

NATIONAL CONSULTATION

Sustainable Recovery and Resilience towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Commonwealth of Dominica

**Date: Wednesday 16th March 2022
(2:00 am to 5:00 pm– AST and EST)**

Organizers:

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG)**

**UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
(UNOSD)**

**United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the
Caribbean (ECLAC)
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean**

in close coordination with:

**United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO) and United Nations
Country Team (UNCT)**

**in partnership with the Government of the Commonwealth of
Dominica**

CONCEPT NOTE

Background:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody the strategic vision and aspirations of all countries for the future of development. Its implementation will require comprehensive actions at the global, regional, and national levels, as indicated in General Assembly Resolution 70/1 on Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, a new emphasis is placed on how policy coherence and better integrated planning mechanisms can help countries strengthen their planning processes, develop holistic development frameworks reflecting global, regional and special commitments, such as the SAMOA Pathway for SIDS, and achieve their national development objectives in a more effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable way, ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic where the world faced an unprecedented fast-changing scenario for which developing countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have limited capacity, the relevance of strong, integrated policies and policy coherence is reinforced.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started out as a severe and acute public health emergency, has since become a socioeconomic crisis of immense proportion that has had significant impacts on social and economic systems, threatening many of the development gains made across countries. The primary cost of the pandemic has been the loss of many lives although the secondary effects of the pandemic on the economy, livelihoods and sustainable development prospects are more alarming. In a context of global contraction, Latin America and the Caribbean subregion have been hardest hit by the crisis stemming from COVID-19.

External challenges specific to the Caribbean subregion included the near total shutdown of air and cruise travel, significantly impacting the tourism sector which is the backbone of many of the economies in the Caribbean as well as foreign exchange earnings; stress in related supply chains (agriculture, construction, hotels, restaurants, entertainment and the culture, cultural and creative industries or the orange economy); a sharp contraction in larger economies, a downturn in commodities prices, the contraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) flows and remittances; disruption in transportation and global supply chains; risk aversion for external investors, and restrictions on foreign exchange availability.

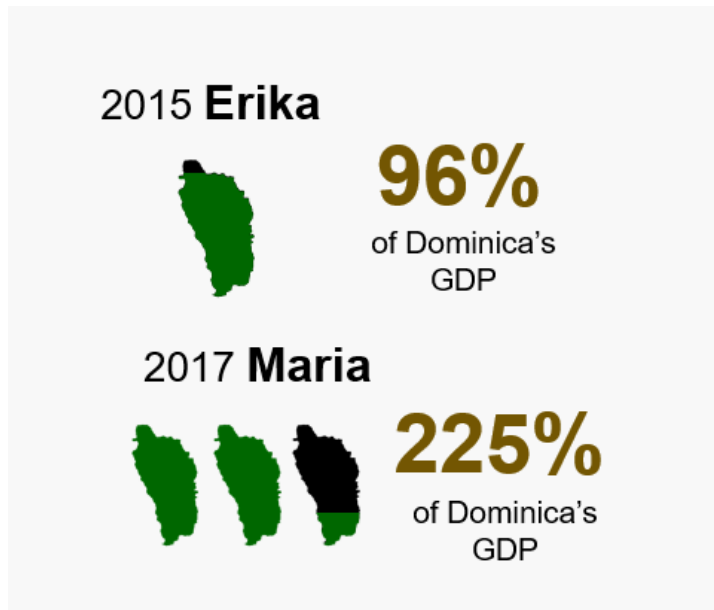
The impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups - including persons with disabilities (PWDs), children, women and girls, female-headed households, and persons living with HIV/AIDS among others have been stark due to the economic fallout experienced by countries as well as the disruptions in access to basic social services. Many persons also have been impacted by the disruption of essential health services including services for sexual and reproductive health, non-communicable diseases and mental health support. These vulnerable groups and communities were challenged before the pandemic by economic hardship and social disparities.

Like many countries the world over, Caribbean countries also experienced several challenges in education due to school closures. Other social issues worth mentioning as a result of the pandemic include food insecurity, food gluts due to supply chain disruptions, and increases in gender-based violence although the latter has not been fully quantified.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dominica was still rebuilding and recovering from Hurricane Maria in 2017, a category 5 hurricane that had significant impacts on the socioeconomic fabric of the country. Hurricane Maria resulted in losses amounting to 225 per cent of Dominica's GDP and was preceded by Hurricane Erika two years earlier in 2015 which cost the country 96 per cent of its GDP. Hurricane Maria resulted in for example:

- Estimated damages totaling approximately US\$931 million and losses of another US\$380 million. This amounts to almost 225% of the country's 2016 GDP.
- 30 persons losing their lives.

- Damage to the country’s housing stock — 15 per cent of houses were totally destroyed, 75 per cent partially damaged, at an estimated cost of US\$382million.
- Damage to critical infrastructure — roads, bridges, water systems, electricity, telecommunications.
- Impacts on the agriculture and tourism sectors, critical for supporting food security, economic activity and providing a livelihood for thousands.
- Uncalculated loss of ecosystem services provided by watersheds, wetlands and coral reefs



Dominica clearly highlights the multi-hazard environment that Caribbean countries and many other SIDS outside of the Caribbean exist in. Dominica is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. Between 2014 and 2018, Dominica experienced 10 tropical storms and two hurricanes, rendering its economy ever more fragile as a result. During 1997-2017, it was the country with the highest GDP losses to climate-related natural disasters and ranked in the top 10 per cent among 182 countries for climate-related fatalities.

Notwithstanding, Dominica's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2019 was 0.742— which put the country in the high human development category— positioning it at 94 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 2000 and 2019, Dominica's HDI value increased from 0.703 to 0.742, an increase of 5.5 percent. Despite this relatively high HDI value, 28.8 per cent of Dominica’s population could be classified as poor, with 3.1 percent of this considered indigent.¹ In addition to those considered poor, a further 11.5 percent of the population can be considered vulnerable due to downturns in the economy and other exogenous shocks such as natural disasters.

Since the start of the pandemic, Dominica has recorded 9,032 COVID 19 cases and 51² deaths. Despite ample vaccines and testing availability, vaccination remains below 40.3 percent of the population due primarily to vaccine hesitancy.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, GDP growth was forecast at 5.47 per cent for 2020, according to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB). However, the pandemic reduced the gains that were expected to strengthen Dominica’s economic position in the near term. GDP is estimated to have contracted by 11 per cent in 2020 and showed a modest recovery of 3.7

¹ <https://prais.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2018-08/Dominica%20CPA%202009%20Main%20Report%20Final.pdf>

² <https://www.google.com/search?q=covid+19+cases+commonwealth+of+dominica&oq=covid+19+cases+commonwealth+of+dominica+&aqs=chrome.69i57j0i22i30j0i39015.10673j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

per cent in 2021. This was partly due to the sharp reduction in tourism and related sectors. While the tourism sector is less important to growth in Dominica compared to several other Caribbean countries, tourism remains Dominica's largest foreign exchange earning activity and the sector is responsible for 56 per cent of all export earnings.³ The downturn in the tourism sector will likely lead to a reduction in foreign exchange earnings.⁴ Furthermore, about 70 per cent of persons employed in the accommodation and food services are female, highlighting a disproportionate impact of the falloff in tourism on females.

During the pandemic, efforts to recover from the impacts of Hurricane Maria led to strong growth in the construction sector, due to the large public investment programme in housing and infrastructure resilient to natural disasters, financed with record-high Citizenship by Investment (CBI) revenue of 30 per cent of GDP⁵. The high CBI revenue contributed to a reduction in the fiscal balance for 2020, despite declines in tax revenue and increases in spending. Public debt, however, increased to 106 per cent of GDP in 2020 due mainly to higher official borrowing. Also, the current account deficit widened to close to 30 per cent of GDP due largely to the loss of tourism exports and increase in imports related public investment and the increase in commodity prices.

Following the devastation as a result of back-to-back major storms in 2015 and 2017, Dominica announced its intention to become the first disaster resilient nation in the world and prepared and is implementing its National Resilience Development Strategy (NRDS), a comprehensive plan including policies, costs, and financing to build resilience against future natural disasters. The NRDS along with the Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP) 2020 – 2030 are two good entry points for enabling integrated planning to support sustained recovery in Dominica and provides an excellent foundation for advancing the integrated recovery approach and leverage points for transformative change with the context of COVID-19 recovery.

Objective:

The National Consultation represents Phase II of the UNDESA and ECLAC cooperation with Dominica that aims at strengthening the integrated recovery planning and decision-making capacity of the national stakeholders in **DOMINICA** and other participating Caribbean States involved in mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and building back better towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

The National Consultation aims at discussing with stakeholders the progress in formulating and implementing sustainable recovery plans in Dominica and receiving input and concrete recommendations on building back better and accelerating the implementation of the country's national development plans, in this case the NRDS towards advancing the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

³ Moore, Winston. 2021. Commonwealth of Dominica: COVID-19 Heat Report: Human and Economic Assessment of Impact. UNDP, UNIEF, UN Women Eastern Caribbean

⁴ <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20caribbean/attachments/publications/2020/human%20and%20economic%20assessment%20of%20impact%20-%20commonwealth%20of%20dominica.pdf?la=en&vs=2852>

⁵ <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/12/03/mcs-120321-dominica-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2021-article-iv-mission>

Target Audience:

The national consultation will bring together a wide range of Government, CSOs, academia, indigenous peoples and private sector representatives engaged in: the national implementation of the NRDS, CRRP and other COVID-19 recovery plans, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs; and the development of the country's first Voluntary National Review on the SDGs. The national consultation also will include relevant the UN Country Team in Dominica, and UN Country Teams in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and UN System partners. Some possible organizations that could be targeted for the consultation include:

Public Sector – Relevant Government Ministries	Civil Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue and Green Economy, Agriculture and National Food Security • Economic Affairs, Planning, Resilience and Sustainable Development, Telecommunications and Broadcasting • Education, Human resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence • Environment, Rural Modernization and Kalinago Upliftment • Finance and Investment • Foreign Affairs, International Business and Diaspora Relations • Governance, Public Service Reform, Citizen Empowerment, Social Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs • Health, Wellness and New Health Investment • Housing and Urban Development • Public Works and The Digital Economy • Sports, Culture and Community Development • Tourism, International Transport and Maritime Initiatives • Trade, Commerce, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Business and Export Development • Youth Development and Empowerment, Youth at Risk, Gender Affairs, Seniors' Security and Dominicans with Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfam • Red Cross • Missionary Flights International • The Dominica National Council of Women • Dominica Conservation Association • ISRAaid • Kibe'kuati Inc. • Caribbean Natural Resources Institute • Dominica Crisis Centre • The West Dominica Children's Federation • Dominica Crisis centre • The West Dominica Children's Federation • EACH • Association for Senior Citizens of Dominica • Dominica Council on Ageing • Dominica Association of Persons with Disabilities • Parents Advocating for Children with disabilities (PACIS) • The Dominica National Council of Women • Minority Rights Dominica (MIRIDOM) • Dominica Employers Federation (DEF) • Dominica Christian Council
Private Sector	Academia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest Dominica Authority • Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominica State College • University of the West Indies (Open Campus)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominica Association of Industry and Commerce • Dominica Manufacturers' Association • The Caribbean Network of Services Coalitions • Small Business Development Centre • Local Banks - 	
Development Partners and Regional Organizations	Youth and Indigenous Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP Eastern Caribbean • ECLAC • ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean • UNICEF Eastern Caribbean • Un Women Multi-Country Office • World Bank • Organization of Eastern Caribbean States • Eastern Caribbean Central Bank 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominica Youth Business Trust • Dominica Youth Environment Organization • Alliance for Youth Action • Representatives from the Kalinagos • 4-H Programme • Dominica Athletics Programme • Dominica National Youth Council

Strategy UNDESA and ECLAC Cooperation (Target Group/ main activities/ approach/methodology)

The National Webinar/Virtual National Consultation is included under Phase II of UNDESA and ECLAC cooperation in Dominica and includes:

Phase 1:

- **Provision of advisory support to the COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA** with focus on researching the COVID-19 pandemic, its impacts and evaluating the progress in recovery planning measures and methodologies in the Caribbean Region in general and in **DOMINICA**. The technical support will be provided through regional and national experts.

Phase 2:

- Organizing a **virtual national consultation/webinar in DOMINICA**, during February/March 2022 aimed at discussing the progress in formulating and implementing integrated recovery plans and strategies that are intended to accelerate the implementation of the country national development plan “National Resilience Development Strategy (NRDS): Dominica 2030 as well as the sustainable development goals. This consultation will also be aligned to the country’s preparation of its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) for presentation at the UN High-Level Political Forum in July 2022

Phase 3:

- **Adapting the UNDESA – UNITAR e-learning course** “*Integrated Recovery Planning and Policy Coherence towards the SDGs*”, with specific emphasis to the national context of Dominica. This will be undertaken over the period March – April 2022.

Phase 4:

- **Delivery of e-learning course** “*Integrated Recovery Planning and Policy Coherence towards the SDGs: The Dominica Context*”, in Dominica using a Train-the-Trainer format targeting Government, Civil Society Organization representatives, Academia, Youth, the Kalinagos (Dominica’s Indigenous People) and the Private Sector. The delivery of the training which will be face-to-face will be undertaken between April and May 2022.

National Consultation

Sustainable Recovery and Resilience towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Commonwealth of Dominica

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Programme / Agenda

Welcome and opening (15:00 Minutes)

Remarks by (Government and UN Agencies)

Session 1 (45 Minutes): Assessment of the Social and Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Dominica

Brief Description

The session will include a brief presentation by UNDESA on the main findings of the research paper, “Impact of COVID-19 on 5 Caribbean SIDS... *Evaluating Progress in Recovery Planning, Emerging Policy Options, Best Practices and Lessons Learned*”, with specific reference to Dominica and focussed on the impacts of COVID-19 on the country.

This will be followed by inputs from key stakeholders from the public sector, private sector, academia, youth and civil society organizations sharing in 1.5 minutes each, the main impacts, including data on a single sector based on the guiding questions below that they are most engaged in. *Participants could also include responses to the questions in the Zoom chat or in the Google Doc that will be made available throughout the consultation.*

Guiding Questions for Stakeholders

What has been the experience and impact of COVID 19 in the Commonwealth of Dominica:

- a. Impacts on the Economy
- b. Impacts on the Labour Market
- c. Impacts on Education
- d. Impacts on Employment
- e. Impacts on Population Health (outside of COVID-19 but with focus on NCDS, HIV/AIDS and other diseases)
- f. Impacts on Tourism and MSMEs
- g. Impacts on Livelihoods, Food Security and Access to Markets
- h. Impacts on Indigenous Peoples (Kalinagos)
- i. Impacts on Women and Girls (any stark differences to the impact on men and boys?)
- j. Other Socio-Economic Impacts

Session 2 (30 Minutes): Stakeholders' Engagement and Capacities to Implement Recovery Plans Post COVID-19:

Brief Description

This session will explore the importance and role of stakeholder involvement and engagement, political commitment and building consensus and ownership for recovery planning post COVID-19. The session also will explore the importance of policy coherence and policy coordination mechanisms, especially in light of the country's preparation of its first Voluntary National Review of the SDGs. The session will begin with a brief presentation from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning, Resilience and Sustainable Development, and address the following questions:

- How has the COVID-19 affected the implementation of the National Resilience Development Strategy and the Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP) 2020 – 2030?
- What are some of the lessons learned with respect to recovery following Hurricanes Erika and Maria and practices in recovery planning that can be shared with other small island developing states?
- How has COVID-19 affected the progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Dominica?
- What was some of the immediate actions taken by the Government to reduce the overall socio-economic impacts on the population and the economy with specific emphasis on vulnerable groups, children and the most vulnerable?
- What steps are being taken to involve stakeholders to prepare the country's Voluntary National Review on the SDGs and what are some of the key areas of resilience that will be showcased in the Dominica's story to the UN High Level Political Forum?

Guiding Questions for Stakeholders – (Using a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being the best possible outcome and 1 being the least favourable outcome).

- How effective do you think the Government's immediate actions were in reducing the overall socio-economic impacts of the pandemic on people, vulnerable groups, indigenous peoples and economic sectors?
- How important do you believe robust and inclusive stakeholder engagement is for a sustainable recovery process?
- How much of a role do you see for national stakeholders – public and private sectors, civil society organizations and academia in the recovery planning process and implementation efforts?
- How important is political commitment to the sustainable recovery?
- How strong do you believe current policy coherence and policy coherence mechanisms are in place in Dominica?

Participants would include responses to the questions in the Google Doc that will be made available throughout the consultation for this session.

Session 3 (45 Minutes): Building Forward Stronger Post COVID-19... The Road to a Resilient Recovery... Selected Options for Consideration in Dominica

Brief Description

This session will begin with a short presentation from UN DESA on Proposed Strategies and Transformative Initiatives for Consideration in Building Back Better, Building Forward Stronger,

Fairer and Equal Post COVID-19. Initiatives that are aligned to the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) and the SDGs and which emerged from the research paper, “Impact of COVID-19 on 5 Caribbean SIDS... *Evaluating Progress in Recovery Planning, Emerging Policy Options, Best Practices and Lessons Learned*” will be presented. Following this presentation, participants will engage in a brainstorming exercise.

Brainstorming Exercise

Participants will be asked to brainstorm using *Polling* to assess how they view each of the proposed initiatives presented. Using *Polling*, each participant will review the proposed initiatives and vote for the top 3 they believe are most critical for Dominica as the country seeks to build back stronger and to achieve a more resilient and sustainable recovery within the context of the country’s NRDS and CRRP. The responses will then be collated across all participant responses and the top 5 priority areas for Dominica, based on the consensus of all groups will be shared. The analysis could also be further broken down to show top priority areas based on stakeholder groupings – e.g. public sector, private sector, youth etc.

Session 4: (30 Minutes): Financing for Sustainable Recovery and Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond

Brief Description

The session will take the form of a panel discussion involving UN and Regional Organization (OECS/ECCB) counterparts involved in the recovery process in Dominica and the wider Caribbean, with specific emphasis on the OECS. Panellists will share via 2-minute presentations on financing for development beyond COVID-19; and innovating financing instruments/tools and other resources available for advancing onto the road to a resilient recovery. This session will therefore take stock of the financial resources required and progress made so far to take the Caribbean Region and more specifically Dominica and the OECS from vulnerability to resilient development and sustainable recovery and dynamic growth, all within the thrust of ‘leaving no one behind’. Panellists will address the following:

- What are the COVID-19 related debt and liquidity challenges facing the Caribbean Region and Dominica and possible measures to address them?
- How to mitigate the collapse of key economic sectors, including sectors such as MSMEs?
- How to engage private creditors, international and regional development banks and access concessional funding, with debt cancellation?
- What are the non-traditional forms of financing that could be explored (e.g. international philanthropic organizations, foundations, public-private partnerships, new financing vehicles for areas such as women’s economic empowerment etc.)
- How to promote economic diversification and green and blue investments for resilience building in the Caribbean Region?
- What are some of the innovative financing tools available to Caribbean countries and how they can be applied (e.g. blended financing, debt swaps, green and blue bonds etc.)
- How can countries capitalize on the Addis Ababa Financing for Development Agenda which adopted a renewed global financing architecture to support the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What is the role of UN agencies to support countries in their thrust to building back better and equal?

Proposed Speakers

- UNDP
- ECLAC
- UNDESA
- UNICEF Eastern Caribbean
- UN Women (Financing Vehicles for Women Economic Empowerment)
- OECS Commission
- Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
- Caribbean Development Bank
- Representatives of Financial sector in Dominica (i.e. Public Transportation, MSMEs, Education Trust Funds (students overseas))

Closing Remarks and Next Steps (15:00 Minutes)

Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica

UN Agencies