



Forum of the Countries
of Latin America and
the Caribbean on
**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**
Santiago
15–18 April **2024**

Distr.
LIMITED
LC/FDS.7/6
26 April 2024
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH
2400601[E]

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

Santiago, 15–18 April 2024

SUMMARY OF THE VICE-CHAIR¹



¹ See paragraph 1 in the section “Opening session”.

INTRODUCTION

At the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held in Mexico City from 23 to 27 May 2016, the member States adopted resolution 700(XXXVI), sponsored by Mexico, establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its targets and means of implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

The seventh meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, from 15 to 18 April 2024, was chaired by Costa Rica, in its capacity as Vice-Chair of ECLAC, and was open to member States of the Forum and observers, the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, regional and subregional bodies, international financial institutions, the private sector, academia and civil society.

The Forum of children, adolescents and youth of Latin America and the Caribbean and the meeting 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 were held on 15 April, prior to the start of official activities of the Forum.

The purpose of the meetings of the Forum is to facilitate peer learning and share experiences and best practices among the Latin American and Caribbean countries regarding actions taken to achieve the SDGs in the region.

Opening session

The Secretary of the Commission read a note verbale from the Embassy of Argentina in Chile, dated 15 April 2024, which stated that Argentina would not serve as Chair of the meeting. The seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was therefore led by Costa Rica, in its capacity as Vice-Chair of ECLAC.

In the opening session, statements were made by José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Laura Fernández Delgado, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development; and Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Executive Secretary said that the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was a space for identifying challenges common to the countries of the region in achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the seventh meeting, a detailed analysis would be conducted Goal 1: No poverty; Goal 2: Zero hunger; Goal 13: Climate action; Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions; and Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals. Those Goals would be addressed at the next high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in New York in 2024, at which the conclusions and recommendations agreed by the countries of the region would be presented. The report entitled *The Challenge of Accelerating the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Transitions towards Sustainability*, prepared by ECLAC for the seventh meeting of

the Forum, noted that only 22% of the targets of the SDG had been met or were on track to be met, while slightly more than three quarters of the targets were not. The report also analysed in detail the six transitions to sustainability in the areas of food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education, jobs and social protection; and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The report analysed the challenges presented by each transition, focusing on strategies, plans, policies and programmes, institutional arrangements and investment needs. It was also important to examine both domestic and external funding sources, reforms to the international financial architecture, the resolution of sovereign debt, strengthening of development banks and the reallocation of special drawing rights and analyse debt sustainability. The call issued by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to redouble efforts to achieve the SDGs, through enhanced partnerships and more effective multilateralism, must be heeded; indeed, the theme of the upcoming 2024 Summit of the Future —to be held in New York— would be “Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow”. ECLAC remained committed to supporting the countries of the region in building a more productive, inclusive and sustainable future and would continue to support countries in implementing the SDGs.

The Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Forum, said that it was an honour for her country to lead the activities of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. Since the first meeting of the Forum in 2017, the region had made great strides towards the achievement of the SDGs, but many challenges nonetheless remained. Efforts must therefore be redoubled to step up the pace of progress. The commitment of Costa Rica to the 2030 Agenda was undeniable: in 2024, it would present its third voluntary national review to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Unfortunately, with the agreed deadline for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development just six years away, only 22% of the targets for which data were available were on track to be achieved by 2030; for 46%, the trend was in the right direction but progress was too slow for them to be met; for the remaining 32%, the trend was moving away from the target, making their attainment by 2030 highly unlikely. A greater effort to strengthen multilateralism was therefore needed. The Summit of the Future would present an opportunity to do so. In conclusion, she hoped that the Forum would enable all stakeholders to be heard, share experiences and best practices, and strengthen partnerships so that the best conditions would be in place by 2030.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations underscored the leadership and key role of the countries of region in renewing commitments and stepping up action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Amid rising geopolitical tensions, raging conflicts, inequality and ongoing crises, the region and the world were not on track to meet the SDG targets; but there was hope. The bold Political Declaration endorsed at the SDG Summit in 2023 must be followed by concrete, ambitious and transformative action. She highlighted four areas: coupling climate action with delivering a just and sustainable energy transition; addressing inequalities through food system transformation; transforming education for a better future and thriving in a digital economy; and digital connectivity to drive new economic opportunities, build resilience and reduce poverty. The United Nations development system was a trusted partner and stood ready to help strengthen institutions and governance and rebuild trust in democracy; and counted on Member States for continued investment, as well as input and ideas for reform of the global governance of the future. The region’s voice and leadership was crucial for the successful outcome of the Summit of the Future and other forthcoming conferences on development. She called on governments, stakeholders and other constituencies to seize the moment and the opportunities ahead, and build a healthy, peaceful and prosperous future —for Latin America, the Caribbean and beyond.

The provisional agenda of the seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was adopted.

Interactive session on the Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC, who moderated the session, underscored the importance of the Summit of the Future, which had been approved by the General Assembly to seek solutions to revive the multilateral system, strengthen international cooperation and global governance, and reflect on humanity's shared future. One of the expected main outcomes of the Summit, the Pact for the Future, was being negotiated by Member States. The General Assembly had also decided to organize open, transparent and inclusive intergovernmental consultations on a Global Digital Compact and a Declaration on Future Generations, which would be annexed to the Pact upon their adoption. Lastly, he emphasized the importance, in the interactive session, of member States and all stakeholders sharing their vision, priorities and hopes for the Summit.

The Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, said that her country wished to actively participate in the Summit of the Future, which presented an opportunity to forge a new global consensus on the achievement of a more just and inclusive future. For that reason, the preparations for the event had included various consultations and initiatives. Two of the main themes in which Costa Rica wished to be involved during the Summit were the need for stable, permanent funding for the SDGs and the need to join forces to address climate change.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations said that the Summit of the Future must be an accelerator for achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in full and on time; spur urgent and scaled-up actions, policies and investments; catalyse efforts to ensure the needs of developing countries were met; and have people at the centre. Countries of the region were showing leadership for sustainable development in many forums; had been actively engaged in intergovernmental negotiations regarding the Pact for the Future to be agreed at the Summit of the Future; and had spoken about issues such as the need to increase financing for development, strengthening efforts for women's rights and empowerment, establishing development metrics that went beyond GDP, strengthening climate adaptation and enhancing crisis prevention and management, as well as the need to harness the benefits of digital cooperation for all. The Summit must deliver a clear way forward with concrete commitments in areas including reform of the international financial architecture; the strengthening of digital cooperation that drove development equitably; and the New Agenda for Peace, which took a holistic approach to the drivers of conflict, recognizing the links between sustainable development, climate action and peace.

The Under-Secretary-General for Policy in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General recalled the founding purpose of the Summit of the Future, to equip the United Nations to better meet existing and emerging challenges in a rapidly changing world, and to render multilateralism more inclusive, more effective and more networked. He described the five chapters of the Pact for the Future which was being negotiated and was expected to be adopted in September 2024. The themes on which the chapters were focused included sustainable development and its financing; international peace and security; science, technology and innovation; youth and future generations; and transforming global governance. A Global Digital Compact and a Declaration on Future Generations would be included as annexes to the Pact. The co-facilitators of the Summit had convened permanent representatives of Member States to discuss the road forward for negotiations, which must be strategic and disciplined, with a clear objective to produce a concise, highly ambitious and action-oriented pact. Latin American and Caribbean Member States had tremendous potential as bridge-builders and brokers of the necessary consensuses. Provision had been made for multi-stakeholder inputs at all stages of the process involving the Summit and the Pact for the Future.

Statements by ministers and other government authorities

The Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs of Chile said that the Forum was a significant event for the country, as it provided an opportunity to collectively face the challenges of implementing the SDGs. Recent global crises had tested the multilateral system and international organizations, and trust in those institutions had to be rebuilt through effective reforms. Issues such as gender equality should inform all areas of the Pact for the Future and the region's voices must be heard loud and clear in order to shape the road map that the world was expected to establish in September at the Summit of the Future.

The representative of Belize said that his country hoped to see more ambitious agreements on multilateral solutions in three areas: (i) development financing, including access to development financing for Caribbean small island developing States, mainstreaming of climate-resilient debt instruments, progress on reforms proposed in the Bridgetown Initiative 2.0 and operationalization of the multidimensional vulnerability index; (ii) youth and future generations, including multilateral efforts to foster youth empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship, and the need for global frameworks to include young people in consultations and decision-making; and (iii) the transformation of global governance to reflect current global conditions and challenges, including reform of the United Nations Security Council and the inclusion of developing countries in the boards governing international financial institutions. The Pact for the Future should not be used as a vehicle for weakening existing commitments; instead, it should raise the ambition of multilateral solutions to accelerate implementation of the SDGs.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica said that there was need of a multilateral system that could deliver on the SDGs, and ensure greater international peace and security, and prosperity. United Nations reform must remain a priority, and efforts were needed to ensure Member States were involved in its governance structure and could contribute to its decision-making processes; reform of the Security Council was especially important. Accelerated reform of the international financial architecture was also needed to ensure developing countries could participate in and benefit from a more equitable global economic system, and from rapid mobilization of capital and investment from public and private resources. As co-facilitator, along with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, of the negotiations on the Declaration on Future Generations, Jamaica would do its best to ensure that the document provided impetus for a more forward-thinking approach to decision- and policy-making, making full use of foresight, data and science.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua said that the world faced complex challenges, such as climate change, health crises and the imposition of unilateral coercive measures by some Western Powers. The Summit of the Future was an opportunity to seek solutions within the framework of a new multilateralism that must be respectful of the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples. It was also necessary to reform and democratize the United Nations so that all countries could participate on an equal footing.

The Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay said that at a time of major crises and with progress towards the SDGs at a standstill, renewed global collective action was urgently needed and the Summit of the Future offered an opportunity for such action. The region played a key role in the search for solutions and some countries would preside over important international forums, including the General Assembly of the United Nations. He underscored challenges in regional trade integration, measuring development beyond GDP and governance of international financing.

The Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stressed that the Summit of the Future could help to revitalize multilateralism, but that required setting aside differences in order to realize the legitimate aspirations of the people. Concrete measures were urgently needed to overcome the multiple ongoing crises and critical areas for his country included the crucial reform of the international financial architecture and the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on a large share of the global population.

The Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador mentioned the many challenges in the areas of poverty, health, economic development, peace and the environment that hampered the achievement of sustainable development. He said that only through an effective and universal multilateral system could global threats be addressed, and he expressed his country's hope that the Summit of the Future would be an opportunity to strengthen cooperation and contribute to a revitalized multilateral system.

The Secretary for Multilateral Political Affairs of Brazil spoke of the aim for people to have access to education and health, and to live in peace. That should be the focus of the multilateral system of the United Nations, and to that end, the system required reform —particularly the Security Council, to ensure its legitimacy— and renewed instruments for addressing conflicts. Countries were considering emerging issues with great interest, but in a fragmented manner; going forward, the United Nations must encourage convergence.

Statements by multiple stakeholders

The representative of The Millennials Movement underscored the importance of creating spaces for intersectional and intergenerational participation, which could only be achieved through a great alliance among the various stakeholders. The Summit of the Future was a forum to re-examine the issues of integration and cooperation, revitalize the 2030 Agenda and disseminate it more widely. The region could take on a pioneering role by truly integrating young people; it was necessary to look beyond 2030 and not only plan for the desired future, but also for the present that was needed.

The Executive Director of The Millennials Movement, in her capacity as focal point of the United Nations Civil Society Conference in Support of the Summit of the Future, highlighted the role of civil society as an important partner in the effort to build common approaches among all sectors and an inclusive, networked multilateralism. She spoke about the expected outcomes of the Conference, and called for more ambitious efforts and joint participation, putting aside differences, in the region. She also called on ECLAC, together with the other regional commissions, to convey the vision of the regions at both meetings.

The Director of Research of CEPEI and Co-Chair of the Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN) said that the Summit of the Future was a unique opportunity and spoke of the need for capacity to innovate and to develop and implement global responses. C4UN would present a peoples' pact, which included messages on issues such as multilateralism and international financing. He said that the 2030 Agenda was the path that the international community had set out to follow and that the Summit could provide the tools to move in that direction.

Other statements

In the ensuing discussion, the Secretary for Planning and Programming of the Office of the President of Guatemala said that the world faced new global challenges that required effective and concrete responses. The Summit of the Future offered an opportunity to strengthen multilateral solutions. For his

country, the transformations needed were only possible through open government, transparency and peace, which provided an enabling environment for progress. There was a need to join forces, share knowledge and work together for a sustainable future for all.

The Director of Social Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Peru said that the Summit of the Future was an opportunity to rebuild the foundations for global action and revitalize the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The changes and challenges faced demanded a coordinated response, beyond the short term. All countries should help to create multilateral solutions, according to their strengths, resources and context. Progress was also necessary in the adoption of indicators in addition to GDP that would enable measurement of the progressive achievement of sustainable development.

The Director of the International Economic Agencies Department of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment of Cuba said that the Summit of the Future should be leveraged to advocate for the implementation of a multilateral mechanism to renegotiate sovereign debt. The effects of imbalances were increasing for countries affected by unilateral coercive measures. For Cuba, the future would be much brighter if the unjust economic, trade and financial blockade imposed by the United States were lifted. The Summit must support a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, which meant the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to build their own independent and sovereign State. There was no other effective means of stopping the spiral of violence and genocide, and of building a viable path to peace. The Summit of the Future must directly address those structural failures of a systemic, moral and political nature. Multilateral solutions must be adopted to ensure a better future.

The representative of Mexico said that democratizing the 2030 Agenda meant ensuring that anyone could play a part in implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, which meant involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making, including young people.

The representative of Colombia referred to the problem of water scarcity and the need to ensure sustainable lifestyles. She said that work was needed to ensure no one was left behind, especially the most vulnerable populations, and that peace should be the cross-cutting theme of discussions at the Summit of the Future.

The representative of UNAIDS said that solidarity and multilateral collaboration had led to a decrease in HIV/AIDS-related mortality, and emphasized the key role played by communities and civil society in the recognition of rights in the region, including access to medicines.

The Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations and President of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly said, in a pre-recorded video message, that the discussions at the Forum and at the first-ever United Nations General Assembly Sustainability Week would complement each other, highlighting the pressing need to accelerate efforts to get progress on the SDGs back on track to deliver the 2030 Agenda. Regional commissions such as ECLAC played a crucial role in forging new consensus and driving multilateral solutions by effectively supporting member States at the regional level to formulate evidence-based policies and development plans that put people and the planet at the centre. The three documents expected to arise from the Summit, the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, should constitute a formidable outcome, which would define the shared future for decades to come. The principle of inclusivity of both processes and outcomes was central to the success of the Summit, and it was essential that all voices be heard.

The Under-Secretary-General for Policy in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General said that the discussion had confirmed the potential, readiness and willingness of Member States in the region to take on a leadership role in arriving at a powerful Pact for the Future. It was clear that the objectives and desired outcome of the Summit were closely connected to delivering the 2030 Agenda. Development financing was at the heart of realizing the ambitions and objectives of the 2030 Agenda. He was impressed by the number of references to the importance of youth participation and the Declaration on Future Generations, and acknowledged the leadership of Jamaica in co-facilitating negotiations on that Declaration. Human rights, gender equality and the rule of law had been identified by the General Assembly as transversal issues to be mainstreamed in the Pact for the Future, and were at the heart of the negotiation process. A successful outcome of the Summit, the adoption of a highly ambitious and action-oriented Pact, would contribute significantly to making the future of the world safer, more peaceful, prosperous, sustainable, fair and just; in a word, better.

Presentation of the document *The Challenge of Accelerating the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Transitions towards Sustainability*, seventh report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC presented the document *The Challenge of Accelerating the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Transitions towards Sustainability*,² seventh report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report was divided into two major parts: an analysis of the status of prioritized SDG targets for 2024, and a set of recommendations to accelerate progress towards their achievement. He said that global growth had decelerated between 2023 and 2024, with figures below historic averages. For Latin America and the Caribbean, it was not an isolated incident but rather a continuation of its progressively declining capacity for growth. Boosting productivity was key to achieving sustained growth, addressing other development challenges and accelerating progress towards the SDGs. The region had fallen into three development traps: low, volatile, exclusionary and unsustainable growth; high inequality coupled with low levels of social mobility and cohesion; and limited institutional capacity and ineffective governance. To emerge from those traps, the region needed a new model of development that was more productive, inclusive and sustainable.

The Executive Secretary stressed that productive development policies were paramount not only for increasing economic growth rates in the region but also for reorienting that growth towards more inclusivity, which would help to reduce poverty and informality, and more sustainability, which would ensure greater respect for the planet. Those policies should be focused on 10 priority areas, which he listed, and should be aligned with the essential dimensions of territory and governance. In addition, 14 sectors had been identified as having significant potential to drive productive transformation. The availability of statistical data was improving year after year, although certain indicators still lacked comparable data to measure progress towards achieving the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the latest regional data, just above three quarters of the targets would not be met by the established deadline, which amounted to a slight worsening of the previous year's outlook. Goal 3, 7, 9 and 15 targets had the highest likelihood of achievement, while Goal 12 and 13 targets had the lowest.

Chapter IV represented a new addition to the annual report. It focused on needed transitions in the six policy areas best positioned to simultaneously impact multiple SDGs: food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection; and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Policies tended to be designed with a focus on technical expertise regarding the

² LC/FDS.7/3.

functioning of economic, social and environmental systems, but the focus should be broadened to include other types of expertise, in particular foresight planning and shepherding transformative, collective action towards desired outcomes. Each transition was analysed from that perspective, with emphasis placed on means of implementation.

Accelerating the six transitions would require new development strategies, policies, plans, programmes and projects, designed and executed collectively by social stakeholders and in coordination with the State, to determine how and with what resources the transitions should proceed. In that regard, it was necessary to develop institutional capacities for social dialogue and inclusion, governance, public-private coordination, multiscale linkages and foresight, to drive initiatives to transform prevailing development patterns. With regard to investment needs, since 2010, national fiscal deficits had been on the rise. Public revenues were insufficient to cover public expenditures, which had diminished public investment in key areas for SDG achievement. Of all the regions, Latin America and the Caribbean had the lowest levels of public investment. Mobilizing domestic resources was critical to improve that outlook and implement sustainable fiscal policy for development.

Two major obstacles in that regard were elevated debt levels and high effective interest rates on general government gross public debt. Several countries of the region were spending 3%–4% of GDP on sovereign debt interest payments alone, which in some cases was more than half of what they invested in education, health and social protection. ODA was insufficient to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The overarching message was that the international financial architecture was inadequate to drive sustainable development. Global financial and tax reform was thus urgently needed, which called for increasing financial resources for development in order to provide lasting solutions for countries in debt distress, and encouraging development banks to play an active role in increasing financing for development.

In the ensuing discussions, the delegation from Brazil affirmed its national commitment to the 2030 Agenda, saying that urgent action was required to achieve the SDGs. In that regard, Brazil had adopted a range of measures that other countries had replicated, which highlighted the importance of information exchange. It was also important to implement different public policies to promote racial equality and tackle inequalities. The representative of Cuba described the broad coverage of social protection policies in his country and said that without peace, supported by cooperation, solidarity and multilateralism, there could be no sustainable development. The representative of Ecuador said that her country had implemented a number of initiatives aligned with the 2030 Agenda and had solid data to contribute to its next voluntary national review. The representative of Guatemala said that overcoming the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in the region was an uncertain prospect and underscored the importance of closing the wide gaps in the country and safeguarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that his country, which had been through three major cycles in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda since 2015, confirmed its commitment to multilateralism and the 2030 Agenda and was working steadily towards the fulfilment of the SDGs. The representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis said that her country was a small independent nation but steadfast in implementing transformative actions. The State agenda was premised on inclusivity, meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and energy security, among others, and the national focus on accelerating the SDGs was reflected in the country's first voluntary national review. The representative of Mexico highlighted the importance of young people, rural communities and Indigenous Peoples in furthering sustainable development and said that her country had a humanistic and comprehensive model of sustainable development. The representative of Paraguay emphasized the need to find sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for eradicating poverty and said that it was important to establish social and fiscal compacts and partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society to make progress towards the SDGs. The representative of Panama said that her country had implemented innovative

solutions to the various challenges of achieving the SDGs and had adopted a more inclusive and equitable approach with a territorial, multi-ethnic and multicultural perspective. The representative of Costa Rica mentioned the progress her country had made in sustainable development then noted that factors such as climate change, large migratory flows and high levels of public debt put at risk the narrowing of social divides in the region, which was at a crossroads.

Contribution of the United Nations sustainable development system in Latin America and the Caribbean

The session was moderated by Roberto Valent, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Development Coordination Office of the United Nations.

Presentation of the 2023 system-wide results report of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean

The report was presented by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC and Michelle Muschett, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP, in their capacity as Vice-Chairs of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the Regional Collaborative Platform had been established in response to the recommendations of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system at the regional level to improve support for States in their pursuit of the SDGs and ensure that system entities responded as effectively as possible to development challenges. He discussed the Platform's key functions and described its working mechanisms, anchored by issue-based coalitions and thematic working groups and supported by operational and programmatic working groups, such as the SDG data and statistics working group. The Platform had incorporated into its work and methods of support the six strategic transitions that the United Nations had identified as central to accelerating progress towards the SDGs, as each of those areas posed certain fundamental challenges in the region. He presented the most significant outcomes that the United Nations development system, through the Platform, had achieved in 2023 in the areas of knowledge management; increased transparency and results-based management; data and statistics; and regional efficiency. Lastly, he detailed the accomplishments of some of the issue-based coalitions and thematic working groups.

The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean for UNDP presented the results of the various issue-based coalitions and thematic working groups and their achievements with regard to other regional priorities, such as education, health and food systems, in addition to operational and programmatic support. She shared the Platform's three priorities for 2024: regional coherence with global priorities to support system-wide efforts in the six transitions, with a focus on leaving no one behind; continued support for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to tackle SDG gaps, with a focus on cross-border and subregional contexts; and partnerships with key regional stakeholders, such as international financial institutions and subregional development actors. Lastly, she listed key factors in the efforts to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the unique political opportunity that chairing and hosting various international forums would provide the region in 2024.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Cuba highlighted his country's long history of working with the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations and expressed support for strengthening the Regional Collaborative Platform to meet country needs. The representative of Panama said that her country had worked with the United Nations system to implement robust public policy measures and that inclusive social development called for the involvement of all social stakeholders.

Presentation of the Regional Gender Equality Profile and SDG indicators to accelerate progress towards equality in Latin America and the Caribbean

María-Noel Vaeza, Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and Ana Güzemes, Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC, delivered a presentation on the Regional Gender Equality Profile and SDG indicators to accelerate progress towards equality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of UN-Women said that the Regional Gender Equality Profile had been developed jointly with PAHO with view to achieving system-wide collaboration to understand the status of women in the region and identify a path forward. Global progress on Goal 5 was limited, but there was some indication of possible regional progress on some of the Goal 5 indicators (e.g. care systems).

The Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC underscored the importance of breaking the statistical silence surrounding the status of women and girls and of gender equality to ensure the availability of disaggregated statistics. She noted that gender mainstreaming was under way in all phases of statistical production and emphasized the importance of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Regional Representative for the Andean Region and the Southern Cone of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) mentioned the challenges posed by organized crime, corruption and violence in the region, which were priority issues for UNODC. To avoid those threats where possible and address those already present, guides and other materials would be launched on a multilingual digital platform. The digital platform was expected to serve as an important capacity-building tool for United Nations country teams.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that coordination among all stakeholders was always a challenge, as work was done at multiple levels: global, regional, subregional and national. In that regard, substantial progress had been made since the launch of the reform of the United Nations development system and further improvements were expected to enhance the system's capacity to support countries. Lastly, he said that the messages received from the countries were an incentive to keep working and improving and learn from experience.

Advancing the priorities of Caribbean small island developing States towards achieving the 2030 Agenda

The session was moderated by Diane Quarless, Chief of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. The panellists were Joy-Marie King, Director of International Trade in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration of Antigua and Barbuda; Rochelle W. Newbold, Special Adviser on Climate Change and Environmental Matters in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Bahamas; Shennel Richards, Chief Research Officer in the Office of the Prime Minister of Barbados; Kennethia Douglas, Project Manager at the SDG Technical Coordinating Secretariat of the Ministry of Planning and Development of Trinidad and Tobago; Benito Wheatley, Special Envoy of the Premier of the British Virgin Islands; and Jemiah Prince, Legal Adviser to the Chairperson's Committee, Caribbean Regional Youth Council.

The Director of International Trade in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Immigration of Antigua and Barbuda said that her country would soon host the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which was expected to adopt a plan to succeed the current SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. The draft plan focused on resilient economies, strong health and social protection systems, a secure future and planetary sustainability. The Conference would also launch a new centre of excellence to enhance social and economic resilience and monitor progress, achievements and challenges related to the new plan.

The Special Advisor on Climate Change and Environmental Matters in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Bahamas said that legislative and regulatory reforms had been made to facilitate data collection and analysis, and the digital transformation. Efforts to build resilience had prioritized energy independence, food security, adaptive and sustainable development, and youth empowerment. Countries with highest GHG emissions must comply with their obligations, otherwise the efforts and investment made by the most vulnerable countries would be lost. Predatory lending should not force developing SIDS to choose between the SDGs and debt reduction.

The Chief Research Officer in the Office of the Prime Minister of Barbados highlighted two priority areas for small island developing States. The first, access to international resources in line with the Bridgetown Initiative for the Reform of the Global Financial Architecture, was important for closing SDG financing gaps. The second, improving public health, required strengthened health systems through increased investment and international aid, and strengthened food security through increased agrifood production, enhanced trade relationships and the elimination of trade barriers.

The Project Manager in the SDG Technical Coordinating Secretariat of the Ministry of Planning and Development of Trinidad and Tobago highlighted four key areas in her country's efforts to achieve sustainable development. Strategies and actions were being implemented to make progress on the climate change agenda, transition to green and sustainable energy, support digital transformation, innovation and data strengthening, and build institutional capacity. The country was committed to advancing regional priorities and the sustainable development of small island developing States.

The Special Envoy of the Premier of the British Virgin Islands said that, despite consensus at the first preparatory meeting, small island developing States that were associate members of the regional commissions—including 13 in the Caribbean—had been left out of the draft outcome document of the fourth Conference and raised concerns about the need for associate members to access financing for development and other forms of assistance to strengthen sustainable development and climate resilience.

The Legal Adviser to the Chairperson's Committee of the Caribbean Regional Youth Council, noting the many crises and challenges of concern to the young people of the region, urged stakeholders to invest in climate-resiliency, deliver on promises regarding regional food security, focus on comprehensive climate education in a decolonized education curriculum, along with continued adaptation and mitigation strategies, increase public confidence and trust in the relevant authorities, and adopt a public health approach to crime and violence. Young people were serious and willing partners, but a sustainable tomorrow was contingent on leadership today.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Cuba said that the "Caribbean first" initiative must be upheld and championed at the meetings of the Forum. Small island developing States, which had to contend with the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, weak economic growth, high levels of debt,

inflation, external shocks, diminished sources of financing and the worsening effects of climate change, warranted differential treatment. He called for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Samoa Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The representative of Jamaica said that his country was focused on accelerators for the SDGs. There was a need to invest heavily in infrastructure, in particular early warning systems, and to expand fiscal buffers. Jamaica's catastrophe bond had been the first of its kind and was an example to follow in the region. Marine ecosystem protection was imperative, and despite progress in sustainable fisheries management practices, stronger enforcement was needed. He highlighted the need to reduce fossil fuel dependence, focus on food security, formalize the structure of the green, blue and orange economies and enhance data capacities to attract the needed investment. The representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis said that his country did not have access to concessional financing as it was considered a high-income country, affecting climate adaptation projects; that the predictability and timeliness of donor financing was an issue, as any financing granted often came three or four years too late; and that domestically, countries must address productivity in public service if SDGs were to be achieved and national development plans implemented. The representative of Brazil referred to the global alliance against hunger and poverty that her country was promoting in the Group of Twenty (G20). The meeting to define the terms thereof would be held in Terezinha, Brazil, in May 2024 for their subsequent submission to the G20 meeting in November. She invited the countries of the Caribbean to join the alliance.

The representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) recognized the constraints posed by size and environmental threats and said that the Programme was working with SIDS to address the climate crisis and food security. The Caribbean could continue to count on WFP support. The representative of UN-Habitat recalled the meeting of the Forum of Ministers and Highest Authorities of Housing and Urbanism of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI) and the agreement between Caribbean member States, UN-Habitat and ECLAC to work on mobilizing resources and technical assistance and support for implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The representative of UN-Women said that the entity was working with several Caribbean countries to establish and organize care systems, as that was the most efficient way to address the time women spent on care. There were many positive examples and good practices from the region with regard to eliminating violence against women; work should be continued with civil society and the judiciary to ensure due process. She recalled the message on breaking the statistical silence and highlighted the importance of strengthening work on gender sensitive data. The representative of UNAIDS applauded advances in the region in eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV, which had been recently validated in three countries (Belize, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). The Caribbean, beginning with Cuba, was a good example for Latin America. The representative of FAO said that despite significant strides in reducing undernourishment, Caribbean SIDS faced social, economic and environmental challenges that adversely affected food security and nutrition, especially for most vulnerable groups. Effective governance, transparency, and data collection, production and analysis were among the key factors for addressing challenges, reducing volatility and guiding informed policy decisions.

In closing, the moderator recalled the structural and systemic challenges facing the region and said that the promise of the 2030 Agenda would remain a distant dream if Caribbean States and territories were denied the resources needed. Support through partnerships, especially South-South and triangular cooperation would help to strengthen institutions, but it was only through access to long-term, low-cost financial resources to invest in technical, institutional and productive capacity that the range of policy imperatives to achieve sustainable development in the subregion could be implemented and sustained.

Panel 1: Goal 1 – No poverty

The panel was moderated by María-Noel Vaeza, Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and the panellists were Irais Graciela Barreto Canales, Executive Secretary of the National Council for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Chief of the Global Economic Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Mexico; Jorge Aldana, Mayor of Tegucigalpa; Andrea Repetto, President of Fundación Superación de la Pobreza of Chile; Elbert Ellis, Senior Operations Officer at the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB); Wellington Dias, Minister for Social Development and Assistance, Family Affairs and the Fight against Hunger of Brazil; Luis Felipe López-Calva, Global Director of the Poverty and Equity Global Practice at the World Bank; and Igor Pantoja, Coordinator for Institutional Relations of Instituto Cidades Sustentáveis of Brazil and representative 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.

The Executive Secretary of the National Council for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Chief of the Global Economic Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Mexico said that poverty was multidimensional and should be addressed using a variety of instruments and through cross-sectoral partnerships. Her country's efforts had focused on poverty in the south of Mexico, in rural areas and among women and young people, seeking to remedy a debt with historically marginalized sectors. Improvements had been made in aspects such as the minimum wage, by agreement with the private sector, tax collection and managing inflation had been improved. There were macroeconomic factors that enabled progress to be sustained through time.

The Mayor of Tegucigalpa stressed that poverty was not simply a lack of money; it was also a lack of government policies for the well-being of the population. People wanted cities that offered opportunities, health care, education and well-being. Poverty and its causes could be addressed in three ways: by improving neighbourhoods comprehensively, which, in addition to providing dignity, generated jobs and opportunities; by investing in the most vulnerable sectors, for example through seed capital for new businesses; and by providing access to public services, such as water, which was a human right.

The President of Fundación Superación de la Pobreza of Chile said that poverty was a complex issue that affected various aspects of life. States should address that complexity and consider the importance of coordinated action in response to the multiple needs of the same people; design rights-based programmes and simplify processes as opposed to making application mandatory; group programmes rather than implementing them in isolation; and keep in mind that eligibility requirements for programmes led to exclusion of people who were already living in difficult conditions. Given the challenge of understanding the lived experience of poverty, mechanisms had to be sought to allow for participation of people living in poverty.

The Senior Operations Officer at the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) said that the Bank's more holistic approach to development focused on resilient social protection systems, climate financing and protecting livelihoods. Cross-cutting areas included the digital transformation, regional integration, gender equality and governance. The Bank was also supporting poverty assessments conducted using empirical data and multidimensional poverty indicators. Smart partnerships that leveraged public, private and third sector stakeholders were indispensable for the Bank's member countries to achieve Goal 1.

The Minister for Social Development and Assistance, Family Affairs and the Fight against Hunger of Brazil said that decades of work had shown what needed to be done to address Goals 1 and 2, but social inequality was also reflected in inequalities between countries. The government wished to promote a truly open partnership in the Group of 20 (G20) to broaden the implementation of good programmes and to end poverty. The aim was not to establish a new international forum but to muster new resources and mobilize them in a more organized fashion, focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable. Countries had valuable experiences to share and establishing a global partnership to combat poverty was everyone's job.

The Global Director of the Poverty and Equity Global Practice at the World Bank said that growth lags in the region would only worsen in a business-as-usual scenario, keeping Goal 1 out of reach. Poverty fomented conflict, migration, informality and a crisis of representation. The answer was to renew the social contract and involve new stakeholders to address the current power asymmetries. The international community could fund improvements in local capacity for consensus-building and the establishment of regulatory frameworks to redirect policy towards climate-friendly and inclusive growth.

The Coordinator for Institutional Relations of Instituto Cidades Sustentáveis of Brazil and representative 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 outlined various proposals for action: raising awareness of the situation of the different groups in vulnerable situations, using differentiated data, to tackle poverty in an intersectional approach; combating discrimination and promoting equal access to goods and services for different groups; encouraging a care approach, including by creating programmes to reduce the burden of care on women; and fostering accountability and citizen participation, including greater civil society participation in the preparation of voluntary national and local reviews.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Panama said that her country had reduced poverty in recent years and was firmly committed to its eradication. Initiatives had been launched to generate significant structural changes in that regard. The representative of Paraguay said that reducing poverty was a priority in her country, numerous plans had been designed to that end and the government had partnered on the issue with several United Nations entities. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that a variety of social missions had been established, some focused on poverty reduction, and emphasized the importance of empowering the people and redistributing power to achieve that objective. The representative of Chile said that it was not a given that any of the targets would be achieved and that data should not be viewed simply as numbers. It was important to update how poverty was measured in response to the economic, social and cultural changes that had taken place in her country. The representative of Cuba said that his country had implemented multidimensional means of measuring poverty and poverty reduction plans had been in place for quite some time. The main problem was preventing more people from falling into poverty and ensuring that those who had overcome poverty did not slip back into it. The representative of Ecuador mentioned the plans aimed at the most vulnerable persons and said that reducing poverty, one of the main lines of work of the country, would only be achieved through joint and coordinated inter-agency action. The representative of Mexico emphasized that poverty and its various expressions was a complex issue, noting the need for initiatives to address both immediate needs and long-term impacts. The representative of Colombia said that States should adopt policies and strategies that generated public goods and that in order to eradicate poverty and end its feminization, the development model must be transformed and effective protection of human rights must be ensured.

The representative of UN-Habitat said that poverty was not just about money; it bore a face —the face of a woman— and was concentrated in certain areas, hence the need to advance in comprehensively improving local neighbourhoods. The representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

referred to the recent population censuses conducted in several countries of the region and emphasized the importance of having accurate data to design public policies that were better targeted. The representative of FAO said that the rise in extreme poverty, food insecurity and hunger in the region was linked to higher international food price. Addressing poverty required multifaceted strategies that included policies to increase food production, enhance income opportunities and foster farmers' resilience to economic shocks. Diversified and innovative financing would be critical and would relieve poverty while fostering environmental sustainability and reducing inequality.

Lastly, the moderator highlighted some of the points made in the presentations, emphasizing the importance of raising the minimum wage. In the region, poverty heightened the vulnerability of women and girls to violence, and reducing poverty lowered their risk of being victims of violence. Poverty was multidimensional and included the time poverty women experienced; this was why the establishment of care systems was being promoted. She expressed appreciation for the use in the presentations of an intersectional approach that had been very effective in highlighting the situation women were facing. It was —also important to think of the future and to place greater emphasis on foresight.

Panel 2: Goal 2 – Zero hunger

The panel discussion was moderated by Mario Lubetkin, Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the panellists were: Jimmy Eduardo Bermúdez Perdomo, Executive Director of the Ministerial Office in the Presidential Secretariat of Honduras; Amaro Angel Rivadeneira, National Director of Follow-up and Evaluation of the National Centre for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) of Peru; Lola Castro, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Food Programme (WFP); Hernán Chiriboga, Representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in Chile; Yamandú Plada, Fundraising Director of Red de Alimentos Compartidos (REDALCO) of Uruguay; and Marcela Browne, Education Coordinator of Fundación SES and Secretary of Campaña Argentina por el Derecho a la Educación (CADE), and representative 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.

The Executive Director of the Ministerial Office in the Presidential Secretariat of Honduras said that the situation in his country with respect to Goal 2 was a consequence of the neoliberal model, which had driven the rural population out of the countryside, eliminated incentives for national production and allowed transnational private investors to take the place of national companies. Under the *Red Solidaria* programme, the government sought, among other things, to secure land ownership for campesinos, alleviate the debt of small producers and rebuild the road network in rural areas with a medium level of production.

The National Director of Follow-up and Evaluation of CEPLAN of Peru said that the country had been working to improve indicators related to Goal 2, and had done so with respect to chronic malnutrition in children, but had not been as successful regarding food security. Improvements had been possible thanks to the implementation of social programmes and other initiatives, either led by the State or supported by the private sector. Various challenges in that area included the adoption of a holistic approach focused on all stages of the food chain and on fostering effective vertical governance to improve collaboration with local governments.

The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of WFP focused on some good practices in the region with respect to Goal 2. In relation to the effects of disasters on food security, she highlighted the provision of subsidies, the protection of biodiversity and micro- and macro-insurance.

School feeding programmes were a crucial social protection system, not only because they ensured children learned and were fed, but also because purchases were made locally, which reduced the environmental impact and guaranteed income for the community. WFP was also working with FAO to reduce food waste and the resulting release of methane into the atmosphere.

The Representative of IICA in Chile said that the rural population was growing older and that one of the main factors driving young people away from rural areas was the lack of connectivity. That problem had to be solved, as young agricultural leaders working for sustainable food production were needed, and the explosive growth of cities had to be stopped. He also said that some production patterns must change, such as the fact that the region's net food exporting countries imported 78% of the fertilizers they used.

The Fundraising Director of REDALCO of Uruguay underscored that, as was the case in the rest of the region, food was produced for many more people than lived in the country, and much of it was wasted. REDALCO connected food markets with organizations working with vulnerable populations to reduce food insecurity by recovering fruits and vegetables that were discarded for aesthetic reasons. Its current objective was to serve as a pilot project with a view to extending that initiative to the rest of the countries in the region.

The Education Coordinator of Fundación SES and Secretary of CADE, and representative 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 said that there were three ongoing pandemics—obesity, chronic malnutrition and climate change—which together represented a global syndemic, because they affected all people around the world, and arose from economic, social and political circumstances that needed to be changed. States had an obligation to ensure food security, and regulations were needed to advance public policies that took nutrition into account.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Panama shared the progress made by her country in food and food security, saying that the prevalence of undernourishment had declined significantly in recent years and that work was being done, for example, to improve nutrition education and encourage family farming. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela commented on the progress and challenges relating to food and spoke about his country's Local Committees for Supply and Production, various plans and programmes aimed at improving food security and the work carried out in that area with various United Nations agencies. The representative of Mexico stressed that the right to food was, above all, a human right, and spoke of the importance of cooperatives and the need to foster the social economy and consolidate value chains in the regions, not in isolated local markets. The representative of Brazil spoke of the importance of school feeding programmes and sustainable and family farming, and said that her country provided assistance to small farmers and had created a food support network, which included civil society participation. The representative of Paraguay detailed some plans and programmes related to food and nutrition that had been implemented in the country and which, by addressing issues such as food security, nutrition education and breastfeeding, were aimed at improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable people. The representative of Chile spoke about food security in her country and the multisectoral strategy implemented to move forward on this issue, while highlighting the increased coverage of the school feeding programme.

The representative of UN-Women mentioned some salient issues that required attention: the role of care in food security, the specific impacts of food shortages on women, the role of women in the food chain, and women's lack of access to credit.

In conclusion, the moderator summarized the issues that had been addressed during the session and emphasized that in order to achieve food and nutrition security in the region, concerted action on multiple fronts and with the participation of all stakeholders was imperative.

Panel 3: Goal 13 – Climate action

The panel was moderated by Nahuel Arenas, Chief of the Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the panellists were Laura Fernández Delgado, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica; Maisa Rojas, Minister of the Environment of Chile; Martín Francos, Director General of Public Investment in the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development of the Dominican Republic; María José Lubertino, representative of Asociación Ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos, Red de Defensoras del Ambiente y el Buen Vivir and Red Ecofeminista LAC, and 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; and André Aranha Corrêa do Lago, Secretary for Climate, Energy and Environment of Brazil.

The Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica said that the countries of the region were facing high levels of risk and destruction related to climate change and that there was a need to take decisive action, with commitments at the national, regional and local levels. Budgeted planning strategies were needed and she listed a set of funding instruments that had been institutionalized in her country to capture permanent funding for climate action. It was essential to follow through at each step of the chain, from planning to accountability, to ensure that initiatives had the desired results. Adequate statistics were also needed for decision-making.

The Minister of the Environment of Chile said that her country had made sound progress in implementing its international climate commitments. The Framework Law on Climate Change of 2022 included a binding target for carbon neutrality by 2050. The country's nationally determined contribution contained ambitious goals and a reduction target that encompassed all sectors of the economy, and it had been strengthened with the introduction of the concept of a fair socioecological transition. She highlighted the importance for the region of synergies between climate action and efforts to address pollution and biodiversity loss.

The Director General of Public Investment in the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development of the Dominican Republic said that his country was affected by disasters originating elsewhere and that it must adapt, and he described a set of policies and instruments for that purpose. A bill on disaster risk management was before the parliament and the country had stepped up its climate ambition in the latest nationally determined contribution. Progress had been made, but there were also many challenges, in particular for populations living in poverty.

The representative of Asociación Ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos, Red de Defensoras del Ambiente y el Buen Vivir and Red Ecofeminista LAC, and 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 said that sustainability discourse was translating into a new phase of dispossession and that decarbonization could consolidate new forms of extractivism. The region had an opportunity to change the current development model, which was inefficient and had devastating effects on common goods. It was possible for countries to grow and be environmentally sustainable, but wide-reaching and rapid transformations were needed. New forms of political dialogue and regional cooperation with robust civil society participation must be developed.

The Secretary for Climate, Energy and Environment of Brazil said that the new government that had taken office in January 2023 had made the achievement of the SDGs and addressing climate change a top priority. Although deforestation accounted for half of the emissions of Brazil, it had already been reduced by 50% in less than one year and the country expected to meet its target of zero deforestation by 2030. The national treasury had issued a sustainable bond that had raised US\$ 2 billion to finance projects through the government's climate fund. There would be much progress to report in time for the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the SDGs in 2025.

In the ensuing statements, the representative of Barbados said that her country supported the Bridgetown Initiative, which aimed to overcome the barriers to mobilizing finance for climate-vulnerable developing countries. Barbados had an ambitious national energy policy aiming for carbon neutrality by 2030. It had also focused its policies on low-carbon and resilient infrastructure development, renewable energy capacity and support for climate adaptation and mitigation. The representative of Paraguay said that climate adaptation was a national priority that had been enshrined in law, with seven priority sectors. Although the country's impact on the global carbon balance was minimal, it had undertaken international commitments and ratified climate change treaties. The representative of Peru said that his country had advanced in combating climate change by establishing policies, adopting laws and working in partnership with several institutions, and had worked with ECLAC and the World Bank to update the social price of carbon. The representative of Panama recalled that her country was one of the countries known as a carbon sink, and said that it had implemented a range of policies in compliance with international climate commitments, including the establishment of a greenhouse gas emissions inventory to calculate its total emissions. The representative of Mexico said that the message of the report presented by ECLAC was clear, and advocated for the adoption of an intersectional and intercultural approach to ensure that the social effects of climate change did not fall by the wayside (for example, as related to human mobility and Indigenous Peoples). In that regard, public policies with a regional scope were needed.

The representative of UN-Women stressed that women were disproportionately affected by climate change, which was increasing, along with internal and international migration. There was an urgent need for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, taking into account the greater vulnerability of women and girls. The representative of UN-Habitat said that it was necessary to continue fostering collaborative work between national and local governments and said that the United Nations system stood ready to continue supporting countries in their climate action initiatives.

The moderator referred to the regional context of limited fiscal space for investment in climate change adaptation and resilience and the insufficient investment and lack of national funding plans for disaster risk reduction, and said that there was an urgent need to raise awareness of the costs and benefits of investing in prevention and resilience. He underscored that disaster risk reduction and climate action must be mainstreamed as central components of investment for sustainable development, and that significant transformations must be made in the productive structures of the economies of the region to be able to address climate change.

Panel 4: Goal 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

The panel was moderated by Patricia Madrigal, Chair of the Committee to Support the Implementation and Compliance of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), and the panellists were: Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs of the United Nations; Candice Welsch, Regional Representative of

the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for the Andean Region and the Southern Cone; Fernando Carrión, academic in the Department of Political Science at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Ecuador (FLACSO Ecuador); Marcela Ríos Tobar, Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA); Gabriela Agosto, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Director of the Centre for Leadership and Foresight of the University of Salvador (USAL) of Argentina; and Mónica Jasis, Co-Director of Centro Mujeres A.C of Mexico and representative 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.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs of the United Nations said that, despite its democratic culture, the region showed signs of fragility, conflict and institutional weakening. It was essential to build strong institutions to uphold the rule of law, encourage citizens' political participation, strengthen justice institutions to reduce impunity and corruption, improve social cohesion and avoid the use of measures to combat violence that could undermine access to public information and the protection of fundamental rights.

The Regional Representative of UNODC for the Andean Region and the Southern Cone said that UNODC served as the custodian of different indicators related to Goal 16, provided member States in Latin America and the Caribbean with policy advisory services and expert technical assistance to progress towards meeting the targets of that Goal, and encouraged and facilitated participation of a wide range of civil society organizations, contributing to an open, responsive and accountable decision-making process on crime- and drug-related matters at the international level.

The academic in the Department of Political Science at FLACSO Ecuador said that violence was endemic in the region, continued to worsen and had even mutated; it now had a clear economic objective and complex structure, and generated significant economic resources. In fact, crime had become one of the three economic sectors, along with the formal and informal sectors, and created a large number of "jobs". The implication was that the policies implemented to fight against violence were perhaps not the most suitable.

The Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of International IDEA said that there had been significant democratic setbacks in the region with respect to gender equality, the rule of law and the exercise of rights, which explained the delay in the achievement of Goal 16. It was worrying to note that citizens were dissatisfied with democracy and willing to support authoritarian regimes and accept the curtailment of their freedoms, rights and guarantees in exchange for security. It was therefore essential that public policies to combat insecurity not only be effective, but also underpin the continuity of democracies.

The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Director of the Centre for Leadership and Foresight of the University of Salvador (USAL) of Argentina said that it was not the region's commitment to democracy that was under threat, but the legitimacy of the system with regard to solving the region's problems. Efforts to achieve Goal 16 provided an opportunity to address entrenched challenges such as violence, corruption and discrimination, and to analyse the new elements and actors that produced and reproduced the mechanisms of violence in the region. The importance of education in the process of cultural change needed to foster the values of peace, justice, equity and the building of inclusive and sustainable societies should not be overlooked.

The Co-Director of Centro Mujeres A.C of Mexico and representative 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 said that the analysis of progress in the

achievement of Goal 16 could not be limited to the state of institutions and the trend in violence. She raised a series of issues that civil society considered fundamental, since they hindered the achievement of the Goal. She also said that the exclusion of civil society organizations from decision-making processes was one of the biggest obstacles to achievement of Goal 16.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Brazil said that the country had adopted policies that contributed to the achievement of Goal 16 and was developing Goal 18 to foster ethnic and racial equality. The representative of Cuba referred to the various plans and programmes created within the framework of Goal 16, and said that the country was fighting terrorism in all its forms and expressions, and that peace, inclusion and social justice were part of the State's policies to achieve sustainable development. The representative of Honduras said that, with regard to peace and solid institutions, her country had selected the new magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice and a new public prosecutor, and that her government had requested the United Nations to establish an international commission against impunity. The representative of Mexico acknowledged that most countries in the region were experiencing a climate of violence and said that, in order to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, sexual and gender diversity must be mainstreamed in the social structure. The representative of Peru detailed the policies adopted in his country in relation to Goal 16, said that Peru was also affected by the problem of violence in the region and stressed the need to address the issues of security and gender-based violence, as well as to improve victims' access to justice.

The representative of OHCHR emphasized the need for equal access to justice for all people, and said that human rights, the fulfilment of which appeared to be backsliding in some instances in the region, should be at the centre of economic and social policies and that respect for those rights would enable the achievement of the SDGs, especially Goal 16. The representative of UN-Women recalled that men and women experienced conflict very differently and that gender-based violence was the most widespread human rights violation. She said that drug and arms trafficking also had a differential impact on women, and that the majority of trafficking victims were girls and women. The representative of ILO referred to job insecurity among young people in the region, and underscored the persistence of labour informality and the need to implement policies to create more jobs and avoid casualization.

In closing, the moderator said that regional progress on Goal 16 was insufficient; in fact, there had been setbacks. High levels of violence were attributed to conflicts between organized criminal groups, as well as structural problems such as weak rule of law, social inequality and youth unemployment. There were also obstacles to citizen participation in decision-making and access to information.

Panel 5: Goal 17 – Partnerships for the goals

The panel was moderated by Teresa Moll de Alba, Senior Manager for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Global Compact. The panellists were Israel Mario Morales, Director of the Committee on Agreements, International Treaties and Statistics of the Mexican National Council of the Maquiladora and Export Manufacturing Industry (INDEX); Elkin Echeverri, Consultant with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group; Patricio Scaff, Lead Officer for Resource Mobilization and Global Partnerships Department, Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF); Montserrat García Villanueva, Chief of the Support and Coordination Unit of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB); Sara Hernández Cepeda, Founder of Consorcio de Organizaciones Juveniles LAC and Coordinator of Red de Jóvenes y Adolescentes VIH Positives de América Latina y el Caribe Hispano (J+LAC); Lorena Santos, Director of Operations of the Mexican Foundation for Family Planning (MEXFAM) and representative 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; Pablo Angelelli, Head of Operations at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); Rémy Rioux, Director General of the French Development Agency (AFD); Aloizio Mercadante, President of the Brazilian National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) of Brazil; and Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir, Director of the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The Director of the Committee on Agreements, International Treaties and Statistics of INDEX said that the existing “take, make and throw away” model was wasteful and extractivist and must be replaced to fulfil sustainable development commitments. The circular economy created jobs and production with an alternative focus, and remanufacturing was its backbone. In addition to its many advantages, remanufacturing was the most ethical way to contribute to the rapid development of industrial goods production. Trade in remanufactured goods, if carried out through the proper mechanisms, should encounter no barriers.

The Consultant with IFC said that innovation was a universally important tool for society and could provide a launchpad for an exponential leap forward in cross-cutting efforts to achieve the SDGs. Activating the collective imagination motivated people to work towards major outcomes. The capacity to mobilize society could be equally as important as the availability of budgetary resources. Partnerships that were based on cross-cutting innovation and driven by society as a whole were particularly crucial.

The Lead Officer for Resource Mobilization and Global Partnerships Department at CAF said that Goal 17 called for not only forging partnerships and mobilizing resources for the achievement of the other SDGs but also fostering solidarity at the national and multilateral levels. It was especially important to cooperate at a time when development gaps between countries were widening. Key in that regard was support for productive development policies to unleash the region’s growth potential. CAF strove to facilitate sustainable and inclusive growth by fulfilling its coordinating role and offering financing on more favourable terms.

The Chief of the Support and Coordination Unit of SEGIB said that her organization had a 30-year history of multi-stakeholder coordination in the region. Ibero-American cooperation between the Latin American and European regions was horizontal, in the sense that all countries had equal standing. That regional cooperation, based on partnerships and highly innovative, sought to develop and strengthen transformative public policies. She described the organization’s eight lines of work and said that SEGIB would continue to collaborate with all stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda.

The Founder of Consorcio de Organizaciones Juveniles LAC and Coordinator of J+LAC said that her experience as an activist had taught her that the best results were achieved when diverse organizations worked together, setting aside their differences and identifying common ground to prioritize a shared agenda above all else. Technical agendas should always make room for civil society to participate on an equal footing to more efficiently implement strategies.

The Director of Operations of MEXFAM and representative 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 said that the contribution of civil society was more important than ever and should be recognized, valued and protected. Civil society organizations had a presence on the ground alongside rights holders. Good practices in that respect included accountability, targeting, territorialization and capacity-building among all levels of government and civil society organizations.

The Head of Operations at IDB called for consolidating individual projects into larger-scale ones and highlighted the important role of multilateral organizations in stimulating economic development and improving quality of life. He discussed the work that IDB carried out in collaboration with other entities and mentioned the efforts of the IDB Group in the areas of climate action, reducing poverty and inequality, improving governance, increasing equality and gender inclusion, and responding to crises, natural disasters and other socioeconomic challenges.

The Director General of the French Development Agency (AFD) said that upcoming climate change and financing for development conferences would be an opportunity to mobilize and reinvent the international financial architecture, so that countries would not have to choose between protecting the most vulnerable and preserving common goods. Strengthening partnerships would help to align financing with the SDGs, and he highlighted a number of initiatives in that regard. Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions were needed more than ever to forge just transitions. AFD was the region's leading bilateral financial partner and would continue to work together with ECLAC towards the SDGs, including by disseminating tools for modelling development paths and linking science, finance and action for a more sustainable world.

The President of BNDES said that major shifts and high levels of instability in the region presented opportunities and, in that light, constituted a major advantage. He discussed the challenges facing the region and BNDES initiatives in areas including agriculture, climate action, and the production of clean energy and critical minerals for e-mobility and pharmaceuticals. There was a need to strengthen regional and South-South integration and to develop infrastructure for that purpose, as well as to integrate value chains and reindustrialize the region, with essential support from development banks.

The Director of the Development Centre of OECD highlighted three key challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda in the region, given its tight fiscal environment and uncertain economic outlook: it needed to attract more private finance, including through public-private partnerships, and strive for a more equitable regional distribution of foreign direct investment (FDI) for the green transition; it needed to improve its use of public funds, including through tax reform; and it needed greater policy coherence and the support of coordinated international frameworks.

In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Cuba said that he appreciated the opportunity to learn from other experiences related to Goal 17. Faced with many challenges, Cuba was focused on intersectoral partnerships and viewed cooperation and solidarity as intrinsic elements of its foreign policy. The representative of Paraguay underscored the establishment of strategic partnerships with other countries, highlighted her country's long-term approach to public policy and said that sustainable development required the active participation of all members of society. The representative of Peru said that his country had forged partnerships with various countries to make progress towards the Goal 17 targets. Tax collection was an area of concern, and it was important that international cooperation projects be sustainable over time. The representative of Honduras said that his country was working to strengthen national production by leveraging synergies with various multilateral organizations and had requested the United Nations to establish an international commission to combat corruption and impunity within its borders. The representative of Panama mentioned cross-sectoral support for the achievement of sustainable development in her country, saying that developing good practices in the public and private spheres alike would ensure citizen participation and intersectoral cooperation. The representative of Brazil called upon countries to join her country in its existing partnerships, in particular in the areas of care, school meals and digital inclusion. She also urged countries to join Brazil's "Goal 18" initiative on ethnic and racial equality.

In her closing remarks, the moderator welcomed a thoughtful consideration of how to get partnerships off on the right track and scale them up, and of their role in addressing existing challenges. There was a need to help firms to integrate the SDGs in order to achieve societal impact. Partnerships were fundamental, and key work areas had been identified for the six priority transitions in order to broaden their reach.

A representative of civil society read the declaration on children, adolescents and young people in Latin America and the Caribbean. A representative 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 also read a declaration.

The intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development were adopted.³

Closing session

In the closing session, statements were made by Laura Fernández Delgado, Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, and José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

The Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Forum, said that the best decisions were reached through collective thinking, thus it was necessary to move forward in collective solution-building. She highlighted three issues that warranted reflection: (i) the fact that the agreed agenda was the responsibility of all; (ii) the need to design strategies for accelerating the achievement of the targets given that many were unmet; and (iii) the importance of financing the Goals.

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that it was a privilege to have heard so many different voices and perspectives and gave an overview of some of the points raised in the various sessions. He also reflected on the causes of the delays in achieving the SDGs and said that it was not an issue of not knowing what to do, but rather a lack of clarity and know-how. The Forum would continue to be a platform for its member countries to raise their concerns, having become an outstanding example of regional coordination of multiple stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

³ See [online] <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2024/en/documents/intergovernmentally-agreed-conclusions-and-recommendations-seventh-meeting-forum-countries>.