path>.

¹⁵ ECLAC and ILO, “Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Employment trends in an unprecedented crisis: policy challenges”, November 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46309-employment-situation-latin-america-and-caribbean-employment-trends-unprecedented>.

¹⁶ ECLAC and ILO, “Employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Work in times of pandemic: the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)”, May 2020, available at <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/45582>.

¹⁷ ECLAC and ILO, “The COVID-19 pandemic could increase child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean. Technical Note N.1”, June 2020, available at <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/45684>.

¹⁸ ECLAC and UNESCO, “Education in the time of COVID-19”, August 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45905-education-time-covid-19>.

¹⁹ ECLAC and UNESCO, “Social protection for families with children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean: an imperative to address the impact of COVID-19”, December 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46490-social-protection-families-children-and-adolescents-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

prepared joint guidance and policy recommendations to address the specific issue of violence against children and adolescents during the pandemic.²⁰

34. In relation to gender equality, ECLAC and UN-Women produced the joint publication entitled “Care in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19: towards comprehensive systems to strengthen response and recovery”,²¹ in which they emphasize the importance of the construction of comprehensive care systems for sustainable development and welfare in the region as a key element for the socioeconomic recovery. A specific focus on the situation of domestic workers in the region was also presented in the joint publication from UN-Women, ILO and ECLAC entitled “Domestic workers in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19 crisis”.²² IOM and ECLAC prepared a document on the specific challenges faced by migrant women in South America in the context of the pandemic,²³ and ECLAC and UNFPA prepared a document on the “Risks of the COVID-19 pandemic for the exercise of women’s sexual and reproductive rights”.²⁴ Other joint policy recommendations and updated data and statistics about the situation of women’s autonomy in the region have been produced with the support of strategic partners and are included in the ECLAC Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁵

35. To address the situation of those that are furthest behind, ECLAC, jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UN-Women, ILO, UNFPA, PAHO, UNDP and the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, and as part of the 2020–2022 cooperation programme of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and German Agency for International Cooperation, prepared a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the indigenous peoples of Latin America,²⁶ presenting both States’ responses and those of indigenous peoples themselves to the crisis, as well as a series of recommendations to include these populations in the management of and the response to the pandemic, putting their collective rights at the centre. ECLAC and UNFPA also addressed the situation of people of African descent in the region²⁷ and the challenges that they face, which reflect the structural inequalities and racial discrimination that persist in the region.

36. ECLAC and FAO jointly prepared a report entitled “Preventing the COVID-19 crisis from becoming a food crisis: urgent measures against hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean” and a bulletin series on the analysis of and responses to the effects

²⁰ ECLAC, UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, “Violence against children and adolescents in the time of COVID-19”, December 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46486-violence-against-children-and-adolescents-time-covid-19>.

²¹ ECLAC and UN-Women, “Care in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19: towards comprehensive systems to strengthen response and recovery”, August 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45917-care-latin-america-and-caribbean-during-covid-19-towards-comprehensive-systems>.

²² ECLAC, ILO and UN-Women, “Domestic workers in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19 crisis”, June 2020, <https://www.cepal.org/en/node/51574>.

²³ See <https://oig.cepal.org/en/node/1641>.

²⁴ ECLAC and UNFPA, “Risks of the COVID-19 pandemic for the exercise of women’s sexual and reproductive rights”, December 2020, available at https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46508/1/S2000905_en.pdf.

²⁵ Available at <https://oig.cepal.org/en>.

²⁶ Available at <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46543-impacto-covid-19-pueblos-indigenas-america-latina-abya-yala-la-invisibilizacion>.

²⁷ See <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46191-afrodescendientes-la-matriz-la-desigualdad-social-america-latina-retos-la>.

of COVID-19 on food systems, which offers policy recommendations for sustaining demand and administering the food trade during the emergency.

37. The United Nations Office for Project Services and ECLAC established a regional observatory on prices for medicines recommended by WHO for the treatment of COVID-19. The observatory provides immediate information for the public sector and civil society in the region, allowing the comparison of international prices from official sources in 21 countries, with the aim of establishing a range of fair market prices in order to reduce the risk of corruption and fraud.

38. With the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), ECLAC supported the Latin American and Caribbean Network on the Environmental Footprint of Coffee, which provided technical assistance and capacity-building on life cycle approaches to improving resource efficiency in the production of coffee in 12 countries. Its ongoing partnership with the European Union facilitates the consideration of inputs from the coffee sector in the European Union's export regulations.

39. In November 2020, ECLAC, UNEP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights jointly organized a regional virtual forum to address challenges and opportunities in the defence of rights and the environment in South America. The forum served to position regional priorities of environmental defenders at the global level and to further disseminate the conclusions of the forum through various United Nations platforms, including the second meeting of the signatory countries to the Escazú Agreement, organized by ECLAC in December 2020.

40. At the end of 2020, upon requests received by the Presidents of Guatemala and Honduras, the ECLAC damage and loss assessment methodology was conducted to assess the economic, social and environmental impacts of Hurricanes Eta and Iota in both countries, to respond to the need to estimate the financial costs of the disaster, with a view to determining the amount of sector-specific funding needed for recovery and reconstruction efforts. These damage and loss assessments were carried out jointly by ECLAC, the resident coordinators' offices and the United Nations country teams of those two countries, as well as other United Nations entities, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Joint training courses to build the capacity of government officials in the region on the damage and loss assessment methodology were conducted by ECLAC, PAHO and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2020, and a joint publication was also prepared by ECLAC and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, entitled "COVID-19 pandemic: an opportunity for a systemic approach to disaster risk for the Caribbean".²⁸

B. Collaboration with other regional commissions

41. The five regional commissions have published a document entitled "COVID-19: towards an inclusive, resilient and green recovery – building back better through regional cooperation",²⁹ with seven key messages for an effective recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. In the document, the commissions highlight the role of

²⁸ ECLAC and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, "COVID-19 pandemic: an opportunity for a systemic approach to disaster risk for the Caribbean", March 2021, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46732-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pandemic-opportunity-systemic-approach-disaster-risk>.

²⁹ Available at <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/COVID-19BuildingBackBetterThroughRegionalCooperationFINAL.pdf>.

multilateralism and regional action in laying the basis for longer-term cooperation on issues that will likely grow more acute after the pandemic has receded.

42. During 2020 and 2021, ECLAC continued to work jointly with other regional commissions on the implementation of United Nations Development Account projects. ECLAC has been participating in all five short-term projects of the Development Account initiated in 2020 to support member States in addressing the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing the perspective of the Latin American and Caribbean region. Also in the context of the Development Account, ECLAC has been coordinating, jointly with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), an interregional project entitled “Inter-regional cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”, which is implemented jointly with all the regional commissions and UN-Habitat. Implementation of the project began in 2020, with the COVID-19 outbreak, and all implementing entities took coordinated action to ensure a new approach to activities and outputs delivery. The political and institutional commitment of most target countries and cities was secured to ensure the project’s development and implementation. Significant progress has been made in the Latin American and Caribbean region in developing regional methodologies to: (a) identify gaps; and (b) support policymakers in developing vertically and horizontally integrated coherent policies.

43. During 2020, joint work has also been carried out between ECLAC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, to assemble global input-output tables. This new tool aims at deepening the knowledge of interregional production networks, promoting the development of value chains and contributing to the formulation of policies for increased integration between both regions.

C. Partnerships with regional and subregional organizations

44. A series of key initiatives to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals were conducted to jointly address the pandemic while keeping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in sight. ECLAC presented to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States a study on the economic impact of COVID-19,³⁰ along with recommendations and proposals for confronting the pandemic.

45. In relation to responsible consumption and production, the report entitled “Latin American economic outlook (LEO) 2020: digital transformation for building back better”,³¹ jointly produced by the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, ECLAC, the Development Bank of Latin America and the European Commission, highlighted information on digital transformation to help the countries of the region to emerge from the crisis by stimulating business innovation and new consumption models.

46. In relation to health, in support of General Assembly resolution [75/130](#), entitled “Global health and foreign policy: strengthening health system resilience through

³⁰ ECLAC, “Report on the economic impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Latin America and the Caribbean”, May 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45603-report-economic-impact-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

³¹ Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Bank of Latin America, ECLAC and the European Commission, “Latin American Economic Outlook (LEO) 2020: Digital Transformation for Building Back Better”, September 2020, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46030-latin-american-economic-outlook-2020-digital-transformation-building-back-better>.

affordable health care for all”, the Inter-American Task Force on Non-Communicable Diseases, led by PAHO, WHO, the Organization of American States, ECLAC, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, established a partnership to spur multisector collaboration on non-communicable diseases in the era of COVID-19 and issued a joint statement calling for the promotion of policies and interventions that support health-in-all-policies for non-communicable disease prevention and control across people’s lifespans – with equity – while reinforcing the role of health as an essential component of human capital.

47. Regarding food security and nutrition, the World Food Programme, ECLAC and the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama finalized studies on the cost of the double burden of malnutrition in terms of social and economic impact in various countries of the region. The studies highlighted the high cost of malnutrition and its impact on productivity, health and education and made a case for governments to invest in the prevention of and response to malnutrition.

48. With respect to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, ECLAC and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States started implementing the memorandum of understanding signed in May 2020 establishing a framework for enhanced cooperation and understanding to assist the Organisation’s member States, including through the Escazú Agreement. Under that framework, the generation, collection and systematization of environmental information in the Eastern Caribbean will be enhanced by creating a regional environmental information system. In July 2020, ECLAC participated in the Organisation’s seventh council of ministers on environmental sustainability and called for transformative, structural change to a development model that advocates for equality, leaving no one behind. In addition, ECLAC, jointly with the German Agency for International Cooperation, the Inter-American Development Bank and UNDP, organized the regional workshop of the 2020 Latin American regional platform on low-emission development strategies, which offered an opportunity to make progress on the regional discussion regarding the design of long-term strategies towards net zero emissions and green recovery, the ambition of the nationally determined contributions and low-emission resilient mobility and transportation. One of the key results of that cooperation includes the nationally determined contributions tool, to monitor and update information on the status of the nationally determined contributions in the region. The tool will be managed by the regional platform and is fed with information coming from ECLAC, UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank.

49. ECLAC joined the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and other United Nations entities by signing a memorandum of understanding in February 2021. It also became a member of the interim coordination committee for the sustainable management, use and protection of shared living marine resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil shelf large marine ecosystems, which is aimed at supporting a multilevel institutional approach to coastal and ocean ecosystem management in the wider Caribbean.

50. In relation to data and statistics, ECLAC, in collaboration with the Statistics Division and the CARICOM secretariat, is implementing a three-year project (2020–2023) to enhance the subregional capacity, production and use of climate change and disaster indicators in the Caribbean small island developing States to improve policy coherence in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in synergy with the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

51. Regarding South-South cooperation and partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals, ECLAC and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) jointly drafted a study on South-South cooperation in Paraguay and Uruguay and held an expert group meeting in November 2020 to further explore the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation to advance the 2030 Agenda while recovering from the pandemic. The participation of the ECLAC Executive Secretary in the 56th ordinary meeting of the MERCOSUR Common Market Council in July 2020 was also an opportunity to advocate for deepening regional integrational for emerging from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and move towards more sustainable and resilient trade.

52. Under the scope of the ECLAC Caribbean First strategy and in order to address the specific vulnerabilities faced by the associate members of the regional commission, during the 4th meeting of the Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development, the CARICOM secretariat, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Association of Caribbean States joined the ECLAC call to discuss the situation of those members in the very first high-level meeting on the challenges faced by the 14 associate members of ECLAC in implementing the 2030 Agenda while recovering from the pandemic,³² in which it was underlined that the pandemic presents an opportunity to redefine established norms and realign priorities while driving the necessary transformation towards a more resilient and dynamic development framework.

³² ECLAC, “ECLAC’s Associate Member Countries Call for Cooperation and Support towards a Resilient COVID-19 Recovery and Readvancing the 2030 Agenda”, press release, 15 March 2021, available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/pressreleases/eclacs-associate-member-countries-call-cooperation-and-support-towards-resilient-covid>.