Community of Practice for Caribbean countries
presenting their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in 2022

12 October 2021

Meeting Notes

Participants

Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Navis

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): Romain Zivy; Mareike Eberz (Office of the Executive Secretary); Lydia Rosa Gény (Office of the Secretary of the Commission); Abdullahi Abdulkadri (ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean).

Objective of the Meeting

The Community of Practice is an informal space for exchange among peers and sharing of good practices with regards to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in general, and the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) by governments in particular; and aims to provide a space to regularly communicate with peers.

The specific goal of this session was to provide information on past and upcoming milestones related to the 2030 Agenda at the global and regional levels, present the result of the recently conducted Community of Practice evaluation survey and determine topics for future sessions of the Community of Practice.

Presentations

Past and upcoming milestones related to the 2030 Agenda at global and regional levels

Presentation by ECLAC

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2021

The SDG Moment

• From the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, 6 Heads of State participated via video messages: República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Guyana and Panama.

• Over the course of the event, the following topics were highlighted: Equitable access to vaccines against COVID-19; Climate change/COP26; Gender equality and women’s empowerment; Participation of diverse actors, particularly young people taking the wheel; Localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Access to digital technologies; Multilateralism and enhanced cooperation.

• Mark the Decade of Action via the transformative change urgently required to make the SDGs a reality.
The General Debate

- Hybrid format at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA, attended by 100 Heads of State, 52 Heads of Government, 3 Vice Presidents, and 34 Ministers (of them, only 18 women).

- **Key issues:** equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine; climate change/COP26; peace and security; greater collaboration, solidarity and strengthened multilateralism.

- "Our Common Agenda" of the United Nations Secretary-General offers 90 recommendations to reinforce multilateralism and close the gaps related to the pandemic, climate, peace, poverty, gender, digital access, asking young people to take a seat at the table.

The voices of Latin America and the Caribbean in the General Debate

- **The prolonged impacts of the pandemic:** COVID-19 has uncovered the shortcomings of the international system and reversed the achievements of the 2030 Agenda; strong call for equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine and for transnational companies lifting their vaccine patents, to establish universal, progressive and redistributive social protection schemes, to close the technology gap and ensure equitable access to the Internet access.

- **The fight against climate change:** Leaders of small island developing States (SIDS) took center stage, stating that their nations face an existential threat if rich countries fail to deliver on their promises to reduce global warming; greater resources and political will are needed to tackle the climate crisis; Official Development Assistance (ODA) should be considered as reparation for past environmental damage; developed countries must fulfill their commitment to contribute US$ 100 billion annually to support developing countries; urgency to address the reclassification status of countries by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the creation of a multidimensional vulnerability index by 2022.

- **The crisis of multilateralism:** Disappointment due to the insufficient response of the multilateral system to ensure equitable access to vaccines against COVID-19; the crisis cannot be overcome by isolated unilateral action, but by renewed cooperation and global solidarity; the need for urgent, global, moral, and strategic leadership and enhanced political will, as called for by the Prime Minister of Barbados.

The Food Systems Summit

The “People’s Summit” that took place on 23 September 2021 was the culmination of an 18-month process to review and transform the entire spectrum of food, including its production, shipment, consumption and disposal, involving more than 100,000 stakeholders, including farmers, indigenous peoples and consumers. National Dialogues were held in 148 countries. The final document identified 5 areas for action: 1) Nurture all people; 2) Promote nature-based solutions; 3) Promote equitable livelihoods, decent work and empowered communities; 4) Foster resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses; and 5) Acceleration of the means of implementation.

The High-level Dialogue on Energy

The event held on 24 September 2021 was the first General Assembly Summit on Energy in forty years and generated around 140 “Energy Compacts” and voluntary action commitments, the majority of which were announced by the private sector and other stakeholders. The United Nations Secretary-General will present a global roadmap with concrete recommended actions and milestones to accelerate the achievement of SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC participated in a side event of the High-level Dialogue on Energy.
Other Global Events related to the 2030 Agenda

UN World Data Forum

The Forum taking place from 3 to 6 October 2021 in Switzerland, concluded with the announcement of the Bern Data Compact for the SDG Decade of Action, a clear call for action and commitment to invest in data capacities and partnerships to leave no one behind, invest and build trust in data to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

15th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 15)

The conference took place from 3 to 7 October 2021 in Barbados and discussed all relevant global issues on trade and development. Key messages included the importance of policies to ensure that new technologies and data drive economic recovery, reduce inequality, and foster sustainable development; regional cooperation offers the possibility of building back better after the multiples crisis resulting from the pandemic; innovative and flexible financing is key for developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries and SIDS, along with increased investments in technological infrastructure; enhanced international collaboration is required to close digital divides, address ethical issues and develop regulatory frameworks to guide responsible development.

Regional Events related to the 2030 Agenda

Extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC (19-20 August 2021)

Despite the economic growth expected for 2021 and 2022, there is a recovery paradox, because it will not be able to alleviate poverty, inequality, unemployment, and informality in the region. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed enormous asymmetries in terms of access to vaccines, concentration of wealth, the fight against climate change and financing for development. Within the region, there are countries where 69% of the population has their complete vaccination, other countries do not reach 1%. Most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries are middle-income countries (MIC), requiring equitable access to external financing, regardless of income level. Within this framework, ECLAC promotes a multidimensional measurement of development. The draft document “Development in transition. Concept and measurement proposal for renewed cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean” was presented by ECLAC, together with the European Commission and the Development Center of OECD, which contains valuable inputs to continue reaching a consensus with a single voice of the region in multilateral spaces. In addition, the Committee on South-South Cooperation, under the chairship of Costa Rica, recommended that the Committee of the Whole of the regional commission approves in its next session the renaming of the Committee on South-South Cooperation as the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Converting the Committee into a conference would ensure that these issues are given their due prominence in the region, within existing resources.

61st meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (29-30 September 2021)

The theme of the XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which will take place in 2022 in Argentina, will be "The care society: horizon for a sustainable recovery with gender equality." Among the agreed commitments reached during the 61st meeting of the Presiding Officers, are recovery plans with affirmative actions that promote comprehensive systems of care, decent work and the participation of women in strategic sectors of the economy. Response policies to the pandemic must incorporate a gender perspective and include the participation of all women and girls in their design and implementation, considering intersectionality and multiple forms of discrimination. The urgency of an effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Regional Gender Agenda was reaffirmed.

VI Summit of Heads of State and Government of CELAC (18 September 2021, Mexico)

The United Nations Secretary-General stressed that the leaders of the region demonstrated their commitment to the renewal of CELAC as a space for strengthening regional cooperation. CELAC countries approved guidelines and proposals for the health self-sufficiency plan, a programmatic route presented by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC to strengthen the production and distribution of medicines, especially vaccines, in the countries of the region and reduce external dependence. ECLAC was mandated by member States to advance its implementation. To develop this initiative, ECLAC carried out an exhaustive follow-up of the progress and problems for equal access to vaccination, constituted a working group made up of more than 20 experts from different countries in the region, carried out an inventory and diagnosis of capacities of regional governments in the field of health, formulated recommendations for strategies and seven lines of action for the short, medium and long term, and identified strategic actors and institutions.

Upcoming 2030 Agenda milestones

Regional level

Some key upcoming meetings in 2021 include: 18th meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of ILPES of ECLAC (19-21 October 2021); 4th meeting of the 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); 20th meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC (CDCC) (5 November); Seminar on Non-Communicable Diseases of ECLAC (4 November); 11th meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (23-25 November); XX General Assembly of the Forum of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Housing and Urban Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI) (22-23 November, Colombia); 36th session of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC (3 December); 3rd session of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of ECLAC (13-15 December); and 5th meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development (8-10 March 2022, Costa Rica).

Global level

Some key upcoming meetings in 2021 include: 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 (COP26) (31 October-12 November, Scotland); 12th Ministerial Conference of WTO (30 November-3 December, Switzerland); Sustainable Energy for All Forum (11 January 2022, Rwanda); 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 15) (9-21 May, Côte d’Ivoire); UN Ocean Conference (27 June-1 July 2022, Portugal), and the 10th session of the HLPF (5-15 July 2022, New York).
Results of the Community of Practice Evaluation Survey

*Presentation by ECLAC*

- **ECLAC thanked all Community of Practice members, who participated in the evaluation survey.**

  - **Which aspects of the Community of Practice sessions were the most useful?** Exchange of experiences, best practices, lessons learned and ideas between countries; Preparation of the VNR; Preparation for the HLPF; Presentations; and the Regional VNR Workshop.

  - **What topics would you like for the Community of Practice to cover in future sessions?** Follow-up post VNR process; SDG awareness-raising among stakeholders; Experience of the 2021 VNR countries; Second-generation VNRs; Managing change in SDG implementation; Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

**Discussion**

**ECLAC** announced the following upcoming ECLAC events related to the 2030 Agenda:


- The launch of the new CEPALSTAT interface, the ECLAC data and statistics portal, took place on **Friday, 15 October at 8.30 am Trinidad and Tobago time**. More information can be found at: [https://www.cepal.org/en/events/new-interface-cepalstat-portal-improve-accessibility-latin-america-and-caribbean-regionally](https://www.cepal.org/en/events/new-interface-cepalstat-portal-improve-accessibility-latin-america-and-caribbean-regionally)

- The Regional Council for Planning is the intergovernmental subsidiary body that guides the activities of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of ECLAC. Its meetings are attended by the Ministers or Heads of Planning of the member States of the Institute. The 18th meeting of the Regional Council for Planning took place on **19-21 October 2021** and more information can be found at: [https://crp-ilpes.cepal.org/18/en](https://crp-ilpes.cepal.org/18/en)

**Jamaica** asked whether there will be any additional support by ECLAC to assist countries from the region in their VNR process.

**ECLAC** replied that as a first starting point, UN DESA will invite all 2022 VNR countries to the first Global Workshop taking place virtually from 25 to 29 October 2021. ECLAC will take it on from there and provide a more regional and/or subregional approach to the VNR process, either collectively or individually, hand in hand with the UN country teams in the region. ECLAC is looking forward to a more profound discussion on the needs of Caribbean VNR countries in this context. Countries can also count on ECLAC for more technical assistance, for example regarding the drafting of the VNR report itself and are invited to reach out to ECLAC with their concrete demands of support. ECLAC stands ready to support all 2022 Caribbean VNR countries in their VNR process.
Belize indicated its interest to present their second VNR in 2022 and inquired what specific role the Resident Coordinator plays in the VNR process, explaining the country’s experience in this context, and whether ECLAC offers technical and analytical support that goes beyond the drafting of the VNR report itself.

Jamaica suggested to discuss the preparation of the VNR report in the upcoming session of the Community of Practice.

Belize confirmed the approval of this topic.

ECLAC invited all countries to send their proposals of topics of future sessions of the Community of Practice by Friday, 15 October 2021, and concluded the meeting.

Next Steps

- ECLAC will follow up with all participants from the Community of Practice and provide more information regarding the mentioned upcoming ECLAC events related to the 2030 Agenda that are of great relevance for all Caribbean countries.

- ECLAC invites all countries to send their proposals of topics of future sessions of the Community of Practice by Friday, 15 October 2021, to: mareike.eberz@cepal.org.

- ECLAC will share the meeting’s presentations and notes with all participants.

- ECLAC invites all participants to visit the official website of the Community of Practice, where all presentations and meeting notes can be found at: https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/2030-agenda-sustainable-development/eclac-community-practice-voluntary-national-reviews

- The next meeting of the Community of Practice for Caribbean countries will take place on 9 November 2021 at 11:00 a.m. (Trinidad and Tobago time).