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**REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF THE COUNTRIES
OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Virtual meeting, 15–18 March 2021

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was held in a virtual format from 15 to 18 March 2021. The meeting was convened by the Government of Costa Rica, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), under the auspices of the Commission, by virtue of resolution 700(XXXVI), adopted by the member States at the thirty-sixth session.

Attendance¹

2. The following States members of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development were represented at the meeting: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

3. The following associate members of ECLAC were also represented: Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, Cayman Islands, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Sint Maarten, Turks and Caicos Islands and United States Virgin Islands.

4. Attending as observers were the following non-Forum-member States members of the Commission: Canada, France, Italy, Norway, the Republic of Korea and Spain.

5. The United Nations Secretariat was represented at the meeting by the Deputy Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators and representatives of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Development Coordination Office (DCO), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Regional Commissions New York Office (RCNYO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

6. The following United Nations bodies were also represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Bank and World Food Programme (WFP)

¹ See annex 4 for the full list of participants.

7. Also attending were representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), Andean Community, Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Central American Integration System (SICA), Central American Monetary Council, EU-LAC Foundation, Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB), Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS), Inter-American Conference on Social Security (ICSS), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), International Youth Organization for Ibero-America (OIJ), Italian-Latin American International Organization (IILA), Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture, ParlAmericas and South American Common Market (MERCOSUR).

8. Carlos Alvarado, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, the country that is chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, participated as guest of honour.

9. In addition, the meeting was attended by representatives of legislative powers of the region, financial institutions and development banks, cooperation bodies, non-governmental organizations, local governments, the private sector and academia who figure in the list of participants.

Chair

10. The fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was chaired by Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC.

B. AGENDA

11. The Forum adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Presentation of the document *Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, fourth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean
3. Dialogue on a resilient and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving the 2030 Agenda
4. Building forward better in the Caribbean post-COVID-19: critical issues to keep the 2030 Agenda in sight

5. Contribution of the United Nations system
 - Presentation of the 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Presentation of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway)
 - Issue-based coalitions and working groups
6. Panel discussions
 - Health and the economy —a false dichotomy?
 - Crisis, recovery and transformation in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals
7. Closing round table “Building an inclusive and effective pathway to achieve the 2030 Agenda within the context of the decade of action and post-pandemic recovery from COVID-19”
8. Other matters
9. Conclusions and recommendations

C. PROCEEDINGS

12. At the opening session, moderated by Adriana Bolaños Argueta, Minister ad interim for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, statements were made by Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York; Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and Carlos Alvarado, President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

13. The Minister ad interim for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, welcomed the participants and opened the fourth meeting of the Forum.

14. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that the Latin American and Caribbean region was particularly affected by the crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and faced the worst economic contraction in its history, potentially erasing the progress made towards equality, and especially gender equality. Countries’ rapid responses through unprecedented fiscal and social measures had saved millions of lives and prevented an increase in poverty. However, there were five key areas for action: (i) making COVID-19 vaccines a global public good, especially through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility, which should be given full support; (ii) providing institutional support to financing for development —critical for middle-income countries and small island developing States (SIDS) where debt and vulnerability to climate change were linked— and to the proposals for debt service suspension, the Fund to alleviate COVID-19 economics (FACE) proposed by Costa Rica, the Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap initiative and the proposed establishment of a Caribbean resilience fund;

(iii) aligning policies on COVID-19 and climate action towards renewable energy, sustainable mobility and tourism, digitalization, health-care manufacturing, the bioeconomy and the circular economy; (iv) building an equal future where women could take their rightful place in society; and (v) making the most of the repositioning of the regional United Nations development system.

15. Upcoming international conferences such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development offered opportunities to help shape a common future and Latin America and the Caribbean had much to offer, as countries could help the world anchor the recovery from COVID-19 in the longer-term promises of the 2030 Agenda. The challenges ahead were significant, but the region had the capacity to drive transformative change over the next ten years. The United Nations would remain a steadfast partner at that pivotal moment in building a better future for all.

16. The President of the Economic and Social Council and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York said the world was at a turning point and the first order of business needed to be equality in the distribution of and access to COVID-19 vaccines. To respond to and recover from the pandemic, the international community needed to mobilize the financing required by developing countries. In the Economic and Social Council there was emerging agreement on the actions needed. The first action was debt relief. At the dawn of this crisis, the Prime Minister of Pakistan had proposed a global initiative on debt relief as the quickest way to provide fiscal breathing space to developing countries. The Group of 20 (G20) Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) was welcome, but should be expanded and extended until the end of the COVID-19 crisis. The private sector, which held most of the debt of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), should be brought into the debt suspension exercise, and that should be utilized to restructure debt on a case-by-case basis. An architecture for sustainable debt management also needed to be built. Second, least developed and middle-income countries required additional liquidity to invest in recovery. Developed countries had injected over US\$ 14 trillion into their economies but developing countries did not have access to reserve currencies to create such liquidity. The creation of new special drawing rights (SDR) by IMF and the redistribution of developed countries' unutilized quotas to developing countries would be critical.

17. The United States Secretary of the Treasury had recently recommended the creation of 500 billion new SDRs, which could generate US\$ 56 billion in new money for the region. Costa Rica's proposed FACE initiative could also provide significant avenues for developing countries to overcome the liquidity crisis and build back sustainably, and it was hoped that it would be adopted by international financial institutions. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) proposal for the establishment of a liquidity and sustainability facility also deserved international support. Third, much more concessional financing needed to be mobilized for countries most in need, as the poorest could not afford to take on new debt. Under the Eighteenth Replenishment of International Development Association Resources (IDA18), US\$ 30 billion had been allocated for concessional financing and that figure must be at least doubled. Donor countries had to finally fulfil their promise to provide 0.7% of gross national product (GNP) as official development assistance (ODA). Regional and subregional financial institutions should increase capitalization and adopt more flexible lending criteria. The illicit flows of funds from poor countries had to be stopped and the climate finance pledge of US\$ 100 billion annually had to be honoured; the 14 recommendations of the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda (FACTI Panel) should be endorsed and implemented. Investment in sustainable infrastructure was also needed, to prevent a climate catastrophe. The creation of a public-private facility for sustainable infrastructure investment under the auspices of the United Nations had been proposed to help developing countries bridge the existing infrastructure investment gap. Systemic inequalities had to be addressed and Latin American and Caribbean countries and ECLAC had a vital role to play in promoting the transition to a more equal, dynamic and prosperous world.

18. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC expressed her appreciation for the commitment of the Government of Costa Rica and the participation of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Economic and Social Council, as well as the representatives of the various sectors that gave the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development its participatory nature. She said that five years earlier ECLAC had been entrusted with the task of creating a space for exchanges, to reflect the specific characteristics of the region in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, the Forum had proven to be a vital space in which to share lessons and challenges, not only relating to the emergency but also to the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to generate inputs for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The crisis had deepened serious structural problems and the unsustainability of the region's development model. In 2020, the pandemic had caused the sharpest economic contraction in 120 years, with rises in unemployment, labour informality, poverty and extreme poverty, and with more severe effects on rural areas, children and young people, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and migrants. One of the effects was a considerable outflow of women from the labour force, owing to the need to meet demand for care in the home, which had been a huge setback. The crisis had also highlighted large gaps in digital matters: 46% of children did not have access to tele-education. In view of this, she called for progress towards a care society with universal social protection, which would represent a major civilizational change, and for the establishment of a basic digital basket in the countries of the region, at a cost equivalent to 1% of GDP.

19. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC then said that the situation countries faced was a wake-up call about the risk of not achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the decade of action for the SDGs, the region should focus on strategic sectors in order to move towards sustainable development. In that regard, ECLAC had identified eight sectors that could drive progress towards the SDGs and a sustainable recovery: transition towards renewable energies; sustainable urban electromobility; the inclusive digital revolution; the health-care manufacturing industry; the bioeconomy; the care economy; the circular economy; and sustainable tourism. In 2020, social protection measures taken by governments had prevented poverty from rising much further. ECLAC therefore urged countries to maintain emergency transfers at least until 2021, and in the medium-term guarantee fiscally sustainable universal social protection. This would require progress towards new social and fiscal compacts, to guarantee health, food, education and digital inclusion, all of which were vital components of the efficiency of equality. Financing for sustainable development was another challenge, and particularly the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE) initiative to meet middle-income countries' urgent need for more concessional international financing and liquidity. External debt had increased in the region. Another serious problem was asymmetry with regard to climate change. ECLAC had therefore proposed other actions in the areas of liquidity distribution, SDRs, relief for Caribbean countries, capitalization of development banks, reform of the multilateral debt architecture and innovative instruments. It was also necessary to return to politics and to the role of the democratic State, which would not be possible without equitable access to vaccines. Collective action had to be re-energized, with a multilateral approach, based on public goods that would close the enormous gaps, and with more solidarity. The 2030 Agenda should be a basis for restoring the concepts of citizenship and multilateralism as irreplaceable instruments for creating public goods.

20. The President of the Republic of Costa Rica said the world had changed since the SDGs were drafted, and the comprehensive nature of the 2030 Agenda was under threat. The pandemic had revealed the large gaps in the region, and high levels of debt and limited fiscal space had hindered adequate responses to the crisis. This situation had been compounded, in the Caribbean and Central America, by vulnerability to climate change. Given the urgent need to speed up recovery, the capacity to invest in the future, in sustainable solutions and in the most vulnerable was imperative, avoiding the temptation to pursue recovery at all costs. The pandemic needed to be taken as a warning sign about humanity's pressure on ecosystems. The production and consumption

systems had reached their limit, placing the world at a crossroads that demanded a structural change in the development model to ensure a safe and healthy home for current and future generations.

21. He then said that the “new normal” needed to be truly new. Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) had to be updated, investments redirected towards carbon neutrality, and a common front formed to mobilize the resources needed to support countries to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Multilateralism remained fundamental, and solidarity and international cooperation were the only real way out of the crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean needed to speak with a strong and united voice for it to reshape the world order for the better. Regional consensus already existed, as expressed in the Political Declaration on a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean,² adopted at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, and the conclusions and recommendations of that fourth meeting of the Forum, and the region should put forward its proposals in all global discussions, in particular at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the 2021 Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up.

Presentation of the document *Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, fourth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 2)

22. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC presented the document *Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,³ the fourth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report highlighted that in a world in crisis, with slow growth, inequality and an environmental emergency, combined with an unprecedented health crisis exacerbated by the matrix of inequality, the region was facing the COVID-19 pandemic with severe pre-existing structural problems, compounded by geopolitical limitations on distribution of vaccines against COVID-19. All of that increased the possibility that the SDGs would not be achieved and put their comprehensiveness at risk. The strategy for a decade of action for the SDGs had to be realistic, build on progress, acknowledge the challenges of implementation and be aligned with a transformative recovery. ECLAC proposed a strategy for action: a big push for sustainability based on the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, a proposal that was endorsed by all of the member States of the Commission during the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, held in October 2020. There was a crisis of multilateralism, with geopolitical tensions, a new economic landscape and worn-out global governance models; structural gaps persisted, with insufficient growth, inequalities and the concentration of wealth; fragmentation of health and education services, inadequate social protection, mistrust and corruption led to social unrest. There were also global challenges such as biodiversity loss, the technological revolution and migration. The health crisis had claimed many lives in the region and ECLAC estimated substantial excess mortality and a six-month decrease in life expectancy. Risk factors such as age, sex, poverty, overcrowding and fragmented and unequal health systems were exacerbating the situation. There was also a care crisis in which women were particularly affected. Countries had implemented policy responses to address the pandemic, such as restrictions on movement (physical distancing), and allocated resources to the health system and to bolster incomes. The central challenge was progress with vaccination, given the hoarding of vaccines by some developed countries—which was why it was vital to support the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility of the United Nations and PAHO— limited financial and negotiating capacities to procure vaccines, and difficulties with infrastructure, logistics and primary health-care services for national distribution.

² See [online] <https://periododesesiones.cepal.org/38/en/documents/political-declaration-sustainable-inclusive-and-resilient-recovery-latin-america-and>.

³ LC/FDS.4/3/Rev.1 (see [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46696/1/S2100124_en.pdf).

23. The economic, social and environmental impacts of the pandemic occurred against the backdrop of a culture of privilege in the region, which had three features: difference was normalized as inequality and considered part of the natural order in the mindset of those who were in a position of privilege and of those who were subordinate; hierarchies were established for the benefit of whoever was in power at the time (according to class or bloodline, race, gender, birthplace, culture or a combination of these), which contributed to strong inertia in terms of power and inequality; and the culture of privilege was perpetuated by actors, institutions, rules and practices, generating asymmetries in multiple spheres. Thus, policy design or implementation was biased, distorted and ineffective (for example in the tax system, public safety, education, health and infrastructure). Disillusionment and anger signalled a breaking point in the continuity of a model associated with four decades of low growth, concentration of wealth and environmental deterioration. Institutions reproduced the behaviour of agents with greater economic and political power, and there was a rentier tendency based on the ownership of natural resources and the financial economy. The pandemic had magnified structural problems and it could be said that the region was facing a lost decade. Caribbean countries faced multiple vulnerabilities: more than 80% of the Caribbean population lived in areas below 5 metres above sea level, which exacerbated the consequences of climate change and disasters related to natural phenomena. They also depended heavily on imported food and other imported goods and faced high debt levels. The pandemic had led to a decline in tourism as tourist arrivals had plummeted by 64% in the first eight months of 2020.

24. The crisis increased the risk of reprimarization and hindered diversified industrialization, with a bigger impact on the sectors with the greatest potential for technological growth and a smaller impact on natural-resource-intensive sectors. The labour market was particularly hard-hit and unemployment in 2020 had reached 10.7%. Labour informality levels were high (54%) and only 47.2% of employed persons were affiliated with or contributed to pension systems. In terms of digital technologies, mobile broadband penetration stood at 70% and fixed broadband at 14%, but one third of the population had limited or no access to the Internet and 46% of children aged 5–12 lived in households with no Internet connection. More than 42 million households had no Internet connection, and, of those, half were in the two poorest quintiles of the population; 77% of rural households and 33% of urban households were not connected. The number of online companies had tripled, but only 21.3% of employed persons could work from home (around 3% in the first quintile and 70% in the fifth quintile). In terms of policy responses to the crisis, the countries of the region had strengthened health systems, supported household income and protected production capacity, devoting fiscal expenditure averaging 4.3% of GDP to that; they had implemented State guarantees amounting to 2.5% of GDP; and they had supported aggregate demand and maintained macrofinancial stability through conventional and non-conventional instruments. Non-contributory social protection in 2020 represented 1.25% of 2019 per capita GDP and covered 84 million households and 326 million people. Emergency transfers had limited the rise in poverty: without them, the number of people living in poverty would have been 230 million instead of 209 million and there would have been 98 million in extreme poverty instead of 78 million (the Gini index was 5.6% higher than in 2019).

25. On the environmental front, with the right policies, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on emissions could give the region time to comply with NDCs: lower emissions provided an additional 3–4 years to make the investments needed to fulfil conditional NDCs and 6–7 years to fulfil unconditional NDCs. Only one third of the 2030 Agenda targets were on track to be met. On the positive side, almost all countries in the region had mechanisms for implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and 31 of them had a coordination mechanism for its implementation and follow-up, although there was little involvement of planning authorities in the formulation and evaluation of pandemic response measures. The countries of the region had increased national and local voluntary reviews: worldwide, a third of the countries that would be presenting reviews for the third time in 2021 were from the region, and 28 of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean would have submitted their reports to the high-level political forum

between 2016 and 2021. It was necessary to foster new engines of growth with redistributive results, and overcome the gaps and the trap affecting middle-income countries. Progressive taxation was needed, as well as the closure of technological and investment gaps, taking into account data protection and cybersecurity, changing the conversation with civil society and the private sector, and moving from indifference to solidarity. Transformative recovery meant avoiding inertia and fragmentation of the economy, high institutional and managerial capacities for the State, and compacts that promoted democracy and multilateral cooperation. The challenges were to invest in the long term, to restore jobs, to make the technological revolution benefit the environment and inclusion, and to change consumption patterns in favour of sustainability.

26. Adriana Bolaños Argueta, Minister ad interim for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, said that the document prepared by ECLAC provided a road map and practical measures to set in motion processes leading to recovery and brought together in an integrative approach the different facets of the crisis, as well as a set of innovative proposals for action based on statistical analyses and projections. The environmental crisis, the climate crisis and the loss of biodiversity had made it clear that production and consumption patterns needed to change, and countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda had brought them face to face with the limitations of the development model and illustrated how fragile the recovery from the previous economic crisis was proving to be. All that was accompanied by a multidimensional crisis caused by the pandemic, whose severe economic, social and environmental consequences had been aggravated by the development models of the countries of the region, highlighting the urgent need for a transformation of production and consumption patterns. The recovery had to be transformative, and the new reality had to be sustainable, inclusive, innovative, green and decarbonized. It was important to formulate actions for post-pandemic recovery, and the State had a key role to play in the recovery process. It was vital to strengthen democracy in every country of the region. The dichotomy between economic growth and the protection of natural resources as public goods, to be protected nationally and internationally, had to be overcome. Multilateral economic and financial cooperation for recovery needed to be more effective and equitable, and proposals for debt relief for low- and middle-income countries should be supported, to enable their economic recovery. The crisis provided an opportunity to undertake reforms to build back better, with equality and sustainability.

27. John Agard, Director of the St. Augustine Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (STACIE) and Professor of Tropical Island Ecology in the Department of Life Sciences of the Faculty of Science and Technology of the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, and Co-Chair of the United Nations 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report task team, said that the title of the report referred to "building forward better", which was a positive outlook, and its mention of "actions" was critical as it was a report that was a driver for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The document was a valuable contribution to the *Global Sustainable Development Report* being prepared for launch in 2023, because it was data-based and highlighted how the impact of the COVID-19 crisis had added to existing structural problems in Latin America and the Caribbean, adding further economic, social and environmental obstacles to achieving sustainable development and causing another decade to be lost. The report highlighted how the 2030 Agenda led the region in a growth direction based on environmental sustainability and equality, which was different from the path being followed. Equality was of utmost importance for environmental sustainability and for tackling the challenges of climate change. Women were on the front line of the crisis and were the hardest hit. The report brought together information that provided a good overview on how countries were coping with the situation. Availability of vaccinations was a new dimension of inequality and joint vaccine production in the region was a particularly important area of opportunity. All the trends described showed that only a third of SDG targets were on course to be met, so Latin America and the Caribbean needed assistance. Some measures had positive effects on one target and negative effects on

another, so there was a need for policies that harmonized interactions between SDGs to support each other. A critical contribution of the report was laying out practical suggestions for bringing about transformative change via a new collaborative model between the State, the market and society, acting together in the best interests of development.

28. Luis Bértola, Professor of the Economic and Social History Programme in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of the Republic (Uruguay), said that ECLAC was a very valuable resource in Latin America and the Caribbean, and its history and thinking had made it a global interlocutor. Given the crisis, it had to be borne in mind that the world had changed and there was no longer any way to return to the previous reality: there was nowhere to go back to. Global governance was at a juncture where it was not clear whether there was a change in global hegemony or whether there was any possibility of building democratic multilateral governance. There was a deterioration in the tools of global governance. One example of this was the process of production and distribution of vaccines. The value of the work of ECLAC was that it had incorporated new elements into the traditional discourse, and although it was an economic commission, it had successfully mainstreamed a holistic and interdisciplinary approach. The document presented to the Forum addressed the problems in the world: the transformation of the world of work, automation and the difficulty of maintaining welfare systems, which were consolidated in developed countries and largely not consolidated in countries of the region. The pandemic had made transformative recovery a key concept. The document also referred to restructuring of the United Nations development system in the region, seeking synergies and cooperation among the agencies, funds and programmes of the system. The system also needed to be present at the local level, together with non-governmental organizations and research groups, for its work to have a real impact on the ground. The report also highlighted the need for greater regional integration, particularly in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase.

Dialogue on a resilient and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving the 2030 Agenda (agenda item 3)

29. This session was moderated by María del Pilar Garrido, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, who explained that her country had launched a strategy called the 2020–2050 Territorial Productive Strategy for an Inclusive and Decarbonized Economy, tracing the path for the country towards a decentralized, digitized and decarbonized economy by 2050, in line with what was proposed in the ECLAC report *Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. One of the aims of the strategy was to decentralize the country's economic development by increasing the sophistication and modernity of its economic activities, by leveraging and enhancing the human capital and capital funds of the different regions. Costa Rica was proposing a path of resilient recovery that would contribute to fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and guarantee growth with employment, closing structural gaps and increasing productivity with very low carbon emissions. In closing, the Minister expressed her interest in learning about how other countries viewed sustainable recovery, as well as the efforts each was making in that regard.

Statements by ministers and high-level authorities of the member States of ECLAC

30. E. Paul Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration of Antigua and Barbuda, cautioned that States had to find strategic solutions to the crisis that was eroding development in a region threatened by the effect of human actions on the environment and the extraterritorial reach developed countries' policies. With pre-existing fiscal space being erased, economies decimated, social services strained, and health care systems plunged into collapse, and poverty and inequality on the rise, it was urgent to design a holistic and inclusive recovery plan. Immediate attention must be given to challenges related to equitable access to vaccines, trade-related policies, access to new sources of finance and to

concessional financing for middle-income countries, impactful fiscal policy responses and bridging the digital divide. Economies must evolve to be able to absorb shocks. The objective must be to build back better; central to that was people-centred development, strengthened social systems, digitization and investment. Recovery provided a unique opportunity to transform the social development model in line with the 2030 Agenda, with cohesion, inclusiveness and solidarity.

31. Fernando Quiroga, National Director of International Relations and Institutional Communication of the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies of Argentina said that the 2030 Agenda was a fundamental element of his country's international policy. His country was developing a new matrix of targets and indicators, as well as a more realistic measurement system, and hoped that it would translate into better results in the framework of its upcoming voluntary national review, the country's third. Most importantly, the 2030 Agenda must be implemented in an inclusive manner, and translated into public policies that have an impact on the quality of life of the population, especially the most vulnerable, while respecting the environment. He underlined that in Argentina, the Agenda was being implemented according to the concept of territorialization, applied at multiple levels and by multiple actors. He said that the State played a central role in development but underscored the importance of public-private partnerships. Lastly, he said that external debt was a conditioning factor of development and it was necessary to create sovereign mechanisms for cooperation and international solidarity with a view to debt restructuring.

32. Sharon Brennen-Haylock, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas said that despite the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian and the pandemic, the country had delivered a budget designed to protect well-being, maintain economic stability and accelerate recovery. Overreliance on the tourism industry and the inability to absorb shocks had demonstrated the need for more flexibility and resilience. International support could provide the anchor for sustainable growth and help to ease the burden of vulnerable economies. Bahamas called for equal and affordable access to vaccines, expansion of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, consensus on concessional financing, the creation of specific resilience and recovery funds, and greater involvement of the business community to support income and employment. The time had come for a multidimensional vulnerability index to inform policy and development assistance. Developed countries' unilateral, insufficiently transparent and unappealable pronouncements on offshore international financial centres in developing countries exacerbated economic challenges. Lastly, she said that the United Nations would best serve its Member States by acting as interlocutor and supreme advocate in fora where they were underrepresented.

33. Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management of Belize, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that his country was highly vulnerable to external shocks as the key drivers of its small economy included agriculture and extractive industries, and tourism was the largest employer and source of foreign exchange. The strict containment measures imposed in response to COVID-19 had led not only to a massive reduction in positive cases and positivity rates but also significant contractions in consumption, investment, employment and government revenues, pushing public debt up to 134% of GDP. To mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic in a country already devastated by Hurricanes Eta and Iota, the government had expanded social protection for the most vulnerable. Medium-to long-term recovery plans were based on modernizing and building resilience in agriculture, promoting blue and green economies, inclusivity, digitization, partnerships and adequate resource allocation. The new government had signalled its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, creating a Ministry of Sustainable Development to serve as the nexus for achieving the SDGs.

34. Claudenice Custódio, Director for Relations with International Organizations and Civil Society of the Government Secretariat of the Office of the President of Brazil, thanked ECLAC for the excellent analytical work it had done on the obstacles to be overcome as a region in order to build forward better and

reaffirmed Brazil's commitment to the SDGs. She said that thanks to the strategy entitled the Sustainable Brazil Agenda, all actions undertaken by the government towards the achievement of the SDGs were being identified so that efforts and resources could be targeted to the sectors that needed them. A federal development strategy with a long-term action plan for 2021–2031 had also been drafted, the goal being to leave no one behind, and new environmental protection mechanisms were being sought. Lastly, she said that true sustainability called for sustainable markets and production processes, which not only prevented environmental degradation, but above all reduced inequality at local and global levels.

35. Karla Rubilar, Minister of Social Development and Family Affairs of Chile, said that the COVID-19 crisis had affected the achievement of many of the SDGs, tested the resilience of societies and institutions and increased structural gaps, shedding light on those that already existed (such as gender and digital gaps or urban/rural inequality) and had undermined the countries' recovery capacity. The health and economic, but above all social, effects would continue for a long time, so the only way out of the crisis was through a sustainable and inclusive recovery, which involved concrete political and social actions in favour of people. In Chile, national institutions had been strengthened for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the fulfilment of which was one of the country's main objectives in order to achieve a better future.

36. Daniel Gómez Gaviria, Sectoral Deputy Director General, National Planning Department (DNP), Colombia outlined, in a pre-recorded video statement, the country's commitments to strengthen its response to climate change: carbon neutrality, green growth, the fight against deforestation, a national system of protected areas, the promotion of renewable energies, the circular economy and others, in the framework of cross-cutting and intersectoral policies. In light of the impact of the pandemic, Colombia had invested heavily in health and had taken measures to cushion the shock to household incomes. The country had also approved temporary protection status for Venezuelan migrants. The vaccination process, key to addressing the pandemic and enabling recovery, sought to leave no one behind, including migrants. He stressed the need to intensify international cooperation and solidarity, and stressed that a global commitment to multilateralism was essential to address global challenges such as pandemics, climate change and others that might arise in the future.

37. Rodrigo Malmierca, Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of Cuba, said that the projections for the region, in terms of falling GDP and an increase in the number of people living in poverty, were discouraging and threatened the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In the face of that reality, it was necessary to strengthen and renew multilateralism, to pursue cooperation and solidarity and to seek concerted and innovative solutions. He also denounced the coercive unilateral measures imposed by the United States, which had intensified during the previous administration and had harmed tourism, remittance flows and the fuel trade, and had reinforced the financial persecution of operations to and from Cuba, in addition to threatening the supply of medical supplies and food. Cuba had been arbitrarily and unjustifiably included in the list of State sponsors of terrorism and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Helms-Burton Act), an extraterritorial and interfering law, had continued to be applied. The United States policy of economic warfare was unjustified and was the main obstacle to the country's development, and was also a systematic and flagrant violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. Even so, Cuba had made progress in its commitment to leave no one behind—reflected in the activities of the Cuban medical brigades and the five vaccine candidates that had been developed—and in 2021 it would submit its voluntary national review to the high-level political forum on sustainable development for the first time. The Minister concluded by expressing his hope that mechanisms would be put in place to ensure fair and equitable access to vaccines for countries in the region.

38. Gregory Riviere, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Planning of Dominica, said that successive natural disasters had prompted the government to institutionalize a resilient and sustainable development paradigm and the pandemic had compounded the achievement of the SDGs. Thanks to

Dominica's initial proactive containment measures, there were currently very few active COVID-19 cases, with no community spread. Although the country was still recovering from the destruction of Hurricane Maria, with a significant current deficit and plummeting revenues from taxes, international trade and domestic goods, the government had continued to invest heavily in pursuit of Goals 1 to 5 —maintaining all pre-pandemic social protection programmes and providing cash transfers to low-income and vulnerable households in response to COVID-19— and Goal 8. For fragile Caribbean economies to overcome the crisis, strengthened international partnership was needed in vaccination campaigns and particularly in debt forgiveness, digital transformation and women's entrepreneurship, the pooling of human and material resources for pandemic response, and the economic diversification of SIDS.

39. Verónica Aguilar, Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, said that the country maintained a firm commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which had been a State policy since 2018. The achievements in that framework included the reduction of the gender gap and of maternal mortality, and the increase in sanitation services, in the number of persons with disabilities entering the labour market and in the population with access to housing. Unfortunately, the eradication of multidimensional poverty was the country's main challenge. To combat it, strategies, plans, measures and concrete actions aimed at sustainable development and related mainly to SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 13, 14 and 15 had been implemented. However, no action would be sufficient without increased international cooperation and renewed multilateralism, including, inter alia, a guarantee of equal access to COVID-19 vaccines and the full involvement of the international public and private sectors in resource mobilization.

40. Alexandra Hill Tinoco, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, described, in a pre-recorded video statement, her country's strategy in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: immediate and highly effective measures prioritizing health, food, economic relief for the most vulnerable families, trade facilitation and support for businesses, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), had been taken. Despite the optimism inspired by the COVID-19 vaccine, the road to recovery from the pandemic was still long and would require enormous effort. In that regard, she reaffirmed the importance of international instruments in the region's advance towards sustainable development. She stressed the urgency of a better classification of countries, as the measurement of income based on GDP was not in keeping with a multidimensional approach. Finally, she expressed the hope that the global solidarity that had emerged over the past year would not be an unusual event, and encouraged reflection on how the pandemic had deepened the inequality of countries. Resilient and sustainable recovery would only be possible if the countries of the region acted together.

41. Oliver Joseph, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs of Grenada, said that the challenges facing the country were reflected in the National Sustainable Development Plan 2020–2035. Grenada's GDP and revenues had fallen significantly, and the financing gap had widened because of COVID-19. As a vulnerable SIDS, Grenada recognized that the management of marine resources and economic development were just as vital as resilience and combating climate change. ECLAC should continue to provide assistance not only in climate change mitigation but also in building human resource capacity and resilient infrastructure. Economic data did not reflect the true vulnerability of Caribbean countries and the Commission should work more closely with its member States to address the reclassification of middle-income countries as well as the European Union's blacklisting of Caribbean States as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. Renewable energy must also be high on the agenda going forward, given small island States' dependence on costly imported energy and their potential to generate clean energy through diverse sources. It would be beneficial for the Commission to develop new strategies to deal with post-COVID-19 challenges, drawing support from its alliance with Caribbean countries.

42. Manuel Alonzo, Undersecretary of Strategic Analysis for Development of the Secretariat for Planning and Programming (SEGEPLAN) of Guatemala, said that in his country, prudent macroeconomic and fiscal management in the context of the pandemic had resulted in a more limited impact than in the rest of the region, and a solid recovery in economic growth was expected in 2021, sustained by exports, MSMEs and the tourism sector. In particular, sustainable tourism harboured great potential to promote growth. The country's priorities were to continue efforts towards the rebuilding, reactivation and recovery of the economy (prioritizing key infrastructure projects for productivity and competitiveness) and to promote citizens' health (for example, by building more hospitals). Despite the uncertainty regarding the end of the pandemic, he stressed the importance not only of defining strategies but also of planning and implementing them efficiently to achieve the SDGs.

43. Wayne Henry, Director General of the Planning Institute of Jamaica spoke of the disproportionate socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on SIDS that, like Jamaica, were inherently vulnerable to natural disasters and climate events. As an upper-middle-income country, Jamaica had limited access to external development financing; yet, its ability to earn foreign exchange had been curtailed by the pandemic-induced collapse of tourism and GDP was projected to contract further. A green recovery strategy, digitization and targeted social protection were among the vital measures needed for sustainable recovery. Historic job losses in the first four months of the pandemic had prompted the government to allocate US\$ 183 million in an unprecedented fiscal stimulus to maintain consumption and protect enterprises and an alleviation programme to protect the vulnerable and sustain employment. Strategic partnerships with key development partners were critical to drive recovery; also required were strong links and a two-way knowledge transfer between academia and the marketplace. Long-term recovery efforts must ensure future debt sustainability and fiscal prudence to promote resilience to shocks while averting further increases to domestic debt ratios and focusing fiscal stimulus spending on areas that improved progress towards SDGs and enhanced social protection.

44. Martha Delgado Peralta, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, said the pandemic had shown that comprehensive policies to address systemic crises were still a long way off. In many countries, a large number of the SDGs had not been achieved, putting the most vulnerable at risk. In addition to addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development, solutions to the crisis had to be sustainable over time, and to that end, the 2030 Agenda as a road map was more relevant than ever. Mexico would submit its third voluntary national review in 2021 and called on all sectors to reflect on how to achieve the Agenda. She also recalled that the fifth retreat of the Group of Friends of Monterrey would contribute to the reflection on financing for development, inclusive and green recovery and building resilience to the effects of the pandemic by strengthening the multilateral response. Lastly, she welcomed the entry into force of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) and said that Mexico would continue working to achieve equitable, timely and fair access to COVID-19 vaccines, relying on collaboration and the sharing of information with other countries in the region.

45. Paul Oquist Kelley, Minister-Private Secretary for National Policy of the Office of the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, said that the neoliberal model was incapable of self-reforming and favouring redistribution to achieve social equity and reverse the hyperconcentration of wealth that had occurred in recent decades and that had been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For that reason, it was clear that a new social contract was needed to address the pandemic and those to come, to achieve a net zero emissions society by 2050 in order to limit global warming, and to reduce poverty and inequality to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Since 2007, Nicaragua had been building a new social model based on solidarity and redistribution, which, among other things, guaranteed free education and health, had managed to bring electricity to 99% of households and had

resulted in the country placing fifth in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum. In conclusion, he said it was urgent to heed the call of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a global ceasefire, and to put an end to the unilateral coercive measures taken against the leftist governments of the region, the illegality of which amounted to a crime against humanity in times of pandemic.

46. María Inés Castillo, Minister of Social Development of Panama, said that the 2020s would be decisive in defining and implementing the actions that would determine not only the future of the 2030 Agenda, but also the future of millions of people who were suffering the consequences of a development model that had been called into question, and that was proving to be less and less inclusive and equitable and was failing to meet the needs of the population. The effects of the pandemic had worsened the problems inherent in that model, and those who had borne the brunt were those who had benefited least from development. That systemic and broad crisis had forced the region to adapt by innovating and applying new ways to work, study and coexist. The potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) to overcome barriers to access and participation had been demonstrated, but that potential depended on expanding access to technologies throughout the territory. Finally, she stressed that overcoming the pandemic required greater cohesion and solidarity, but that resilient recovery went beyond that: it required making cross-sectoral and coordinated decisions to close gaps, combat poverty and inequality, and ensure social justice and protection for those most disadvantaged.

47. Helena Felip Salazar, Director General of Multilateral Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, said that her country's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs had made it possible to promote public policies and concrete actions for sustainable development, and to strengthen the institutional architecture in that regard, achieving great progress in the social, economic and environmental fields. However, the pandemic had had deleterious effects on health, education, employment, poverty and food security, and exposed existing gaps. The pandemic had shown the need for greater investment in health and social protection, in addition to an improvement in economic resilience. She underscored the need to strengthen the values of multilateralism, the cornerstone of sustainable development, and to work collectively towards a sustainable recovery that would reduce the deep inequity gaps and focus on the most vulnerable.

48. Javier Abugattás, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Centre for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) of Peru, referred to his country's consensus-building platform, the Forum of the National Agreement, a mechanism in which civil society also participated and which had given rise to important reports, compacts and commitments, among others, for the protection of life and the fight against violence against women and the full exercise of their rights. He regretted the painful cases of violence and killings that, despite those commitments, continued to occur in the country, adding to the difficult situation resulting from COVID-19, and warned about serious mental health problems that were not being addressed. Finally, he spoke of the importance of having accurate and quality data from specific geographic areas, in order to understand the diverse cultural realities and to be able to issue early warnings, act and follow up in those cases where necessary.

49. Ricardo Menéndez, Sectoral Vice-President and Minister in the Ministry of People's Power for Planning of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, warned that the impact of the pandemic should not obscure the trade and economic wars being waged on some countries, including the blockade against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as a result of which the country had seen its income reduced by 99% and the cost of international financing increase by 2,000%, and was unable to access US\$ 5 billion that could be used to address the health crisis. He highlighted the usefulness of the SDGs in addressing the pandemic and post-pandemic, organizing the public policies of States and solving the root causes of inequalities, and emphasized their territorialization in the country as a way to prioritize attention to the areas

with the greatest difficulties. He referred to inequity in access to vaccines as an expression of the structural problem affecting the entire world and valued the role of ECLAC and the United Nations at the regional and international levels. There was a need for a profound agenda of democratization of all countries and support for the United Nations, especially in the face of attacks such as those to which the World Health Organization (WHO) had been subjected. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela proposed the creation of a bank of productive inputs, a food bank and a humanitarian fund, within the orbit of the United Nations, so that it could play an organizing role leading to a more just world.

50. Luis Madera, Director General of Economic and Social Development of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development of the Dominican Republic, said that his country was aware that, despite its excellent GDP figures and low incidence of food poverty before the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, that pandemic had shown that the gaps among its population had not really been closed. He stressed the need to improve planning and prevention capacities to deal with crises. To recover from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic in an inclusive, transformative and sustainable manner, the country would focus on social protection and the reduction of inequality gaps, environmental sustainability and risk reduction, and governance and digital transformation for resilience, which were themes aligned with long-term sustainable development strategies and goals. Dialogues, actors, sectors and issues related to sustainable development were fundamental factors that, when integrated into management, would place the Dominican Republic in a better position to overcome the crisis and move towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

51. Shawn Richards, Deputy Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, said that in its commitment to achieve the SDGs, the country had continued to make substantial investment across the areas identified in the 2030 Agenda, with a people-centred approach. Inclusive national development agendas were more critical than ever as the region suffered an unprecedented crisis. There was a need to foster a resilient economic recovery and avoid a return to the environmentally destructive “business as usual” model that eroded the hard-earned gains of the past. Recovery must be supported by investment and behavioural changes that reduced the risk of and improved resilience to future shocks. The impacts of the current health crisis would be nothing compared to the effects of climate change which, if unabated, would affect the health and survival of the region’s communities. He called on the international community to support the use of the multidimensional vulnerability index —the most appropriate metric capturing the true fragility of SIDS— and urged participants to use their influence to ensure that the region was not left behind in vaccine distribution.

52. Gale T. C. Rigobert, Minister of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development of Saint Lucia, said, in a pre-recorded video statement, that sustainable growth had long been an ambition of Caribbean leaders, but COVID-19 had hit those nations hard, its effect on tourism almost crippling their economies. Greater efforts were needed: it was increasingly evident that the region’s biodiversity and ecosystems, and nurturing and protecting green and blue economies presented opportunities for sustainable recovery. Continued promotion of innovation and science and technology was essential as countries charted a recovery path. There was no choosing between addressing climate change and dealing with the pandemic: effective solutions for both must be found and no effort must be spared in minimizing the pandemic’s impact on young people and avoiding setbacks to progress taken for granted. The region must unite to increase children’s resilience to combat future global crises by harnessing environmental resources, and invest together in shared technological advancement to help prepare the Caribbean for a post-COVID-world that would rely more heavily on science and technology.

53. Ricardo González Arenas, Director General for Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, highlighted his country’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: their multidimensional, cross-cutting and comprehensive nature was key to development that left no one behind.

That commitment was reflected in the four voluntary reviews submitted by the country. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic response, the SDGs were an indisputable guide, as they were aligned with the needs highlighted by that crisis and their follow-up allowed for the optimization of limited resources through cross-cutting responses. He also welcomed the document presented by ECLAC and appreciated its timely recommendations for the region's recovery. He highlighted support for the concept of development in transition; categorization based on per capita income indices was problematic, as it ignored persistent structural gaps and limited access to financing and international cooperation. In order to emerge from the crisis caused by the pandemic and move towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, it was necessary to take into account the different realities of the countries, and ECLAC was helping, within the framework of the United Nations, to give the region a voice on the international stage.

Statements by ministers and high-level authorities of the associate members of ECLAC

54. Vanessa Toré, Director of Foreign Economic Cooperation in the Ministry of Economic Development of Curaçao said that the pandemic had paralysed tourism and affected other sectors and the country was currently reopening borders, continuing vaccination roll-out and implementing medium and long-term employment, economic diversification and growth strategies for a sustainable recovery in line with the prioritized SDGs. As in other SIDS, specific challenges and risks must be considered in planning for sustainable development, and countries must join forces, sharing and building capacity. The embrace of new technologies had proved timely as COVID-19 had pushed the implementation of the SDGs online. One example was the creation of a virtual platform for an inter-island network supporting SDG delivery to communities furthest behind. Curaçao welcomed innovation that enhanced economic development, including digital nomad and investor incentives and had developed —with United Nations assistance— a green export strategy targeting several areas, while engaging dialogue with other countries of the region to facilitate market access.

55. Andrew A. Fahie, Premier and Minister of Finance of the British Virgin Islands, welcomed the inclusion of the associate members of ECLAC in the discussions of the Forum and, in particular, the high-level meeting on the challenges faced by associate members of ECLAC in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held prior to the Forum and which he had chaired in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) of ECLAC. The representatives of the 13 associate members had highlighted issues related to administrative capacity, policy expertise, technology transfer and financial resources, all compounded by COVID-19 and the climate emergency. Associate members had also benefitted from the presentations from representatives of CARICOM, OECS other United Nations entities on the support provided during the pandemic and for recovery from the 2017 hurricanes. Member States and associate members required further dialogue on achieving the SDGs and the proposal for a follow-up meeting in 2022 was endorsed by Costa Rica. Speaking in his national capacity, he said it was time to strengthen the resolve to defeat COVID-19 and promote sustainable development, green growth and climate resilience. There were currently no active cases in the British Virgin Islands; the pandemic had however decimated the economy. The government had rolled out an economic stimulus package and continued to support vulnerable populations and struggling businesses. His country's inclusion in the COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Response Plan for the Eastern Caribbean had provided vital technical and financial assistance for social protection and economic resilience. A modest recovery was projected over the coming months thanks to the reopening of the tourism sector in December 2020, the vaccination campaign and robust public health measures. A post-hurricane national development plan was also in development. In closing, he said that support had also been received from ECLAC, UNDP and the Resident Coordinator Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

56. In light of the ideas raised in the dialogue on resilient and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, the moderator highlighted the importance of social inclusion, human rights, the faster implementation of the 2030 Agenda and new financing mechanisms to achieve that,

new ways of understanding territory and the production matrix, the strengthening of economic activity and its sophistication, the decoupling of growth from carbon emissions and the leveraging of the most knowledge-, technology-, innovation- and research and development-intensive sectors, and of ensuring that the COVID- 19 pandemic served to advance, especially in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in the aspiration of all to guarantee more sustainable development.

Member States of the Commission that are not part of the Forum

57. Roland Dubertrand, Ambassador of France to Chile, reiterated his country's and the European Union's firm commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the fight against climate change. France had been the first country to adopt a green budget in September 2020 and, in 2015, had passed the Energy Transition for Green Growth Act with a view to eliminating its carbon footprint by 2050. In addition, France was modernizing its traditional official development assistance policy (the French legislature was currently debating a programming bill on inclusive development and combating global inequalities), making it more effective and efficient and geared towards global public goods, gender issues, energy transition and the fight against inequality. The European Commission was committed to combating climate change with new targets to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 and aimed to increase that target through the European Green Deal; energy transition would be a priority in its relations with the world and with Latin America. The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) would be a pivotal moment for international efforts in that regard. He stressed that in 2021, the challenge for countries was to set themselves on a path of economic and social recovery and accelerate the energy transition towards a sustainable development model. The European Union remained ready to strengthen political dialogue with Latin America and the Caribbean, as the countries of both regions had much in common, not least in the area of sustainable development, and could do more together.

Presentations by civil society

58. Next, Sandra Castañeda, representative of civil society, presented the declaration of the civil society mechanism on civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean in light of the decade of action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.⁴ She expressed the concern of civil society organizations about the grave situation in the region five years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and expressed the need for political and social transformation and changes in the development paradigm to strengthen democratic systems, reform tax systems to ensure redistributive justice and combat evasion and avoidance, promote decent work, strengthen health and education systems, encourage the use of disaggregated data to plan inclusive responses, monitor the influence of fundamentalisms in political spaces, respect the commitments made in the context of international cooperation and ratify and implement international instruments, care for the environment and protect the lives and human rights of all, especially the most vulnerable.

59. Christian Guillermet-Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, expressed gratitude for the participation in the dialogue on resilient and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and said it had been extremely productive.

⁴ See annex 3.

Building forward better in the Caribbean post-COVID-19: critical issues to keep the 2030 Agenda in sight
(agenda item 4)

60. This session was moderated by Diane Quarless, Chief of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. Statements were made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Christian Guillermet-Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, Marsha K. Caddle, Minister of Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados; Dean Jonas, Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda; Roshan Parasram, Chief Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago; Kari Grenade, Macroeconomic Adviser of the Ministry of Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development of Grenada and Chairwoman of the Technical Working Group of the National Sustainable Development Plan 2035; Andrew Lee, Acting Director-General of e-Learning Jamaica Co. Ltd; Terry Ince, Founder and Convener of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago; and Birgit Gerstenberg, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Belize and El Salvador.

61. The Chief of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean said the session would cover the critical issues that needed to be addressed to prevent the Caribbean's sustainable development aspirations from being undermined by COVID-19 and would examine strategies for resilience and recovery. She called on the participants to share success stories across critical sectors. She then gave the floor to the Executive Secretary of ECLAC and the Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, for their opening remarks.

62. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the measures implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 had exacted a heavy toll on the economic, social, and psychological well-being of Caribbean citizens. Consideration needed to be given to how to re-ignite growth and recover jobs in the Caribbean post-COVID-19, exploring options for financial support to prevent debt from spiralling and examining how to safeguard the welfare of women and children who had been disproportionately affected by lockdowns, school closures and job losses in the informal economy in particular. There was an opportunity to address both new and long-standing issues that continued to compromise the development trajectory of Caribbean States. To be resilient, the economy of the future would need to be diversified and would require a skilled workforce that could benefit from the new world of work in the post-COVID-19 era. Broad investment in technology was vital to facilitate education system reform. In the subregion, an innovative strategy for effective management of non-communicable diseases remained extremely important.

63. The Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, in his capacity as Chair of ECLAC, said that it was important for the regional agenda to include not only the Caribbean's challenges but also its strengths. Costa Rica was committed to finding solutions for a sustained and inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic was practice for another devastating threat: the climate crisis. The relationship with nature had reached a limit. The effects of climate change exacerbated structural problems in the region and had an impact on economies, increasing vulnerability and directly affecting the security of people, particularly the most vulnerable. The pandemic had affected social protection systems, inequality and public debt levels, and limited governments' fiscal space. In addition, the middle-income countries in the region had difficulty accessing financing, so Costa Rica welcomed innovative mechanisms, such as the debt for climate change adaptation swap, the proposed creation of a Caribbean resilience fund and the inclusion of clauses for events such as hurricanes and pandemics in loan conditions. Economies needed to be greener and bluer and nature-based solutions would consolidate an innovative and transformative consumption and production model, as well as being good business. Global warming and the loss of biodiversity had to be stopped. Strategic approaches were needed to address the specificities of the Caribbean subregion and move towards the SDGs, fostering

greater linkages in the region through trade and investment, and South-South and triangular cooperation. Opportunities should be identified and capitalized on to achieve growth, equity and environmental sustainability in the Caribbean, with a view to a more equal and inclusive subregion.

64. The Minister of Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados reflected on the new approaches to tourism that could be adopted in her country and said the pandemic had shown the importance of nutrition security; the region was dealing with chronic non-communicable diseases that had compromised the ability to recover from a health perspective. The health crisis had to be prevented from leading to a debt crisis and the social and financial collapse of the social and economic systems. There was need for a new mechanism and a revision of the global financial architecture that would provide the means of implementation for sustainable development in island economies, emerging economies, and lower- and middle-income countries. There was also a need for a new way to allocate special drawing rights to ensure that middle-income countries vulnerable to the debt crisis received support, for a more sustainable approach to social protection and for a new deal for human development in the countries of the region, including a change in the education model.

65. The Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda said that although the pandemic had caused significant setbacks to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Government of his country remained committed to the SDGs. In the health-care sector, assistance received from various sources was being used to improve infrastructure and capabilities to respond to the pandemic. The Ministry of health had launched a national technical working group to assist in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in the country. A number of social protection initiatives were in place to support members of the population in need of assistance, and the Government was exploring the possibilities offered by the blue economy, particularly aquaponics, to provide employment opportunities, increase food production and improve food security to diversify and strengthen the economy in the face of unforeseen or unexpected shocks.

66. The Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago said that the initial response to COVID-19 in his country had been to increase testing capacity by establishing and expanding national and subnational testing sites. Very early on, a parallel health-care system had been established to treat confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19 in dedicated facilities to prevent the spread of infection and ensure the rest of the health sector could continue to function normally. Legislation had been introduced, including a requirement to wear masks in public, and the Government had suspended commercial air transport while maintaining cargo exports and imports. The success of a committee created that represented all of government showed that an all-of-government approach was needed in public health. A return to normal after the pandemic was unlikely; infection prevention and controls would have to change; economies would have to be diversified; and human resource capacity had to be built up in terms of the number and resilience of people, as people were the greatest resource in the fight against any disease.

67. The Macroeconomic Adviser to the Ministry of Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development of Grenada and Chairwoman of the Technical Working Group of the National Sustainable Development Plan 2035 said that policy needed to be mission-oriented, people-oriented and results-oriented. There needed to be a paradigm shift to a circular economy, because the extractive model was unsustainable. The economy was truly digital in the twenty-first century, so data systems needed to be improved. With regard to building resilience, consideration needed to be given to the kind of communities that the subregion wanted to build. Opportunities had to be created for men and women to own assets, not merely perform income-generating activities. Fundamental social security reform was also needed. With respect to planning, implementation hubs could be created in the region, to move from rhetoric to action. New inclusive governance models could be created, with real involvement of people in public policy and development, as well as new modes of fiscal governance to entrench fiscal discipline. Although COVID-19 vaccines gave reason to be optimistic, it was important not to fall into complacency.

68. The Acting Director-General of e-Learning Jamaica Co. Ltd said that the energy and enthusiasm of vaccine drives needed to be repeated with education. One major challenge for the Caribbean was the digital divide and broadband access was another major issue. Students needed to be made ready for a digitized economy. Providing digital devices was not enough, content was also needed. Governments needed to invest in platforms that enabled examinations to be conducted online.

69. The Founder and Convener of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago said that two areas were fundamental to ensuring no one was left behind: digitization and food security. Digitization touched all areas of society and enabled people to be reached where they were. Success in that area would require investment in robust telecoms infrastructure, free Wi-Fi for rural areas and digitization of public services. Services that had been moved online during the pandemic, such as those related to mental health and domestic violence, should be strengthened and extended. For food security, agriculture was fundamental and supply chains needed to be strengthened. Households should also be encouraged to grow crops, thus reducing the food import bill; spaces could be created for small farmers to grow their businesses; and more public-private partnerships could be forged for agribusiness. Actions had to involve all stakeholders; building forward better needed to be truly inclusive, involving the private and public sectors and civil society.

70. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Belize and El Salvador said that the crisis was an opportunity to leverage the global discussion on financing for development. Societies' vulnerabilities were not solely determined by per capita income, but also by the size and level of external integration of key sectors, the size of the informal sector, levels of inequality, climate and disaster vulnerability, dependency on remittances and debt burdens. The criteria for official development assistance urgently needed to be reviewed. United Nations country teams across the Caribbean had developed socio-economic response plans (SERPs), based on detailed vulnerability assessments, helping to identify opportunities in response to the pandemic. The success of the 2030 Agenda in the Caribbean depended on the capacity to vaccinate, access to internal and external financial resources, safe reopening of schools and social assistance for the most vulnerable. In the longer term, key policy shifts would be required on issues such as macroeconomics, inclusiveness, governance models, climate and disaster risk management. In closing, she provided some examples of successful actions by United Nations resident coordinators in the region.

71. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Cuba said that for Caribbean countries the impact of the pandemic multiplied challenges. These were countries that depended on the external sector and faced the onslaught of climate change, countries in special situations, less-developed countries, landlocked developing countries, SIDS and, in general, middle-income countries. Cuba proposed that reference to "Caribbean First" must continue to be made to resume implementation of the SDGs and address productive diversification, better access to markets and cooperation and solidarity, through cooperation, exchange of experiences, multilateralism and partnerships for development. There needed to be fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and health technology.

72. The Premier and Minister of Finance of the British Virgin Islands thanked ECLAC for creating the Forum as a platform for dialogue and the Executive Secretary of ECLAC for being an advocate for the Caribbean, not just for ECLAC member States, but also for associate members. He said the British Virgin Islands were formulating a sustainable development plan to guide work in the decade ahead, a process that was being led by a consultant provided by ECLAC. The territory's post-pandemic recovery was based on improving the public health situation. The number of COVID-19 cases had already been reduced to zero, and the situation was being consolidated through rapid vaccination. He thanked Cuba for providing medical staff to assist in the situation. Despite the challenges the Caribbean faced, from COVID-19 to climate change, the Caribbean subregion could emerge from the crisis to achieve the SDGs through innovation, new solutions, and partnerships.

73. The Gender Officer and SDG Focal Point of the Sustainable Development Goals Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Government of the Bahamas, in a written statement submitted to the Forum, said that the pandemic had had an unprecedented impact on the Bahamas, affecting its progress towards the SDGs. The country was continuing to respond resiliently to COVID-19 through a task force and emergency measures, and would distribute vaccines according to criteria set by the National COVID-19 Vaccine Consultative Committee. She thanked the Government of India for its donation of vaccines. Regarding climate change, the Ministry of Reconstruction and Disaster Preparedness was formulating a Resilient Recovery Policy. The country had also received a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank to assist micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and modernize the regulatory framework for environmental resiliency. Construction activities had been granted tax exemptions to contribute to building back better, reflecting the State commitment to SDG 9. Many social issues had been exacerbated by the pandemic, such as access to education and food security. The economy had been hit hard, and the government had responded with social assistance and support for businesses. In closing, she reaffirmed the statement in the ECLAC report that there needed to be a shift towards a more inclusive and sustainable development pattern, throughout the region.

74. The Chief of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, in her capacity as moderator, acknowledged the attention paid by the Chair of the Forum to the particularities of the Caribbean, since it was necessary to highlight issues such as the subregion's economic and financial challenges. She stressed the importance of testing for COVID-19 as a legal basis for authorities to implement measures, in particular related to travel and tourism. The circular economy was important to SIDS, as were social resilience, planning, tax governance, food security, education and women's empowerment. The United Nations system provided support to the countries of the region and partnerships were important in supporting the subregion in its progress towards sustainable development.

75. The Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, in his capacity as Chair of ECLAC, highlighted the contributions of the panellists in a space for sharing concerns and finding solutions to the problems of the region, particularly in the Caribbean, through innovation and a transformative, green and blue economy with inclusion. He said this could only be achieved with regional integration and the tools of multilateralism. A better future for the Caribbean went hand in hand with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Contribution of the United Nations system (agenda item 5)

76. This session was moderated by Christian Salazar, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Coordination Office, and statements were made by Christian Guillermet-Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica; Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also made statements, in their capacity as Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean.

77. The Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that the only way to address global challenges comprehensively and inclusively was through strong and effective multilateralism, and a global crisis required interlinked global responses, through the multilateral forum par excellence that was the United Nations. In that regard, the United Nations system was a great ally of the countries of the region, as it contributed to their development efforts, guided them in progress towards the SDGs and, during the pandemic, had taken timely and pertinent measures to help

them overcome the crisis. The Deputy Minister also expressed his satisfaction with the process of reforming the United Nations development system, which had led to the creation of the Regional Collaborative Platform and other initiatives that would enhance cooperation among the entities of the United Nations development system. Those initiatives would provide insight into the needs of countries, to know where to focus efforts and resources in order to provide appropriate responses, with the aim of preventing the 2030 Agenda from becoming a collateral victim of the pandemic and to make the structural changes necessary to achieve a transformative recovery focused on sustainable, inclusive, green and blue development.

78. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that over the past year, the COVID-19 crisis had dealt a setback to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean had responded to the health and socioeconomic crisis with urgency, and several had showed exemplary leadership in limiting transmission of the virus. The 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean showed how the United Nations had contributed to the response to the crisis at the regional level. The report sought to create greater transparency and accountability around the Organization's efforts and pointed to the vast potential of the Organization's regional assets. Thanks to the United Nations Secretary-General's reforms, the United Nations system was in a better position to support countries in the transition to a better future. She encouraged partners to continue contributing to the regional architecture and thanked the Executive Secretary of ECLAC and the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP for leading the preparation of the report. The United Nations system in Latin America and the Caribbean would be a steadfast partner for the region in developing more equal, just and sustainable economies and societies.

Presentation of the 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean

79. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said the 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean⁵ aimed to show how the United Nations system had contributed to supporting the response of the region's countries to the pandemic, while continuing joint actions to address the structural causes of inequality and promote a transformative recovery, with equality and sustainability. The report also aimed to increase the transparency, accountability and results-based management of its regional architecture. Importantly, a summary was therefore provided of the highlights of United Nations system-wide results at the regional level. The basis of the work undertaken came from the agreements reached by Member States on United Nations system reform to optimize structures and strengthen the collaboration of the regional commissions with the regional teams of the agencies, funds and programmes, resident coordinators and country teams.

80. The Executive Secretary described the Regional Collaborative Platform that had been launched in November 2020 to incorporate the duplicated coordination mechanisms that existed in the region and promote collaboration among the entities of the United Nations development system that operated at the regional level. The Platform provided those same entities with a space to consolidate an agile and effective structure for development in the region and to engage with other crucial actors, including member States, to learn about their needs first-hand and be able to focus regional efforts and resources on providing context-specific responses. She said the Platform was chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and its Vice-Chairs were ECLAC and UNDP. A total of 24 United Nations entities collaborated on the Platform, which she thanked for preparing that first transitional results report. The Executive Secretary also explained the context of the

⁵ See [online] https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2021/sites/default/files/lac_un_system-wide_report.pdf.

reform that gave rise to the creation of the Regional Collaborative Platform, and the five recommendations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for repositioning the United Nations development system. Progress had been made on implementation of those recommendations, including establishing the Regional Collaborative Platform and its functions; launching the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway);⁶ defining six issue-based coalitions (climate change and resilience, crime and violence, equitable growth, governance and institutions, human mobility, and most recently, financing for development) and two cross-cutting thematic working groups (one on youth and another on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls); establishing a working group on partnerships and communication; and renewing the regional operations management teams, among others.

81. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP said key United Nations system-wide results at the regional level included the support provided to Member States, United Nations country teams and United Nations resident coordinators in their response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, through evidence-based policy guidance, capacity-building support and establishment of regional knowledge-sharing and communication platforms. Inter-agency initiatives had been launched to provide integrated responses to the challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Joint actions had been taken in the different issue-based coalitions to address the structural causes of inequality and promote a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability in line with the SDGs. Actions had also been taken to foster cooperation and partnerships, to accelerate SDG implementation, such as intergovernmental meetings and dialogues, and exchanges through multi-stakeholder networks.

82. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP described the opportunities that existed for progress in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. He stressed that the Agenda's implementation should not be side-lined by the crisis caused by the pandemic and said that in that regard, voluntary national reviews were extremely relevant, and the voluntary local reviews had immense potential. Another area of future work was overcoming existing constraints and promoting a better recovery so as not to return to the pre-pandemic situation in areas such as the safe reopening of schools and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), universal access to vaccines, gender-sensitive measures and financing for development. To that end, it was necessary to accelerate policies to transform the production matrix, strengthen effective governance, rethink social protection systems, improve mechanisms for access to financing, formulate policies that reached the most vulnerable and incorporate a systemic approach to risk prevention and management able to respond to any type of crisis. Lastly, he highlighted the importance of having a unified regional voice at the global level.

83. The representative of Cuba spoke after the presentation to express appreciation for the work done by the United Nations system to implement the 2030 Agenda in the region and to highlight its response to the pandemic, given that it had redoubled its efforts to support the countries and had showed efficient coordination between entities, organizing the use of available resources and offering tailored assistance based on a comprehensive vision of the region's challenges. Cuba welcomed the proposed issue-based coalitions, especially the one on financing for development, and hoped that the Regional Collaborative Platform would continue to be strengthened and contribute to the needs of countries, in line with national priorities and in support of the achievement of the SDGs, in an atmosphere of dialogue, with respect for national sovereignty and self-determination of States, and in defence of multilateralism.

⁶ See [online] <https://agenda2030lac.org/en>.

Presentation of the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway) and issue-based coalitions and working groups

84. The presentation was made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP, in their capacity as Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean and the session was moderated by the Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica.

85. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean was the fruit of collaboration among all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the region and responded to the Secretary-General's request to present transformative proposals to establish regional knowledge management hubs. It had been developed under the coordination of and with technical support from ECLAC and UNDP. It was a reference point for all information on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the region and aimed to provide countries and United Nations entities with specialized information to respond to the national needs related to the 2030 Agenda. It also facilitated the follow-up of progress towards the SDGs at country and regional levels, and fostered collaboration across all United Nations system entities. The Platform provided an overview of the institutional architecture related to the 2030 Agenda; the SDGs and their targets and indicators; information on the countries of the region, their institutional frameworks for the SDGs and national statistical follow-up of the SDGs; data for global, regional and national statistical follow-up; and information on United Nations entities and their work in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Other resources available included data from the United Nations Statistics Division and from the CEPALSTAT database that could be used for geographic visualization, as well as information from academia, civil society, local governments, parliaments and the private sector.

86. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP said that issue-based coalitions and the thematic working groups constituted a form of inter-agency coordination within the United Nations to work more effectively in support of country teams. He mentioned the agreed principles of those groups and the main regional challenges in the areas of transforming the production matrix, effective governance, social protection based on a universal approach, more flexible and sustainable access to financing for development, protection of vulnerable populations and systemic risk management. To address those challenges, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the region within the Regional Collaborative Platform had established a set of issue-based coalitions on climate change and resilience, crime and violence, equitable growth, financing for development, governance and institutions, and human mobility, with gender and youth as cross-cutting areas. The aim of the coordination mechanisms was to respond to challenges in an organized and effective manner, supporting resident coordinators and country teams in the short term with a view to building back to a "normal" far better than the pre-pandemic one, but also addressing the structural causes behind the weaknesses to be addressed. It was a coordination mechanism for a new approach to work that would better respond to a changing reality.

87. In the discussions that followed, Paloma Merodio, Vice President of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico, in her capacity as Chair of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for the Americas, said that the Regional Knowledge Platform would improve the coordination between regional initiatives for the development of indicators and the implementation of the SDGs. One such initiative was the Statistical and Geospatial Framework for the Americas (MEGA) that was being implemented in collaboration with ECLAC as the cartographic base of CEPALSTAT to introduce a geospatial component, which was critical for decision-making.

88. Juan Daniel Oviedo, Director-General of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia, in his capacity as Chair of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, said that the Regional Knowledge Platform was a regional public good that could constitute a space for learning and innovation for national statistical offices, as part of their commitment to information-sharing and public policy guidance, by providing information data that was sufficiently disaggregated to reflect the heterogeneity of the region and leave no one behind.

89. Mirta Luisa Ramírez, Director of the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI) of Cuba, welcomed the presentation and said that her Office, in keeping with the requirements to measure progress on the SDGs, had worked closely with a group of institutions in the country to design a national SDG and SDG indicators website, whose launch was imminent. Integration of the website with the Regional Knowledge Platform presented by ECLAC would be possible.

90. Vance Amory, Ambassador in the Office of the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis commended ECLAC on its leadership in developing the SDG Gateway, which would help to advance his country's plans for achieving the SDGs and keep a record of progress made in the region. His country had focused its efforts on combating crime and a positive approach to socialization of young people, which were already paying dividends. Adding value to productivity and reducing poverty were also priorities for his government.

Panel discussions (agenda item 6)

Panel 1: Health and the economy —a false dichotomy?

91. Panel 1 was moderated by Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC, and the panellists were Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); Joy St. John, Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA); Alejandro Werner, Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); Blanca Margarita Ovelar de Duarte, National Senator of Paraguay and President of ParlAmericas; Mónica Jasis, focal point of the group on migrants and persons displaced by disasters or conflicts of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development; Román Macaya, Chair of the Board of the Costa Rican Social Security Institute; Daniel Innerarity, Director of the Institute of Democratic Governance of Spain; and Martha Delgado Peralta, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

92. In his opening remarks, the Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC stressed that health was a human right and a fundamental public good, which had to be guaranteed by the State. The pandemic had made it clear that full access to quality health-care systems was essential for inclusive and sustainable economic development. The health crisis had left the region with weak, fragmented health-care systems hampered by partial coverage, barriers to access and inadequate human resources, technology and infrastructure, along with social protection systems hindered by significant gaps in coverage, insufficient benefits and financing problems. The economic, political and social scenario was complex. To offset the loss of household income and the welfare state deficit, the governments of the region had implemented emergency measures, which were important but of limited duration and partial coverage, and, for the most part, not enough to cover the social impact on households and the most vulnerable population. The panellists would discuss policy proposals to overcome barriers to health-care access in order to bring about an inclusive recovery with equality at the centre.

93. The Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said that in the face of the worst health crisis in the region and the world in 100 years, rapid investment and scaling-up of policy responses by countries had strengthened health systems' capacity to save lives and provided support to critical sectors. However, as new diagnostics and vaccines were deployed, countries faced a new surge in cases. There was no substitute for effective leadership and science-based public health measures. Four critical actions had to be prioritized in 2021 and beyond: sustaining public health efforts to provide essential health services; reducing inequality to protect vulnerable populations and expanding social protection; addressing structural deficiencies owing to years of inadequate public health investment, with a view to building universal, resilient, responsive, adaptive and rights-based systems; and ensuring the availability of and equitable access to pharmaceutical and medical products, vaccines and diagnostics. To improve pandemic preparedness, the region had to address its lack of productive capacity, health technology policies, and public and private investment in the development of health technology institutions. Strong political leadership, willingness to effect change, and collective action were needed to build sustainable resilient and inclusive societies for current and future generations to survive and thrive.

94. The Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) said that governance of the COVID-19 pandemic response had been strong, with a whole-of-society approach mandated by heads of government. CARPHA had adapted global and regional guidelines to the Caribbean context; built on the foundation of functional cooperation in health; sought to produce protocols and guidance to allow the safe return to work, play and governance; and proposed the application of a formula to ensure equity based on countries' age profile and disease burden. Communication had been tailored to counter social media pushing vaccine hesitancy. Pooled procurement had served the small economies well and the Caribbean Regulatory System was being used to ensure there were quality vaccines on the CARICOM market. Lastly, she spoke of the need to ensure equality in societies and the importance of increasing capacity in areas such as the provision of medical equipment and vaccine production, and said there should never be any question of choosing between economic activity and saving lives.

95. The Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of IMF said that in 2020 the region had recorded one of its weakest economic performances and, although a recovery was expected in 2021, it was predicted that at the end of the year there would not be a return to the level of activity of 2019 and that social gaps would have widened considerably. Fiscal support in the region had provided a much stronger boost than expected based on countries' fiscal space, which was greater than anticipated. The decline in international interest rates, the fall in investment and the increase in households' savings also created space for greater deficit financing. In 2021, even if output recovered, employment would still reflect gaps and the hardest-hit households and small and medium-sized enterprises would continue to need support. In 2020, a significant number of countries had managed to finance the widening fiscal deficits with debt from the various banks. In 2021, countries would continue to receive support, the proposal to increase special drawing rights was being consolidated and work was being done on IMF programmes. Finally, he emphasized that it was important to ensure sound public finances for the future.

96. The National Senator of Paraguay and President of ParlAmericas stressed that the pandemic had put health on the public agenda. Health and the economy had been affected by an unprecedented crisis, which should be a turning point in history, and an occasion for the various specialists to propose solutions for a new approach to development. A new meaning of humanity had to emerge, with more empathy and a sense of justice. Parliaments had a crucial role to play in exercising political oversight of pandemic responses, passing emergency legislation and promoting transparency around the measures implemented, in a scenario where it was important to maintain public confidence in government action and to have the necessary information. They also had a key role to play in a green recovery, for example through the approval of budgets.

97. The focal point of the group on migrants and persons displaced by disasters or conflicts of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development said that some countries outside the region had understood that there was no trade-off between health and the economy, and had taken swift action in response to the pandemic, guaranteeing sufficient resources, on the assumption that a strong economy required a healthy population. In the region, there had been inadequacies in relation to health infrastructure, education services, connectivity, access to services and policies by women and informal workers, lax implementation of measures, increased workloads for women and gender-based violence. There were also opportunities, such as the strengthening of existing programmes, the good performance of consolidated health networks in some countries and the maintenance of food programmes. In that regard, she highlighted as an example the legislation on telework in Argentina and on the care system in Mexico.

98. The Chair of the Board of the Costa Rican Social Security Institute said that the possible conflict between health and the economy could only exist in the short term, owing to certain measures that affected economic activity, but that in the medium term there could be no conflict since the interests coincided. In the future, it would be necessary to create additional capacities for business continuity, in companies, businesses and the world in general, in terms of supply, logistics, education, production and government tasks, among others, considering that health crises occurred every five years, on average. In the process of establishing to a new normal, it would be important to maintain the positive elements that had emerged during the emergency, such as telemedicine, innovation and research development. It was also necessary to advance in legislative changes, since in Costa Rica, for example, it had not been possible to implement certain measures during the pandemic because of the lack of regulations. A decisive factor in that country was the fact that the entire health apparatus was administered by a single authority, which made it possible to respond more efficiently as a result of close coordination.

99. The Director of the Institute of Democratic Governance of Spain said that crises of various kinds were commonplace around the world, but political systems did not have the capacity to recognize, manage and anticipate them, because they only dealt with the urgent issues, focused more on the symptoms than the causes, and were concerned with the voters of the present and not those of the future. Societies were not prepared for “anticipatory governance”. A system was needed to manage future crises, in areas such as pensions, health and climate, in order to anticipate them and act in a timely manner. The aim was to improve the strategic coherence of actions, based on more information on the long-term effects of decisions and on the type of risks faced. Only then would there be a shift in the focus of policymaking, from repairing to shaping. He added that it would not be enough to turn to best practices and past experiences, as the future had to be incorporated into analyses, so that policy responses were not belated and weighed down by the cost of remedial measures, which was always higher than that of anticipatory measures. Preparations had to be made for a world in which crises were not just one-off events, with policymaking capable of reinventing itself and adapted to an increasingly unpredictable reality.

100. The Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico argued that the crisis faced was more than a health crisis, it was a security crisis, which provided an opportunity to learn. In the face of the emergency, the importance of multilateral cooperation and the benefit of global agreements had become evident. The multilateral arena offered many areas of opportunity for building back better, with more resilient, just and inclusive systems. In light of the fact that available vaccines were highly concentrated in some countries, there was need of a spirit of multilateral defence, based on the understanding that the safety of everyone depended on the safety of all. Lastly, she said that human health and the economy were closely linked to the environment, biodiversity and the fight against climate change, and in the future, it would be necessary to analyse how those factors influenced the emergence of pandemics.

101. The Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said that countries could not afford to only react to the pandemic, but needed to anticipate and plan to be better prepared for the next pandemic, within a framework of sustainable development with people at the centre.

102. In the statements that followed the presentations, the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that health was a human right, not a commercial activity, and acknowledged the work of Cuban doctors in his country. He also referred to the measures taken by his government to address the effects of the pandemic. The freezing of funds in foreign accounts affected the supply of vaccines, and he stressed the need for the support of the United Nations in unblocking those funds. He proposed the creation of a fund for access to vaccines and a fund to access trade in food and supplies in the region to ensure no one was left behind.

103. The representative of Cuba said that for the economy to be reactivated, health and the economy had to go hand in hand. In her country, measures to protect the population from the novel coronavirus with the aim of safeguarding human life had been put in place, along with strategic economic measures within a planning framework. The existing universal and free public health-care system, the strengthening of the national statistical system, the allocation of the necessary budget for public health care and the intersectoral nature of the measures had been an advantage in dealing with the pandemic. The economic impact, aggravated by the blockade imposed by the United States, had not prevented Cuba from focusing on cooperation, sharing of experiences and international solidarity in pursuit of alternatives and participatory and inclusive solutions for the achievement of the SDGs.

104. The representative of the Bahamas said that governments faced growing pressure to balance COVID-19 mitigation measures with ensuring families' survival and meeting fiscal obligations. It had become clear early on that until holes in the health-care system were plugged, economies would not rebound. While tourism was the engine driving the economy of many Caribbean States, public health was the oil that kept the engine purring. Lockdowns and curfews provided fewer opportunities for discretionary spending. The flattening of the curve in the first and second waves of COVID-19 had shown the success of public health mitigation strategies and bolstering of the health-care system, and was soon followed by the reopening of ports and return of tourists because of the low threat of contracting COVID-19, demonstrating a synergy, not a dichotomy, between health and the economy. When a nation's people were well and thriving, so was the economy. Finally, she said that there was no trade-off between economics and public health or between saving lives and livelihoods.

105. The Executive Director of CARPHA conveyed three messages: there was a need for equality in our societies; the region had to increase capacity in certain areas of health such as obtaining crucial supplies; and human life was critical, so there should be no trade-off between health and economics.

106. The Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of IMF said that a more powerful State was needed with regard to social and public goods, and highlighted the role of multilateralism and the voice of Latin America, particularly on health and climate change issues, and of national consensus to carry out reforms and legislative changes. Particular attention had to be paid to the Caribbean, as the region most vulnerable to climate change, and Central America, with major deficiencies that would be exacerbated by the pandemic and trigger migration in the region.

107. The National Senator of Paraguay and President of ParlAmericas highlighted the concept of "anticipatory governance" mentioned at the meeting, as short-termism prevented long-term solutions from being found. Low trust in politicians would hinder recovery. International institutions should support that recovery, particularly in terms of facilitating access to vaccines. The regions should have a stronger voice on climate change to promote a greener, fairer and friendlier world.

108. The focal point of the group on migrants and persons displaced by disasters or conflicts of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development read out the recommendations of the group she represented in the civil society participation mechanism regarding ODA, health, digital connectivity, telework, digital skills training, and strengthening of local non-governmental organizations, particularly women's and feminist organizations in the region. The participation of civil society would be critical to recovery.

109. The Chair of the Board of the Costa Rican Social Security Institute said the pandemic had shown how far science had advanced in the creation of the COVID-19 vaccine and the development of tests and treatments. It was necessary to prepare for a possible new pandemic in order to ensure the continuity of the economy and education. Science would generate the technology, but regional and national capacities would be needed to ensure a timelier supply of key inputs.

110. The Director of the Institute of Democratic Governance of Spain said that at that time the focus was on access to vaccines, but once herd immunity was achieved, it was necessary to address social, political and educational "immunity" in order to be prepared for serious crises that would involve multiple factors and which would require the contribution of all sciences to solutions. It was not only political systems that had proved to be weak, but also concepts: the instruments used to assess the situation were outdated and unsuited to the complexity of today's world, and possible futures had to be anticipated.

111. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the pandemic had highlighted the serious global asymmetries in the areas of finance, climate, health and access to vaccines in a world where "islands of immunity" seemed to be emerging because of limited access. IMF was making significant efforts and considering issuing new SDRs to support all countries, which revealed a change in approach in the face of the pandemic. The region had to think collectively, and the initiatives of Argentina and Mexico with regard to vaccines, as well as the efforts of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), were commendable. Support was needed for the building of a health-care manufacturing industry in the region. Examples of much needed multilateralism were the support for PAHO in the implementation of the COVAX Facility and the dialogue that had to be maintained with countries in the hemisphere and with countries with a surplus of vaccines. At the country level, the pandemic showed that countries with social protection and primary health-care systems were the best performers; the only solution was to create care societies that gave priority to social protection and the management of public goods, and to build new social compacts.

112. The Ambassador of Costa Rica in Chile concluded by saying that health, economic and social well-being, biodiversity and climate change were interrelated and had to be addressed in order to build back better, which also required unlocking the power of science in the interest of the weakest.

Panel 2: Crisis, recovery and transformation in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals

113. Panel 2 was moderated by Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and the panellists were Cristina Gallach Figueras, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and for Ibero-America and the Caribbean of Spain; Camillo Gonsalves, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development and Information Technology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) of ECLAC; André Lara Resende, Adjunct Senior Research Scholar at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) of Columbia University; José Francisco Pacheco, Member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Costa Rica; Maurizio Bezzeccheri, Director for Latin America of Enel; and Laura Becerra Pozos, deputy focal point of the NGO networks, groupings, organizations and platforms group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

114. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC opened the discussion by expressing the need for a transformative recovery that would lead to a more egalitarian and inclusive society, a fairer distribution of wealth and a green and sustainable development model. He said that although achieving the SDGs by 2030 seemed difficult, the 2030 Agenda would remain the basis for reflecting on the development model. If everything remained the same as before the pandemic, there would be faster growth, but at the expense of higher levels of poverty and inequality. The purpose of the debate was to consider how to build a better model based on the different points of view contributed by the participants, taking into account factors such as technological changes and the world of work, the balance between the public and private sectors, the creation of new sectors, and access to vaccines.

115. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and for Ibero-America and the Caribbean of Spain said that Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean had been the main champions of the 2030 Agenda, and it was their responsibility to work to ensure that it remained a guiding light for the development of the planet. In the first few years following adoption of the Agenda, Europe had focused on the environmental aspect, while in Latin America and the Caribbean there had been great progress on planning of public policies in various areas. Europe had moved to a more global vision of the Agenda only when the European institutions underwent a renewal at the end of 2019 and a major project of modernization, digitization and inclusion policies was launched. However, the two regions were the most affected by the pandemic and the Agenda was at the heart of the European economic recovery plan, through the allocation of public resources for employability, digital transformation and equality. Europe should provide decisive support to Latin America and the Caribbean, by speeding up the signing of trade agreements between the two regions, strengthening the European presence in the region's business fabric in order to be part of its socioeconomic and industrial development and consolidating social, business, political and other ties. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean faced great difficulties in accessing the financial resources needed to implement social, industrial development, education, ecological transition, and energy policies, among other areas, that were necessary to implement the sweeping changes required by the 2030 Agenda. Although it was positive that the major economic and financial organizations were considering issuing new special drawing rights for the least developed countries, the "middle-income" label given to some countries should be removed, as it made access to financing more difficult and did not reflect their reality. In that regard, it was proposed that discussions take place, in that and other forums, on the possibility of adjusting some of the SDG targets, to avoid the frustration of not achieving them by the agreed deadline.

116. The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development and Information Technology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of CDCC of ECLAC said that Caribbean countries were trying to borrow their way out of the COVID-19 crisis, just as they did in previous crises caused by external factors (such as extreme weather events and the global financial crisis). A decade of growth had been lost after the global financial crisis. Because of the pandemic, there was an increasingly real possibility of another period of decline. Therefore, despite the start of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, instead there would be a lost generation in the Caribbean. Unless the region was to accept that achieving the SDGs was impossible, discussion needed to centre on accelerating their implementation, as most of the Caribbean would not return to 2019 levels of activity until 2023, once the pandemic ended. Without vaccines and jobs there could be no recovery, so some countries that depended on tourism or agricultural imports were forced to reopen their economies before they could vaccinate the population. However, neither recovery nor acceleration of SDG implementation would be possible without increased fiscal space, which in turn was impossible without debt relief. All the long-discussed initiatives (climate finance, debt for climate adaptation swaps and debt relief) needed to be put in place immediately if a lost decade in the Caribbean was to be avoided.

117. The Adjunct Senior Research Scholar at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) of Columbia University said that the main question in Brazil and most countries was fiscal space to address the pandemic. Expansionist austerity was dominating Brazil's macroeconomic policy, an approach that was no longer defended by most economists in the United States or Europe. In that regard, concerning the difference between public domestic debt and public external debt, while foreign debt led to transfers of resources abroad, domestic debt did not affect Brazil's wealth. The country would probably have a current account surplus in 2021 and commodity price rises were very positive. There were many people who had lost all income and high levels of unemployment. Social transfers and long-term investment and planning were required, but the policy straitjacket of balancing the budget meant that such measures were not being discussed. Fiscal responsibility should be about investing well, increasing productivity and reducing inequality, not about balancing the budget no matter what.

118. The Member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Costa Rica said the pandemic had shown that all countries were vulnerable to risk and that it was important to envisage, beyond policies to fight poverty, welfare states in which everyone had at least access to health and food. The debate about the size of the State no longer made sense; in mature and democratic societies, an adequate social compact could not be maintained by cutting back on the functions of the State. Regarding discussion of the role of the private sector in development, there were interesting examples of the private sector implementing development programmes with good results for the population, without excessive profit. The dialogue on the transformation of the State needed to take into account the new role of the private sector, and diversified financing had to be sought that provided a response to countries' main problems and did not drive away private investment. One question was whether teleworking would become an established practice and if that might affect means of hiring, which could in turn impact social security financing. Although financing was not an end in itself, it was vital and therefore had to be the result of long-term planning. Budgets had to be results-based and the institutional capacity of governments to implement financing was also very important. It was vital to strengthen budget execution mechanisms, to improve the capacity to transform funding into goods and services for society, and to ensure that funds contributed to meeting the goals to which they were allocated.

119. The Director for Latin America of Enel said that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the fragility of systems and the importance of their resilience. The pandemic had also transformed the world of work, increasing flexibility and accelerating the need for new types of training and skills, as well as driving tremendous innovation in production and distribution. Green sovereign bonds, and particularly sustainable bonds (related to the corporate sustainability), could be an extremely effective tools to help States work towards the SDGs and meet their nationally determined contributions related to the Paris Agreement. The energy transition could generate many stable jobs and increase competitiveness. His company had made a significant corporate commitment to combatting climate change; it was already investing in infrastructure and renewable energy development: sustainability was the driving force behind its operations in the region, which also contributed to the socioeconomic development of the communities in which it worked. He reiterated that the private sector could play a crucial role in the transformative recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and in progress towards the SDGs, working with governments and involving civil society.

120. The deputy focal point of the NGO networks, groupings, organizations and platforms group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development lamented the region's situation five years after adopting the 2030 Agenda and warned that inequality and the threat of climate change were growing. She said the pandemic had not created that critical situation, but did show that the model followed in Latin America was not working and needed to be revised. The slow pace of vaccination in the region reflected the severe inequalities between countries according to level of development, and the importance

of development cooperation, which had been absent in addressing COVID-19. Governments should be guided by the 2030 Agenda—a global governance mechanism—to design measures and programmes with a more holistic, cross-cutting and multidimensional vision, and dialogue with civil society was important for this. The governments of the region had not changed their economic models, nor were they in a new paradigm, and the social programmes they implemented did not have holistic, multidimensional perspectives, nor did they mainstream rights or gender. She called on participants to recognize civil society actors as development actors and to include them in decision-making processes, not merely consult or invite them to participate, including in the reform process of the United Nations system. The United Nations was not the exclusive domain of States, it was also of the people, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

121. In the statements that followed the presentations, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba said multilateralism and cooperation in the international system both urgently needed to be strengthened, to be able to address the pandemic in better conditions. The issues of external debt, climate change and financing for sustainable development raised at the Forum were central to the region. The pandemic had sharply decreased the region's GDP and increased poverty. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba, severely tightened in recent years, was an obstacle to the country's development. Achieving the 2030 Agenda was a national goal. In conclusion, she called for international solidarity and the application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

122. The Ambassador of the Office of the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis said that lessons had been learned in the pandemic, driving adjustments in government and the private sector. Vaccines would help the country to reopen, but tourism had been decimated. SIDS debt was external and had high rates, and they faced the risk of natural disasters. The country was looking at obtaining debt relief and concessional financing to create fiscal space. In that regard, international funding agencies could play a role. Job creation could come from the green economy, blue economy and digital economy, and it was critical for there to be employment for youth. Other areas of opportunity included public-private partnerships, energy efficiency, renewable energy, investment in public infrastructure and education for transformation.

123. The Director-General for Global Issues of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico advocated for innovative financing mechanisms, such as the sovereign SDG bond issued by her country, a sustainable sovereign bond that linked projects with social and environmental benefits. More than ever, there was a need for as many resources as possible from innovative sources. The participation of civil society in international forums was essential. She commended the forthcoming entry into force of the Escazú Agreement and noted the large number of participants expected for the fifth retreat of the Group of Friends Monterrey, including the World Bank and IMF. Finally, she stressed that issues of inequality, gender and climate change had to be incorporated into recovery programmes.

124. The Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development and Information Technology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of CDCC of ECLAC added to his previous remarks by saying that because some Caribbean countries used 50 to 60 cents of every dollar to service debt they had no policy space or fiscal space, and without that space they could not undertake the transformative work being discussed. The most urgent issue for the subregion was debt, which had put the countries in a desperate situation. Progress towards the SDGs could not begin until Caribbean countries were able to deal with their individual specificities. The decade of action also needed to be a decade of increased fiscal and policy space, to deal with the ongoing crisis and future crises.

125. The Deputy Minister for Social and Institutional Planning in the Ministry of People's Power for Planning of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that, although the country's national development plan and public policies were based on the 2030 Agenda, its implementation had been conditioned by the difficult situation the country was facing because of international coercive measures that had imposed, inter alia, a blockade on the country's access to financial resources.

126. The Member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Costa Rica spoke of the State's commitment to society regarding the creation of fiscal space and the use of funds, and the need for that to be accompanied by reforms for the benefit of society and a broader and renewed social compact.

127. The deputy focal point of the NGO networks, groupings, organizations and platforms group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development highlighted the contribution of civil society to sustainable development, which could be optimized through better communication with governments and through a horizontal and transparent dialogue. Changing an economic paradigm was not merely a technical matter but also a matter of political will based on an ethical approach to development. The activities of civil society, in particular those of environmental defenders, were not fluid or safe, and she demanded more protection for them. Extractivism had to end because it was a private capital investment that did not respond to any ethical principle. The space provided by ECLAC represented an opportunity to improve dialogue with national governments.

128. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC summarized the main points of the discussion: she underscored the need for a different future and warned of the risk of anchoring the development model to reprimarization; it was necessary to generate wealth, not just extract it but create value. She spoke of the inefficiency of unsustainability and inequality. The asymmetries between countries had been exacerbated by the pandemic, and vaccine geopolitics had made them starkly evident. She valued the contributions of the European Union and the private sector to the discussion. She reiterated the importance of debt relief for the Caribbean and investment in climate change adaptation. She also underscored the need to return to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, both in terms of climate and finance, and in relation to vaccines. She highlighted the call for action on financing for development, and underscored the importance of innovative financing mechanisms, such as green sovereign bonds and sustainable development bonds. She also spoke of the reflection on what the future would look like in terms of the recomposition of sectors, employment or digital inclusion, and how to achieve a virtuous intersection between the public sector, the private sector and civil society to create a more inclusive market and a more collaborative economy. Lastly, she expressed the conviction of everyone that civil society should be a fundamental part of intergovernmental meetings: there was a need not for two monologues, but for one dialogue.

129. The Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations stressed the value of initiatives such as the one presented by his country, the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE), in view of the increased needs and debt levels of States as a result of the pandemic. He described it as a programme to ensure a large transfer of resources for countercyclical use that would address the needs identified in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: reducing hunger and poverty, improving health and also generating investments with multiplier effects. It provided for a contribution of no more than 0.7% of GDP of the countries with the highest levels of liquidity and was not subject to external conditionalities. He called on countries to become involved in that initiative and even to propose ideas for its improvement.

Conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 9)

130. In accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 700(XXXVI) of ECLAC, the Forum adopted intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations, which are attached hereto as annex 1. In addition, a Summary of the Chair of the Forum is attached as annex 2.

Closing round table “Building an inclusive and effective pathway to achieve the 2030 Agenda within the context of the decade of action and post-pandemic recovery from COVID-19” (agenda item 7)

131. This session was moderated by Christian Guillermet-Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, and participants included Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations and Chair of the Group of Friends on Voluntary National Reviews, María José Lubertino, focal point of the Southern Cone regional group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, Elliot Harris, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP, and Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

132. The Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations and Chair of the Group of Friends on Voluntary National Reviews said that the experience of the pandemic provided countries with an opportunity to implement policies for progressive social equality and to make progress in relation to one of the main challenges facing the region: achieving SDG 10, reducing inequality. The welfare model had to be broader and multisectoral, and to incorporate equality and sustainability. Sectors that could drive growth with sustainability included the energy transition, sustainable mobility and urban planning, sustainable tourism, the circular economy, the digital revolution, the health-care manufacturing industry and the care economy. Universal, timely and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines was critical to the global recovery and, as a global public good, had to be incorporated into the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. He underscored the contribution of voluntary national reviews to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by linking national actions with global multilateral policies and aligning the efforts of different actors within each country. He also stressed the need for useful and relevant data to better assess the situation of the countries; more sophisticated and multidimensional measurements of poverty were required.

133. The focal point of the Southern Cone regional group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development highlighted the value of ECLAC projections, statistical data and recommendations during the pandemic. The problems that the pandemic had brought to light already existed; it had only made them worse. Civil society was calling for a paradigm shift: more citizen participation, more democracy and human rights, more equality and harmony with nature were needed. Human rights and environmental defenders were also in urgent need of protection. In that regard, she stressed the importance of the ratification of the Escazú Agreement, as well as the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other binding treaties, and the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken. She listed other pending issues in the region, such as the pursuit of greater equality, a sociodemographic transformation focused on harmony with nature, fiscal reform and the rethinking of external debt, and she defended the role of science.

134. The Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of DESA said that the 2030 Agenda had been off-track before the pandemic, owing to a lack of resources, but also because of major policy failure. A predictable frame was needed for sustainable activities and for private sector engagement in sustainable development, with policies that were interlinked and consistent with the SDGs. Training and reskilling would equip people for new and green jobs and adequate social protection should be provided for those adversely affected by labour market changes. The emergency social measures related to COVID-19 should be made permanent and governments could shift financing from beneficiary contributions to general tax revenues or use a hybrid model. Improving domestic finance was attainable through closing of tax loopholes, regulations discouraging lending for non-sustainable activities, stricter reporting requirements and green finance guidelines. As regards debt, a political consensus through subregional and regional organizations could support global processes, and engagement with private sector creditors and debtors was necessary. In trade, a recommitment to the multilateral rules-based non-discriminatory trading system was vital.

135. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in her pre-recorded video statement, spoke of the multiple challenges countries faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis, which had hit Latin America and the Caribbean particularly hard. The crisis had revealed the extent of inequality and discrimination that already existed, and could mean the reversal of gains in women's health, economic participation and equal rights. On the road to building forward better, efforts had to be anchored in human rights and a new social contract with opportunities for all was required. People and human rights had to be at the centre of sustainable development and at the centre of the response to the pandemic. Action against inequality through a commitment to economic, social and cultural rights was necessary. Universal health coverage was a priority and rights had to be realized gradually and that had to be reflected in the budget and in efforts to make the best use of available resources. Building back better was impossible with austerity measures or policies that further concentrated wealth, and progressive tax systems were crucial.

136. The world needed new levels of global cooperation and international solidarity, as well as a fairer globalization model. Public participation was also key. During the pandemic, some States had unnecessarily and disproportionately restricted fundamental freedoms and civic space, undermining the rule of law, and attacks against human rights defenders and journalists continued. She warmly welcomed the forthcoming entry into force of the Escazú Agreement, which aimed to guarantee the right of all people to a healthy environment and to protect human rights defenders in environmental matters, and encouraged countries that had not yet ratified it to do so promptly. In concluding, she spoke of the need for vaccines to be accessible to all, and not just the vaccine against COVID-19: human rights represented the best vaccine against hunger, poverty, inequality, and many other ills facing humanity.

137. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP stressed that recovery from the pandemic still presented enormous challenges in the region and remained uncertain. He stressed the importance of ensuring equitable access to vaccines, which had to be expeditious to prevent the emergence of new strains; of mitigating the impact of the crisis on the productive fabric, especially SMEs; of building on the momentum to advance towards inclusive digitization through the development of the appropriate infrastructure, facilitation of households' access to the necessary tools and training and the establishment of the relevant regulation, and of ensuring that education systems got back on track as quickly as possible to avoid the loss of human capital and to re-establish the functioning of the fabric.

138. In the document *Latin America and the Caribbean: effective governance beyond recovery*,⁷ UNDP promoted a new fiscal covenant, citizen participation, transparency and accountability, elimination of violence, justice for all, rebuilding trust and intergenerational equity. It was also supporting countries in building social protection systems, green and blue engines of growth, and inclusive energy transition and digitization. He underscored the complexity of the challenges ahead and the need for unified efforts for the decade of action, and reiterated the commitment of UNDP in that regard. Partnerships such as the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean aimed to maximize the capacities of each member and thus support countries, for example, in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

139. In her concluding remarks, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC stressed that the regional consensus reached at the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development supported the urgent need to act together to ensure access to vaccines for the entire population and for a unified response to the challenges of the pandemic. Latin America and the Caribbean had to seize that opportunity to strengthen regional integration once and for all. She referred to the region's commitment to unity, cooperation, multilateralism and transformative recovery, which was key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to the commitment to overcome inertia and not return to old patterns. Equality was not a result of economic growth, but indispensable for efficiency and growth itself. She underscored the importance of full and equal access to health, education, nutrition, digital technologies, drinking water and other public services, and of moving towards a care society. The pandemic had shown that countries with stronger health and social protection systems were more resilient to such crises.

140. The structural causes of inequality had to be determined. Value and wealth needed to be generated, not just extracted without innovation and with only scarce job creation. Moreover, to boost sectors that supported a transformative recovery, there needed to be industrial and technological policies that were in line with environmental protection. Even in the midst of the crisis, it was imperative to return to the path of sustainable development. In that context, the Executive Secretary expressed her satisfaction with the successful adoption and entry into force of the Escazú Agreement. Meanwhile, middle-income countries had to have access to international financing on more favourable terms given the urgent need for liquidity to meet the challenges imposed by COVID-19. The debt levels of the Caribbean countries were unsustainable; those countries already needed debt relief urgently, and for many of them the only way forward was through investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC stressed once again that there was nowhere to go back to, so it was necessary to move towards a different future. It was time to put an end to the culture of privilege and inequalities and to eradicate poverty in all its forms.

141. The Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, noted that the adopted text of conclusions and recommendations was a clear road map for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and a common regional position for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. He also noted that there was a consensus on the region's priorities in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, which was reflected in the Political Declaration on a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, held under the chairship of Costa Rica in October 2020. He also said that in the Caribbean it was imperative to implement decisive climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, with nature-based solutions that were not only positive for society, but could also be cost-effective. In closing, he urged the countries of the region to act with a united voice in the multilateral system to achieve a different future for the region

⁷ See [online] https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/democratic_governance/america-latina-y-el-caribe--gobernanza-efectiva--mas-alla-de-la-.html.

Annex 1

**INTERGOVERNMENTALLY AGREED CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF THE COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

We, the Ministers and high-level representatives gathered virtually at the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), from 15 to 18 March 2021, taking in consideration General Assembly resolution 70/1, adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and 74/4, which marks the beginning of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development,

1. *Reaffirm* our commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ensuring that no one is left behind, including its Goals and targets, which are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development —economic, social and environmental—, and stress that it is people-centred, universal and transformative and that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, reaching the furthest behind first and empowering those in vulnerable situations to achieve sustainable development;

2. *Also reaffirm* that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which builds on the 2002 Monterrey Consensus and the 2008 Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, provides a global framework for financing sustainable development, as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda that supports and complements it, and helps to contextualize its means of implementation with concrete policies and actions to achieve its targets; recognize the synergies with relevant instruments, in particular of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador, the SAMOA Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries and the outcome document of the Second United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

3. *Further reaffirm* all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including, inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as set out in Principle 7 thereof;

4. *Note* that the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Escazú Agreement, met the conditions for entry into force on 22 January 2021 and will enter into force on 22 April 2021 for the States parties to the Agreement, as a contribution to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development;

5. *Welcome* the Political Declaration on a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted by the Foreign Ministers and high representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered virtually on the occasion of the thirty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, under the Presidency Pro-Tempore of Costa Rica, held from 26 to 28 October 2020;

6. *Look forward* to the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the ECOSOC that will be convened under the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of

sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, which will review in depth Sustainable Development Goals 1 on the end of poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns, 13 on climate action and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships, reviewed annually, while recognizing the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all SDGs and review the targets of the SDGs with a 2020 timeline, and that will be informed by the 2020 Global Sustainable Development Report, which shall strengthen the science-policy interface and could provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development;

7. *Reaffirm* in this regard the commitment to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions, as the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development; reiterate our determination to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, stress the need to keep food and agriculture supply chains functioning, ensure the continued trade in and movement of food and livestock, products and inputs essential for agricultural and food production to markets, food supply-chains, maintain functioning food systems, avoid food shortage, reduce food loss and waste and safeguard food safety, and encourage actions to enable access to safe, sufficient, affordable and nutritious food for all; reaffirm the commitment to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; reiterate the commitment for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work, promote equal pay for work of equal value, reduce gaps of participation and entry in the labour market, and strive for universal access to social protection; recall the pledge to reduce inequality within and among countries; reiterate the commitment to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and that people in our region have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature; stress the strong commitment to effective climate action; recommit to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as to substantially reduce corruption in all its forms; and reiterate the call to strengthen means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development;

8. *Note with concern* that the SDG targets with a 2020 deadline have not been fully achieved, and in this regard call upon the international community to reinforce actions to address those specific challenges, including to protect biodiversity, develop disaster risk reduction strategies, increase the availability of timely, quality and disaggregated data, engage youth, and enhance financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer to developing countries;

9. *Express* solidarity with all people and countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims of the pandemic and those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by it;

10. *Underline* the primary responsibility of governments for adopting and implementing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic that are specific to their national context, as well as for mobilizing the necessary resources to do so;

11. *Reaffirm* our commitment to international cooperation, multilateralism and solidarity in the global response to the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic and its consequences, and emphasize that multilateralism is not an option but a necessity as we recover and build back better for a more equal, more resilient and more sustainable world through reinvigorated global action and by building on the progress achieved in the last 75 years since the creation of the United Nations;

12. *Emphasize* that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal functioning of open markets, global supply chain connectivity and the flow of essential goods, and that these disruptions hinder the fight against poverty, hunger and inequality, ultimately undermining efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reaffirm that emergency measures must be targeted, proportionate, transparent and temporary, that they must not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains, and that they must be consistent with World Trade Organization rules, and call upon member States to reaffirm the critical importance of connected global supply chains in ensuring the unimpeded flow of vital medical and food supplies and other essential goods and services across borders, by air, by land and by sea;

13. *Encourage* further strengthening of World Health Organization preparedness and response to health emergencies and of pandemics preparedness and multidimensional response capacities, taking into account the recommendations of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, the International Health Regulations Review Committee (IHRRC) in case of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other contributions regarding this matter that can be made by the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and other relevant organizations;

14. *Reaffirm*, in that regard, General Assembly resolutions 74/270, 74/274, 74/306 and 74/307 and *urgently call* for universal, unhindered, timely, inclusive, equitable and non-discriminatory access to, and fair distribution of all quality, safe, efficacious and affordable diagnoses, therapeutics, medicines and vaccines against COVID-19, as well as health technologies and products, including their components and precursors, that are required in the response to COVID-19 as a global priority; encourage strengthening of scientific international cooperation necessary to combat the pandemic and support initiatives in this regard, such as the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), and relevant pledging appeals; and call for the recognition of the COVID-19 vaccine as a global public good;

15. *Recognize* that, inequalities, or even a rise in inequalities, remain pervasive in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, even in those with high levels of economic growth, which have been further exacerbated within and among countries by the COVID-19 pandemic, perpetuating all multiple and intersecting forms of violence, discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion in the region, especially for persons in vulnerable and marginalized situations; and that tackling inequality requires, inter alia, further investment in social services, including social protection services, and economic opportunities in a partnership between governments, the private sector, the international financial system, civil society and other relevant stakeholders working together, in accordance with national plans and policies, in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

16. *Also recognize* that the COVID-19 pandemic has a disproportionately heavy impact on women and girls, older persons, youth, children, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, indigenous peoples, persons of African descent, migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, as well as the poor, deepening existing inequalities for persons in vulnerable and marginalized situations; and that the coronavirus disease has also disproportionately affected people of all ages with pre-existing medical conditions, showed a higher mortality rate in men infected by COVID-19, and elevated the risks of front-line and health-care workers;

17. *Express* profound concern that the COVID-19 pandemic is causing a devastating impact on health, including mental health and well-being, loss of life, economic growth and employment, resulting in the decimation of jobs and entrepreneurship, and the extended deterioration of public services, which, in the context of increased poverty in all its forms and dimensions and a widening digital gap, as well as ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, the deterioration of oceans, and vulnerability to climate change

and disasters, result in a critical incidence on the fulfilment of sustainable development and humanitarian needs and the enjoyment of human rights across all spheres of society and risk slowing down the progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including on food security, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and inclusive and equitable quality education made over the past decades;

18. *Reaffirm*, in that regard, our renewed commitment to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and hunger everywhere, to further promote sustainable development, including inclusive economic growth, protecting the environment and promoting social inclusion, to combat inequalities within and among countries as well as to respect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including the right to development, ensure gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls throughout their life course, peaceful and inclusive societies in which no one is left behind while preserving the planet for future generations;

19. *Reiterate* the urgency to promote decent work for all, as well as social protection policies aimed at avoiding unemployment, reducing labour informality and the failure of micro-, small and medium- sized enterprises, and enhancing income support mechanisms to better assist the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in times of crisis in order to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions;

20. *Stress* that recovery from the pandemic should enhance and support the development policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, foster investment in innovation, research and development, as well as renewed regional solidarity and cooperation, including for the strengthening of public health systems, and on epidemiological control, while strengthening democracy and fulfilling all human rights for all; and recognize the importance of developing recovery plans that promote sustainable development and drive transformative change towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies, including by empowering and engaging all women, adolescents and girls, with the effective engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society;

21. *Urge* Member States and other relevant stakeholders to accelerate the catalytic role that digital technologies play in reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on life-long learning and quality education, health, communication, commerce and economic recovery and ensure a path towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, while striving to address the digital divide within and among countries and regions;

22. *Emphasize* with deep concern the particular adverse effects of the pandemic in all countries of the region dependent on commodities, remittances or tourism, as well as the impact of limited fiscal space and high debt levels on countries' abilities to withstand the consequences of the COVID-19 shock and to invest in a sustainable recovery and reconstruction of their economies and welfare;

23. *Call for* a global coordinated multilateral response to address the current impacts on sustainable development of the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies necessary to address the current economic downturn and future depression, begin economic recovery and minimize the negative effects on livelihoods, while striving to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; welcome global, regional and national initiatives seeking international solidarity in the face of the economic and social downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the specific circumstances of each country, aimed at laying the foundations for a strong sustainable and inclusive global recovery; and encourage Member States and other relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and international financial institutions, to mobilize a large-scale comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences amounting to at least 10 per cent of global gross domestic product;

24. *Call upon* Member States of the United Nations and international financial institutions to provide more liquidity in the financial system, especially in all developing countries, including by the implementation of instruments such as a Liquidity and Sustainability Facility and the broader use of Special Drawing Rights and emphasize the need to increase access to concessional finance for the countries of the region, especially in the context of the global pandemic, including by the creation of new financial mechanisms or funds to support countries facing fiscal pressures and consider offering low-interest loans to open up the fiscal space and, in this regard, welcome regional and global proposals and look forward to the operationalization of the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE);

25. *Underscore* the need to grant special dispensation to the vulnerable countries of the region, with regard to the actions of credit rating agencies and the measures necessary to achieve debt sustainability and reduce the indebtedness of developing countries and, in this regard, welcome innovative financing mechanisms such as the steps by the Group of 20 to provide a time-bound suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries, the institution of the Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap initiative for the Caribbean, the creation of a Caribbean Resilience Fund, and the inclusion of hurricane and pandemic clauses as part of new borrowing arrangements;

26. *Recognize* the need to enhance the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through Sustainable Development Goal 17, as well as the seven action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, to pursue policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors, and to reinvigorate the global partnership for sustainable development to secure our objectives for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership;

27. *Welcome* the forthcoming fifth annual retreat of the Group of Friends of Monterrey held virtually on 17–18 March 2021;

28. *Stress* the importance of addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by all developing countries, including countries in special situations, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries and countries in situation of conflict and post-conflict;

29. *Reiterate* that national averages based on criteria such as gross national income (GNI) per capita are not aligned with the multidimensional scope of sustainable development enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and do not reflect all the particularities, development needs and challenges of developing countries; recall that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls upon the United Nations system, in consultation with the international financial institutions, to develop transparent measures of progress in sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, taking advantage of the initiatives existing, as appropriate; recognize poverty in all its forms and dimensions, as well as the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic production and structural gaps at all levels;

30. *Also reiterate* the call to address further the specific development needs of middle-income countries through, inter alia, innovative financing for development as stated in the Monterrey Consensus, an accurate response to their requirements, taking into account variables that go beyond per capita income criteria, and eliminate increasing difficulties and conditionalities faced to access financial and non-financial resources, as appropriate, recall that 73 per cent of the world's poor population is concentrated in these countries, where cooperation can have a multiplier effect on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, and look forward to actively participating in the high-level meeting on middle-income countries convened by the President of the General Assembly, to discuss the gaps and challenges middle-income countries face in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

31. *Stress* the importance of addressing the particular and diverse needs and challenges faced by countries that are close to surpassing or have recently crossed the upper-middle-income threshold but still have structural gaps and vulnerabilities, considering the multidimensional scope of sustainable development and the limits of criteria such as gross national income (GNI) for measuring development, especially in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;

32. *Recall* the convening 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 on 27 September 2019 and the adoption on 10 October 2019 of its political declaration, in which Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation with and support to small island developing States in the context of sustainable development, in line with their national development strategies and priorities, and look forward to the implementation of the calls made in that political declaration;

33. *Reiterate* the call for immediate and substantial actions to facilitate the responses of small island developing States to recover from the unfolding crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and address the unprecedented health and economic crisis unfolding in such States, while preserving their sustainable development achievements and commitments, and reinforce their resilience to climate change in line with the Samoa Pathway and 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;

34. *Recall* the holding of the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in New York on 5 and 6 December 2019 and the High-Level Political Declaration, in which all the relevant stakeholders are called upon to commit to the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action; and welcome the convening of the regional review meeting for the Latin America region in Santiago on 11 and 12 June 2019 in ECLAC Headquarters;

35. *Emphasize* the need to strengthen international development cooperation, noting with concern that there are still structural problems aggravated by the reduced access to Official Development Assistance (ODA) and concessional finance for countries in the region, including middle-income countries, and call upon the developed countries to fulfil their ODA targets, and further recognize the urgency of concrete and immediate action to create the necessary enabling environment at all levels for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including national efforts and international and regional cooperation that support policies and programs to increase investment in sustainable development;

36. *Reaffirm* that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also acknowledges that the implementation of sustainable development will depend on the active engagement of both the public and private sectors and, recognizing that the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, encourage alignment of private sector incentives with national public goals towards long-term investment according to national realities and capacities, including innovative financing instruments and approaches, and further encourage the consideration of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to bridge the region's structural inequality gaps and eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions;

37. *Also reaffirm*, in order to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the importance for our region of accessing and mobilizing additional, sufficient, adequate and well-directed financial and non-financial resources and capacity-building for the development, transfer, dissemination

and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, and further recommend increasing international and regional cooperation, inter alia, to support domestic science and technology research and innovation;

38. *Stress* further the critical role of science, technology and innovation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and bear in mind that technological change includes new and powerful tools that can help to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; in this context take note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation and the High-level Thematic Debate on the Impact of Rapid Technological Change on the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets, that took place on 11 May 2020; and of the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted at the Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in November 2020, as well as the the 2020 edition of the *Latin American Economic Outlook*, LEO;

39. *Reaffirm* the outcome document of the Second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) and commit to its implementation; reiterate the important contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; reaffirm that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation and is an important element of international cooperation for development; acknowledge the need to enhance development effectiveness of South-South and triangular cooperation; and welcome the contributions of South-South and triangular cooperation to poverty eradication and sustainable development;

40. *Further* recognize that triangular cooperation complements and adds value to South-South cooperation by enabling requesting developing countries to source and access more, and a broader range of resources, expertise and capacities, that they identify as needed in order to strengthen national capabilities and support States' efforts to achieve their national development goals and internationally agreed sustainable development goals, and stress the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise;

41. *Commit* to continuing to promote a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and look forward to achieving positive results at the WTO Twelfth Ministerial Conference in 2021, in particular an agreement on comprehensive and effective disciplines on fisheries subsidies and on the continuous reform of agricultural trade rules, in accordance with their respective mandates and emphasize, in addition, that trade, with appropriate supporting policies, can, inter alia, contribute to promoting inclusive economic growth, reducing inequalities within and among countries and eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions;

42. *Reaffirm* that States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries;

43. *Recommend* redoubling efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030, including by combating tax evasion and corruption and increased international cooperation as well as reducing opportunities for tax avoidance to make sure that all companies, including multinationals, pay taxes to the governments of countries where economic activity occurs and value is created, as well as that the value created is distributed in a way that reinforces economic and social equality and inclusion, particularly in

favour of the most vulnerable, to achieve sustainable development, according to national legislations; and further recall that every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity;

44. *Express concern* that the region continues to experience a decline in correspondent banking relationships, impacting the ability to send and receive international payments, with potential consequences for the cost of remittances, financial inclusion and international trade, among other areas, and thus for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

45. *Recognize* the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination and stress that remittances are a form of private capital that cannot be equated to other international financial flows such as foreign direct investment, ODA, or other public sources of financing for development; and encourage concrete measures, as appropriate, to ensure that adequate and affordable financial services are available to migrants and their families in both origin and destination countries, and to reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and to eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent of the amount transferred, while promoting conditions for cheaper, faster and safer transfer of remittances in both source and recipient countries;

46. *Recall* the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, in Marrakech, Morocco, on 10 and 11 December 2018, and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 73/195 of 19 December 2018; and in this regard take note of the endorsement by a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries¹ of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;

47. *Reaffirm*, inter alia, the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law, including International Human Rights Law;

48. *Call upon* States to promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, especially those of women, children and adolescents, and to address international migration through international, regional or bilateral cooperation and dialogue and a comprehensive and balanced approach, recognizing the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination in promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants and avoiding approaches that might aggravate their vulnerability;

49. *Take note* of the upcoming Latin American and Caribbean regional review of implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which will be held in April 2021;

50. *Welcome* the Buenos Aires Declaration of the IX Regional Meeting on International Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean (MIAH), hosted by the Government of Argentina in June 2019;

¹ Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

51. *Recognize* the importance of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development as the regional agenda on population and development for Latin America and the Caribbean beyond 2014 in order to reinforce the application and further implementation and follow-up of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and as a complementary tool for the integration of population issues into sustainable development;

52. *Also recognize* the importance of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, adopted during the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico in 2019, for promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, tackling the current multidimensional crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and moving towards a transformative, inclusive and resilient recovery with equality; and invite the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in the in the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, to take place in the second half of 2021, as well as in the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development, to be held virtually in Antigua and Barbuda in the second half of 2021;

53. *Welcome* the ongoing regional efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls throughout their life course, and recall of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, adopted at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and note the Santiago Commitment, adopted at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the sixtieth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women, and underscore that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls throughout their life course will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and that the protection and full realization of their human rights are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, and in this regard recommend further mainstreaming of a gender responsive approach into national sustainable development policies, programmes and strategies, and emergency and recovery responses to the COVID-19 pandemic;

54. *Note with appreciation* the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons;

55. *Recall* General Assembly resolution 68/237 in which it proclaimed 2015–2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent, recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected, note that 2021 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and look forward to the commemoration of the first International Day for People of African Descent, as mandated by resolution 75/170, on 31 August, which represents an important opportunity for the region to reaffirm its commitment to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

56. *Reaffirm* the importance to protect and enhance indigenous and traditional knowledge as well as cultural, social and environmental practices of indigenous peoples and local communities, and their contribution to global efforts and initiatives, in accordance with national legislation, to enable sustainable livelihoods, sustainable consumption and production patterns and practices, and food security in harmony with nature;

57. *Welcome* the multiple environmental and sustainable development events that took place during 2020, such as the 15th session of the UN Forum on Forests, the High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, and looks forward to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP15), the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), which will take place in 2021, and in this regard call to enhance synergies among these events, considering regional intergovernmental priorities as established by the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, as appropriate;

58. *Look forward* to the Food Systems Summit in 2021, convened by the Secretary-General with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development;

59. *Recognize* that the region is highly vulnerable to climate change owing to its geography, climate, socioeconomic conditions and demographic factors, and in this regard note with concern the findings contained in the Special Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels; the *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*; and the *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* and the *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* of IPBES; all of which represent the best available science and underscore the need to urgently increase ambition for climate action in order to achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UNFCCC and encourage all Parties to the Paris Agreement to fully implement it;

60. *Take note* with appreciation of the outcomes of the 24th and 25th Conference of the Parties (COP 24 and COP 25), in particular the decisions adopted that will enable the full implementation of the provisions of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and urge Parties to the Paris Agreement to finalize outstanding decisions at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to fully operationalize the Paris Agreement in a manner consistent with its long-term goals and environmental integrity, and stress in this regard the importance of strengthening UNFCCC and of ensuring that its allocation of resources allows the effective implementation of its mandate; emphasizing, in that sense, the need to reinforce our efforts to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change and ensure enhanced access to international climate finance in order to support mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including Least Developing Countries and small island developing States, in order to leave no one behind;

61. *Emphasize* the need to significantly increase climate finance, which is additional to Official Development Assistance (ODA), to support action on mitigation and adaptation to climate change and ensure enhanced access to international climate financial flows with a special focus on increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable; and in this regard aim to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the

context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development;

62. *Underscore* the need, in view of the high vulnerability of the region to climate change, to urgently promote the adoption of policies and planning that effectively contribute to increasing resilience to climate-induced disasters and achieving the long-term goals of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, inter alia and where applicable, by taking climate change into account in macroeconomic policy, fiscal planning, budgeting, credit risk, public investment management, and procurement practices;

63. *Welcome* the updated Nationally Determined Contributions submitted in 2020 and call for the nationally determined contributions that will be updated and submitted in 2021 to reflect the highest possible level of ambition, in line with the principles of progression and non-regression and the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement;

64. Considering the global trend of biodiversity loss and the need to realize the 2050 Vision of Living in Harmony with Nature, *urge* the adoption of an ambitious, realistic and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), to be adopted at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Kunming, China, and further note that GBF must address the three objectives of the Convention in a balanced manner, be based on scientific evidence, include targets and measures to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and must guarantee new and additional financial resources from developed countries, as well as from other sources, for implementation and long-term monitoring and management in developing countries;

65. *Recognize* the United Nations General Assembly proclamation on the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and welcome the United Nations Ocean Conference on scaling up actions for ocean protection, conservation and sustainable use based on science and innovation for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 to be held in 2021;

66. *Also recognize* that improving the environmental quality in our cities is one of the challenges we have ahead of us to achieve sustainable development, which will require efforts in a multitude of areas, such as air, soil and water pollution, water scarcity, sanitation, sustainable transportation, sustainable production and consumption, energy efficiency including clean energy sources, sustainable management of chemicals and waste, and decreasing food loss and waste, taking into consideration the New Urban Agenda, which promotes the full realization of the right to adequate housing and the right to an adequate standard of living, without discrimination, and welcomes the outcome of the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, which took place in May 2019;

67. *Recall* the need to renew and enhance efforts for the sound management of chemicals and waste, as expressed in the 2030 Agenda, including its relevant Goals and targets, recognize the Action Plan for Regional Cooperation on Chemicals and Waste Management adopted by the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean that aims, inter alia, to support the implementation of the chemicals and waste-related international agreements in the countries of the region, and encourage the implementation of the decisions adopted at the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Barbados from 1 to 2 February 2021;

68. *Applaud* the “Caribbean first” initiative advanced by ECLAC since its thirty-seventh session, held in Havana in May 2018, and the peer learning sessions on challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean, held in the framework of the second, third and fourth meetings of this Forum;

69. *Recognize* the impact of disasters on sustainable development, poverty eradication and the reduction of inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean; acknowledge the need to adopt a broader and more people-centred and inclusive preventive approach to disaster risk reduction, and realign disaster financing to anticipate, plan for and reduce disaster risk; commit to integrate disaster risk reduction into plans, policies and strategies at all levels, highlighting the importance of generating environmental and territorial data and information for decision-making by governments and policymakers, in line with national priorities, considering multidisciplinary and interinstitutional coordination mechanisms; and welcome the outcomes of the Sixth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, hosted by the Government of Colombia in June 2018, and look forward to the Seventh Regional Platform to be hosted by the Government of Jamaica in 2021;

70. *Note with appreciation* the continued support of ECLAC to member countries in the conduct of damage and loss assessments following natural disasters, most recently the assessments done in Honduras and Guatemala following the passage of Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020, as well as for the Bahamas following the passage of Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, while conveying our solidarity for the recent impacts of hurricanes and other hydro-climatic events in other countries of the region, including Belize, Colombia, El Salvador, Jamaica and Nicaragua, added to the difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and recognize that sustainable development objectives including economic growth, the reduction of poverty and inequality, and the promotion of sustainable cities and settlements, are inextricably linked to the achievements of disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction;

71. *Reiterate* that the region, in particular small island developing States, continues to face the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters and, in this regard, recognize the economic challenges, including unsustainable debt levels, arising in part from extreme weather events and slow-onset events, and the need to build creative and innovative partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean for sustainable development with regard to environment, climate resilience and post-pandemic recovery;

72. *Recognize* that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, as well as for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing its Goals and targets, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities; and that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development;

73. *Welcome* the continuous efforts of countries from our region to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda through its mainstreaming in public policies, institutional arrangements, and national and subnational follow-up and review; encourage these countries to further deepen their national efforts in that endeavour and to engage in in-depth knowledge-sharing with peers and partners throughout the region; highlight in that regard the 28 national coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the increase in the number of national and subnational initiatives promoting articulation between development priorities, plans, budgets and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the efforts of raising awareness and training to disseminate the Agenda and its relationship with national development objectives; as well as by strengthening the involvement of local and other actors at the national level, as appropriate, in the achievement of sustainable development;

74. *Also welcome* the numerous contributions and the support provided by the United Nations development system at the regional level, aiming to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; and reiterate the need that their activities be carried out in a coherent and coordinated manner and in line with national policies and priorities;

75. *Further welcome* the actions taken by the Secretary-General to strengthen and adapt the United Nations development system to better support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through the repositioning of the United Nations development system, including through an empowered and independent Resident Coordinator system, supported by the Development Coordination Office, including its regional presence, and reiterate our commitment and support to the Secretary-General in advancing, implementing and respective follow-up of his actions in this regard;

76. *Also welcome* the efforts of the Secretary-General in formulating the recommendations to harness the regional assets of the United Nations development system, recognizing the steps taken to better position the regional assets to support countries as they seek to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region;

77. *Take note* of the presentations of the 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean and take note also of the practice of convening the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform and the Resident Coordinators of Latin America and the Caribbean during the meetings of the Forum, the latter upon previous consultation with their respective national public counterparts, as an opportunity to interact with the regional mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the member States of the Forum and strengthen the nexus among analytical, policy and operational work of the United Nations development system at the regional level;

78. *Welcome* the detailed commitments and actions of the Secretary-General to improve the United Nations development system's offer in countries serviced by multi-country offices to ensure more tailored technical and policy support, enhanced and aligned capacities and physical presence, strengthened policy support with regard to financing for development, data systems, disaggregated data collection and data use for informed decision-making, as well as better integration and participation of States in intergovernmental forums and processes and fostering South-South and triangular cooperation and cross-regional learning, and commend the work of ECLAC in supporting its member States and associate members covered by the multi-country offices in the region;

79. *Reaffirm* the role of the Commission as an essential component of the United Nations development system based on: (i) its convening function as an intergovernmental platform for policy advice and dialogue; (ii) its ability to act as a think tank for devising analysis and policy recommendations; and (iii) its capacity to provide technical cooperation and normative and capacity-building support to its member States, and in this regard stresses the importance of ensuring adequate regular budget resources in order to fulfil the mandate of the commission;

80. *Welcome* the presentation of the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean —SDG Gateway— developed through a regional inter-agency effort of the United Nations system under the leadership of ECLAC, as a key tool for supporting the capacities of countries and other stakeholders in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, encourage the countries to use it to promote collaborative work and horizontal cooperation for closing gaps in data availability for follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and

further invite the countries of the region to disseminate their statistical information relating to the Sustainable Development Goals via online platforms that can be integrated with the SDG Gateway;

81. *Take note with appreciation* of the Annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean entitled “Building forward better: actions to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,² prepared by ECLAC, and note with concern that the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic, social and environmental effects are putting at risk the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in this connection, welcome the scenario simulations and trend projections to 2030 set forth in the report regarding a selection of SDG indicators as well as the analysis of the policy measures implemented by the States of the region in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and their effects on the SDG targets;

82. *Commend* the 24 countries of the region³ that have already presented voluntary national reviews at the ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC, and the 11 countries⁴ preparing to do so in 2021, of which 7 are presenting a second or third review, and highlight the commitment and leadership shown by these 24 countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by integrating it into their national strategies and adjusting institutional arrangements;

83. *Take note* of the efforts of subnational and local governments who have conducted Local Voluntary Reviews, showing the increasing political will and commitment of their cities and regions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as their interest in actively supporting the follow-up and review processes;

84. *Recognize* that the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its means of implementation, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, in preparation for the High-Level Political Forum, has become an example of regional coordination of multiple stakeholders, such as governments, the United Nations system, the private sector, academia and civil society, to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean;

85. *Highlight* the commitment of the countries of the region to address statistical challenges and advance in the generation of quality data for the SDGs, in a timely manner, including through the strengthening of statistical systems that guarantee reliable and disaggregated data, to allow a detailed analysis of the progress in the SDGs, in order to identify inequalities and needs of the most vulnerable, and acknowledge the contribution made by ECLAC and the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Statistical Conference of the Americas to the indicators of the region; recommend that such contribution continue on a regional framework of indicators for regional statistical follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean; and encourage the Statistical Conference of the Americas to continue analysing national statistical capacities of the region to identify areas of cooperation, in consultation with the respective governments, with a view to advancing in the generation of disaggregated, accessible, timely and reliable data;

² LC/FDS.4/3/Rev.1.

³ Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁴ Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay.

86. *Commend* the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development for providing useful opportunities for sharing of best practices among multiple stakeholders in the peer learning sessions on institutional arrangements, national measurements and challenges and priorities, challenges in the Caribbean, participatory approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, platforms for follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals, continuity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, institutional framework, planning and budgeting for the 2030 Agenda, implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the subnational level, statistical capacities, and measurement and georeferencing, held during the four meetings of the Forum convened thus far, and recommend continuing to include peer learning sessions in its meetings on other emerging issues of interest, upon request and as identified by the Forum;

87. *Welcome* the participation and contributions of the associate members of ECLAC in the Forum, recognize their specific political and economic constraints and their vulnerabilities in their pursuit of sustainable development, and encourage their continued inclusion, where appropriate, in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;

88. *Also welcome* the work of civil society to strengthen their engagement in the Forum, including through the Mechanism for the participation of civil society in the Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by civil society at the margins of the Second Meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, and the participation in the third meeting and their declaration, and look forward to the meaningful participation and contribution of civil society in the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development;

89. *Further welcome* the contributions of all relevant stakeholders to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region, and the participation, according to resolution 700(XXXVI) of ECLAC, of parliamentarians, local governments, private sector, civil society and academia in the fourth meeting of the Forum, and encourage their continued commitment to ensure that no one is left behind;

90. *Recommend* that the Chair of the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC submit the present conclusions and recommendations and a Summary of the Chair, along with the Political Declaration on a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted by Foreign Ministers and High Representatives on the occasion of the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, as regional contributions to the 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the ECOSOC along with the regional results report of the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean for their due consideration, as well as to make it available for other relevant regional and international events and processes;

91. *Request* that this regional contribution, which reflects the commitment of the countries of the region to the 2030 Agenda and highlights the challenges, priorities and progress achieved in the region on the implementation of the Agenda, be considered an input to the agreed conclusions and recommendations of the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum follow-up and the Ministerial declaration of the High-Level Political Forum by its facilitators;

92. Moreover, *request* the President of the Economic and Social Council that the contribution of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development be mainstreamed in the sessions of the High-Level Political Forum to enrich its debates, highlight the region's expectations in this global platform and ensure coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels (national, regional and global);

93. *Commit* to actively participate in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in relation to the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to benefit from lessons learned;

94. *Express* our deepest appreciation to the Republic of Costa Rica as the Chair of the Forum, and to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, for their leadership in convening the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development in a virtual manner in the interest of safeguarding the well-being of the participants amidst the outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

Annex 2

SUMMARY OF THE CHAIR OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF THE COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**INTRODUCTION**

At the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held in Mexico City from 23–27 May 2016, the member States adopted resolution 700(XXXVI), sponsored by Mexico, establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its targets and means of implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

The first meeting of the Forum was held in Mexico City, from 26–28 April 2017. The meeting was chaired by Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC, and convened under the auspices of the Commission. The second meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, from 18–20 April 2018, chaired by Mexico, and convened under the auspices of the Commission. The third meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, from 24–26 April 2019, chaired by Cuba, and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

The fourth meeting of the Forum was held from 15 to 18 March 2021, in virtual format owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and was chaired by Costa Rica and convened under the auspices of the Commission. It was open to member States of the Forum and observers, the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, regional and subregional bodies, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society. Preparatory activities for the Forum included meetings of associate members of the Commission and the civil society meeting on 15 March. In addition, more than 30 side events were held, two of which were organized by the Office of the President of Costa Rica: “Women and nature: financial solutions for an inclusive and equitable economic recovery” and “The environmental big push for sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery”.

The purpose of the meetings of the Forum is to share experiences and best practices among the Latin American and Caribbean countries regarding actions taken to achieve the SDGs in the region.

1. Opening session

At the opening session, moderated by Adriana Bolaños Argueta, Minister ad interim for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, statements were made by Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York; Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that the Latin American and Caribbean region was particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis and faced the worst economic contraction in its history, potentially erasing the progress made towards equality, and especially gender equality. Countries' rapid responses through unprecedented fiscal and social measures saved millions of lives and prevented an increase in poverty. However, there were five key areas for action: (i) COVID-19 vaccines must be a global public good, especially through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility, which should be given full support; (ii) institutional support must be given to financing for development—critical for middle-income countries and small island developing States (SIDS) where debt and vulnerability to climate change were linked—and the proposals for debt service suspension, the Fund to alleviate COVID-19 economics (FACE) proposed by Costa Rica, the Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap initiative and the proposed establishment of a Caribbean resilience fund; (iii) align policies on COVID-19 and climate action towards renewable energy, sustainable mobility and tourism, digitalization, health-care manufacturing, the bioeconomy and the circular economy; (iv) build an equal future where women could take their rightful place in society; and (v) make the most of the repositioning of the regional United Nations development system. Upcoming international conferences such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development offered opportunities to help shape our common future and Latin America and the Caribbean had much to offer as countries could help the world anchor the recovery from COVID-19 in the longer-term promises of the 2030 Agenda. The challenges ahead were significant, but the region had the capacity to drive transformative change over the next ten years. The United Nations would remain a steadfast partner at this pivotal moment in building a better future for all.

The President of the Economic and Social Council said the world was at a turning point and the first order of business must be equality in the distribution of and access to vaccines. To respond to and recover from pandemic, the international community must mobilize financing required by developing countries. In the Economic and Social Council there was emerging agreement on the actions needed. The first was debt relief: the Group of 20 (G20) Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) was welcome, but should be expanded and extended until the end of the COVID-19 crisis. The private sector, which held most of the debt of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), should be brought into debt suspension exercise, and that should be utilized to restructure debt on a case by case basis. An architecture for sustainable debt management must also be built. Second, least developed and middle-income countries required additional liquidity to invest in recovery. Developed countries had injected over US\$ 14 trillion into their economies but developing countries did not have access to reserve currency to create such liquidity. The creation of new special drawing rights (SDR) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the redistribution of developed countries' unutilized quotas to developing countries would be critical. The United States Secretary of the Treasury had recently recommended the creation of 500 billion new SDRs which could generate US\$ 56 billion in new money for the region. Costa Rica's proposed FACE initiative could also provide significant avenues for developing countries to overcome the liquidity crisis and build back sustainably, and it was hoped that it would be adopted by international financial institutions. The Economic Commission for Africa proposal for the establishment of a liquidity and sustainability facility deserved international support. Third, much more concessional financing must be mobilized for countries most in need, as the poorest cannot afford to take on new debt. Under the Eighteenth Replenishment of International Development Association Resources (IDA18), US\$ 30 billion had been allocated for concessional financing and that figure must be at least doubled. Donor countries must finally fulfil their promise to provide 0.7% of GDP as official development assistance (ODA). Regional and subregional financial institutions should increase capitalization and adopt more flexible lending criteria. The illicit flows of funds from poor countries must be stopped and the climate finance pledge of US\$ 100 billion annually must be honoured: the 14 recommendations of the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda (FACTI Panel) should be

endorsed and implemented; and investment in sustainable infrastructure was needed to prevent a climate catastrophe. The creation of a public-private facility for sustainable infrastructure investment under the auspices of the United Nations had been proposed to help developing countries bridge the existing infrastructure investment gap. Systemic inequalities must be addressed and Latin American and Caribbean countries and ECLAC had a vital role to play in promoting the transition to a more equal, dynamic and prosperous world.

The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) said that amid the health crisis, the value of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was clear, establishing it as a vital space for sharing the lessons learned and challenges faced during the pandemic and action taken by countries to achieve the SDGs, as well as for providing input for the next high-level political forum on sustainable development. The meeting was taking place in the midst of a crisis that had deepened the serious structural problems and revealed the unsustainability of the region's development model. The pandemic had caused in 2020 the sharpest economic contraction in 120 years, increasing unemployment and labour informality, poverty and extreme poverty, and with disproportionate effects on rural areas, women, children and young people, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and migrants. Among the most notable effects of the crisis was the substantial number of women who exited the labour market, due in part to rising demand for care in the home, setting back more than a decade of progress. The crisis had also revealed deep digital divides, with 46% of children having no access to tele-education. Against that background, there was a renewed call to move towards a care society with universal social protection, which would represent a major civilizational change, and to establish a basic digital basket in the countries of the region, to which 1% of GDP would be allocated. The situation was a wake-up call as to the dangers of not achieving the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. In the framework of the decade of action for the SDGs, it was highlighted that the region must focus on strategic sectors in order to move towards sustainable development, and that international financing was crucial. In that regard, the FACE initiative was of particular relevance, as it would provide concessional loans regardless of countries' income levels and without conditions. The response to the crisis must be accompanied by the course-correcting actions needed to achieve sustainable development. Greater democracy was also a must, but nothing would be achieved without access to vaccines, which called for changes in intellectual property and patent regulations, collective action and a multilateral approach, based on public goods to close the broad gaps.

The President of Costa Rica said the world had changed since the drafting of the SDGs and the comprehensive nature of the 2030 Agenda was at risk. The pandemic had revealed the wide gaps in the region. High indebtedness and limited fiscal space restricted the capacity to respond adequately to the crisis, and in the case of the Caribbean and Central America, there were also pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as those linked to climate change. Given the urgent need to speed up recovery, the capacity to invest in the future, in sustainable solutions and in the most vulnerable was imperative, avoiding the temptation to pursue recovery at all costs. The pandemic must be taken as a warning sign about humanity's pressure on ecosystems. The current production and consumption systems had reached their limit, placing the world at crossroads that demanded a structural change in the development model to ensure a safe and healthy home for current and future generations. The "new normal" must be truly new. Nationally determined contributions must be updated, investments redirected towards carbon neutrality and a common front formed to mobilize the resources needed to support countries to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Amid the tensions that the global governance architecture now faced, the value of multilateralism could not be overemphasized. Solidarity and international cooperation were the only real way out of the crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean must speak with a strong and united voice for it to reshape the world order for the better. Regional consensus already existed, as expressed in the *Political*

Declaration on a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC and the conclusions and recommendations of the fourth meeting of the Forum, and the region should put forward its proposals in all global discussions, in particular at the high-level political forum and the 2021 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development.

2. Presentation of the document *Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, fourth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean¹

The document *Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, fourth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighted that in a world in crisis, with slow growth, inequality and an environmental emergency, the unprecedented health crisis was exacerbated by the inequality matrix. The region was facing the pandemic amid serious existing structural problems, compounded by geopolitical constraints in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. All that increased the possibility that the Goals of the 2030 Agenda would not be achieved and put their comprehensiveness at risk. The strategy for a decade of action for the SDGs had to be realistic, build on progress, acknowledge the challenges of implementation and be aligned with a transformative recovery. ECLAC proposed a strategy for action: a big push for sustainability based on the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. There was a crisis of multilateralism, with geopolitical tensions, a new economic landscape and worn out global governance models; structural gaps persisted, with insufficient growth, inequalities and the concentration of wealth; fragmentation of health and education services, inadequate social protection, mistrust and corruption led to social unrest. There were also global challenges such as biodiversity loss, the technological revolution and migration. The health crisis had claimed 718,000 lives in the region and ECLAC estimated substantial excess mortality and a 0.5-year loss in life expectancy. Risk factors such as poverty and overcrowding and fragmented and unequal health systems were exacerbating the situation. There was also a care crisis in which women were particularly affected. Countries had implemented policy responses to address the pandemic, such as restrictions on movement (physical distancing), and allocated resources to the health system and to bolster incomes. The central challenge was access to vaccination, given the hoarding of vaccines by some countries, limited financial and negotiating capacities to procure vaccines, and limited infrastructure, logistics and primary health-care services for national distribution.

The economic, social and environmental impacts of the pandemic occurred against the backdrop of a culture of privilege in the region, which had three features: difference was normalized as inequality and considered part of the natural order in the mindset of those who were in a position of privilege and of those who were subordinate; hierarchies were established for the benefit of whoever was in power at the time (according to class or bloodline, race, gender, birthplace, culture or a combination of these), which contributed to strong inertia in terms of power and inequality; and the culture of privilege was perpetuated by actors, institutions, rules and practices, generating asymmetries in multiple spheres. Thus, policy design or implementation was biased, distorted and ineffective (e.g. in the tax system, public safety, education, health, infrastructure, etc.). Disillusionment and anger signalled a breaking point in the continuity of a model associated with four decades of low growth, concentration of wealth and environmental deterioration. Institutions reproduced the behaviour of agents with greater economic and political power, and there was a rentier tendency based on the ownership of natural resources and the financial economy. The pandemic had magnified the structural problems and it could be said that the region was facing a lost decade. Caribbean countries faced multiple vulnerabilities: more than 80% of the Caribbean population

¹ LC/FDS.4/3/Rev.1.

lived in areas below 5 metres above sea level, which exacerbated the consequences of climate change and disasters related to natural phenomena. They also depended heavily on imported food and other imported goods and faced high debt levels. The pandemic had led to a decline in tourism as tourist arrivals plummeted by 64% in the first eight months of 2020.

The crisis increased the risk of reprimarization and hindered diversified industrialization, with a bigger impact on the sectors with the greatest potential for technological growth and a smaller impact on natural-resource-intensive sectors. The labour market was particularly hard hit and unemployment in 2020 came to 10.7%. Labour informality levels were high (54%) and only 47.2% of employed persons were affiliated with or contributed to pension systems. In terms of digital technologies, mobile broadband penetration stood at 70% and fixed broadband at 14%, but one third of the population had limited or no access to the Internet and 46% of children aged 5–12 lived in households with no Internet connection. More than 42 million households had no Internet connection and, of those, half were in the two poorest quintiles of the population; 77% of rural households and 33% of urban households were not connected. The number of online companies tripled, but only 21.3% of employed persons could work from home (3% in the first quintile and 70% in the fifth quintile).

In terms of policy responses to the crisis, the countries of the region had taken measures in three areas: strengthening health systems, supporting household income and protecting production capacity, for which they had devoted fiscal expenditure averaging 4.3% of GDP; implementing State guarantees amounting to 2.5% of GDP; and supporting aggregate demand and maintaining macrofinancial stability through conventional and non-conventional instruments. Non-contributory social protection in 2020 represented 1.25% of 2019 per capita GDP and covered 84 million households and 326 million people. Emergency transfers limited the rise in poverty: without them, the number of people living in poverty would have been 230 million instead of 209 million and there would have been 98 million in extreme poverty instead of 78 million (the Gini index was 5.6% higher than in 2019). On the environmental front, with the right policies, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on emissions could give the region time to comply with nationally determined contributions (NDCs): lower emissions provided an additional 3–4 years to make the investments needed to fulfil conditional NDCs and 6–7 years to fulfil unconditional NDCs.

The pandemic was heightening the risk to the comprehensive nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was at a critical point, with only one third of the targets on track to be achieved. On a positive note, almost all countries had mechanisms in place for the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. Thirty-one countries in the region had such a coordination mechanism, although there was little involvement of planning authorities in the formulation and evaluation of pandemic-response measures. The countries of the region had taken ownership of the 2030 Agenda and national and local voluntary reviews were on the rise: worldwide, a third of the countries that would be presenting reviews for the third time in 2021 were from the region, and 28 of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean would have submitted their reports to the high-level political forum between 2016 and 2021. It was necessary to foster new engines of growth with redistributive results, and overcome the gaps and the trap affecting middle-income countries. Progressive taxation was needed, as well as the closure of technological and investment gaps, taking into account data protection and cybersecurity, changing the conversation with civil society and the private sector, and moving from indifference to solidarity.

In the session dedicated to comments on the report, moderated by Adriana Bolaños Argueta, Minister ad interim for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, it was noted that the report outlined an integrative approach to the multiple facets of the crisis, along with a set of proposals for action based on analysis and statistical projections. The serious economic, social and environmental consequences of the

crisis highlighted the urgency of a transformation of production and consumption patterns. The recovery had to be transformative and the new reality had to be sustainable, inclusive, innovative, green and decarbonized. The title of the report made reference to “building forward better”, which gave it a positive spin, and the mention of “action” was also critical as it was important to produce a report that led to action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The document was a valuable contribution to the *Global Sustainable Development Report* being prepared for launch in 2023, because it was data-based and highlighted how the impact of the COVID-19 crisis had added to existing structural problems in Latin America and the Caribbean, adding further economic, social and environmental obstacles to achieving sustainable development and causing another decade to be lost. It highlighted how the 2030 Agenda led the region in a growth direction based on environmental sustainability and equality, which was different from the existing path. Equality was of utmost importance for environmental sustainability and for tackling the challenges of climate change. Women were on the front line of the crisis and were the hardest hit. The report brought together information that provided a good overview on how countries were coping with the situation. Availability of vaccinations was a new dimension of inequality and joint vaccine production in the region was a very important area of opportunity. All the trends described showed that only a third of SDG targets were on course to be met, so Latin America and the Caribbean needed assistance. Some measures had positive effects on one target and negative effects on another, so there was a need for policies that harmonized interactions between SDGs to support each other. A critical contribution of the report was laying out practical suggestions for bringing about transformative change via a new collaborative model between the State, the market and society, acting together in the best interests of development.

ECLAC was a very valuable resource in Latin America and the Caribbean and its history and thinking had positioned it as a global interlocutor. Given the crisis, it had to be borne in mind that the world had changed and there was no longer any way to return to the previous reality: there was nowhere to go back to. Global governance was at a juncture where it was not clear whether there was a change in global hegemony or whether there was any possibility of building democratic multilateral governance. There was a deterioration in the tools of global governance. One example of this was the process of production and distribution of vaccines. The value of the work of ECLAC was that it had incorporated new elements into the traditional discourse, and although it was an economic commission, it had successfully mainstreamed a holistic and interdisciplinary approach. The document presented to the Forum addressed the problems of today’s world: the transformation of the world of work, automation and the difficulty of maintaining welfare systems, which were consolidated in developed countries and largely not consolidated in countries of the region. The pandemic had made transformative recovery a key concept. The document also referred to restructuring of the United Nations development system in the region, seeking synergies and cooperation among the agencies, funds and programmes of the system. The system also needed to be present at the local level, together with non-governmental organizations and research groups, for its work to have a real impact on the ground. The report also highlighted the need for greater regional integration, particularly in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase.

3. Dialogue on a resilient and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving the 2030 Agenda

During the dialogue, moderated by Pilar Garrido, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, the countries reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, which served as a guide for addressing the needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2030 Agenda had enabled countries to make significant progress on social, economic and environmental fronts, but the pandemic had deleterious consequences on health, education, unemployment, poverty and food security and exposed existing gaps. In the response to the pandemic and its effects, in addition to

health, social protection was prioritized. It was necessary to rebuild with equality and sustainability and build resilience while revitalizing the regional response to the pandemic, especially regarding equitable access to vaccines. The countries reaffirmed that multilateralism was the cornerstone of sustainable development and was crucial for tackling challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries must show greater commitment, responsibility, empathy and solidarity. Delegations welcomed the document presented by ECLAC and appreciated its timely recommendations for the region's recovery. The importance of the concept of development in transition was stressed, as the classification of countries determined on the basis of GDP was not a multidimensional approach. Several countries highlighted the importance of local adaptation of the SDGs as a way to focus efforts on the most critical areas, and highlighted their progress in terms of environmental policies and climate change response, in particular energy transition initiatives.

The COVID-19 crisis had hindered the achievement of the SDGs and tested the resilience of societies and institutions. It had widened structural gaps and undermined the recovery capacity of the countries of the region. The systemic and comprehensive health crisis had revealed the lack of comprehensive policies to deal with systemic crises. The current development model was called into question: it was not inclusive or equitable and did not meet the needs of the population. The effects of the pandemic, which deepened pre-existing structural problems, had compounded that model and it was those worst affected who had benefited the least from development. Designing a recovery plan that included the pillars of sustainable development was vital. The recovery must be sustainable and inclusive to tackle the health, economic and, in particular, social effects of the crisis by means of lasting solutions, and the 2030 Agenda was the appropriate road map. Resilient recovery meant more than just fighting the pandemic: it required making cross-sectoral and coordinated decisions to close gaps and combat poverty and inequality. The main challenge was to ensure social justice and protection for the most disadvantaged, to leave no one behind. A collective response and a new social compact were needed to confront the current and future pandemics. More specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic had forced the region to adapt, innovating and applying new ways to work, study and coexist. While the importance of the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and their potential to overcome the barriers to access and participation that predated the crisis had become clear, access to technology must be expanded to all corners of the region.

Resilience-building was imperative for Caribbean countries: economies must evolve to withstand different types of shocks and not succumb to systemic failures. It was not enough to build back better; it was necessary to build forward better. Small island developing States (SIDS) were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, given their inherent vulnerability to disasters and high dependence on tourism, which had taken a severe hit. However, these countries being classified as middle-income countries based on the outdated tools for measuring wealth, they had no access to concessional financing. It was imperative to develop a vulnerability matrix, as per capita GDP did not reflect the vulnerability of SIDS economies. Cuba and Nicaragua reiterated that the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States—and which had intensified under the previous administration—harmed key sectors, such as tourism, and impeded countries' development. Furthermore, it was a systematic and flagrant violation of the human rights of the population and could be deemed a crime against humanity in times of pandemic.

Society's capacity to protect all people, especially the most vulnerable, must be strengthened. The increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic illustrated that need. The State must play a central role in the integration of all the rights enshrined in the 2030 Agenda, and public policies must be implemented at the territorial level if they were to have an impact. Public-private partnerships were important, as was the incorporation of business sectors, trade unions and civil society organizations. Countries called for cooperation and solidarity, with multilateralism as the cornerstone and a people-centred

approach. They also recalled the objectionable undermining of the funding and structure of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the midst of the pandemic, the consequences of which, for example, were reflected in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

In the presentations by civil society, the document “The Organizations of the Society Civil Latin America and the Caribbean before the decade of action for the implementation of Agenda 2030” was read out.² They highlighted the need to strengthen the democratic systems of the countries of the region and address the COVID-19 crisis with a human rights approach, promote decent work, respect the human rights of vulnerable groups, protect land and environmental defenders, journalists and human rights defenders, have disaggregated data on the fulfilment of human rights, address the widespread increase in poverty and hunger, contain the advance of religious and other forms of fundamentalism and guarantee the human right to migration. Organizations also called for financial, political and legal commitments to ensure compliance with the 2030 Agenda and the creation of an environment in which cooperation and solidarity, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, were given the requisite capacities, policy frameworks and earmarked State resources. They called for the ratification of the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, to guarantee a dignified old age for the people of the region.

4. Building Forward Better in the Caribbean post-COVID-19: critical issues to keep the 2030 Agenda in sight

In the session, the representatives of the Caribbean countries stated that the measures implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 had exacted a heavy toll on the economic, social and psychological well-being of Caribbean citizens. Consideration had to be given to how to re-ignite the engine of growth and recover jobs in the Caribbean post-COVID-19, explore options for financial support to prevent a spiral of deepening debt, safeguard the welfare of women and children—who had been disproportionately affected by job losses in the informal economy, in particular, and by school closures—and how to seize that opportunity to address both new and long-standing issues that continued to compromise the development trajectory of the Caribbean. There was a need for a new deal for human development in the countries of the region, including a change in the educational model. In the Caribbean, the pandemic had highlighted the importance of an innovative strategy for the effective management of non-communicable diseases as, in addition to COVID-19, the region was dealing with chronic non-communicable diseases that had compromised the ability to recover from the pandemic from a health perspective. Human-resource capacity had to be built in terms of people’s resilience, as human resources were the greatest resource in the fight against any disease. With regard to building resilience, consideration had to be given to the kind of communities that the subregion wanted to build. Opportunities had to be created for men and women to own assets, not merely perform income-generating activities.

The pandemic had affected social protection systems and public debt levels, and limited governments’ fiscal space and room for manoeuvre. In addition, Caribbean countries classified as middle-income had difficulty accessing financing, so innovative financing initiatives (such as the debt for climate change adaptation swap, the proposed creation of a resilience fund for the Caribbean countries and the inclusion of clauses for events such as hurricanes and pandemics in loan conditions) were necessary and welcome. A revisioning of the global financial architecture was needed to provide the means of implementation for sustainable development in small island developing States (SIDS). The proposed issuance of new SDRs and reallocation of surplus SDRs from developed to developing countries should be envisaged not only for low-income countries, but also for middle-income countries. The crisis was an

² The text of the declaration figures in annex 1.

opportunity to leverage the global discussion on financing for development, taking into account the context of COVID-19 and the specific needs and vulnerabilities of SIDS and middle-income countries in the Caribbean.

Structural problems were compounded by the effects of climate change, which were causing increasingly frequent natural disasters that affected the security of the population and economic growth. Rebuilding after Hurricanes Irma and Maria was still under way. The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts had not delivered for the most vulnerable countries and regions, so a new mechanism was needed. The representatives of the Caribbean countries stressed the importance of creating new governance models that were inclusive with real involvement of people in public policy and development. Building forward better had to be truly inclusive. It was also important to incorporate into the regional agenda the specificities of the Caribbean, including both challenges and strengths, and the Forum provided a space to advance in the development of those opportunities to build forward better.

Digitalization was key to ensuring that no one was left behind in the Caribbean and there was a need to invest in robust telecommunications infrastructure, reliable and free Wi-Fi for rural areas, digitalization of public services and in better equipping children to compete globally through their digital skills. There was a need for broad investment in technology to facilitate education system reform because, in the future, a resilient economy would need to be sufficiently diversified and would require a skilled workforce that could benefit from the new world of work. Services moved online during the pandemic had to be strengthened and extended to people in crisis, such as mental health and domestic violence services. Food security was fundamental and there was a need to strengthen supply chains, encourage households to grow —thus reducing the food import bill—, create more public-private partnerships for agribusiness and create spaces for small farmers to grow businesses.

The current challenges could only be addressed through transformative solutions. Nature-based solutions were fundamental to consolidate competitive economies in new production and consumption patterns, which were also cost-effective. In the Caribbean, a strategic approach that took into account the region's specificities was important to advance towards the achievement of the SDGs through the development of a blue economy, a green economy and creative industries, which would allow for greater participation in global value chains. It was also crucial to foster greater linkages in terms of trade and investment with the economies of the region in order to strengthen integration and the tools of multilateralism. ECLAC provided a platform for dialogue for the member and associate member States of the Caribbean. Despite the challenges facing the Caribbean because of COVID-19 and climate vulnerability, innovation, new solutions and partnerships could help Caribbean countries achieve the SDGs.

5. Contribution of the United Nations system

In this session, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a pre-recorded statement, said that over the past year, the COVID-19 crisis had dealt a setback to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Governments in Latin America had responded to the health and socioeconomic crisis with urgency, using available tools, and several had showed exemplary leadership in limiting transmission of the virus. The 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean that was being presented showed how the United Nations at the regional level had contributed to the response to the crisis. The report sought to create greater transparency and accountability around the Organization's regional efforts and pointed to the vast potential of the Organization's regional assets. Thanks to the United Nations Secretary-General's reforms, the system was

in a better position to support countries in the transition to a better future. The Deputy Secretary-General encouraged partners to continue contributing to the regional architecture and thanked ECLAC and UNDP for preparing the report. The United Nations system in Latin America and the Caribbean, she said, would be a steadfast partner in achieving more equal, just and sustainable economies and societies.

The Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean presented the 2020 system-wide results report of the United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean, which aimed to show how the United Nations system had contributed to supporting the response of the region's countries to the pandemic to increasing the transparency, accountability and results-based management of its regional architecture. A summary was provided of the highlights of United Nations system-wide results at the regional level. The basis of the work undertaken came from the agreements reached by Member States on United Nations system reform to optimize structures and strengthen the collaboration of the regional commissions with the regional teams of the agencies, funds and programmes, resident coordinators and country teams. The Regional Collaborative Platform had been launched in November 2020, incorporating the duplicated coordination mechanisms that existed in the region and promoting collaboration among the entities of the United Nations development system that operated at the regional level. The Platform provided those same entities with a space to consolidate an agile and effective structure for development in the region and to engage with other crucial actors, including member States, to learn about their needs first-hand and be able to focus regional efforts and resources on providing context-specific responses. The Platform was chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and its Vice-Chairs were ECLAC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A total of 24 United Nations entities collaborated on the Platform, which had six thematic coalitions (climate change and resilience, crime and violence, equitable growth, governance and institutions, human mobility, and most recently, financing for development) and two cross-cutting thematic pillars (one on youth and another on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls).

Key United Nations system-wide results at the regional level included the support provided to Member States, United Nations country teams and United Nations resident coordinators in their response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, through evidence-based policy guidance, capacity-building support and establishment of regional knowledge-sharing and communication platforms. Inter-agency initiatives had been launched to provide integrated responses to the challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Joint actions had been taken to address the structural causes of inequality and promote a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability in line with the SDGs, as well as actions to foster cooperation and partnerships, to accelerate SDG implementation. A number of countries highlighted the contribution of the United Nations system during the pandemic. The only way to address global challenges comprehensively and inclusively was through strong and effective multilateralism, and a global crisis required interlinked global responses, through the multilateral forum par excellence that was the United Nations. In that regard, the United Nations system was a great ally of the countries of the region, and had redoubled its efforts to support them, showing efficient coordination among entities, organizing the use of available resources and offering tailored assistance based on a comprehensive vision of the region's challenges. The representatives also expressed their satisfaction with the process of reforming the system—given that there was always room to improve processes and increase efficiency—and their wish that the Regional Collaborative Platform continue to grow stronger and contribute to the needs of countries, in line with national priorities and in support of achievement of the SDGs.

6. Panel 1: Health and the economy —a false dichotomy?

Panel 1 was moderated by Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC and the panellists were Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); Joy St. John, Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA); Alejandro Werner, Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); Blanca Margarita Ovelar de Duarte, National Senator of Paraguay and President of ParlAmericas; Mónica Jasis, focal point of the group on migrants and persons displaced by disasters or conflicts of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development; Román Macaya, Chair of the Board of the Costa Rican Social Security Institute; Daniel Innerarity, Director of the Institute of Democratic Governance of Spain; and Martha Delgado Peralta, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Panellists stated that health was a human right and a fundamental public good, which must be guaranteed by the State. The pandemic had made it clear that full access to quality health-care systems was essential for inclusive and sustainable economic development. However, the ongoing health crisis had left the region with weak, fragmented health-care systems hampered by partial coverage, difficulties relating to access and inadequate human resources, technology and infrastructure, along with social protection systems hindered by significant gaps in coverage, insufficient benefits and financing problems. The region's economic performance in 2020 had been one of its weakest and although a recovery was expected in 2021, a return to 2019 activity levels was unlikely by the end of the year. Social gaps appeared to have widened considerably. With regard to the economic policy response, fiscal support in the region was much greater than expected based on the countries' fiscal space. The decline in international interest rates, the fall in investment and the increase in households' savings created space for greater deficit financing. In 2021, even if output recovered, employment would still show gaps and the hardest-hit households and small and medium-sized enterprises would continue to need support. It was important to ensure the soundness of public finances for the future, but there also had to be room to support families, businesses, and the health and education sectors.

Parliaments had a crucial role to play in exercising political oversight of pandemic responses, passing emergency legislation and promoting transparency around the measures implemented, in a scenario where it was important to maintain public confidence in government action and to have the necessary information. They also had a key role to play in a green recovery, for example through the approval of budgets. In the region, there were inadequacies in relation to health infrastructure, education services, connectivity, access to services and policies by women and informal workers, lax implementation of measures, increased workloads for women and gender-based violence. There were also opportunities, such as the strengthening of existing programmes, the good performance of consolidated health networks in some countries and the maintenance of food programmes.

Crises of various kinds were commonplace around the world and political systems did not have the capacity to recognize, manage and anticipate them, because they only dealt with the urgent issues, focused more on the symptoms than the causes, and were concerned with the voters of the present and not those of the future. Societies were not prepared for "anticipatory governance". A system was needed to manage future crises, in areas such as pensions, health and climate, in order to anticipate them and act in a timely manner. The aim was to improve the strategic coherence of actions, with more information on the long-term effects of decisions and on the type of risks faced. Only then would there be a shift in the focus of policymaking, from repairing to shaping. Drawing on best practices and past experiences was not enough. The future had to be incorporated into analyses, so that policy responses were not belated and weighed

down by the cost of remedial measures, which was always higher than that of anticipatory measures. Preparations had to be made for a world in which crises were not just one-off events, with policymaking capable of reinventing itself and adapted to an increasingly unpredictable reality. The multilateral arena offered many areas of opportunity for building back better, with more resilient, just and inclusive systems. In light of the fact that available vaccines were highly concentrated in some countries, there was need of a spirit of multilateral defence, based on the understanding that the safety of everyone depended on the safety of all. Human health and the economy were closely linked to the environment, biodiversity and the fight against climate change, and in the future it would be necessary to analyse how those factors influenced the emergence of pandemics.

Human life was critical and there should never be any question of choosing between economic activity and saving lives. Sustained and collective action was a challenge in a pandemic that had claimed 1.27 million lives in the region and impacted all, wreaking havoc on economies, jobs, lives and livelihoods, and stretching systems to their limit. The evidence of the past 12 months was clear: there was no substitute for effective leadership and science-based public health measures to control the pandemic, save lives and support economic activity. To end the pandemic and accelerate inclusive and sustainable recovery to achieve the SDGs, four critical actions had to be prioritized: (i) sustained and continued intervention by countries in public health; (ii) the reduction of inequality, a central linchpin for action during the pandemic and economic recovery, (iii) public investment in resilient, responsive and adaptive health systems based on the guarantee of rights, protection and universal access to health, and (iv) the production and availability of and equitable access to pharmaceutical products, vaccines, medical supplies and diagnostics in a region characterized by low production of vaccines and little private sector participation in that area. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was working with ECLAC and other partners to support the health, science and technology sectors to increase health product manufacturing capacity in the region. There had also been a proposal to convene a meeting of health ministers of the region in 2021 to discuss the issue and to ensure that the region had the necessary medical supplies to meet current and future needs. The region could not afford to merely react to the current pandemic, but needed to anticipate and plan well into the future to be better prepared for the next pandemic.

In the Caribbean countries, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic had been managed with the support of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat. The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), which had built on the foundation of functional cooperation in health, had been given specific mandates and interpreted the global and regional guidelines of PAHO in the Caribbean context and reality. A lot of activities were strongly supported through international development partners. Various organizations, such as the Regional Health Communications Network, had helped tailor communication to counteract social media pushing vaccine hesitancy. The Caribbean Regulatory System was being used to ensure the availability of quality vaccines in the CARICOM market.

Health was a human right and not a commodity, but access to the vaccines had become an auction, which was why there was need of a fund within the United Nations system that could provide access to vaccines. Latin America and the Caribbean had to weigh in on multilateral discussions, especially on health issues, multilateral investment and climate change. The pandemic would reduce countries' per capita income and increase poverty and public debt, so local and national consensus would be essential to carry out the necessary reforms. Two subregions faced particular challenges: in the Caribbean, vulnerability to the effects of climate change; in Central America, migration processes. Trust had collapsed in the countries of the region and the low credibility of politicians would hinder the recovery. Once herd immunity had been achieved, social, political and educational "immunity" had to be addressed in order to be prepared for serious multifactor crises. The instruments used to assess the situation were outdated and unsuited to the complexity of today's world, and possible futures had to be anticipated.

The pandemic had highlighted the serious global asymmetries in the areas of finance, climate, health and access to vaccines in a world where “islands of immunity” seemed to be emerging because of limited access. IMF was making significant efforts and considering issuing new SDRs to support all countries. The region had to think collectively, and the initiatives of Argentina and Mexico with regard to vaccines, as well as the efforts of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), were commendable. Support was needed for the building of a health-care manufacturing industry in the region. Examples of much needed multilateralism were the support for PAHO in the implementation of the COVAX Facility and the dialogue that had to be maintained with countries in the hemisphere and with countries with a surplus of vaccines. At the country level, the pandemic showed that countries with social protection and primary health-care systems were the best performers; the only solution was to create care societies that gave priority to social protection and the management of public goods, and to build new social compacts.

7. Panel 2: Crisis, recovery and transformation in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals

Panel 2 was moderated by Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and the panellists were Cristina Gallach Figueras, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and for Ibero-America and the Caribbean of Spain; Camillo Gonsalves, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Sustainable Development and Information Technology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC); André Lara Resende, Adjunct Senior Research Scholar at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) of Columbia University; José Francisco Pacheco, Member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Costa Rica; Maurizio Bezzeccheri, Director for Latin America of Enel; and Laura Becerra Pozos, deputy focal point of the NGO networks, groupings, organizations and platforms group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

The panellists said that although achieving the SDGs by 2030 now seemed difficult, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would remain the basis for reflecting on the development model. In that regard, it was proposed that discussions take place, in this and other forums, on the possibility of adjusting some of the SDG targets, to avoid the frustration of not achieving them by the agreed deadline. The relationship between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean could contribute to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In the first few years following adoption of the Agenda, Europe had focused on the environmental aspect, while in Latin America and the Caribbean there had been great progress on planning of public policies in various areas. Europe had moved to a more global vision of the Agenda only when the European institutions underwent a renewal at the end of 2019 and a major project of modernization, digitalization and inclusion policies was launched. However, the two regions were the most affected by the pandemic and the Agenda was at the heart of the European economic recovery plan, through the allocation of public resources for employability, digital transformation and equality. Europe should provide decisive support to Latin America and the Caribbean, which had fewer resources to overcome the crisis, by speeding up the signing of trade agreements between the two regions, strengthening the European presence in the region’s business fabric in order to be part of its socioeconomic and industrial development and consolidating social, business, political and other ties.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean faced great difficulties in accessing the financial resources needed to implement social, industrial development, education, ecological transition and energy policies, among other areas, that were necessary to implement the sweeping changes required by the 2030 Agenda. Although it was positive that the major economic and financial organizations were

considering issuing new special drawing rights for the least developed countries, the “middle-income” label given to some countries should be removed, as it made access to financing more difficult and did not reflect the reality of the countries.

The pandemic had shown that all countries were vulnerable to risk and that it was important to envisage, beyond policies to fight poverty, welfare states in which everyone had at least access to health and food. The debate about the size of the State no longer made sense; in mature and democratic societies, an adequate social compact could not be maintained by cutting back on the functions of the State, which should make life easier for citizens and provide services. Funding should be the product of long-term planning and budgets should be results-oriented. The institutional capacity of governments to execute such financing was also very relevant. It was vital to strengthen budget execution mechanisms, to improve the capacity to transform funding into goods and services for society, and to ensure that funds contributed to meeting the goals to which they were allocated. Regarding the role of the private sector in development, there were increasingly interesting examples of the private sector implementing development programmes with good results for the population, without excessive profit. The debate on the transformation of the State needed to take into account the new role of the private sector, and diversified financing had to be sought that provided a response to countries’ main problems and did not drive away private investment.

The implementation of innovative financing instruments such as green sovereign bonds could be extremely effective in enabling States to make progress towards the SDGs and fulfil their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. The energy transition could generate many stable jobs and increase competitiveness. The COVID-19 pandemic had transformed the world of work, creating a need for greater flexibility and accelerating the need for new types of training and skills, as well as driving tremendous innovation in production and distribution. Governments should be guided by the 2030 Agenda to design measures and programmes with a more holistic, cross-cutting and multidimensional vision, and dialogue with civil society was important for this. Participants were called on to recognize civil society actors as development actors and to include them in decision-making processes, not merely consult or invite them to participate. Multilateralism and cooperation in the international system both urgently needed to be strengthened, to be able to address the pandemic in better conditions.

The countries of the Caribbean had done reasonably well in minimizing loss of life and severe infection from COVID-19; economically, however, they had been greatly affected. Most Caribbean countries had experienced double-digit economic declines in 2020 and a return to some semblance of normalcy required vaccines and jobs. The contribution of business owners was critical in the pandemic and in the recovery phase, so to keep businesses afloat they had been granted moratoriums on loan repayments and utility charges. In addition, small community infrastructure projects could create temporary construction jobs and contribute to the long-term resilience of communities. Transformative sustainable development was not possible without additional fiscal space, but Caribbean countries would not have that space without debt relief. Added to this were the costs of the hurricane seasons, which Caribbean countries had to cover with reconstruction loans. The debt burden of these countries was not due to bad economic planning, but to the catastrophes that hit them periodically. The Caribbean was trying to borrow its way out of this crisis as it had with all previous crises caused by external factors such as extreme weather events or the global financial crisis. A decade of growth had been lost after the global financial crisis. Because of the pandemic, there was an increasingly real possibility of another period of decline. Therefore, despite the start of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, there would be a lost generation in the Caribbean. Unless it was accepted that achieving the SDGs was impossible, it would be necessary to think about how to accelerate their implementation, as most Caribbean countries would not return to 2019 levels of activity until 2023, once the pandemic was over. As a result, there would not be a decade to achieve the SDGs, but just seven years. Neither recovery nor acceleration of SDG implementation would be possible

without increased fiscal space, which in turn was impossible without debt relief. All initiatives (climate finance, debt for climate adaptation swaps and debt relief) needed to be put in place immediately if a lost decade in the Caribbean was to be avoided.

8. Presentation on the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway) and on issue-based coalitions and working groups, by the Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean

In this presentation, the Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean said that the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway) was the fruit of collaboration among all the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations in the region and responded to the Secretary-General's request to present transformative proposals to establish regional knowledge management hubs. It was developed in a joint effort, with coordination and technical support from ECLAC and UNDP. A reference entry point for all information on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the region, it aimed to provide countries and United Nations country teams with specialized information to respond to the national needs related to the 2030 Agenda. It facilitated the monitoring and follow-up of progress towards the SDGs at country and regional levels, and fostered collaboration on sustainable development across all United Nations development system entities. The Platform provided an overview of the 2030 Agenda, the related institutional architecture, the SDGs and their targets, and the indicators for measuring progress on each of them; information on the countries of the region, their institutional frameworks for the SDGs and national statistical follow-up of the SDGs; data for global, regional and national statistical follow-up; and information on each of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and their work in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Other resources included global data from the United Nations Statistics Division and data from the CEPALSTAT database that could be used for geographic visualization, as well as information from academia, civil society, local governments, parliaments and the private sector pertaining to the 2030 Agenda.

Issue-based coalitions constituted a form of inter-agency coordination to work more effectively in support of country teams. The agreed principles in that regard were recalled and contextualized, with policies relating to transforming the production matrix, effective governance, social protection based on a universal approach, more flexible and sustainable access to financing for development, protection of vulnerable populations and systemic risk management. The aim of this coordination mechanism was to respond to challenges in an organized and effective manner, supporting country teams in the short term with a view to rebuilding towards a "normal" far better than the pre-pandemic one, but also addressing the structural causes behind the weaknesses that needed to be addressed. Coordination among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to respond the challenges was based on a set of issue-based coalitions on climate change and resilience, crime and violence, equitable growth, financing for development, governance and institutions, and human mobility, each of which included thematic areas, with gender and youth as cross-cutting areas. It was a coordination mechanism for a new, more effective and agile approach to inter-agency work that would better respond to a changing reality.

In the discussions following the presentation, representatives noted that the Regional Knowledge Platform would improve the coordination between regional initiatives for the development of indicators and the implementation of the SDGs. One such initiative was the Statistical and Geospatial Framework for the Americas (MEGA) that was being implemented in collaboration with ECLAC as the cartographic base of CEPALSTAT to introduce a geospatial component, which was critical for decision-making. Geospatial tools could enrich and reinforce the platform by providing a space for sharing experiences, strengthening national and regional capacities, and narrowing gaps in countries' technical development. The information presented in the Regional Knowledge Platform could serve as a bridge between national and regional levels

to foster dialogue, leverage experiences and good practices, and avoid duplication of effort. As a permanent reference tool, it would facilitate the follow-up of the Goals with a view to providing more effective public policy recommendations. The Regional Knowledge Platform was the manifestation of the concept of a regional public good, offering an opportunity for dialogue between producers and users of information, as well as a space for capacity-building in the production of statistical information. Collaboration was required not only among national statistical offices but also with new stakeholders. The Platform helped to close gaps because not all countries had the capacity to develop their own. For national statistical offices, it could constitute a space for learning and innovation, as part of their commitment to information-sharing and public policy guidance, by providing information that would increase equality for vulnerable populations, and in particular data that was sufficiently disaggregated to reflect the heterogeneity of the region and leave no one behind.

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

The intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the fourth 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 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 underscored that the document struck an important balance between the ongoing implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and thanked delegations for their participation and flexibility in the consultation process.

10. Closing round table “Building an inclusive and effective pathway to achieve the 2030 Agenda within the context of the decade of action and post-pandemic recovery from COVID-19”

The participants in the round table “Building an inclusive and effective pathway to achieving the 2030 Agenda within the context of the decade of action and post-pandemic recovery COVID-19” agreed that there was a need for immediate action and unified efforts for the decade of action and to meet the challenges of the pandemic. Latin America and the Caribbean had to seize that opportunity to strengthen regional integration once and for all. Universal, timely and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines was critical to the global recovery and, as a global public good, had to be incorporated into the themes of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. On the road to building forward better, efforts had to be anchored in human rights, which represented the best vaccine against hunger, poverty, inequality, and many other ills facing humanity. A new social contract with opportunities for all was also required. The experience of the pandemic provided countries with an opportunity to implement policies for progressive social equality and to make progress in relation to one of the main challenges facing the region: reducing inequality (SDG 10). Equality was a prerequisite for economic growth. The welfare model had to be broader and multisectoral, and to incorporate equality and sustainability. Sectors that could drive growth with sustainability included the energy transition, sustainable mobility and urban planning, sustainable tourism, the circular economy, the digital revolution, the health-care manufacturing industry and the care economy. The importance of full and equal access to health, education, nutrition, digital technologies, drinking water and other public services was highlighted. The pandemic had shown that countries with stronger health and social protection systems were more resilient to such crises. The decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals had to be accompanied by more efficient coordination among all entities of the United Nations system. There was a need for effective multilateralism that actually improved the living conditions

of people on the ground. The contribution of voluntary national reviews to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by linking national actions with global multilateral policies and aligning the efforts of different actors within each country, were underscored. Countries were already off track from achieving the 2030 Agenda before the pandemic, and there were five areas that had to be the priorities of the recovery: SDG alignment of public policy, job creation, private sector collaboration, social protection and domestic finance. With regard to debt, political consensus must be forged for a comprehensive solution, working through subregional and regional organizations to support what was already happening at the global level, and engaging with private sector creditors and debtors.

The need for useful and relevant data to better assess the situation of the countries was underscored; more sophisticated and multidimensional measurements of poverty were needed. Middle-income countries had to have access to international financing on more favourable terms in order to address the urgent need for liquidity to meet the challenges imposed by COVID-19. The debt levels of the Caribbean countries were unsustainable. Those countries needed debt relief urgently, and for many of them the only way forward was through investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Nature-based solutions were not only good for society, but could also be cost-effective. Civil society was calling for a paradigm shift: more citizen participation, more democracy and human rights, more equality and harmony with nature were needed. Human rights and environmental defenders were also in urgent need of protection. In that regard, the ratification of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) was important. Partnerships such as the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean aimed to maximize the capacities of each member and thus support countries, for example, in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In a video message, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, said that leaders of countries around the world faced the immense and demanding task of addressing the multiple challenges of COVID-19, a virus that could not be met with denial or misinformation, a health emergency, a socioeconomic crisis not seen in generations, the ultimate revelation of an unacceptable pandemic of inequality and discrimination. The crisis had hit Latin America and the Caribbean particularly hard, with a disproportionate impact on groups experiencing marginalization and discrimination. Even before the crisis, the socioeconomic determinants of health were the main reasons for the lack of access to quality services for millions of people. In recent years, many countries in the region had experienced growing protests that generally focused on inadequate access to economic, social and cultural rights, discrimination, impunity and allegations of corruption. The socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis unfolding in the wake of the pandemic could further deepen that discontent and trigger a new wave of social unrest. Overall, the COVID-19 crisis could mean a reversal of hard-won gains in women's health, economic participation and equal rights. Data were more than numbers, they represented people, their families, their stories and their dreams, —and, in the present situation, they represented millions of people being left behind.

In order to truly to build back better, there was only one way forward: anchoring efforts in human rights and in building a new social contract with opportunities for all, as the Secretary-General had encouraged in his call to action for human rights. That was precisely the message that the regional Forum had to convey to the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council: people and human rights had to be at the centre of sustainable development and at the centre of the response to the pandemic.

Building back better meant taking action against inequalities through a commitment to economic, social and cultural rights, and ECLAC had made several very important proposals in that regard. Universal health coverage was a priority. Rights had to be realized gradually and that had to be reflected in the budget

and in efforts to make the best use of available resources. Building back better was impossible with austerity measures or economic policies that further concentrated wealth, and progressive tax systems were crucial so that those who had more would contribute more to the recovery of all. The world needed new levels of global cooperation and international solidarity, as well as a fairer globalization model. Everyone had a role to play and people's participation was not only a right, it was key to an inclusive and sustainable recovery. In 2020, there had been serious restrictions on civic space and civil and political rights such as freedom of movement, association and assembly, and freedom of expression and opinion. Some emergency measures had been necessary to curb the spread of the virus, but in some cases States had unnecessarily and disproportionately restricted fundamental freedoms and civic space and undermined the rule of law. Attacks against human rights defenders and journalists continued, including through smear campaigns on social networks, and there were cases of arbitrary detention for curfew violations affecting the most vulnerable segments of the population. The capacity and willingness of States to investigate environmental crimes and to protect nature and indigenous lands and territories had declined. Indigenous peoples had reported the invasion of their lands by actors from extractive industries, who carried out illegal logging and drug trafficking activities. Building back better meant protecting the right of all people to a healthy environment. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights warmly welcomed the forthcoming entry into force of the Escazú Agreement, which aimed to guarantee the right of all people to a healthy environment and to protect human rights defenders in environmental matters, and encouraged countries that had not yet ratified it to do so promptly. Historical inequities within or among countries were being repeated in the distribution of vaccine. The pandemic had made it clear that people would only be safe when everyone was safe. Vaccines had to be accessible to all, and not just the vaccine against COVID-19, but the vaccine against hunger, poverty, inequality, lack of universal health care and a social protection system capable of dealing with future crises for so many other ills facing humanity. It was a vaccine developed from previous crises, including two world wars, and the name of that vaccine was human rights.

In her concluding remarks, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the regional consensus reached at the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development supported the urgent need to build fair and sustainable societies that addressed inequality and guaranteed citizenship and rights, as well as the undelayable urgent need to act together as a region to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines and to share capacities and experiences so that the entire population was vaccinated. The Forum was a space that allowed the region to speak with its own identity about its realities and specificities, to recognize its rich diversity, and to encourage and align shared aspirations. Once again, Latin America and the Caribbean had demonstrated its enormous commitment to unity, cooperation, multilateralism and transformative recovery, which was key to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The region had committed itself to overcoming inertia, to not returning to a pattern of development with slow growth, low productivity, insufficient employment, poverty, inequality and acute environmental and social crises, because there was nowhere to go back to: the world had changed.

It had been said loud and clear that equality was not the result of economic growth; it was a necessary, indispensable prerequisite for efficiency and for growth itself. The region had reiterated the urgency of moving towards a care society and had firmly recognized that when one woman advanced and transformed, everyone advanced, because when women advanced, society advanced. The pandemic had taught very important lessons: there were severe global asymmetries that had become even more evident because of the pandemic. The world had already seen financial and climate asymmetries; now, it was witnessing asymmetry in access to health and vaccines. It was experiencing new geopolitics of creation, production and distribution of vaccines. That is why the challenge of vaccination was at the heart of the current situation. Although the COVAX Facility was not a complete solution for the region, PAHO needed to be supported in the implementation and expansion of that initiative, and there had to be dialogue with the countries in the hemisphere that would have surplus vaccines and a mechanism for these vaccines to be distributed in the

hemisphere. In that scenario, it was time for Latin America and the Caribbean to act collectively and seize the opportunity to achieve regional integration without further delay. ECLAC had proposed strengthening regional coordination mechanisms for acquiring vaccines, promoting the full functioning of the COVAX Facility, conducting awareness-raising campaigns for those who did not want to be vaccinated, pursuing negotiations with countries that would have a surplus of vaccines, exchanging information on best practices in the vaccination process and promoting the flexibilization of intellectual property systems.

The region had to support CELAC. The Government of Mexico had made an earnest effort to change the conversation about vaccines. As the Pro Tempore Chair of the Community, it had spoken to the world and has presented to the United Nations an initiative for equitable access, not only to vaccines, but also to medicines and supplies. In addition, initiatives such as the joint production of vaccines between Mexico and Argentina should lead to better regional integration to create a health-care manufacturing industry. That required more equitable multilateralism. Those efforts should draw on the synergies provided by integration systems such as CARICOM and the Central American Integration System (SICA). Societies in the region needed to build resilience to absorb change and to revitalize and recreate themselves. The only way out was towards a care society, a society that espoused social protection, health care, universal access to public services (such as Internet and drinking water), and stewardship of the planet. Regarding this point, there were two different aspects: on one hand, supporting Caribbean countries on issues such as debt relief, going beyond the classification of countries by per capita income, and on the other hand forging new political and social compacts and coalitions that promoted a protective care society in which women would no longer shoulder the burden of care.

Value and wealth needed to be generated, not just extracted without innovation and only scarce job creation. Hence the concern over the tendency towards reprimarization of the economies. To boost sectors that supported a transformative recovery, there needed to be industrial and technological policies that met environmental criteria. Even in the midst of the crisis, it was imperative to return to the path of sustainable development and to ensure that the transformative reconstruction had environmentally sustainable foundations. The scientific community had repeatedly warned about the seriousness of the environmental issue. Critical planetary thresholds had been breached, and the natural environment that sustained humankind could bear no more. ECLAC had insisted that the environment was crucial to connect the emergency with the recovery and with the decade of action, to address the planet's major challenges. An economic recovery with environmental sustainability and equality allowed for a faster resurgence from the recession, with substantial improvements in quality of life and health. That required policies that were aligned with the 2030 Agenda, new domestic and international political coalitions, and new forms of international cooperation to support the change in the development pattern. The arduous but successful process of adopting and implementing the Escazú Agreement testified to this being possible. Continuing to do the same thing could not be expected to produce different results. Therefore, it was crucial to resume actions to meet the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Middle-income countries urgently needed access to international financing on more favourable terms, to meet their pressing need for liquidity to address the challenges created by COVID-19. Without exception, all countries in the region had experienced a deterioration in their fiscal situation and an increase in general government debt. It bore repeating that the debt levels of the Caribbean countries were unsustainable. They already had been beforehand, but the slump in tourism had increased the urgent need for debt relief for the Caribbean, without further delay. Latin America had to show solidarity and contribute to overcoming the double asymmetry faced by Caribbean countries: they did not pollute, but they suffered enormously from the effects of pollution in other countries. Latin America and the Caribbean could not continue to tolerate its hitherto hallmark structural injustice. It was time to put an end to the culture of privilege and inequalities and to eradicate poverty in all its forms. The inefficiency of unsustainability and

inequality was concerning. The fact that there was no full access to health, to education, to nutrition or to digital technologies was inefficient now and would be even more inefficient in the future. The world had changed, but not for the better: national, regional and global asymmetries had worsened.

Christian Guillermet Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, noted that the text of conclusions and recommendations was a clear road map for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and a common regional position for the high-level political forum. He also noted that there was a consensus on the region's priorities in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, as reflected in the Political Declaration on a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, held under the chairship of Costa Rica in October 2020. In closing, he urged the countries of the region to act with a united voice in the multilateral system to achieve a different future for the region.

Annex 3

CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION

Mecanismo de Participación
de la Sociedad Civil de América
Latina y el Caribe para el
Desarrollo Sostenible - MeSCALC

**The Organizations of the Society Civil Latin America and the Caribbean before the decade of
action for the implementation of Agenda 2030
Message to the IV CEPAL Forum- March 2021**

The constitution of the Civil Society Participation Mechanism in the III Regional Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development in 2018 was an important advance, but still not enough to ensure dialogue in a meaningful way between government representatives and civil society in the Regional Forums. The governments of Latin America and the Caribbean in the current context of COVID-19, have moved further away from complying with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. The serious situation generated by the pandemic in our peoples is not reflected in most of the countries, in an attitude of dialogue and exchange with civil society, who are the urgent gaps that they must address in order to advance in the 2030 Agenda and reduce the negative impact of the pandemic. According to ECLAC scenarios, the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean judged a fall in domestic product (GDP) of -9.1% in 2020, with decreases of -9.4% in South America, -8, 4 % in Central America and Mexico and -7.9% for the Caribbean excluding Guyana, whose strong growth leads the subregional total to a smaller contraction (-5.4%).¹

Five years after the approval of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our region shows acute economic stagnation, aggravated by the COVID 19 pandemic that increased poverty, structural inequality and the gap towards the interior of the countries to exorbitant levels and between nations, the regressive distribution of income simultaneously with the fall of the GDP, the increase of the foreign debt, the dismantling of public services and their privatization; coexisting with high levels of corruption in an environment of impunity; with human rights violations, the increase in authoritarian tendencies, the persecution and criminalization of human, economic, social, environmental, cultural and labor rights defenders; the repression and criminalization of citizen protest, as well as the advance of lawfare that promotes polarization and political violence.

The neoliberal policies adopted by the majority of the countries of our region that hinder the achievement of the SDGs, which is why today a radical change in the action of governments is even more urgent, and the implementation of a New Social Contract for the implementation of

¹ [Contracción de la actividad económica de la región se profundiza a causa de la pandemia: caerá -9,1% en 2020 | Comunicado de prensa | Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe \(cepal.org\)](#)

new models of production and development, which guarantee the realization of human rights and the acceleration of the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda. Now is the opportunity for governments, together with civil society, to consider the changes necessary to avoid deterioration of the planet and recognize the protection of life and the guarantee of human rights, as State policies. From the civil society organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean, through the Participation Mechanism before the Sustainable Development Forum, we hope, based on a horizontal and transparent dialogue, better accountability and democratic ownership of the Agenda. 2030, to launch the true and necessary political and social transformations and changes in the development paradigm, the starting point for the progress of sustainable development.

In this context, we reiterate the need to:

- 1) Strengthen our democratic systems and face the coronavirus crisis from a human rights-based approach, establishing progressive economic policies, with systems that guarantee prevention measures, without deepening economic deterioration, as is recorded in most countries in the region. For this, national strategies are needed that effectively incorporate non-governmental actors, trade unions and social movements, particularly civil society organizations and the most vulnerable populations. We note with concern that most of the countries in the region are not modifying tax systems to transform them into comprehensive, equitable and transparent progressive systems, or establishing mechanisms to avoid tax evasion and avoidance, capital flight, opacity and indebtedness. Several developed countries have debated and approved taxes on large fortunes, some in extraordinary ways such as Argentina, to compensate for the unequal distribution of wealth, whose gap between rich and poor is widening during the pandemic. The opposition to these advances is still very strong. We are particularly concerned about the setback in relation to past health cooperation, particularly in the distribution of vaccines against COVID 19. With more than four months of approval of more than seven vaccines worldwide, 90% of the Vaccines were distributed among the ten richest countries on the planet and many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have not yet received any doses. The WHO COVID 19 Response Fund has failed to provide effective samples for the most vulnerable countries.
- 2) Promote decent work, which is a demand not met by the governments of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The ILO has described the employment crisis in the region as a tragedy, observing the loss of 34 million jobs in 2020. The crisis generated by the pandemic was preceded by multiple crises that caused a situation of vulnerability for millions of workers affected by unemployment, employed in informal and precarious conditions in multiple ways. Communication and information technologies, teleworking, platform work and care work have been fundamental to provide societies with substantial services in the midst of the health emergency. However, the people who work in these jobs were always ignored and their rights were ignored. But the pandemic has also destroyed millions of formal jobs, affecting collective bargaining and weakening the

already fragile social dialogue in the region. The ravages of neoliberalism in our countries are as strong as the virus in people's bodies.

The appreciable gap between the performance necessary to achieve the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and the situation in the region in recent years - affirms ECLAC - is a call for attention, that if current trends are maintained, it is not possible that the region as a whole will meet SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). Therefore, strengthen GDP growth and investment policies, as well as proactive policies in the labor market.

It is urgent to promote decent work, as well as social protection policies aimed at avoiding unemployment, reducing informality and job insecurity and the failure of small and medium-sized enterprises, and mechanisms to guarantee a minimum income to the most vulnerable population in times of crisis like the ones we are experiencing, avoiding a further increase in poverty. The non-recognition of informal workers left them outside the containment policies, forcing them to not respect isolation, with the risks that this implies. Today more than ever, "leaving no one behind" and a New Social Pact -as the ILO proclaims- depends on achieving a development model that contains all of us and that, without privileges, allows all sectors of society to contribute with equity.

Despite the evidence of an increase in violence, especially against women and children in the context of COVID19, governments did not take significant measures to stop it. In a few cases, alternative reporting channels for women and girls were strengthened but their reduction was not achieved; rather, progressive and alarming increases were observed in the statistics of violence suffered by women, youth and children in the region.

It is urgent, the protection, promotion, respect and guarantee of human rights to a life free of violence, as well as the sanction and effective enforcement of laws and policies that meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups and ensure the eradication of any type of violence and / or discrimination.

3) The civil society of the countries warns about human rights that are not being respected for all groups placed in vulnerable situations such as in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Honduras and Guatemala. There are evidence and complaints of violation of rights such as housing, education, access to water, free movement, to land and territory, and a life free of violence. It is worrying that in many countries the impunity of those responsible for human rights violations continues. Without work, education and social security, violence grows. The standards implemented by governments that guarantee the well-being and respect for the dignity of the elderly, another of the groups most vulnerable in the context of COVID19, has consisted of promoting social and mandatory isolation as the only preventive health measure. In many countries, the information disseminated reinforces the need for social distancing among this population. However, there is great concern about the increase in violence against older people.

It is imperative to stop the generalized violence, mainly towards children, adolescents, youth, the elderly, women, the LGBTQI + population, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, migrants, informal workers, such as street vendors, workers / sexual relations, people with disabilities and people living with or affected by HIV / AIDS, which must change to avoid further deterioration of our populations.

4) The protection of defenders of land and the environment, journalists and human rights defenders is worrying due to the increasing criminalization, persecution, penalization and violation of fundamental rights that is exercised on defenders, a situation that it was exacerbated in the context of a pandemic. Latin America is the most lethal region for land and environmental defenders, with Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala being the countries with the highest number of murders in 2019 according to Global Witness. This problem is particularly observed in Colombia where social leaders have been assassinated. The case of Brazil is very serious, given that it is the fourth country with the largest number of human rights activists. The Brazilian government is at war against the indigenous peoples and the Quilombolas, promoting the attack on their lands. It is urgent that measures be established for the protection, promotion, respect and guarantee of human rights, of human rights defenders, ensuring the well-being of the entire population, with laws and policies that meet the needs and ensure the eradication of any kind of discrimination. It has never been so important to have comprehensive and coordinated responses that reinforce the territorial anchoring of policies to expand their coverage, relevance and effectiveness, while responding to the multiple needs and demands of all people, in all their diversity and in all stages of its life cycle.

5) The absence of disaggregated data in the countries of the region on human rights to plan concrete and inclusive responses from a perspective of interculturality and intersectionality is constant, with some exceptions of national governments such as Argentina, but whose policy does not reach the governments provincial and / or local. In Brazil, studies to map the profile of people impacted by COVID19 were prepared by other actors, not by the government. The poorest people, especially people of African descent and indigenous peoples, are the most impacted there. It is necessary to implement concrete actions based on disaggregated data, by ethnicity, race, disability, to plan responses from the perspective of intersectionality and interculturality, as well as programs and services to reduce inequalities that benefit us equally. Especially when ECLAC has warned that the number of poor in the region would rise from 185 to 220 million and that extreme poverty would rise from 67.4 to 90 million people in the context of the coronavirus.

6) ECLAC, the World Bank, FAO, OXFAM and other international organizations have presented evidence on the widespread and worrying increase in hunger and poverty in the region, a serious problem to which governments have not responded. The World Bank estimates that poverty in Nicaragua has progressively increased by more than 3% between 2016 and 2019 and the figures for 2020 are still unknown. In Honduras, it is estimated that 75% of the population will fall into poverty in 2020. In El Salvador, there is evidence of a reduction in family income, and the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups deteriorate and 1% of

Salvadorans will fall into poverty, particularly affecting women the most. In Guatemala, according to OXFAM, there will be five million people without food security, doubling the number of people in that situation before the pandemic. According to ECLAC / FAO, extreme poverty in Guatemala will increase in the country by 3%. The Bank of Mexico declared that this year, 9 million people will fall into poverty in Mexico, amounting to 70 million Mexicans. In Argentina, according to September data from the Census Institute, 47% of the population is below the poverty line and 14% is in a situation of indigence. In Brazil, the Civil Society Report on the 2030 Agenda, which has been monitoring compliance with the SDGs since 2017, denounces the deterioration of indicators on hunger.

The current crisis requires putting the State as a fundamental development axis to end hunger and reduce poverty. The few attempts to guarantee a minimum income for all people only apply to some groups, so social protection is necessary for all groups, including informal workers, such as programs with subsidies that currently only exist for those who are at higher risk, they are not universal and, in many countries, they have not yet been met. We advocate for universal social protection that allows a sufficient income floor and simultaneously active decent work programs for social inclusion through employment and equal opportunities.

Although in many of the countries there is a constitutional right to free, universal and quality public health services, they have suffered a wide deterioration and lack of budget for years, boosted by increasing privatization. In the face of the pandemic, health care services have only been improved in cases of COVID19. Free, secular, public education in many of the countries such as Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico among others, is not universal and its quality has deteriorated. The virtual modality, in many countries of the region, shows the existing digital divide due to lack of access to technology, which affects the majority of children and adolescents who will have great difficulties in continuing their schooling and which will be very difficult to get them back. For example, in Guatemala, access to technology resources only reaches 30% of the population concentrated in the Guatemalan capital. In Mexico, the dropout figures are alarming and unprecedented: it is estimated that 2.5 million children and young people will definitely drop out of school due to the pandemic; 800 thousand adolescent students between 15 and 17 years old who are in the third grade of the intermediate level will not be able to finish their schooling and a figure of 593 thousand young people of the higher level. This situation disproportionately affects virtual education for children in rural areas of the countries of the region. The health crisis will continue to show us the turning point on the laziness and absence of public educational and health policies, and the supremacy of the deregulated market in the production and distribution of wealth and the depredation of our environment for the benefit of economic interests. private.

7) The advancement of religious fundamentalisms and of any kind in political spaces, denies scientific evidence, fostering hatred and discrimination, and making it difficult to implement policies with a rights perspective. Governments do not fight these groups; balancing with Catholic religious groups, new Pentecostals and others that have penetrated the popular sectors. Therefore, we demand that the advance of the growing influence of religious

fundamentalisms and of any kind in political spaces, including health and education, that deny informed scientific and political evidence, that promote inequalities, promote hatred, heteronorm, be contained, the schism and make it difficult to implement public policies that guarantee the full exercise of rights, such as comprehensive sexuality education and other policies that defend and support sexual autonomy and the emancipation of the most marginalized populations.

8) We demand that the Inter-American Convention on the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons be ratified and that they guarantee a dignified old age; that the Program of Action for the OAS Decade be adopted; the ratification and compliance with the fundamental ILO conventions such as Convention 169 and the application of the Earth's Guidelines on World Food Security (UN); that a plan be expedited to implement the UN Decade of Family Farming and Peasant Rights and the International Decade for People of African Descent; that the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean be ratified, and the Declaration of Incheon, of the World Education Forum in 2015, and that they address to the demands of the 2019 High Level Political Forum and the ALC 2030 Youth Forum.

9) In the countries of the region in general, the human right of people to migrate is not being guaranteed. Public policies do not respect security or allow regular migration. The rights of migrants are not respected, regardless of their migratory status as refugees and / or displaced persons. There are multiple discriminatory practices against migrants, as well as situations of extreme racism, xenophobia, restrictions and serious discrimination, especially against migrant women. The situation is especially dramatic in Mexico, a host country for Central Americans through the Remain in Mexico (Stay in Mexico) program, but which does not offer decent living conditions, leaving a large number of migrants in precarious and threatened conditions, even, at the mercy of organized crime in the border areas. Almost 50% of the Central American migrants who pass through Mexico have suffered violence and even kidnappings. The southern border of Mexico concentrates a large number of Central Americans and other nationalities detained for lacking legal residence permits and pending deportation to their countries of origin. The migratory stays are exceeded in their capacity, with migrants in overcrowded conditions, without access to health services or information on legal procedures. Government institutions have prohibited access to organizations that work for the human rights of migrants. In Chile, the situation of migrants is alarming due to the multiple intolerances and discrimination increased by the COVID19 crisis. The Chilean government recently forwarded a Migration Law Project to the National Congress for its review by the Human Rights Commission, which does not respond to minimum standards that are consistent with International Human Rights Conventions, such as the Convention for the Protection of Migrant Workers and their Families (CMW). Migrants in Chile continue to suffer violence at all levels and ages, criminalization by state agents reproduced by the media, which allow multiple forms of vulnerability and violence. Since 2019, Brazil has received serious complaints in international forums for systematic violations of fundamental rights, which has prompted recommendations from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs. Goal 10.7 of the SDGs has receded as the country has reduced its support for immigrants and

refugees. Most are concentrated in the southeastern and southern regions of the country, until 2018, those from Haiti predominated, since 2018, Venezuelans represent 39% of immigrants. The hate speech and xenophobia of the current Brazilian government generate great concern in civil society.

10) We reiterate and demand financial, political and legal commitments to ensure full compliance with the 2030 Agenda, especially that the right to health is a reality for all people and guarantee full compliance with goal 3.8. "Achieve universal health coverage, in particular protection against financial risks, access to quality essential health services and access to safe, effective, affordable and quality medicines and vaccines for all people." It is an ethical duty and humanitarian to consider all the most vulnerable groups in the face of the COVID19 crisis, such as migrants, displaced people and refugees, people living with HIV / AIDS and chronic diseases, with disabilities, workers with daily pay unable to work (including sex workers), health workers, caregivers (mostly women) and essential services, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, girls and boys and especially older people also to the situation of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ with the increased risk of suffering from multiple forms of gender violence due to confinement for forced quarantine.

11) We consider that the main response is to create an environment where cooperation and solidarity, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, have adequate capacities, regulatory frameworks and defined state resources to deal with them. All of this implies demanding that the commitments assumed by international development cooperation, and in particular South-South cooperation, between developed countries and those with low or middle income are reviewed and activated to respond effectively to the current scenario of development. generalized crisis in the region, without abandoning the Objectives of the 2030 Agenda and recognizing the effective participation of civil society.

In most countries, the SDG targets are far from being achieved or have been set back. Historical inequalities require structural changes, with more and better public policies considering the impacts of the pandemic. In a context where governments have not yet shown themselves to be effective in responding to the negative effects of the socio-economic situation, without betting on a new development paradigm, based on freedom and democracy, solidarity, and human development in harmony. with our planet, decent work, social justice, happiness and the integral well-being of all.

The situation facing our region is extremely serious and indicates that the recommendations of civil society were not listened to, so in this IV Forum we hope to discuss our complaints, diagnoses and demands.

Annex 4

**LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)/International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración (ALADI)/Latin American Integration Association (LAIA)

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Comunidad Andina (CAN)/Andean Community (CAN)

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Comunidad del Caribe (CARICOM)/Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

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Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social (CISS)/Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS)

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Consejo Monetario Centroamericano (CMCA)/Central American Monetary Council (CAMC)

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Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe (FILAC)/Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC)

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Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR)/Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)

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Organismo de Salud Pública del Caribe/Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)

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Organización de Cooperación y Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE)/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

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Organización de Estados del Caribe Oriental (OECO)/Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECES)

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Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI)/Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI)

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Organización del Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica (OTCA)/Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO)

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Organización Iberoamericana de Seguridad Social (OISS)/Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS)

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Organismo Internacional de Juventud para Iberoamérica (OIJ)/International Youth Organization for Ibero-America (OIJ)

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Organización Internacional Ítalo-Latinoamericana (IILA)/Italian-Latin American International Organization (IILA)

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Organización Latinoamericana de Energía (OLADE)/Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE)

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N. Instituciones financieras y bancos de desarrollo Financial institutions and development banks

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Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina (CAF)/Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)

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Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (IDB)/Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

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Fondo Latinoamericano de Reservas (FLAR)/Latin American Reserve Fund (LARF)

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Fondo para el Desarrollo Social de la Ciudad de México

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ACT Alliance

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Acción Sostenible para la Afirmación de la Pluralidad (ASAP)

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Action for Sustainable Development

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Agriculture Alliance of the Caribbean (AACARI)

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