



Community of Practice on Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for Caribbean countries

Tuesday 13 October 2020

Meeting Minutes

Participants

Antigua y Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and ECLAC.

Recording and presentation

To access a recording of the meeting, please visit:

<https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/016fb91b-3f39-48b8-adae-89d06f68f136>

ECLAC's presentations are enclosed as an attachment to these notes.

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 among peers. The goal of this session was to welcome new Caribbean countries presenting their VNRs at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2021 (Antigua and Barbuda-which will present for the first time- and the Bahamas which will present for the second), share the results of a recently conducted survey on the Community of Practice, present resources as countries initiate their VNR preparations and discuss topics for future Community of Practice meetings.

Introduction

ECLAC welcomed participants and shared the objective of the meeting. It was highlighted that this Community of Practice is a complementary space to the Global DESA webinars, which will take place virtually starting on 26 October. The Community of Practice looks at how the VNR report fits into the entire implementation process of the 2030 Agenda, offers the space for informal group in smaller groups and takes into account the specific priorities and challenges of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The selection of topics for the monthly meetings is flexible and can be requested by participants.



Belize reiterated the Community of Practice is a useful space, which is complementary to the global DESA VNR workshops, as it provides guidance for the VNR process, helps participants prepare for the HLPF and allows to validate whether countries are on the right track in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by bouncing back ideas and sharing challenges, best practices and lessons learned.

Presentation and discussion

ECLAC presented a brief analysis (presentation enclosed) with a specific focus on the key messages from Latin American and the Caribbean of the United Nations General Assembly SDG Moment which took place on 18 September.

- **The SDG Moment is considered the launchpad for the Decade of Action** and encompassed a strong focus on poverty/inequality, gender inequality and climate change. It brought together 20 Heads of State and Government, nominated by the regional groups, civil society, local authorities, international organizations and the private sector to generate a renewed sense of urgency, ambition and accountability as the world embarks on a Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs.
- From Latin America and the Caribbean, the Prime Minister of Barbados and the Presidents of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela intervened during the SDG moment.
- Looking at where the region will stand in 2030, ECLAC's analysis shows that the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda is at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean and that recent progress regarding the achievement of various SDGs is likely to be reversed as a consequence of the pandemic. ECLAC estimates a -9.1% contraction in regional GDP in 2020 with an increase in poverty affecting 231 million people (96 million in extreme poverty), greatly jeopardizing our ability to meet SDG 1. This sharp drop in economic activity is expected to drive the unemployment rate up to 13.5% in 2020 affecting 44 million people; and informality rates will reach 54%, which undermines regional progress towards SDG 8. These impacts risk increasing inequalities and jeopardizing recent progress on SDG 10. 40 million households don't have internet connection which hinders progress on SDGs 4 and 9, and exports dropped by -14% affecting SDGs 8 and 17. Women represent more than 60% of informal labor, and confinement is placing additional pressure on them as primary caregivers, whether paid or unpaid, reverting progress in SDG 5. Out of the 169 SDG targets, the region is likely to meet 14 at the current progress rate by 2030.
- Ms. Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, delivered a video message along with the other Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions. She highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on the economic, social and political development in the region, taking the gender dimension into account, and advocated for a new political and fiscal compact to ensure universal social protection.
- More information on the SDG Moment can be found [here](#).

ECLAC also delivered a live demonstration of the Data and Statistics Section of the **United Nations 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Knowledge Management Platform**, also known as the SDG Gateway, which can be found [here](#). The inter-agency Platform was launched in April 2020 and is a reference point for all regional information related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including activities, information resources, statistics, regional data, specific analytical tools and knowledge products developed and made available by the UN in response to the needs of member countries.



The **Regional Knowledge Platform** has two complementary components:

1. One space for general information and content on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean that gathers together information on activities, news, publications and information resources, voluntary national reviews and institutional arrangements, related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the work of United Nations system, governments and other civil society actors in the region associated with the 17 SDGs.
2. A space dedicated to statistical follow-up and monitoring of the progress made with regard to the SDG indicators, which contains information on institutional aspects of national statistical systems, indicator frameworks, databases, statistical profiles and links to third party entities related to the 2030 Agenda at the global, regional and national levels.

The **Statistics Section** includes the following features:

- A section on statistical monitoring at the global, regional and national levels. For global and regional monitoring, official UN information from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) global database is used. National data is taken from the national SDG monitoring platforms of each country (when available). Countries were encouraged to contact ECLAC if a national platform exists and is not reflected in this section of the regional platform.
- A section with data and indicators, which refers to the regional databank for monitoring the SDGs, regional statistical profiles of the SDGs by target, national indicators, and links to national statistical portals, and relevant databases.
- A section on methodologies and information resources organized by each of the 17 SDGs.
- An area to follow the statistics-related cooperation activities and technical assistance offered by the United Nations System in Latin America and the Caribbean in connection with the monitoring of and reporting on the SDGs.

ECLAC highlighted the importance of recognizing the countries' efforts in terms of strengthening their institutional mechanisms and the capacity of National Statistical Systems, even when there is no national data available for SDG indicators. ECLAC also recommended to compare national data with data provided by the UN agencies and funds in the regional platform, which might provide key messages with regards to certain trends to underpin national data. Regional profiles can also be helpful in the absence of national data. In this sense, ECLAC also highlighted that the regional data dashboards allow to download data in various formats, view timelines, disaggregation, footnotes, looking at data by goal and target. This tool gives ideas on how to visualize data and support messaging in the VNR, with tools such as data disaggregated by gender for example.

ECLAC further encouraged countries to consider data visualization, since due to the global pandemic, the VNR could be presented virtually, thus online platforms can complement the presentation of progress complementing a more traditional print version of the report. ECLAC stands by to assist countries further in this process.

Trinidad and Tobago pointed out that the monthly Community of Practice meetings have proven very useful, particularly for fostering a space for countries to learn from each other and have a place to discuss challenges with regards to the VNR process and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and welcomed the presentation of the SDG Gateway.



Bahamas stressed the importance of the 2020 VNR Handbook to provide valuable advice in the VNR process and requested receiving further information on “Second Generation VNRs” to differentiate their second VNR from their first, and expressed interest in learning from countries that have already presented their second and third VNRs. Bahamas sought advice on how to include the human rights dimension into the VNR process, engage multiple stakeholders and include different data sources.

Antigua and Barbuda mentioned an ongoing dialogue with the office of ECLAC in Trinidad and Tobago for VNR preparations. An upcoming meeting in the near future with the Permanent Mission to the UN Headquarters in New York would pave the way forward and the next steps in the VNR process as first-time presenters. The country is aligning SDG indicators with the country’s foreign policy and requested ECLAC further assistance on this matter.

ECLAC pointed out that Belize has experience on integrating the human rights reports with the VNR and mentioned the example of Mexico in aligning the country’s foreign policy with SDG 5. The meeting of ECLAC’s Regional Committee of Planning taking place in 12 November 2020, was also mentioned as a relevant space for countries to discuss the relevance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a blueprint for pandemic recovery and beyond. ECLAC confirmed that planning agencies of all member States in Latin America and the Caribbean have been invited to the meeting.

Closing

To close, ECLAC presented the **results of the recently conducted online survey** with participants of the Community of Practice. The presentation (enclosed) included suggested topics for future sessions: Post-VNR activities directed at the implementation of the SDGs, stakeholder engagement and buy-in, prioritization and financing to outweigh the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change, “Second-Generation” VNRs, institutional mechanisms and frameworks for SDG coordination, localization and integration of the SDGs, accelerating progress on the SDGs, and national monitoring and reporting.

ECLAC thanked all participants for joining the call and encouraged participants to reach out to ECLAC with any question or suggestion they might have.

Next Steps

- ECLAC will share the minutes of the meeting, presentation and meetings timeline with all Community of Practice members.
- The meetings take place every second Tuesday of the month, covering a topic suggested by the entire group. The next meeting of the Community of Practice will take place on **Thursday 12 November 2020 at 12:00 pm (Chile time)**.