Key messages from the Regional VNR workshop and the fourth meeting of the Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

*Meeting of the Community of Practice on Voluntary National Reviews for Caribbean Countries*

*16 April 2021*
Some thoughts on the VNRs from Latin America and the Caribbean

• The 2030 Agenda is more relevant than ever, with its 17 SDGs at the forefront.
• There is urgency in accelerating actions towards the SDGs, in line with the Decade of Action. The 2030 Agenda is the blueprint to recover from the multidimensional crisis and to create a renewed strategy to strengthen resilience and build forward better. The VNR is a guiding document that tells us where we are and how we move forward
• There are multiple reasons to present a VNR: accountability to society, developing partnerships with multiple stakeholders, or creating better cooperation and accelerating actions to implement the 2030 Agenda
• The pandemic didn’t stop the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda; by July 2021, 85% of the region's countries would have presented their VNR to the HLPF at least once
• The VNR is more than a report or a presentation; it is an inclusive, transparent and participatory process, at a national and local level, which in turn facilitates the integration of the SDGs into national and local development plans and budgets
• The statistical capacity, data and empirical evidence on SDG progress remains a challenge. A concrete issue faced during the VNR process is establishing a baseline for disaggregated data collection. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the data collection process was interrupted, and budgetary reallocations were made to address other urgent priorities.
Workshop recommendations

- Dedicate enough time to prepare the VNR and integrate a systemic and multisectoral approach to address the SDGs, while not losing the long-term vision of sustainable development. Coherence with policies, laws and budgets, as well with environmental and human rights commitments is essential.

- Establish clear participation mechanisms and budgets to engage civil society in the development of public policies and normative frameworks.

- In the face of confinement measures, it is recommended to have an effective national communication strategy, with online surveys and other channels, to enable collaboration among different stakeholders.

- The voluntary local reviews (VLRs) allow for a local follow-up and coordination with national efforts. It is recommended to design strategies and actions that are directed to localities and to have a methodology to support the localizing efforts, as well as dedicated budgets to support local governments to localize the 2030 Agenda.

- It is important to generate synergies with other global and regional frameworks (Paris Agreement, Samoa Pathway...), national reports on Human Rights, etc. The VNR opens opportunities to request cooperation from international donors, mobilize partnerships and maintain open communication channels at the national, regional and global levels.
Results of the fourth meeting of the Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, 15-18 March 2021

- 9,600 participants, 31 side events; 100% virtual
- Presentation of ECLAC report: Building forward better: Action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Key messages:
  - LAC is the most affected region by the pandemic, with structural gaps more visible: inequality, informality, low productivity and limited fiscal space
  - Member States called for a technology transfer to middle income countries (MICs), with urgency to close the digital divide, and adapt, innovate, and apply new forms of work, study and coexistence during the pandemic
  - Development of a vulnerability index, and of a methodology for distaste risk reduction
  - The importance of youth and women participation was highlighted as essential for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the recovery
  - The Forum reaffirmed its commitment to the 2030 Agenda as the blueprint during and after the pandemic, and to multilateralism, as the main option for a better recovery
  - The main priority in the short term is to ensure equitable access to the vaccine, as a global public good
  - Member States called for increased liquidity in the financial system, to promote inclusive engines of growth, and to address the financial gaps that affect MICs. They recognized innovative financing mechanisms such as ECLAC’s Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap Initiative in the Caribbean and the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE) initiative proposed by Costa Rica
  - Call for an adjustment to graduation criteria that reflect the multiple dimensions of sustainable development, and call for urgent action to facilitate a response to the current crisis caused by the pandemic in Caribbean SIDS
- Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the Forum that will be sent to the HLPF
Thank you

maria.ortiz@cepal.org