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of Latin America and  
the Caribbean on  
**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**  
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Fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America  
and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

San José, 7–9 March 2022

## SUMMARY OF THE CHAIR





## INTRODUCTION

At the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held in Mexico City from 23–27 May 2016, the member States adopted resolution 700(XXXVI), sponsored by Mexico, establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its targets and means of implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

The first meeting of the Forum was held in Mexico City, from 26–28 April 2017. The meeting was chaired by Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC, and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

The second meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, from 18–20 April 2018, chaired by Mexico, and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

The third meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, from 24–26 April 2019, chaired by Cuba, and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

The fourth meeting of the Forum was held from 15–18 March 2021, in virtual format owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and was chaired by Costa Rica and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

The fifth meeting of the Forum was held in San José, from 7–9 March 2022. It was chaired by Costa Rica and convened under the auspices of the Commission. It was open to member States of the Forum and observers, the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, regional and subregional bodies, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society.

The purpose of the meetings of the Forum is to share experiences and best practices among the Latin American and Caribbean countries regarding actions taken to achieve the SDGs in the region.

### Opening session

At the opening session, moderated by Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of ECLAC, statements were made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Carlos Alvarado, President of Costa Rica.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that in the prevailing context, that meeting of the Forum should represent a starting point to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He reviewed the milestones of the past two years while Costa Rica had been Chair: ongoing listening and dialogue; rapprochement with associate members; special attention to the Caribbean subregion, to raise awareness of its priorities and specific characteristics; transformation of the Committee on South-South Cooperation into a Regional Conference; and promotion of a recovery based on an innovative agenda, which calls for creation of innovative mechanisms to make the necessary financing more

accessible for middle-income countries. The moderator called for the meeting's discussions to be channelled into specific actions that would substantially improve people's quality of life.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC, in her keynote speech, welcomed the fact that after some difficult years, a face-to-face meeting could take place once more, despite the ongoing crisis caused by the pandemic and its health, social, environmental, economic and political repercussions, which continued to affect the world and particularly the region. She said that in the midst of global uncertainty, the Forum was again proving itself to be an indispensable meeting space to address the urgent need for effective multilateralism that supported regional integration and cooperation. The main motivation of ECLAC for the fifth meeting was to hear the lessons learned and challenges faced during the pandemic, as well as reflections on the recovery and on implementation of the 2030 Agenda, not only from authorities, but also from civil society and the private sector. The Executive Secretary thanked Costa Rica for its commitment and leadership as Chair of ECLAC, and extended greetings to Argentina, which would become Chair in September, highlighting its vocation for integration. She also thanked the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations for attending the meeting, especially given the conflict situation in Eastern Europe and the difficulties the United Nations was facing.

A change of era was underway, in which structural problems combined with serious singular situations. Latin America and the Caribbean had been the region of the developing world hardest hit by the pandemic, and severe inequalities in the right to health, income concentration, territorial gaps and access to public goods had been magnified. In addition, the pandemic had deepened asymmetries between developed and developing countries, affecting middle-income countries, which made up most of the region. Gaps had widened in access to vaccines and financial resources, as well as in capacities to implement economic recovery initiatives. Specifically, access to vaccines had reflected a marked trend toward nationalism; Latin America and the Caribbean has been affected by trade protectionism on medicines, equipment and vaccines, which has led it to consider a health self-sufficiency plan with a regional approach.<sup>1</sup> Ongoing events might cause the financial resources of the countries of Europe to be allocated to military security, at the expense of development. That increased the urgency of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean faced its worst economic recession in 120 years. The greatest impact was seen in labour formality, especially among women and young people. There had been a 20-year reversal in women's labour force participation rate, and the excessive burden of caregiving and unpaid domestic work had increased. The shadow pandemic of femicide, feminicide and other forms of gender-based violence continued. In the area of education, the region recorded one of the longest interruptions of face-to-face classes, which had led to gaps in the development of cognitive skills, the loss of learning opportunities and a risk of increased school dropout rates, in addition to contributing to the excessive burden of caregiving tasks. It was becoming increasingly clear that there was a need to transition to a care society. Poverty—including extreme poverty—and inequality also increased considerably during the period. In 2021, growth in the region was insufficient to reverse the fall in 2020, even though there was temporary respite from a low baseline and higher external and domestic demand. In 2022, GDP growth was slowing, accompanied by lower fiscal resources, inflationary pressure, rising interest rates, and increased monetary and financial volatility and uncertainty. Latin America and the Caribbean had structural problems: low levels of investment, low productivity, high informality, inequality and poverty, all in a context of exclusion and prevalence of a culture of privilege. Regarding digital connectivity, one third of the region's inhabitants had limited or no access to digital technologies owing to their economic and social circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> *Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals* (LC/TS.2021/115), Santiago, 2021.

For all those reasons, transformative recovery actions were urgently needed, concentrating on strategic sectors that could drive cross-cutting progress; sectors that promoted innovation, strengthened public and private investment, created jobs, reduced environmental footprints and transformed development models, such as digital inclusion, the care economy and the transition to renewable energy. There was also a pressing need to strengthen the health manufacturing industry, with a pragmatic approach to regional integration. In that regard, the member countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had approved *Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals* prepared by ECLAC, which was a road map to strengthen the production and distribution of medicines, and especially vaccines, and gave ECLAC and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) the mandate to pursue actions for its implementation. The Executive Secretary also warned of the need to be cautious with regard to fiscal and monetary adjustments to avoid growth recession, and stressed the importance for countries to have greater access to international liquidity to supplement their domestic resources. Innovative financing instruments were needed, and it was essential to include middle-income countries in initiatives involving debt relief and access to liquidity on concessional terms, hence the importance of the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE) proposed by Costa Rica and the debt-for-climate adaptation swap for Caribbean countries.

Lastly, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC stated that political commitment was key to moving towards a new type of multilateralism that would enable reshaping of international economic and social power relations, and give greater priority to development issues rather than focusing entirely and excessively on market liberalization. The united voice of Latin America and the Caribbean was more significant than ever, to insist on the importance of effective multilateralism and cooperation on various fronts to successfully provide global public goods such as climate security, universal health and peace. In the unique times at hand, Latin America and the Caribbean needed to redouble commitment to its shared calling of closeness, integration and brotherhood and pursue a change in the pattern of development. The region was facing great challenges, but it also had many opportunities to achieve the desired development with a focus on equality, social justice, sustainability, democracy and peace.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations thanked the President of Costa Rica for his leadership, the Vice-President of Costa Rica for focusing work on Afrodescendants and Alicia Bárcena, for her years of service and leadership within the United Nations. She said that the global economy was still reeling from the havoc wrought by COVID-19 and had been further destabilized by the Ukraine conflict and the resulting wider geopolitical dynamics, which could threaten the prospects for recovery. The region was the hardest hit by COVID-19 and had many structural challenges, especially in the Caribbean, which was tragically vulnerable to crises. Achieving the SDGs would not be easy, and getting back on track required policy changes aligned with the 2030 Agenda, strong institutions and governance for inclusive and sustainable growth. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the inclusion of trade in the discussion could help the process. The Secretary General's initiative, *Our Common Agenda*, drove actions, and the Forum should be an occasion to chart an ambitious path towards development. Five priorities could inform discussions: (i) building resilience to the pandemic and preparedness for future (stronger health systems, investment in primary health care, vaccine production); (ii) scaling up and speeding up investments in the protection of people and ecosystems on the frontlines of the climate crisis, especially in the Caribbean, with cooperation with middle-income countries to redistribute liquidity, reform of the global debt architecture and support for innovative debt repayment instruments (the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was the only institution applying a multidimensional vulnerability index); (iii) supercharging just transitions in digital connectivity (the digital transition must become a driver of inclusion), energy (a just transition to renewable energy was a must) and food systems (the region could chart a way forward in building sustainable and resilient food systems); (iv) rebounding from learning losses of the pandemic to reinvent future of education; and (v) accelerating gender equality and economic transformation. The Secretary-General had presented five transformative recommendations to advance gender equality: repealing gender-discriminatory laws; promoting gender parity in all spheres and at all levels of decision-making; facilitating women's economic inclusion; ensuring greater

inclusion of younger women; and following through on an emergency response to prevent and end gender-based violence. Young men needed to be included in efforts to change how we lived together. Robust and decent job creation must be matched by universal social protection. In the meeting of Regional Collaborative Platform it was hoped that an ambitious workplan would be considered to support countries across the region and agree on concrete deliverables. The situation in Haiti had not been forgotten and international engagement as well as national efforts towards reconstruction were encouraging. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean had given birth to the SDGs, and its leadership was now needed to build a future of peace, dignity and prosperity.

The President of Costa Rica said a face-to-face meeting with numerous representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean and friends and partners of the region was a great opportunity, and encouraged participants to reflect on their strategic contribution to the Forum. At times of war, uncertainty and despair, such as the crossroads where humanity found itself, the courageous and bold route to ensure people's well-being was the path of peace. The greatest courage was that required to converse and seek solutions to the problems the world and the region faced. Events of recent years, especially the pandemic, had shown that the world was interdependent. It was not possible to survive alone, or to be safe unless we all saved ourselves, and the best way to achieve a better world was to show solidarity. Economic recovery, fighting climate change, meeting health needs and realizing human rights needed to remain as the priority lines of action for Latin American and Caribbean governments, and the region was in a decisive position to lead the way.

The call for a new global compact was stronger than ever; a unified response that measured up to the enormity of the common challenges. Solutions and responses needed be found by all, multilaterally, with an international architecture that supported peace, sustainable development and the realization of the human rights of all people, and particularly those in the most vulnerable situations. Asymmetries existed among and within countries. Inequality, which eroded nations and dissolved social fabrics, needed to be fought. The countries of the region had seen their fiscal space shrink, were suffering from high levels of debt, and faced the constant dilemma of financing for development. Furthermore, the main threat the world was facing was the destruction of the planet by human beings, the disappearance of biodiversity and the desertification of arable areas. However, even before the ongoing conflict in Europe, levels of investment in weaponry had once again surpassed cold war levels. The question was why millions were being spent on weapons and not on humanity's main problems. Specific answers were needed; proposals could and should emerge from the Forum to address all those problems.

It was important to do away with one-dimensional criteria for understanding reality. Classification criteria based solely on income hid a situation that overlooked the needs of most of the world's countries and their most vulnerable populations. Economies that focused on the here and now had led to simple, unidirectional solutions, but reality was complex, and understanding and accepting complexity was transformative. Multidimensionality called for more action and communication, because the truth was more difficult to explain. It had been an honour for Costa Rica to service as Chair of ECLAC, based on an innovative financing for development agenda and recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, with specific proposals that went beyond assessments and studies and had the potential to have a real impact. As a result of technical inputs from ECLAC and intergovernmental discussions in recent months, a toolbox was available that included proposals in areas such as national fiscal strategies, expansion and recirculation of special drawing rights, debt-for-nature swaps, debt for social protection swaps, creation of a multilateral credit rating agency and new multilateral funds financed by developed countries, such as the FACE fund proposed by Costa Rica. Lastly, he commended and thanked the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Alicia Bárcena, for her work, dedication, leadership and vision, and said that the Government of Costa Rica was awarding her the Silver Grand Cross of the National Order of Juan Mora Fernández.

**Presentation of the document *A decade of action for a change of era*, fifth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>2</sup>**

In the presentation of the document *A decade of action for a change of era*, fifth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC highlighted several key messages, such as the growing global asymmetries between developed and developing countries (economic, health, climate and crisis response gaps), the fact that the region had been the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the central role of the State in addressing the economic and social costs of the crisis. She also drew attention to the unequal access to vaccines in the region and said that and the most worrying aspect of the recovery, which offered a historic opportunity to forge a new social compact that provides protection, certainty and confidence, was that it was following a development model that had already been shown to have structural limitations. Latin America and the Caribbean was facing three silent crises: (i) the loss of more than a year of classroom schooling for an entire generation of students; (ii) the increase in gender-based violence and in the unequal gender distribution of care burdens; and (iii) the exacerbation of marine and terrestrial biodiversity destruction as a result of illegal activities, often combined with killings of environmental defenders. The report examined the issues of debt, inflation, the increases in poverty and extreme poverty, and the worsening of gender inequalities, and analysed patterns in the SDG indicators, focusing on matters related to education, gender equality, the care society, biodiversity and institutional progress on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In the space for comments on the report, moderated by Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, statements were made by Carlos Alvarado, President of Costa Rica, Mariana Mazzucato, Economist and Professor of the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) of University College London (UCL), and Enrique Iglesias, former Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

The President of Costa Rica said that the document presented by ECLAC was an extremely important contribution to jointly pursuing solutions to address the critical juncture of that time and outline future pathways for sustainable development and well-being for society as a whole. The report confirmed that the damaging repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis had been exacerbated by sustained levels of structural inequality, and also addressed, from various angles and with regard to different dimensions, the severe consequences that countries were continuing to suffer as a result of the pandemic. For there to be true recovery and reconstruction, investment needed to be systematic, aligned with the SDGs and sensitive to the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The report was a clear call to action to avoid marring the futures of current and future generations, but in order to act, greater access to financing and international cooperation was needed, as they were essential for a transition to a more sustainable pattern of development. In the specific case of Costa Rica, the country had to ratify the Escazú Agreement and its government had launched several initiatives, such as the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE), and the joint work among local governments to territorialize the 2030 Agenda. There needed to a discussion of the care society from a rights-based perspective and a more egalitarian approach to domestic and care tasks. The region needed to move from a culture of privilege to a care society, and a change of course was needed to move towards a new normal that was equal, sustainable, inclusive, innovative, green and decarbonized.

The Economist and Professor of the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) of University College London (UCL) said that the consequences of COVID-19 —such as the loss of a year of schooling for an entire generation, the infodemic, the a lack of investment and underfunding of health care, vaccine apartheid

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<sup>2</sup> LC/FDS.5/3.

and hoarding, the lack of vaccine production capacity in many developing countries because of how poorly intellectual property rights had been intentionally structured globally— were all indications of the failure to govern economic systems, innovation and development in the common interest and for the common good. There was a need to redesign how economics and capitalism worked. Existing problems were the outcomes of problematic governance of public, private and third sector institutions and the relationships between them. She then focused on four big changes: (i) changing the direction of growth, moving away from “levelling the playing field” to “tilting” the playing field in the direction of innovation-led, inclusive and sustainable growth, with proactive design of policies to free them of the concept of fixing market failures; (ii) designing an industrial strategy, with innovation policy, procurement budgets as dynamic innovative instruments to crowd in bottom-up solutions, because it was not simply a matter of listing sectors in difficulty and handing out money as all sectors needed to work together differently; (iii) a direction needed to be provided for finance and liquidity, orienting public banks like CDB to this mission, and countries would have to focus less on deficits and instead kickstart public and private investment and innovation, the multiplier effect of which would keep debt-to-GDP ratios in check; and (iv) investing in the dynamic capabilities of institutions. Less outsourcing of capacity was required, and more inward investment, to make public institutions more flexible and agile. In the term public-private partnerships, the word “partnership” was not normative, but symbolic. Partnerships needed to be symbiotic, mutual, dynamic, with conditionality at the centre, and not the ones that reduced fiscal space. That could mean making loans conditional on the transformation of a sector or putting principles such as the common good or collective intelligence at the heart of contract design. She concluded by saying that in the digital, health and clean energy spaces, it would be important to reformulate relationships between business, the State and the third sector in the region, to truly build symbiotic partnerships and meet the important Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The former Executive Secretary of ECLAC highlighted five points: (i) the rigorous preparation by ECLAC of the report, which very clearly reflected the work of the institution; (ii) the need to recognize in the preceding 75 years, significant technological progress had been made with production systems and communications; (iii) the deepening of inequality and the enormous inefficiency with which opportunities had been distributed around the world; the great contribution of the United Nations system had been to incorporate into public discussion the concept of solidarity, of society’s commitment to those who were most in need and who should be supported; the world was still incapable of overcoming conflicts among races, religions and nationalisms, and still owed it to history to restore peace to humanity; (iv) the incorporation into growth of the concept of interaction (for example, the presence of millions of companies throughout the world, where everything was a result of a combination of everything); and (v) the concept of a change of era: in human history, such changes had always been accompanied by shocks and by violence, and that needed to be kept very much in mind. Peace was more important than everything else and should be the great purpose that drove the world in its future, but it was not a commitment that should be placed solely in the hands of politicians, society as a whole had to assume it. He thanked Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, for her contribution to the work of ECLAC through her innovation, her commitment to the goals of the United Nations, her enthusiasm, her vitality and her personal commitment.

**Statements by ministers of foreign affairs and high-level authorities of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

This session was moderated by María del Pilar Garrido, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, with the following statements.



The Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia said that in response to the pandemic her country had strengthened transfer programmes, but that was only a palliative measure and it was necessary to move towards truly inclusive growth and development, that went beyond traditional indicators. Value chains with greater processing and value added should be developed, enhancing competitiveness to orient the region more toward the international market and to take advantage of the existing market in the hemisphere. In that process, it was essential to promote women playing a prominent role in the economy through sustainable, market-oriented enterprises, with a more active role for governments in implementation of policies that had sufficient budgets to each the required scale, and a more active role for a true development bank to foster those processes. It was also necessary to promote a solidarity-based economic model that favoured partnerships, so that small producers could move towards formalization. Migration went hand in hand with lack of economic opportunities and lack of freedoms, areas in which work was needed to achieve social progress and fulfil the 2030 Agenda.

The Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba said that, as stated in the report presented, the agreed goals would not be achieved if production, consumption and distribution patterns were not transformed, and that the region had much to contribute to that process. He reiterated Cuba's commitment to the SDGs and its willingness to support other countries, even in the harmful scenario imposed by the blockade, which hindered the fight against the pandemic. Cuba was addressing challenges in education, gender equality and ecosystem protection, through national strategies and programmes that were aligned with the 2030 Agenda. Despite progress, there were still great challenges ahead and Cuba would continue to contribute to multilateralism and promote partnerships with other countries to achieve the change of era that was needed for Latin America and the Caribbean to become the region its population desired.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration of Antigua and Barbuda expressed special thanks to the Executive Secretary and her team for the work carried out and the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean for the assistance provided. He highlighted the challenges and lessons learned in implementing the SDGs; Antigua and Barbuda's first voluntary national review had shown significant progress towards some of the Goals and the second review would be presented in 2026. His Ministry would implement three projects in 2022 on mapping, innovative financing solutions and recovery planning, in coordination with ECLAC and the Resident Coordinator in Barbados. Lastly, he said that Antigua and Barbuda was eager to hear from other countries and join forces to make the region a better place for its people.

The Director of the Office of Planning and the Budget (OPP) of Uruguay said that the 2030 Agenda provided guidance for comprehensive and inclusive management of development efforts. For that reason, joint action by the region was essential in order to obtain financing to implement the 2030 Agenda and not lose sight of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The greatest source of financing was always economic growth and in that respect the region was far from reaching its potential. Growth required macroeconomic and institutional stability, as well as modern institutions and quality education. Uruguay was committed to those efforts and to submitting voluntary national reviews. The pursuit of the 2030 Agenda must continue to be complemented by economic recovery and, in that regard, the report presented covered very important issues, such as the challenges posed by the pandemic, environmental challenges, challenges relating to the world of work and those related to care. Joint efforts were required not only for the region to recover, but also for it to begin to develop its huge growth potential.

The Deputy Minister for Social and Institutional Planning in the Ministry of People's Power for Planning of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that in the global context it was fitting to look at issues from the perspective of resilience. The challenges posed by the health emergency were being compounded in his

country's case by unilateral coercive measures that affected the population and hindered the fight against the pandemic. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela remained committed to cooperation and respectful social dialogue, and was continuing to promote an inclusive economic development model, in areas such as health, education and gender equality, which had been included in a plan with a horizon of 2025 that was aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The country remained dedicated to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, within a framework of regional integration and, as always, was willing to collaborate with ECLAC to benefit the region.

The Undersecretary of State for Foreign Policy Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Honduras said that a structural and institutional change had taken place in that country with the return to democracy. The new Government of Honduras found itself leading a country that had to allocate 50% of its budget to debt service, preventing those resources from being translated into development, poverty reduction or social programmes. A commitment to human rights and to defending natural resources was at the heart of the country's development and would be reflected in the signing of the Escazú Agreement and the beginning of consultations on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The new government's main focus was on education and health. Progress in those areas would only be possible if past implementation of social programmes was reviewed to prevent them from being linked to clientelist practices, as had occurred in the past. Honduras needed the support of ECLAC to achieve progress in development.

The Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru said that inequality in the region had increased and the process of reducing inequality that had begun in 2002 had been interrupted. The countries had allocated considerable resources to finance cash transfers to prevent a further increase in poverty, but the transfers, in general, did not reach the level of one poverty line. In addition to putting data and information at the centre once more, as the Executive Secretary of ECLAC had said, it was also necessary to put policy back in the centre, in the sense of the Commission proposal to form agreements for a decade of action for a new pattern of development, which was linked to the proposal from the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a new global social contract for recovery. The post-pandemic recovery was following pre-pandemic patterns, but with the same approach to growth policies it would be difficult to reverse the 10-year setbacks in indicators. Economic and social relations in the countries needed to be restructured, for example, through cash transfers based on a new conception of how to end poverty. There was also room for renewed regional cooperation, especially in terms of new forms of financing.

The Ambassador of Brazil in Costa Rica said that his country was fully committed to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. In the midst of the greatest global crisis in many decades, the obstacles to fulfilling the Agenda had grown and there was an obligation to reassess, so that the result was not merely a return to normal, but a choice to build back better, leaving no one behind. Structural economic reform was high on the country's national agenda. Brazil had also made great efforts in environmental matters and had sought to develop the bioeconomy to lift people out of poverty. The government had been working on pursuit of the targets of the 17 SDG, undertaking actions to foster progress towards the Goals. Work had been done on indicators and on disseminating results to a wider public, so that society could follow the progress in that process. Cooperation with the region had been fundamental in that regard.

The Ambassador of the Dominican Republic in Costa Rica said that her country had made efforts to align its national strategies to overcome the difficult last two years of the pandemic with efforts to foster sustainable development. More than 90% of the initiatives in place were aligned with SDGs 3, 6 and 8, as indicated in the voluntary national review submitted by the Dominican Republic in 2021. During the pandemic, the government had decided to prioritize reactivation in three areas: access to decent work, quality health care, and expanded coverage and quality of public services. To meet the challenges of the

prevailing international context (supply chain bottlenecks, inflation and the military crisis in Europe), additional measures had been taken to provide social assistance to the unemployed and poor, increase liquidity to prevent a banking crisis, and directly support different productive sectors and companies. The government's main objective was to improve people's quality of life through specific outputs with measurable indicators; planning in the public sector was a flexible instrument that could be adapted to circumstances and corrected to avoid drifting away from this ultimate goal. In closing he commended Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the ECLAC and the first woman to hold that important position, for the years she had dedicated to the Commission and for leading the region towards the shared goal of the 2030 Agenda.

The Presidential Commissioner for Multilateral Affairs of Guatemala said that his country had developed coordination and implementation strategies to prioritize the 2030 Agenda and incorporate it into national planning instruments. Specifically, work had been done to ensure free, quality, comprehensive education (SDG 4); to formulate municipal development plans, as planning tools that improved management and cooperation capacity at the local level (SDG 11); to guarantee access to hygiene and sanitation services by strengthening municipal water and sanitation offices, which oversaw maintenance and management of water resources, and to draft a water law to reduce the country's vulnerability to the effects of climate change (SDG 6). Lastly, he underscored Guatemala's commitment to transforming the country by closing inequality gaps, protecting the planet, ending poverty and achieving sustainable prosperity for all.

The Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador stated that the meeting of the Forum, the first face-to-face meeting of that magnitude since the start of the pandemic, would provide a major boost to multilateralism. The complexity of post-pandemic recovery had the potential to hinder fulfilment of existing commitments, so it was essential to rethink priorities and courses of action to guarantee citizens' livelihoods and health. In El Salvador, the pandemic had accelerated required changes in the public health system, which had been expanded and modernized, prioritizing its humanization and integration, thus contributing to fulfilment of SDG 3 and SDG 10. In the area of education, the country had undertaken modernization in the field of technology by strengthening new generations' digital skills, adding to progress on SDG 4 and SDG 9. The commitments to job creation and to expansion of business opportunities in all sectors were instrumental in progress towards SDG 8. Public investment in social well-being had a direct impact on people's lives; continued technological and financial support was needed to move the world closer to achieving the SDGs. Lastly, she conveyed to the Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena, her greetings and respect, and thanked her for her extensive legacy, which inspired all of the countries to continue their work.

The Director General of Multilateral Policy and Coordinator of the SDG Paraguay Commission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay said that the SDG Paraguay Commission was a milestone for the country, providing it with a structure that could pursue decisive actions with tangible benefits for all citizens. The second voluntary national review —submitted by Paraguay in July 2021— had been a very useful self-assessment, highlighting the structural problems that had been affecting the country for years, and had led to the linking of regulatory frameworks with the SDGs and to multisectoral collaborative actions to reach innovative solutions to the country's challenges. Looking forward to 2030, a number of challenges lay ahead, such as further harmonizing shared policies for the free transit of people without failing to respect health checks, steering trade and tourism toward a path of sustainable growth, and rebuilding the social fabric damaged by the pandemic. Collective horizontal efforts were needed, with citizens at the origin and destination of public policies, and especially the most vulnerable populations. More than ever, there was a clear need to continue joining forces to achieve an Agenda that called for peace, cooperation, respect and tolerance among countries as values that were inseparable from the concept of sustainability.

The Minister of Finance of Guyana said that the report presented showed that progress towards development was insufficient and proactive measures were urgently needed, particularly given the loss of one year of

schooling in the region during the pandemic. Guyana welcomed the focus of ECLAC on the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. He highlighted his country's initiatives in the area of food security, the sustainable development strategies to preserve rainforest and reduce carbon emissions, and tangible support for learning and capacity-building with online scholarships. He then reiterated the call for application of a multidimensional vulnerability index. Partnerships were essential and Guyana was committed to working with the United Nations and ECLAC. He thanked the Executive Secretary for her passionate leadership and outstanding support for the Caribbean, acknowledging its vulnerability and advancing the development agenda.

The Minister of Social Development and Family of Chile said that the health crisis had tested the capacity of institutions to respond to citizens' demands and had given a new lease of life to the path traced by the 2030 Agenda to facilitate a sustainable recovery in the three dimensions of development. While the pandemic was expected to affect the progress made on SDGs 1, 3 and 8, it had rapidly become apparent that it was also affecting education, gender equality and the environment, and was increasing inequality for particularly vulnerable groups. In this complex situation, full of uncertainty, the Government of Chile was calling on diverse stakeholders to make commitments, and the support of civil society was vital for national recovery, as dialogues and partnerships were essential to leave no one behind. Responses to the COVID-19 crisis could become the basis for addressing other crises, such as the climate crisis. Chile was updating and strengthening its institutional framework for the SDGs, through a register of State initiatives linked to the 2030 Agenda, working groups that would study national progress on the SDGs, and a proposal for implementing the Agenda that would contribute to its adoption at all territorial levels.

The Deputy Minister of Multilateral Affairs and Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama stated that voluntary national reviews were healthy undertakings to identify gaps and weaknesses and focus efforts on the most needful areas. Panama had already submitted two reviews, in 2017 and 2020, and would submit its third in 2023. Addressing climate change was a priority for the country, which was promoting the blue economy by formulating a national ocean policy; nine years ahead of schedule, the country had met the goal of the 30x30 initiative (which sought to protect 30% of the planet by 2030), and had become one of only three carbon-negative countries in the world. Another key challenge for Panama was mitigating, through a return to face-to-face education, the impact of the pandemic on education caused by a lack of access to information and communications technology (ICT) in rural areas. The country was also working on protection of women's rights and the equal pay agenda. The Deputy Minister thanked ECLAC for presenting the countries with a clear and complete overview, with recommendations for achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda, and called on the entire region to step up the pursuit of these Goals.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines said leaving no one behind was not just a catch phrase for her country: its National Economic and Social Development Plan 2013–2025 (NESDP) and other plans put people at the centre. Poverty had been substantially reduced and there had been tangible improvements in quality of life as a result of targeted action in employment, health and social protection, accompanied by incentives to reduce youth unemployment and increase entrepreneurship. Climate change remained a danger to small island developing States (SIDS) and the pandemic and volcano eruptions compounded food insecurity. Only international assistance would help SIDS to mitigate and withstand natural disasters. Reforms in the United Nations development system and progress towards a multidimensional vulnerability index were encouraging, as was the fund for climate adaptation and comprehensive response to natural disasters. It was still possible to achieve the SDGs, but urgent action was needed.

The Deputy Minister of Planning and Coordination in the Ministry of Development Planning of the Plurinational State of Bolivia stated that, since 2006, the country had been implementing an economic,

social and productive model that had reduced poverty and the gap between rich and poor, and increased access in areas such as health, education, housing and basic services. The Patriotic Agenda 2025, which was very similar to the 2030 Agenda in its approaches, had made it possible to reduce extreme poverty; implement a unified, universal and free health-care system, which contributed to reducing infant mortality; increase the school attendance rate of the population aged 4–17 years, and the rate of enrolment in educational establishments for the population aged 19–23 years; increase women’s participation in politics, resulting in an increase in the number of seats held by women in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly; increase access to improved water sources, and reduce the Gini coefficient. Over the coming years, the challenge would be to create better economic and social opportunities for new generations, based on economic diversification, industrialization and import substitution, equitable income distribution, safeguarding fundamental human rights and protecting Mother Earth.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina said that his attached great importance to the 2030 Agenda, which had led to inter-institutional mechanisms for designing public policies that were aligned with the Agenda, integrated monitoring of progress, and the necessary budget allocation, as well as the presentation of two voluntary national reviews, in 2017 and 2020, and the intention to present the third in July 2022. As agents of public policy, governments should promote an inclusive and sustainable recovery, refraining from increasing concentration of poverty and social exclusion, and working in solidarity on the basis of international agreements. The old formulas of austerity would be of no use in this new state of affairs, in which a systemic crisis was affecting children, the elderly, women and diverse groups disproportionately. The needs and demands of the most vulnerable groups needed to be recognized, starting with the most disadvantaged, in order to reach everyone. ECLAC and CELAC were vital spaces for forging social and productive political integration, and the future of the region depended on joint work, integration and unity. The Forum was the last intergovernmental meeting with the Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena. Her leadership was undeniable and, like her, countries would continue to support sustainable development with enthusiasm at the global, regional and national levels.

The Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico expressed his concern at the setbacks seen in all areas of the 2030 Agenda. The President of Mexico had proposed that the G20 countries, large companies and the richest people in the world should contribute a percentage of their income so that no one had to live on less than four dollars a day, regardless of which country they lived in. That would create a world standard in anti-poverty, solidarity and fraternity, and would increase the importance of international organizations. It was a viable initiative, but it had to be fought for. Examples of joint initiatives pursued by ECLAC included the *Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals*, the fund for climate adaptation and comprehensive response to natural disasters, and the *Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico*. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were sister nations and their only way forward, in a world in which the strategic and political balance was changing, was to work together to present such initiatives, since individually they did not have sufficient sway in international bodies. Lastly, he commended the extraordinary work of the Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena, who he was proud to say was Mexican.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs of the United States Department of State said that the United States sought to eliminate disparities in its own education system and to ensure equal access for marginalized populations. The protection of the country’s natural ecosystems, life below water and life on land, was one of President Biden’s top priorities, and they looked forward to the Our Ocean Conference in April and the United Nations Ocean Conference in June. The United States supported launching negotiations for a global agreement to combat ocean plastic pollution and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was implementing the “Clean Cities, Blue Ocean”

initiative in Peru and the Dominican Republic to reduce the estimated 11 tons of plastic flowing into the oceans each year. Domestically, the United States had endorsed the goal to conserve or protect at least 30% of land and sea by 2030 and supported including that goal in the global diversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity. She congratulated Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama on the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor, a unique model for regional cooperation that showed great potential for ocean conservation and ocean-based climate solutions. The United States was committed to making real progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Multilateral cooperation, as seen at ECLAC, was the only way to solve global sustainable development challenges. Finally, she requested that she and her colleagues at their embassies in the region be contacted to share ideas on deepening cooperation and accelerating the full implementation of the sustainable development goals.

The moderator gave some closing remarks following the statements. First, she emphasized the need to transform the productive fabric and close productivity gaps based on the fourth industrial revolution, in order to infuse the region's sustainable development with direction and intention. Economies needed to be more resilient, and low in emissions, and to foster inclusion by developing green, blue and orange jobs, with women and young people playing a leading role. A new welfare architecture was also required, with new financial instruments and a new way of cooperating and relating to each other; in other words, a transformative way of being a region. She said that all the countries agreed on that point, and ECLAC and the Executive Secretary had set an example. She praised the warmth, cordiality and courage of Alicia Bárcena, who had been the voice of the region in numerous forums over the years and had successfully defended its interests in various international bodies.

Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, shared some reflections on the path that ECLAC had followed in recent years. She said that in 2010, ECLAC had put equality at the centre of the development agenda and since then had focused on analysing all aspects of inequality and exploring ways to close the gaps that afflicted people. Over the course of that work, which had begun when the fact that inequality was inefficient was not yet being addressed, several milestones had been reached, including: development of progressive ideas for the region given the urgency of a change in the pattern of development, but with a realistic approach, as globalization intensified, the economy was repeatedly hit by crises and the threats of environmental deterioration and climate change became more acute; proposal of an agenda of equality, with the holding of rights as a regulatory framework; formulation of proposals for progressive structural change, with a need to pursue wide-ranging compacts on fiscal matters, productive policy, the advancement of women, social cohesion and sustainable development; the effort made to demonstrate with data that inequality was economically inefficient; the development of proposals for a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability in the context of the effects of the pandemic, and the proposal of eight sectors to drive investment to create growth and jobs and reduce the environmental footprint.

She also referred to the concept of the culture of privilege, which arose from political and economic inequalities becoming ingrained and incorporated into the rules of the game of society. In view of this, it was necessary to break away from structures of political and economic domination, and build alternative paths, formulas for society in which the citizen was an active participant in transformations rather than a passive subject. That was the greatest challenge for present and future generations: to expand freedoms, forge equality, deepen democracy, re-establish solidarity among the middle and working classes, and safeguard public safety. She also warned of the indignation that could arise when political action failed to change what was important to society and when expectations of well-being were dashed, and reiterated, in that regard, the need for compacts, in a democratic framework in which the tasks to be undertaken were huge.

ECLAC had worked in close cooperation with the governments of the region, promoting regional integration and open regionalism to formulate proposals to address challenges such as migration, climate

change, health self-sufficiency and food sovereignty. In that respect, five initiatives were noteworthy: the *Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico*, the *Plan for self-sufficiency in health matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lines of action and proposals*, the “Caribbean first” initiative, the initiative on financing for development from a regional perspective led by the Secretary-General, Canada and Jamaica, and the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement). Lastly, she highlighted five key messages that she believed inspired hope: the importance of continuing to focus on equality; the importance of environmental sustainability as part of development strategies and not as an externality; the importance of the role of the State and of policies as distributive instruments; the urgency of greater regional integration, to participate in multilateralism with a single voice; and the centrality of gender equality and women’s autonomy, and of moving towards a care society.

### **High-level dialogue on an innovative financing agenda for recovery**

In his introductory remarks to the dialogue, Rodolfo Solano Quiros, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, said that in terms of financing for recovery, the meeting was an opportunity to move from words to action. The fact that the governments themselves were the owners of the multilateral financial organizations hindered dialogue. In practice, the Ministers of Finance, who were the directors of the banks, had to be open to such dialogue. He thanked the representatives of regional and international development banks for attending and, above all, for participating, and invited them to think creatively and innovatively.

#### *Contributions to the innovative financing agenda for recovery: the perspective of regional and international development banks*

The session, with representatives of regional and international development banks, was moderated by Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, who said that the region’s governments had a limited capacity to obtain resources to respond adequately to the health, economic and human rights crisis caused by the pandemic because of several underlying factors: high levels of debt and resources being diverted to service debt; the region’s reduced fiscal space, exacerbated by lower revenues and greater pressing needs; the impact of the pandemic on tourism, and the challenge for middle-income countries, including upper-middle, to access financing and traditional forms of cooperation. As a metric, per capita GDP was not sufficient to assess countries’ progress; a multidimensional metric was needed that properly reflected the socioeconomic development and particularities of each country. The ECLAC *COVID-19 Special Report* entitled “An innovative financing for development agenda for the recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean” proposed specific policy measures to move forward and produce a direct impact on the region’s populations.

The experts participating in the dialogue were asked to address key aspects to improve the capacity to access and mobilize financing: (i) measures to expand liquidity and redistribute it from developed countries to developing countries, without excluding middle-income countries, which generally did not have access to concessional financing; (ii) actions to facilitate the access of countries in the region to new sources of financing such as green bonds and SDG bonds; (iii) the strategies required to strengthen regional cooperation, increasing the lending and response capacity of regional, subregional and national financing institutions and strengthening their cooperation; (iv) the role of national development banks in mobilizing resources for sustainable development; (v) regional strategies to boost public revenues by reducing tax evasion and making tax structures more progressive, and the role of global agreements on tax rates and fiscal and financial transparency in supporting countries’ capacity to strengthen fiscal revenues; and (vi) in the context of the pandemic, the actions required from development banks to meet the needs of

Latin American and Caribbean countries —most of which are categorized as middle-income— in terms of access to resources and financial mechanisms to support the region’s development efforts.

The Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB) said that was a dark time for Ukraine and the world and that EIB was working closely with international financial institutions to support Ukraine. More than ever, it was important for there to be a strong European Union, to ensure that its values —such as the rule of law, human dignity, democracy, freedom and human rights— carried weight. The pandemic had shown how connected the world was and how much countries needed to collaborate. The European Union led the world in climate ambitions. EIB played a key role in supporting investment in climate action, not only in climate technology, but also in the pursuit of the Paris Agreement goals. Most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for a small share of emissions but were the most affected by natural disasters and rising sea levels. Most EIB loans to the region were to the public sector with a climate change focus, and over the coming years climate change and the green economy would be priorities for the Bank. EIB funds would complement European Union grant programmes and would be distributed regardless of countries’ income. The challenges countries faced were global, and there was a chance to make the world fairer and more sustainable. It was imperative to act rapidly and decisively.

The Manager of the Country Department for Central America, Mexico, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Haiti of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) highlighted the question of how to bring resources from developed countries to developing countries, since that was precisely the nature of the institution. He said that IDB helped channel those resources to the countries of the region, with concessional rates and terms that depended on the characteristics of the country. The Bank had been supporting projects to achieve the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean since 2016. Recently, there had also been innovation in terms of financing mechanisms: IDB had forged strategic alliances with other cooperation partners to maximize the resources reaching the region through indirect financing. The public sector had been supported, one example being the Salud Mesoamérica initiative, and work had been done in the area of public-private partnerships. Another aspect that the institution considered important in the region was support for national and subregional public development banks. In addition, IDB had worked intensively on issuance of thematic bonds (green, blue, gender and others), which entailed attracting resources from international markets, from investors that were willing to offer better terms and better interest rates. Multilateral development banking and other partners could play an important role in providing better mechanisms and incentives for countries to manage the impacts of climate change and disasters. IDB had supported the countries with various instruments, including an accessible line of credit at no cost. During the pandemic, the Bank had quickly approved fast disbursement instruments to assist ministries of health in the region. Lastly, in order to strengthen recovery and maximize the impact of its work, efforts were being made to inject more capital into the institution, which would make more resources available for the countries.

The Head of the Environmental and Social Sustainability Office of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) said that CABEI had reaffirmed its role as the most important source of multilateral financing for Central America. The Bank was updating its corporate strategy, to include new elements while maintaining the original ones. Its strategic pillars were: environmental and social sustainability, regional integration, sustainable competitiveness, human development and social inclusion, and gender equity. Direct lending was at the heart of the work of CABEI, and would continue to be so. The Bank’s work with the private sector, especially with micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), was also of great importance. Actions taken by the Bank in response to the pandemic included the Emergency Support and Preparedness Program for COVID-19 and Economic Reactivation, with emergency assistance and support in areas such as public sector operations, central bank liquidity, vaccine procurement, employment and youth entrepreneurship. In the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota, CABEI reacted quickly with its Central American Resilient Reconstruction Program, which included emergency



aid, technical assistance, public investment, private investment and green and other thematic bonds. Through development policy operations, the Bank supported governments in designing and implementing reform programmes that promoted sustainable growth and poverty reduction through technical advice and financing, as a means of paving the way for long-term development. In addition, CABEI worked with the Green Climate Fund, which had allowed it to mobilize resources in the form of loans, grants, guarantees, and other types of cooperation. The Bank had worked on the issuance of bonds —green bonds, social bonds and particularly bonds for procurement of vaccines— and was working to mobilize additional resources, including a regional debt market, creation of an infrastructure fund for the development of Central America in collaboration with the Republic of Korea, and a sovereign bond issuance programme in the Mexican capital market. In conclusion, he called for greater collaboration between multilateral and regional development banks to improve countries’ short- and long-term capabilities, and stressed the importance of measuring the effectiveness of investments aimed at improving the well-being of the region’s inhabitants.

The President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) referred to three areas: sustainable development, financing mechanisms to drive development, and a vulnerability and resilience framework to support access to concessional finance. Sustainable development required an ecosystem of social, institutional, environmental, financial and productive capacity resilience, designed holistically, building a bridge between stabilization and long-term development, and integrating three frameworks: the debt sustainability framework of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the investment framework of the World Bank and the resilience-building framework of the United Nations. Systemic sustainability was impossible without financing resilience, which in turn required a financing ecosystem, with resources from public and private sectors, multiple financial institutions, blending concessional and non-concessional funding and engineering instruments to meet different purposes. A suite of instruments was needed, with green and SDG-themed bonds, resilience bonds funded with special drawing rights (SDRs), private equity, contingent instruments, derivative-based instruments, and concessional funds. However, in terms of access to concessional finance, gross national income (GNI) did not capture the process of development, or the time needed to recover from shocks. Even with high levels of GNI per capita, small States faced significant challenges after exogenous shocks. CDB had been using a vulnerability index and had contributed to the multidimensional vulnerability index. Nonetheless, existing vulnerability indices were backward-looking. CDB proposed a forward-looking concept of internal resilience capacity that captured the structural factors and vulnerability that constrained development, distinguished the magnitude and persistence of shocks, and linked access to finance to the duration of recovery; a resilience capacity-adjusted measure, called the “recovery duration adjuster”, as a more appropriate and equitable measure for classifying countries for access to concessional financing.

The Secretary General of the Italian-Latin American International Organization (IILA) said IILA was a space for dialogue, but also a place where cooperation projects were carried out in the region with financing from both Italy and the European Union. Although IILA was not a bank, it could contribute to the search for new forms of cooperation for development, and wanted to, thus building a bridge between Italy and Europe and Latin America. IILA, together with the Italian development finance institution Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP), was proposing to the European Commission an initiative that focused on supporting MSMEs in the agri-food and agro-industrial chains, one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, to contribute to economic recovery in Latin America. That initiative could also have a gender focus, by fostering female entrepreneurship. To achieve that, the idea was to adopt blending financing that combined the two main financial components of international cooperation previously mentioned —non-reimbursable funds and concessional credit lines— and to add one more component: technical assistance to the recipient companies. The European Commission would provide CDP with a guarantee fund whose main purpose would be to reduce the interest rate and lending requirements of local banks, encouraging concessional credit lines to SMEs, which generally had difficulties accessing credit because of a lack of cash or equity

guarantees. CDP would act as a lender to local banks, so that they would receive new resources and, because they would be sharing the risk, mobilize their own resources. Technical assistance increased companies' chances of success, which in turn ensured loan repayment. Training was an activity that IILA had been carrying out for decades, which enabled experiences and good practices acquired in Italy to be shared with the region. In addition, the use of blending had several advantages: it reduced the importance of distinguishing between priority and non-priority countries, and the combination of funds and financial instruments could facilitate the entry of the private sector into development cooperation, either as a source of financing or as a recipient of credit.

The Knowledge Manager of the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) stated that the recently approved capitalization of her institution would allow it to continue strengthening its countercyclical and catalytic role through financial products and technical assistance to support sustainability in the region. In the periods of economic difficulty and adverse international financing situations, CAF had played an important role for all its member countries through rapid disbursement and freely available programmes. The most commonly used products were programme-based loans, sector-oriented loans with a wide reach, swaps and contingent lines of credit to provide liquidity. In response to the outbreak of the pandemic, CAF quickly made different financing and support alternatives available to the countries to favour economic recovery and mitigate the social impact of the crisis. Following the capitalization, the institution would maintain its agenda of financing economic and social infrastructure and regional integration, but would also expand its financing of non-sovereign risk operations, including the private sector. This related to three strategic lines of action: (i) climate change and environmental sustainability, and green business; (ii) equity, social inclusion and provision of public services; and (iii) economic recovery and increased productivity and competitiveness of the region's productive fabric. In addition to providing financing resources, CAF also helped its non-sovereign clients structure sustainable projects that met the highest environmental, social and governance standards, and provided technical cooperation to strengthen regulatory and institutional frameworks in the region. In terms of operations, there were also plans to expand support to subnational governments, which could result in a greater impact. Other instruments were related to participation in special funds that enabled mobilization of institutional investment resources, such as infrastructure funds, and the mobilization of co-financing from global funds to support countries in meeting their decarbonization commitments, as in the case of the Green Climate Fund. In closing, she highlighted the relationship of CAF with national and regional development banks. She said there was a convergence between those institutions' missions and the active role they played in governments' counter-cyclical policy in periods of liquidity restrictions, which made them perfect partners. During the pandemic, CAF supported the development banks of its member countries with resources to address the health emergency, assist vulnerable populations, finance enterprises (particularly MSMEs), and finance institutional strengthening initiatives. In addition to these programmes, CAF also provided facilities such as lines of credit and guarantees to development banks, as well as partial guarantees on debt issues. In short, CAF had a wide range of instruments with which to continue channelling resources and support to the private sector and member countries, not only through financing, but also through knowledge.

*Interactive dialogue with ministers of foreign affairs and high-level authorities of Latin America and the Caribbean on the contributions of development banks to the innovative financing agenda for recovery and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda*

This dialogue was moderated by Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), who highlighted some tasks in relation to the proposals made earlier: reclaiming the role of the United Nations and defending the importance of the agenda of developing countries in discussions on the international financial architecture; not allowing the conflict in Europe to

detract from development issues and the SDGs, which for developing countries are fundamental, and supporting the Secretary-General's agenda for measurements beyond GDP. She said that, if poor measurement continued, bad decisions would continue to be made; if two decades of progress in the region had been lost in 10 months of pandemic, it was because something was being measured incorrectly. It was necessary to have a say in all new instruments, gender bonds, green and blue bonds and social bonds, and for all of these to be transparent and subject to reporting and verification, in order to obtain the expected results from these innovative instruments.

At the onset of the crisis caused by the pandemic, the right decisions were made, but on the assumption that the crisis would be short-lived. Subsequently, other crises had continued to hit countries without systematic instruments to address them thoroughly. In that regard, the moderator mentioned decisions concerning some countries' non-payment of debt service, which translated into the accumulation of large amounts corresponding to overdue payments. She also mentioned decisions on debt restructuring, a modality undertaken by only three countries, which showed that it was not properly designed. There was also a need for another round of unconditional funding from the International Monetary Fund, since the pandemic was not over, and for capitalization of development banks, which did not exist at the time, since private financing would not be available without long-term public financing. Financing capacity had never been as significant as it was at the time, but it did not reach developing countries. All of these problems can be addressed if countries are able to bring a united voice to the world stage. Among other problems, she also mentioned the higher transportation costs faced by developing island countries and the effect on their inflation rates, as well as the inevitable looming food crisis. Finally, she said that there would be greater regionalization of trade, which would open up a real possibility of greater integration that the region must take advantage of. The countries of the region faced the possibility of a lost decade, putting at risk the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. However, that could be prevented and had to be the goal that united the countries.

In the ensuing discussion, a representative of Mexico expressed her country's agreement with the proposals put forward and stressed that multilateralism must prevail. She stressed the need to rethink the international financial architecture and appreciated the creation of new financing modalities, but emphasized that that was a long and complex process and that funds were of no use if they could not be accessed. She also mentioned the difficult situation of subnational authorities in that area. A representative of Cuba stated that the implementation of innovative mechanisms for the SDGs should target new and predictable resources, and should include aspects such as knowledge sharing and the transfer of environmentally sustainable technologies. He said that the sanctions imposed on Cuba increased the restrictions to access financing and for that reason the country would like to access new sources of financing to complement the national effort. The Premier of the British Virgin Islands, recognized Alicia Bárcena's tremendous leadership in helping the region to navigate the various challenges and crises experienced and keeping countries on track to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular her commitment to ensuring that ECLAC associate members received greater attention in the regional dialogue on sustainable development. He also said that until vulnerability was included in the eligibility criteria for development financing, Caribbean small island States would not have access to the funding support needed to recover from natural disasters and the pandemic and to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. The British Virgin Islands would greatly welcome technical assistance and services from a development bank, preferably CDB, to structure and issue catastrophe bonds and invest in other insurance instruments and economic risk mitigation products that would serve as a more prudent means of mitigating economic risk. A representative of the Centre for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) of Peru highlighted the importance of development banking in that country, which had made it possible to increase the benefits to the most vulnerable sectors in the context of the pandemic. He stressed that the information shared in that space was very valuable for his country, which was about to adopt the "Vision of Peru to 2050" plan, of which the SDGs were an important input.

In closing, the Chief of the Economic Development Division of ECLAC spoke about the financing needs and challenges of Latin American and Caribbean countries for the future. The region had found itself in a growth trap since before the pandemic: before 2019 it was growing at very low rates, the pandemic resulted in the worst contraction in the previous 100 years, in 2021 there was a recovery and in 2022 a slowdown was expected. The result would be another lost decade of growth. The great challenge was to boost growth so that it was green, environmentally sustainable and inclusive, which required changing countries' production structures and energy matrices, which in turn required significant investment efforts. In a context of low growth and an increasingly complex macroeconomic situation, financing needs were increasing dramatically and the region's ability to mobilize resources would be central to achieving a transformative recovery. In reviewing some of the central issues addressed during the day, which could outline a future work agenda, he highlighted three in particular: (i) the need to change the global financial architecture (financial systems had to return to their basic function of financing investment, not financial speculation); (ii) the development of innovative financing instruments (issuance of new types of bonds and generation of new methodologies or strategies) and (iii) the need for coordination and cooperation among global, regional and national banks (sometimes there was a perceived separation between them and greater coordination was needed to mobilize more resources).

Lastly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that the innovative financing agenda for economic recovery was an issue that had to be kept current and that the information produced by ECLAC was valuable for decision-making. Regional banks played a fundamental role and the times demanded modern mechanisms that placed citizens at the centre of their action.

### **Commemoration of International Women's Day**

The session was moderated by María-Noel Vaeza, Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The panellists were Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Epsy Campbell, Vice-President of Costa Rica, Erika Mouynes, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama, Jean Gough, Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carla Barnett, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Shi Alarcón, representative of Vecinas Feministas por la Justicia Sexual y Reproductiva en América Latina and member of the LGBTQI+ group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, Rosa Adriana López Carrillo, representative of RedTraSex of Guatemala and focal point of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, Elizabeth Gómez Alcorta, Minister for Women, Gender and Diversity of Argentina and Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The moderator said that without women, there could be no progress in the world or economic recovery. The aim of the session is therefore to explore options for increasing the recognition and enforcement of women's rights and putting them at the centre of recovery. She used the opportunity to call for peace in Ukraine and to stand in solidarity with Ukrainian and Russian women alike who were suffering in an unnecessary theatre of war and taking to the streets to demand an end to it. She also advocated greater participation by women in the judiciary, in the hope that this could change the direction of controversial rulings related to women's rights. She also called for the release of Nicaraguan women imprisoned for being feminists, remembered the women human rights and environmental defenders who had lost their lives in

the region in 2022, and called on countries to ratify ILO conventions concerning sexual harassment. Lastly, she paid tribute to the Executive Secretary of ECLAC —the existence of such a strong Regional Gender Agenda, the Commission’s active role in gender issues, and mechanisms for mainstreaming gender in public policies would be impossible had she not raised her voice to fight for those issues.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the post-pandemic recovery must overcome the four structural challenges relating to gender inequality, which have devastating effects on women and on society as a whole: socioeconomic inequality and poverty; the sexual division of labour and the unjust social organization of care; the concentration of power, patriarchal, discriminatory and violent cultural patterns and the culture of privilege. While the first line of response was overwhelmingly female, with women serving as health workers, teachers, caregivers, innovators and community leaders, too few women were leading countries and making decisions in the public sphere. Women spent three times as much time as men on unpaid domestic and care work, and estimates indicated that 1 in 2 women would be out of the labour force in 2022. Those who worked earned on average 11% less than men; 6 out of every 10 were employed in the sectors hardest hit by the crisis (trade, tourism and manufacturing) and 1 out of every 3 in the care economy sectors.

They were also subjected to the “shadow pandemic”, victims of violence, femicide and other abuses such as child marriage and early unions. The Executive Secretary argued that a change of era was at hand, requiring a profound transformation that recognized the linkages between the economy, society and the environment, and that would drive greater multilateral cooperation. Urgent progress was needed on new political, social and fiscal compacts and work towards a transformative recovery with gender equality and sustainability based on feminist principles of redistribution of power, resources and time, and the reduction of violence. Convinced that feminism could offer strategic solutions for overcoming asymmetries and halting environmental degradation, she called on everyone to take the path towards a care society.

The Vice-President of Costa Rica argued that it was necessary to develop new narratives and to put paid to the mentality by which the accumulated knowledge of women and communities was disregarded. She called for peace throughout the world, remembering the women of Ukraine and Afghanistan, as well as the women who protected the forests and who were being murdered regularly. Among the women who had inspired her, she acknowledged famous activists like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and the 129 women who died on 8 March 1908, as well as the women who defied the patriarchy and whose revolution was carried out on the home front; women like her grandmother, an unsung heroine, and the nameless women and girls leading the fight against biodiversity loss worldwide. Lastly, she insisted on the need to create egalitarian spaces for decision-making, not only in governments, but also in all United Nations governing bodies, for great revolutions could also be sparked when women started to reclaim the spaces in which they lived and worked.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama spoke of the responsibility incumbent on all to act to bring about change. First, it was necessary to recognize the situation in the region: gender violence was a veiled pandemic, but more than 4,000 women were victims of femicide every year, and teenage pregnancy was prevalent. Second, there was a need to speak out in one voice. In that regard, she commended and congratulated women’s and feminist organizations for their constant efforts in the fight against violence and anachronistic privileges. Third, what mattered most was taking action, with collective commitment and coherence between rhetoric and action. She argued that it was pointless to have trained women who had no opportunities for paid employment and referred to Panama’s Equal Opportunities for Women Action Plan which aimed to promote women’s employment in public positions. She hoped that similar initiatives would be implemented in other countries and said that another generation could not be lost; the time had come for the future with gender parity to begin.

The Director of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNICEF drew on two actual cases to describe the status of the rights of girls and adolescents in the region. One illustrated the difficulties of access to education during the pandemic, while the other showed the rise in inequality experienced by girls and adolescents during the pandemic, owing to the upsurge in child marriage, sexual violence, unavailability of sexual and reproductive health services, unwanted pregnancies and transmission of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, poverty and hunger. She said that a generation of girls and adolescents must not be burdened with the cost of the pandemic for the rest of their lives: their voices must be heard and they must be made visible in statistics. Investment in their education and access to health was crucial and they must be put at the centre of policies to ensure that they lived in security, grew up with climate justice and had a say in the decisions affecting them.

The Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said that International Women's Day was a celebration of women's important contributions and tireless service at home in communities; despite progress in gender equality, much needed to be done. She paid tribute to Mia Mottley, the only woman Head of Government in the region and first female Prime Minister of Barbados, recipient of 2021 Champion of the Earth award and an outstanding example for women and girls of the region. For the Caribbean, it was urgent to decisively chart the path toward sustainable development and ensure the restructuring of social, political and economic systems so women and men had an equal stake and say. Insecurity, governance deficits and climate-related and other hazards were not gender neutral, as inequalities caused by socioeconomic, cultural and other factors put women at a disadvantage: post-disaster mortality rates were often higher among women and girls than men and boys. While data on COVID-19 deaths showed that death rates were higher for men, women were also affected as they accounted for over 70% of front-line workers. The pandemic had also worsened women's already-low participation in the CARICOM labour market (women had lost jobs at twice the rate of men). However women had been resourceful and innovative during adversity, finding ways to keep children engaged in education. Governments and other stakeholders must take into account the pandemic's impact on women and men in designing gender responsive and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery policies. Female-headed households, which accounted for approximately 40% of households in the Caribbean, were larger, more vulnerable to loss of livelihood in aftermath of disaster and experienced greater difficulty re-entering labour market. Gender equality was cross-cutting in all priority integration issues in CARICOM (single market, food and nutrition security, zone of peace, strengthening security) and success would mean women and men were included in key decision-making processes at all levels. She extended her personal regards to Executive Secretary of ECLAC: a professional ally and friend of the Caribbean who would be missed, and who would understand that as region sought to build back on equal footing, it would find its voice and redefine its place, in the Caribbean and Latin American region. She thanked the United Nations for its support and reiterated the continued commitment of CARICOM to not just build back better but also build back equal.

The representative of Vecinas Feministas por la Justicia Sexual y Reproductiva en América Latina and member of the LGBTQI+ group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development expressed civil society's concern at the economic stagnation and the worsening of all social, environmental and labour indicators in the region, as well as the expansion of authoritarian and dictatorial proposals on public policy by various governments in the region, leading to setbacks in human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. The data showed that institutions were being instrumentalized to criminalize women human rights defenders and that there was a lack of response to the violence, injustice and persecution experienced by women in all their diversity. She also condemned the fact that social policies aimed at prevention and care were the first to be cut and that institutions established to protect the rights of women and diverse populations were under threat. She rejected the established narratives that controlled women's bodies, the patriarchal justice that resorted to using technicalities to dismiss the daily

violence against women, and the lack of climate justice. Lastly, she said that combating the culture of privilege required educating people with a gendered, non-discriminatory and intersectional perspective, and that feminists and women in all their diversity would continue to fight to achieve those goals.

The representative of RedTraSex of Guatemala and focal point of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development welcomed the occasion to commemorate working women, many of whom had not been covered by the social protection measures in response to the pandemic. She called on all countries to adopt protective measures to reduce gender violence, invest in prevention, response and free legal assistance, end impunity and comply with commitments on the eradication of violence and harassment. She also called for mechanisms that provided data on all forms of violence against women and girls and ensured their participation in the use of data and resources. She also referred to megaprojects and militarization in communities and indigenous peoples, which affected indigenous girls, young people and women, and demanded that States fully assume their responsibility to guarantee human, civil and labour rights, and that reparations be paid through the regulation and control of the operations of all companies, including multinationals. Lastly, she urged states to stop criminalizing sex work, to avoid forcing women into hands of the underworld, and pressed for truth and justice in relation to the murders of sex workers perpetrated in Peru in February 2022.

The Minister for Women, Gender and Diversity of Argentina said that her country would host the fifteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would address the theme of care, in November 2022. She said that the Conference and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development were spaces conducive to building a shared political narrative, addressing key issues to achieve sustainable development with redistribution and, most importantly, equality, and exchanging frank views on the challenges to gender equality. It was necessary to adopt radical policies to dismantle the structural bases of gender inequality and work towards building care societies in which care work was recognized and remunerated, and where the right to provide and receive care was guaranteed. A cross-cutting approach to those issues was required in all regional discussions, as they were not the exclusive concern of ministries of women's affairs. She concluded expressing the hope that the conclusions of the Forum would be followed up at the Regional Conference in Argentina in November.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations said that International Women's Day was an opportunity to mark progress, identify the road forward, and renew commitment to gender equality as the strong foundation needed to achieve SDGs; it was only with women and girls at centre of efforts that current and pressing global challenges could best be addressed. The Regional Gender Agenda charted an ambitious path and reflected Member States' commitments, thanks to efforts of women's and feminist civil society in the region. Recent gains for women's rights and parity in some countries and the wider region gave hope. She recognized the work of Alicia Bárcena as Executive Secretary, a powerful voice for women's leadership everywhere, whose commitment and innovative proposals had made an important contribution to advancing gender equality. The year 2022 celebrated the contribution and sacrifices of women and girls leading efforts for women's rights for a more sustainable and climate-resilient future, often at risk of their own safety. Latin America and the Caribbean had shown the world it was possible to collectively build a roadmap for inclusive development but great challenges to achieving gender equality remained. The pandemic had deepened inequality, negatively affected women's rights and autonomy, and increased their burden of care, causing immeasurable setbacks world could ill afford with eight years left to implement the 2030 Agenda. Achieving a world that was equal and sustainable would require accelerated effort and innovation from all stakeholders and intensified efforts to reverse inequalities of all kinds. She called on all to recommit energies to achieving true and irreversible gender equality because everyone benefited when women had the opportunity to lead.

**Panel 1: From development in transition to development for action:  
towards renewed international development cooperation**

Panel 1 was introduced by Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica and moderated by Christian Guillermet-Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica. After some remarks by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, a presentation was given by Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC. The panellists were Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); E. Paul Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration of Antigua and Barbuda; Abdunnasser Al-Shaali, Assistant Minister for Economic and Trade Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Economic Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates; Niels Annen, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany; Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir, Director of the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Jolita Butkeviciene, Director for Latin America and the Caribbean and Relations with all Overseas Countries and Territories of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission; Karla de Palma, General Director of the El Salvador Agency for International Cooperation (ESCO); Enrique O’Farrill, Head of the Cooperation Division of the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AGCID); Sergio Colina Martín, Head of the Department of Cooperation with Andean and Southern Cone Countries of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID); and Walter Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA).

In his introduction, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that given the effects of the pandemic in the region, it was imperative that the multilateral response fully address the needs of developing countries. It was time to take action, and that must be done taking into account the different vulnerabilities and the multidimensional nature of development. Development in transition, a concept developed by ECLAC, the European Commission and the OECD Development Centre, should be understood as a positive path that strengthened countries’ development efforts through new instruments that were not necessarily financial and that supported regional and national strategies through channels such as technical assistance, knowledge transfer and adaptation of good practices, as well as formation of human capital. In that context, Costa Rica had promoted the creation of a multidimensional poverty index that sought to more accurately determine countries’ needs and thus make decisions and take actions tailored to their well-being. Meetings such as the one being held, at which national views and experiences were exchanged, were the first step towards achieving a coherent and powerful discourse for the region, to be heard by the international community with specific proposals and viable evidence-based solutions.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC, before giving the floor to the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC for his presentation, said a few words about the origin of the concept of transitional development, which ECLAC had developed together with the European Commission and the OECD Development Centre in response to concerns about the situation of middle-income countries when they graduated from official development assistance. She thanked the panellists for their contributions and called on more stakeholders to join the process, stressing the need to change the paradigm of cooperation.

The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC gave a presentation in which he outlined the main priorities and actions for the post-pandemic period from the point of view of development in transition. He reviewed the process by which this concept had been born: the graduation of the first countries in Latin America and the Caribbean; the various impacts of the 2008 crisis, which cast light on structural vulnerabilities and challenges; and the awareness among the countries of the region and the European Union of the need to rethink the graduation framework, taking into account existing vulnerabilities. The challenges of graduation



of middle-income countries needed to be addressed, given their risk of exclusion from the international cooperation system; Concessional development financing was essential for those countries, and especially those with smaller economies. The concept of development in transition also offered a platform for dialogue for renewed cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean that went beyond GDP and took into account the needs and strengths of the countries in the region. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic made discussions of development in transition even more urgent. Asymmetries were even reflected in the vaccination process, which the existing development and cooperation model could not contribute to. Cooperation and the multilateral financial architecture needed to be rethought from the bottom up. The priorities for the post-pandemic period, in the area of development in transition, should be to guarantee resources for recovery (debt relief was fundamental) and to move towards an international financial system for development, as well as to build partnerships based on the targets of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, whose indicators already constituted a multidimensional framework to guide cooperation priorities. The required cooperation instruments must take into account the local dimension, especially with regard to productivity and social vulnerability, but also the regional dimension, in order to strengthen cooperation between countries and common positions in multilateral forums. A rights-based approach was needed; along with rules, standards and policy dialogue at the global level; partnerships that facilitated productive integration, access to new technologies and creation of decent jobs; and new indicators that took into account the various dimensions of economic, social and environmental well-being.

The panellists noted that development in transition was related, on one hand, to a weak link between income and non-monetary variables and, on the other, to the fact that as income levels increased, it was more difficult to access financing to move forward with development. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean the model was based on factor accumulation and a move was needed to a model based on productivity, innovation and a better allocation of resources. However, to carry out this transition institutions had to adapt, creating the right conditions. Countries that broke out of the middle-income trap and managed to move to a higher income level tended to have better governance indicators: less corruption, more trustworthy judiciaries, greater transparency and greater participation by civil society. Multilateralism could help in that transition to action. Instruments such as loans, cooperation or international agreements could balance power asymmetries between elites and citizens and create alternative spaces for dispute resolution, create coalitions for change that led to agreements between stakeholders. If such structural change was achieved, it would create the conditions for many of the other transitions.

It was time to rethink cooperation and drive sustainable recovery globally. The economy and society must become more sustainable in economic, ecological and social terms. Latin America and the Caribbean played a particular role in that regard; environmental protection in the region was essential for global climate change mitigation. For the Caribbean, instead of an abrupt graduation, a “gradation” was advocated, to ease economies into their new status. A more relevant metric for access to concessional finance than per capita GNI was the concept of internal resilience capacity, that captured the structural and vulnerability factors that often constrained growth and development. CDB had designed a “recovery duration adjuster”, which took into account the duration to recovery, a more appropriate and equitable measure for classifying countries for access to concessional finance. The United Nations should work closely with CDB to develop a resilience framework that was more equitable and appropriate for countries facing structural problems, exogenous shocks, and much longer periods of recovery. Graduation from official development assistance undermined access to transfer of knowledge, good practices and technical standards. Transitional support was needed, with renegotiated economic policy agreements, such as preferential trade agreements. To produce an accurate vulnerability index for the Caribbean, there must be relevant data, and investment in and upgrading of statistical institutes was a major contributor to development. Initiatives should also be developed to reduce the debt burden of Caribbean economies and increase fiscal space, such as the Caribbean Resilience Fund. It was also noted that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had a genuine

commitment to help lift countries out of debt or income traps. About one-third of the funds allocated over the preceding five years by UAE had been focused on achieving economic growth; UAE had also worked to encourage entrepreneurship as a path to economic growth. The regional focus of UAE cooperation had shifted from the Middle East and Africa to as many regions as possible.

Germany, meanwhile, maintained a successful cooperation partnership with ECLAC, supporting Latin American and Caribbean countries in diversifying their economic models and shaping them to be resilient and environmentally friendly. Positive cooperation among the European Union, the OECD Development Centre and ECLAC would also continue. Recent work on adapting the OECD well-being framework to Latin American and Caribbean countries had been a step forward. OECD had also analysed data availability to identify areas in need of investment in statistical capacity. Several countries in the region had requested OECD support to put the development in transition approach into practice, and some European countries had also agreed on the need to update their cooperation with the region, applying the development in transition approach. The European Union, in its renewed commitment to Latin America and the Caribbean, sought an effective partnership based on shared interests and challenges. Climate change, the digital divide and human development challenges were among the priorities of both regions. There were several initiatives, strategies and investments at the European level focused on these aspects and aimed at the region. By strengthening their ties, the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean could foster a fairer, greener, more sustainable and shared future.

All stakeholders needed to be included in the search for a common solution, and new tools and modalities. In that regard, South-South and triangular cooperation were important. In 2020, the El Salvador Agency for International Cooperation (ESCO) had been created. El Salvador sought to be a point of reference for other countries and contribute to strengthening synergies and overlaps among national priorities and strategies. Through the dual role of both receiving and providing cooperation, the country had undertaken joint actions that translated into specific advantages for the populations. It was important for the region to move toward a results-based evaluation approach and have quantifiable data to serve as a basis for designing and prioritizing interventions. Chile also played a dual role in cooperation, and the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AGCID) had made efforts to foster international discussions on countries' development and graduation, supporting the concept of development in transition since it was first conceived. Development in transition was not a concept from outside the region; it was a framework of analysis that proposed restoring the multidimensional nature of development needs for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals; it was therefore applicable to all countries, regardless of their income level. In addition to mechanisms and modalities of cooperation, the region needed to seek consensus and speak with one voice on the need to renew international cooperation to achieve more inclusive and sustainable development for all its inhabitants.

The draft bill on cooperation for sustainable development and global solidarity that had been approved by Spain's Council of Ministers in January 2022 referred expressly to the development in transition agenda. The draft focused on multidimensionality, intersectionality and the rights approach, with a focus on gender gaps, the environmental dimension and the most vulnerable groups. Spain's cooperation programmes were not governed by macroeconomic visions of development, but rather by a down-to-earth approach, with a clear focus on global and regional public goods, a commitment to South-South and triangular cooperation, a solid technical dimension anchored in innovation, and a strong emphasis on equality and inclusion. The major transformations that the world was undergoing had reshaped the challenges faced by the countries of the region in their transition to development and had highlighted the need to build a new approach to international cooperation to support development objectives. Regional cooperation was one of the assets of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, but progress in that area had been modest. When renewing the focus of international cooperation, the aim should therefore be to strengthen integration and

maximize the use of its dividends. To strengthen this new vision of international cooperation and contribute to overcoming development traps, instruments and solutions needed to reflect national development needs and priorities and link them with international strategies; higher levels of well-being must be sought and human capital variables must be monitored; there should be impact evaluation mechanisms for international cooperation, fostering its innovation and effectiveness, and the concept of cooperation should be broadened, going beyond financing and adding actions relating to technology transfer, policy dialogue and research and development.

In his concluding remarks, the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC said he hoped that international cooperation would be the subject of ongoing discussion in view of the situation that the world would face over the coming years. Large economies were changing social cooperation and their budgets by shifting resources from welfare budgets to military budgets. That would have major repercussions for international cooperation. If Latin America and the Caribbean did not acknowledge and discuss the issue as a region, regardless of political position, it would not be able to overcome the situation in which it found itself. ECLAC would continue to work with its partners, but very hard times were ahead and much more than rhetoric was needed.

### **Panel 2: Statistical, quantitative and territorial monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals**

Panel 2 was moderated by Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC. The presentation of CEPALSTAT and the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway) was given by Rolando Ocampo, Chief of the Statistics Division of ECLAC. The panellists were Marco Lavagna, Director of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina, in his capacity as Chair of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC; Carol Coy, Director General of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN); Juan Daniel Oviedo, Director General of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia; Graciela Márquez Colín, President of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico; Luciana Mermet, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in the Plurinational State of Bolivia; and Christian Guillermet Fernández, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica.

The Chief of the Statistics Division of ECLAC described how statistical information for monitoring progress on the SDGs was organized and presented in CEPALSTAT and the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway), created by the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to monitor the 2030 Agenda. He gave a brief overview of the gradual development of those tools, highlighting the creation of the Regional Knowledge Platform in 2019 and the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020, as well as the update of CEPALSTAT in 2021 that included a geoportal, enabling visualization and monitoring of all the indicators of the 169 SDG targets. In each case, he outlined the type of data the platform collected, the data sources and how it could be viewed. In the case of CEPALSTAT, he said that the data was open, interoperable, integrated and comparable, allowing information to be viewed in relation to the territory, in accordance with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere.

In their statements, the panellists said that the presented platforms were powerful tools for decision-making based on SDG monitoring, that enabled visualization of where the countries stood, where they were going, what the regional differences were; the platforms represented a meeting point for the countries. The inclusion of national and regional profiles combined some of the most important indicators into a single

view, providing valuable information for specialists and proper information for the common citizen. In those times of reconstruction of development models, statistics had become a priority, but the discussion on the concept of development in transition showed that progress was needed on forms of measurement, to have more precise measurements, for example at the subnational level. That could only be achieved by building the capacities of statistical offices.

The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC had already discussed the challenges of measurement in the context of development in transition, in a process that would allow a shift from development in transition to development for action, based on information such as that presented by the platforms. The innovations included in the Regional Knowledge Platform were steps in the right direction, as they did not only focus on production and supply of data, but also moved towards information for action, making the platform a space for collaboration.

The panellists mentioned several areas on which to focus future efforts: coordination of methodologies and training programmes, not only for statistical offices, but also for other national and subnational entities, to apply statistical best practices; data exchange agreements, which related to regulations, protocols, forms of protection, anonymization and data governance; use of administrative records; and the need to work within the framework of the concept of national data systems, which included private organizations and civil society.

From the perspective of the Caribbean, the regional profile could be broken down into Latin America and the Caribbean, as regional representation mostly represented Latin America because of the wide disparity in size between Caribbean and Latin American countries. ECLAC should lead strengthening of national statistical systems in the subregion to improve statistical capacity not just in national statistical offices but actually in line ministries, which were an important source of data for SDGs. Dialogue with countries should increase regarding the indicators on the platform because there were some indicators which were available but not included in the platform.

In the ensuing discussion, representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Guatemala described initiatives being carried out by those countries in the area of statistics and the progress made. In the case of the former, mention was also made of the challenge posed by traditional mechanisms not measuring efforts made by the country in the context of coercive measures, through subsidies and various social programmes and investments.

### **Panel 3: Natural disasters and the asymmetry of climate change in the Caribbean**

Panel 3 was introduced by Charles Hernández, Deputy Director of Foreign Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, and moderated by Diane Quarless, Chief of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. The panellists were E. Paul Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration of Antigua and Barbuda, Ashni K. Singh, Minister of Finance of Guyana, Rodolfo Sabonge, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Keisal Peters, Minister of State with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Carla Barnett, Secretary General of CARICOM, Wayne Henry, Chairman and Director General of the Planning Institute of Jamaica, Lindorna Lambert, Financial Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management of Montserrat, Katia Avilés-Vázquez, representative of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, Raúl Salazar, Chief of the Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and Yannick Glemarec, Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

The Deputy Director of Foreign Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that every year, small island developing States, many of them in the Caribbean, faced the onslaught of nature and climate change, which was evident every hurricane and tropical storm season and which was capable of generating human and material losses that set back their development. He then gave the floor to the moderator to begin the segment on natural disasters and the asymmetry of climate change in the Caribbean, which would address precisely those challenges.

The moderator said that the panel, which was devoted to the consideration of the unique challenges facing the countries of the subregion, was an integral expression of the ECLAC “Caribbean first” initiative. It underscored the resolve of ECLAC to explore in depth the critical issues undermining the development trajectory of the Caribbean and afforded the widest consideration of the strategic response to address those concerns. Natural disasters were one of the issues central to the multidimensional vulnerability of the Caribbean. In 2021, as the subregion struggled to cope with the impact of COVID-19, it experienced the full range of natural shocks. Finding the best way to mitigate and moderate their impact by planning for and investing in resilience had to be at the heart of an effective sustainable development strategy for the subregion. However, that was a tall order for middle-income countries largely ineligible for concessional financing and confronting persistently low growth, declining official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment while shouldering high and growing levels of indebtedness, facing a less than sympathetic international financial environment. The panel would discuss how best to recommend to governments of the Caribbean, with the support of the regional and international communities, strategies to meaningfully and practically enhance the resilience of the subregion. To add to those imperatives, the resilience of national institutions and the production capacity of the subregion had to be strengthened.

The panellists noted that climate change had the capacity to undermine future development and prosperity in the Caribbean subregion, and that intervention was needed in three areas: biodiversity, water scarcity and the impact of climate change on the tourism sector. Two critical imperatives were thus raised: addressing the debt overhang resulting from the inherent vulnerability of Caribbean SIDS and addressing the need to diversify the productive sector into activities that ensured greater climate resilience, which required heavy investment in technology and human capital. The way forward entailed a greater focus on comprehensive disaster risk management to address the root causes of vulnerability to disasters and climate change in the subregion; increasing public awareness of climate change and its impacts and promoting changes in social behaviour; greater collaboration among intergovernmental organizations, regional governments, the scientific community, businesses and communities to understand complex risk patterns and make informed risk management decisions; continued development of market-based solutions, such as parametric insurance to protect against extreme weather events and weather-related losses; and greater multilateral cooperation to finance climate adaptation and build adaptation capabilities in the region. The asymmetries that characterized climate change and disasters in the Caribbean were mirrored in the asymmetrical and disproportionate effect that disasters and climate change had on the vulnerable and on women and girls.

Although the Caribbean had made tremendous strides in pursuing the SDGs and its subregional agenda, the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS, especially to climate change, had too often stalled, reversed or discounted those gains. Climate change was an existential threat to the Caribbean people; therefore, actions had to be sustained to hold major emitters accountable and push for change beneficial to all States, particularly the most affected. A key strategic framework was needed to achieve countries’ adaptation goals. The subregion’s efforts to build resilience had been undermined by the slow progress of the international community to deliver on its outstanding economic commitment to counter climate change. Institutions such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) had been instrumental in supporting and supplementing national efforts in countering natural disasters which had become more frequent and intense due to climate change. To address the Caribbean’s vulnerability, there was need of: (i) an enabling

environment to facilitate the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation in the planning, budgeting and implementation processes by strengthening governance structures to enhance synergies between adaptation and disaster risk reduction, including the identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and communication of adaptation actions; (ii) improved capacity for data and information collection, management and sharing to determine climatic risk and access to technology and financing for adaptation and (iii) adaptation actions to ensure increased resilience of the most vulnerable members of the population. The Green Climate Fund's approach to supporting green resilient recovery from COVID-19 included helping to establish a supportive environment for climate action, catalysing climate innovation, de-risking transformative projects to attract private finance and aligning finance with sustainable development.

It was important to have a multidimensional vulnerability index and access to concessional financing; some countries lack access to donors, whose agendas often clashed with national agendas. Lack of data and poor technical capacity had to be addressed for evidence-based decision-making and solutions. There was also a need for better data sharing. Proactive regional initiatives had been taken in several areas, such as risk management, food security and pooled procurement of medicines during the pandemic. Investment decisions, especially regarding post-COVID-19 recovery, must incorporate sustainable initiatives. Investment must also be resilient and look at how to protect infrastructure and integrate private-sector know-how. There was also a need for better understanding of risks. At the national level, it is vital to ensure that all ministries worked together to build resilience. From the civil society perspective, government responses had prioritized economic rights, while human rights were eroded and basic needs unmet in the aftermath of disaster. Those bearing the brunt of effects of climate change were being left behind. Participants called for a climate fund and the inclusion of hurricane clauses in loans, debt relief and debt cancellation.

The science was clear about the effects of climate change. There would be real impacts of rising sea levels on low-lying States and small island developing States (SIDS), particularly on critical infrastructure (in sectors that sustained livelihoods) which made it urgent to take tangible action to avoid a roll-back in development. The region had contributed the least to climate change, but was the most vulnerable to it, and bore a disproportionate debt burden. Developed countries had to reduce greenhouse gases, as the development agenda and climate agenda were two sides of the same coin. International cooperation in areas such as technology and debt relief was vital; greater stakeholder investment in climate resilience was also key. Multiple threats or hazards or the "layering of crises" and their impacts heightened the need for comprehensive disaster risk management and inclusion of disaster risk in recovery plans. The region had a unique opportunity to incorporate green solutions and innovation in recovery.

In the ensuing discussion, the asymmetries and severity of the climate crisis were recognized and a call was made to all the countries of the region to demand, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2022 (COP27), specific financial resources for loss and damage. Caribbean countries faced extreme natural disasters with devastating consequences for entire communities and even if humanitarian aid flowed to these communities, it only flowed for a few weeks and access to resources from green funds involved an entrenched bureaucracy that meant the process took years with no guarantee of success. Therefore, a united front had to be presented at COP27. It was pointed out that the industrialized countries were largely responsible for climate change and that their actions had a negative impact on the region, especially in the Caribbean. Climate change would continue to have an impact on the quantity and intensity of climate phenomena, and to materialize in the form of droughts, floods, hurricanes, landslides, temperature increases and other phenomena that would cause, among other things, crop failures, displacement of production areas, water shortages, increased risk of transmission of water-borne diseases and their vectors, reduced energy production potential and loss of critical ecosystems. The costs of inaction far outweighed the effects that these phenomena would have on the territories and populations of the region. Given their nature and dimensions, it was important for natural hazards to be addressed with a multilateral approach, and for the

specific needs and challenges faced by the Caribbean countries to continue to be addressed in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Transformative recovery for resilient, inclusive and sustainable development in the Caribbean was a vital issue that could no longer wait and would require double the effort and international support in order to bridge gaps and strengthen resilience to exogenous shocks, such as those produced by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. It was essential to include climate change and natural disaster statistics in national statistical systems and to integrate different sources of data on the subject. In that regard, the efforts being made around the world to establish indicators and measurements under international standards to measure the degree of vulnerability of countries and their ability to adapt and comply with the requirements established in different international agendas were important. Emphasis was placed on the role of the inter-agency framework in addressing disaster risks with a prevention, mitigation and adaptation approach which constantly placed the preservation of human welfare and ecosystems at its centre.

**Panel 4: Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for sustainable recovery:  
challenges and opportunities for Latin America and the Caribbean**

Panel 4 was moderated by Jeannette Sánchez, Chief of the Natural Resources Division of ECLAC. The panellists were Franklin Paniagua Alfaro, Deputy Minister for the Environment of Costa Rica; Brigitte Baptiste, Chancellor of Universidad Ean in Colombia; Amelia Arreguín Prado, member of the Convention on Biological Diversity Women’s Caucus; Esther Camac Ramírez, leader of the Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA) in Costa Rica; Eva Zabey, Executive Director of Business for Nature; Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Global Environment Facility (GEF); Luis Miguel Aparicio, Head of Sustainable Landscapes for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI); Ana María Hernández Salgar, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); and Piedad Martín, Deputy Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Closing remarks were made by Joseluis Samaniego, Chief of the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC.

The moderator said that the prevailing context was singular, as the world was experiencing an unresolved severe health crisis, a long-standing environmental crisis, and a very delicate recent political crisis owing to the military conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. What those three crises had in common was that they forced contemplation of the fact that the survival of civilization was at stake, so mechanisms needed to be found to sustain life. In that context, biodiversity was fundamental, as it was the basis of the food supply and ecosystem services that allowed humanity to exist. Although the enormous biodiversity of the region was one of its main features, governments often had a negative relationship with nature, without properly linking the present with the long term. In the private sector and civil society, there were good practices, but also lessons that had not been learned and mistakes that were repeated, such as overexploitation of resources, pollution and acidification of marine ecosystems, and deforestation. The targets of the 2030 Agenda were not being achieved because of factors such as insufficient resources being dedicated to environment, an incipient and incomplete environmental institutional framework, and weak governance in most of the countries of the region. The aim of the panel was therefore to discuss, based on the experiences of governments, agencies, the private sector and civil society, how to identify opportunities and address these challenges.

The main message that emerged from the panellists’ statements was that biodiversity loss directly resulted in loss of human well-being: biodiversity loss was usually associated with phenomena such as climate change, desertification and pollution, but it is also with problems in the areas of poverty, health, education

and development. For example, the disappearance of pollinators would affect food production —there was therefore a need to do away with the idea that biodiversity conservation was a completely separate area from food production— and environmental degradation would increase vulnerability to weather events and diseases —zoonotic diseases that could lead to pandemics arose from poor interaction between humans and the natural environment. Investing in conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature contributed to management of those risks.

Data indicated that the Aichi Biodiversity Targets had not been met by the deadline (2020) and that there was a clear risk that the targets of the 2030 Agenda would not be met either. To avoid this, it was necessary, firstly, to recognize what was being done wrong. There were five direct drivers of biodiversity loss (land and ocean use change, species exploitation, climate change, pollution and the introduction of invasive alien species), but underlying these were root causes: social values and behaviour, and a desire for individual accumulation of wealth. It was becoming increasingly difficult to talk about planetary sustainability while humanity competed individually for resources. It had become clear that decision-makers are unaware of the Convention on Biological Diversity or the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and did not know what biodiversity was or understand the crucial role it played in sustaining life on the planet. Therefore, one possible action was to communicate and educate —both decision-makers and society in general— to put biodiversity at the centre of development policies.

No economic fund would be sufficient to close the financial gaps that prevented countries from meeting their environmental commitments. The aim of funds such as the Global Environment Facility was to help generate long-term public policy that was consistent with those commitments, something that had not been achieved to date anywhere, as all countries continue to foster investment in economic activities that contributed to climate change and biodiversity loss. In fact, such activities were allocated 50 to 150 times more resources than biodiversity protection and climate change mitigation. It was also in countries' own interest to learn to mobilize their domestic financial resources more efficiently, with budget management that enabled it to be known exactly what was allocated to conservation of natural capital. Governments must understand that natural capital could not continue to be destroyed, as it was life and health insurance for the economy and for citizens, and must be properly and seriously managed, as was done with other types of capital.

The model on which extractivist countries were based was exhausted and, in order to chart a different course, green accounts needed to be established to reorient budgets and economic activities. It was also necessary to encourage private sector participation through capacity-building at the local level and support to MSMEs in business planning, market knowledge, opportunities, creation of incubators and green business accelerators. For large companies, it was essential to establish tax incentives and mechanisms that recognized investment in areas related to conservation and restoration of ecosystems. In addition, there was a need to ensure that investments did not undermine biodiversity, to reform regulations, and to conduct ex ante and ex post assessments of such investments. International cooperation was also important for mobilizing resources, reorienting investments with a long-term perspective, and supporting the development of guidelines and indicator frameworks that rewarded compliance with conservation goals. Protecting, restoring and sustainably using nature needed to become the default business decision. Indigenous peoples and local communities were the real custodians of biodiversity, the population as a whole had much to learn on protecting, restoring and respecting nature. Aside from business, political leadership and policy ambition were required, because political certainty could drive business innovation and investment. To engage in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework businesses needed to: understand that nature loss was a risk to their interests, but also an opportunity; have ways to engage with the complex process and take responsibility for successful implementation of the framework; and have



confidence that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework would be impactful and translate into national legislation that levelled the corporate playing field.

One of the most frequently repeated reflections among the panellists was the need to work together from the different decision-making spaces. Institutional reforms could integrate sectors, break down barriers between the different ministries and achieve better coordination, including between national and subnational governments, in order to improve land-use planning and management. Governments were called on to promote ongoing work, dialogue and links among different bodies—for example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)—to establish a coherent framework for biodiversity protection. In that regard, reference was made to the need to work on target 17.14 (enhance policy coherence for sustainable development), which should guide the pursuit of all other 2030 Agenda targets, ensuring long-term investments, efficient budget allocation and the effective participation by different stakeholders.

Governments and society were urged to listen to local, campesino and indigenous communities, who had knowledge related to the care and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources and who knew what was happening in the territory, where conflicts arose but were also resolved. Attention was drawn to those communities' warning that the prevailing economic model was irrational, seeking unbridled economic growth without recognizing planetary limits and leading to degradation of ecosystems and of living conditions, but also to social breakdowns and the rise of nationalist movements that questioned democratic systems.

In the ensuing discussion, the country representatives said that compliance with the SDGs would come largely from the territories, from local governments. They therefore stressed the importance of having strong municipalities in order to have strong countries. Territorial planning would be fundamental for there to be: (i) territories that were resilient to climate change, with good risk management; (ii) green territories that conserved forests and biodiversity, with intelligent management of access to water; and (iii) competitive territories that attracted investment, created job opportunities and become development hubs. Conservation of biological diversity was a priority, and the proper management of biodiversity was an indispensable tool for poverty reduction and progress towards a just, sustainable and inclusive recovery. Sustainable, resilient, just and green reconstruction would be made possible by implementing projects that addressed needs such as biodiversity recovery and conservation, soil restoration and recovery, and by applying climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. One example of this type of initiative was sustainable agriculture and wood pasture systems. Sustainable wood pasture farming techniques prevented land degradation, promoted soil and ecosystem conservation and restoration, reduced drying up of water sources, and promoted mitigation through carbon capture and storage. Such systems also improved food security and plant and livestock quality, prevented contamination of water bodies, and brought health to communities. Indigenous peoples and communities, for their part, become custodians of nature thanks to their extensive traditional knowledge. Attention was drawn to the relative growing discrepancy between the international agreements and consensus that countries signed and adopted and certain domestic policies that were in conflict with environmental preservation. It was vital for discussions on preservation of the environment and the effects of climate change to address the issue of sector policies related to the economic activities that polluted the most, or that contributed the most to deforestation or desertification, being aligned with international agreements.

In his closing remarks, the Chief of the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC said that there was a clear desire for change, but that the path was not being found. It was important for solutions to be sustainable and not to create new problems. Agroforestry systems were an important good alternative, since they had many advantages: they were more productive, provided employment and regenerated nature. The bioeconomy, wood pasture farming and sustainable fisheries were economic

alternatives that needed to be further developed. It was essential to count properly: Mexico was the only country in the region that measured ecological domestic product (it had included accounting of degradation and depletion of natural capital in the 1990s). If policies could be harmonized and the right measurement could begin, it would be possible to educate, raise awareness and measure the effectiveness of changes to incentives. When counting, it was crucial, for example, to determine how much net environmental spending was being invested in economies and to record the contributions of the different communities. Work was required to integrate national and international policies, interlinking ministries of finance and other productive and environmental ministries, as well as the different levels of government (national government and local authorities) and communities. Incentives and disincentives (penalties) must be created for the private sector, but to be able to penalize destructive companies, measurement was needed. Lastly, he referred to the issue of national targets and deadlines and said that the prevailing system was not leading to a good place.

**Panel 5: Education and gender equality: human rights central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Panel 5 was moderated by Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC. Panellists included Claudia Uribe, Director of the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALAC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Marcela Guerrero, Minister for the Status of Women and Executive President of the National Women's Institute (INAMU) of Costa Rica, María-Noel Vaeza, Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of UN-Women, María Carmelina Londoño, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Nadine Gasman, President of the National Institute of Women (INMUJERES) of Mexico, Lucy Garrido, Articulación Feminista Marcosur and Nora González Chacón, focal point of the education, science and technology group of the mechanism for civil society participation in the Sustainable Development Agenda and in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. Closing remarks were made by Ana Güzemes, Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC.

The Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC described the effects of the pandemic in terms of exacerbation of gender inequality and setbacks in education. It was a prolonged health crisis, not an emergency, with effects on poverty, inequality, unemployment, labour informality and education that would be difficult to reverse. The crisis offered a historic opportunity to rethink and restructure education systems in order to move towards resilient, inclusive and quality education systems, from a gender-equality perspective. The pandemic had resulted in an unprecedented setback in terms of women's economic, physical and decision-making autonomy. The signs of economic recovery showed that the productive structure was based on a sexual division of labour that reproduced patterns of inequality. Without changes to the current development model, growth would not necessarily result in improved living conditions for women.

On education, the panellists stressed that the pandemic had caused the worst education crisis in history and had had massive and profound effects at all levels. In addition to the interruption of face-to-face classes, problems included the lack of connectivity and limited access to education-related services, such as school meals and preventive health, with consequences in terms of loss of learning, mental health, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. The crisis emerged at a time when the region was already facing large structural gaps, and much of the progress made was already slowing down or being reversed before the pandemic. In terms of gender equality, there were still stereotypes that affected women and the pandemic worsened the situation, creating a vicious circle between care and confinement in the home, which increased violence and the burden of unpaid work. From the civil society perspective, the importance

of opening more spaces for the participation of women and citizens in general to achieve greater progress in those areas was highlighted. Progress was achieved by civil society and often governments and politicians were further behind, but they needed to keep pace. Mention was made of the structural asymmetries affecting the region and the gaps in education between urban and rural areas, between different populations, in gender and between the public and private sectors, which had widened the inclusion gaps, especially in the case of young people and women. The central role of equality and the challenge of establishing a new social contract, with protection of rights and life without leaving out civil society, was reiterated.

The ways to overcome the lags included combating the patriarchal culture, protecting the countries' economies and labour markets, favouring women's access to the most dynamic sectors, moving towards the distribution of public and private power and decision-making, and achieving a social compact based on a system of care and care economies that put women on an equal footing. Mention was made of the need to increase the appropriate age for marriage, as well as to recognize, redistribute and reduce unpaid work. The close relationship between the transformation of the education system and the achievement of equality was also highlighted. Regarding the role of women in economic reactivation, in the face of a crisis of loss of jobs, lives and opportunities, it was emphasized that the contribution of women translated into increases in GDP and productivity, diversification of exports and increased entrepreneurship, and that the increase in women's income resulted in greater resources for education and health for families. Consequently, focusing the recovery on women was the smartest way to carry those efforts forward, as empowering women had a multiplier effect on the economy.

The need to allocate more funding to accelerate progress in educational achievements was also highlighted, with more dialogue between institutions and greater participation of the various stakeholders. While resources were not sufficient to solve the long-standing problems, without more resources it would not be possible to move forward at the required speed. It was also necessary to incorporate the gender perspective from primary education onward, in order to promote cultural change in the new generations, including the development of new concepts of masculinity with greater co-responsibility and the reduction of gender violence, as well as the inclusion of sexual education and education for social mobility and the future of work. Gender equality was fundamental to development that put the sustainability of human life and the planet at its core. To facilitate and encourage the role of women in sustainable development, a cultural and structural change was urgently required, in which education played a central role.

In their closing remarks, the panellists stressed that although the education crisis had been silent, swift action was needed to prevent irreversible damage. Women also had to be encouraged to participate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies and professions and in the opportunities offered by Industry 4.0, and their presence in those areas had to be highlighted. Education was necessary for the respect of all human rights; peaceful coexistence; to leave discrimination and stereotypes behind; to eliminate gender-based violence; parity at all levels; sexual and reproductive education from an early age; social mobility and the elimination of poverty; inclusion and to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid work, which fell mostly on women. A true closing of gaps in the region had to prioritize three areas: (i) the promotion of education as a prerequisite for access to other rights and guarantees for women; (ii) the economic empowerment of women and (iii) the economic and social recognition of care tasks. Civil society underscored the need for women's and feminist organizations to have resources to carry out their work, referring to the Regional Fund in support of Women's and Feminist Organizations and Movements, and for decent budgets to be allocated to education. Education had to be perceived not as a service, but as a human right.

The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC said that although the region faced great challenges at the moment, it also had many opportunities to achieve the desired development with a focus on equality,

social justice, sustainability, democracy and peace. For transformative recovery with equality and sustainability, a shift from formal equality to substantive equality by investing in gender equality was required. Women's autonomy, empowerment and the right to education are a condition, a path and a catalyst for sustainable development. There was a need for a social covenant to establish universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems; a fiscal covenant to ensure the financial sustainability of those protection systems and a statistical covenant to provide better disaggregated and georeferenced statistics. The advancement of women translated into progress for society as a whole. The pandemic had highlighted the link between caring for people and the environment; social and gender inequality had to be reversed in synergy with the environmental dimension, placing the sustainability of life and the planet at the centre.

In the ensuing discussing, in which representatives of Guatemala, Mexico and Colombia participated, mention was made of the objective of guaranteeing access to education without discrimination, including early childhood and preschool education, with quality standards and working for free education, the promotion of technical and higher education and the incorporation of theoretical and practical content of sustainable development and the culture of peace, as well as the pending challenge of incorporating the gender perspective in childhood. The importance and challenges of comprehensive sexual education were highlighted as a particularly effective measure for preventing the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, unwanted teenage pregnancy and even gender inequality and violence. Participants also discussed the benefit of creating guidelines for the media so that they not only stopped reproducing stereotypes on their platforms, but also shared responsibility for building a better world, free of violence, discrimination and gender inequality. Finally, they discussed the need for granular data to assess inequalities and formulate specific policies and to advance in the systematic integration of the gender perspective in all phases of planning, production and use of data and statistics in all areas, and underscored the value of ongoing dialogue between producers and users of information.

**Peer-learning session: Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)  
while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda  
for Sustainable Development**

This session was moderated by Cielo Morales, Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES). Introductory remarks were made by Ángela María Penagos, Director of the Agrifood Initiative of Universidad de los Andes in Colombia. The participants in the session were Félix Ulloa, Vice-President of El Salvador; Sharon Saunders, Ambassador of Jamaica to Costa Rica; Isaac Alfie, Director of the Office of Planning and the Budget of Uruguay; Eduardo Brau, Undersecretary for Information Management and Analysis of the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies of Argentina; Vince Henderson, Minister for Planning, Economic Development, Climate Resilience, Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy of Dominica; Oliver Joseph, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs of Grenada; Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation of Suriname; and Adriana Bolaños Argueta, Deputy Minister for Bilateral Affairs and International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica.

The moderator said that the session, as a space for collective reflection, was a new feature of the Forum, which had arisen from the work of a community of practice, with the participation of countries' technical teams and the entities of the United Nations system, to support countries in the preparation of their voluntary national reviews based on peer-to-peer learning. Over the preceding two years, ECLAC had advocated linking short-term emergency response measures with medium- and long-term recovery policies. To achieve that, institutional frameworks needed to be strengthened with the capacity to implement

comprehensive programmes that interlinked sectors and territorial levels, mainstreaming climate action, gender equality and citizen participation. The voluntary national review exercise fostered partnerships among development actors and contributed to multi-stakeholder and multilevel thinking for a coordinated and coherent approach to SDG implementation. The countries represented at the session would present their reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2022, some for the first time, others for the second or third. He therefore invited the participants to comment on the lessons learned from the process of preparing reviews, going beyond the technical aspects of their content.

In her introductory remarks, the Director of the Agrifood Initiative of Universidad de los Andes in Colombia said that a worsening had been observed in the SDG index, an aggregate measure of the region's progress toward the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda, comprising more than 100 indicators, which was developed by the Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean (CODS) of Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia. In 2020, for the first time since adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the regional average index had fallen, and three quarters of the countries were further away from achieving the SDGs than in 2019. For the 2030 Agenda to continue to guide countries' recovery work, there needed to be a change from guidelines to instruments, with clear implementation mechanisms, and for each target to be a public policy objective. The traditional way in which policies had been formulated needed to be changed: instead of looking at how different sectors could contribute to the Agenda, that should be the main policy, to be implemented through those sectors. Collaboration was also needed within and between countries, and that required new leadership that created trust and had interdisciplinary capabilities to implement policies that led to transformations and evaluate them comprehensively. Likewise, there must be enabling conditions; in particular, sufficient, specific budgets, based on data and aligned with planning objectives.

The first statements were made by countries that had already presented at least one voluntary national review (Argentina, El Salvador, Jamaica, and Uruguay). The representatives of those countries said crises and changes of era required cultural and institutional changes, as well as updating of national agendas and regional and subregional integration agendas. There is also a need for capacity to reorient priorities in response to crises and external shocks, but always focusing policies on safeguarding rights —particularly the right to health in the context of a pandemic— while at the same time addressing the need for economic growth. It was important to have a consolidated system of social protection measures (such as unemployment insurance, a minimum wage and old-age pensions) that prioritized support of the most vulnerable individuals and the weakest productive apparatus, since, in the current context, many countries in the region were facing significant restrictions related to debt and rising interest rates, which depleted fiscal resources, and those restrictions were unlikely to disappear in the short term. In that regard, a strong State, that was present and had the capacity to make decisions and take action, played an essential role in addressing emergencies.

Despite the challenges of the prevailing context, they reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and said it was important to maintain the comprehensiveness of public policies to achieve the Goals, to monitor and evaluate those achievements, and to perform related accountability exercises. Success in implementing the SDGs would depend on the quality of the actions taken by the countries. Voluntary national reviews were, in that regard, a very valuable instrument, and the participants mentioned the importance of working to overcome communication problems with the grassroots in order to ensure full participation of all stakeholders in the preparation of the reports. That was essential for obtaining accurate information on the progress achieved and the situation in each sector, learning about deficiencies and taking measures to refocus actions. What was not measured could not be assessed, and what could not be assessed could not be improved. Therefore, statistical processing of information was fundamental in that process. Reference was also made to joint work with subnational stakeholders and the possibility of providing them with training and advice so that they could prepare their voluntary local reviews.

The second round of statements were made by the countries that were preparing to submit their first review to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2022 (Dominica, Grenada and Suriname). They said that several lessons could be drawn from the crisis, but three aspects were important: implementing social protection measures, overcoming digital disruption and promoting innovation. Also, there could be no honest conversation about the 2030 Agenda or the SDGs without discussing climate change. The pandemic crisis had highlighted the importance of: robust, responsive primary health care systems; national institutions that were strong enough to enable countries to withstand exogenous shocks; responsive education systems; and robust accessible telecommunications infrastructure. Energy security and food security were also vital. The recovery phase from the crisis was a window of opportunity to renew social cohesion, equity was key to sustainable recovery, and strong national institutions were needed, which people had confidence in. To rebuild in a resilient and sustainable manner, to recover from the pandemic, and to implement the 2030 Agenda, it was crucial to restructure the financing for development architecture, strengthen international cooperation, increase participation by all stakeholders, and overhaul the international trading system to facilitate international trade and investment.

The Deputy Minister for Bilateral Affairs and International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that participants in the session had reaffirmed that the 2030 Agenda should be the road map for all countries in the region. She underscored the importance of preparing voluntary national reviews, which were essential for analysing compliance with the Goals of the Agenda, pending actions and priority areas on which efforts should be focused. More challenges arose from the exercise, as strengths were identified, but also weaknesses, and it was only possible to address those challenges through collaborative and participatory processes, public-private partnerships and inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination. It is also crucial to build trust among the different institutions, sectors and stakeholders, in order to move forward. The goal was to work towards a green, sustainable, inclusive recovery with a far-reaching digital and technological transformation, as that was the only way to move forward.

### **Contribution of the United Nations sustainable development system in Latin America and the Caribbean**

This session was moderated by Roberto Valent, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Development Coordination Office (DCO) of the United Nations, who underscored the importance of the issue to be discussed.

#### Presentation of the 2021 system-wide results report of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean

The 2021 system-wide results report of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean was presented by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in their capacity as Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the report was prepared in accordance with resolution E/RES/2020/23 adopted by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations in July 2020, when Member States requested the United Nations conduct transparent and inclusive consultations, in close collaboration with the regional economic commissions, the specialized agencies, funds, programmes of the United Nations system, the regional offices of the Development Coordination Office, and the resident coordinator offices. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had made five

recommendations: (i) create a regional collaboration platform for Latin America and the Caribbean, to see what was being done, avoid duplication and seek complementarities and synergies; (ii) create a knowledge management hub; (iii) enhance results-based management and transparency; (iv) launch a change management process to consolidate existing capacities in data and statistics; and (v) provide administrative services more efficiently through common back offices. The report was based on three specific recommendations: enhancing transparency, accountability and results-based management. The aim was to align the work of the United Nations system to support member States in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve better alignment, issue-based coalitions and inter-institutional working groups had been created. Among other aims, the Platform sought to link humanitarian and development issues, facilitate more effective management, develop knowledge products that were relevant to member states, facilitate policy advice, conduct inter-agency collaboration (for example in the areas of education and labour), and address cross-border issues. Themes being jointly addressed include: climate change and resilience, crime and violence, inclusive growth, financing for development, governance and institutions, and human mobility. A regional vision had been developed and common strategic positions had been adopted on issues such as gender equality, digital inclusion, energy transition and food security. It was important to support resident coordinators and country teams, and to link what was being done as a system with intergovernmental bodies such as the Forum on Sustainable Development. The report showed that structural social, economic and environmental inequalities had increased in the region, that the most affected populations had been the most vulnerable (women, youth, migrants, refugees, Afrodescendants) and that the region was facing the risk of a lost decade.

The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP detailed some types of support that the Platform provided to country teams through different regional initiatives. He focused on cross-border issues, which required a subnational or multi-country approach, and on positioning the United Nations system as a point of reference for knowledge and experiences that were useful for policy design, and said global agendas needed to be brought to the regional and local levels. Continued efforts needed to be made for the United Nations system to form strategic partnerships outside the Organization, with civil society and the private sector. In terms of issue-based coalitions, there were some specific initiatives on climate change and resilience, crime and violence, and inclusive growth, and a lot of work had been done in the area of human mobility. A thematic cluster had been created on financing for development and very targeted actions were undertaken in the areas of governance and institutions. Two cross-cutting themes ran across all the thematic clusters: (i) gender and empowerment of women and girls; and (ii) youth. During the year, three areas of work had been added: food systems, urban development and HIV/AIDS. Looking ahead, priorities had been set for areas of action in the coming period and a decision had been made to address economic and social inequalities, environmental issues of climate action, strengthening governance systems and supporting transitions in terms of connectivity, energy and food systems. Addressing those priorities would entail meeting specific demands, which were changeable in a context of uncertainty, and being ready to respond to them, taking into account cross-border issues, continuing to emphasize the role of advocacy and communication, continuing to work with regional intergovernmental bodies, and serving as a link between the global and local levels. There was still a long way to go to be as effective as the region aspired to be, but work was being done in that direction.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Mexico said that the proposal had very positive elements and a structure that contributed to coordination of the support of the United Nations for work in the countries to move toward the SDGs. It was important to consider implementation of the 2030 Agenda in each country, since although the Agenda was a shared agreed horizon towards which to advance, it took a different form in each country according to national priorities. The Platform was a great opportunity, enabling attention to issues that were key not only to the 2030 Agenda, but also far beyond it. The key issues with opportunities for joint action through this Platform were: care systems, energy transitions and the circular economy.

Approaches were required that enabled understanding that responsibilities, historical trajectories, possibilities, actions and aspirations were very different, not only in the region, but also with respect to countries in other regions. If work was not done to promote differentiated transitions, the opportunity to pursue a major transition that was fair and feasible would be lost. The representative of Cuba said that her country was pleased that the Forum on Sustainable Development had become an excellent demonstration that the United Nations system and States could work in line with each other to achieve the SDGs. She expressed appreciation for efforts to increase the effectiveness of support to countries in the region, and particularly the work done in 2021, which for some countries in the region had been an even more difficult year than that when the COVID-19 pandemic began. The United Nations system had offered a timely and very constructive response to the pandemic, but faced a greater task: rebuilding and recovering in a resilient and sustainable manner from the damage the pandemic had caused and still caused, without overlooking medium- and long-term development goals and transforming prevailing patterns of development, to effectively and comprehensively fulfil the 2030 Agenda. The support of all United Nations system entities would be fundamental in this great challenge. It was hoped that the Platform would continue to strengthen and contribute to meeting the needs of the countries of the region through multilateralism and for a change of era.

After the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP thanked the representatives, on behalf of the Platform, for their comments, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the Forum had been a very enriching space where entities, resident coordinators and country representatives had been able to dialogue, which contributed substantially to being more effective, collaborating more and interlinking actions. Despite the difficult year in 2021, many capacities had been oriented towards reconstruction. What was being sought, as a United Nations system, was a dialogue with the countries on the issues raised. A care society, which went beyond a care economy, entailed a leap in quality. Numbers needed to be calculated for the energy transition: how much it would cost, how many jobs it could create. Another emerging issue was the circular economy, which was related to cities, rural areas and industry. Countries' contributions were encouraging and helped a better understanding of what could be done. Also, that interregional cooperation was extremely important. The question was how to raise Latin America and the Caribbean's profile on the global stage, giving more impetus to regional positions.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that it was important to recognize and emphasize that the Vice-Chairs of the Platform provided valuable input to offer a clear view of where the region stood and how it could move forward more decisively. In that respect, the coordinated work of the United Nations development system and its agencies, funds and programmes had been essential to ensure that the work was productive and, above all, concerted, since it could not be an isolated effort. Coordination with United Nations country teams and resident coordinators was essential. Member States urgently needed to make greater use of the capacities of the resident coordinator offices and the United Nations agencies in the territories of the region, since it has been demonstrated that, in times of greater difficulties, those agencies were capable of providing timely responses and meeting the requirements of the States. He invited all member States to rediscover these valuable capacities of the United Nations system. At a time when COVID-19 was having an unprecedented impact on all countries in the region, the coordinated support of the United Nations had been essential. The region should draw on the support of the United Nations to formulate a forward-looking strategic regional vision and to work together to develop common positions. What was not measured could not be seen, and in that regard it was important to be grateful for the efforts to increase transparency and generate knowledge, opening spaces for exchange and creating forums such as the Platform. The United Nations would continue accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region; every day that passed was one day less to achieve the SDGs. The clearest road map for recovery was cooperation, solidarity and concerted efforts. It was hoped that the next report would strengthen that cycle of exchange and collaboration, and that efforts would continue in 2022 to support countries in achieving the SDGs.



### **Civil society declaration**

A representative of civil society then read a statement.<sup>3</sup>

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development were adopted.<sup>4</sup> These had been previously submitted to the countries for a series of consultations facilitated by Costa Rica, the country serving as Chair of the Forum, through the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations in New York. Upon adoption of the conclusions and recommendations, the Chair thanked the delegations for their participation and flexibility in the consultation process.

### **Closing session**

In the closing session, statements were made Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, and Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica highlighted key ideas: peace, dialogue and active participation needed to be fostered as a path to sustainable development; reducing the large economic, social and environmental gaps and asymmetries among and within countries, focusing on health, climate and gender; liquidity should be redistributed from developed to developing countries and appropriate instruments were required that took into account the extent of the pandemic, environmental, gender and equity issues, vulnerabilities and the need to build resilience; it was necessary to speak of “gradation”, not graduation, and the countries of the region could not be left out of cooperation or access to concessional funds, so development needed to be measured in a multidimensional way, taking into account each country’s structural gaps and vulnerabilities; the economic recovery should be truly transformative, science-based, sustainable, green and blue, inclusive, just, innovative and resilient; awareness needed to be raised of the true value of nature, the services provided by the environment and its undeniable contribution to sustainable development; the region, particularly Central America and the Caribbean, was highly vulnerable to climate change and disasters; for the recovery to be sustainable, new shared intersectoral compacts needed to be forged through participation and dialogue that resulted in social cohesion and prosperity while strengthening and legitimizing democracy and the full exercise of human rights, paying special attention to the territories and the local level, taking into account their realities; the autonomy and empowerment of women and girls, including access to education, technology and digitization, were prerequisites for progress toward an equitable and inclusive model of development; societies must show solidarity and move from a culture of privilege and exclusion to a society of collective responsibility; greater political dialogue, agreements and cooperation were needed, and above all a unified voice for the region within the international community, to seek solutions that benefited populations, with a forward-looking vision of well-being and dignified life, and a pragmatic but no less ambitious approach, within a framework of new multilateralism, aspiring to a new global compact that represented a unified response from the international community to put sustainable development first and that included reshaping the international financial architecture.

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<sup>3</sup> See [online, in Spanish] <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/en/programme/civil-society-declaration>.

<sup>4</sup> See [online] [https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/sites/foro2022/files/22-00131\\_fds.5\\_intergovernmentally\\_agreed\\_conclusions\\_and\\_recommendations.pdf](https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/sites/foro2022/files/22-00131_fds.5_intergovernmentally_agreed_conclusions_and_recommendations.pdf).

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the Forum, which was coming to an end, had been unique for many reasons: for the intensity of the exchanges, reflecting the interest and commitment of governments, civil society, the private sector, the academic sector and all those who participated in the intense discussions; it was also unique because there had not been a face-to-face meeting for a long time, and because it would probably be the last time she addressed the Forum as Executive Secretary of ECLAC. She thanked the Chair and the people of Costa Rica for their hospitality and for hosting the Forum so efficiently and successfully, and expressed gratitude for the work carried out during the years the country had chaired ECLAC, in the very adverse context of the pandemic. The Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was a space that allowed the region to speak with its own voice, to recognize its rich diversity, but at the same time, to bring together and champion shared aspirations and to envision paths to a better future.

The meeting of the Forum marked the end of a period for her of almost 14 years at the helm of ECLAC, which was her greatest pride, and few spaces like that one were better suited to bidding farewell. It was a place to meet the constituents of ECLAC, representatives of the countries that were both the leaders and the purpose of the Commission's efforts. It was a space for dialogue and exchange, a fruit grown from shared seeds, in which participation, cooperation and solidarity had forged a meeting place for the voices of Latin America and the Caribbean. Over the course of three days, with healthy frankness, the participants had shared experiences of sustainable development efforts from all corners of the region, set out their successes and difficulties, learned together, and seen that the obstacles that we sometimes believe to be specific, local and unique, are in fact frequent and shared beyond our borders. Innovative ideas had been discovered, original practices, effective initiatives that sometimes seemed inaccessible, which formed part of the repertoire of more developed countries, and yet had been shown to work in sister communities. Since its creation in Mexico, she was proud to say the Forum had been a multi-stakeholder space. Almost 1,200 people had participated in that fifth meeting of the Forum, and more than half of them in person; 260 country representatives had registered to participate in the event, in addition to 230 representatives of the United Nations system, 21 from intergovernmental organizations, 19 from financial institutions and 22 from cooperation agencies, together with more than 300 representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector, in addition to the thousands of people who had followed the meeting on social media and public broadcasts of the proceedings. The Executive Secretary also acknowledged and thanked Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, for attending, and supporting everyone in person during difficult times, reflecting the commitment and interest of the entire United Nations system in the present and future challenges that Latin America and the Caribbean faced.

Lastly, the Executive Secretary said that the period that was coming to a close had been extraordinary. The young woman she had once been had soon become aware of the unjust system before her eyes. A flame of rebellion was lit. The woman she was today was grateful that the flame still burned, and privately hoped to have spread that fire to others.