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## Regional cooperation

# Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023–2024

## 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 2023–2024.



## Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023–2024

### *Summary*

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) continued to support member States by performing its three main functions: its think tank and normative function, through the provision of evidence-based analysis and the formulation of policy recommendations; its operational function through the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building activities; and its convening function through the organization of meetings of intergovernmental and subsidiary bodies.

During the reporting period, the Latin America and Caribbean region experienced low growth, a slowdown in job creation and persistently high levels of inequality and informality, which translated into uneven and insufficient progress with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, the Commission increasingly focused on strategies to transform the region's development model by giving priority to strategic sectors that can drive forward productive transformation and achieve higher economic growth with sustainability and inclusion and, hence, the synergistic implementation of multiple Goals. The Commission presented these sectoral proposals at high-level events at the regional and global levels, in some cases to also foster investment opportunities. In order to help operationalize accelerated implementation of the Goals through the six key transitions identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, ECLAC also carried out deep-dive studies in 10 countries and devised a methodological approach to support their implementation in country-level policies and through the United Nations regional inter-agency architecture.

The Commission also progressed with the analysis of financing for development challenges in a region predominantly comprised of middle-income countries, including to address climate financing, rising debt and debt servicing pressures that have become a source of distress with regard to development. A key result during the reporting period was the establishment of the Regional Platform for Tax Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, which ECLAC supported in its role as technical secretariat, to foster regional cooperation on tax matters and to mobilize financing for development. Moreover, in alignment with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, ECLAC advanced with the development of its data ecosystem, including through the addition of new and innovative data and information assets and the fostering of regional cooperation on data and statistics, including in relation to time-use data to monitor gender inequalities.

## I. Introduction

1. Latin America and the Caribbean confronts a context of low growth, persistently high inequalities, intensifying climate change impacts and a volatile global backdrop of rising geoeconomic fragmentation and the reconfiguration of supply chains and global trade dynamics. Only 22 per cent of Sustainable Development Goal targets for which data are available are expected to be met by 2030, while 46 per cent are moving in the right direction but require acceleration and 32 per cent are backsliding. Against that background, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has identified three development traps the region needs to overcome to find a sustainable development path. First, there is the trap of low growth. Average growth in the region in the decade from 2014 to 2023 was only 0.8 per cent, and for 2024 ECLAC estimates place regional growth at 1.9 per cent. Moreover, during the same period, employment growth stood at a historical low, with job creation at the lowest levels since the 1950s. Second, there is the trap of high inequality, which is also expressed in limited social mobility and cohesion. Although levels of poverty and extreme poverty have returned to levels similar to those observed before the pandemic, more than 180 million people still live in poverty, 70 million of them in extreme poverty. The participation of women in the labour force is around 50 per cent, remaining much lower than that of men (75 per cent), and women devote over three times as much time to domestic and care work as men do. Third, the trap of weak institutional and governance capacities weakens the effectiveness of addressing the first two traps and contributes to rising polarization and reduced trust in institutions.

2. Furthermore, the rising development distress provoked by high debt levels and debt-servicing pressures calls attention to the urgency of solutions to address financing for development needs. Interest payments as a percentage of tax revenues have increased over the past decade, in some countries exceeding 20 per cent and reaching as high as 30 per cent. In addition to necessary reforms of the international financial architecture, including with regard to debt treatment and scaling financing from development banks, enhanced international tax cooperation, the combating of illicit financial flows and improvement of the redistributive effects of tax systems remain priorities across the region.

3. ECLAC has sustained its support to member States through thought leadership and policy advice, technical cooperation and intergovernmental convening to address development traps and support the acceleration of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes deepening work on transformative sectors aligned with a new generation of productive development policies that enable the synergistic implementation of multiple Goals across the economic, social and environmental pillars of development. It also includes deep-dive analysis and the devising of methodological approaches on key transitions for the acceleration of achievement of the Goals. In addition, ECLAC provided technical support on mobilizing financing for development, including by fostering regional cooperation on tax matters and climate financing. The Commission continued to build its data and knowledge ecosystems to enhance the monitoring of the Goals, as well as the territorial dimensions of productive development and digital transformation to support evidence-based policies.

## II. Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region

### A. Deep-dive analysis and methodological framework for the six key transitions for the acceleration of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

4. Against a backdrop of slow and uneven progress with regard to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region, ECLAC carried out in-depth analysis of opportunities for transformative change that generate traction on multiple Goals, building on the six transitions to support acceleration of progress towards achieving the Goals identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The six transitions relate to food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection; and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. ECLAC prepared 10 country studies covering all subregions, which provided a review of trends related to the implementation of Goal targets in each country, highlighting which Goals were on track and which ones required additional effort. The studies also contained analyses of the macroeconomic and fiscal conditions shaping implementation of the Goals, accompanied by deep-dive analyses of the state of each transition.

5. In addition, ECLAC dedicated a chapter to how each transition can accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in its annual progress report presented at seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, entitled *The Challenge of Accelerating the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Transitions towards Sustainability*. In addition to analysing how each transition supports implementation of the Goals in the region, the report maps their current and desired scenarios and outlines three action areas for their implementation. These include strategies, plans, policies and programmes for each desired pathway; institutional arrangements; and investment needs, providing a view of the necessary public policy interventions, as well as partnership and financing requirements.

6. Having a clear methodology for analysing and operationalizing the six transitions offers opportunities for their implementation at the country level, including through technical support from ECLAC and other United Nations partners, and in the framework of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC presented this methodological approach at the meeting of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group principals held on 1 May 2024 as an example of regional efforts to support Sustainable Development Goal acceleration pathways.

### B. Thought leadership to advance the 2030 Agenda

7. ECLAC sustained its analytical work on key dimensions of the region's sustainable development, including its annual flagship publications, which in the reporting period included: (a) *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*; (b) *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean: Financing a Sustainable Transition – Investment for Growth and Climate Change Action*; (c) *Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2023: Labour Inclusion as a Key Axis of Inclusive Social Development*; (d) *Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*; (e) *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*; (f) *Demographic Observatory 2023: Population Dynamics in Latin America and Their Effects on the Labour Force*; and

(g) *Fiscal Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2024: Fiscal Policy for Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change.*

8. As a highlight, the 2023 edition of the *Economic Survey* presented estimates for six vulnerable countries in Central America and the Caribbean on the economic cost of climate shocks up to 2050, which will reach between 9 per cent and 12 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). In order to counter these losses, countries would require additional annual investments of between 5.3 per cent and 10.9 per cent of GDP. The report provides an analysis of financing strategies to promote climate investment as part of a broader strategy to propel economic growth and highlights the role of central banks in scaling climate finance flows in the region's countries.

9. With regard to mainstreaming a gender perspective in financing and supporting related actions at the country level, ECLAC has played a pivotal role in providing new insights and analysis on payment methods and household indebtedness with a gender perspective. In this regard, it contributed to the formulation of the Parenting Index and the Regulation on the Prevention and Resolution of Consumer Overindebtedness in Argentina, aimed at enhancing the economic autonomy of women. These efforts were informed by a comprehensive understanding of the financing needs of households headed by single mothers, as highlighted in the "Primer informe sobre endeudamientos, géneros y cuidados en la Argentina" (First report on debt, gender and care in Argentina). Such initiatives shed light on the challenges faced by women in managing household finances and underscore the importance of addressing issues like economic violence and ensuring equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities. The support delivered by ECLAC contributed to the publication in the *Official Bulletin of the Republic of Argentina* of provision 11/2023, in which the Regulation on the Prevention and Resolution of Consumer Overindebtedness was approved.

### **C. Promoting inclusive social development and contributions to global initiatives**

10. In view of the region's persistently high poverty and inequality indicators and the slowdown of employment creation, ECLAC placed emphasis on the promotion of inclusive social development policies. Twenty per cent of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean has no access to social protection and approximately 49 per cent of workers are in the informal sector. Technological transformation has translated into changes in labour demand, and available information on digital platform workers shows their limited access to social protection. In its 2023 edition of the *Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean*, ECLAC sought to raise awareness among member States of the challenges related to labour inclusion as a key axis for social development and delivered technical assistance to strengthen national capacities in the design and implementation of policies aimed at more universal and sustainable social protection systems.

11. With the objective of setting the stage for the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 2025, social development authorities of 10 countries of the region came together in March 2024 to establish a unified regional agenda and address structural gaps in social protection at the "Dialogue on inclusive social development policies in the region", convened by ECLAC at its headquarters in Santiago. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC addressed the region's critical challenges linked to low economic growth and high inequality and stressed practical governance improvements to enhance the region's social protection systems.

12. In April 2024, ECLAC, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), convened a high-level seminar on the topic "Towards the Second

World Summit for Social Development: enhancing global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda”. The event featured a keynote presentation by the Deputy Secretary-General and remarks by the President of the Economic and Social Council, and fostered an exchange between the principals of ECLAC (acting on behalf of the five regional commissions), ILO, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization with regard to the key social development challenges and topics to address at the Second World Summit for Social Development. The event also referred to the outcomes of the special meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “The future of work: towards a productive, inclusive and sustainable global society”, convened at ECLAC headquarters in January 2024.

#### **D. Addressing the needs of countries in special situations**

13. ECLAC contributed to the regional preparatory activities of both global conferences focused on countries in special situations. For the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024, it prepared a regional report on progress in implementing the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which was a key input into the regional preparatory meeting for the Caribbean region convened with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Moreover, ECLAC has been the lead agency in the management and substantive preparations for the interactive dialogue on “Enhancing critical forms of financing and aid effectiveness through collaborative partnerships: a conversation”, one of five interactive dialogues being held as part of the official programme of the Conference.

14. For the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, ECLAC provided inputs and contributed to the high-level Latin America regional review meeting on the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, convened in July 2023 in Asunción.

15. Concerning its ongoing efforts to scale financing for adaptation and resilience, ECLAC serves as administrator for the Climate Adaptation and Comprehensive Response to Natural Disasters Fund. The Fund was launched by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in September 2023, on the margins of the high-level week of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, with ministerial participation from the region, including by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the pro tempore presidency of CELAC and authorities from the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### **E. Support for member States in enhancing implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and reporting at all levels**

16. ECLAC provides direct support to member States to enhance local, national and regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for the preparation of the voluntary national review processes in the region through its community of practice for voluntary national reviews for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The community of practice includes a diverse group of government officials, researchers and technicians, along with representatives of ECLAC and the United Nations system, including resident coordinator offices. Representatives of civil society, youth, the

private sector and academia also participate in sessions tailored to diverse stakeholder groups, in addition to local authorities, parliamentarians and other key actors for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The topics of the monthly discussions respond to the demands of the countries of the region and include a wide variety of topics related to the Goals, such as the localization of the 2030 Agenda, meaningful multi-stakeholder participation, means of implementation, data and statistics, and climate finance. Between December 2019 and February 2024, 56 virtual sessions of the community of practice were held to support the countries of the region in the process of preparing the voluntary national reviews and implementing the 2030 Agenda. The community of practice represents an informal and trusted space for peer-to-peer exchange and constructive feedback in the preparation stages of the reviews, and ECLAC support is highly valued by the countries of the region in the presentation of their reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Eight out of the 38 countries that will present their voluntary national reviews at the 2024 meeting of the forum are in the Latin America and Caribbean region: Belize and Brazil will present their reviews for the second time; Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras and Peru for the third time; and Colombia and Mexico for the fourth time.

17. Within the framework of the seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, held at ECLAC headquarters from 15 to 18 April 2024, the Commission, jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized a regional workshop on accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the role of voluntary national and local reviews, to strengthen the knowledge and capacities of Latin American and Caribbean countries in the formulation and preparation of their voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews as part of their national strategies to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda, as well as to enhance vertical integration across the local, national, regional and global levels.

18. The workshop was complemented by a side event at which the ECLAC publication entitled “Territorialización de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) en América Latina y el Caribe: guía para la elaboración de exámenes locales voluntarios a nivel subnacional” (Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean: guide for the preparation of voluntary local reviews at the subnational level) was launched to guide subnational and local authorities in the process of formulating voluntary local reviews and to support local government efforts related to local implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This work builds on valuable lessons learned from various collaboration streams between ECLAC and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the localization of the Goals in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

## **F. Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean**

19. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean is helping the regional United Nations development system to identify and create common regional strategies and messages, leveraging its assets to better deliver demand-driven support to member States and stepping up efforts to provide integrated and coordinated support from the United Nations. Translating global commitments to country-level action to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through issue-based coalitions and working groups, ECLAC has strengthened its partnerships with different agencies, funds and programmes by co-chairing two issue-based coalitions: on equitable growth and financing for development; and on human mobility, in addition to the knowledge management hub steering committee

and the working group on Sustainable Development Goal data and statistics. Each year the Platform prepares an annual report on system-wide results that reflects inter-agency efforts at the regional level to support member States in achieving the Goals, which is presented during a special session of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

20. Since 2023, the Regional Collaborative Platform has received 52 requests for support from 14 resident coordinators and United Nations country teams across the region. In response, the Platform's issue-based coalitions provided support through the coalitions on climate change and resilience; equitable growth and financing for development; governance for peace, justice and strong institutions; and human mobility. Furthermore, thematic working groups provided support to foster gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, support populations left behind and highlight the needs of young people.

21. To further facilitate engagement between the regional and national levels, and to advance the implementation of the reform of the United Nations development system at the regional level, the updated Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean launched its website to facilitate knowledge exchange, inter-agency collaboration and support, and to enable access to the regional roster of expertise. The website was the result of a joint effort led by ECLAC and UNDP through the Platform's knowledge management hub steering committee.

22. Resident Coordinators participate in meetings of the Regional Collaborative Platform to provide first-hand information on specific country situations. In November 2023, the Resident Coordinator of Honduras gave an overview of the implementation of the six transitions in that country, and in April 2024 the Resident Coordinator of Haiti shared an update on the situation in that nation. In-person annual meetings between members of the Platform and all resident coordinators in the region also take place in the framework of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development to foster collaboration and identify areas of support.

23. The roster of expertise has also been developed to ensure agile response from the Regional Collaborative Platform in facilitating demand-driven integrated policy advice, normative support and technical capacity for regional and subregional organizations, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

24. The working group on Sustainable Development Goal data and statistics, co-chaired by ECLAC, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), continued to support national statistical offices in the follow-up to and review of the implementation the 2030 Agenda, as well as to strengthen national capacities on data analysis. The working group pursued additional funding to finalize an online information system for collecting data on national statistical capacities related to Goal indicators. It also met during the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC to assess progress and plan next steps.

25. ECLAC strengthened its partnerships with different agencies, funds and programmes to prepare joint knowledge products, such as policy briefs on the socioeconomic impact of the ongoing crises and related policy responses on issues like migration, employment, youth and financing for development. For instance, ECLAC and ILO released a new edition of their joint report entitled "Employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean", focusing on the inclusion of young people in the labour market and the redistribution of care work. In its role as co-chair of the issue-based coalition on human mobility, ECLAC, along with other participating agencies, responded to the needs and requests of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, including those in Colombia and Mexico, by providing continued information and analysis, and regularly disseminating



comprehensive data on routes, trends and needs, as well as crafted tangible tools for this purpose, including the issuance of quarterly reports on mixed movements, compiling data from diverse sources and launching an online dashboard with real-time access to information on people on the move.

26. As a follow-up to the requests made by the resident coordinators of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the issue-based coalition on human mobility also organized a meeting with focal points from United Nations country teams and a wide range of United Nations colleagues to support the efforts of country teams with a joint analysis of the challenges and opportunities in the border area of the two countries. It also provided technical support for the development of a comprehensive strategic framework and helped develop a communication and advocacy plan.

27. In recent years, ECLAC has enhanced its partnership with United Nations entities through participation in projects funded by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund implemented jointly with several United Nations country teams, including in Argentina, Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago.

28. ECLAC systematically invites all resident coordinators, representatives of the Development Coordination Office and all regional directors of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to participate in all subsidiary bodies and intergovernmental meetings for which ECLAC acts as technical secretariat and in which policy recommendations are discussed with the ministries. Three subsidiary bodies of ECLAC are already jointly organized with other United Nations entities to foster synergies and offer integrated support to Member States: the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, with UN-Women; the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with UNFPA; and the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with UNDP.

## **G. Outcomes of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and preparations for the Summit of the Future**

29. To highlight the multi-stakeholder character of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, the official activities of its seventh meeting were preceded by meetings of the Mechanism for Civil Society Participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, and of the Forum of children, adolescents and youth of Latin America and the Caribbean. Representatives of both Forums delivered plenary statements based on the results of their respective meetings.

30. Member States attending the seventh meeting of the Forum adopted conclusions and recommendations in which they emphasized, among other issues, the need to significantly enhance access to international climate financial flows, including to foster the resilience of the most vulnerable groups.

31. An interactive session on the Summit of the Future was also convened with the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary General for Policy. Several ministers for foreign affairs and high authorities from the region intervened, highlighting that Summit outcomes must help accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including in relation to financing for development, gender equality, development metrics that go beyond GDP, climate action and digital cooperation.

### **III. Strengthening the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

#### **A. Data ecosystems to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals and build country capacities**

32. In accordance with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, and the United Nations 2.0 quintet of change initiative, ECLAC progressed with the consolidation of its regional data and knowledge management ecosystem as part of the implementation of its data strategy, which is characterized by the use of open-source formats and interoperability. This includes the development of web-based data visualization and dissemination platforms and the addition of several new data assets, including geospatial data.

33. Geospatial information management is positioned at the highest level on the United Nations agenda. The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, reporting to the Economic and Social Council, provides guidelines for countries to strengthen the management of geospatial information and support their priority issues, with a special focus on development and its social, economic and environmental dimensions. In 2023, ECLAC launched the geospatial data portal (CEPALGEO), which was designed and implemented to support these guidelines and promote the generation of geospatial knowledge in the countries of the region. The data portal is composed of a set of technological tools – catalogues, viewers and geospatial services – that allow for discovery of and remote access to a wide range of geospatial information products, which can be used to support decision-making and public policies.

34. In partnership with the Centre for Mathematical Modelling of the University of Chile, and with support from the European Commission, in 2023 ECLAC also launched the Satellite Monitoring System for Greenhouse Gases. The System provides access to information on trends related to the flows and concentrations of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases of anthropogenic origin at the regional, subregional, national and urban levels. It enables comparative analyses of the impacts of climate policies and actions to mitigate gas and particle pollution at different territorial levels.

35. In September 2023, ECLAC also launched the Portal of Inequalities in Latin America, a platform designed to disseminate information on different aspects of inequality in the countries of the region. The platform, launched during the twelfth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, uses data visualizations to showcase inequalities and provides descriptions of the construction of the indicators and the interpretation of their results. The portal focuses on the most characteristic inequalities in the region, covering issues such as income distribution, access to employment and social protection, and access to education, housing and basic services.

36. Regarding the dissemination of information about the region's digital transformation and the progress of national digital agendas, in February 2024 ECLAC launched the Digital Development Observatory, aimed at producing, gathering and analysing relevant data and information to identify trends, evaluate progress and support the formulation and implementation of policies on digital transformation in the region. The Observatory contains more than 100 indicators and qualitative information in 12 thematic areas of digital transformation, including connectivity and digital inclusion, businesses and productive digital transformation, e-commerce and digital services, digital skills, digital government and artificial intelligence.

37. ECLAC also sustained its intergovernmental convening and technical assistance role in several domains of data and statistics development at the regional level. For example, at the twelfth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, held in September 2023, authorities from national statistical offices in the region released a statement on the use of data held by the private sector for official statistical purposes. In that statement, they encouraged partnerships with the private sector and addressed the issue of safeguarding data privacy and confidentiality. Also in September 2023, ECLAC hosted the twenty-first International Experts Meeting on Time Use and Unpaid Work, which focused on time-use surveys to increase the visibility of women's economic contributions and highlighted the inequalities in the current gender division of labour in the household.

38. ECLAC continued to provide technical support to countries of the region in population estimations, the undertaking of census processes and the use and analysis of census data to inform public policies. Technical assistance was delivered to national statistical offices and included recommendations for population estimation, planning and road maps for census processes, and communication strategies for data dissemination, contributing to the refinement of census data and the analysis of census data variables. The implementation of the census data processing methodology of ECLAC, using specialized tools like the Census and Survey Processing System (CSPPro) and Retrieval of Data for Small Areas by Microcomputer (REDATAM), further improved national institutional capacities and skills in the region, along with thematic consistency and coherence analyses. Collaborative efforts between ECLAC and national statistical offices facilitated the exchange of expertise and methodologies, leading to advancements in demographic analysis and census data management across the region. These efforts reflect a concerted push towards improving statistical capacities and promoting evidence-based policymaking in the region.

## **B. Mobilizing financing for development**

39. Ongoing changes in international tax cooperation may have impacts in the mobilization of domestic resources, and new tax regulations developed in international forums do not necessarily address the concerns of countries of the region. In this regard, Colombia, with the support of Brazil and Chile, created the Regional Platform for Tax Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Platform was launched in July 2023 to increase coordination among countries to build regional positions for international tax cooperation, promote the region's concerns on international tax regulation and foster cooperation to enable the mobilization of domestic resources for development financing. ECLAC serves as technical secretariat and has provided technical assistance to set up and coordinate the Platform's working groups.

40. In May 2024, ECLAC convened the thirty-sixth meeting of the Regional Seminar on Fiscal Policy. Prior to the event, the Council of Treasury, Economy and Finance Ministers of the Regional Platform for Tax Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean was convened with the objective of reviewing regional priorities related to the international tax architecture, and the results of the Platform during its first year of operation under the pro tempore presidency of Colombia. Subsequent discussions held in the framework of the Regional Fiscal Seminar addressed the region's fiscal policy challenges in the context of low growth and climate change, debt sustainability and the strengthening of public revenue generation for development financing. It thus served as an opportunity to shape regional discussions ahead of the Summit of the Future and its proposals for reforming the international financial architecture. Moreover, ECLAC presented its annual report, the *Fiscal*

*Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean*, to support the deliberations of ministers of finance from across the region.

41. In its role as coordinator of the regional commissions, ECLAC led the consolidation of substantive inputs from the five regions at the request of the Ad Hoc Committee to Draft Terms of Reference for a United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation. The input focused on the specific issues to be addressed by a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation, providing a joint perspective of the regional commissions, in addition to analysis of the priorities of each region. ECLAC also represented the five regional commissions at the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up held in April 2024. At that event, ECLAC participated in a panel focused on domestic public resources and delivered a plenary statement in which it highlighted the perspectives of the commissions on the reforms of the international financial architecture, including in relation to debt distress in developing countries, the cost of financing and tax transparency, and outlined related actions to be addressed in the process leading up to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in 2025.

### **C. Introducing gender perspectives in technical assistance related to trade**

42. ECLAC is working to mainstream a gender perspective in international trade matters. In this regard, the Commission provided technical assistance to the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promoter (PROCOMER) on gender and trade, with the compilation of experiences and good practices for the promotion of women entrepreneurs in cross-border e-commerce activities, combined with support in the creation of a repository to gather solutions related to the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises in marketplaces. In Peru, technical assistance was provided to support programmes on export-oriented entrepreneurship led by women.

### **D. Promoting regional cooperation and country support regarding science, technology and innovation**

43. In April 2024, delegates from Latin American and Caribbean countries participating in the fourth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communication Technologies of ECLAC agreed on a regional cooperation agenda for the next two years, aimed at addressing the region's productivity challenges. The event, organized jointly with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia, brought together high-level authorities from 22 ECLAC member States and over 300 representatives from international organizations, the scientific community, academia, the private sector and civil society in Bogotá. As the main outcome of the Conference, the 2024–2025 workstreams outlined in the document “Science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive productive development: guidelines for 2024–2025” were approved, defining a biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities to support the formulation of science, technology and innovation policies. The approved workstreams include: instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development; governance of science, technology and innovation; territorial-focused science, technology and innovation; and sectoral and technological strategic agendas.

#### **IV. Spotlight on the promotion of a new generation of productive development policies to accelerate economic growth and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**

44. In response to the region's persistent development challenges, ECLAC has identified 10 areas for transformation: low, volatile and unsustainable economic growth that generates insufficient formal employment; high inequality with low social mobility and cohesion; considerable gaps in social protection; weak education and professional training systems; high gender inequality; environmentally unsustainable development patterns and the challenge of climate change; digital gaps; rising and increasingly diverse patterns of intraregional migration flows; insufficient regional integration; and limited fiscal space and the high cost of financing. Moreover, the weakness of governance and low institutional capacities cut across these 10 dimensions. To address the latter, enable effective action across the 10 transformations and overcome the trap of weak institutional and governance capacities, the Commission is placing increased emphasis on the required technical, operative, policy and foresight capabilities of institutions.

45. Moreover, to address the trap of low growth and inequality, ECLAC has identified a set of strategic productive sectors. If implemented at scale, these sectors carry the potential to produce synergies and multiplying effects towards higher, more sustained, and inclusive economic growth and Sustainable Development Goal acceleration. The dynamizing and transformational sectors include the energy transition and related industries; bioeconomy, sustainable agriculture and bioindustrialization; the circular economy; sustainable tourism; digital transformation; exports of Internet-enabled modern services; the care society and gender equality; the pharmaceutical, medical devices and life sciences industries; and the positioning of the region to take advantage of global value chain reconfiguration. If promoted at scale, these sectors can lead to a new growth strategy involving industry, services and a critical mass of green growth sectors associated with a big environmental push.

46. The proposals of ECLAC for this new growth strategy comprise not only what to do but also strategies focused on how to do it. This includes an emphasis on cluster initiatives and the territorial dimension of productive development policies. In order to illustrate the specifics of this approach and facilitate their implementation in the region, in December 2023 ECLAC launched an online platform for cluster and other territorial productive articulation initiatives. The platform features an interactive map of 258 cluster and other related initiatives, covering the activities of over 10,000 businesses in nine countries. It further serves as a tool for knowledge-sharing, good practices, research and regional productive integration. Moreover, the Commission has also progressed with initiatives linked with the strategic sectors, some examples of which are set out below.

##### **A. Promoting productive development policies and sustainable extractive practices with regard to critical energy transition minerals**

47. Considering the region's high reserves of minerals required for the green energy transition, ECLAC has carried out initiatives to analyse opportunities for sustainable productive development and provide technical assistance to member States. This includes the launch in July 2023 of the policy brief on "Lithium extraction and industrialization: opportunities and challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean",

which examines the governance, regulatory and fiscal regimes of the region's lithium-producing countries and provides policy guidelines to promote a productive development agenda centred on lithium and sustainable added value generation.

48. In addition, ECLAC provided technical assistance to the Permanent Technical Dialogue Forum on Lithium Innovation, Technological Development and Value Addition, which advocates for sustainable lithium exploitation practices, to introduce social and environmental safeguards and to prioritize community participation, reflecting a holistic approach to sustainable lithium exploitation in the region. The Forum made significant strides in fostering collaboration and innovation among its member countries (Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile and Mexico) through the implementation of the three axes of its biennial action plan, namely technological surveillance, exchange of experiences, and capacity development. The inclusion of Mexico as a member of the Forum in 2023 expanded the Forum's reach and potential, enriching discussions and cooperation efforts. Notably, the Forum facilitated technical studies, virtual workshops and field visits. These endeavours fostered knowledge exchange and facilitated on-the-ground learning through workshops and technical tours across lithium operations in Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Chile.

49. The organization of field visits to lithium extraction and refining operations in member countries, as well as to the first lithium-ion battery plant in Argentina, facilitated the dissemination of technical knowledge and fostered cooperation. The technical support provided by ECLAC contributed to bolstering technical knowledge and served as a catalyst for bilateral and regional (South-South) cooperation among member countries. Furthermore, strategic guidance was provided for developing a robust lithium supply chain in Mexico, accompanied by proposed methodologies for assessing business alliances in the sector. Proposed actions were aimed at enhancing capacities and strategic planning within the lithium sector of Mexico, with an emphasis on social and environmental considerations.

50. In addition, in October 2023, ECLAC played a crucial role in supporting the annual Mines Ministries of the Americas Conference, taking the lead by delivering a keynote presentation on the overall state of the mining sector in Latin America and the Caribbean. During this significant event, the Conference pledged to collaborate with ECLAC in the regional consultation for the United Nations Framework on Just Transitions for Critical Energy Transition Minerals.

51. ECLAC also contributed actively to the Working Group on Transforming the Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development, along with other regional entities. In 2023, this encompassed contributions to the development of a comprehensive toolkit tailored for resident coordinator offices, country teams and resident agencies, along with active participation in shaping the United Nations Framework on Just Transitions for Critical Energy Transition Minerals. In 2024, as coordinator of the regional commissions, ECLAC assumed a co-leading role in the Working Group, supporting the finalization of the Framework and assisting in the definition of a set of voluntary principles by the United Nations Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, which was announced by the Secretary-General at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and launched in April 2024.

## **B. Promoting digital agriculture and addressing food security challenges**

52. ECLAC is working on initiatives to support digital agriculture based on low-cost solutions and the coordination of public and private actors. In 2023, its work

contributed to the digitalization of the technical assistance system for coffee producers in Costa Rica through the development of an application for dissemination via WhatsApp in collaboration with the Coffee Institute of Costa Rica. ECLAC also contributed to the design of a pilot project in smart agriculture and digital irrigation in a community in Manabí, Ecuador.

53. Moreover, in response to rising food security challenges in the region, ECLAC produced a joint report with FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture entitled *The Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Americas: A Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean – 2023–2024*. The report, which contains proposals for mechanisms to strengthen regional cooperation and promote sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems, was presented at the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture of the Americas held in October 2023.

### **C. Regional cooperation and technical assistance to promote the region’s health manufacturing industry**

54. Following up on the implementation of the plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted by CELAC in 2021, ECLAC proposed establishing a health working group as part of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies convened by the Commission. Moreover, ECLAC is working on a technical assistance programme with four countries in the region on policy designs to strengthen the health manufacturing industry which has the following focus areas: (a) analysis of medical device production chains for the development of local suppliers in Argentina; (b) support in the preparation of the “Transforma salud” road map in Chile; (c) strengthening of the pharmaceutical production chain in Colombia; and (d) evaluation of and proposed improvements to the incentive for public purchases of pharmaceutical products in Uruguay. Moreover, ECLAC is collaborating with the Latin American Federation of the Pharmaceutical Industry on an initiative to strengthen capabilities for carrying out clinical trials in the region.

## **V. Leveraging partnerships for sustainable development**

### **A. Fostering regional cooperation and integration through partnerships with regional and subregional organizations**

55. Considering that regional integration is critical for the energy sector of member countries of the Central American Integration System, ECLAC is supporting the System in the formulation of regional energy compacts and the regional climate change adaptation and mitigation goals for the energy sector, which are based on and support the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Energy Strategy. Meetings were held with the Committee of Energy Directors of System member countries, and the Secretary-General of the System focused on developing a joint intersectoral agenda for the energy and environmental ministries and a road map for its implementation.

56. ECLAC is providing technical assistance to the States members of the Andean Community to generate international trade statistics by enterprise characteristics, which will deepen the knowledge of the sector and the impact of trade on national economies by identifying the size and business volumes, and describing the employed personnel, of such enterprises, and address topics such as digitalization and innovation processes.

57. ECLAC supported the Pacific Alliance in the development of the Observatory of Social Development of the Pacific Alliance, a dynamic space for information diffusion, analysis and the collective building of knowledge for governments, academia, the private sector and civil society about social development in States members of the Alliance. The Observatory's objective is to collect, systematize, manage and publish updated information on the social sector that contributes to the design and strengthening of public policies, improving the well-being of national populations and ensuring that the benefits of integration reach the entire community. It further addresses social development practices applied to face the health crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which in turn are aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development adopted at the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **B. Promoting interregional cooperation in strategic productive sectors**

58. In July 2023, representatives of ECLAC attended the third Summit of Heads of State and Government from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the European Union, held in Brussels. At the Summit, leaders of the two regional blocs committed to renewing their long-standing partnership and discussed, among other issues, collaboration in the areas of trade and investment, efforts to combat climate change, and justice and security for citizens, and adopted a declaration. ECLAC prepared a publication entitled "Investment and cooperation opportunities for Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union", which provides an analysis of areas of opportunity for boosting growth and transforming development models. These sectors range from the energy transition and e-mobility to the circular economy, the care society and sustainable tourism.

59. Regarding cooperation with Asia, a notable example is the collaboration of ECLAC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the framework of the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation fund to support the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in cross-border goods and services e-commerce in East Asia and Latin America. Additional activities within this framework include joint training activities on digital trade regulations in the two regions.

## **C. Partnerships with regional development banks**

60. Building on the partnership agreement signed in 2023 between ECLAC and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, the two institutions convened their annual conference in April 2024 under the theme "The challenge of scaling up and improving productive development policies in Latin America and the Caribbean". The event drew the participation of ministers of economy, trade and industry from countries of the region, along with experts from regional and multilateral organizations. Discussions focused on productive development policies in the region, the role of development banking in productive development agendas, territorial approaches to policymaking, cluster initiatives, the bridging of talent gaps for productive development and the fostering of cooperation between governments, the private sector and financial institutions to amplify the impact of development policies.

61. On the occasion of the visit of the President of the Brazilian Development Bank to ECLAC headquarters in September 2023 to deliver a presentation as part of the lecture series to commemorate the Commission's seventy-fifth anniversary, the two institutions signed a memorandum of understanding. Among other things, the



memorandum formalizes the creation of a new joint working group, named after economist Celso Furtado, with the aim of promoting research in areas such as sustainable productive transformation.

#### **D. Collaboration with parliamentarians**

62. In September 2023, ECLAC convened parliamentarians from across the region to launch the virtual platform and the legislative data monitor of the Parliamentary Observatory on Climate Change and Just Transition. The platform monitors relevant legislative activity and displays interactive data visualizations on economic sectors affected by legislative instruments, among other key indicators. It further enables information-sharing on the status of legislative developments and parliamentary proceedings on environmental matters in the region.

63. Moreover, in June 2024 ECLAC will convene the first Regional Conference of Parliamentary Committees of the Future to enhance strategic foresight capacities in the region, in close alignment with United Nations 2.0 and the foresight pillar of the quintet of change initiative. The Conference will bring together parliamentary experts and leaders on anticipatory governance and on incorporating foresight into legislative processes.

#### **E. Multi-stakeholder engagement in regional intergovernmental platforms**

64. In April 2024, in its capacity as technical secretariat, ECLAC convened the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Conference marked a significant step forward with the approval of an action plan on human rights defenders in environmental matters. The action plan introduces a strategic road map aimed at ensuring the protection of environmental defenders in support of the full execution of article 9 of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), which mandates that member States create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders. The Conference was characterized by a high level of attendance of diverse stakeholders. It attracted over 700 attendees, including delegations from 15 States parties and nine observer countries, indigenous representatives, youth activists and representatives of international organizations.

### **VI. Conclusions**

65. Insufficient progress with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and persistent development traps highlight the need to devise new strategies that enable the synergistic implementation of multiple Sustainable Development Goals. ECLAC will sustain efforts in this regard through the analysis and promotion of strategic sectors and productive development policies, along with a focus on the six key transitions for acceleration of achievement of the Goals through the provision of technical assistance to member States, upon request, and collaboration with the United Nation development system.

66. Against a backdrop of a shifting pattern of globalization, characterized by rising distrust of interdependencies, rivalry for technological supremacy and the reconfiguration of global supply chains, there will be growing pressure to adapt such development strategies to a new geoeconomic reality. Thus, fostering regional

cooperation and regional positions will increase in relevance and remains an important dimension of the work of ECLAC.

67. Furthermore, in the context of rapid technological change, demographic shifts, intensifying climate change and an international financial architecture that does not respond adequately to the current set of development risks, strengthened multilateral cooperation is of the essence. In this context, supporting the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit of the Future in the policy areas pertaining to the ECLAC mandate will be essential for the Commission's work.

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