Summary

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Accelerating Implementation in a New Era of Uncertainty and Geopolitical Fragmentation

Ninth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Explanatory notes:

Three dots indicate that the data are missing, not separately reported or unavailable.
A dash indicates that the amount is nil or negligible.
A full stop is used to indicate decimals.
The word "dollars" refers to United States dollars, unless otherwise specified.
A slash between years (e.g. 2025/2026) indicates a 12-month period falling between the two years.
Individual figures and percentages in graphs and tables may not always add up to the corresponding total because of rounding.

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Foreword

A turning point was reached in 2025, a year marked by fractures in the global economic and geopolitical landscape. These disruptions include a shift towards protectionism among key actors in the international economy, a deepening of geopolitical rivalry centred on competition for industrial and technological leadership, a retreat from multilateral cooperation by some countries that are considered pillars of the system and a transition from a rules-based world order to a new reality of "weaponized interdependence"[1] as a strategy for managing relations among countries.

These developments have heightened uncertainty and are driving rapid reconfiguration of spaces for dialogue and negotiation, as well as of global supply chains, trade and investment, resulting in a more fragmented and less predictable world in both political and economic terms. Some analysts point to a shift towards a new multipolar global order, while others argue that the former global economic order is spiralling into disorder.[2]

Against this backdrop, the final four years of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are under way. A number of factors slowed progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the first decade following their adoption in 2015, including weak institutional capacities, a failure to prioritize certain goals, limited financing and fiscal space, the burden of debt,

[1] A concept used to explain how States may turn global economic and technological networks into instruments of coercive power (Farrell and Newman, 2025).

[2] Prasad, E. S. (2026). *The Doom Loop: Why the World Economic Order Is Spiraling into Disorder*. Basic Venture.

slow global economic growth, the shock of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and cascading crises. These factors are now compounded by disruptions that are fragmenting the global economy, reducing the scope for collaborative action among countries and creating a less favourable environment for growth and investment.

Disruptions take multiple forms, including the unilateral use of power to weaponize interdependence in a new phase of globalization shaped by spheres of influence, the weakening of the multilateral system and the underfunding of the United Nations, as well as an emerging competition among currencies and the use of financial power.

These disruptions deepen well-known risks and pose new challenges for progress towards achieving the SDGs, including a reduction in resources allocated to official development assistance as developed countries reorient budgetary priorities towards defence and other domestic areas; constraints on long-term planning in an uncertain and volatile context; a slowdown in key global negotiation processes, including those related to the reform of the international financial architecture and agreements on inclusive social development and gender equality; weakening commitments on climate change and insufficient action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that drive global warming; and the postponement or obstruction of efforts to establish effective global governance frameworks for artificial intelligence and advanced digital technologies.

As noted in this report, at the current pace of progress in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 19% of SDG targets are expected to be achieved by 2030, while 42% are moving in the right direction but at an insufficient pace to be met and 39% have stalled or reversed compared with 2015. These estimates are less favourable than those projected just one year ago.

How can the commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda be sustained? The strategy should incorporate a greater degree of pragmatism and seek feasible agreements at the national, regional and global levels. The overwhelming majority of governments worldwide, regardless of political orientation, are pursuing the Goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda, such as eradicating hunger and poverty, generating decent work, fostering economic growth, improving the quality of education and promoting innovation. Global fragmentation complicates the pursuit of these goals but does not diminish their urgency or importance. A significant share of responsibility for advancing towards

the SDGs lies at the national level: political leadership by governments and key stakeholders, the strengthening of institutional capacities and governance, the mobilization of resources and continuous monitoring are all essential to accelerating progress.

However, not all challenges can be addressed at the national level; international cooperation continues to be essential. It is vital that countries committed to addressing global challenges through collective action, multilateralism and the establishment and implementation of regional and global agreements continue on the path of international cooperation and coordination.

A central element is coordination: reinforcing partnerships among governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders is fundamental. At the same time, strengthening institutional capacities to manage transformations remains critical to progress.

To this end, the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system continue to work with a wide range of actors committed to the sustainable development agenda, designing and supporting policies and initiatives that advance progress in the desired direction. A pragmatic approach entails recognizing that even where targets are not fully met, progress towards their achievement represents a significant gain. Sustainable development is not an all-or-nothing outcome. Rather, it is a multidimensional process in which incremental progress is meaningful and can transform the lives of millions of people.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) once again calls on the countries of the region to continue taking firm and decisive action to advance the SDGs and uphold the international commitments they have undertaken throughout the 80-year history of the United Nations.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs
Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Latin America
and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Introduction

This ninth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean is being presented as globalization and geopolitics enter a new stage. While 2025 was marked by fractures that represent a clear turning point in the global economic order, 2026 is unfolding in a context where these disruptions are becoming entrenched and their implications for sustainable development increasingly apparent.

One of the most significant disruptions is the transition from a world committed, albeit imperfectly, to seeking a level playing field and rules-based order for diplomatic, trade and investment relations, to one marked by competition among major powers. These powers are increasingly adopting unilateral measures to intervene in financial, trade, investment and technology flows in pursuit of both economic and non-economic objectives.

Another disruption stems from declining support for multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations. This has brought about a major crisis, not only in terms of financing but also through the emergence of narratives that question international cooperation and the role of institutions in promoting collective action. In response, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean reaffirm that the major challenges of sustainable development —climate change, poverty, inequality, food insecurity and pandemics— are inherently transnational and cannot be effectively addressed without multilateral cooperation and governance. This complex context of uncertainty and geopolitical fragmentation poses new challenges for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

This report examines progress and challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking into account emerging challenges in the current context. It also presents examples of good practices and policy recommendations to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region, focusing on targets showing stagnation or setbacks.

In addition to this introduction, the report contains three chapters and a section of conclusions and recommendations. Chapter I examines the economic, social and environmental context of Latin America and the Caribbean. Chapter II presents trends in SDG indicators using a traffic-light system, illustrating progress towards the achievement of the SDGs at both the regional and subregional levels, and includes prospective scenarios for 2030. Chapter III focuses on the five SDGs that will be examined in detail at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2026: Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Lastly, the conclusions and recommendations present an overview of the major challenges facing the region and the global and regional efforts undertaken in 2025 to address them.

I. Latin America and the Caribbean: a sustainable development agenda in a context of structural and geopolitical challenges

Introduction

In 2025, new challenges stemming from the global economy were added to the legacy of structural gaps affecting the region and created further obstacles to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Several factors slowed progress with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the first decade since its adoption: weak institutional capacities, a failure to prioritize certain goals, limited financing and fiscal space, the burden of debt, slow global economic growth, the shock of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and various cascading crises (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2025e). These factors are compounded by geopolitical disruptions, which have made advancing towards the SDGs even more challenging.

Not everything has been negative in the 11 years since the 2030 Agenda was adopted, but there is still a long way to go in a number of areas. Economic, social and environmental achievements coexist with persistent gaps, underscoring the need for more decisive policy measures and stronger mobilization of resources.

A. The regional economic context in the period 2000–2025

The current geopolitical environment will constrain, in some areas, regional progress and the achievement of the SDGs, while also creating new opportunities in other domains.

Changes in the geopolitical context, which include the new United States tariff policy and an environment characterized by greater protectionism[3] and weaponized interdependence, have increased political and economic uncertainty and will generate negative impacts that will affect the performance of Latin America and the Caribbean and its ability to implement the SDGs. Nevertheless, the region has a wide variety of assets that it can leverage in the new geoeconomic environment, such as natural resources (strategic minerals, biodiversity, energy and water sources), production platforms (including world-class clusters in the automotive, medical devices, modern services, pharmaceutical and agrifood production sectors) and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The main manifestation of the region's weak economic performance is the downward trend in the aggregate growth rate since the debt crisis of 1981–1983. The average growth rate for the region in the period 1951–1980 was 5.6%, while in the period following the debt crisis (1984–2025) it stood at 2.5%. The average growth rate in the period 2000–2025 was 2.3%, and in the decade from 2015 to 2025 it was just 1.1% per annum, barely more than half the 2.0% annual average of the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s.

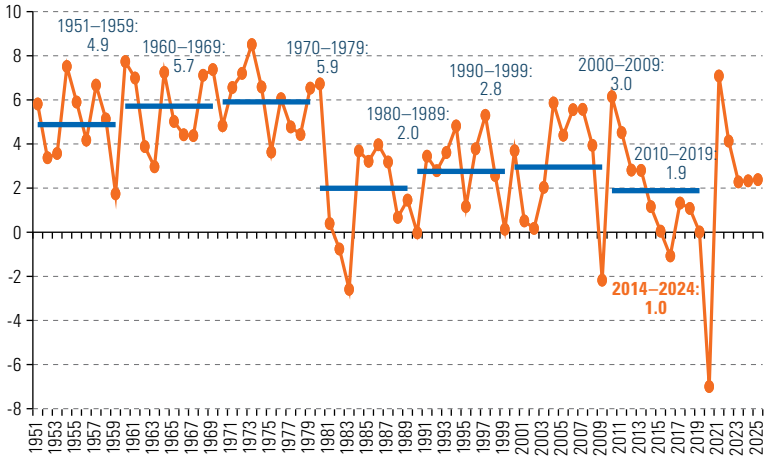
The exception to this stagnation was the commodity supercycle between 2003 and 2011, when the region grew at an average annual rate of 4.0%, driven by higher prices for agricultural products, energy, and metals and minerals. However, the end of the supercycle in 2011 was followed by a period of slowdown with ever-lower growth rates. This was compounded in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which caused the region's economy to contract at the highest annual rate ever recorded (-7.0%), negatively affecting employment, poverty and inequality and exacerbating long-standing structural problems.[4] Following a strong rebound in 2021 (7.1%) and growth of 4.1% in 2022,

[3] According to the McKinsey economic conditions outlook, the changed orientation of policy and trade relations in general is the main obstacle to global and national growth and to the expansion of the business sector (Smit, 2025).

[4] Low investment and productivity, informality, unemployment, low coverage of social protection and healthcare systems, and high levels of inequality and poverty. The destruction of productive and human capabilities disproportionately affected women, exacerbating gender inequalities (see ECLAC, 2021a, 2021b).

economic activity in the region returned to a path of low growth, with a rate of 2.3% in 2023 and 2024 and estimated rates of 2.4% for 2025 and 2.3% for 2026 (see figure I.1).

Figure I.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: aggregate GDP growth, 1951–2025
(Annual figures and averages by decade, percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Balance Preliminar de las Economías de América Latina y el Caribe*, 2025 (LC/PUB.2025/26-P).

1. The contribution of the external sector to economic growth

The region's persistent current account deficit weakens aggregate demand. In some countries, remittances have partially stabilized this situation.

Externally, the current account of the region's countries has generally been in deficit, undermining rather than contributing to aggregate demand. Between 2000 and 2024, the current account deficit as a share of GDP averaged 1.4%. This performance can largely be explained by the combination of a low income elasticity of exports and a high income elasticity of imports, reflecting structural factors related to the region's undiversified production structure and its high dependence on imports of capital goods and intermediate inputs. Another determining factor was the slowdown in external demand: the rate of growth in world trade slowed from 6.9% between 2000 and 2007 to 2.1% between 2011 and 2025.

Remittances have played a vital stabilizing role in a number of countries, as they constitute a source of autonomous consumption, and thus of growth in aggregate demand. Remittance flows exceed 20% of GDP in some economies of the Central American isthmus. The volume

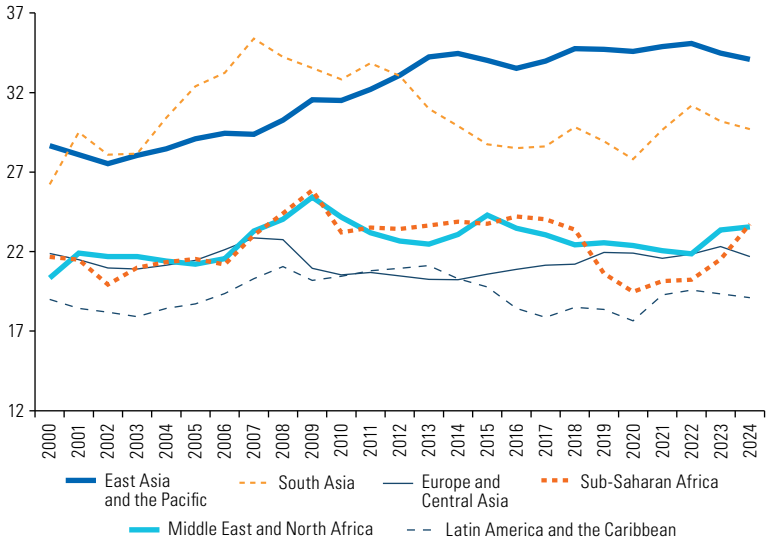
of remittances grew by an average of 9.0% in the period 2000–2024. The recent tightening of immigration policies in the United States could disrupt these flows, with adverse effects on recipient countries.

2. Investment and productivity

The region's low growth and persistent inequality are largely explained by a lack of investment dynamism and sustained productivity gaps.

A lack of investment dynamism is one of the internal factors explaining the region's weak economic performance. The investment ratio has stayed within a range of 18% to 21% of GDP since the 1990s, well below that of other developing regions, particularly East Asia and the Pacific (see figure I.2). In the period 2000–2024, the investment ratio rose from 17.9% in 2003 to 21.1% in 2013 before declining and stabilizing at around 19% of GDP.

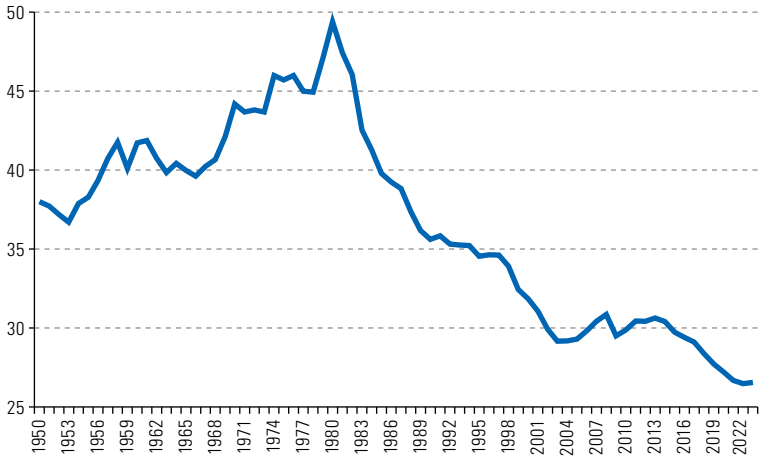
Figure I.2
Developing world regions: gross fixed capital formation, 2000–2024
(Percentages of GDP)



Source: World Bank. (2026). *World Development Indicators*. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators.

Labour productivity in Latin America and the Caribbean has remained stagnant at low levels: average labour productivity in Latin America is only 28% of that in the United States (see figure I.3) (The Conference Board, 2025). This productivity gap is one of the main factors underlying the persistence of low growth and inequality in the region.

Figure I.3
Latin America: output per hour worked relative to the United States, 1950–2023
(Constant 2012 international dollars at purchasing power parity (PPP))



Source: The Conference Board. (2025). *Total Economy Database*. https://www.conference-board.org/topics/total-economy-database.

Increased protectionism and high uncertainty arising from the new geopolitical context may negatively affect exports and thence investment. However, the reconfiguration of global supply chains may also present an opportunity to attract investment in higher value-added manufacturing sectors, provided countries have the infrastructure, renewable energy and human capital needed to leverage the nearshoring trend.

3. The role of fiscal policy

In 2023, the regional average tax take was 21.3% of GDP, which left a gap of more than 10 percentage points between Latin American and Caribbean countries and those of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (34% of GDP) (ECLAC, 2025b). The reasons for this gap are structural: a narrow tax base associated with high levels of exempt income and preferential tax treatment; low marginal tax rates for higher income brackets; and, in 2023, personal income tax revenue equivalent to just 2.0% of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean but 8.2% of GDP in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2025).

Insufficient tax revenue, constraints on public spending and reduced investment in public goods hinder economic growth and limit financing for the SDGs in the region.

Tax expenditures —that is, the numerous exceptional treatments that are granted for specific purposes— were equivalent to 4.0% of regional GDP in 2023 (ECLAC, 2025b). Tax evasion was valued at US$ 433 billion, or 6.7% of regional GDP in 2023 (ECLAC 2024a), and interest payments amounted to 2.9% of GDP in 2024, equivalent to 70% of education spending, 86% of health spending and 57% of social protection spending in 2023 (ECLAC, 2025b).

Rigidity in expenditure leaves public investment as the adjustment variable for balancing the fiscal accounts, which impedes investment in public goods and therefore economic growth (ECLAC, 2025b). High interest rates and tight fiscal space limit the countercyclical response capacity of fiscal policies and compromise governments' ability to finance the SDGs.

4. Inflation and monetary policy

Inflation has followed a downward trend since the early 2000s. In 2021 and 2022, regional inflation rose (3.9% and 7.7%, respectively) owing to increased international fuel and food prices. Central banks in the region generally adopted a restrictive monetary policy to address the situation (Vernengo and Pérez Caldentey, 2023). Starting in 2023, declining inflationary pressures led most countries in the region to begin a cycle of monetary policy easing that has continued in 2025. As of June 2025, the average inflation rate for Latin America and the Caribbean was 2.5% (ECLAC, 2025b).

5. The labour market

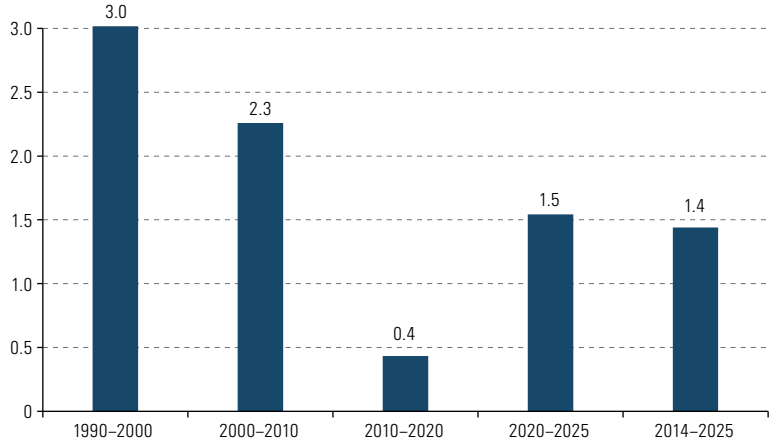
In the period 2014–2025, average employment growth in the region was barely 1.4% per annum, the lowest level in decades, reflecting the impact of the region's low capacity for growth on its ability to generate quality employment (see figure I.4) (ECLAC, 2025b).

Employment growth in the region is generally low and informality is high, with persistent age and gender gaps.

Informality affected 47% of the employed population in the region in 2024, mainly in sectors with lower labour productivity, such as construction, commerce, transport, tourism and services, which employ 74% of informal workers (ECLAC, 2024b). The high level of informality reflects the region's undiversified production structure and limited access to social protection. The youth unemployment rate was approximately 15% in 2024, double the average rate for people over 24 years of age (ECLAC, 2024b). The persistence of gender inequality in the labour market is manifested in a 20 percentage point gap in labour force participation between men and women (ECLAC, 2025b).

Technological change and digitalization are increasing the risk of tasks and occupations being replaced in some sectors. The risk of automation and polarization in the region's labour market is especially high in the more informal sectors, where there is less capacity for adaptation and training. This poses major labour regulation and skills-building challenges in a context of rapid productive transformation.

Figure I.4
Latin America (18 countries):[a] rates of change in numbers employed, 1990–2025
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2025b). *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2025* (LC/PUB.2025/12-P); on the basis of International Labour Organization, Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC and official sources.

[a] Argentina, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

B. The regional social context in the period 2000–2025

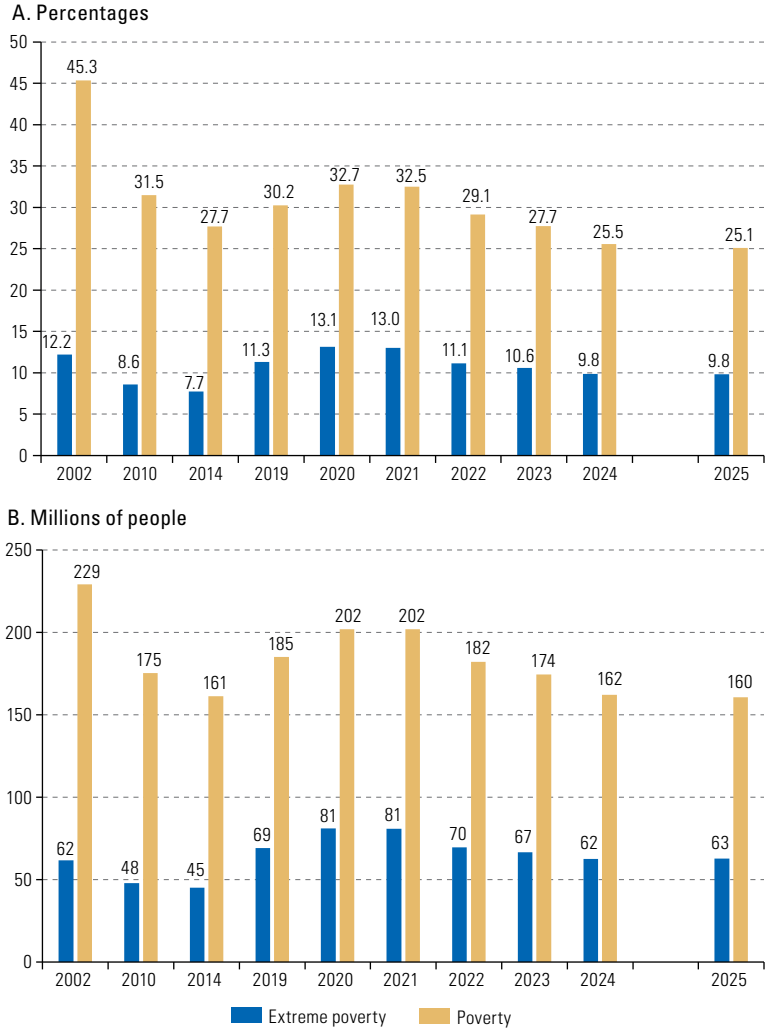
1. Monetary and multidimensional poverty

Poverty and extreme poverty are declining at the regional level, although progress at the country level is uneven.

In the 2000s, a combination of high growth and greater fiscal space allowed social programmes to expand, which reduced poverty and extreme poverty in 2014 to a respective 27.7% (equivalent to 161 million people) and 7.8% (equivalent to 45 million people), the lowest levels on record. After 2014, the trend was cut short, and the subsequent deterioration worsened during the COVID-19 crisis: in 2020, poverty rose by almost 3 percentage points from 2019, and extreme poverty rose by almost 2 percentage points.

A gradual recovery began in 2021, leaving 25.5% of the region's population poor and 9.8% extremely poor by 2024 (see figure I.5) (ECLAC, 2025d).

Figure I.5
Latin America (18 countries):[a] population in poverty and extreme poverty, 2002–2024 and projections for 2025
(Percentages and millions of people)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2025). *Panorama Social de América Latina y el Caribe, 2025* (LC/PUB.2025/23-P).

[a] Weighted averages of Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

The percentage of the population affected by multidimensional poverty fell from 34.4% to 20.9% between 2014 and 2024, which reflects improvements in access to housing, basic services and other rights.[5] However, food insecurity —one of the severest manifestations of poverty— was worse in 2023 than it had been prior to the pandemic, affecting 28.2% of the regional population, or 187.6 million people (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] et al., 2024, cited in ECLAC, 2025c). In addition, the prevalence of overweight, the other face of malnutrition, has increased steadily in all age groups, reaching 8.6% among children under 5 years of age in 2022 (ECLAC, 2025c).

2. High inequality, low social mobility and weak social cohesion

Income concentration remains very high in the region.

Since 2005, there has been a statistically significant decline in the region's Gini index, which fell from 0.472 in 2014 to 0.450 in 2023. This is still high, however, and values in the region have persistently exceeded those in the OECD countries (0.315 in 2023). Income concentration is extreme: the richest 10% account for 34.2% of total income, while the poorest 10% account for just 1.7%. This creates a situation in which the transmission of economic growth to the lower income groups is inefficient, perpetuating structural poverty and weakening social cohesion.

The intergenerational reproduction of inequality, transmitted through segmented education systems, directly affects the job and income prospects of new generations. High inequality, in turn, affects democratic governance and environmental sustainability, as higher income groups tend to have a disproportionate influence on policy decisions, which they can leverage to block the structural reforms needed to make progress on the SDGs.

3. Social protection: progress and remaining challenges

Although social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean have made major progress in recent decades, substantial challenges remain.

In 2022, more than 180 million people (27.1% of the regional population) lived in households benefiting from conditional and other continuous transfer programmes, compared to nearly 19 million people (3.6% of the population) in 2000. Non-contributory pension scheme coverage increased from 3.4% of people aged 65 and over in 2000 to 31.0% of

[5] The multidimensional poverty index is composed of indicators for housing and services, health, education, and employment and pensions (ECLAC, 2025d).

this population in 2022 (Vila, Robles and Arenas de Mesa, 2024). Meanwhile, in 14 Latin American countries, 23.5% of households lacked access to any form of social protection, whether contributory or non-contributory, and in the first income quintile, the figure reached 36.5% (ECLAC, 2025c, 2024b, 2024c).

In terms of sufficiency, on average, conditional cash transfers covered just 46.8% of the per capita income shortfall in poor households. Despite progress, more than half of the economically active population was not contributing to any pension scheme in 2022.

4. Education and healthcare: key factors in overcoming the inequality trap

In 2023, 28% of young people aged 20 to 24 had not completed secondary school, with a gap of 37 percentage points between the top and bottom income quintiles. As regards learning outcomes, 2022 data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that 71.2% of 15-year-old students did not exhibit basic proficiency in mathematics (86.7% in the lowest socioeconomic quartile and 47.3% in the highest) (ECLAC, 2025d).

In the area of health, although life expectancy at birth is projected to reach 76 years in 2025, rapid population ageing is associated with an increase in the incidence of chronic and non-communicable diseases. The decline in maternal mortality[6] stagnated between 2000 and 2019, which is attributable to multiple barriers to healthcare access and structural inequalities in the region's health systems.

C. The regional environmental context in the period 2000–2025

1. Deforestation and fires

Together with clear-cutting, forest fires are now the most significant cause of forest loss in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2024, approximately 67,000 km² of the planet's forests were lost,[7] almost double the amount recorded in 2023 (Global Forest Watch, 2026), and 71% of the destroyed forest areas were in six Latin American countries, with Brazil and the Plurinational State of Bolivia at the top of the list (see table I.1). Fires

[6] Defined as the decease of the mother during pregnancy or childbirth or within 42 days of the latter.

[7] For the purposes of comparison, Uruguay has a total area of 176,215 km².

were the main cause of forest loss, which was unprecedented: logging for agricultural and livestock purposes has historically been the main driver of deforestation.

Deforestation due to clear-cutting[8] in the Brazilian Legal Amazon[9] between August 2024 and July 2025 was down 11.08% compared to the annual figure for 2024, but fires in the past three years offset this positive development.

Table I.1
Latin America (6 countries): forest cover lost between 2000 and 2020 and primary forest lost between 2002 and 2024

Country	Forest cover lost after replanting in 2000–2020 *(Thousands of km²)*	Forest cover lost *(Percentages)*	Primary rainforest lost in 2002–2024 *(Thousands of km²)*	Total deforestation *(Percentages)*
Argentina	36	10	4.8	7
Bolivia (Estado Plurinacional de)	33	5.6	57	59
Brasil	280	5.9	340	47
Colombia	17	2.2	21	39
Paraguay	52	25	12	17
Perú	7.6	0.97	28	66

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of Global Forest Watch. (2026). Global. https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/global.

2. Disasters and temperature and sea level rise

Elevated exposure to disasters and to temperature and sea level rise negatively affect the region's economy.

Between 2000 and 2022, the region suffered more than 1,500 disasters, affecting over 190 million people (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2023). The region accounted for 53% of global economic losses caused by disasters during the period. The effects are especially alarming in the Caribbean, where extreme weather events have caused damage and losses exceeding 100% of GDP in some island States.

[8] Clear-cutting is a harvesting system in which all marketable trees within a particular physical area are felled, leaving no significant tree cover. Its use is generally limited to plantations (Dykstra and Heinrich, 1996).

[9] The Legal Amazon concept was instituted by the Government of Brazil with a view to planning and promoting the social and economic development of the states in the Amazon region. It covers an area of 5,217,423 km2 (approximately 61% of Brazil's surface area) and includes the entirety of the states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins and part of Maranhão (O eco, 2014).

Temperatures have risen steadily in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and 2024 was the warmest year on record, with an average temperature 1.47°C above the 1961–1990 average (World Meteorological Organization [WMO], 2025; ECLAC, 2025f). This rise has direct economic consequences: it is estimated that regional GDP would be at least 6% lower in 2030 under current climate policies than in a scenario without climate change (ECLAC, 2025f).

At the same time, sea levels are rising at an annual rate of 2.0mm–4.0mm, depending on the subregion, as waters warm and glaciers melt (see table I.2).

Table I.2
Latin America and the Caribbean: regional rates of sea level rise, January 1993 to November 2024
(Millimetres per year)

Subregion	Area	Average sea level trend for the band between the coast and 50 km offshore
Mexico Central America The Caribbean	Pacific coast of Central America	2,0 ± 0,35
	Subtropical North Atlantic	4,0 ± 0,35
	Tropical North Atlantic (Caribbean)	3,45 ± 0,35
South America	Tropical North Atlantic (South America)	3,62 ± 0,35
	South Atlantic	2,93 ± 0,35
	Pacific coast of South America	2,26 ± 0,35

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of World Meteorological Organization. (2025). State of the Climate in Latin America and the Caribbean 2024.

3. Aridity and land degradation

The region is experiencing harmful effects from increasing aridity and land degradation.

A comparison between the periods 1961–1990 and 1991–2020 shows that 82.1% of the region's territory has become more arid,[10] which is above the global average of 77.6%. This increasing aridity[11] could have devastating effects, including food and water

[10] Arid lands or drylands are defined using the aridity index and include areas classified as hyper-arid, arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid. The index is calculated by dividing average precipitation by potential evapotranspiration. Drylands are those with an aridity index of 0.65 or less, meaning that potential evapotranspiration is at least 45% greater than actual average precipitation (United Nations, 1994). Aridity is characterized by a relative and prolonged lack of moisture available to sustain life in terrestrial climates.

[11] Aridification is the process that can lead to non-arid land becoming arid or one type of aridity giving way to a drier type in a continuous progression towards desertification, potentially causing abrupt systemic changes in multiple ecosystem properties.

insecurity,[12] low soil fertility, loss of crop productivity, declining biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, and increased human migration and forest fires.

Drylands have been expanding significantly in the Yucatan Peninsula (Mexico), north-eastern Brazil and north-western Argentina. In forest ecosystems, such as the Amazon, the Gran Chaco, the Pantanal and the Cerrado, greater aridity is expected to increase the extent and intensity of forest fires. The weakening of "flying rivers" (water transfer into the atmosphere from the Amazon) is especially concerning: because more than 70% of rainfall in the River Plate basin originates in the Amazon rainforest, continued deforestation could lead to a vicious cycle of forest and precipitation loss, triggering a downward spiral with devastating consequences for the South American economy (Van der Ent et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2017; Lovejoy and Nobre, 2018).

[12] These changes are affecting moisture transfer in the South America region, leading to decreased water availability and intensifying droughts and fires right across the continent.

II. Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal targets in Latin America and the Caribbean: regional overview

This chapter presents an analysis of future scenarios for the SDGs using a traffic light system, classifying targets according to likelihood of achievement by 2030: a green light means the target has already been or is likely to be achieved by 2030; a yellow light indicates that the trend is moving in the right direction, but at an insufficient pace; and a red light indicates that the trend has stalled or reversed relative to 2015. The analysis is based on available data up to October 2025 and includes 190 indicators, representing 69% of those identified in the universe of analysis, which enabled an assessment of the likelihood of achievement for 134 (79%) of the SDG targets.

The methodology used to determine the expected values for 2030, the selection of statistical series and the traffic light system is consistent with that applied at the global level by the United Nations Statistics Division following the review of the various methodologies employed within the United Nations system for such analyses. As a member of the group of experts that conducted the review, ECLAC supports the methodology adopted at the global level and applies it to exercises implemented within the region.[13]

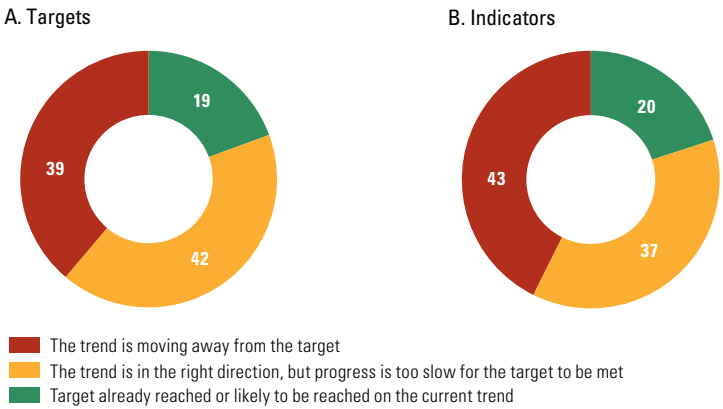
[13] For more details on the process and methodology, see https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2025/Technical_Note_for_Progress_Assessment_2025.pdf.

A. Regional overview

The outlook for achieving the SDGs is not promising. At the current rate of progress, the region will have achieved only 19% of the SDG targets by 2030.

The regional overview is similar to that presented on previous occasions, although more adverse than in 2025. Prospective analysis for 2030 suggests that 19% of the targets —less than the 23% in 2025— have reached the established threshold or are progressing well and likely to achieve it by 2030; 42% of the targets are moving in the right direction, but too slowly to reach the respective target; and 39% of the targets are either at a standstill or moving in the wrong direction, indicating stagnation or regression compared to 2015 (see figure II.1).

Figure II.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators, by likelihood of achievement by 2030, 2026
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

These results are poorer than projections made just a year ago, reflecting the adverse impact of the current complex international situation on the prospects for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A large proportion of targets, close to 4 out of 10, are critically behind, with a large gap between these results and the figures needed to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Comparison of each target's status in 2025 and 2026 shows that 13 slipped down in category of progress, and a mere 6 moved up to a category of stronger progress (see table II.1).

Table II.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators, by likelihood of achievement by 2030, 2026
(Numbers)

Goal	Total		Target already reached or likely to be reached on the current trend		Target likely to be reached only with public policy intervention			
					The trend is in the right direction, but progress is too slow for the target to be met		The trend reflects stagnation or regression	
	Targets	Indicators	Targets	Indicators	Targets	Indicators	Targets	Indicators
No poverty	6	10	0	0	4	7	2	3
Zero hunger	7	15	1	1	1	5	5	9
Good health and well-being	12	25	3	5	4	9	5	11
Quality education	8	10	1	2	4	3	3	5
Gender equality	6	7	1	1	4	5	1	1
Clean water and sanitation	8	11	1	1	3	4	4	6
Affordable and clean energy	5	6	4	5	1	1	0	0
Decent work and economic growth	11	16	2	5	7	6	2	5
Industry, innovation and infrastructure	6	8	0	1	4	3	2	4
Reduced inequalities	8	10	0	0	2	2	6	8
Sustainable cities and communities	5	6	1	1	3	4	1	1
Responsible consumption and production	9	11	3	3	1	1	5	7
Climate action	3	4	0	0	1	2	2	2
Life below water	6	6	3	3	2	2	1	1
Life on land	9	12	2	3	2	3	5	6
Peace, justice and strong institutions	9	11	0	0	6	7	3	4
Partnerships for the Goals	16	22	4	7	7	7	5	8
Total	134	190	26	38	56	71	52	81

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.
Note: Includes 14 complementary indicators of the set prioritized by the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean for regional statistical follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Main progress and setbacks by Sustainable Development Goal

The data analysed show insufficient progress overall and a mixed picture in terms of progress toward the various SDGs.

The regional situation varies considerably from one SDG to another. Some of the most encouraging results are on SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), the only Goal for which no target is standing still or regressing, and for which good progress is being made on 80% of the targets and 83% of the indicators. There has been progress on SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) in terms of child mortality and the impact of pollution on health, and on SDG 14 (Life below water) as regards the conservation of coastal and marine areas. SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) shows encouraging signs in sustainable business practices and waste reduction, and active international cooperation in science and technology is supporting progress on SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

However, none of the targets for Goals 1 (End poverty), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 13 (Climate action) or 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) are expected to be met by 2030. Meanwhile, less than 15% of the targets of Goals 2 (Zero hunger), 4 (Quality education) and 6 (Clean water and sanitation) are progressing fast enough to reach the threshold in time.

Over 55% of the targets relating to Goals 2, 10, 12, 13 and 15 show regression or stagnation. Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities) shows setbacks in fiscal and social policy, safe migration and inclusive global governance. Achievement of Goal 2 (End hunger) depends on overcoming major challenges, including the persistence of undernutrition and malnutrition and food price volatility, which is worsening food insecurity.

Among the targets in green are those related to child mortality (target 3.2), the health impacts of pollution (target 3.9), equitable access to education (target 4.5), share of renewable energy (target 7.2), energy efficiency (target 7.3), per capita economic growth (target 8.1), economic productivity and innovation (target 8.2), waste reduction (target 12.5), the conservation of coastal and marine areas (target 14.5), statistical capacity (target 17.19), and international cooperation on science and technology (target 17.6) (see figure II.2).

Conversely, the targets marked in red —those that have stalled or regressed— include extreme poverty and national poverty (targets 1.1 and 1.2), undernourishment, food security, and malnutrition (targets 2.1 and 2.2), maternal mortality (target 3.1), non-communicable diseases

and mental health (target 3.4), universal health coverage (target 3.8), early childhood development (target 4.2), inclusive and sustainable industrialization (target 9.2), inclusive global governance (target 10.6), safe migration and mobility (target 10.7), housing and basic services (target 11.1) and climate change policies (target 13.2).

Figure II.2
Latin America and the Caribbean: Sustainable Development Goal targets, by likelihood of achievement by 2030, 2026

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

C. Differences and similarities among the subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean

The subregions differ both in terms of their overall progress towards the SDGs and the progress made towards specific targets.

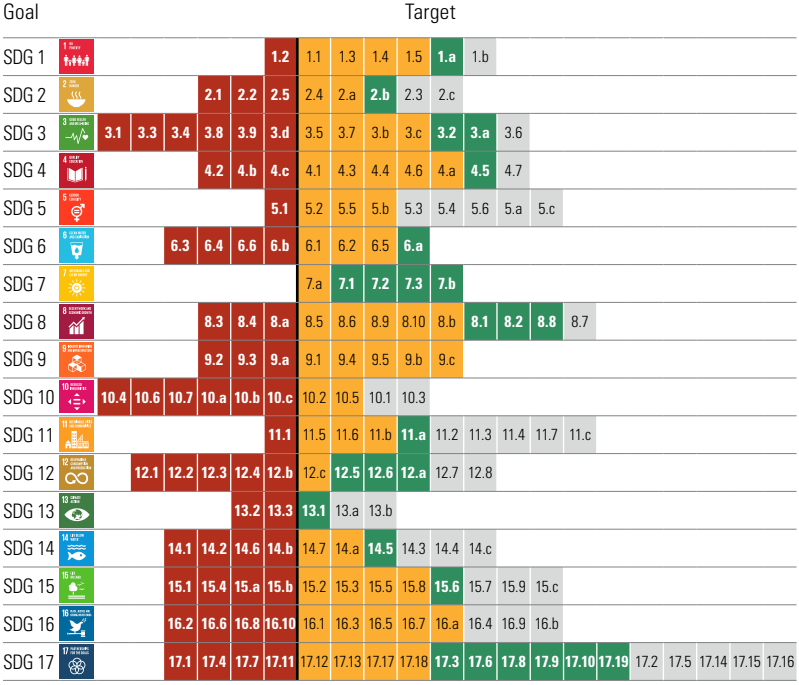
Mixed trends among the Goals are also reflected in the different subregions. Results are similar overall, with slightly better performances in South America and Central America and Mexico than in the Caribbean.

The percentages for South America, Central America and Mexico are very similar to the figures for the region as a whole with respect to targets that are on a promising path (19% and 18%, respectively). The Caribbean comes in about 7 percentage points below this (13%). The Caribbean has the largest number of targets that have stalled or are moving in the wrong direction —45% of the total analysed, compared with 41% for South America and 39% for Central America and Mexico. These figures speak to the Caribbean's particular vulnerabilities, which stem from its exposure to climate change, its high import dependence, small and poorly diversified island economies and limited availability of data for statistical monitoring.

In all three subregions, many targets are making progress but too slowly to reach the 2030 thresholds. This is the case for 40% of targets in South America, 43% in Central America and Mexico, and 42% in the Caribbean. Accordingly, the indicators analysed are progressing in all three subregions for most targets (whether fast enough or not): 61% in Central America and Mexico, 59% in South America and 55% in the Caribbean (see figure II.3).

Figure II.3
Latin America and the Caribbean: Sustainable Development Goal targets, by likelihood of achievement by 2030, by subregion, 2026

A. South America

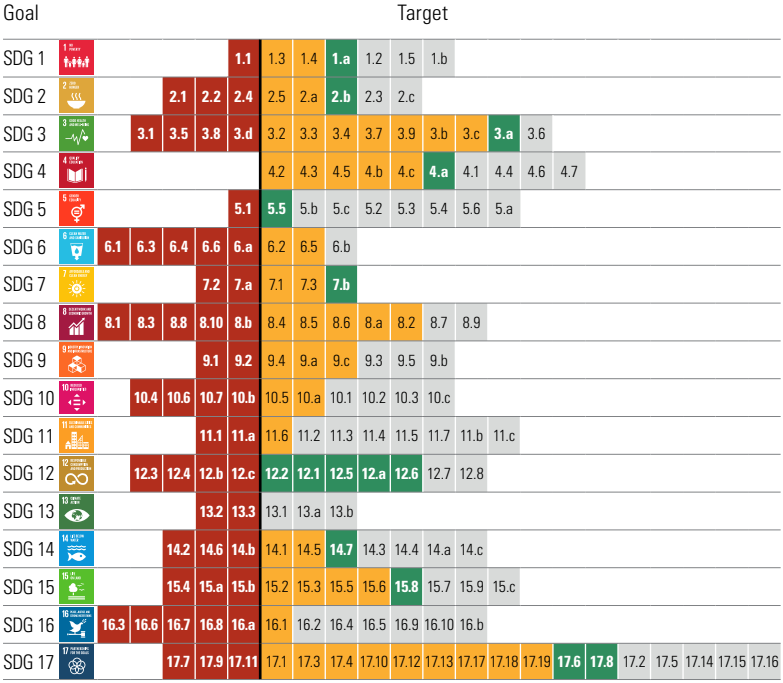


The trend has stalled or is moving away from the target
The trend is in the right direction, but progress is too slow for the target to be met
Target already reached or likely to be reached on the current trend
Insufficient data

B. Central America and Mexico

The trend has stalled or is moving away from the target
The trend is in the right direction, but progress is too slow for the target to be met
Target already reached or likely to be reached on the current trend
Insufficient data

C. The Caribbean



The trend has stalled or is moving away from the target
The trend is in the right direction, but progress is too slow for the target to be met
Target already reached or likely to be reached on the current trend
Insufficient data

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

D. Fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean

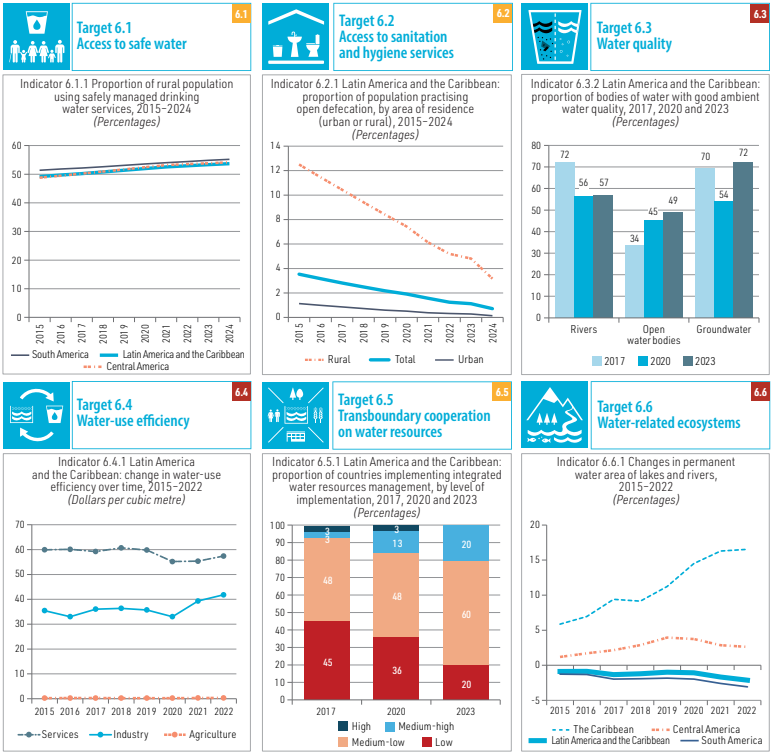
The data lead to a clear conclusion: the region needs to accelerate progress. The results obtained thus far show that progress is possible, but also that time is running out. The region is at a crossroads; the two available options are acting more swiftly or accepting that commitments which are crucial for current and future well-being will not be met. The challenge is formidable, but the opportunity to transform this narrative into a success story remains within reach, as long as decisive action is taken with a spirit of cooperation and a strategic vision.

III. Progress in relation to Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This chapter looks at progress towards the five SDGs that will be reviewed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2026. It outlines progress made, key challenges, examples of good practices from countries in the region, and policy recommendations for accelerating progress with respect to each Goal. Where relevant information is available, it also documents the first effects of the major global disruptions that occurred in 2025, such as the imposition of higher tariffs and the weakening of multilateralism.

A. Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

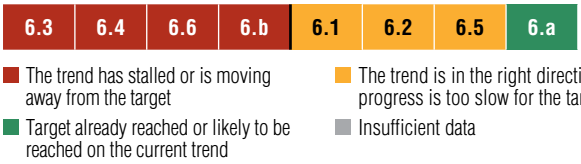
Infographic III.1
Latin America and the Caribbean: progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of United Nations. (n.d.). *SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: statistical knowledge management hub*. Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/index-es.html.

Note: Each indicator comprises one or more statistical series, which partially or fully cover the corresponding indicator. In the figures presented here, one or more statistical series were used for the respective indicator.

Diagram III.I
Latin America and the Caribbean: Goal 6 targets, by likelihood of achieving the defined threshold by 2030



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The region made modest progress between 2021 and 2025 as regards access to drinking water and sanitation services; significant gaps remain in sanitation, water quality and ecosystem protection. Fiscal constraints and the lack of institutional capacity to expand the scope of water safety projects compound long-standing territorial and social inequalities. Water and sanitation are not merely a technical or financial issue: they constitute a matter of human rights, equity and the power of institutions.

1. Universal and equitable access to water (target 6.1)[14] and sanitation (target 6.2)[15]

Access to safe drinking water in the region is lower among households in the lowest income quintiles, in rural areas and among the Indigenous and Afrodescendent populations.

In 2024, access to safely managed drinking water supply services (target 6.1) remained largely unchanged and varied significantly across subregions: the greatest percentage of the population had access in South America (83.1% of the population), followed by the Caribbean (58.9%) and Central America (49.2%) (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2025). At the regional level, 21.1% of the population —140 million people— lacked access to safe drinking water in 2024 (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene, 2025).

With regard to access to sanitation and hygiene services (target 6.2), 48.8% of the regional population —324 million people— lacked access to safely managed sanitation services in 2024, and 5.1% of

[14] Target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
[15] Target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

the population (34 million people) lacked basic hygiene facilities for handwashing (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene, 2025).

Access gaps are especially pronounced between higher- and lower-income groups, between urban and rural areas, and among ethnic groups. Flat or regressive charges for water and sanitation services make it hard to close these gaps: the region's most vulnerable population quintile devotes 1.6 times more of its total household expenditure to water and sanitation than the highest-income quintile.

2. Water quality and wastewater management (target 6.3)[16]

Between 2020 and 2024, progress in wastewater management stalled and, in some cases, went into reverse. In South America, levels of treatment and reuse remained virtually unchanged, at 60.9% in 2024. By contrast, in the Caribbean they declined by 2.5 percentage points to 33.8%, while Central America posted a larger decline of 11.3 percentage points to 30.6%. These figures suggest that investments have not translated into sustained increases in capacity or quality, owing particularly to incomplete sewerage networks, undersized treatment plants and insufficient operational mechanisms to cover energy and maintenance costs.

Investments in wastewater management in the region have not produced sustained improvements in capacity and quality.

ECLAC estimates that an investment of approximately US$ 250 million in 75 medium-sized wastewater treatment plants could generate annual energy savings of nearly US$ 46 million, with a payback period of around six years, reduce operating costs by some 40%, and lower methane emissions by 88% (Saravia Matus et al., 2022). A second analysis of seven small and medium-sized plants in El Salvador and Mexico shows that an investment of US$ 5.37 million would generate annual savings of US$ 1.35 million, with an average payback period of 5.5 years (Saravia Matus et al., 2024). These figures show that the wastewater sector offers significant opportunities for promoting the circular economy in the region.

[16] Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

3. Water-use efficiency (target 6.4)[17] and integrated water resources management (target 6.5)[18]

During the period 2018–2022, water-use efficiency —measured as economic value generated per cubic metre— declined in 2020 and subsequently recovered. Prices in the Caribbean continued to trend upwards, reaching between US$ 15.02 and US$ 15.74 per cubic metre. Gradual but uneven progress has been made on integrated water resources management: the proportion of resources managed in an integrated manner in 2023 was 40% in the Caribbean, 39% in Central America, and 38% in South America. Significant efforts will be required to consolidate operational arrangements for basins, where multiple uses, institutions and jurisdictions converge. The bottlenecks include the lack of legal alignment between agreements and domestic frameworks, insufficient capacity and funding of multinational institutions, and differing views on the main management challenges among the riparian states in transboundary basins.

4. Protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems (target 6.6)[19]

Between 2017 and 2023, the share of areas protected or under restoration declined from 86.3% to 68.9% in the Caribbean and from 64.5% to 56.6% in South America, but rose in Central America, from 43.3% to 59.5%. In the first two subregions, the decline reflects a loss of ecosystem functions linked to land-use change, urban and industrial pressures and extreme weather events, which in turn raises the cost of maintaining water quality and weakens resilience to droughts and floods.

5. Good practices and policy recommendations for achieving Goal 6

One of the initiatives that have had a positive impact on progress towards achieving Goal 6 in the region include Brazil's new legal framework for sanitation (Act No. 14026, in force since 2020), which set binding targets for 2033, strengthened regulation and promoted competitive investment. An estimated 80 million people benefited

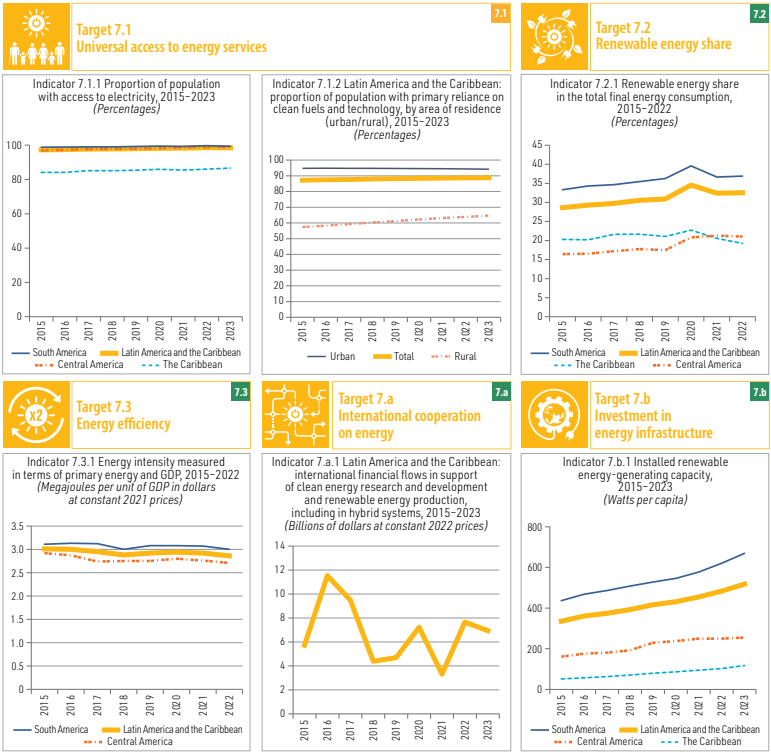
[17] Target 6.4: By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
[18] Target 6.5: By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.
[19] Target 6.6: By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

from these measures (GO Associados, 2024, 2025). Another was Costa Rica's tariff reform, which built in progressive tiered structures (blocks of increasing consumption), a targeted social tariff, and adjustments based on operating costs (Public Services Regulatory Authority, 2024). El Salvador introduced a debt-for-nature swap, which allocates some US$ 350 million to the Lempa River Conservation and Restoration Programme (Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean [CAF], 2025), while the Dominican Republic's National Pact for Water 2021–2036 provides for around US$ 8.5 billion in water sector investments (Inter-American Development Bank et al., 2025). Peru integrated natural infrastructure into the national public investment system, such that 43 of the country's 50 sanitation service providers finance measures in watershed headwaters, with an investment of about US$ 75 million in 2023 and a portfolio of hundreds of projects (Smith et al., 2025).

Key recommendations for accelerating progress toward Goal 6 are to expand and maintain financial sustainable networks with progressive tariffs; strengthen integrated water resources management at the basin level, with clear regulatory frameworks and intersectoral coordination; integrate natural infrastructure into national public investment systems; develop new sources of financing, such as debt swaps, water bonds and water funds; and ensure meaningful participation by local communities —including Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendent populations— in water management.

B. Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

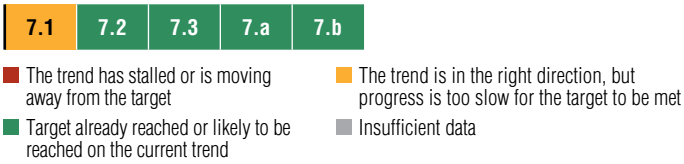
Infographic III.2
Latin America and the Caribbean: progress on Sustainable Development Goal 7



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of United Nations. (n.d.). *SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: statistical knowledge management hub*. Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/index-es.html.

Note: Each indicator comprises one or more statistical series, which partially or fully cover the corresponding indicator. In the figures presented here, one or more statistical series were used for the respective indicator.

Diagram III.2
Latin America and the Caribbean: Goal 7 targets, by likelihood of achieving the defined threshold by 2030



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The region's best performance is on Goal 7: 80% of its targets and 83% of its indicators are highly likely to meet the thresholds set for 2030, and it is the only Goal with no targets that are stagnating or regressing. This is the fruit of decades of investment in renewable energy in the region —primarily in hydropower, but increasingly in solar and wind power as well— and relatively consistent energy policies in most countries.

1. Universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (target 7.1)[20]

The region's electrification rate increased from 91.7% in 2000 to 98.5% in 2023, bringing it close to achieving universal access. However, while access in urban areas is virtually universal (99.7% in 2023), it drops to 92.9% in rural areas (United Nations, 2025). Lack of access to electric power has become an increasingly localized phenomenon, closely bound up with multidimensional poverty, territorial exclusion and rurality: in 2024, 3.6% of the overall population in the lowest income quintile lacked access to electricity, rising to as much as 10.2% of this quintile in rural areas (ECLAC, 2025j).

Significant challenges remain with respect to increasing the use of clean fuels and technologies in households.

The proportion of the population using clean cooking methods rose from 79.9% in 2000 to 88.8% in 2023, but with a gap between rural (64.7%) and urban areas (94.2%) (United Nations, 2025). Over a third of rural households continue to rely on firewood, coal or kerosene for cooking (ECLAC, 2025j). These lacks disproportionately affect women, rural communities and Indigenous and Afrodescendent populations. One successful policy in this area is El Salvador's targeted subsidy for liquefied petroleum gas, after which clean fuels and technologies coverage rose from 58.4% in 2000 to 94.4% in 2023 (United Nations, 2025).

[20] Target 7.1: By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

2. Share of renewable energy in the overall energy mix (target 7.2)[21]

In 2024, non-combustible renewable sources (hydropower, wind, solar and geothermal) accounted for 64.5% of regional electricity generation (Latin American and Caribbean Energy Organization [OLACDE], 2025a). Hydropower, the historical pillar of the region's electricity supply, now accounts for 44.7% of generation, while recent growth has been driven mainly by the rapid expansion of wind and solar energy. Some two thirds of installed capacity comes from non-fossil fuel renewable sources and, in 2023, per capita renewable capacity reached 518 watts, compared with 305 watts in 2013 (OLACDE, 2025b).

Although the region's share of renewable energy has risen, its final energy consumption remains heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

However, the electricity sector's strong performance contrasts with a heavy reliance on fossil fuels in the primary energy mix and in final consumption, with fossil fuels accounted for 66.9% of the region's primary energy mix in 2024 (OLACDE, 2025c). The gap between the high share of renewable energy in electricity generation and its lower share in final consumption derives mainly from dependence on petroleum products in the transport sector, the intensive use of fossil fuels in industry and the slow rate of thermal electrification.

Achieving target 7.2 will require boosting renewable energy beyond the electricity sector, speeding up the electrification of transport and replacing fossil fuels in industry. In Chile, Santiago offers an example of good practice: in 2025, it brought in 308 new electric buses, and its fleet reached an estimated 4,400 by March 2026, meaning that 7 of 10 public buses are now electric (Mobility Portal, 2025).

3. Improvement of energy efficiency (target 7.3)[22]

The pace of improvement in energy efficiency in Latin America and the Caribbean is still slower than in other regions and may not be enough to meet the target.

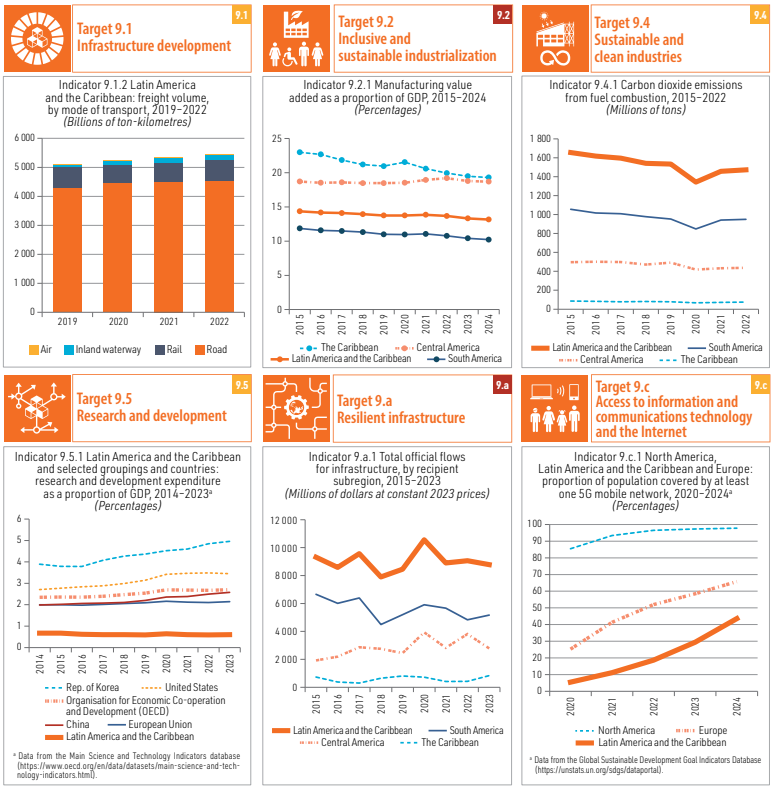
Regional energy intensity[23] declined from around 1.52 megajoules per dollar in 2004 to 1.25 megajoules per dollar in 2023, representing a cumulative improvement of 18% over two decades (ECLAC, 2025k; OLACDE, 2025c). However, improvement has been

[21] Target 7.2: By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.
[22] Target 7.3: By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.
[23] Energy intensity is measured as the total energy supply in megajoules per unit of GDP expressed in constant purchasing power parity dollars at 2021 prices.

slower than in other world regions and falls far short of what is needed to achieve the target of doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency. Electricity losses in transmission and distribution systems are estimated at approximately 17% of available energy, well above the levels in the high-income countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Yépez García and Jiménez Mori, 2024). Among the region's most successful programmes are the Energy Efficiency Programme in Brazil, the regulation on energy management for large energy consumers and public sector organizations in Chile and the official standards for non-residential buildings in Mexico (Carvajal et al., 2025).

C. Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

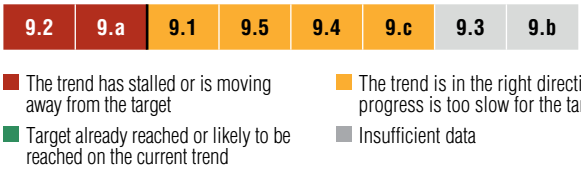
Infographic III.3
Latin America and the Caribbean: progress on Sustainable Development Goal 9



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of United Nations. (n.d.). *SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: statistical knowledge management hub*. Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/index-es.html.

Note: Each indicator comprises one or more statistical series, which partially or fully cover the corresponding indicator. In the figures presented here, one or more statistical series were used for the respective indicator.

Diagram III.3
Latin America and the Caribbean: Goal 9 targets, by likelihood of achieving the defined threshold by 2030



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

SDG 9 is one of the Goals on which the region is lagging furthest behind, as none of its targets are on track. With only a few years to go before the deadline for implementing the 2030 Agenda, most Goal 9 targets show moderate progress, while others have stalled or even regressed. The new geopolitical landscape adds new challenges, as it widens the gaps in productivity, innovation and capabilities, particularly given the accelerating pace of technological change and the expansion of artificial intelligence (AI).

1. Development of sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure (target 9.1)[24]

Passenger transport volume recovered steadily following the sharp contraction in 2020, to 3.8 trillion passenger-kilometres in 2022, but has yet to come back up to the levels seen before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, air transport has already exceeded 2019 levels in all subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean. In freight transport, total volume growth was moderate, from 5.1 trillion ton-kilometres in 2019 to 5.4 trillion ton-kilometres in 2022. In the maritime sector, port container traffic reached 59 million TEUs[25] in 2023, compared with the 53 million recorded in 2020 (ECLAC, 2025g).

The quality and coverage of road infrastructure vary across the countries in the region.

Territorial disparities in terms of the quality and coverage of road infrastructure are striking: while over 90% of the road network is paved in Mexico, Panama and Uruguay, only around 20% is paved in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Colombia

[24] Target 9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
[25] TEU = twenty-foot equivalent units.

(Sanguinetti et al., 2021). In rural Paraguay, 58% of the population lacks access to a road that is passable all year round within two kilometres of their homes, and in Peru, this is true for 63% of the population (ECLAC, 2023a). The fragmentation of transportation systems limits the potential benefits of physical connectivity in terms of intraregional trade, productivity, international competitiveness and the ability to attract investment (Herreros and Saade Hazin, 2025). Initiatives such as the South American Integration Routes programme (Ministry of Planning and the Budget of Brazil, 2025) represent a step in the right direction by supporting multimodality and the formation of strategic corridors.

2. Industry's share of employment, economic growth and productivity (target 9.2)[26]

The manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP and employment has declined.

The contribution of the manufacturing industry to both GDP and employment has declined in recent years, a trend that lowers the prospects for meeting target 9.2.[27] Between 2015 and 2024, the share of manufacturing in the GDP of Latin America and the Caribbean dropped by 8.4%, while the sector's share of employment fell by 5.2% between 2015 and 2023. This decline occurred in 24 of the 32 countries analysed in contribution to GDP and in 17 of the 29 countries in contribution to employment. The process of relative deindustrialization hurts not only the creation of quality jobs, but also the region's ability to take up technological advances and improve productivity. Costa Rica offers a notable example of successful reindustrialization: beginning in 2013, it began converting its industry toward high-tech manufacturing, particularly medical devices, whose share of the country's industrial exports rose from 15.5% to 51.2% between 2013 and 2024, thanks to a combination of targeted policies to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), human capital development, production linkages and cluster-based governance systems (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2022; Mora-García and Pearson, 2025; Rojas et al., 2025).

[26] Target 9.2: Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.

[27] The importance of manufacturing for economic growth is well documented in the literature, with the greatest benefits stemming from its strong forward and backward linkages and greater potential to innovate and incorporate technical progress relative to other sectors (Correa, 2018).

3. Access of small-scale enterprises to financial services (target 9.3)[28]

According to data from 11 countries in the region, between 2016–2017 and 2023–2024, the percentage of small and medium-sized enterprises that considered access to financing to be a severe constraint declined in 7 (Barbados, Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago) (World Bank, n.d.). However, in El Salvador and Uruguay, the percentage increased among medium-sized firms, while in Ecuador and Paraguay, the percentage rose for both medium-sized and small firms (World Bank, n.d.). Structural barriers remain, such as the higher risk associated with small and medium-sized businesses, the lack of documentation they may have, the high transaction costs involved and their limited financial literacy (Kulfas, 2018; Pérez Caldentey and Titelman, 2018; Cipoletta Tomassian and Pérez Caldentey, 2024; Oddone and Stola, 2025). The strengthening of guarantee systems, such as the National Guarantee Fund in Colombia and the Small Business Guarantee Fund in Chile, is a highly effective strategy for increasing lending to this segment (Pérez Caldentey and Titelman, 2018).

4. Upgrading of infrastructure and retrofitting of industries to make them sustainable (target 9.4)[29]

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions per unit of GDP have been steadily declining since 2000, falling by nearly 20% between 2000 and 2022. Nonetheless, the average annual reduction falls short of the mitigation pathways established by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023). The challenges include a heavy reliance on primary, low-value-added activities, technological gaps, limited uptake of clean technologies and weak institutional capacities (ECLAC, 2025h). Some countries show promising advances, however: Chile has a national green hydrogen strategy; Brazil is pursuing a new industrial policy that incorporates sustainability principles; and Costa Rica's power grid is mainly renewable (ECLAC, 2025a, 2025h).

[28] Target 9.3: Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets.

[29] Target 9.4: By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.

5. Enhancement of scientific research, technological capabilities and innovation (target 9.5)[30]

The region's R&D investment over the past decade has stagnated and remains well below that of more technologically dynamic economies.

Latin America and the Caribbean have not increased their investment in research and development (R&D) in over a decade (ECLAC, 2025h). Regional R&D intensity remained stable at around 0.6% of GDP between 2014 and 2023, which stands in stark contrast to R&D intensity in the most technologically dynamic economies: in 2023, the Republic of Korea allocated 4.96% of its GDP to R&D; the United States, 3.45%; OECD countries, on average, 2.70%; and China, 2.58% (ECLAC, 2023b). Only Argentina, Brazil —which allocates about 1.2% of its GDP to R&D— and Uruguay exceed 0.5% in the region (ECLAC, 2025h). The composition of funding is also unpromising. Public funding predominates and private-sector involvement is low compared to developed countries, where firms provide between 60% and 70% of total R&D spending (ECLAC, 2025h). The number of researchers per million inhabitants has increased slowly but there are still too few to support continuous innovation. Progress requires coordination between education systems, productive sectors and innovation ecosystems; higher graduate numbers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and policies on science, technology and innovation both to increase funding amounts and guide how those resources are allocated.

6. Increase in access to information and communications technology and universal and affordable access to the Internet (target 9.c)[31]

Substantive progress has been made in Latin America and the Caribbean in universal access to the Internet and information and communications technology (ICT). Between 2014 and 2024, mobile coverage grew rapidly and steadily, reaching 95% for 3G and 93% for 4G (GSMA Intelligence, 2025). However, the region faces a considerable lag in the deployment of advanced mobile networks: while 74% of Europe's population has 5G coverage, the figure is only 48% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and just 13 of the region's 33 countries have deployed

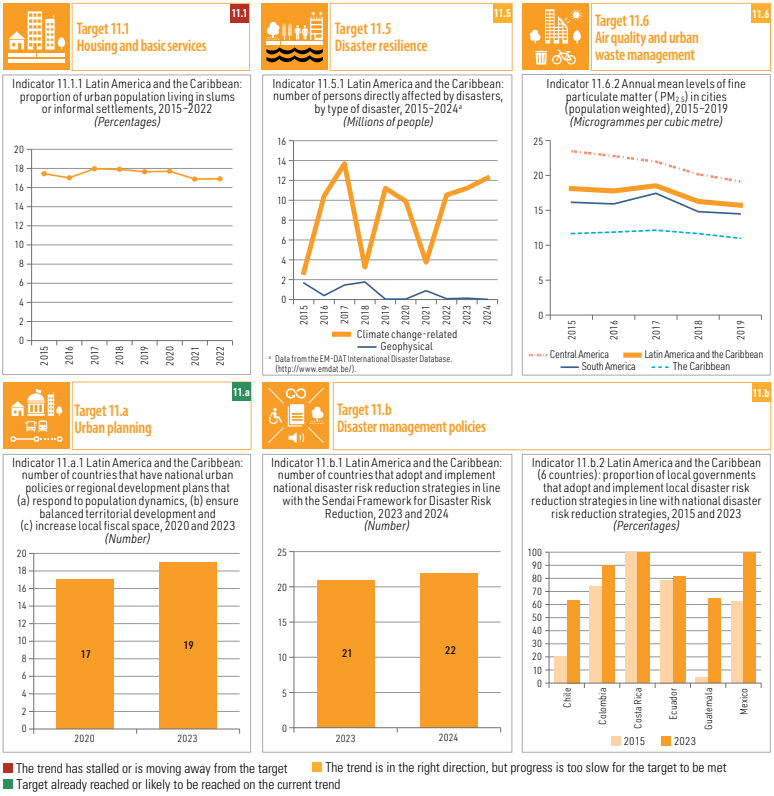
[30] Target 9.5: Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.

[31] Target 9.c: Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

5G services for commercial purposes (GSMA Intelligence, 2025; International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2024). Unique mobile Internet subscribers accounted for only 65% of the population in 2024, reflecting underutilization of installed capacity. Current challenges are no longer limited to infrastructure availability, but also relate to factors such as affordability. For those in the poorest quintile, a mobile handset can account for 41% of monthly per capita income and a 20-gigabyte plan for 8% (GSMA Intelligence, 2025). These figures far exceed the International Telecommunication Union's affordability threshold of 2%.

D. Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

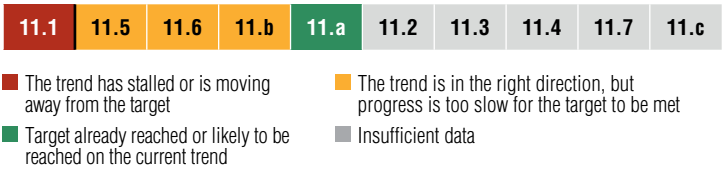
Infographic III.4
Latin America and the Caribbean: progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of United Nations. (n.d.). *SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: statistical knowledge management hub.* Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/index-es.html.

Note: Each indicator comprises one or more statistical series, which partially or fully cover the corresponding indicator. In the figures presented here, one or more statistical series were used for the respective indicator.

Diagram III.4
Latin America and the Caribbean: Goal 11 targets, by likelihood of achieving the defined threshold by 2030



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most urbanized region in the world, with 54% of its population living in settlements classified as cities according to the degree of urbanization methodology. This figure is surpassed only by the regions of North Africa and Western Asia. Monitoring of Goal 11 is severely constrained by limited data availability. Of all the Goals, it has the fewest targets with data compiled at the regional level (just five). This limitation reduces the capacity to effectively monitor cities' specific challenges, which go beyond the indicators measured in other sectors.

1. Adequate and affordable housing (target 11.1)[32]

Beginning in the early twenty-first century, the proportion of the urban population living in slums declined steadily. However, this progress stalled in 2016 and since then the figure has not resumed its previous downward trajectory, but has remained close to that year's levels. This is set against a backdrop of persistent urban informality and rising housing and urban land costs. The sector's post-pandemic recovery capacity has been hampered by surging construction costs and by tighter mortgage lending conditions.

2. Accessible and sustainable transport (target 11.2)[33]

Mass transit systems have expanded in recent years in several Latin American and Caribbean countries, but gaps persist in accessibility, security, cost and travel times. Between 2010 and 2023, the combined network length of metro systems, which are present in 20 Latin American cities, increased

[32] Target 11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.
[33] Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

from 745 to 1,080 kilometres (International Association of Public Transport [UITP], 2025). The most significant change has been the expansion of bus rapid transit systems, which currently operate in 64 cities and have a combined length of 2,199 kilometres. This network accounts for over a third of the world's bus rapid transit infrastructure and provides nearly 19 million trips daily (BRT+ Centre of Excellence and EMBARQ, n.d.). In November 2025, 7,273 electric buses were in operation; this technology was barely present in the region in 2017 (E-Bus Radar, 2025). Much of this growth is concentrated in a few large cities, such as Santiago, Bogotá and São Paulo.

Some of the region's major cities have expanded mass public transport infrastructure, especially bus rapid transit and metro systems.

Commuting time reflects sharp inequalities: in cities such as São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Montevideo, a journey on public transport averages more than an hour, twice as long as by private vehicle.[34] These delays mainly affect lower-income groups, who must travel longer distances at lower speeds, highlighting the regressive nature of urban mobility costs (Aulestia and Lana, 2024) and the importance of investing in transport connectivity for peripheral urban areas.

3. Disaster impact (target 11.5)[35]

The number of deaths in the region caused by disasters has remained relatively stable, ranging from 1,500 to 3,000 annually in most years. However, the economic damage is significant. For example, in 2024, Hurricane Beryl caused total damage in Barbados equivalent to 0.15% of GDP and severely affected tourism infrastructure (CEPAL, 2025i). That same year, in the worst climate-related disaster in Brazil's history, flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, caused economic losses of approximately U$ 17 billion (IDB et al., 2024). Twenty-two of the region's countries have adopted and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In some countries, the proportion of local governments adopting these strategies has increased significantly: this is the case in Colombia (up from 3.5% in 2008 to 89.6% in 2023), Costa Rica (up from 2.2% in 2005 to 100% in 2015) and Chile (up from just over 1.0% in 2005 to 78.5% in 2021).

[34] Statistical urban mobility profiles, prepared by ECLAC with data from origin-destination surveys of six of the region's cities, are available on the Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean, at https://plataformaurbana.cepal.org/en/sustainable-mobility.

[35] Target 11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.

4. Urban pollution and waste management (target 11.6)[36]

The gradual and steady decline in the concentration of fine particulate matter in some subregions is still insufficient to meet the target.

Between 2010 and 2019, there was a gradual and steady decline in the concentration of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)[37] in urban areas in Central America, from 23.1 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) to 18.6 µg/m³, and in South America, from 16.9 µg/m³ to 13.8 µg/m³. This downtrend may be linked to policies such as the adoption of stricter vehicle emission regulations, improvements in fuel quality, gradual fleet replacement and the implementation of targeted decontamination plans. However, no Latin American or Caribbean country meets the air quality guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), which set an annual $PM_{2.5}$ air quality guideline level of 5 µg/m³. The highest values are recorded in Andean countries such as Peru (31.7 µg/m³) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (26.9 µg/m³), where levels are more than five times the reference value.

5. Rural, urban and territorial integration (target 11.a)[38] and resilience and climate change adaptation in urban policies (target 11.b)[39]

In 2023, Paraguay brought to 19 the number of countries and territories of the region that have national urban policies or regional development plans that respond to population dynamics, ensure balanced territorial development and increase local fiscal space. These policies are still largely absent in the countries and territories of the Caribbean. Between 2000 and 2020, the built-up area per capita in the region's cities remained relatively stable (increase from 127 m^2 to 129 m^2), although with significant variations among cities (United Nations, 2023). Some patterns of urban expansion remain a concern; for example, in this same period, the built-up area per capita in Montego Bay, Jamaica increased by 55.7% (De Paula and Hosein, 2024).

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[36] Target 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

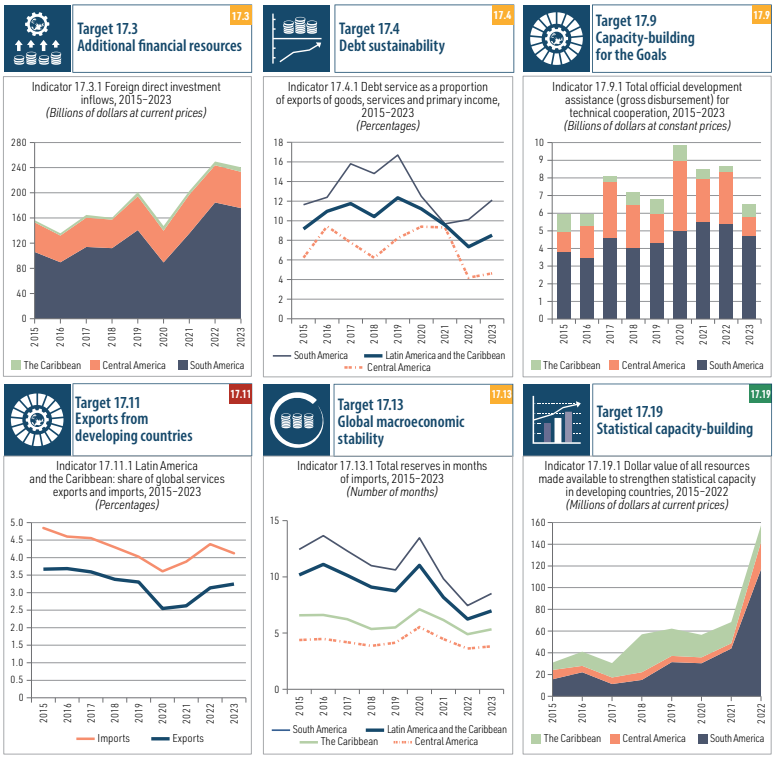
[37] Fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) refers to airborne pollutants with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less, capable of penetrating deep into the respiratory system and linked with significant human health risks (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

[38] Target 11.a: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.

[39] Target 11.b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

E. Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

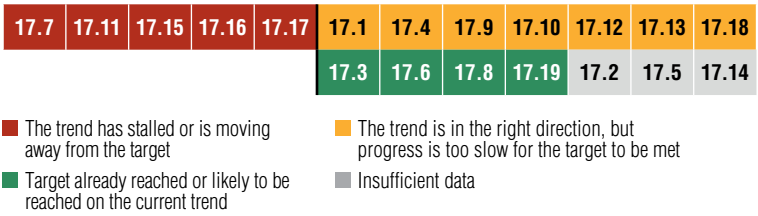
Infographic III.5
Latin America and the Caribbean: progress on Sustainable Development Goal 17



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of United Nations. (n.d.). *SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: statistical knowledge management hub*. Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/index-es.html.

Note: Each indicator comprises one or more statistical series, which partially or fully cover the corresponding indicator. In the figures presented here, one or more statistical series were used for the respective indicator.

Diagram III.5
Latin America and the Caribbean: Goal 17 targets, by likelihood of achieving the defined threshold by 2030



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

With respect to Goal 17, domestic resource mobilization and flows of official development assistance (ODA) have both trended downward in a context where the weakening of multilateralism and a shift towards protectionism are narrowing the space for international cooperation. The financing gap for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the region is approximately US$ 650 billion per year, or around 15% of regional GDP, and it cannot be closed with domestic public resources alone.

1. Domestic resource mobilization to improve national capacity for tax revenue collection (target 17.1)[40]

In 2023, tax revenues in Latin America and the Caribbean averaged 21.3% of GDP, a figure well below that of OECD countries, which averaged 34% of GDP (ECLAC, 2025b). Tax evasion amounted to 6.7% of regional GDP that same year (ECLAC, 2024a). Low tax revenues, high levels of tax expenditure (4.0% of GDP in 2023) (ECLAC, 2025b) and the regressive tax structure limit governments' capacity to finance the SDGs and widen the fiscal space for investment in public goods. Progressive tax reforms, efforts to address tax evasion and the rationalization of tax expenditures are all necessary conditions for expanding fiscal space.

[40] Target 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.

2. Official development assistance (target 17.2)[41]

The implementation of the action needed to achieve the SDGs is constrained by limited capacity to mobilize domestic resources and by reduced access to ODA and resources from international financial institutions.

There has been a decline in ODA to Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years, and the outlook is bleak as a result of weakening multilateralism, a shift in donor countries' budgets towards domestic priorities and reduced support for the United Nations. Between 2000 and 2023, ODA for infrastructure in Latin America and the Caribbean increased by a cumulative 143%. However, this growth was uneven across subregions and concentrated in a small number of countries. Flows to Caribbean small island developing States and landlocked developing countries are highly unpredictable, which limits their capacity to respond to regional needs in a balanced manner.

3. Debt sustainability (target 17.4)[42]

One of the main obstacles to achieving the SDGs in the region is the high cost of debt servicing, which in 2024 accounted for 2.9% of GDP. Interest payments were equivalent to 70% of education spending, 86% of health spending and 57% of social protection spending in 2023, underscoring the excessive opportunity cost of debt for sustainable development (ECLAC, 2025b). The effective implementation of these measures could partially ease the fiscal constraints of the most heavily indebted countries.

4. Regional and international cooperation on science, technology and innovation and knowledge-sharing (target 17.6)[43]

International cooperation flows in science, technology and innovation have increased, although at a pace insufficient to close the region's technological gaps. There is a significant geopolitical risk, as the rapid development

[41] Target 17.2: Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7% of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15% to 0.20% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.

[42] Target 17.4: Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress.

[43] Target 17.6: Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, together with restrictions on trade in critical technological components (such as advanced semiconductors), could widen the digital and technological divides between the region and more advanced economies. The governance of artificial intelligence is a particularly important challenge for Goal 17, as it requires multilateral frameworks that are still under development and increasingly difficult to establish amid the weakening of multilateralism.

5. Universal multilateral trading system and its challenges (17.10)[44]

Amid rising global protectionism, the risks for the region include increased external dependency and new barriers to integration into more complex value chains.

The multilateral trading system is facing one of its most challenging periods. The unilateral increase in tariffs by the United States —whose average effective tariff rose from 2.7% between 2022 and 2024 to 16.9% in February 2026—[45] and the erosion of World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules pose significant risks to regional exports. For Latin America and the Caribbean, the risks include increased external dependency and reliance on primary and low-value added activities, new barriers to integration into more complex value chains and constraints on job creation and productive development. However, disruptions in global supply chains could also create opportunities for countries that are able to position themselves as reliable alternatives in strategic sectors.

[44] Target 17.10: Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda.

[45] The effective tariff rate does not reflect changes in consumer and business spending in response to tariffs. Taking this effect into account, the effective tariff rate falls to 14.3% (The Budget Lab, 2026).

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Latin America and the Caribbean has been generally limited. Notwithstanding the relevant and valuable experiences that have been analysed, these advances could be affected in the coming years by emerging geopolitical conditions, fragmentation and uncertainty —factors that generate disruptions that undermine the possibility of achieving sustainable development worldwide. The following sections examine these challenges and some options for addressing them.

A. Challenges

1. The weakening of multilateralism and the breakdown of the international order

The weakening of multilateralism and the breakdown of the international order are undermining cooperation, stability and equity in the international system. This is creating a less conducive environment for achieving the SDGs, curbing the effectiveness of joint mechanisms for addressing global problems that, by definition, go beyond national borders, such as climate change, pandemics, migration flows and the governance of emerging technologies.

The weakening of multilateralism and the breakdown of the international order limit, in various ways, the region's capacity to achieve the SDGs.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the weakening of multilateralism impedes international cooperation aimed at funding social policies, reducing inequality and overcoming challenges, such as vulnerability to climate change, food insecurity, public health crises and migration. The strengthening of multilateralism

and the revitalization of international cooperation mechanisms are key strategic requirements for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. Changing rules of global trade

Rising protectionism, growing geopolitical rivalries and weakening multilateral mechanisms are creating an increasingly fractured and uncertain climate. Interdependence based on mutual benefit is morphing into one of weaponization, in which major powers unilaterally impose tariffs, financial sanctions and trade restrictions in pursuit of economic and non-economic objectives alike, heightening uncertainty and changing the rules that for decades lent global trade a measure of stability.

For Latin America and the Caribbean, these changes limit the capacity of countries to design and implement strategies to overcome the trap of low capacity for growth. Potential consequences include increased external dependency, primarization and lower value added, as well as new barriers to integration within the more complex global supply chains. This, in turn, would create constraints on job creation and pose greater obstacles to productive development, innovation and technology transfer. In this context, it is essential to design and implement national and regional strategies that boost the region's productive capacities and leverage the technological knowledge generated in many Latin American and Caribbean countries.

3. Income and wealth concentration

The high level of income and wealth concentration in Latin America and the Caribbean prevents economic growth from producing a real and sustained reduction in poverty and an improvement in overall well-being. It exacerbates unequal access to basic rights, such as health, education, housing and social protection, in addition to making lower-income households more vulnerable and restricting the State's ability to redistribute resources through taxation and public spending.

This high level of income and wealth concentration also affects democratic governance and environmental sustainability by influencing public decisions and hampering structural reforms. Reducing income and wealth concentration through progressive tax regimes and policies for social protection and inclusive productive development is therefore crucial for achieving the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as economic growth that is truly inclusive and sustainable.

4. Climate change

In Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the greatest challenges to the 2030 Agenda stems from slow progress on environmental targets. Substantial gaps in critical areas, such as climate change, water resource management, biodiversity conservation and reduction of risks related to disasters caused by extreme weather events. Climate vulnerability in Latin America and the Caribbean exacerbates the socioeconomic impacts of hurricanes, droughts and flooding, which in turn affect food security, infrastructure and ecosystem stability.

Promoting low carbon strategies that encourage energy efficiency and the sustainable development of productive sectors, along with disaster risk reduction strategies, is key for minimizing climate vulnerability and turning risks into opportunities for resilient growth, and ensuring the transition towards a sustainable development model that not only advances the achievement of the 2030 Agenda but also boosts societal and ecosystem resilience.

5. Governance and political economy in relation to artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence represents a technological opportunity to accelerate economic and social development and a factor of structural transformation capable of driving productivity, innovation and social inclusion in the region. However, it also presents a major challenge owing to the high implementation costs —technological infrastructure, energy resources, licences, services, training of specialists and regulatory frameworks— and to the risks relating to unequal distribution of its benefits. These issues may deepen the digital divide and technological dependence in many countries of the region, thereby worsening inequality.

To turn a potential challenge into an opportunity, it is necessary to adopt an anticipatory governance approach and to have comprehensive public policies linking national and regional efforts to combine investments in technology, human capital formation, international cooperation and responsible legislation. Multilateral governance of artificial intelligence —which is still under construction and is hindered by the weakening of multilateralism— is essential to ensure that the benefits of this technology are distributed equitably among countries and social groups.

B. Major achievements of the United Nations in 2025

In light of these challenges, the following actions have been taken within the United Nations.

1. UN80 Initiative

The UN80 Initiative is a comprehensive institutional reform effort launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in March 2025, on the occasion of the Organization's eightieth anniversary. Its primary aim is to amplify the impact of the United Nations, strengthen its agility, responsiveness and resilience, eliminate duplication of efforts, and more effectively and efficiently execute its mandates across the system's three fundamental pillars: peace and security, development and human rights.

The United Nations system as a whole is driving a reform process to strengthen its capacity to respond and support countries in their efforts to implement the SDGs.

Latin American and Caribbean countries have repeatedly stressed that the results of the UN80 Initiative's broad-based and complex reforms must strengthen —not weaken— the development pillar and ensure that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs continue to guide the Organization's support services. They have also underscored the importance of preserving region- and subregion-specific arrangements and maintaining an effective United Nations presence in the territories. On this point, the countries have indicated that the regional commissions, including ECLAC, generate significant added value through their integration of policy analysis with operational measures and their essential contribution to sustained progress on the 2030 Agenda.

2. Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development

At the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Seville, Spain, from 30 June to 3 July 2025, countries adopted the Sevilla Platform for Action, a product of joint efforts by various country coalitions to make progress on critical financing for development issues and to implement 130 initiatives. These include the creation of a global hub for debt-for-development swaps (World Bank and Spain), the establishment of a United Nations-supported borrowers' forum for countries, and a commitment from multilateral development banks to adopt State-contingent debt pause clauses, to be activated in times of crisis.

In follow-up to these efforts, the region must first and foremost expand fiscal space by improving the quality and effectiveness of spending and boosting public investment. It also needs to increase tax collection by curbing tax evasion, streamlining tax expenditures and strengthening progressive taxation. Second, it must strengthen external and private resource mobilization, develop capital markets and integrate regional capital market platforms, with incentives for FDI attraction and a more intensive use of financial instruments like thematic bonds, debt swaps and blended finance. Third, the region must expand the lending capacity of national, subregional and regional development banks, ensuring that they have a broad array of traditional and innovative financial instruments.

3. Second World Summit for Social Development

The Second World Summit for Social Development, held in Doha from 4 to 6 November 2025, represented a historic opportunity to address the main social challenges related to the 2030 Agenda and expedite progress towards its social targets, in particular reducing inequality, strengthening social cohesion and bolstering democracy. Thirty years after the first World Summit for Social Development, the countries of the world reaffirmed their commitment to inclusive social development, agreed to pursue policies for poverty and hunger eradication, inequality reduction, social cohesion and economic mobility, and called for strengthening governance, international cooperation and the role of civil society.

In the Doha Political Declaration of the "World Social Summit" under the title "the Second World Summit for Social Development", the regional commissions of the United Nations were invited to convene meetings with the aim of assessing progress made, gaps and opportunities for action, and to utilize existing mechanisms and platforms to conduct said meetings. ECLAC will convene these meetings in the framework of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to ensuring that actions taken in follow-up to the Second World Summit accelerate SDG achievement in the countries of the region.

C. ECLAC efforts to achieve the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean

ECLAC has also spearheaded regional initiatives to address the structural and emerging challenges that are hindering progress towards achieving the SDGs.

1. Community of Practice on voluntary national reviews in Latin America and the Caribbean

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, all Member States agreed to conduct periodic reviews, termed voluntary national reviews. To this end, in December 2019, ECLAC established the Community of Practice on the voluntary national reviews of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Since its inception, 65 virtual meetings have been held and the Community of Practice has become a regional platform that is valued by ECLAC member States.

It brings together government officials, professionals, researchers and technical experts, as well as representatives from ECLAC and other agencies, funds, and programs of the United Nations system. It addresses matters relevant to the preparation of voluntary national reviews, such as localizing the 2030 Agenda, mainstreaming the SDGs into planning and budgeting, financing for development, data and statistics, and accelerating progress on the SDGs.

2. Subsidiary bodies of ECLAC

Intergovernmental bodies offer a space in which member States can share their views and their visions, in particular on development-related issues. In 2025, in line with the UN80 Initiative, ECLAC sought to foster synergies and collaboration among its subsidiary bodies and with other agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations.

One of the key outcomes of ECLAC subsidiary bodies in 2025 was the second session of the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, at which participants addressed the importance of strengthening coordination with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the quantification of South-South cooperation as a source of financing for the SDGs, especially for Goal 5. Also worthy of note was the sixteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which culminated in the

adoption of the Tlatelolco Commitment: A Decade of Action to Achieve Substantive Gender Equality and the Care Society. At the sixth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC was requested to prepare, in its capacity as secretariat, a regional strategy for the implementation and follow-up of the agreements emerging from the Second World Summit for Social Development. Lastly, the Regional Agenda on Governance of Planning and Public Management for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted at the twentieth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES).

D. Final reflections

At the current pace of progress, Latin America and the Caribbean will only meet 19% of the SDG targets by 2030. Among the remaining targets, 42% exhibit a trend that is headed in the right direction but at an insufficient pace, while the remaining 39% have either stalled or regressed relative to 2015. These estimates are worse than projections indicated just one year ago and can be attributed to both internal and external factors. Internal factors include the weakening of institutional capacities, the failure to prioritize some SDGs, financial and fiscal constraints, the burden of debt, the low level of global economic growth, the shock brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and cascading crises. As to external factors, 2025 marked a tipping point in geopolitics and the global economy, with the resurgence of protectionism, the intensification of geopolitical rivalry in the struggle for industrial and technological supremacy, the withdrawal of some countries from multilateral cooperation, and the transition from a rules-based global order to one based on weaponized interdependence.

Given the scale of the challenges and the bleak outlook, the greatest risk is that hope should be lost and efforts, abandoned. The 2030 Agenda was ambitious from the outset, and its rationale remains unchanged: achieving inclusive and sustainable development requires lofty goals and forward motion, regardless of whether all targets are ultimately reached. Sustainable development is not an all-or-nothing outcome. Rather, it is a multidimensional process in which incremental progress is meaningful and can transform the lives of millions of people in the region. The simple fact of pursuing these targets, even without meeting them all, makes an enormous difference.

For the region to successfully navigate the major challenges and adversities posed by today's global context, it is essential to strengthen the spirit of collaboration and international cooperation and to implement comprehensive public policies that can bring about positive change in the lives of millions of people.

The countries of the region may yet seize additional opportunities, chief among them the opportunity for revitalized national and internal collaboration and cooperation through multi-stakeholder coordination. Transcending ideological and political differences, ECLAC is a testament to the fact that there is both room and willingness for collaboration within and among countries— a reality that is borne out every day in the conferences, meetings and communities of practice convened by the Commission. The stakeholders who want to advance the collective construction of a more inclusive and sustainable world are legion; the challenge, however, is to coordinate these efforts in a coherent and effective manner.

It is necessary to make progress by whatever means possible, form pragmatic partnerships and help all relevant stakeholders to understand that the 2030 Agenda is ultimately an agenda to transform societies and pursue the human aims to which we all aspire: a better life, with peace, a healthy environment and freedom from injustice and inequality. The current geopolitical climate makes it more difficult and yet more vital to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Cooperation and collaboration are the most effective countermeasures in a world increasingly dominated by power and force.

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A little more than a decade since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Latin America and the Caribbean is limited. Just 19% of SDG targets are expected to be met by 2030.

In 2025 and early 2026, fulfilling the SDGs was complicated further by a new era of uncertainty and geopolitical fragmentation. The world is facing major disruptions: increasing protectionism, greater competition for industrial and technological supremacy, and weaker collaboration in trade, investment, access to technology and financial support for development.

Countries must become more pragmatic in this new era.

They must ensure greater coordination between government, the private sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders, and strengthen their institutional and domestic resource mobilization capacities in order to step up implementation of the measures needed to achieve the SDGs.

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