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**Building back better from the coronavirus disease
(COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Regional contribution on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the fifth meeting of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in San José from 7 to 9 March 2022, to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

Summary

The [fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#) was held in San José, from 7 to 9 March 2022, and was chaired by Costa Rica and convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It was open to member States of the Forum, associate members of ECLAC, and observers, the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, United Nations resident coordinators, regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, academia, the private sector and civil society.

The meeting included the presentation of the document prepared by the secretariat “[A decade of action for a change of era](#)”, [fifth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean](#); a High-level dialogue on an innovative financing agenda for recovery; the commemoration of International Women’s Day; panel discussions on development in transition towards renewed international development cooperation; statistical, quantitative and territorial monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals; Natural disasters and the asymmetry of climate change in the Caribbean; Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for sustainable recovery: challenges and opportunities for Latin America and the Caribbean; Education and gender equality: human rights central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; as well as a peer-learning session entitled “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The contribution of the United Nations sustainable development system in Latin America and the Caribbean was also addressed at the meeting.

[Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations](#) of the Fifth Meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development were adopted.

The present report is based on the summary of the chair of the Forum.

Introduction

1. The [fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#) was held from 7 to 9 March 2022 in San José, chaired by the Government of Costa Rica and convened under the auspices of ECLAC. It was open to member States of the Forum, associate members of ECLAC, and observers, the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, United Nations resident coordinators, regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, academia, the private sector and civil society. The meeting counted on high participation from all relevant stakeholders: a total of 1243 participants (664 in person and 554 via zoom)¹.
2. Preparatory activities for the Forum included the Meeting of civil society from Latin America and the Caribbean (6 March) on the topic “Social dialogues as an instrument for the design, implementation and monitoring of inclusive and sustainable recovery policies”, a regional workshop on Voluntary National Reviews, organized by ECLAC in collaboration with DESA, the SDG Business Forum in Latin America and the Caribbean 2022, organized in collaboration with Global Compact, as well as 26 side events.
3. The annual meetings of the Deputy Secretary-General in her capacity as Chair of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean and another between her and all United Nations resident coordinators of the region were also held in the framework of the Forum.
4. At the opening session, moderated by Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of ECLAC, statements were made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Carlos Alvarado, President of Costa Rica.
5. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that in the prevailing context, that meeting of the Forum should represent a starting point to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He reviewed the milestones of the past two years while Costa Rica had been Chair: ongoing listening and dialogue; rapprochement with associate members; special attention to the Caribbean subregion, to raise awareness of its priorities and specific characteristics; transformation of the Committee on South-South Cooperation into a Regional Conference; and promotion of a recovery based on an innovative agenda, which calls for creation of innovative mechanisms to make the necessary financing more accessible for middle-income countries. The moderator called for the meeting’s discussions to be channelled into specific actions that would substantially improve people’s quality of life
6. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC indicated that after some difficult years, a face-to-face meeting could take place once more, despite the ongoing crisis caused by the pandemic and its health, social, environmental, economic and political repercussions, which continued to affect the world and particularly the region. She said that in the midst of global uncertainty, the Forum was again proving itself to be an indispensable meeting space to address the urgent need for effective multilateralism that supported regional integration and cooperation. ECLAC welcomed the fifth meeting to hear the lessons learned and challenges faced during the pandemic, as well as reflections on the recovery and on implementation of the 2030 Agenda, not only from authorities, but also from civil society and the private sector.
7. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations said that the global economy was still reeling from the havoc wrought by COVID-19 and had been further destabilized by the Ukraine conflict and the resulting wider geopolitical dynamics, which could threaten the prospects for recovery. The region was the hardest hit by COVID-19 and had many structural challenges, especially in the

¹ 55% of which were women.

Caribbean, which was tragically vulnerable to crises. Achieving the SDGs would not be easy, and getting back on track required policy changes aligned with the 2030 Agenda, strong institutions and governance for inclusive and sustainable growth. The Secretary General's initiative, Our Common Agenda, drove actions, and the Forum should be an occasion to chart an ambitious path towards development. Five priorities could inform discussions: (i) building resilience to the pandemic and preparedness for future (stronger health systems, investment in primary health care, vaccine production); (ii) scaling up and speeding up investments in the protection of people and ecosystems on the frontlines of the climate crisis, especially in the Caribbean, with cooperation with middle-income countries to redistribute liquidity, reform of the global debt architecture and support for innovative debt repayment instruments; (iii) supercharging just transitions in digital connectivity (the digital transition must become a driver of inclusion), energy (a just transition to renewable energy was a must) and food systems (the region could chart a way forward in building sustainable and resilient food systems); (iv) rebounding from learning losses of the pandemic to reinvent future of education; and (v) accelerating gender equality and economic transformation.

8. The President of Costa Rica said a face-to-face meeting with numerous representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean, friends and partners of the region was a great opportunity and encouraged participants to reflect on their strategic contribution to the Forum. At times of war, uncertainty and despair, such as the crossroads where humanity found itself, the courageous and bold route to ensure people's well-being was the path of peace. Events of recent years, especially the pandemic, had shown that the world was interdependent. It was not possible to survive alone, or to be safe unless we all saved ourselves. The best way to achieve a better world was to show solidarity. Economic recovery, fighting climate change, meeting health needs and realizing human rights needed to remain as the priority lines of action for Latin American and Caribbean governments. The call for a new global compact was stronger than ever; a unified response that measured up to the enormity of the common challenges. Solutions and responses needed be found by all, multilaterally, with an international architecture that supported peace, sustainable development and the realization of the human rights of all people, and particularly those in the most vulnerable situations. Asymmetries existed among and within countries. Inequality, which eroded nations and dissolved social fabrics, needed to be fought. The countries of the region had seen their fiscal space shrink, were suffering from high levels of debt, and faced the constant dilemma of financing for development. Furthermore, the main threat the world was facing was the destruction of the planet by human beings, the disappearance of biodiversity and the desertification of arable areas. However, even before the ongoing conflict in Europe, levels of investment in weaponry had once again surpassed cold war levels. Why millions were being spent on weapons and not on humanity's main problems?. Specific answers were needed; proposals could and should emerge from the Forum to address all those problems. It was important to do away with one-dimensional criteria for understanding reality. Classification criteria based solely on income overlooked the needs of most of the world's countries and their most vulnerable populations. Economies that focused on the here and now had led to simple, unidirectional solutions, but reality was complex, and understanding and accepting complexity was transformative. It had been an honour for Costa Rica to serve as Chair of ECLAC, based on an innovative financing for development agenda and recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, with specific proposals that went beyond assessments and studies and had the potential of real impact. As a result of technical inputs from ECLAC and intergovernmental discussions in recent months, a toolbox was available that included proposals in areas such as national fiscal strategies, expansion and recirculation of special drawing rights, debt-for-nature swaps, debt for social protection swaps, creation of a multilateral credit rating agency and new multilateral funds financed by developed countries, such as the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE) proposed by Costa Rica.

Presentation of the document “A decade of action for a change of era”

9. In the presentation of the document [A decade of action for a change of era, fifth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean](#),² the Executive Secretary of ECLAC highlighted several key messages, such as the growing global asymmetries between developed and developing countries (economic, health, climate and crisis response gaps), the region had been the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the central role of the State in addressing the economic and social costs of the crisis. She also drew attention to the unequal access to vaccines in the region and said that the most worrying aspect of the recovery, which offered a historic opportunity to forge a new social compact that provides protection, certainty and confidence, was that it was following a development model that had already been shown to have structural limitations. Latin America and the Caribbean was facing three silent crises: (i) the loss of more than a year of classroom schooling for an entire generation of students; (ii) the increase in gender-based violence and in the unequal gender distribution of care burdens; and (iii) the exacerbation of marine and terrestrial biodiversity destruction as a result of illegal activities, often combined with killings of environmental defenders. The report examined the issues of debt, inflation, the increases in poverty and extreme poverty, and the worsening of gender inequalities. It analysed patterns in the SDG indicators, focusing on matters related to education, gender equality, the care society, biodiversity and institutional progress on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

10. The document was commented by Carlos Alvarado, President of Costa Rica, Mariana Mazzucato, Economist and Professor of the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) of University College London (UCL), and Enrique Iglesias, former Executive Secretary of ECLAC

11. The President of Costa Rica said that the document presented by ECLAC was an extremely important contribution to jointly pursuing solutions to address the critical juncture of the time and outline future pathways for sustainable development and well-being. The report confirmed that the damaging repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis had been exacerbated by sustained levels of structural inequality. It also addressed, from different angles and dimensions, the severe consequences that countries were continuing to suffer as a result of the pandemic. For true recovery and reconstruction, investment needed to be systematic, aligned with the SDGs and sensitive to the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The report was a clear call to action to avoid marring the futures of current and future generations. Greater access to financing and international cooperation was needed, as they were essential for a transition to a more sustainable pattern of development. Costa Rica had to ratify the Escazú Agreement and its government had launched several initiatives, such as the FACE fund, and the joint work with local governments to territorialize the 2030 Agenda. A discussion of the care society from a rights-based perspective and a more egalitarian approach to domestic and care tasks is needed. The region also needed to move from a culture of privilege to a care society, and a change of course was needed to move towards a new normal that was equal, sustainable, inclusive, innovative, green and decarbonized.

12. The Economist and Professor of the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) of University College London (UCL) said that the consequences of COVID-19—such as the loss of a year of schooling for an entire generation, the infodemic, the lack of investment, underfunding of health care, vaccine apartheid and hoarding, the lack of vaccine production capacity in many developing countries because of how poorly intellectual property rights had been intentionally structured globally—were all indications of the failure to govern economic systems, innovation and development for the common interest and the common good. There was a need to redesign how economics and capitalism worked. Existing problems were the outcomes of problematic governance of public, private and third sector institutions and the relationships between them. Four big changes are needed: (i) changing the direction of growth, moving away from “levelling the

² ECLAC, *A decade of action for a change of era* (LC/FDS.5/3) [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47746/S2100984_en.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y.

playing field” to “tilting” the playing field in the direction of innovation-led, inclusive and sustainable growth, with proactive design of policies to free them of the concept of fixing market failures; (ii) designing an industrial strategy, with innovation policy, procurement budgets as dynamic innovative instruments to crowd in bottom-up solutions, because it was not simply a matter of listing sectors in difficulty and handing out money as all sectors needed to work together differently; (iii) more finance and liquidity, orienting public banks like CDB to this mission. Countries would have to focus less on deficits and instead kickstart public and private investment and innovation, the multiplier effect of which would keep debt-to-GDP ratios in check; and (iv) investing in the dynamic capabilities of institutions. Less outsourcing of capacity was required, and more inward investment, to make public institutions more flexible and agile. In terms of public-private partnerships, the word “partnership” was not normative, but symbolic.

13. The former Executive Secretary of ECLAC highlighted five points: (i) the rigorous preparation by ECLAC of the report, which very clearly reflected the work of the institution; (ii) the need to recognize in the preceding 75 years, significant technological progress had been made with production systems and communications; (iii) the deepening of inequality and the enormous inefficiency with which opportunities had been distributed around the world; the great contribution of the United Nations system to incorporate into public discussion the concept of solidarity, of society’s commitment to those who were most in need and who should be supported; the world was still incapable of overcoming conflicts among races, religions and nationalisms, and still owed it to history to restore peace to humanity; (iv) the incorporation into growth of the concept of interaction (for example, the presence of millions of companies throughout the world, where everything was a result of a combination of everything); and (v) the concept of a change of era: in human history, such changes had always been accompanied by shocks and by violence, and that needed to be kept in mind. Peace was most important and should be the great purpose that drove the world in its future, but it was not a commitment that should be placed solely in the hands of politicians, society as a whole had to embrace it.

14. Statements were made by the ministers of foreign affairs and high-level authorities of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). During the session moderated by the Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, delegates agreed on the need to transform the productive fabric and close productivity gaps based on the fourth industrial revolution, in order to infuse the region’s sustainable development with direction and intention. Economies needed to be more resilient, and low in emissions, and to foster inclusion by developing green, blue and orange jobs, with women and young people playing a leading role. A new welfare architecture was also required, with new financial instruments and a new way of cooperating and relating to each other; a transformative way of being a region.

15. In her closing remarks, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the Commission had worked in close cooperation with the governments of the region, promoting regional integration and open regionalism to formulate proposals to address challenges such as migration, climate change, health self-sufficiency and food sovereignty. Five initiatives were noteworthy: the *Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico*, the *Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals*, the “*Caribbean first*” initiative, the initiative on financing for development from a regional perspective led by the Secretary-General, Canada and Jamaica, and the Escazú Agreement. She highlighted five key messages inspiring hope: the importance of continuing to focus on equality; the importance of environmental sustainability as part of development strategies and not as an externality; the importance of the role of the State and of policies as distributive instruments; the urgency of greater regional integration to participate in multilateralism with a single voice; and the centrality of gender equality and women’s autonomy, to move towards a care society.

High-level dialogue on an innovative financing agenda for recovery

16. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica in his introductory remarks, indicated that the meeting was an opportunity to move from words to action on financing for recovery,. The fact that the governments themselves were the owners of the multilateral financial organizations hindered dialogue. The Ministers of Finance, who influenced the banks, had to be open to such dialogue. He thanked the representatives of regional and international development banks for attending and participating, and invited them to think creatively and innovatively.

17. The session, entitled “Contributions to the innovative financing agenda for recovery: the perspective of regional and international development banks” was moderated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, who said that the region’s governments had a limited capacity to obtain resources to respond adequately to the health, economic and human rights crisis caused by the pandemic because of several underlying factors: high levels of debt and resources being diverted to service debt; the region’s reduced fiscal space, exacerbated by lower revenues and greater pressing needs; the impact of the pandemic on tourism, and the challenge for middle-income countries, including upper-middle, to access financing and traditional forms of cooperation. As a metric, per capita GDP was not sufficient to assess countries’ progress; a multidimensional metric was needed that properly reflected the socioeconomic development and particularities of each country. The COVID-19 Special Report “An innovative financing for development agenda for the recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean”³ proposed specific policy measures to produce a direct impact on the region’s populations.

18. The experts participating in the dialogue addressed key aspects to improve the capacity to access and mobilize financing: (i) measures to expand liquidity and redistribute it from developed countries to developing countries, without excluding middle-income countries, which generally did not have access to concessional financing; (ii) actions to facilitate the access of countries in the region to new sources of financing such as green bonds and SDG bonds; (iii) the strategies required to strengthen regional cooperation, increasing the lending and response capacity of regional, subregional and national financing institutions and strengthening their cooperation; (iv) the role of national development banks in mobilizing resources for sustainable development; (v) regional strategies to boost public revenues by reducing tax evasion and making tax structures more progressive, and the role of global agreements on tax rates and fiscal and financial transparency in supporting countries’ capacity to strengthen fiscal revenues; and (vi) in the context of the pandemic, the actions required from development banks to meet the needs of Latin American and Caribbean countries —most of which are middle-income— in terms of access to resources and financial mechanisms to support the region’s development efforts.

19. An interactive dialogue, moderated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), followed the statements and presentations of the representatives of international financial institutions and development banks. The moderator highlighted some proposals: reclaiming the role of the United Nations and defending the importance of the agenda of developing countries in discussions on the international financial architecture; not allowing the conflict in Europe to detract from development issues and the SDGs, which are fundamental for developing countries, and supporting the Secretary-General’s agenda for measurements beyond GDP. She said that, if poor measurements continued, bad decisions would continue to be made; if two decades of progress in the region had been lost in 10 months of pandemic, it was because something was being measured incorrectly. It was necessary to have new instruments, gender, green, blue and social bonds, and for all of them to be transparent and subject to reporting and verification, in order to obtain the expected results from these innovative instruments.

³ See [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47490/3/S2100627_en.pdf .

20. In closing, the Chief of the Economic Development Division of ECLAC spoke about the financing needs and challenges of Latin American and Caribbean countries for the future. The region had found itself in a growth trap since before the pandemic: before 2019 it was growing at very low rate, the pandemic resulted in the worst contraction in the previous 100 years. In 2021 there was a recovery and in 2022 a slowdown was expected. The result would be another lost decade of growth. The great challenge was to boost growth so that it was green, environmentally sustainable and inclusive, which required changing countries' production structures and energy matrices, as well as significant investment efforts. With low growth and an increasingly complex macroeconomic situation, financing needs were increasing dramatically and the region's ability to mobilize resources would be central to achieving a transformative recovery. He highlighted three issues in particular: (i) the need to change the global financial architecture (financial systems had to return to their basic function of financing investment, not financial speculation); (ii) the development of innovative financing instruments (issuance of new types of bonds and generation of new methodologies or strategies) and (iii) the need for coordination and cooperation among global, regional and national banks (there was a perceived separation between them and greater coordination was needed to mobilize more resources).

Commemoration of International Women's Day

21. The session was moderated by the Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The panellists were the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, the Vice-President of Costa Rica, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama, the Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Shi Alarcón, representative of Vecinas Feministas por la Justicia Sexual y Reproductiva en América Latina and member of the LGBTQI+ group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum, Rosa Adriana López Carrillo, representative of RedTraSex of Guatemala and focal point of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum, the Minister for Women, Gender and Diversity of Argentina and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

22. The moderator said that without women, there could be no progress in the world or economic recovery. The aim of the session was therefore to explore options for increasing the recognition and enforcement of women's rights and putting them at the centre of recovery. She also advocated for greater participation by women in the judiciary, in the hope that this could change the direction of controversial rulings related to women's rights. She also called for the release of Nicaraguan women imprisoned for being feminists, remembered the women human rights and environmental defenders who had lost their lives in the region in 2022, and called on countries to ratify ILO conventions concerning sexual harassment.

23. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the post-pandemic recovery must overcome four structural challenges relating to gender inequality, which have devastating effects on women and on society as a whole: socioeconomic inequality and poverty; the sexual division of labour and the unjust social organization of care; the concentration of power, patriarchal, discriminatory and violent cultural patterns and the culture of privilege. While the first line of response was overwhelmingly female, with women serving as health workers, teachers, caregivers, innovators and community leaders, few women were leading countries and making decisions in the public sphere. Women spent three times as much time as men on unpaid domestic and care work.

24. The Vice-President of Costa Rica insisted on the need to create egalitarian spaces for decision-making, not only in governments, but also in all United Nations governing bodies, for great revolutions could also be sparked when women started to reclaim the spaces in which they lived and worked.

25. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama said it was necessary to recognize the situation in the region: gender violence was a veiled pandemic, with more than 4,000 women victims of femicide every year, and teenage pregnancy was prevalent. There was a need to speak out with one voice. She commended and congratulated women's and feminist's organizations for their constant efforts in the fight against violence and anachronistic privileges.

26. The Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNICEF highlighted the difficulties of access to education during the pandemic and the rise in inequality experienced by girls and adolescents during the pandemic, owing to the upsurge in child marriage, sexual violence, unavailability of sexual and reproductive health services, unwanted pregnancies, poverty, hunger and transmission of diseases such as HIV/AIDS..

27. The Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said that for the Caribbean, it was urgent to decisively chart the path toward sustainable development and ensure the restructuring of social, political and economic systems so women and men had an equal stake and say. Insecurity, governance deficits and climate-related and other hazards were not gender neutral, as inequalities caused by socioeconomic, cultural and other factors put women at a disadvantage. Female-headed households, which accounted for approximately 40% of households in the Caribbean, were larger, more vulnerable to loss of livelihood in aftermath of disaster and experienced greater difficulty re-entering labour market. Gender equality needed to be cross-cutting in all priority integration issues in CARICOM (single market, food and nutrition security, zone of peace, strengthening security) and success would mean that women and men were included in key decision-making processes at all levels.

28. The representative of Vecinas Feministas por la Justicia Sexual y Reproductiva en América Latina expressed civil society's concern at the economic stagnation and the worsening of all social, environmental and labour indicators in the region, as well as the expansion of authoritarian and dictatorial proposals on public policy by various governments in the region, leading to setbacks in human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.

29. The representative of RedTraSex of Guatemala welcomed the occasion to commemorate working women, many of whom had not been covered by the social protection measures in response to the pandemic. She called on all countries to adopt protective measures to reduce gender violence, invest in prevention, response and free legal assistance, end impunity and comply with commitments on the eradication of violence and harassment.

30. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations said that International Women's Day was an opportunity to mark progress, identify the road forward, and renew commitment to gender equality as the strong foundation needed to achieve SDGs; it was only with women and girls at centre of efforts that current and pressing global challenges could best be addressed. The Regional Gender Agenda charted an ambitious path and reflected Member States' commitments, thanks to efforts of women's and feminist civil society in the region. Recent gains for women's rights and parity in some countries and the wider region gave hope. The pandemic had deepened inequality, negatively affected women's rights and autonomy, and increased their burden of care, causing immeasurable setbacks world could ill afford with eight years left to implement the 2030 Agenda. Achieving a world that was equal and sustainable would require accelerated effort and innovation from all stakeholders and intensified efforts to reverse inequalities of all kinds. She called to recommit energies to achieving true and irreversible gender equality because everyone benefited when women had the opportunity to lead.

31. The Minister for Women, Gender and Diversity of Argentina said that her country would host the fifteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would address the theme of care, in November 2022. She said that the Regional Conference and the Forum were

spaces conducive to building a shared political narrative, addressing key issues to achieve sustainable development with redistribution and equality, and exchanging frank views on the challenges to gender equality. It was necessary to adopt radical policies to dismantle the structural bases of gender inequality and work towards building care societies in which care work was recognized and remunerated, and where the right to provide and receive care was guaranteed. A cross-cutting approach to those issues was required in all regional discussions.

Panel discussions

32. Pursuant to the wish expressed by the countries that the Forum should provide useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, the sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets, five panel discussions were organized to allow the member countries of the Forum and other stakeholders to report on and share their experiences and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

33. **Panel 1 “From development in transition to development for action: towards renewed international development cooperation”** was introduced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica who said that given the effects of the pandemic in the region, it was imperative that the multilateral response fully address the needs of developing countries. It was time to take action, and that must be done taking into account the different vulnerabilities and the multidimensional nature of development. Development in transition, a concept developed by ECLAC, the European Commission and the OECD Development Centre, should be understood as a positive path that strengthened countries’ development efforts through new instruments that were not necessarily financial and that supported regional and national strategies through technical assistance, knowledge transfer and adaptation of good practices, as well as formation of human capital. Costa Rica had promoted the creation of a multidimensional poverty index that sought to determine more accurately, countries’ needs and thus make decisions and take actions tailored to their well-being.

34. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC gave a presentation outlining the main priorities and actions for the post-pandemic period from the point of view of development in transition. He reviewed the process by which this concept had been born: the graduation of the first countries in Latin America and the Caribbean; the various impacts of the 2008 crisis, which cast light on structural vulnerabilities and challenges; and the awareness among the countries of the region and the European Union of the need to rethink the graduation framework, considering existing vulnerabilities. The concept of development in transition also offered a platform for dialogue for renewed cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean that went beyond GDP and considered the needs and strengths of the countries in the region. Cooperation and the multilateral financial architecture needed to be rethought from the bottom up. The priorities for the post-pandemic period, in development in transition, should be to guarantee resources for recovery (debt relief was fundamental) and to move towards an international financial system for development, as well as to build partnerships based on the targets of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, whose indicators already constituted a multidimensional framework to guide cooperation priorities.

35. The panellists noted that development in transition was related, on one hand, to a weak link between income and non-monetary variables and, on the other, to the fact that as income levels increased, it was more difficult to access financing to move forward with development. The model for Latin America and the Caribbean was based on factor accumulation and a move was needed to a model based on productivity, innovation and a better allocation of resources. However, to carry out this transition institutions had to adapt, creating the right conditions. Countries that broke out of the middle-income trap and managed to move to a higher income level tended to have better governance indicators: less corruption, more trustworthy judiciaries, greater transparency and greater participation by civil society. Multilateralism could help in that transition to action. Instruments such as loans, cooperation or international agreements could balance power asymmetries between elites and citizens and create alternative spaces for

dispute resolution, create coalitions for change that led to agreements between stakeholders. If such structural change was achieved, it would create the conditions for many of the other transitions.

36. **Panel 2 “Statistical, quantitative and territorial monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals”** was moderated by the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC. The Chief of the Statistics Division of ECLAC described how statistical information for monitoring progress on the SDGs was organized and presented in [CEPALSTAT](#) and the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean ([SDG Gateway](#))⁴, created by the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to monitor the 2030 Agenda. He gave an overview of the gradual development of those tools, highlighting the creation of the Regional Knowledge Platform in 2019 and the [COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) in 2020, as well as the update of CEPALSTAT in 2021 that included a geoportal, enabling visualization and monitoring of all the indicators of the 169 SDG targets. In each case, he outlined the type of data the platform collected, the data sources and how it could be viewed. In the case of CEPALSTAT, he said that the data was open, interoperable, integrated and comparable, allowing information to be viewed in relation to the territory, in accordance with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere.

37. The panellists indicated that the presented platforms were powerful tools for decision-making based on SDG monitoring, that enabled visualization of where the countries stood, where they were going, what the regional differences were; the platforms represented a meeting point for the countries. The inclusion of national and regional profiles combined with some of the most important indicators into a single view, provided valuable information for specialists and proper information for the common citizen. In those times of reconstruction of development models, statistics had become a priority, but the discussion on the concept of development in transition showed that progress was needed on forms of measurement, to have more precise measurements, for example at the subnational level. That could only be achieved by building the capacities of statistical offices.

38. **Panel 3 “Natural disasters and the asymmetry of climate change in the Caribbean”** was moderated by the Chief of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. The moderator said that the panel, which was devoted to the consideration of the unique challenges facing the countries of the subregion, was an integral expression of the ECLAC “Caribbean first” initiative. It underscored the resolve of ECLAC to explore in depth the critical issues undermining the development trajectory of the Caribbean and afforded the widest consideration of the strategic response to address those concerns. Natural disasters were one of the issues central to the multidimensional vulnerability of the Caribbean. In 2021, as the subregion struggled to cope with the impact of COVID-19, it experienced the full range of natural shocks. Finding the best way to mitigate and moderate their impact by planning for and investing in resilience had to be at the heart of an effective sustainable development strategy for the subregion. However, that was a tall order for middle-income countries largely ineligible for concessional financing and confronting persistently low growth, declining official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment while shouldering high and growing levels of indebtedness, facing a less than sympathetic international financial environment. The panel discussed how best to recommend to governments of the Caribbean, with the support of the regional and international communities, strategies to meaningfully and practically enhance the resilience of the subregion. To add to those imperatives, the resilience of national institutions and the production capacity of the subregion had to be strengthened.

39. The panellists noted that climate change had the capacity to undermine future development and prosperity in the Caribbean subregion, and that intervention was needed in three areas: biodiversity, water scarcity and the impact of climate change on the tourism sector. Two critical imperatives were thus raised: addressing the debt overhang resulting from the inherent vulnerability of

⁴ <https://agenda2030lac.org/en> .

Caribbean SIDS and addressing the need to diversify the productive sector into activities that ensured greater climate resilience, which required heavy investment in technology and human capital. The way forward entailed a greater focus on comprehensive disaster risk management to address the root causes of vulnerability to disasters and climate change in the subregion; increasing public awareness of climate change and its impacts and promoting changes in social behaviour; greater collaboration among intergovernmental organizations, regional governments, the scientific community, businesses and communities to understand complex risk patterns and make informed risk management decisions; continued development of market-based solutions, such as parametric insurance to protect against extreme weather events and weather-related losses; and greater multilateral cooperation to finance climate adaptation and build adaptation capabilities in the region. It was important to have a multidimensional vulnerability index and access to concessional financing; some countries lack access to donors, whose agendas often clashed with national agendas. Lack of data and poor technical capacity had to be addressed for evidence-based decision-making and solutions. There was also a need for better data sharing. Proactive regional initiatives had been taken in several areas, such as risk management, food security and pooled procurement of medicines during the pandemic. Investment decisions, especially regarding post-COVID-19 recovery, must incorporate sustainable initiatives.

40. **Panel 4 “Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for sustainable recovery: challenges and opportunities for Latin America and the Caribbean”** was moderated by the Chief of the Natural Resources Division of ECLAC. She said that biodiversity was fundamental, as it was the basis of the food supply and ecosystem services that allowed humanity to exist. Although the enormous biodiversity of the region was one of its main features, governments often had a negative relationship with nature, without properly linking the present with the long term. In the private sector and civil society, there were good practices, but also lessons that had not been learned and mistakes that were repeated, such as overexploitation of resources, pollution and acidification of marine ecosystems, and deforestation. The targets of the 2030 Agenda were not being achieved due to insufficient resources being dedicated to environment, an incipient and incomplete environmental institutional framework, and weak governance in most of the countries of the region. The aim of the panel was therefore to discuss, based on the experiences of governments, agencies, the private sector and civil society, how to identify opportunities and address these challenges.

41. The main message that emerged from the panellists’ statements was that biodiversity loss directly resulted in loss of human well-being: biodiversity loss was usually associated with phenomena such as climate change, desertification and pollution, but it is also with problems in the areas of poverty, health, education and development. Data indicated that the Aichi Biodiversity Targets had not been met by the deadline (2020) and that there was a clear risk that the targets of the 2030 Agenda would not be met either. To avoid this, it was necessary, firstly, to recognize what was being done wrong. There were five direct drivers of biodiversity loss (land and ocean use change, species exploitation, climate change, pollution and the introduction of invasive alien species), but underlying these were root causes: social values and behaviour, and a desire for individual accumulation of wealth. A frequently repeated reflection among the panellists was the need to work together from the different decision-making spaces. Institutional reforms could integrate sectors, break down barriers between the different ministries and achieve better coordination, including between national and subnational governments, to improve land-use planning and management. Governments were called on to promote ongoing work, dialogue and links among different bodies — for example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)— to establish a coherent framework for biodiversity protection.

42. **Panel 5 “Education and gender equality: human rights central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”** was moderated by the Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC. The moderator described the effects of the pandemic in terms of exacerbation of gender inequality and setbacks in

education. It was a prolonged health crisis, not an emergency, with effects on poverty, inequality, unemployment, labour informality and education that would be difficult to reverse. The crisis offered a historic opportunity to rethink and restructure education systems in order to move towards resilient, inclusive and quality education systems, from a gender-equality perspective. The pandemic had resulted in an unprecedented setback in terms of women's economic, physical and decision-making autonomy. The signs of economic recovery showed that the productive structure was based on a sexual division of labour that reproduced patterns of inequality. Without changes to the current development model, growth would not necessarily result in improved living conditions for women.

43. The panellists stressed that the pandemic had caused the worst education crisis in history and had had massive and profound effects at all levels. In addition to the interruption of face-to-face classes, problems included the lack of connectivity and limited access to education-related services, such as school meals and preventive health, with consequences in terms of loss of learning, mental health, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. The need to allocate more funding to accelerate progress in educational achievements was also highlighted, with more dialogue between institutions and greater participation of the various stakeholders. While resources were not sufficient to solve the long-standing problems, without more resources it would not be possible to move forward at the required speed. It was also necessary to incorporate the gender perspective from primary education onward, to promote cultural change in the new generations, including the development of new concepts of masculinity with greater co-responsibility and the reduction of gender violence, as well as the inclusion of sexual education and education for social mobility and the future of work. Gender equality was fundamental to development that put the sustainability of human life and the planet at its core. To facilitate and encourage the role of women in sustainable development, a cultural and structural change was urgently required, in which education played a central role.

44. **The peer-learning session entitled “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”** was moderated by the Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES). The moderator said that the session, as a space for collective reflection, was a new feature of the Forum, which had arisen from the work of a community of practice, with the participation of countries' technical teams and the entities of the United Nations system, to support countries in the preparation of their voluntary national reviews. The voluntary national review exercise fostered partnerships among development actors and contributed to multi-stakeholder and multilevel thinking for a coordinated and coherent approach to SDG implementation. The eight countries represented at the session would present their reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2022 (Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Suriname for the first time; El Salvador and Jamaica for the second time; Argentina for the third time; and Uruguay for the fourth time).

45. Despite the challenges of the prevailing context, the panellists reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and said it was important to maintain the comprehensiveness of public policies to achieve the Goals, to monitor and evaluate those achievements, and to perform related accountability exercises. Success in implementing the SDGs would depend on the quality of the actions taken by the countries. Voluntary national reviews were considered a very valuable instrument, and the participants mentioned the importance of working to overcome communication problems with the grassroots to ensure full participation of all stakeholders in the preparation of the reports. That was essential for obtaining accurate information on the progress achieved and the situation in each sector, learning about deficiencies and taking measures to refocus actions. What was not measured could not be assessed, and what could not be assessed could not be improved. Therefore, statistical processing of information was fundamental in that process. Reference was also made to joint work with subnational stakeholders and the possibility of providing them with training and advice so that they could prepare their voluntary local reviews. More challenges arose from the exercise, as

strengths were identified, but also weaknesses, and it was only possible to address those challenges through collaborative and participatory processes, public-private partnerships and inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination.

Contribution of the United Nations of the United Nations sustainable development system in Latin America and the Caribbean

46. This session was moderated by the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Development Coordination Office (DCO) of the United Nations. The 2021 system-wide results report of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean⁵ was presented by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in their capacity as Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform. The report was based on three specific recommendations: enhancing transparency, accountability and results-based management. The aim was to align the work of the United Nations system to support member States in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve better alignment, issue-based coalitions and inter-institutional working groups had been created. Among other aims, the Platform sought to link humanitarian and development issues, facilitate more effective management, develop knowledge products that were relevant to member states, facilitate policy advice, conduct inter-agency collaboration (for example in the areas of education and labour), and address cross-border issues. Themes being jointly addressed included: climate change and resilience, crime and violence, inclusive growth, financing for development, governance and institutions, and human mobility. A regional vision had been developed and common strategic positions had been adopted on issues such as gender equality, digital inclusion, energy transition and food security. The Vice-Chairs said that it was important to support resident coordinators and country teams, and to link what was being done as a system with intergovernmental bodies. The report showed that structural social, economic and environmental inequalities had increased in the region, that the most affected populations had been the most vulnerable (women, youth, migrants, refugees, afrodescendants) and that the region was facing the risk of a lost decade. The Vice-Chairs of the RCP detailed some types of support that the Platform provided to country teams through different regional initiatives. Global agendas needed to be brought to the regional and local levels. Continued efforts needed to be made for the United Nations system to form strategic partnerships outside the Organization, with civil society and the private sector. In terms of issue-based coalitions, there were some specific initiatives on climate change and resilience, crime and violence, and inclusive growth, and a lot of work had been done in human mobility. A thematic cluster had been created on financing for development and very targeted actions were undertaken in the areas of governance and institutions. Two cross-cutting themes ran across all the thematic clusters: (i) gender and empowerment of women and girls; and (ii) youth. During the year, three areas of work had been added: food systems, urban development and HIV/AIDS. Looking ahead, priorities had been set for areas of action in the coming period and a decision had been made to address economic and social inequalities, environmental issues of climate action, strengthening governance systems and supporting transitions in terms of connectivity, energy and food systems. Addressing those priorities would entail meeting specific demands, which were changeable in a context of uncertainty, and being ready to respond to them, considering cross-border issues, continuing to emphasize the role of advocacy and communication, continuing to work with regional intergovernmental bodies, and serving as a link between the global and local levels.

Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

⁵ See [online] https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/sites/foro2022/files/2022-03-07_reporteresultados_2021.pdf.

47. The [intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#) were adopted. These had been previously submitted to the countries for a series of consultations facilitated by the Government of Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of the Forum, through the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations in New York. On the adoption of the conclusions and recommendations, the Chair thanked delegations for their participation and flexibility in the consultation process.