

Statement by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council 2020

Session 4b - Unleashing the UNDS's regional assets: the path forward

Friday 22 May – 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Chair: H.E. Mr. Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Vice-President of ECOSOC, Chair of the Operational Activities for Development Segment, ECOSOC

Moderator: Mr. Jens Wandel, Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Reforms

Panellists:

- Ms. Vera Songwe, Coordinator of the Regional Commissions and Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- Ms. Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- Mr. Mourad Wahba, Associate Administrator a.i. and Director, Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Ms. Alanna Armitage, Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Mr. Neil Buhne, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Development Coordination Office (DCO)

Thank you moderator/Jens.

All protocols observed.

Let me acknowledge the fantastic job done by Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico and Vice-President of ECOSOC, in organizing the interactive debate between member States and the United Nations development system (UNDS) in this year's operational activities segment (OAS) in such challenging circumstances. This is a clear sign of the importance of strengthening ECOSOC and its role in monitoring the development agenda and its reform.

FIVE MESSAGES:

1. The regional value proposition is a key bridge to connect the global processes with the new reality at the national level in the context of COVID-19

The regional dimension of development goes beyond the sum of actions at the national level. It addresses transboundary, subregional and regional perspectives and fosters cooperation and collective responses to key areas of development.

For example, moving from funding to financing for sustainable development is more critical than ever for all countries regardless of their income level. ECLAC is analysing the options of middle-income countries in relation to debt restructuring and relief, particularly —but not only— for the Caribbean countries, through the debt-for-climate-adaptation-swap initiative to set up a green resilience fund. Proposals have also been made on how to ensure liquidity and avoid solvency problems. Through instruments such as the special drawing rights

(SDRs), taking into account other facilities from the International Monetary Fund (IMF); emergency lines such as those issued by the World Bank to 11 countries of the region, and also through innovative financing mechanisms.

2. ECLAC has striven to put into action the main recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report one year ago, jointly with the UNDS and the RCS.

We believe is time to consolidate the existing UNDS coordination mechanisms at regional level (the Regional Coordinating Mechanism and UNSDG-LAC) into the proposed **Regional Collaboration Platform (RCP)**. We are fully committed and able to act as co-vice-chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

RCP will interact every year with member States through the Forum of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. This regional Forum has been organized for the past three years and has proven to be an interactive multi-stakeholder platform for member States and other stakeholders, which offers the opportunity to analyse progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and foster peer learning and sharing of experience. It includes an interactive session between member States and the regional agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs), and also convenes the RCs, particularly for those countries presenting their voluntary national reviews (VNRs). It also provides a platform for evidence-based and data-driven policy dialogue with private sector, academia and civil society.

The regional Forum reports to and feeds into the high-level political forum and ECOSOC through its chair, which is the member State that also presides over ECLAC for the respective two-year period.

ECLAC has a strong intergovernmental architecture which ensures constant interaction with the sectoral authorities of its member States. These include the Statistical Conference of the Americas, in which all AFPs participate annually and the regional conferences on Women, organized jointly with UN-Women; on Population and Development, jointly organized with UNFPA; on Social Development, organized jointly with UNDP; on Planning; and on Science, Technology and Innovation focusing on the digital economy; as well as the Caribbean Development Cooperation Committee and the South-South Cooperation Committee.

A proposal is to operate through issue-based coalitions that could interact with member States through these intergovernmental subsidiary bodies, as well as with other regional ministerial meetings organized by other agencies such as FAO, ILO or UNEP.

3. Third, regarding the establishment of a regional knowledge management hub and data and statistics, we are pleased to report that together with 22 agencies, funds and programmes of the region, we developed the Regional portal on the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean —SDG Gateway—a one-stop United Nations inter-agency knowledge hub and data platform on the 2030 Agenda, which is already fully operational. The SDG Gateway offers an entry point for all information available regarding 2030 Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs. It is a powerful instrument to track progress and needs of countries in the implementation of the Agenda. The SDG Gateway provides access to regional and national information, data, indicators and statistics. It includes data from the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, national, regional and global indicators for each SDG, and links to the voluntary national reports presented by countries in the region and all the information made available by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. This knowledge hub operates under the technical coordination of

ECLAC with the guidance of a United Nations inter-agency steering committee co-chaired with UNDP. It was developed **in response to the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to present transformative proposals for the establishment of regional knowledge management hubs and, most importantly, we have managed to undertake this platform within existing resources.**

4. ECLAC as an inter-agency catalyst and link to RCs/UNCTs on subregional and cross-border issues

The Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) for Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico, requested of ECLAC by the Governments of these four countries, is an example of a demand-driven United Nations endeavour. Through a Special Coordination Mechanism led by ECLAC and composed of 20 agencies, funds and programmes, the Development Coordination Office and the four Resident Coordinators, the CDP has been developed in continuous consultation with the Governments of the four countries involved. Four draft reports of the Plan have been prepared, which include the formulation and costing of 100 project proposals for the next five years to address the structural causes of migration from a development perspective.

Other concrete actions with resident coordinators:

The collaborative work between ECLAC and the resident coordinators has yielded excellent results. First, we are collaborating with RCs and UNCTs in the preparation of common country analyses (CCAs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Frameworks (UNSDCFs) in various countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay and Caribbean countries).

5. In relation to COVID-19, we may report that ECLAC is carefully following the socioeconomic impact of this pandemic in the region. This was in response to an explicit request from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

ECLAC has developed a **COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean** with the support of the Resident Coordinators and the Development Coordination Office, to track and map national measures and policy responses and their impacts in addressing the COVID-19 crisis by the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Resident Coordinators and the Development Coordination Office for Latin America and the Caribbean are assisting to ensure the continuous updating of this information.

In addition, through the Observatory, ECLAC is publishing periodical special reports on COVID-19, focusing on economic growth, trade, poverty, statistical methodologies and inequality, persons with disabilities, food security, and climate change. ECLAC is preparing one such report covering options for potential areas for reactivation of the economy and policy recommendations to build back better.

Our first analysis shows that the pandemic is reverting much of the progress achieved in reducing poverty and inequality and on other SDGs. ECLAC estimates a GDP contraction of 5.3% and a 15% slump in exports in 2020. This impact of this on unemployment will add around 12 million people to the number of jobless and drive an additional 28.7 million people into poverty and 15.9 million people into extreme poverty. ECLAC is calling for an emergency basic income (EBI) equivalent to a national poverty line (US\$ 145 per month) for six months, to be provided to 215 million estimated to live in poverty, or 83 million people estimated to live in extreme poverty in 2020. These options would cost respectively 2.1% or 1.0% of regional GDP.

We stand ready to assist the RCs and UNDP in the socioeconomic impact analysis at the country level, as we are already doing in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala and Mexico.

ECLAC has also leveraged its intergovernmental architecture and convening power to organize a series of ministerial policy dialogues on COVID-19 impacts and responses, in order to facilitate the exchange of best practices, identify priorities for national, regional and multilateral coordination and cooperation and highlight key areas for advocacy.

This has included dialogues with the region's ministries of social development; ministers of gender equality in collaboration with UN-Women; representatives of national statistical systems and offices in collaboration with ILO; and the Ministers of finance; of both Latin America and the Caribbean —and most recently with the ministers of science, technology and innovation, and the 2030 Agenda National Focal points.