

***Side Event: Towards an inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19: Needs and contributions of Indigenous Peoples from Latin America and the Caribbean  
UNDCO Latin America and the Caribbean***

Talking Points – 868 words

- **Thank** the organizers (CEPAL and DCO) for the opportunity to speak about the situation of indigenous communities.
- **Highlight** that ‘leaving no one behind’ means reaching these communities. Indigenous people represent 14 per cent of the poor and 17 per cent of the extremely poor in Latin America, despite being only 8 per cent of the population<sup>1</sup>. Besides structural deficits in access to basic services, indigenous communities are also often the most affected by armed conflict and violence. COVID-19 significantly impact them both in terms of health and socio-economic implications.
- **Recall** that the first COVID-19 cases in the region were predominantly registered in urban areas. However, the unique characteristics of the Amazonas quickly turned into a disadvantage. **The Amazonas river is the central artery in a vast network of tributaries that sustains some 30 million people across eight countries** in Latin America. **Territories in the Amazonas of Brazil, Peru and Colombia alone host more than 400 indigenous communities. The virus spread easily along the river reaching remote communities that quickly registered as many cases per capita as New York by May 2020.**
- **Note** that contrary to New York, the Amazonas region only possesses **basic healthcare facilities** in urban areas with large parts of the indigenous population located remote locations. **The confluence of these factor quickly turned the triple border into one of the global epicenters with one of the highest fatality rates worldwide.**
- **Recall** the following actions taken:
  1. A multisectoral rapid needs assessment launched by the Colombian HCT in May 2020.
  2. A coordination outpost established in Leticia to facilitate monitoring and response efforts.
  3. A 25-point action plan elaborated with the UNCTs in Peru and Brazil to deploy coordinated actions to mitigate the multifaceted impacts of the pandemic. **The plan required 10 million USD to be implemented.**
- **Highlight** The promotion of cross-border initiatives between RCOs in the region, has emerged as a very promising strategy to deal with environmental and indigenous peoples’ issues, given their nature as complex Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus affairs.

---

<sup>1</sup> World bank data

- The three UNCTs mobilized some targeted actions in the area. In Colombia, 5 new partners provided an emergency response delivering over 44 tons of food assistance and hygiene kits in the first weeks of the emergency, followed by a multisectoral response in the subsequent months including support to epidemiological surveillance and the donation of life-saving health supplies such as oxygen concentrators. The hospital ship of World Vision Brazil and Colombia in cooperation with the NGO Súmate was key to assist communities along the river. UN country teams in Brazil and Peru also deployed a first line response with available means.
- **Note** that Colombia received a CERF allocation that was partly dedicated to the action plan on the Colombia side. **Unfortunately, efforts of the three RCs to mobilize funding for Peru and Brazil did not materialize – despite pressing needs and UN-led advocacy.**
- There is the need to ensure financing for Peru and Brazil agencies, funds and programmes, for humanitarian and development activities; and to address security issues in an area with illicit trade flows and low presence of state actors.
- **Highlight** that currently after cases decreased significantly in the second half of 2020, the new, more infectious, P.1 variant was confirmed in the Brazilian Amazonas in early January. The director of PAHO, Carissa Etienne, recently warned about the deterioration of the situation in the region.
- **Note** that despite a seroprevalence study of blood donors showing that more than 2/3 of the population had antibodies against the disease, **a second outbreak of the virus in December affected the city even harder than the first epidemic in spring 2020.**
- **Note** that we have all seen the terrifying impact of this variant in Manaus. The Amazonian state in Peru – Loreto –also witnessed a complete ICU occupation. Similarly, the Colombian Amazonas department recently started to report the highest contagion and death rate in the country and has no ICU capacity.
- **Stress** that this second outbreak and, the subsequent isolation of the region increased food and commodity prices. The self-isolation of indigenous communities has furthermore led to deterioration of key socio-economic indicators. **Stress** that despite Governments' efforts to accelerate vaccinations in the region, **serious logistical and capacity challenges remain.**
- **Inform** that the key priorities for the upcoming period are:
  1. **Support the rapid vaccination** of the region which remains the key priority during the next weeks. Vaccinations must not only be offered to the urban population but also the rural population despite logistical challenges.
  2. **Step up resource mobilization efforts.** Whereas the Colombian operations benefited from CERF and ECHO funding, the response in Peru and Brazil were not equally supported which limits the ability of actors to scale up their response in the area.

3. Enhance **consultation with indigenous communities** and drawing up specific and focused plans- tailored to their specific needs and customs- including longer term interventions.
  4. Meanwhile, humanitarian actors in the three countries will continue to provide a multisectoral response in complementarity to State's efforts and relying on an intercultural dialogue with indigenous communities at all territorial levels
- **Conclude** that this is not only a national or regional crisis, but rather a global one. The international community must acknowledge the disparity of the supply of vaccines in the world and in the Americas. The Amazonas basin should be prioritized to stop the high death toll, the spread of the new variant, the irreversible loss of indigenous culture.
  - **Encourage** participants to support multi-country initiatives, as the trinational action plan, which are not only operationally relevant but also promote greater UN strategic collaboration. This plan represents a good model for the increasingly transnational challenges our region is facing.