



**Community of Practice for Caribbean countries presenting their
Voluntary National Reviews in 2020**

Tuesday 11 August

Meeting Notes

Participants

Belize, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and ECLAC.

Recording and presentation

To access a recording of the meeting, please visit:

<https://eclac.webex.com/webappng/sites/eclac/recording/play/a15a62818b704aa49f85add11abce463>

Password: Qrfp4Qwc

ECLAC's presentation is enclosed as an attachment to these notes.

Notes of all HLPF side events with participation from the LAC region are available upon request.

Objective of the meeting

This 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 in general and the preparation of VNRs in particular; and aims to provide a space to communicate regularly with peers. The goal of this session was to discuss the experience of Caribbean countries presenting their VNRs at the HLPF 2020, including a presentation of key messages by ECLAC and an open discussion between countries on future steps on the 2030 Agenda implementation in their national contexts. Furthermore, the meeting addressed the next steps of the Community of Practice.

Introduction

The monthly Community of Practice meeting took place just a couple of weeks after the Caribbean countries' presentation of their VNR report at the High-level Political Forum (7-16 July 2020) and a couple of weeks ahead of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 75) (15-30 September 2020). Just as the HLPF, UNGA75 will take place for the first time in the history of the United Nations in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



The meeting opened with a presentation by ECLAC, showcasing an analysis of the 2020 HLPF with a specific focus on the key messages from the region and some reflections from the VNRs presented by Latin American and Caribbean countries. The presentation (enclosed) included the following key points:

- **Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean’s participation in the HLPF 2020**, with 9 VNRs from the region; and interventions in plenary by Ministers from Latin American and Caribbean countries. An overview of the side events from the region was also provided.
- **Summary of the regional side event “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the new global and regional context: Scenarios and projections in the current crisis”**, in which ECLAC provided an analysis of the COVID-19’s socioeconomic impacts in the region, and presented emergency policy responses and recommendations towards building back better. The event included high-level panelists from Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, and Jamaica.
- **Key Messages from the region’s VNR**, including Caribbean SIDS vulnerabilities (economic, social and environmental), the multi-dimensional approach and measures to limit socio-economic impact of the pandemic, data gaps, and calls on mobilization of access to international concessional funding, expansion of global liquidity, and reform of international governance and financial systems that recognize vulnerabilities, among others.
- **Recommendations from ECLAC on building better, with equality and sustainability at the forefront of development**

Discussion

- **Trinidad and Tobago** thanked ECLAC’s office in Port of Spain for their support and indicated that although the presentation of the VNR went smoothly, the main challenge faced was the approval time which took longer than planned (due to unforeseen bottlenecks at the Ministerial/Cabinet level) which delayed the handing in of the official VNR document to the United Nations.
- **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** shared the challenges in finalizing the VNR report due to the pandemic, which included difficulties to reach different stakeholders and meaningfully including them in the VNR process due to the lockdown measures in place.
- **ECLAC** highlighted that internet connectivity was a reality across most countries presenting the VNR and further encouraged countries to share key challenges they had experienced during the VNR process and advice to other Caribbean countries presenting their VNR in the upcoming years.
- **Trinidad and Tobago** suggested to plan every step of the approval process and not underestimate how long it would take to get approval of every level of government and plan in time to prevent future delays.
- **Belize** shared that the VNR withdrawal in 2020 was due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which did not permit Belize to conduct the extensive stakeholder consultations previously envisioned to be in line with the expectations of a second generation VNR, and also a cooperation challenges with the UN System in Belize. Timely implementation and proper planning for the VNR preparations is key to be



successful in the VNR process. Hoping to engage the UN system and other stakeholders as early as possible to work together on a timely data collection. Also, getting people used to online consultations, is important, as lockdown measures might extend in the future.

- **Jamaica** recommended to look at a country's national financial and capacity needs and identify innovative financial mechanism to close potential gaps, as well as assess how effectively and efficiently a government uses their resources to achieve national SDG targets and indicators, i.e. the return on spending. Jamaica benefitted from a number of national assessments and evaluations, such as an audit of Jamaica's readiness to implement the SDGs, following their VNR presentation in 2018 and one outcome of the country's analysis was strengthening the M&E framework, institutions and statistical systems, fostering greater coordination between all actors involved and promote cooperation with different stakeholders to ensure better data integration and reporting mechanism. The different assessments were extremely beneficial to adapt the SDG targets and indicators at the national level. Jamaica reiterated the need to strengthen the institutional framework of the engagement process with multiple stakeholders, in order to increase stakeholder ownership via meaningful participation opportunities and strengthen their engagement throughout the entire VNR and 2030 Agenda implementation process.
- **Trinidad and Tobago** indicated that one of their priorities going forward is to establish and concretize an institutional mechanism of Monitoring and Reporting on the 2030 Agenda.
- **ECLAC** encouraged countries to look beyond the actual VNR process and evaluate progress towards a sustainable future from a longer-term perspective, identifying key gaps and bottlenecks on the way. Also, reaching out to new stakeholders, and identifying (emerging) key partners in a continuous stakeholder mapping process was highlighted.
- **Belize** added that the VNR report should not only be a snapshot of where a country stands, but also look at where policies can be strengthened moving forward, which requires a stable Statistical and Monitoring and Reporting system. In this regard, Belize shared the experience of close collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Environment and Sustainable Development and the National Statistical Office of Belize to develop national SDG indicators and identifying custodians to clearly share responsibilities., indicating that data collection comes with a cost and hence also needs to be looked at from a financing lens, which includes the identification of alternative data from key actors and partners in a whole-of-government approach.
- **ECLAC** pointed out that it was great to see the similarities and differences between the Caribbean VNR presentations to learn from each other and share best practices and encouraged participants to discuss how ECLAC could support countries in meeting the challenges presented by the pandemic.
- **Jamaica** shared the concern that M&E was a consistent challenge for many countries of the region and that capacity building on strategic planning was needed to encounter the continuous challenges of data and to clearly see the contributions of stakeholders towards the 2030 Agenda. Jamaica also indicated that the Community of Practice had been very useful for sharing lessons learned between countries and learn from each other's experiences even if Jamaica didn't present a VNR in 2020.
- **Trinidad and Tobago** highlighted that the continued peer-learning as envisioned by the monthly Community of Practice had been and would continue being beneficial to Caribbean countries in the VNR process and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda moving forward.



- **ECLAC** stressed that at the heart of the Community of Practice was the exchange between countries presenting their VNRs and previous VNR presenters to learn from each other in a spirit of continuous peer-learning. The monthly Community of Practice will continue to support the Caribbean region in the VNR process ahead of us, in a spirit of peer-learning and mentoring between VNR presenters. Countries were encouraged to actively stay engaged in the monthly meetings as well as motivate other countries from the subregion to present their VNRs and stay committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In conclusion, ECLAC indicated its readiness to continue assisting countries in their participation at UNGA75 and any steps ahead in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Next Steps

- In the context of UNGA75, the upcoming SDG Moment in the spirit of the Decade of Action will take place on 18 September and the SDG Media Action Zone from 22-24 September. These are occasions in which governments can participate and showcase their experiences, lessons learned and accelerating actions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- ECLAC will share an online survey with all participants (<https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/S78SK72>) to get further feedback on the Community of Practice and future discussion topics.
- The next meeting of the Community of Practice will take place on **13 October 2020 at 12:00 pm (Chile time)**.