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Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information
Society in Latin America and the Caribbean

Virtual meeting, November 23–26, 2020

**REPORT OF THE SEVENTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE INFORMATION
SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Virtual meeting, 23–26 November 2020



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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in a virtual format from 23 to 26 November 2020 and was convened by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), by virtue of resolution 747(XXXVIII) and in follow-up to the Cartagena de Indias Declaration,¹ adopted at the sixth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held from 18 to 20 April 2018.

Attendance²

2. The Conference was attended by representatives of the following member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay. Representatives of the following associate members also participated: Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Curaçao and Montserrat.

3. Representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organizations, cooperation agencies and the private sector, whose names appear in the list of participants, also attended.

Chair

4. The meeting was chaired by Ecuador and the Vice-Chairs were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

B. AGENDA

5. The Conference adopted the following agenda:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Presentation on digital technologies for a new future and panel discussions.
4. Keynote presentations.
5. Other business.
6. Consideration and adoption of the proposed digital agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2022).

¹ See the *Report of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/CMSI.6/7).

² See annex 2.

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Opening session

6. At the opening session, statements were made by Lenín Moreno, President of the Republic of Ecuador (by video message), Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Karen Abudinen, Minister of Information and Communications Technologies of Colombia, and Andrés Michelena, Minister of Telecommunications and the Information Society of Ecuador.

7. The President of Ecuador greeted all those present and wished them every success in the work of the seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean. He said that the meeting was taking place in a virtual format thanks to information and communication technologies, which were offering increasingly rapid progress. No society could achieve development if it was on the fringes of digital technology. Therefore, digital technology had to be available to everyone, without exclusion of any kind. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, digital connectivity had enabled activities such as commerce, telework, telemedicine and tele-education—which had prevented a halt in children’s learning—to continue, all thanks to the Internet. Country representatives should make meaningful commitments to strengthen development in the digital domain and jointly define regional policies that were democratic and inclusive for millions of people.

8. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that a change of era was under way and that one of its most decisive variables was the digital revolution, which was generating disruptive changes in all areas of life: consumption and production models, links between citizens, and links between citizens and institutions. The crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the importance of digital technologies. Indeed, their use had been essential to the functioning of the economy and society. However, one third of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean lacked access to the Internet. The development and adoption of technological solutions in the countries of the region were greatly constrained by factors such as highly heterogeneous production structures concentrated in poorly linkaged sectors with low demand for knowledge, with a large number of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises with limited productivity and workers with few digital skills, and by highly segmented and informal labour markets with precarious conditions.

9. A significant percentage of the population was also in the vulnerable middle-income strata and the crisis caused by the pandemic had rapidly increased poverty and extreme poverty. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) called for greater efforts in areas of development such as digital matters, and there was therefore a need for international digital cooperation with common leadership, which in the region was provided by the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC). The challenge was to make progress in defining a digital agenda that would allow the regional cooperation process to be strengthened, taking into account the importance of promoting inclusive structural change while building back better. To this end, it was crucial to formulate joint actions and move towards a new model of digital governance that would protect the economic, social and labour rights of the population, and that would drive a digital economy and digital transformation for social well-being.

10. The Minister of Information and Communications Technologies of Colombia remarked that it had been an honour for Colombia to chair the Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean. Progress with the eLAC mechanism while Colombia had chaired the Conference included publication of reports, organization of training events and participation in other spaces

for exchange of ideas. There were many challenges, but the incoming Chair, Ecuador, would do a wonderful job. Colombia also faced significant challenges, including ensuring that 70% of its population was connected (at that time, 51.9% of the population had connectivity). Measures such as spectrum auctions had been taken in the country, which had made it possible to connect 3,658 locations. Subsidies had also been provided to connect 500,000 homes to the Internet, 2,600 rural areas of the country had been connected to free community Internet, and more than 160,000 technological devices had been delivered to all regions to enable children, young people and university students to continue their education. Colombia had also made progress with electronic identification so that everyone could carry out procedures online. Programmes had been implemented to support companies with their digital transformations, through digital transformation centres in all regions of the country and by providing lines of credit. It was forecast that 100,000 programmers would be trained in 2021 since training human talent was part of digital progress.

11. The Minister of Telecommunications and Information Society of Ecuador said that the countries of the region were facing a historic challenge. No one could be oblivious to the fact that economic, social and technological gaps were converging and holding back development and that the crisis was likely to severely affect a whole generation of Latin Americans. Students from poor and vulnerable households needed an education to escape poverty, but paradoxically, they were excluded from education because they did not have access to digital technology. The figures showed the seriousness of the situation: 46% of children between the ages of 5 and 12 in the region lived in unconnected households, excluding more than 32 million children. In addition, to reach the levels of digitalization of more advanced countries, the countries of the region needed an investment of at least US\$ 160 billion, an exceptional but perfectly feasible task if the capacity for creative work, planning and regional coordination were combined with the political will of governments, public and private enterprises, and multilateral organizations. Therefore, Ecuador proposed creating a Latin American fund for deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas to support digital transformation and economic revival, comprising at least 1% of each country's GDP.

Presentation on digital technologies for a new future and panel discussions (agenda item 3)

12. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC gave a presentation in which she said that connectivity had become ubiquitous because of the use of smartphones. Global platforms were booming, and technological progress was accelerating, particularly in technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, augmented reality and virtual reality. A great geopolitical struggle, which was technological rather than trade-related, was taking place. Given the context, Latin America and the Caribbean had to define its own strategy. The pandemic had led to a social and economic crisis, and the digital transformation would enable progress towards a digitalized economy. Processes of automation and adoption of advanced technologies had to be accelerated, and hybrid working models needed to be implemented through teleworking. Open government should also be encouraged through citizen applications and the use of open data. Telemedicine was another area where there was still a lot of progress to be made.

13. Digital technology had to be a central part of development plans. The region faced several challenges; for example, just 67% of its inhabitants used mobile broadband and a mere 14% had access to fixed broadband. Also, only 60% of households in the region used the Internet. Geographical, age and socioeconomic gaps had major social repercussions. Affordable Internet access therefore had to be made universal. To achieve this, ECLAC had proposed providing a basic digital basket that would cost an average of 1% of the region's GDP. Another challenge was achieving digitalization for sustainability, which would help reduce environmental impacts. More technology also needed to be incorporated into production and digital skills had to be built. In conclusion, she said that digitalization —based on sustainability— should contribute to recovery.

Panel 1: High-level panel – Digital technologies in recovery: towards a strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean

14. Panel 1 was moderated by Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and the panellists were Marcos Cesar Pontes, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Brazil; Andrés Michelena, Minister of Telecommunications and the Information Society of Ecuador; Paola Vega, Minister of Science, Technology and Telecommunications of Costa Rica; and Allyson West, Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation of Trinidad and Tobago.

15. The panellists stated that, because of the pandemic, there was a need to unify efforts to overcome existing challenges and improve cooperation among countries to enable digital transformation. It was important to leave no one behind, so one of the key challenges was the identification and subsequent digital inclusion of population groups that still lacked access to online services, or whose access was insufficient, and who were therefore excluded from distance education, telemedicine and telework. There were cross-cutting government services and projects that could be extended to the regional level, related to issues such as digital identity, interoperability and cybersecurity. Regulation of the digital economy was changing and there was no single recipe, but regulation had to be based on certain principles, such as comprehensiveness. Lastly, the panellists proposed identifying transnational initiatives that were producing good results—for example, in terms of increased connectivity—and determining which ones could be scaled up.

Panel 2: Universalization of digital technologies for social inclusion

16. Panel 2 was moderated by Lidia Brito, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the panellists were Pamela Gidi, Undersecretary for Telecommunications in the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications of Chile; Rosa Virginia Nakagawa, Deputy Minister of Communications of Peru; Emiliano Calderón Mercado, Coordinator of the National Digital Strategy of Mexico; Lucas Gallito, Public Policy Director for Latin America of GSMA; Rodrigo de la Parra, Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN); Ángel Melguizo, Chair of the Inter-American Association of Telecommunication Enterprises (ASIET); and Yacine Khelladi, Regional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI).

17. The panellists discussed how the pandemic had highlighted the gaps in access to digital technologies that persisted in the countries of the region. They remarked upon the need to consider how technologies could contribute to reducing inequalities in the region to achieve more justice, resilience and inclusion. It was imperative for Governments to work on bridging the digital divide, and strong institutional frameworks needed to be fostered to drive digitalization, with funding and political support. The pandemic had posed great challenges, and it had become clear that, while conditions were improving for some, others did not have the necessary skills or online connections, and were therefore cut off from opportunities. Technology could drive economic recovery, but it was important for people to be able to afford connectivity. The access gap amplified inequality and the social divide.

Panel 3: Productive transformation and skills in the digital age

18. Panel 3 was moderated by Sebastián Cabello, Chief Executive Officer of SmC+ Digital Public Affairs and the panellists were Rodrigo Alejandro Yáñez, Undersecretary for International Economic Relations of Chile; Hebert Paguas, Executive Director of the National Agency for e-Government and Information Society (AGESIC) of Uruguay; Matías Kulfas, Minister of Productive Development of Argentina; Lisardo Bolaños, Vice-Minister for Investment and Competitiveness of Guatemala; Marushka

Chocobar, Secretary of Digital Government the Office of the President of the Council of Ministers of Peru; Raúl Echeberría, Executive Director of the Latin American Internet Association (ALAI); Mauricio Agudelo, Senior Specialist of the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF); and Oscar Robles, Executive Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Internet Addresses Registry (LACNIC).

19. The panellists said that productive transformation went beyond the digital transformation and that training was also required to participate in the digital society. It was no longer enough just to be connected; rather, meaningful connectivity had to be sought. In other words, connectivity had to provide opportunities for access to education or work, among other things. To drive the digital transformation, sufficient and appropriate incentives were needed to enable companies to transform. First, an enabling environment had to be created and then the necessary technological capacity developed. The pandemic had accelerated the digital transformation, but it was important for the region to work on know-how, data governance and artificial intelligence, and to improve the capacity for innovation in the digital field. The next challenge was to take the step towards trade 3.0 —digital trade— not only of physical products through digital platforms, but also of digital goods. In terms of trade policy, it was essential to close the gaps that made it difficult to adapt to this type of trade.

Workshop: Towards policy coherence and digital integration in Latin America and the Caribbean

20. The opening remarks of the workshop were made by Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC; Bertrand de La Chapelle, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Internet and Jurisdiction Policy Network; and Laura-Theresa Krüger, Advisor to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany. The Internet and Jurisdiction and ECLAC Regional Status Report 2020³ was presented by Carlos Affonso de Souza, Director of the Institute for Technology and Society of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, and Martin Hullin, Director of Operations and Knowledge Partnerships of the Internet and Jurisdiction Policy Network. Comments on the report were made by Raúl Echeberría, Executive Director of the Latin American Internet Association (ALAI); Alexandre Barbosa, Executive Director of the Regional Centre for Studies on the Development of the Information Society (CETIC) of Brazil; Manuel García Sánchez, Senior Policy Officer of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission; Lorena Naranjo, National Director for Recording of Public Data of Ecuador; María Paz Canales, Executive Director of Derechos Digitales; and Nicolás Schubert, expert in digital economics of the Undersecretariat for International Economic Relations of Chile. The discussion was moderated by Georgina Núñez, Economic Affairs Officer of ECLAC.

21. The Internet & Jurisdiction and ECLAC Regional Status Report 2020 was presented as part of the workshop. The document had been prepared jointly by ECLAC and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany. The purpose of the report was to map out the main challenges in Internet regulation in the region, which included a lack of cross-border coordination and cooperation, a need for more innovation in governance models and the development of regional standards for regulatory interoperability. Connectivity was mentioned as critical to the exercise of rights, especially in times of pandemic, and for access to basic services. The main areas of regional digital policy included freedom of expression, security and the economy. Disinformation was a very worrying phenomenon, as it was detrimental to electoral processes in different countries. Disinformation campaigns also had a cross-border impact.

³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network (I&JPN), *Internet & Jurisdiction and ECLAC Regional Status Report 2020* (LC/TS.2020/141), Santiago, 2020.

Workshop: The potential of digital technologies for changing the dynamics of production in SMEs

22. The workshop was opened by Giovanni Stumpo, Chief of the Unit on Investment and Corporate Strategies of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC, and Jesús del Barrio, Cooperation Officer within the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. The participants in the subsequent panel were Carmen Sánchez, President of the National Development Agency (ANDE) of Uruguay; Guillermo Merediz, Secretary of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurs of the Ministry of Productive Development of Argentina; Alba Mercedes Gómez Bayuelo, Deputy Director of Sectoral Transformation of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies (MINTIC) of Colombia, and Marco Sancho, Undersecretary of Electronic Government and Civil Registry of the Ministry of Telecommunications and the Information Society of Ecuador.

23. After a presentation on how digital technologies could change dynamics for small and medium-sized enterprises, given by the Chief of the Unit on Investment and Corporate Strategies of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC, there was a panel discussion. The panellists said that digital technology was one of the most important tools for companies to access markets, but that they also needed support. The greatest obstacles to adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies for small and medium-sized enterprises compared to large firms included a lack of technological know-how, a lack of personnel, resistance to change, financing difficulties and inadequate access to technology services. To achieve a digital transformation, adequate funding was needed and skills had to be built. There was a need for public-private partnerships to encourage use of technology. It was also important to formulate strategies with the different institutions to develop technologies and create programmes with different training and support tools.

Workshop: Data for digital development policymaking

24. The workshop was attended by Martin Hilbert Professor of the Department of Communication of the University of California, Davis; Alexandre Barbosa, Executive Director of the Regional Centre for Studies on the Development of the Information Society (CETIC) of Brazil; Gerardo Durand, Deputy Director-General of Economic Surveys of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico; Ana Lenis, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Spanish-speaking Countries of Google; and Guillermo Cruz, Consultant of ECLAC. The panel was moderated by Valeria Jordán, Economic Affairs Officer of ECLAC.

25. The workshop participants said that data analytics could be used to study the digital trace data left by Internet users, but it was difficult to use in public policymaking. There were platforms for data collection—such as Freelancer, Kiva, Mercado Libre, Facebook and Shopify—and methods such as application programming interfaces (APIs), but several aspects related to their use needed to be considered, such as the definition of indicators, selection of reliable sources, representativeness, harmonization, data quality and substantive knowledge. There was also a gap between development of digital policies (capacity to measure and produce policy-relevant data and statistics) and the adoption and diffusion of digital technologies (digital transformation and its impact on the economy and society). The pandemic had forced national statistical offices to accelerate generation of statistics by using sources of information that did not require field visits, such as administrative records, big data or open data.

Workshop: The rise of e-commerce amid the pandemic and future challenges

26. The workshop included a presentation on economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and how to enable developing countries to take better advantage of e-commerce and digital commerce in Latin America and the Caribbean, given by Bernardo Astarloa, Consultant to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and ECLAC. It was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Nanno Mulder, Economic Affairs Officer of ECLAC. The panellists were Torbjorn Fredriksson, Chief of the ICT Policy Section of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); Christian Volpe, Principal Economist for the Integration and Trade Sector (INT) of IDB; David Cabrera, Acting Executive Director of the Regional Centre for the Promotion of MSMEs (CENPROMYPE); and Daniel Cavalcanti, Acting Director of the Secretariat of Telecommunications of the Ministry of Communications of Brazil.

27. In the workshop, the panellists noted that during the pandemic, domestic e-commerce had grown significantly, but there had been a contraction in cross-border e-commerce. There were also challenges relating to the sustainable growth of e-commerce. Governments had taken various measures to support businesses and consumers during the crisis, but not on the basis of studies with clear diagnoses. Structural challenges remained, related to promoting regional integration through e-commerce, to increase exports. However, no clear or official statistics were available to carry out a proper analysis of those matters, and the data that did exist belonged to companies. One of the main constraints on e-commerce was Internet access, which remained of low quality and unaffordable for many people.

Workshop: Latin American Economic Outlook 2020: digital transformation for building back better

28. The workshop included a presentation on the report “Latin American Economic Outlook 2020: Digital transformation for building back better”,⁴ by Sebastián Rovira, Economic Affairs Officer of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC; Sebastián Nieto Parra, Head of Unit of the Latin America and the Caribbean Desk of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Centre; and Georgiana Macovei, European Union policy analyst. Comments on the report were made by José David Montilla, Deputy Minister for the Digital Agenda of the Ministry of the Presidency of the Government of the Dominican Republic; Susana Dornel, Coordinator of the Digital Agenda and Information Society Observatory Division of the Agency of Electronic Government and Information Society of Uruguay (AGESIC); and José Antonio Sanahuja, Director of Fundación Carolina. The panel was moderated by Adriana Arreaza, Director of Macroeconomic Studies at the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF).

29. During the workshop, the panellists said that to ensure that the digital transformation could be harnessed by companies, a coordinated digital agenda needed to be developed. COVID-19 had exacerbated the effects of the digital divide and made the challenges of connectivity more evident. International cooperation had not fully met expectations and needed to move towards a new model, focused on supporting the development strategies of Latin American and Caribbean countries. That model needed to take into account the multidimensional nature of the countries’ challenges, with inclusive and productive dialogue platforms and more tools and actors, expanding the potential and impact of coordinated action. Similarly, the digital development agenda had to be linked to economic and social revitalization, and include citizens as the focus of specific actions.

⁴ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and others, *Latin American Economic Outlook 2020: Digital transformation for building back better* (LC/PUB.2020/10), Paris, OECD Publishing.

Workshop: Women's autonomy in the digital economy

30. The participants in the workshop were Paola Vega, Minister of Science, Technology and Telecommunications of Costa Rica; Julissa Cruz, Executive Director of the Dominican Telecommunications Institute (INDOTEL); Maryleana Mendez, Secretary-General of the Inter-American Association of Telecommunications Operators (ASIET); and Gheidy Gallo, Presidential Adviser for Women's Equity of Colombia. The workshop was moderated by Ana Güzmes, Chief of the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC.

31. The workshop participants said that it was important to prioritize gender equality in the digital agenda. Some recent studies had showed that women were less likely to telework because of a lack of access to equipment, connections and skills. A digital economy required the population to have digital skills and, to that end, it was important to eliminate gender stereotypes. While the pandemic had accelerated the use of technologies, there was significant segregation in the economy. Measures needed to be implemented to enable women to engage with technological careers, as women's participation in careers linked to science, technology, engineering and mathematics was very low. It was important to change the paradigm at the household level, to introduce girls from a young age to the technological fields. The challenge of this type of policy was to integrate all the components: economics, guaranteeing rights, education and cultural identity.

Keynote presentations (agenda item 4)

32. During the Conference, two keynote addresses were made, by Mischa Dohler, Professor in Wireless Communications at King's College London, and by Roberto Viola, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology of the European Commission.

33. In his presentation, the Professor of Wireless Communications at King's College London said that how to use digital technologies for social inclusion was a challenge around the world. It was important for policy decisions at the national level to balance capabilities in education, innovation and corporate execution. It was advisable to have a proper regulatory framework. The government's role was to perfect demand, reviewing the availability of content. To create demand, citizens needed to be taught how to use digital technology. In addition, the rural sector had to be taken into account. There were linear business cases, but an exponential relationship had to be sought. In terms of regulation, the government should not work in silos. It was necessary to standardize the urban environment, to visualize the spectrum as a single model, to nurture business.

34. In his presentation, the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology of the European Commission said that the digital sector was crucial to moving towards green societies and economies. In a pandemic context, global digital partnerships and scientific communities were needed to build stronger cooperation among countries for economic recovery. The European Union envisaged a digital transformation based on four pillars. The first was connectivity, which was what united society and the reason why communication existed; more connectivity was needed in all areas, including schools, factories, hospitals and businesses. The second pillar was scaling up; that meant applying technologies to increase the competitiveness of industries, including artificial intelligence, big data and quantum technology, in all enterprises and in all sectors. The third pillar was education, as everyone needed to know how to use digital tools, which should be part of all educational levels. The last pillar was administration, linked to the implementation of reforms, without which the digital transformation would not be possible.

Special session

35. In the special session, representatives and high-level authorities of Latin America and the Caribbean discussed the digital agenda and its role in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion was moderated by Julio Muñoz, Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Technologies of Ecuador. Statements were made by Sebastian Rovira, Economic Affairs Officer of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC; Ernesto Rodríguez Hernández, Deputy Minister of Communications of Cuba; Virginia Pardo, Director for the Information Society of the Agency of Electronic Government and Information Society of Uruguay; Marushka Chocobar, Secretary of Digital Government of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Peru; José Aguilar Reátegui, Director-General of Communications Policy and Regulation of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Peru; Mauricio Nine, Director of Human Security, Innovation and International Technological Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina; Elisa Fuentes, Head of the International Office of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies of Colombia; Maryleana Méndez, Secretary-General of the Inter-American Association of Telecommunication Enterprises (ASIET); and Erick Iriarte Ahon, representative of the civil society organization Alfa-Redi.

36. The purpose of the special session was to initiate a dialogue on the role of digital agendas with regard to COVID-19, in order to identify possible areas of cooperation at the regional level and to facilitate sharing of experiences, generation of know-how, harmonized production of statistics on the digital economy and issues related to the information society, and management of capacities within the framework of the proposed digital agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean for the 2020–2022 period. The participants were invited to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Conference to begin discussing specific activities that could be part of the eLAC2022 programme of activities.

37. The issues addressed by participants included improvement of infrastructure and connectivity, as well as proper training to take advantage of them; the need to make progress on data protection and cybersecurity or digital security; and the importance of having minimum regulatory frameworks and regulatory flexibility for new business models. The participants said there were sectors that could benefit from emerging technologies, such as agriculture and tourism, but a regulatory framework was needed to enable effective use of those technologies. It was also important to involve civil society and business and to seek to create links with multiple actors, initiatives and institutions. Digitalization should be a cross-cutting State policy, as technologies affected every area of society. It was crucial to set realistic and achievable goals, which could be measured and evaluated to determine whether they had been achieved, since empirical data enabled better decisions to be made.

Consideration and adoption of the proposed digital agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2022) (agenda item 6)

38. The countries participating in the seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, in plenary session, adopted the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2022), the text of which is reproduced in annex 1 of this report.⁵

⁵ LC/CMSI.7/4.

Closing session

39. During the closing session, statements were made by Jolita Butkeviciene, Director of Development Coordination for Latin America and Caribbean of the European Commission; Mario Pezzini, Director of the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Andrés Michelena, Minister of Telecommunications and the Information Society of Ecuador; Hebert Paguas, Executive Director of the National Agency for e-Government and Information Society (AGESIC) of Uruguay; and Mario Cimoli, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

40. During the closing session, the participants highlighted the importance of digital technologies to the response the pandemic and, above all, to economic recovery. The participants said that international and cooperation organizations played a key role in structuring initiatives to allow for better use of those technologies. Continued support was needed for a regional digital agenda and cooperation activities within this framework required strengthening. The participants called for a common vision of the role that digital technologies should play in sustainable development and said that the region had an opportunity to be a relevant actor in the digital economy. Lastly, the offer of the Government of Uruguay to host the next Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022 was highlighted.

Annex 1

DIGITAL AGENDA FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (eLAC2022)

A. BACKGROUND

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks the entry of a new era and a time of opportunity when the dissemination and adoption of new technologies and global interconnection, and particularly information and communications technology (ICT), offer enormous potential for accelerating human progress, facilitating access to information and developing knowledge societies. The 2030 Agenda also acknowledges the critical nature of scientific and technological innovation in areas that are vital to development such as health and energy. Both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda itself expressly include ICT as an essential tool for improving the quality of education, promoting women's empowerment, driving inclusive and sustainable industry and promoting innovation, as well as part of the means of implementation of the Agenda.¹

2. In 2020, it will be 15 years since the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2007) was adopted in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 2005. This cooperation mechanism has been renewed over the years, and was last updated during the sixth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) in April 2018, where the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2020) was adopted and it was agreed to hold the seventh Ministerial Conference in 2020.

3. The present situation caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic forms a new and complex global panorama, characterized by an economic and social collapse of unforeseen magnitude. In this new reality, digital technologies have proven to be essential tools to facilitate physical distancing and mitigate the economic and social effects of the crisis. Adoption of these technologies has also accelerated considerably during this period, providing solutions for trade, labour, education and health. However, the coverage and use of digital technologies are still determined by structural and socioeconomic factors. In the medium and long terms, social welfare will clearly not be possible without access to and use of digital technologies in all areas of economic and social life.

4. The Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean is intended as a catalyst for regional cooperation on digital matters and a mechanism to promote policy design, capacity-building and political dialogue on the challenges and opportunities that the digital transformation creates for society and the economy. Technological progress, coupled with the challenges of the crisis, calls for renewed cooperation that facilitates the expansion of the digital economy to all segments of the population but also promotes trust and security in the use of digital technologies.

5. A cooperation agenda is needed to address the short-, medium- and long-term challenges associated with digital inclusion. To respond to the challenges the region faces in this area, the proposed Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC2022), presented below, includes 8 areas of action—in addition to a section on the fight against the pandemic and economic recovery and reactivation—and identifies 39 specific goals for implementation. This proposal was formulated based on a survey of

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

eLAC2020 focal points and observers, consultation with working groups and a review of documents. The proposal aims to follow on from previous agreements and provide inputs for political dialogue at the seventh Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean.

B. AREAS OF ACTION AND GOALS

1. Digital infrastructure

- Goal 1:** Adopt policies, digital agendas and plans with specific targets relating to affordable universal access, which encourage deployment of broadband connections and resilient high-capacity networks, through an appropriate balance of public investment and the promotion of competition within an investment-friendly environment.
- Goal 2:** Promote broadband access and connectivity that is meaningfully affordable and of sufficient quality in remote, rural and semi-urban areas, fostering the development of alternative connectivity providers such as community networks, rural operators and cost-efficient technologies, through alternative and sustainable investment models.
- Goal 3:** Foster policies and incentives for the deployment, sharing and operation of the enabling infrastructure and technologies needed for the development of the Internet, especially by promoting the establishment and strengthening of Internet exchange points (IXPs) and adoption of Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) protocols, through multi-stakeholder approaches.
- Goal 4:** Formulate plans and strategies that facilitate the efficient and effective provision, management and use of radioelectric spectrum in accordance with international standards and recommendations, to promote the harmonized deployment of fifth-generation mobile technology (5G) in all countries of the region, taking into account the need for appropriate metrics to measure the efficient use of the spectrum.
- Goal 5:** Promote the strengthening or creation of specialized digital and connectivity infrastructure to boost education, science and technology in the region as fundamental pillars of economic and social development and to accelerate processes of digital transformation.

2. Digital transformation and the digital economy

- Goal 6:** Promote digital presence and effective adoption, dissemination and use of advanced digital tools related to Industry 4.0 to foster business productivity and competitiveness, as well as entrepreneurship and structural change, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women-led initiatives.
- Goal 7:** Incentivize entrepreneurial ecosystems and public and private collaboration to promote production linkages and innovation, and to accelerate technology-based enterprises, through incubators, accelerators, business networks and digital ecosystem observatories.

- Goal 8:** Stimulate the diversification of financing options for technology-based enterprises, including alternative sources of financing supported by systems such as targeted trusts, person-to-person loans and financial services through digital and other platforms and use digital technologies to reduce information asymmetries and barriers to access to capital markets, in accordance with domestic legislation and based on an appropriate regulatory framework that balances innovation, stability and security.
- Goal 9:** Address the emerging challenges of the digital economy by updating rules and regulations on taxation, labour, competition and international trade, within a framework that safeguards rights and promotes sustainable development, taking into account the differences between countries that could hinder progress.
- Goal 10:** Strengthen the political and regulatory frameworks to facilitate digital transformation processes and their linkages with national education, research and innovation systems.

3. Digital government

- Goal 11:** Promote open standards, based on the principle of technological neutrality, that facilitate and expedite government services and promote multichannel and multidevice services, fostering an interoperable regional environment through data exchange and the development of infrastructure, platforms, architectures, standards, integrated systems and computer interfaces that ensure digital transformation.
- Goal 12:** Foster the adoption of a regional strategy of standards and agreements for digital identity interoperability, digital signature, e-apostille and electronic medical records that support innovations in the public and private sectors, safeguarding data privacy, enabling public consultation, ensuring transparency and non-discrimination and strengthening security and trust in online services.
- Goal 13:** Promote the use of digital tools for government procurement and contracts for public services and works, to ensure transparency, services for citizens, civic oversight and effective accountability.

4. Inclusion and digital skills and other competencies

- Goal 14:** Promote the development and incorporation of digital skills and competencies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics into teaching and learning by updating curricular content, digital educational resources and teaching standards according to the skills that will be demanded by the activities of the future.
- Goal 15:** Strengthen advanced digital, technical and professional skills and competencies and establish incentives for companies and governments to provide opportunities for continuous learning to workers, based on individual and local needs and labour market requirements.
- Goal 16:** Promote a digital culture that incentivizes appropriation of technology and development of digital skills and competencies, for the innovative, ethical, safe and responsible use of ICT to promote digital inclusion.

- Goal 17:** Promote accessibility of digital technologies as a necessary resource for the inclusion of persons with visual, auditory, mobility, motor and cognitive disabilities, among others, in work, education, health, culture, access to justice, public services and smart cities.
- Goal 18:** Establish a comprehensive and non-discriminatory perspective in public policies for digital inclusion, guaranteeing full access and use of ICT and emerging digital technologies for women, girls and older persons and promoting their online participation and safety, as well as women's leadership in public and private decision-making spaces.
- Goal 19:** Promote telework in the region, updating labour policies to ensure adequate social protection, social dialogue, decent work and participation of workers in the digital economy, above all in the case of vulnerable groups and women.

5. Emerging technologies for sustainable development

- Goal 20:** Promote technological development and digital and data innovation through incentives for development of new products and services, provision of public and private financing, a flexible regulatory environment and consolidation of a digital ecosystem.
- Goal 21:** Encourage open access to data and its reuse in the public and private sectors, to drive innovation, co-creation of value, new products and services, and evidence-based policymaking.
- Goal 22:** Consider the use of emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence and 5G technology, in a convergent and interoperable manner, taking into account factors relating to ethics, impartiality, transparency, accountability, security, privacy and non-discrimination.
- Goal 23:** Promote the use of digital technologies to prevent, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable development.

6. Trust and digital security

- Goal 24:** Combat digital crime by formulating public policies and cybersecurity strategies for critical infrastructure protection, by developing or establishing regulatory frameworks aligned with international human rights instruments, building capacities, strengthening secure systems based on best practices, and by coordinating at the local, regional and international levels among cyber incident response teams and among stakeholders.
- Goal 25:** Coordinate multi-stakeholder actions aimed at ensuring privacy and personal data protection, the protection of consumers and their rights on online platforms, access to public information and freedom of expression in the digital environment, restricting improper and unauthorized use of data and strengthening mechanisms of collaboration between the competent authorities in the region.
- Goal 26:** Promote civil society participation in assessment, mediation, transparency, capacity-building and consumer protection.

7. Regional digital market

- Goal 27:** Promote a regional digital market strategy, including in the framework of regional and subregional integration mechanisms, that facilitates cross-border e-commerce and digital trade through integration of digital infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, free flow of data with trust, in accordance with domestic legislation; trade facilitation; improved postal and logistics services; and regulatory frameworks that encourage innovation in digital payment services.
- Goal 28:** Facilitate greater regional coordination through a digital integration plan that establishes a common vision and goals, with mechanisms for dialogue and coordination with existing regional and subregional organizations.

8. Digital regional cooperation

- Goal 29:** Promote strengthened regional digital cooperation in Internet governance processes by reinforcing national, regional and subregional multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms.
- Goal 30:** Strengthen the institutional structure of the entities responsible for designing, implementing and following up on digital agendas. Formalize and coordinate multi-stakeholder participation in the development of such policies.
- Goal 31:** Promote digital regulatory coherence at the regional level, especially on data protection, cross-border data flows, cybersecurity, e-commerce and digital trade, consumer protection and rights on online platforms, and interoperability between digital signatures and digital identity systems in the region, in line with domestic policy and regulatory frameworks.
- Goal 32:** Improve the measurement of digital transformation and the digital economy by strengthening data collection, analysis and review for official statistics, use of new methods and advanced technologies such as big data analytics, strengthening and harmonization of common frameworks of indicators and their monitoring and evaluation through regional observatories.

9. Combatting the pandemic and facilitating economic recovery and reactivation

- Goal 33:** Design strategies for economic recovery and reactivation based on productive digital transformation and the use of ICTs and which encourage inclusive innovation and changes in management, production and business models, with a special focus on SMEs.
- Goal 34:** Promote comprehensive policies on information management in the different key government areas to address the pandemic and enable coordination of testing, dissemination channels, communication, services, epidemiological forecasting and limitation of physical contact between people.
- Goal 35:** Implement specific measures to promote and expand access and continuity of access to quality Internet services and digital platforms, preserving in particular the open architecture and interoperability of the Internet, and addressing the affordability of connectivity and devices.

- Goal 36:** Strengthen the institutional and regulatory frameworks for data protection and privacy, providing a guarantee to citizens that the exceptional access to personal data required to deal with a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, entails adequate custody of the data, and that their privacy will be safeguarded.
- Goal 37:** Strengthen distance education programmes in national education systems, considering the use of digital tools specifically designed for low-connectivity settings, in addition to supporting the training and digital literacy of teachers and the development of digital educational content.
- Goal 38:** Promote strategies and programmes in the field of digital health, considering aspects such as training of health professionals, promotion of telemedicine services, interoperability of health information and records systems, regulations to protect patient privacy and validation of the use of emerging technologies, and new means of delivering health services.
- Goal 39:** Accelerate the creation of affordable services and online government solutions that allow citizens to be served remotely, to facilitate physical distancing, through the use of digital identification systems.

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**D. Organismos, fondos y programas de las Naciones Unidas
United Nations agencies, funds and programmes**

Organización de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Industrial (ONUDI)/United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

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**Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (FAO)/
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**Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO)/
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Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT)/International Labour Organization (ILO)

- Anne Posthuma, Directora del Centro Interamericano para el Desarrollo del Conocimiento en la Formación Profesional (CINTERFOR), email: posthuma@ilo.org

Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)/International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- Matteo Mandrile, Oficial Regional para el Desarrollo de Proyectos, Argentina, email: mmandrile@iom.int

Programa Conjunto de las Naciones Unidas sobre el VIH/SIDA (ONUSIDA)/Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

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**E. Organizaciones intergubernamentales
Intergovernmental organizations**

Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina (CAF)/Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)

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Comisión Europea/European Commission

- Jolita Butkeviciene, Directora para América Latina y el Caribe de la Dirección General de Cooperación Internacional y Desarrollo, email: jolita.butkeviciene@ec.europa.eu
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Organización de Cooperación y Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE)/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

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**F. Invitados de honor
Guests of honour**

- Lenín Moreno, Presidente de la República del Ecuador

**G. Panelistas
Panellists**

- Lenín Moreno, Presidente de la República del Ecuador (por video)
- Alicia Bárcena, Secretaria Ejecutiva de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)
- Karen Abudinen, Ministra de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones de Colombia
- Andrés Michelena, Ministro de Telecomunicaciones y de la Sociedad de la Información del Ecuador
- Mario Cimoli, Secretario Ejecutivo Adjunto de la CEPAL
- Marcos Cesar Pontes, Ministro de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación de Brasil
- Paola Vega, Ministra de Ciencia, Tecnología y Telecomunicaciones de Costa Rica
- Allyson West, Ministra de Administración Pública y Transformación Digital de Trinidad y Tabago
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