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Commentary: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A bridge between the short and long term

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On 25 September, in New York, the member states of the United Nations (UN) will officially adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which constitutes a milestone in the global process to build more egalitarian societies capable of living in harmony with the environment.



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The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in this agenda will replace the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that guided countries' efforts during the last 15 years. The difference between these agendas is relevant for Latin America and the Caribbean: the new roadmap addresses numerous aspects of inequality, which is the primary problem in our region.

The 2030 Agenda incorporates the three pillars of sustainable development and refers to crucial matters for the region relating to education, housing, food security, the provision of basic services, urban development, social protection and risk management for catastrophic events. It also incorporates the notion of global public goods, such as the protection of oceans, the atmosphere and biodiversity.

The new goals agreed upon by countries, with the participation of other actors in an unprecedented democratic process, necessitate important transformations that have already been flagged by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which has called on countries in recent years to carry out structural changes in their modes of production and consumption -- privileging sectors that are more knowledge-intensive and environmentally sustainable -- and to seek broad social compacts that have a long-term vision.

For the first time, the new global agenda proposes to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 and it considers, as ECLAC has done historically, that decent, quality employment is the master key to achieving more inclusive development. Employment with rights must go hand in hand with industrialization and technological innovation to improve productivity and efficiency in the use of resources.

In terms of gender, significant progress is being made by addressing the three dimensions of women's empowerment needed to achieve full equality: economic, political and physical autonomy. The aim is to eliminate all types of violence against women, ensure equal access to economic resources and recognize and value unpaid work. The gender perspective is also incorporated into other goals.

It is vital for the region to strengthen the domestic mobilization of resources to implement this agenda, since savings and tax collection rates are generally low and there is reduced access to traditional external financing sources, such as official development assistance. Our countries also face the challenge of more effectively channeling private financing flows, as well as devising innovative financing mechanisms.

Sustainable development demands significant collective action. An agenda such as the one we are forging today requires the decolonization of multilateral development accords, since global governance must be universal and inclusive and reflect the interests, needs and objectives of the international community as a whole. This is an even greater challenge if one considers matters related to climate change and the asymmetry of the international financial architecture.

Harnessing the potential of the technological revolution, the 2030 Agenda should be centered on participatory and transparent processes that turn the top-down logic on its head and move from the national arena to a regional sphere, and from regional to global.

ECLAC is nearing its first seven decades in existence and is dedicated, as always, to imagining the paths towards economic, social and environmental development in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this framework, we see the SDGs as a bridge between the short and long term.

Today, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, we have new and better tools and the solid institutions needed to carry out a transformative process and overcome our region's most pronounced feature: inequality. Just as the new agenda underscores, our obligation is to not leave anyone behind.