

**Statement by José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs,
Executive Secretary of ECLAC**

Deploying regional assets of the UN development system to
support countries to address cross-border issues
2023 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment

Thursday, 25 May 2023, 10:00 – 11.00 (EST)

(4 minutes)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The regional dimension has been key to support Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda over the last 8 years, and even more so for development priorities which entail cross-border dimensions and require regional or sub-regional approaches.

Let me start with the issue of **international migration**, considering that today most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are part of the migration cycle as countries of origin, destination, transit and return.

In 2020, 43 million people from our region lived outside their country of birth, representing 15% of migrants globally. Migration is increasingly intra-regional, for example 6 million Venezuelan migrants or refugees live primarily in other countries in the region. Migration and displacement flows are increasing driven by

economic and environmental factors, but also by deteriorating public security situations in some countries.

ECLAC in partnership with the regional UN System provides support to Resident Coordinators and UNCTs to address the structural causes of migration and displacement. The Regional Collaborative Platform established an advisory board on the **Comprehensive Development Plan** for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico to facilitate the implementation of such plan as a UN system-wide strategy.

Originally, its implementation strategy envisioned a five-year agenda with 114 costed projects organized into four pillars: economic development; social well-being; environmental sustainability, climate change, and disaster risk reduction; and the comprehensive management of the migration cycle.

Implementation has advanced at the national level with Guatemala as pilot country but also on transboundary issues.

Many of the region's sustainable development priorities also require cross-border approaches in policy areas, which can drive the synergistic implementation of multiple SDGs. Action is urgent, as in the region, only 25% of SDGs are set to be achieved by 2030; 48% are moving in the right direction but not fast enough, and 27% are backsliding.

In the context of the green energy revolution and considering that the region holds over 50% of global lithium reserves, in 2022 ECLAC established the Permanent Technical Dialogue Forum on Lithium Innovation, Technological Development, and Value Addition at the request of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, the countries comprising the so-called Lithium Triangle.

Through this cross-border platform, ECLAC works with both public and private entities on challenges and opportunities linked with lithium extraction, technological development and value addition. It has enabled regional cooperation on knowledge exchange, capacity building and discussions on new technologies and productive innovation. The recent entry of Mexico's state-owned lithium company to this Forum highlights the value of such transboundary initiatives for transformative sustainability strategies and serves as an example for other commodity producing regions.

Cross-border, regional and sub-regional approaches are also of essence for the **means of SDG implementation**. For example, ECLAC promotes a sub-regional initiative on **climate finance** to respond to the unique vulnerabilities and financing needs of Caribbean SIDS, many of which are not sufficiently met by the financing criteria of the international financial architecture. Our proposed Caribbean Resilience Fund has the objective of securing

development financing for adaptation and mitigation initiatives, through two windows: one focused on financing resilience building and the other on debt restructuring and liquidity enhancement.

As regards **international trade and regional economic integration**, ECLAC actively promotes cross-border economic integration to foster productive diversification, new investments in strategic sectors, employment and resilience. We do this through collaboration with regional integration bodies, and by conducting along with other Regional Commissions the biennial Trade Facilitation Survey that supports initiatives to expedite cross-border movements of goods.

ECLAC also supports the Pacific Alliance on several topics including to improve statistics on trade in services, mainstreaming gender equality in trade policies, and map cross-border production links through the analysis of connected input-output tables, as we have done for the Andean Community, MERCOSUR and the Central American Common Market.

In addition to collaboration on these and other issues with regional and subregional organizations, we have also made **progress with updating the UN Development System's regional architecture**. In 2023, the RCP LAC 2.0. was launched

to facilitate access to regional public goods and the rosters of expertise to support RCs and UNCTs in addressing SDG gaps, key transitions and transboundary issues.

In closing, let me highlight that in the conclusions and recommendations of the Sixth Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, convened last month, Member States recognized and welcomed efforts to harness the regional assets of the United Nations development system to support SDG implementation and countries' sustainable development efforts.

Thank you