The “SDG Moment”: key messages from Latin America and the Caribbean

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

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The SDG Moment: the launchpad for the Decade of Action

- The first SDG Moment of the Decade of Action, on 18 September 2020, is mandated by the UN General Assembly and convened by the UN Secretary-General.

- The SDG Moment was the “curtain raiser” to the UN General Assembly in its 75th anniversary. Focus on poverty/inequality, gender inequality and climate change.

- The SDG Moment brought together 20 Heads of State and Government, nominated by the regional groups, civil society, local authorities, international organizations and the private sector to generate a renewed sense of urgency, ambition and accountability as the world embarks on a Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs.

- UN Secretary General, António Guterres:
  - Highlighted COVID-19 as the greatest challenge of our times, and how the pandemic has exposed our shortcomings on delivering on the 2030 Agenda.
  - Called for social protection, infrastructure (education, health, internet), to place women at the center of decision-making, and a green transition that can lead to better jobs while preserving the environment.
  - Insisted that political will, financing, and COVID-19 recovery as particularly important to meet the SDGs by 2030.
The SDG Moment: messages from LAC

From Latin America and the Caribbean, the Prime Minister of Barbados and the Presidents of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela intervened during the SDG moment.

• **Barbados:** fight poverty and provide a sustainable development pathway. Climate Change is putting a huge pressure on SIDS and middle-income countries. Ambition for the 2030 Agenda to be real, but no funding or fiscal space. “It’s all right to say to a man that he should lift himself by his own bootstraps. But it’s a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he should lift himself by his own bootstrap” (as stated by Martin Luther King, Jr.)

• **Colombia:** during the pandemic, thousands of houses were connected to the water system and care beds and ventilators doubled. Progress on providing ICT connection for rural communities, so that all students can access education. Committed to climate change and protection of biodiversity. Colombia aims at closing social inequalities and building equity with sustainable and legal peace.

• **Ecuador:** strongly committed to the SDGs as demonstrated in the National Plan "Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2017-2021 Toda una Vida", meant to accompany people throughout the cycle of life. Presented VNR twice. The gender wage gap fell, provided housing and included persons with disabilities in the labor market. All progress is insufficient without solidarity and multilateralism, with common but differentiated responsibilities in terms of climate goals and with concessional funding for developing countries.

• **Peru:** A critical juncture of multilateralism, for the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations. Ensuring universal, timely and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Pandemic revealed the fragility of our system and increased inequalities. Economic and social reactivation plan will tackle social inequalities, including a strong health system, quality education, economic growth, justice and fighting (extreme) poverty.

• **Venezuela:** Defense of our sovereignty and right to sustainable development. Despite COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring food security, decent and comfortable housing units, protection to older persons, and education. Thanks to investments made over the last 20 years, guaranteed free State-provided medical care. Great commitment to the meet the SDGs by 2030.

Where will Latin America and the Caribbean be in 2030?

The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda is at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean. Out of the 169 SDGs targets, Latin America and the Caribbean is likely to meet 14 at the current progress rate.
Ms. Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, delivered a video message along with the other Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions. She highlighted:

• As a result of the pandemic, ECLAC estimates a -9.1% contraction in regional GDP, with an increase in poverty affecting 231 million people (96 million in extreme poverty).
• Governments have provided emergency basic income to the poor and tax exemptions and grace periods to SMEs. ECLAC proposes extending these measures for 9 months.
• A basic digital basket composed of a laptop, smartphone, tablet, and a connectivity plan for households without Internet is proposed.
• In the region, women are worse off than men in terms of discrimination, political exclusion and lack of economic autonomy, and violence against women and girls is the tragedy of inequality exacerbated in this pandemic. Women represent more than 60% of informal labor, and confinement is placing additional pressure on them as primary caregivers, whether paid or unpaid. Women are also on the front line of the response to this health crisis and are more exposed to infection, as they account for 72.6% of those employed in the region’s health sector.
• A new political and fiscal compact to ensure universal social protection
• The region must pursue a strategy to diversify its economic structure, enhance its productive and trade integration, while adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change through innovative financial measures, with universal policies to combat poverty and inequality at the forefront.
Thank you

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