

Key messages and main outcomes of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2021 and upcoming 2030 Agenda milestones

Meeting of the Community of Practice for Caribbean countries that present their Voluntary National Review

10 August 2021



**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



UNITED NATIONS

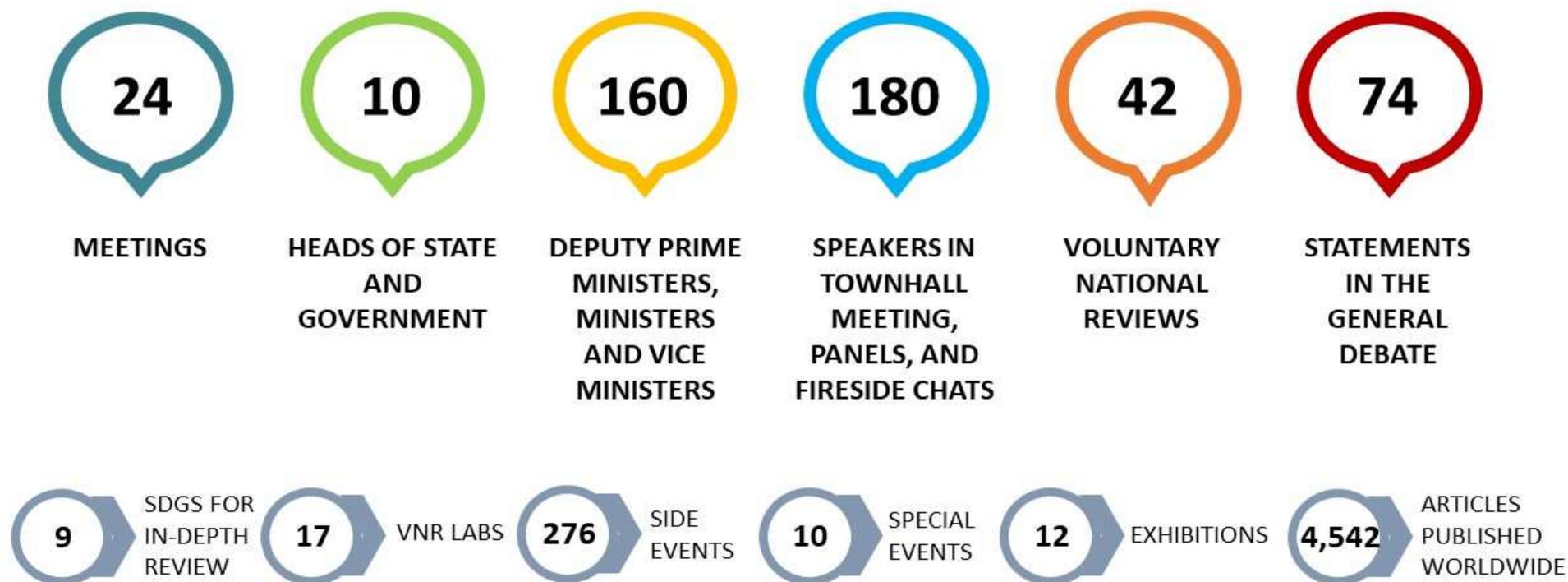


HLPF 2021 IN NUMBERS

(6-15 July 2021, hybrid meeting)



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021>

Overview of the HLPF 2021

- Similar programme to previous year but in a **hybrid format**. **Only in-person sessions** were the **opening** (13 July) and **closing** (15 July) of the **ministerial segment**.
- This year, the UN Secretary-General updated his **Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines** for preparing VNRs, including a call for 4 key areas:
 - **COVID-19 recovery plans and strategies;**
 - **Continuity and comparability in 2nd and 3rd VNRs;**
 - **New and emerging challenges;**
 - **Possible links to subnational reporting, including voluntary local reviews (VLRs).**
- **Adoption of the HLPF Outcome Document** at the closing session on 15 July. Views diverged on **climate change**, the **TRIPS waiver**, **health care services**, **financing and debt**, **biodiversity**, and **countries in special situations**.



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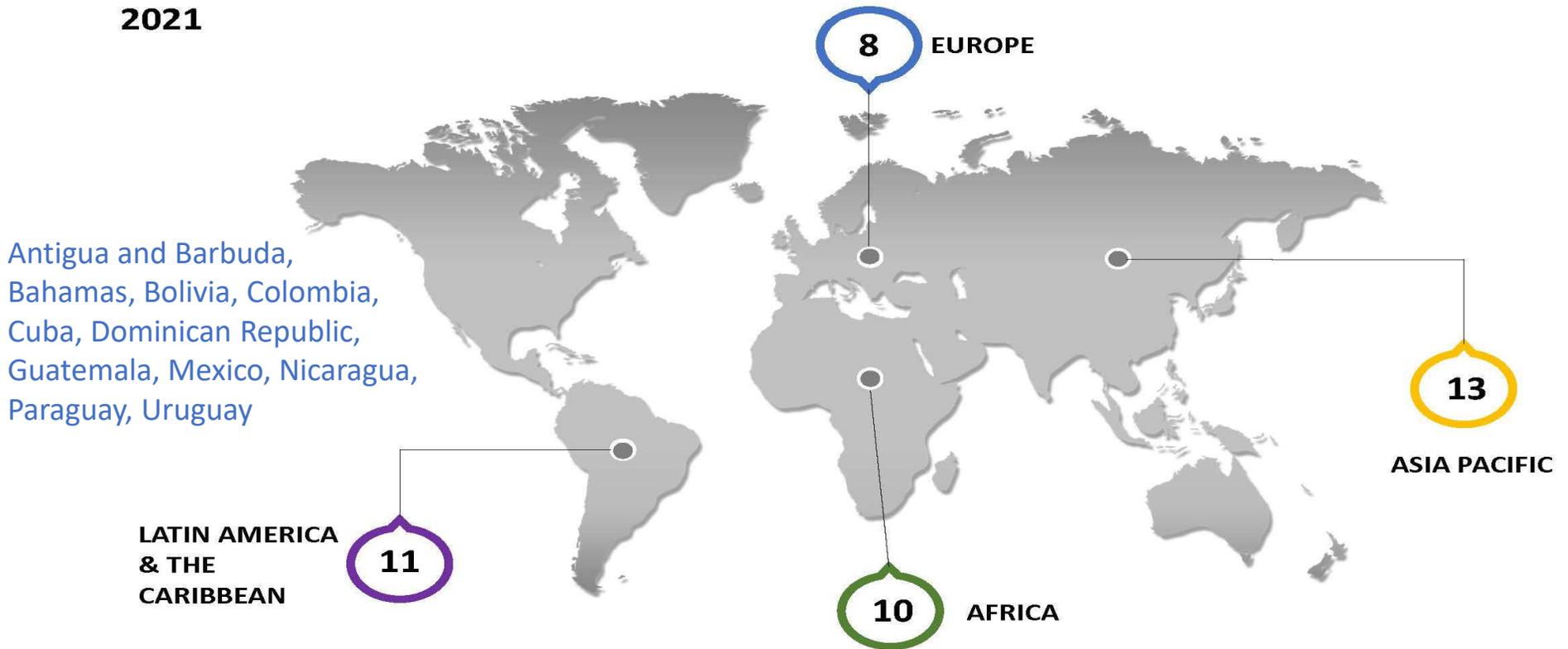
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HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS 2021



Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021>

VNRs from LAC in Numbers

- From the **11 VNR presenters** from the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, **4 countries were from the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba and Dominican Republic)** and 7 countries from Latin America (Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay)
- In total, the HLPF has heard **247 presentations from 176 countries** since 2016. From **LAC, 28 countries** have presented their VNR to the HLPF in New York between 2016 and 2021, including **14 countries** that submitted their VNR more than once.
- All countries of the Eastern European group have presented a VNR, whereas Africa still has eight countries that have not yet prepared a VNR, followed by the Asia Pacific region with six, **Latin America and the Caribbean with five (Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname)**, and the Western Europe and Others group with two countries.

Key Messages of the 2021 VNRs – COVID-19

- The COVID-19 pandemic has heavily impacted economic and social progress across the SDGs. **VNRs** focused on **national plans and strategies for a sustainable and resilient recovery** (e.g. Antigua and Barbuda, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala).
- Most messages highlighted the **devastating economic impacts of the pandemic, including unemployment, debt, and recession** (such as the Dominican Republic). Some emphasized impacts on the **social dimension**, including **health care, education, and gender inequality**.
- Related and interlinked areas such as **tourism, data collection, and climate action** were strongly mentioned in the Caribbean VNRs.
- Other key areas frequently mentioned were **social protection, vaccination, economic recovery, food security, mental health, inclusion, employment, debt relief, disaster resilience, digitalization, and systemic approaches** to overcome multiple challenges.
- The **rollout of COVID-19 vaccine** is still **uneven** in many countries. Cuba highlighted its **national vaccination rates** in this context.

Key Messages of the 2021 VNRs – Financing of the SDGs

- The pandemic **exposed the precarity of hard-won development gains and structural gaps** of the LAC region's development pattern, while Caribbean SIDS vulnerabilities exposed further.
- The pandemic has increased **SDG financing** needs by an **annual 2.5 percentage points of GDP for all low-income development countries**. ECLAC Executive Secretary intervened in a session emphasizing specific **financing challenges and opportunities for MICs and SIDS**: limited fiscal space, reduction in oil prices, reduction of trade and tourism, economic contraction.
- Calls on **mobilization of access to international concessional funding**, expansion of **global liquidity, reform of international governance and financial systems** that recognize vulnerabilities, such as those encountered by Caribbean SIDS.
- Authorities from the region posed the urgency of renewed cooperation with development in transition countries based on a **multidimensional measurement of sustainable development**.
- ECLAC stressed the importance of **reforming the international financial architecture** to address the debt problem. Opportunity for **tailored and innovative financing** (Caribbean resilience fund, Debt for Climate swap, hurricane bonds). **High-level foreign investments** are needed.

Key Messages of the 2021 VNRs – Climate Change

- The effects of **rising CO2 levels and increasingly extreme weather events** are derailing progress, especially in SIDS, despite the slight reduction in emissions due to decreased travel during the pandemic. (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Uruguay)
- Some countries have defined concrete measures and solutions to overcome climate-related challenges, stressing the need for **strengthened multilateralism, international cooperation and global partnership** (Cuba, Dominican Republic).
- The Bahamas referenced the **integration of other international commitments and frameworks into their development plans**, including the **SAMOA Pathway**.
- Sustained efforts for **more sustainable energy, resilient infrastructure and carbon-free, resilient economies** are key.
- **ECLAC** Executive Secretary stressed that we must pick up the pace toward **economic, climate and gender justice**, and **transition to a care society** at an HLPF side event.

Key Messages of the 2021 VNRs

Stakeholder Engagement

- Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, countries have utilized **innovative policies and tools to collect data and information** through online surveys, virtual platforms, and remote collaboration, to meaningfully engage multiple stakeholders in their VNR.
- This outreach was often cited as key in pursuing the principle of **leaving no one behind**, which is increasingly being institutionalized in many countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Uruguay).
- **Countries reporting for the 3rd time** reflected more profoundly on progress achieved since the 1st VNR and on advanced integration of SDGs into national development plans, measuring the **private sector's contribution** (Colombia; Guatemala).
- **Special committees, councils, and dedicated ministries** are now set up in many countries to provide consistency and coherence to the VNR process. Some have been informed by independent studies carried out by **representatives of civil society, the private sector, academia, the UN system and others**, to provide a more diverse engagement (Mexico).

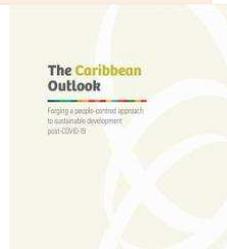
Key Messages of the 2021 VNRs

Subnational Reporting and Data

- The 2021 VNRs included several examples of countries that are engaged in the trend toward **subnational reporting** (Mexico). While **Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)** are not mandated to be conducted and linked to VNRs, they raise awareness about the SDGs and monitor their implementation at the local level.
- **Availability, timeliness and quality of SDG data** remains a concern, but greater **integration between VNRs and VLRs** can provide VNRs with better localized data to implement the 2030 Agenda at the national level and increase the visibility of VLRs.
- The **2020 target** set on supporting **statistical capacity building** to developing countries (*target 17.18*) remains unmet (along with the other 2020 targets), which limits capacities for data-driven decision making.
- **ECLAC** participated in an HLPF VLR Lab organized by UN DESA to enhance the **dialogue between the VNRs and VLRs** (12 July).

Key Messages from the regions

- ❑ **Importance of the regional and subregional dimensions** in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.
- ❑ **Regional Forums on Sustainable Development** have been organized by the Regional Commissions to contribute to the HLPF preparations.
- ❑ The session highlighted ways in which **Regional Commissions are mobilizing regional action and leveraging regional frameworks on the road to 2030 and beyond.**
- ❑ In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, key messages included:
 - There is a growing possibility **that the Goals of the 2030 Agenda will not be achieved, and its comprehensive nature is at risk.** Only 1/3 of the SDG targets are on track to be met.
 - Urgent measures need to be taken to support **middle-income countries and SIDS**; review obsolete concepts of measuring development and financing paradigms that are no longer adjusted to the current needs. The recovery requires expansionary fiscal policies, with strengthened income and international financing.
 - At the current rate of vaccination, **the region will not achieve herd immunity in 2021**, urgent measures for equitable access to vaccines/ regional cooperation and solidarity are needed.
 - The **countries have taken ownership of the 2030 Agenda**: 28 of the 33 countries in the region have presented their reports to the HLPF between 2016 and 2021.
 - ECLAC proposal for a **big push for sustainability for a transformative recovery.**



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

10 March 2021

Main outcome: Ministerial Declaration

- Reaffirm **commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs**, being a global blueprint to respond to COVID-19;
- Called for **equitable, affordable access for all to safe, quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable COVID-19 vaccines**, therapeutics and diagnostics and for rapid scaling up and expansion of vaccine production globally;
- Noted with deep concerns the **regression in some SDGs**, including poverty, hunger, malnutrition;
- Reaffirm the **importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development** in addressing regional challenges and scaling up action for and among countries and welcome the work of the regional commissions and recognize the valuable contribution of the regional forums on sustainable development, as the multi-stakeholder platforms to support their member States in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in the regions;
- Welcome the **Group of 20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative**, which is also endorsed by the Paris Club and aims to facilitate timely and orderly debt treatment for Debt Service Suspension Initiative-eligible countries, with broad participation of creditors, including the private sector;
- Look forward to the report of the Secretary-General to be released at its seventy-sixth session, including on the potential development and coordination of work within the United Nations system on a **multidimensional vulnerability index** for small island developing States, including on its potential finalization and use.

Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/E/2021/L.26>

Outlook HLPF 2022

- The 2022 HLPF will review in-depth the following **5 SDGs: 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnerships)**.
- The incoming ECOSOC President **Collen Vixen Kelapile**, Permanent Representative of **Botswana** to the UN, will introduce a set of reforms to the 2022 session.
- He called on countries presenting VNRs in 2022 to conduct “**innovative, evidence-based and inclusive**” VNR processes.
- He suggested **limiting the number of VNR presentations** at the 2022 HLPF in order to ensure enough time for meaningful interaction on each review and maximizing the value of VNRs, while giving **priority to first-time presenters**.
- The **2030 Agenda and the SDGs** remain the global **blueprint** for every country. **SDG 17** remains the most transformative goal of the joint agenda, without it, SDGs will not be attained by 2030.

An SDG-guided recovery from the pandemic

The ECOSOC President outlined the following **8 pillars to make rapid gains and realize an SDG-guided recovery from the pandemic:**

1. **Urgent access to vaccines for everyone**, a topic on which he will convene a Special Meeting of ECOSOC part-way through the session;
2. **Creating fiscal space for COVID-19 response and recovery;**
3. **Identifying and addressing the real root causes of inequality**, such as structural racism;
4. **Resuming development after conflicts**, including by utilizing the Meeting on Transition from Relief to Development;
5. **Ensuring the transfer of technology**, supporting the creation of knowledge everywhere, and closing the digital divide;
6. **Advancing the climate action agenda** and supporting an ambitious **post-2020 biodiversity framework** at the 15th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15), and scaling up ambition for sustainable use of oceans through the second **UN ocean conference;**
7. **Leveraging input from people** directly affected by or with a contribution to reinforce intergovernmental decision-making, and embracing the value of diverse contributions and **multi-stakeholder engagement;**
8. **Hearing from global youth** on keeping “the compass on the SDGs in the current crisis.”

Upcoming 2030 Agenda milestones

Regional level

- Extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC (19-20 August)
- 61st meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (29-30 September)
- VI Summit of Heads of State and Government of CELAC (18 September)
- 20th Monitoring Committee of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC (CDCC) (October)
- 18th meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of ILPES of ECLAC (19-21 October 2021)
- 4th meeting of Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC (26-28 October 2021, Antigua and Barbuda)
- Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction for the Americas and the Caribbean (PR21) (1-4 November)
- 11th meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (23-25 November)

Global level

- 76th session of the UN General Assembly (14-30 September, NY); **SDG Moment and High-level Dialogue on Energy**
- Global Food Systems Summit** (September 2021)
- 15th session of the Conference of UNCTAD** (3-8 October, Barbados)
- UN World Data Forum** (3-6 October, Switzerland)
- 15th meeting of the UN Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP 15)** (11-24 October, China)
- The second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference** (14-16 October 2021, China)
- G-20 Summit** (30-31 October, Italy)
- 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties** (1-12 November, Scotland)
- 12th Ministerial Conference of WTO** (30 November-3 December, Geneva)
- UN Ocean Conference** (dates TBC, Portugal)

Thank you



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