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Opening remarks of Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the opening ceremony of the third edition of the Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

24 April 2019

Santiago, Chile

Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for your strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

I also thank the Government of Cuba for chairing this Forum, and the government of Chile for hosting not only ECLAC, but many other entities of the United Nations in the region.

Finally, I want to recognize the work of ECLAC and the leadership of my colleague and friend Alicia Bárcena.

I wish I could have been with you today at this defining moment on our road toward 2030.

In many ways, this region helped give birth to the conceptual vision behind the Sustainable Development Goals.

Latin America and the Caribbean has demonstrated by theory and practice that alternative economic models are possible.

You have consistently advocated for poverty metrics that go beyond economic growth and GDP, to also reflect social and environmental dimensions.

Our journey is now well advanced.

But, despite progress, early data show the world is not on track.

And as Secretary-General Guterres has put it, we are also losing the race against climate change.

The discussions in this Regional Forum will provide important insights while also underscoring challenges and bottlenecks.

The fact is that the 2030 Agenda is extremely ambitious. Its pledge to leave no one behind demands much more from all of us – government officials, policy makers, parliamentarians, businesses, and civil society organizations.

In this region, persistent inequalities make the task even more daunting.

Inequalities limit economic growth, marginalize individuals and erode public trust in institutions.

We must step up our game.

For its part, the United Nations is taking bold steps to transform and be a better partner to governments and peoples as you deliver on the SDGs.

In January, we created a new, stronger system to coordinate the incredible array of expertise and resources that can be found across 40 different development entities of the United Nations.

Working as one Organization – diverse, yet cohesive - we can provide sharper and more integrated policy advice to governments; take action to a greater scale; and better help countries leverage finance and partnerships.

And in the regions – in hubs like Santiago - we can help better connect global action to results in-country, especially as you face challenges that know no borders, such as climate change, trade and water management.

With our reforms now well advanced, we have never been closer to delivering to Member States the development system they have aspired to for years: a system that is fit for purpose to help you achieve the SDGs.

Excellencies,

In Latin America and the Caribbean, you have compellingly raised the specific challenges of realizing sustainable development in a region of Middle-Income Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Your efforts are helping to put three fundamental questions on the global agenda:

- First, how can we uphold our commitment to leave no one behind when absolute income poverty rates are declining, but multi-dimensional poverty and inequality remains high?
- Second, how can this region ensure that women and indigenous populations can participate fully in the economic, social and political lives of their countries?

- And third, how can we move the needle on financing for development?

Funding is not anywhere near the scale required to deliver on the SDGs.

Here in Latin America and the Caribbean, private flows—including Foreign Direct Investment and remittances—constitute the bulk of external finance.

But to achieve the SDGs, private and public resources must be combined and synergized to maximize the impact of development financing.

To best mobilize external funding, we also need heightened global cooperation to eliminate illicit flows and tax evasion.

At the Conference on South-South Cooperation last month in Buenos Aires, we were also reminded of the unique contributions South-South and triangular cooperation can bring to the table—especially when it comes to the exchange of know-how, technology and expertise.

The United Nations will continue to be your strong ally.

We encourage you to work closely with our Resident Coordinators and Country Teams, to ensure you receive tailored and effective support for your national strategies and plans.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have a great task ahead of us, with the ambitious 2030 Agenda as our shared roadmap.

The global community is counting on your region's continued innovation and creativity.

The road to 2030 will be difficult; but it is our best chance for a future of prosperity, dignity and peace for all.

Thank you.