



Forum of the Countries
of Latin America and
the Caribbean on
**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**
Virtual meeting
15–18 March **2021**

2 March 2021

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America
and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

Virtual meeting, 15–18 March 2021

Concept note

Panel 1: Health and the economy —a false dichotomy?

Wednesday, 17 March, 10 a.m.–1 p.m. (Costa Rica time, GMT -6)

Introduction

The pandemic has had an enormous health impact in Latin America and the Caribbean since the first case of coronavirus was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) in early 2020. Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean have responded to the pandemic with an unprecedented set of emergency social protection programmes, mainly covering households in poverty or facing a higher risk of poverty, such as those with informal workers.

However, public spending on health in the region remains far from the target of 6% of GDP recommended by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and there are problems with the allocation of resources. In most cases, primary health care is not receiving the recommended 30% of total public spending on health and, even in countries where it is, the absolute amounts are extremely low. All this reduces the efficiency and quality of health services, and there is financial vulnerability that impoverishes households, which must make large direct payments when they use health care systems.

Latin America and the Caribbean is also the hardest hit region in the emerging world in terms of the economic, social and environmental effects of the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the region was already showing slow economic growth. In 2020, negative external and internal supply and demand shocks combined with a need to implement lockdown and physical distancing measures and to suspend productive activities. As a result, the health crisis has led to the worst economic, social and productive crisis that the region has experienced in 120 years, with a 7.7% drop in regional GDP in 2020.

Therefore, the region's weaknesses and persistent structural gaps, its limited fiscal space, limited social protection coverage and access, high labour informality, uneven production structure and low productivity are key to understanding the magnitude of the pandemic's effects, as well as the difficulties in implementing

policies to offset those effects and the challenges of generating a sustainable and inclusive economic recovery.

Goals of the panel

The goals of the panel are to:

- Reflect on the measures the countries of the region have taken in response, to strengthen their health systems and emergency social protection programmes, and the sustainability of the measures in a context of limited fiscal space and rising debt in the region.
- Explore policy examples and proposals to address barriers to strengthening and accessing health services, which would also drive an inclusive and fair economic recovery with equality at its centre.
- Examine the challenge of procuring, distributing and administering vaccines in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Moderator: Luis F. Yáñez, Secretary of the Commission (ECLAC)

Panellists

- Martha Delgado Peralta, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
- Joy St. John, Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)
- Alejandro Werner, Director of the Western Hemisphere Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Blanca Margarita Ovelar de Duarte, National Senator of Paraguay and President of ParlAmericas
- Mónica Jasis, focal point of the group on migrants and persons displaced by disasters or conflicts 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
- Román Macaya, Chair of the Board of the Costa Rican Social Security Institute
- Daniel Innerarity, Director of the Institute of Democratic Governance of Spain

Final remarks: Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

Panel format

This multi-stakeholder panel will bring together experts and representatives from government, civil society, and the private and academic sectors in the region. The panel will be moderated by Luis F. Yáñez, Secretary of the Commission (ECLAC).

The moderator will invite the panellists to reflect on the three goals of the panel, through an **eight-minute** introduction.

Once the panellists have finished their presentations, the moderator will open the floor to the representatives of participating countries to address the theme of the panel, for up to three minutes each. After the representatives of the countries have spoken, the floor will be given back to the panellists for closing remarks of two minutes each.

At the end of the panel, Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has been invited to give closing remarks lasting eight minutes.