



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 May 2020

Original: English

2020 session

25 July 2019–22 July 2020

Agenda item 15

Regional cooperation

Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019–2020

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 2019–2020.



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Summary

The present report contains highlights of the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2019 and from January to April 2020. Over the last decade, ECLAC has systematically worked on the issue of equality, an issue at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as expressed in its guiding principle of leaving no one behind. As an institution fully committed to the development of the countries of the region, ECLAC has continued to build a tradition of innovative Latin American and Caribbean thought and consolidate its role as a leading think tank of the United Nations Secretariat. The Commission has continued to nurture its key convening role by fostering intergovernmental platforms, providing a space for policy dialogue, consensus-building, peer learning and normative discussion, as well as delivering operational support, technical cooperation, capacity-building and advisory services to member States, upon request. In this capacity, the Commission has conducted analysis and provided policy advice to countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to address the socioeconomic impact of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020. ECLAC has maintained its role as an inclusive and impartial forum for fostering public policy debate, the exchange of best practices and the promotion of regional positions in global forums, as well as in regional and interregional high-level meetings and summits of Heads of State and Government.

I. Introduction

1. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals have continued to guide the work of ECLAC. The Commission has oriented its programme of work around the following five key strategic areas, identified in close consultation and dialogue with its member States and associate members, across which it has forged a multidisciplinary response to their needs and demands towards achieving sustainable development: (a) the formulation of strategies, including the design and follow-up of the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional and subregional levels, and the analysis of key policy interlinkages on topics related to such areas as trade, financing for development, technology transfer, the wider application of information and communications technology (ICT) for development, rules of engagement with the private sector and innovative public-private partnerships; (b) the promotion of sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies, as well as productive and export diversification; (c) the enhancement of inclusive social development, with a gender perspective and equality at its core; (d) the promotion of the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and disaster risk reduction measures into national and territorial planning, budgeting and investment schemes in collaboration with the United Nations system at the regional and national levels; and (e) the strengthening of the capacities of national statistical systems to support the formulation of evidence-based public policies and the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. ECLAC has strengthened regional coordination, working closely with the resident coordinator system, which as from 1 January 2019 became part of the United Nations Secretariat in the context of the reform of the United Nations development system.

3. Given the continuous close collaboration between ECLAC and the United Nations development system entities present in the region, in the face of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Commission was able to support member States with an analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic on Latin American and Caribbean countries, as well as on the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this vein, the Commission produced several reports and developed the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, available on the ECLAC website, which maps and monitors the measures adopted by Governments of the region to address the crisis. The Observatory was developed in collaboration with United Nations resident coordinators in Latin America and the Caribbean and the regional desk of the Development Coordination Office.

4. The present report describes the contribution of ECLAC in 2019 and from January to April 2020 to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in the region and beyond to achieve sustainable development for all.

II. Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region

A. Responding to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean

5. The COVID-19 pandemic will have a severe impact on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, not only in the short term, but also in the medium and

long terms. The impact will depend on the specificities of their economies, the duration of the pandemic and social and economic measures implemented by national authorities. In order to provide support to the countries of the region as they confront the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, ECLAC has mobilized its resources and networks. In early April 2020, ECLAC launched the online COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, which provides continuously updated information on measures and actions at the national level that are monitored with the support of the United Nations resident coordinators and the regional desk of the Development Coordination Office. The Observatory also provides other regular updates through a series of publications and tools, including special reports, with relevant analysis and policy recommendations on selected thematic issues.

6. Through the Observatory and additional outreach initiatives, including participation in media interviews by the Executive Secretary and sectoral dialogues held virtually with national authorities, ECLAC has provided updated information on the impact of COVID-19 on public policy responses being implemented in the countries of the region in the current context, as well as policy recommendations on economic and social matters for the post-COVID-19 context. In that connection, a meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 2 April 2020. Meetings were also held with the heads of national statistical offices, in the context of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, and the Executive Secretary chaired the Briefing of the Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis from a Gender Perspective (8 April), and a high-level regional dialogue with Latin American ministers of finance on the response to COVID-19 (13 April). Similar meetings were held specifically with ministers of social development and ministers of finance, on 21 and 28 April, respectively, of Caribbean member States to discuss the particular needs of Caribbean small island developing States in this context.

B. Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development adopted by Latin American and Caribbean countries

7. Within the context of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals and leaving no one behind, ECLAC has made a systematic effort to better visualize the socioeconomic situation of specific population groups, such as Afrodescendants, persons with disabilities, youth, children, indigenous peoples, ageing populations, women and migrants. ECLAC has also worked towards identifying how multiple forms of discrimination interact with one another, using an intersectional approach, and has reflected this in its data production. In that regard, in its document *Critical Obstacles to Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Background for a Regional Agenda*, presented at the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, October 2019), ECLAC identified at least eight critical obstacles that are keeping the region from achieving inclusive social development, including the persistence of poverty, structural inequalities, deficits in decent work and social protection, insufficient social investment, diverse forms of violence and disasters and climate change.

8. Building on the foundations of that work, at the third session of the Regional Conference, Latin American and Caribbean countries adopted the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, as a technical and political instrument that will enable progress towards the implementation of the social dimension of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda in the region. The Regional Agenda reflects the countries' endorsement of the development of public policies as a means of tackling

poverty, structural inequalities and new challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its main objectives are to identify and create a consensus on lines of action to deepen the progress made in social development, end poverty and achieve greater social inclusion and equality; to promote high-quality public policies for social development that enable the entire population to exercise its rights, leaving no one behind; to strengthen the position of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the role of ministries of social development and equivalent entities in public agendas; and to promote regional and subregional cooperation spaces as a means of deepening progress towards inclusive social development, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Towards a new development paradigm: a comprehensive development plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-south-east Mexico

9. Considerable progress was made in 2019 in the formulation of a development plan aimed at creating a space for sustainable development and local opportunities for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and nine south-south-eastern states of Mexico in order to improve the population's quality of life, with a comprehensive vision that addresses the migration cycle and an emphasis on human security. Throughout 2019, ECLAC presented to the countries revised versions of the draft plan, which comprises two parts: (a) a diagnosis of the structural causes and the proposed policy response under four strategic pillars: economic development; social well-being; environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk reduction; and comprehensive management of the migration cycle; and (b) over 100 concrete proposals, including investment in large-scale infrastructure projects, development of certain key sectors and capacity-building. The proposals are being prepared jointly with all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and fine-tuned in the light of feedback and following negotiations with the highest authorities in all four countries, in a special coordination process led by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, at the request of the Secretary-General.

D. Supporting Sustainable Development Goal 11: the New Urban Agenda and the Latin American and Caribbean urban and cities platform

10. ECLAC is continuing to support sustainable cities and communities, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11. During the period under review, the Commission strengthened its collaboration with Ecuador by signing a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing to support the country in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and Goal 11. In that context, ECLAC organized a workshop in Quito to enhance national capacities for monitoring and reporting on human settlement indicators. At the regional level, the Commission convened the twenty-eighth General Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean in San José on 21 and 22 October. At the meeting, ECLAC presented the proposed Latin American and Caribbean urban and cities platform. The platform will include an observatory, where consolidated information on cities and urban areas in the region will be available for visualization, and will host an e-forum, to strengthen capacities between diverse actors on urban issues, as well as providing a space for rigorous follow-up and assessment of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda through its Regional Action Plan and the achievement of Goal 11 and other Goals at the national and subnational levels.

E. Institutionalizing the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America in the context of South-South cooperation

11. ECLAC used its convening power and its influence to shape the agenda in bringing the Sustainable Development Goals to the fore of discussions among Latin American and Caribbean countries. During a working meeting of the network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City on 28 and 29 November 2019, the 14 member States in attendance agreed on a road map to continue to promote the work of the network in three areas: institution-building, statistics and South-South cooperation. ECLAC also contributed to the discussions held at the first international seminar on the regional challenges of implementing the Goals in the MERCOSUR Parliament, held in Montevideo in June 2019, to exchange views on the integration of the Goals into the work of parliaments.

F. Strengthening capacities for inclusive demographic analysis and census-taking

12. Throughout 2019, the Commission provided key training in demographic analysis, support for census-taking and technical assistance on population themes, including population estimates and projections. Those actions placed significant focus on the inclusion of gender and ethnic perspectives through training courses for indigenous women and technical assistance on the inclusion of a gender perspective and persons with disabilities in population censuses, thus contributing to Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 10 by working towards gender equality and reducing inequalities. Technical assistance was also provided to Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), covering different areas of the census process, including mapping, development of the questionnaire and dialogue with users, processing, evaluation, training in the use and analysis of information and, as a derivative, the preparation of population estimates and projections. In that regard, following systematic support from ECLAC throughout the year, Guatemala successfully completed its census in 2019, after 16 years.

III. Strengthening the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda

13. During the reporting period, ECLAC coordinated the launch of a Sustainable Development Goal gateway, an inter-agency regional knowledge platform for the Goals. The platform, developed in response to General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) (see also [A/74/73-E/2019/14](#), para. 113) and with inputs from all the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, was presented to the Deputy Secretary-General and to regional directors of United Nations entities with a presence in the region in March 2020. The platform will allow countries – and United Nations country teams – to obtain specialized knowledge to respond to emerging national needs related to the 2030 Agenda, facilitate the monitoring and the statistical follow-up of the progress made towards meeting the Goals at the regional and country levels and foster collaboration on sustainable development across entities of the United Nations development system operating at the regional level, by serving as a reference point for all the information related to the 2030 Agenda and the Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

14. The platform, which is available in English and Spanish, references the institutional architecture for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional and national levels and provides an overview of each Sustainable Development Goal and its respective targets, outlining challenges and opportunities relating to implementation and conveying key messages from Latin America and the Caribbean. It includes a regional Sustainable Development Goal indicators database, including institutional arrangements for the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, dashboards, statistical profiles and technical guidelines and links to more than 50 statistical databases of the custodians and partner agencies of the indicators.

15. The Statistical Conference of the Americas, which was established 19 years ago, has become a crucial pillar for the statistical development of Latin American and Caribbean countries owing to its countless roles, which include representing the region in the global mechanisms involved in the Sustainable Development Goals process. During its tenth meeting, held from 19 to 21 November 2019 in Santiago, countries agreed on the need to pursue a collaborative regional response to the demand for official statistics to support the formulation of evidence-based policymaking in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and to contribute to improving the organization and management of national statistical systems.

16. ECLAC continues to work towards mainstreaming a gender perspective in the production of official statistics to monitor the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. At the national level, technical assistance, including through face-to-face and virtual courses, on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the production of data and statistics was provided to countries in the region. In addition, the Commission produced analytical documents on the indicators proposed at the global, regional and local levels to measure progress towards the achievement of the Goals, and on the strengths and weaknesses of countries in the production of the indicators that inform public policies, thus ensuring that no one is left behind. At the regional level, as technical secretariat of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, and through the Working Group on Gender Statistics (now a community of practice), the Commission continued to guarantee the incorporation of a gender perspective into the regional follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, in synergy with the commitments of the Regional Gender Agenda. Moreover, at the global level, the Commission continued to participate actively in the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics. In addition, through its Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC compiles and disseminates information on the indicator for femicide, which is part of the regional framework for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring.

17. The Commission is also working on mainstreaming a gender perspective in financial and trade policies with different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the area of gender gaps in the financial system, ECLAC supports the production of data to identify gender gaps in access to and use of products and services of the financial system in Chile, Guatemala and Costa Rica (targets 5.a and 8.10). In the area of gender and trade, technical assistance was provided in such countries as Chile, El Salvador Peru and Uruguay.

18. In its 2019 edition of *Social Panorama of Latin America*, ECLAC focused on the centrality of equality for sustainable and inclusive development. In addition, the Commission prepared the position paper *Critical Obstacles to Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Background for a Regional Agenda*, which was presented to Governments of the region at the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, October 2019). Furthermore, ECLAC published the book *Social Programmes, Poverty Eradication and Labour Inclusion: Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean*, promoting a comprehensive approach to social programmes such

as conditional cash transfer programmes, labour and production inclusion programmes and social pensions, which are of particular relevance in the context of COVID-19. The issue of financing for sustainable development has taken centre stage and, among the alternative funding sources, emphasis has been placed on the mobilization of domestic resources. Among other challenges encountered, the level of funding is below its potential in most countries, not only because of flaws in the design and administration of taxes, but more particularly owing to high levels of tax evasion – both domestic and international – and the prevalence of voluminous tax expenditures.

19. Further seeking to reaffirm the need to create new instruments for development cooperation, ECLAC launched the *Latin American Economic Outlook 2019*, a report prepared jointly with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Development Bank of Latin America and the European Union, calling for a new cooperation narrative, referred to as “Development in transition”. The report emphasizes the need for renewed and inclusive multilateralism to forge a new paradigm for international cooperation that recognizes the needs of countries in transition in order to overcome the development traps that the region’s middle-income countries face.

20. Throughout 2019 and early 2020, ECLAC continued to support countries of the region in the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2020), which was adopted by member States at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society of Latin America and the Caribbean (Cartagena de Indias Declaration). The Commission fostered regional cooperation to continue moving forward on inclusion, the digitalization of production, skills development among the population and the promotion of open government and governance to stimulate collaboration between countries. In 2020, the Preparatory Meeting for the Seventh Ministerial Conference will be held.

21. ECLAC has conducted research on “Strengthening ICT and knowledge management capacity in support of the sustainable development of multi-island Caribbean small island developing States”, as issues related to oceans, marine resources management and science, technology and innovation are increasingly central to the Commission’s programme of work.

IV. Spotlight on the ECLAC “Caribbean first” strategy and the support provided for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the subregion

22. The ECLAC Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap initiative aims to respond to the Caribbean’s vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters and its high level of debt. In order to close the financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals, ECLAC has called for the creation of a Caribbean Resilience Fund, as part of a debt alleviation strategy based on the climate change swap proposal, and for donors to use pledged resources to finance a gradual write-down of the multilateral debt stock of the Caribbean small island developing States held at various multilateral institutions, as well as the bilateral debt stock of member States. Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are piloting the initiative. Antigua and Barbuda is ready to move along with a full proposal, while Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are working on readiness-related activities. ECLAC will continue to work with the phase one countries to compile a compendium of national and regional climate-resilience projects. Concomitantly, work is continuing on the debt sustainability analyses for these three countries, to determine the optimal debt reduction strategy in each case. The Commission is in discussions with the Caribbean

Development Bank regarding various scenarios through which these institutions could jointly house and manage the Caribbean Resilience Fund. The initiative has been gaining momentum as it was promoted by ECLAC at several events leading up to the 2019 Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General and during the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

23. In the political declaration of the high-level meeting to review progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States through the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, adopted by acclamation on 27 September 2019, countries were urged to take action to support small island developing States in climate change mitigation and adaptation through diverse approaches, including by exploring debt swap initiatives. That proposal was also endorsed by the Secretary-General at the Annual Meetings of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, held in Washington, D.C., in October 2019. With that strong political support, ECLAC is moving ahead to make the initiative a reality by conducting scenario analyses on debt sustainability and developing practical debt reduction options for Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a basis for discussions and negotiations with multilateral and bilateral creditors.

24. In 2019, ECLAC continued to support the countries of the subregion in the drafting of their national development plans. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines acknowledged the Commission's technical advice regarding its national economic and social development plan for the period 2013–2025, in which goals and targets are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and budgetary allocations are dedicated to strategies for their attainment. ECLAC also supported Grenada in the drafting of its national sustainable development plan for the period 2020–2035, integrating the Goals and the small island developing States agenda. Technical support from the Commission helped Dominica to achieve policy coherence through the realignment of sectoral plans to operationalize its national resilience development strategy. Saint Lucia also received support in the preparation of a Sustainable Development Goal road map and its voluntary national review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which was presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2019. Similarly, ECLAC is offering to support Trinidad and Tobago in the preparation of its voluntary national review in 2020.

25. Following work done by ECLAC, there is increased interest in using trade policies for economic development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Caribbean subregion. In 2019, Trinidad and Tobago launched its new trade policy, which examines avenues for economic diversification, expanding existing and new markets for exports of goods and services and achieving the trade-related Goals. Other countries in the subregion have expressed interest in following suit. In 2019, the Commission published a study on the impact of upgrading and diversifying tourism goods and services in the Bahamas, Belize and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The Bahamas is actively using this study to guide the development of its tourism sector, and Belize and Saint Kitts and Nevis found the study useful for the implementation of national tourism policies.

V. Leveraging partnerships for sustainable development

26. ECLAC has continued to deepen partnerships with entities from both the United Nations development system and the regional institutional landscape, spanning all three dimensions of sustainable development.

A. Collaboration with entities of the United Nations development system

27. The meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Latin America and the Caribbean and a meeting with all resident coordinators were held in April 2019 at the headquarters of the Commission in Santiago, in the framework of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. ECLAC has been working in close collaboration on different initiatives with the Regional Director of the Development Coordination Office, the country representatives and United Nations country teams. Those initiatives include participation in the design and implementation of a joint programme with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under the leadership of the resident coordinator, to support the Government of Argentina in the implementation of the national early childhood strategy, focusing on strengthening childcare services at the national and subnational levels, which was awarded a grant from the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

28. ECLAC has also organized, jointly with other entities of the United Nations development system, regional intergovernmental meetings and policy dialogues. Those meetings included the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized jointly with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in January 2020; the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in October 2019, organized jointly with UNDP; and the meetings of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized jointly with UNFPA.

29. ECLAC and UNFPA have continued their decades-long practice of adopting joint annual workplans, which, in 2019, included the provision of extensive technical assistance to countries in the region in the context of the preparations for the 2020 round of censuses and the regional workshop on strengthening statistical capacity for censuses and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Caribbean, co-organized with UNFPA and the Caribbean Community.

30. The Commission collaborated with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on population estimates and projections for *World Population Prospects 2019* and has been working closely with the regional offices of the International Organization for Migration on the preparations for the regional review of the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. A study on Afrodescendent populations was carried out in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

31. In 2019, ECLAC developed a joint workplan with UN-Women, which included the online Briefing of the Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Machineries for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis from a Gender Perspective, which was held on 8 April 2020; support for the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean; and an agreement for strengthening the Colombian Women's Observatory. In a similar vein, in the framework of the Spotlight Initiative, ECLAC is carrying out a study on measuring femicide in association with UNDP.

32. ECLAC has consolidated its partnership with the World Food Programme regarding the provision of hard evidence on the long-term social and economic costs of not combating malnutrition, in terms of productivity and economic growth. Technical assistance provided to the African Union through a partnership with the

World Food Programme and the African Union Commission has enabled the preparation of similar studies in several African countries within the framework of the Cost of Hunger in Africa initiative. ECLAC and the World Food Programme are also working together in Haiti on a new social protection and promotion strategy and the estimation of the costs involved in the implementation of such a strategy.

33. As part of its long-standing partnership with UNICEF, in 2019, studies on the rights of children of African descent, childhood in urban contexts and a comparative report on childhood in the digital age were published and discussed in policy dialogues. Work is currently under way regarding options to support the region in facing the COVID-19 crisis from the perspective of children, poverty and social investment in childhood policies. ECLAC is also collaborating with the ILO Regional Office on the prevention and eradication of child labour through technical assistance and subnational studies in nine countries.

34. In the framework of the regional inter-agency task team on youth, ECLAC is coordinating the preparation of an inter-agency document on youth and the 2030 Agenda. To date, United Nations Volunteers, UN-Women, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNICEF and UNFPA have contributed towards its preparation. ECLAC has collaborated with United Nations Volunteers in the translation of documents through its online volunteer platform. Jointly with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, ECLAC has carried out an expenditure study on HIV/AIDS in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

35. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process has allowed ECLAC to enhance its partnership with relevant international and regional organizations. In response to a request for technical support from the ministries of environment of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Uruguay, ECLAC partnered with the United Nations Environment Programme to build a regional initiative for the transparency and enforcement of nationally determined contributions by developing long-term climate strategies. In addition, ECLAC and UNEP are partners in the regional programme EUROCLIMA+, funded by the European Union, in which they promote regional activities on monitoring nationally determined contributions, climate finance and green fiscal policy initiatives.

36. As part of the preparatory activities for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, ECLAC and ILO collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of the Environment of Chile in the organization of a regional seminar on just transition and green jobs (Santiago, October 2019). During the Conference of the Parties, ECLAC took part in several inter-agency initiatives, such as the organization of a “One United Nations” side event on realizing the right to participation to enhance climate action, and participated in a joint United Nations submission in the framework of the Action for Climate Empowerment agenda (Doha work programme on article 6 of the Convention) with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNEP, UN-Women, UNICEF, ILO, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity. In March 2020, ECLAC collaborated with the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation and the Ministry of the Environment of Chile and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in the organization of a regional conference on science-based public policy for climate change.

37. Over the four years of the negotiation process that resulted in the adoption of the Escazú Agreement and the current process of its entry into force, ECLAC has partnered with many entities, both from the United Nations system and the regional institutional landscape. UNEP is one of the main collaborating agencies, including on the development of the Observatory on Principle 10 in Latin America and the

Caribbean, a public platform containing laws, regulations, policies, case law and treaties applicable to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

38. ECLAC partnered with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in the design and implementation of the Latin American and Caribbean urban and cities platform, which is aimed at contributing to the formulation of urban policy and monitoring of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, providing both an observatory on laws, regulations and urban statistics and an e-forum on urban policies. In addition, the Commission has collaborated with UN-Habitat on different activities in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 11 in the Caribbean, including the subregional policy dialogue workshop “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (Port of Spain, June 2019).

39. In 2019, ECLAC collaborated closely with the International Fund for Agricultural Development on two technical assistance projects in Central America: technical assistance for the Government of El Salvador to identify barriers and opportunities to foster investment from the diaspora; and a four-year project aimed at generating the analysis needed to understand the “new rurality” with a focus on persistent structural gaps in order to reduce rural poverty and inequality and foster structural transformation in middle-income countries. It also continued its partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, including the joint publication of *The Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Americas: a Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019–2020*.

40. Together with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECLAC co-organized two regional capacity development initiatives on the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Caribbean. The learning conference on “Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Caribbean region” (Trinidad and Tobago, May 2019) and the regional workshop on “Integrated policies and policy coherence for the Sustainable Development Goals” (Trinidad and Tobago, November 2019) provided a forum for discussing challenges and their potential solutions regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national and local levels. The activities involved the active participation of the United Nations resident coordinator offices from Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

41. In the context of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2019, ECLAC partnered with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to organize the side event “Building back better: reckoning with size in pursuit of resilience” to discuss the need to integrate resilience-building into sustainable development planning and practice in the Caribbean; and contributed, with the Department, to the preparation of the regional policy brief on accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7.

42. ECLAC also contributed, with the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development and the Institute for Water, Environment and Health of the United Nations University, to the organization of a regional workshop on using the policy support system for Sustainable Development Goal 6 to facilitate water-related sustainable development for Latin America and the Caribbean (San José, 4 and 5 March 2020).

43. ECLAC and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) partnered for the regional launching of the *Trade and Development Report 2019*, published by UNCTAD. ECLAC is also a member of eTRADE for All, an initiative coordinated by UNCTAD, which is focused on helping developing countries to create the capacities necessary to participate in and benefit from electronic commerce. Within the framework of the trade in value added initiatives, ECLAC has collaborated with the World Trade Organization, Eurostat, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the other regional

commissions. ECLAC and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States jointly prepared a report on the status of implementation in South America of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

44. ECLAC has actively participated in the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals to support the implementation of the Goals. ECLAC has also collaborated with the International Telecommunication Union on the promotion of the World Summit on the Information Society action lines and the programme of regional cooperation activities under the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2020). ECLAC has continued to support the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, a coalition of United Nations organizations led by the International Telecommunication Union, by collecting data from household surveys on ICT access and use in sixteen Latin American and Caribbean countries.

B. Collaboration with other regional commissions

45. ECLAC has continued its collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on the joint implementation of two Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation trust fund projects, in which the Asian Development Bank has also participated; and a project to enhance value chain integration between Asia and Latin America.

46. ECLAC has also implemented several Development Account projects in collaboration with ESCAP, ECE and UNEP. Jointly with ECE and ESCAP, the Commission implemented several activities within the framework of the Regional Observatory for Sustainable Energies. ECE was a key partner in the negotiations of the Escazú Agreement, having participated in all meetings, and is continuing to share knowledge and experience in preparation for the entry into force of the Agreement. In partnership with ECE, the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization and the Special Envoy for Road Safety, ECLAC organized the Caribbean Road Safety Regional Workshop (Kingston, 8 and 9 August 2019). ECLAC and ECE have jointly explored ways to better use public-private partnerships to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the area of infrastructure. Coordination and valuable exchange of experiences has been systematic with the other regional commissions in such areas as issues related to population ageing, the Commission on Population and Development and the regional reviews on the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

47. In the context of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2019, ECLAC collaborated with the other regional commissions, the Regional Commissions New York Office and the Office of the President of the Economic and Social Council to organize a ministerial lunch for all ministers attending the event to discuss regional trends and experiences with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ECLAC also facilitated two discussion and knowledge-sharing activities with the Economic Commission for Africa, ESCAP and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia during the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

C. Partnerships with regional and subregional integration organizations

48. At the ministerial meeting during which Mexico presented its workplan for its presidency pro tempore of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) (Mexico, January 2020), ECLAC renewed its commitment to continue its support for CELAC in such areas as trade facilitation, climate change and digital integration. More recently, the presidency pro tempore of CELAC requested technical support from ECLAC to address the COVID-19 crisis.

49. In collaboration with the secretariat of the Central American Integration System, ECLAC has continued to contribute to the deepening of regional integration in the subregion. During 2019, ECLAC collaborated with the System's sectoral councils of ministers for the economy and trade, finance, energy and transportation. In that regard, ECLAC collaborated with the System's Council of Energy Ministers to disseminate the Central American Sustainable Energy Strategy 2030 and the road map for the universalization of modern energy services (Sustainable Development Goal 7). In November 2019, ECLAC initiated activities for the design of the first regionally determined contribution for the energy sector (the first such regionally determined contribution outside the European Union), an initiative proposed by the ministers of energy and the environment of the member countries of the Central American Integration System in the framework of the preparatory meeting for the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (San José, October 2019). Finally, ECLAC continued its work with the Central American Integration System in the context of the implementation of a three-year project on public investment, disaster risk reduction and sustainable and inclusive adaptation, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and another project aimed at strengthening subregional value chains, for example, for tourism and cocoa.

50. A framework agreement was signed with the Social Institute of MERCOSUR to cooperate on initiatives relating to social protection and social inclusion. Similarly, discussions are under way on possible collaboration with the technical group on development and social inclusion of the Pacific Alliance on the preparation of a social observatory of the member countries and the measurement and analysis of multidimensional poverty.

51. ECLAC has signed an agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank on institutional strengthening of the ministries of finance of the region, and during October and November 2019 the two institutions provided technical cooperation to the Government of the Bahamas for the damage and loss assessment following Hurricane Dorian. ECLAC has continued to collaborate with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Development Bank of Latin America on developing and updating the Economic Infrastructure Investment Data for Latin America and the Caribbean database.

VI. Conclusions

52. Latin American and Caribbean countries have made strong efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, demonstrating significant advances towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. ECLAC has provided them with continuous support in that endeavour. However, current trends, even more so in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, reveal that a critical point has been reached by the region on the global road map towards 2030.

53. Through the close relationship built up with member States, concrete and relevant results have been achieved. The coherent and systematic work in equitable sustainable development has allowed ECLAC to set forth innovative framework proposals, such as the big environmental push, an initiative aimed at inducing profound and transformative changes in production and consumption patterns based on green investment and business opportunities that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Special emphasis will be placed on issues related to inclusive, sustainable and smart cities to fully capitalize on the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution. That approach, while giving due consideration to the interconnection with the rural dimension, has a very special significance in a region with an urbanization index of over 80 per cent of its population.

54. However, trends identified for several indicators show that, if countries continue on their current track, it will not be possible for them to attain some Sustainable Development Goal targets. Public policies to implement the 2030 Agenda are therefore required now more than ever. Moreover, to evaluate the impacts of those policies, it is crucial to determine if negative trends are being reverted and positive trends reinforced.

55. To implement the 2030 Agenda, and even more so in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new multilateralism is required, one that strengthens trust in international cooperation and in collective action towards the provision of global and regional public goods, and that also increases resilience to financial, trade and technological shocks. The economic and social impact of COVID-19 will affect Latin American and Caribbean countries across five channels: a decline in economic activity among its major trade partners; a decrease in commodity prices; a disruption of global value chains; lower demand for tourism services; and an increase in risk aversion, affecting financial flows. Negative growth and the rise in unemployment will translate into increased poverty levels among the population of the region. The challenge ahead is enormous. However, it is also an opportunity to embrace the benefits of multilateral actions and to open up the space for a much-needed debate on a new, inclusive, sustainable and equitable development model.