



Forum of the Countries  
of Latin America and  
the Caribbean on  
**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**  
San José  
7–9 March **2022**

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

San José, 7–9 March 2022

### Concept note

#### Panel

**Peer learning: building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, while moving  
towards full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Wednesday, 9 March, 10:45 – 11:45 a.m.  
(Crowne Plaza Corobicí, Costa Rica time, GMT-6)**

With just eight years to go before the deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the structural challenges for their implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean remain and are increasing in a more demanding and uncertain context resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

At the global level, Latin America and the Caribbean has been the region hardest hit by the pandemic, both in terms of the percentage of infections and deaths from the disease and the magnitude of the deterioration in economic and social conditions faced by its countries in 2020, which led to the largest contraction in regional GDP since 1900 (6.8%) and the worst performance among developing regions. Flat growth in the region in the years before the crisis, combined with the contraction seen in 2020 and the weakness of its social protection and health systems, triggered unprecedented increases in unemployment, declines in income and rising poverty and inequality. These phenomena weighed disproportionately on women, worsening the structural gender inequality that is characteristic of the region. The figures would have been even worse without the social and reactivation policies implemented by the region's countries.

The recovery that began in 2021 has not yet restored the large number of jobs lost, particularly for women, and continues to be shaped by a development model that had already shown its limitations and generated low growth before the pandemic, amid new inflationary pressures that are eroding the real income of much of the population.

In light of this scenario, ECLAC has underscored the need to connect the emergency with the recovery, that is, the short-term response of the States with medium- and long-term policies. ECLAC has also called

for linking measures to respond to the pandemic with the transformation of the development model into one that is more just, inclusive and sustainable. This requires strengthening the resilience of the institutional framework in the face of crises, with renewed capacities to design and implement comprehensive plans, policies, strategies and programmes that are coordinated between sectors and territorial levels, mainstreaming climate action, gender equality and citizen participation.

Amid the growing complexity and interconnectedness of development challenges, peer-learning initiatives make it possible to share and analyse experiences and policies aimed at adopting a new style of development that combines growth, social inclusion, competitiveness, innovation and care for the environment, in order to address the region's structural problems: high levels of poverty, limited capacity to create quality jobs, low productivity and technological intensity of production, and production and consumption patterns that do not adequately internalize environmental externalities. All this in a context of low citizen confidence in the institutions called to lead these changes.

Thus, progress in the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires policy coherence, ensuring that these are coordinated over time (short, medium and long term), in space (multi-scale and multilevel coordination), between sectors (social, economic and environmental) and between actors (public, private and civil society).

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages States to conduct periodic and inclusive reviews of progress and challenges in achieving goals and targets at the national and subnational levels. The presentation of these voluntary national reviews (VNRs) at the high-level political forum on sustainable development at United Nations Headquarters in New York in July each year facilitates the sharing of experiences among peers, including achievements, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the national level, conducting such reviews fosters partnerships and contributes to multi-stakeholder and multilevel reflection and action to address the 17 SDGs in a coordinated and coherent manner.

In this framework, ECLAC created the Community of Practice<sup>1</sup> on the VNRs of Latin American and Caribbean countries in 2019 as an informal space for peer learning among the technical teams of the national mechanisms in charge of monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in general and VNR preparation in particular. This Community of Practice has become an important regional platform for peer learning, collaboration and the sharing of experiences, lessons learned, knowledge and good practices relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the VNR process.

The 46 VNRs submitted by countries in the region between 2016 and 2021 are a wealth of information, analysis, processes, good practices and lessons learned on the road to achieving the Agenda and its goals by 2030 and they also reveal the challenges that will remain beyond that date. As can be seen in the reports, the countries have made significant progress in integrating the SDGs into their national development plans and in the territorialization of the SDGs, but challenges remain. These include difficulties in overcoming the common practice of sectors working independently, with little alignment

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<sup>1</sup> The Community of Practice includes government officials, professionals, researchers and technical experts as well as representatives of ECLAC and of the rest of the United Nations system, and also occasionally representatives of civil society, the private sector and academia. Between December 2019 and early 2022, some 40 virtual meetings were held to support the region's countries in the preparation of their VNRs and in monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Discussion topics included localization of the 2030 Agenda; multi-stakeholder participation; planning and budgeting aligned with the 2030 Agenda; data and statistics for the SDGs; and means of implementation of the Agenda with an emphasis on financing for development, among others. For more information, see [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/2030-agenda-sustainable-development/eclac-community-practice-voluntary-national-reviews>.

between national plans, investment plans and budgets, which prevents the design and implementation of policies that address problems in a systemic and integrated manner.

The panel includes countries with experience in conducting these reviews, as well as countries that will be conducting a review for the first time in 2022. In this regard, and based on the recent experience in the preparation of the VNRs to be presented at the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development, as well as that gathered from previous reports, the panellists are expected to share experiences aimed at building back better from the pandemic while advancing in the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with identified challenges.

## Questions

### *Questions for countries that have already submitted VNRs previously*

- How have the institutional arrangements for following up and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda had an impact on a comprehensive, intersectoral, multilevel, multi-stakeholder and long-term approach to public policies, and what are the remaining challenges?
- Do you believe that the public policies formulated in your country post-2030 Agenda are more comprehensive and participatory? What would you consider the most important characteristics? And what are the challenges that remain in moving towards greater comprehensiveness and multi-stakeholder participation? Could you share an emblematic experience of your country in the territorialization of the 2030 Agenda?

### *Questions for countries submitting their VNRs for the first time*

- How has the preparation of the first VNR made it possible to visualize the transformations needed for a post-pandemic recovery that ensures the style of development is more sustainable while advancing in an integrated manner towards the achievement of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda?

### *General questions*

- What lessons and priorities can be learned from the current crisis to move towards sustainable development?
- How has the necessary alignment of plans/budgets and public investment been addressed in your country and what are the main lessons to be learned from the experience?

## Panel

Moderator: Cielo Morales, Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of ECLAC

See the full preliminary programme at <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/en/programme>.

## Meeting format

This panel will bring together representatives of the countries in the region that will present their VNRs to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2022. The session will be moderated by Cielo Morales, Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of ECLAC.

She will invite the panellists to reflect on the lessons learned in the preparation of their VNRs to build back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, allotting a time of five minutes for their initial statements.

Once all the panellists have made their initial statements, the moderator will invite each one to make a two-minute closing statement.

Finally, the moderator will invite Ángela María Penagos, Director of the Agrifood Initiative and Centro ODS of Universidad de los Andes in Colombia to share some brief final remarks on the discussion (five minutes).

Given that the panel is intended to be a space for conversation that encourages sharing and discussion among panellists and in view of the time constraints, slideshow presentations should not be used.