

- (a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs;**

SDG 4

In one of the world's most unequal regions, education is among the most powerful instruments for linking economic growth with the reduction of inequality. Although the region of Latin America and the Caribbean faces major challenges in terms of the quality of education provided, education systems have made substantial progress in recent decades. Children's access to early childhood education services has increased considerably since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Whereas in 2010, for example, 88.6% of children in the region entered an educational institution one year before the official primary school entry age, this figure had increased to 92.5% by 2020. However, this progress has not been homogeneous across the different income levels of the population of the region, and a gap remains between the lowest and highest income quintiles, despite a modest narrowing over the period. Moreover, enrolment has expanded too slowly to meet the targets for universal access to early childhood education by 2030 agreed within the framework of the SDGs. The challenges are particularly urgent when it comes to children's access to early childhood care and development services. Indeed, while more than 2 million children entered early childhood education in the region in 2015–2020, coverage in the population aged 0 to 2 years was still below 20% by the end of that period. School education in the region is further characterized by a "hard core" of dropout problems, high levels of underattainment and completion rates that diminish with each new level of education. The pandemic has exacerbated these significant challenges in terms of inclusion and quality even further, especially considering that Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the longest period of suspension of education services in the world (56 weeks on average as of September 2021). School closures impacted more than 165 million children, adolescents and youth in the region, causing them to lose an average of more than one academic year of face-to-face classes. The pandemic also increased the risks of domestic violence, malnutrition and poverty, mental health problems and child labour, with up to 300,000 children and adolescents being forced to work since the onset of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the crisis is an opportunity to rebuild more inclusive education systems as proposed by ECLAC, ensuring a quick return to face-to-face classes, increased investment in education, extension of compulsory schooling, support of teachers in the introduction of digital skills and innovative pedagogical tools and the implementation of active education policies to guarantee the right to education and to a full life for all children, adolescents and youth.

SDG 5

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant an unprecedented setback for the region's women in terms of economic autonomy, physical autonomy and decision-making autonomy. The structural constraints that underpin gender inequality are related to the current development model, which leaves women overrepresented in low-wage sectors with less social protection. At the same time, the sexual division of labour, particularly in domestic and care work, limits women's participation in the labour market and the public sphere and reinforces the gender stereotypes that sustain patriarchal relationships. Lack of own income, job insecurity and time poverty are phenomena that have historically affected women more than men and have worsened with the COVID-19 crisis. Women continue to have an excessive workload despite the slow change in gender roles, the progress made in the countries of the region in publicizing

information on time use and unpaid work, and policy initiatives aimed at recognizing and distributing this work. The latest official surveys show that while women spend between 12.0% and 24.7% of their time on these tasks, men spend between 2.3% and 12.5%. On average, women spend three times as much time as men on unpaid domestic and care work. Physical lockdown and distancing measures and restrictions on mobility have increased women's and girls' exposure to situations of domestic violence, reduced their opportunities to use support networks and created additional barriers to the availability of essential services. Femicide continues to be a problem throughout the region despite its increased visibility and the pressure exerted by the mass women's movements that have come out against gender violence in different countries. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was possible to observe that while women sustained essential services such as health and education and were overrepresented in the front line of the response, they were not always present in the most important spaces where decisions about dealing with the emergency were made. Today, women are still a minority in the highest positions, such as head of State or minister. The active and equal participation of women and girls in decision-making is a necessary condition for a true social contract able to provide the basis for a society in which gender gaps are a thing of the past. In this context, authorities from the region committed to "advancing recovery plans with affirmative actions that foster comprehensive care systems, decent work and the full and effective participation of women in strategic sectors of the economy for a transformative recovery with gender equality aimed at the sustainability of life and for the transition to a care society." during the recent Sixty-second Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women, organized by ECLAC and UN Women.

SDG 14

Plastics are the main pollutant in the region's marine waters, damaging ecosystems and species. In 2016 and 2018, Latin America and the Caribbean was the region whose beaches had the most litter per square kilometre, followed by South-East Asia. Since 2016, however, extensive beach clean-up campaigns have had an effect, and in 2017 the regional figure for litter per square kilometre fell by 30%, followed by a further slight decrease in 2018. The areas of greatest concern are the Gulf of Mexico and wider Caribbean region and the southern Brazilian shelf. Mangroves play an important role in mitigating the effects of hurricanes and storms in the Caribbean, reducing their cost in human lives, infrastructure damage and financial impacts. The region is home to almost a quarter of the world's mangroves, about 35,000 km², distributed mainly in coastal areas of its intertropical zone. Two of the four countries with the largest mangrove areas in the world are Brazil and Mexico, with 9% and 6%, respectively, of the global area. However, this resource has been undervalued and is at risk globally because of large losses in South and South-East Asia particularly, but also in Latin America and the Caribbean. Globally, annual mangrove loss halved between 1990 and 2020 from an area of 46,700 ha/year between 1990 and 2000 to an area of 21,200 ha/year in 2020. Official country data show that annual losses in the region of 11,000 ha/year between 1990 and 2000 were reduced to 8,800 ha/year between 2000 and 2010. Subsequently, the trend of area loss reversed and there was an increase (24,800 ha/year) between 2010 and 2020. Coral reefs and ecosystems in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, which are vital for biodiversity, human livelihoods and tourism activities, are seriously threatened by acidification, rising sea temperatures and increasing pollution. The region has a particularly high proportion of marine protected areas, representing more than double the target committed to for 2020. Some of its countries have also played a leading role in the conservation of oceans and seas. There has been a markedly positive trend in this indicator at the global and regional levels; globally, the increase was from 1.6% in 2000 to 17.7% in 2020, while in the region it

was from 1.4% to 23.6%. Latin America and the Caribbean has a low proportion of harmful fishing subsidies compared to the rest of the world. Instead, it is affected by fishing carried out by distant-water fleets in its own regional waters, which means that the worldwide elimination of subsidies that contribute to overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (the target set for 2020) would benefit the region. Of the four SDG 14 targets set for 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean has only met and surpassed target 14.5 (conservation of coastal and marine areas). The other three, namely targets 14.2 (protection and restoration of ecosystems), 14.4 (sustainable fisheries) and 14.6 (end subsidies that contribute to overfishing) are far from being met, as is target 14.1 (reduction of marine pollution), whose deadline is 2025.

SDG 15

Latin America and the Caribbean is known worldwide for its natural diversity and biocultural wealth. At the same time, it is faced with the crisis of numerous environmental conflicts, some of which have led to the murder of environmental defenders (two thirds of all such recorded murders worldwide have occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean), and the pandemic has not stemmed the tide of violence. The roots of this situation can be traced back to decades of armed conflict, illegal groups and corruption, as well as mismanagement and overexploitation of natural resources, combined with deep social, economic and political inequalities. Indigenous peoples occupy one fifth of the territory (404 million ha), and more than 80% of the area occupied by them is forested. The forest area of Latin America and the Caribbean is 23% of the world's total (on just 8% of the planet's emerged land surface), representing 46.7% of the region's territory. The annual rate of deforestation has almost halved this century in Latin America and the Caribbean, which makes the region a global outlier compared, for example, to South-East Asia or sub-Saharan Africa. Although deforestation rates have slowed in the region, forests remain at risk: deforestation increased in 15 countries in the last decade. Latin America and the Caribbean has led the world in three major converging trends in recent decades: forest loss, increase in land under arable crops and increase in land under pasture crops. Two agricultural chains, namely soybeans and livestock, are associated with deforestation, mainly because of the high rents associated with their production and export and generate large negative social and environmental externalities. The region has almost 20 million hectares under certified forest management; however, certification is not necessarily granted for the management of forests with native species, and often is granted to large-scale plantations with alien species that disrupt the natural dynamics of the watershed or micro watershed. For groups of vertebrate animals (birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish), the estimates of the Living Planet Index by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) are critical for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is the region presenting the largest decline (-94%) worldwide.

SDG 17

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragilities and vulnerabilities of our region and the world. Gender equality remains the biggest human rights challenge, from school closures to an increase in violence and an increased care burden in the home. Poverty and unemployment are increasing. Biodiversity is disappearing. Technologies have opened new opportunities, but they have also increased inequalities. Despite the pandemic's strong impact on the region (*see bullet b below*), international cooperation has been limited and has been focused on low- and lower-middle-income countries. In 2020 and 2021, around 15% of the World Bank's loan commitments went to the Latin American and Caribbean region, as opposed to an average of 40% for Africa. Given the middle-income countries' systemic importance in the world

economy, the risks that they face could hold back global growth and jeopardize the world's financial stability. Middle-income countries account for 75% of the world's population, about 30% of global aggregate demand and, most importantly, 96% of developing-country public debt (not including China or India). Latin American and the Caribbean is the most heavily indebted region in the world. (Its general government debt amounted to 77% of GDP in 2020 and its debt service, measured in terms of fiscal revenues, was equivalent to 29% of GDP in that same year.) Development financing is also key to supporting policy space and investment. In this context, ECLAC makes a strong call to expand and redistribute liquidity from developed countries to developing countries; strengthen development banks; reform the international debt architecture; provide countries with a set of innovative instruments aimed at increasing debt repayment capacity and avoiding excessive indebtedness; and integrate liquidity and debt reduction measures into a resilience strategy aimed at building a better future.

Despite the multiple challenges resulting from the pandemic, the region remains very committed to the 2030 Agenda. Between 2016 and 2021, a total of 28 of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean reported on their progress in terms of national involvement, follow-up, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by submitting at least one voluntary national review to the HLPF. Of these 28 countries, 14 have submitted a VNR more than once (Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay). Of the 45 countries that will present their reviews in 2022, eight are from Latin America and the Caribbean: Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Suriname will present for the first time; El Salvador and Jamaica for the second time; Argentina for the third time and Uruguay for the fourth time. In a first since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, most of the countries from the region that will submit their voluntary national review in 2022 belong to the Caribbean subregion. Haiti remains the only country in the region not to have submitted its first voluntary national review by 2022. For more information, please refer to: [A decade of action for a change of era - Fifth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

(b) Assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “leaving no one behind” against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body;

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has been the region hardest hit by the pandemic worldwide, both in percentages of contagion and death and in the magnitude of the deterioration of economic and social conditions. The region has 32.1% of the total deaths from COVID-19 reported in the world, and its population represents only 8.4% of the world population. While the extreme poverty rate in Latin America would have increased from 81 to 86 million people, inequality increased by 0.7 percentage points for the regional average between 2019 and 2020. Historical increases in unemployment affected women to a greater extent, youth and workers in the informal and low-income sectors. In 2020 the equivalent of more than 30 million jobs would have been lost. Likewise, the inequality between men and women was accentuated, which reflects the burden of care on women and the lower dynamism of sectors that concentrate female employment, such as services. In 2020, both poverty and extreme poverty increased for the sixth consecutive year. In 2020, extreme poverty rose to levels recorded 27 years ago, while the overall poverty rate stood at a level similar to that of the late 2000s. If the countries of the region had not adopted measures such as emergency income transfers, extreme poverty would have been around 1.8 percentage points higher, and general poverty would have been 2.9 percentage points higher on average in 7 countries. In rural areas, poverty rates reached 44.8%, 15 percentage points more than in

urban areas (30%). The poverty rate in childhood (0 to 14 years old) reaches 47%, 2.7 times higher than that registered in the group of 65 years and over. In 2020, the poverty rate for indigenous people amounted to 52.1% (5.4 percentage points higher than in 2019). Poverty in households whose heads did not complete primary education was 49%, 5.2 times higher than households whose heads completed tertiary education (9.4%). The incidence of poverty in households whose heads of household completed high school increased by almost 9 percentage points in 2020, reaching 35.8%. The extreme poverty rate in Latin America would have increased from 13.1% of the population in 2020 to 13.8% in 2021, from 81 to 86 million people. The general poverty rate would have decreased slightly in 2021, from 33.0% to 32.1% of the population, from 204 to 201 million people. More countries from the region include a specific section of their VNR to “leave no one behind”. For more information, please refer to: [Social Panorama of Latin America 2021](#)

(c) Actions and policy recommendations in areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the implementation of the SDGs under review;

COVID-19 has brought to the fore the need to address the problem of financing for development in middle-income countries (MIC), which has been characterized by the increasing decoupling of per capita income and the ability to mobilize domestic and external resources, and the disconnect between economic and social needs and the response of multilateral cooperation. MIC, which includes most of those of Latin America and the Caribbean, require multilateral cooperation through the expansion and redistribution of liquidity and debt reduction to enhance their policy space to foster a sustainable recovery and advance their economic and social development. This will help to address the region’s medium- and long-term challenges, including falling productivity and investment, which is key to shifting the development model towards productive transformation with sustainability and equality. To address these challenges, ECLAC proposes an innovative financing for development agenda for the recovery in the region based on five policy actions: (i) expand and redistribute liquidity from developed to developing countries; (ii) strengthen regional cooperation by enhancing the lending and response capacity of regional, subregional and national financial institutions, and strengthening linkages between them; (iii) carry out institutional reform of the multilateral debt architecture; (iv) expand the set of innovative instruments aimed at increasing debt repayment capacity and avoiding excessive indebtedness and (v) integrate liquidity and debt reduction measures into a development financing strategy aimed at building forward better (Caribbean Resilience Fund). In more concrete terms in regard to the five SDGs under review at the HLPF in 2022, the agenda proposed by ECLAC calls for enhanced investments in education and the care economy with a gender lens (SDG 4 and 5); counter the significant budget cuts for environmental protection in the region, along with green fiscal policies, including carbon taxes; as well as the review of royalty regimes in extractive industries and innovative instruments linking debt reduction with climate resilience (SDG 14 and 15); and multilateral action to address mounting debt pressures (SDG 17). For more information, please refer to: [An innovative financing for development agenda for the recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) and [How to finance sustainable development - Recovery from the effects of COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

(d) Policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

- The historic Escazú Agreement, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, which entered into force on Mother Earth Day 2021, is not only the first environmental treaty of the region, but also the first to include provisions for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders in environmental matters. The agreement does not only step up regional efforts to curb the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity collapse and pollution of the environment, hence advancing SDG 14 and 15 among other SDGs, but further sets the stage for a sustainable and resilient recovery after the pandemic. The [preparatory meeting of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Escazú Agreement \(PreCOP1\)](#) will take place on 4 March 2022. For more information, please refer to: [The Escazú Agreement](#)
- The paradigm of development in transition as promoted by ECLAC calls for a renewed, inclusive form of international cooperation that will help to close structural gaps and eliminate the global asymmetries between developed and developing countries that have been amplified by the current crisis. The shortage of financing for development and the limited amount of multilateral support being made available to MIC during the current crisis accentuate the challenges faced by this group of countries, including inequality, marginalization, and poverty. The concept rethinks international cooperation modalities with MICs to enable the policy space and technological capacities for inclusive and sustainable recovery policies. The recent establishment of the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean provides an intergovernmental forum for the discussion and implementation of proposals for new forms of cooperation with and between countries of the region. ECLAC's call to create a multidimensional vulnerability index, to reformulate the criteria under which countries can access concessional funds and international cooperation, is part of the call for greater international solidarity and a more comprehensive approach to development gaps, as advocated by the 2030 Agenda.
- ECLAC proposes a new social and fiscal compact to build universal, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable social protection systems. The social compacts should be geared towards promoting the culture of equality and giving legitimacy to structural reforms and transformative policies with a rights-based approach, so as to achieve a care society. The fiscal contracts must finance social investment with financial sustainability, with progressive tax policies that allow for increasing the revenue coming from those who have the most concentrated wealth. Recovery plans need to include actions that foster comprehensive care systems, decent work and the full and effective participation of women in strategic sectors of the economy for a transformative recovery and the transition to a care society. ECLAC also encourages countries to sustain emergency transfers to protect the most vulnerable groups and promotes digital inclusion. For more information, please refer to: [Towards a care society: The contributions of the Regional Gender Agenda to sustainable development](#)
- The Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean prepared by ECLAC proposes concrete recommendations to strengthen capacities to produce and distribute vaccines and medicines in the region. This document proposes seven lines of action that include short-, medium- and long-term initiatives to strengthen mechanisms for pooled international

procurement of vaccines and essential medicines; use public procurement mechanisms for medicines to develop regional markets; create consortiums for the development and production of vaccines; implement a regional clinical trials platform; take advantage of regulatory flexibilities to gain access to intellectual property; strengthen regulatory convergence and recognition mechanisms; and strengthen primary health systems for equitable distribution of vaccines and universal access to them. For more information, please refer to [The Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals](#)

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 HLPF.

- In the context of rising asymmetries between developed and developing countries regarding the capacity to mobilize resources and to open policy space for inclusive and sustainable recovery policies, the implementation of the SDGs requires enhanced international cooperation.
- We need to rethink the development model and consolidate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, ensuring that no one is left behind as mandated in the 2030 Agenda.
- Effective international cooperation includes innovative solutions for financing for development and rethinking development cooperation in MIC and SIDS based on multidimensional vulnerability criteria. Efforts to measure prosperity “Beyond GDP”, as outlined in the United Nations Secretary-General’s “Our Common Agenda”, gain special relevance in this area.
- Improved international coordination on universal access to vaccine, including the boosting of production and distribution capacities of vaccines and therapeutics in developing countries.

Resources

[A decade of action for a change of era - Fifth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

[An innovative financing for development agenda for the recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

[How to finance sustainable development - Recovery from the effects of COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

[Social Panorama of Latin America 2021](#)

[Regional Knowledge Management Platform Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

[COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

[The Escazú Agreement](#)

[The Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals](#)

[Towards a care society: The contributions of the Regional Gender Agenda to sustainable development](#)