



Fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers
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on Social Development
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Fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference
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**DRAFT PLAN OF WORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL
AGENDA FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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BACKGROUND

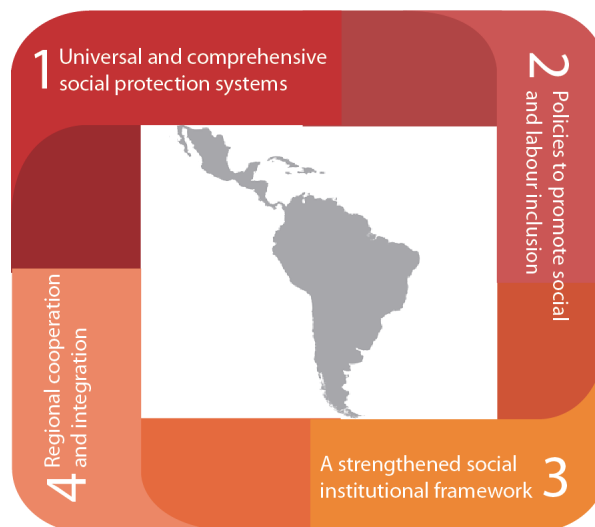
The Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, adopted at the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City from 1-3 October 2019, is a technical and political instrument that seeks to support the implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in areas linked to the mandates of the ministries of social development and equivalent entities, taking into account the achievements, opportunities and critical obstacles related to inclusive social development in the region. The Agenda is a call for progress in reducing poverty and structural inequalities in the region.

The Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development is based on eight guiding principles, aligned with the agreements and commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as those linked to other international and regional instruments in the areas of human rights, sustainable development and social development. Those principles are:

1. The rights-based approach as a normative principle.
2. Empowerment and autonomy.
3. Dignified life and progressive well-being.
4. Universalism that is sensitive to differences.
5. An approach based on redistribution and solidarity, with financial sustainability.
6. A systemic perspective on sustainable development.
7. High-quality public policies.
8. Partnerships and social compacts to consolidate State policies.

The Agenda incorporates four axes: (i) universal and comprehensive social protection systems, (ii) policies to promote social and labour inclusion, (iii) a strengthened social institutional framework and (iv) regional cooperation and integration. These come under the framework of the critical obstacles the region faces in terms of inclusive social development, the analysis of the 2030 Agenda and the existing agreements on social development in the region. Progress in each of these four axes would make it possible to close gaps and overcome structural inequalities.

Diagram 1
Axes of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development (LC/CDS.3/5), Santiago, 2020.

In order to begin implementing the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, in January 2020, in coordination with Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, a coordination meeting of the Presiding Officers was held and included the participation of Barbados, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay, to discuss the steps to be taken to advance the implementation of the Agenda. At this meeting, participants agreed to organize online working groups corresponding to the axes of the Agenda, resulting in four thematic groups on universal and comprehensive social protection systems; policies to promote social and labour inclusion; a social institutional framework; and regional cooperation and integration. The groups were in turn organized into specific sub-working groups. The participating countries also highlighted their desire to address issues such as the social solidarity economy and care policies, and to prioritize populations such as young people, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

In the first half of 2020, the Presiding Officers held meetings to continue making progress in the formation of the working groups. The meetings focused on the role of social development ministries in reducing the social impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. There were two ministerial meetings and two technical meetings with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to make progress on these issues and discuss specifically social protection and economic reactivation measures. There was also a workshop with Caribbean countries to discuss universal social protection and inequality.

In addition to this work, the secretariat carried out other activities related to the commitments to advance the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development. On 20 July, a meeting of the Presiding Officers was held to present a website on social development and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean,¹ with information on non-contributory social protection initiatives implemented in the region to address the pandemic, and the website of the Social Development Community

¹ See [online] <https://dds.cepal.org/observatorio/socialcovid19/en/>.

of Latin America and the Caribbean,² as a space to share knowledge and experiences on development and social inclusion in the region. A proposal to work on the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development around the working groups was also presented.

Following the presentation, on 31 August 2020, the website of the Social Development Community of Latin America and the Caribbean and the website on social development and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean were officially launched. At this meeting, participants agreed to advance in communication so that the countries could participate through the thematic groups of the website of the Social Development Community of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Three technical meetings associated with the working groups were held in the fourth quarter of 2020. The first was jointly organized with the Government of Mexico on the social and solidarity economy that is part of the axis of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development on policies to promote social and labour inclusion. A meeting of the South-South cooperation subgroup was held on 21 October. Finally, on 3 December, a workshop was held on social information systems and social records in Latin America with regard to progress and challenges in the face of COVID-19, and included the presentation of a study carried out by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to provide the countries with technical tools to record beneficiaries.

A. DRAFT PLAN OF WORK

This section briefly describes the main features of the draft plan of work for the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development.

It is proposed that the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development should be implemented on the basis of a participatory approach, whereby the various national bodies represented in the Conference can share experiences and lessons learned, make proposals and request support from other member countries, ECLAC or other international or bilateral cooperation organizations.

Special emphasis is placed on multilateral work at the global, regional and subregional levels and on South-South cooperation, so that both national and international actors can participate in a learning and support network for the implementation of programmes and projects in line with the axes of Agenda, ensuring national adaptation according to the capacities and needs of each participant.

1. Participants and roles

The main national actors called upon to work on the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development are the participants in the Regional Conference for Social Development, namely ministries, secretariats or entities in charge of social development policy in the countries.

Active participation is fundamental to the implementation of the Agenda and, therefore, ministries and secretariats of social development must be protagonists in the process, assuming the responsibilities of coordinating the work and constantly recommending, discussing and analysing themes and policy proposals, technical alternatives and means of implementation. The Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Presiding

² See [online] <https://comunidades.cepal.org/desarrollosocial/en>.

Officers are in a privileged position to propose to the countries new themes and areas of work, or to propose modalities of organization and implementation.

The ministries of social development may invite representatives of various national and international organizations to participate in the implementation of the Agenda. These include:

- (a) Other government bodies, at the national or subnational level.
- (b) Subregional integration spaces.³
- (c) Civil society.
- (d) The academic sector and research centres.
- (e) The private sector.
- (f) United Nations and international cooperation agencies.
- (g) Financing institutions.

The actors mentioned may participate in ministerial discussions and workspaces and form their own discussion groups to contribute ideas and approaches to be considered and used as decided by the members of the Conference.

Joint work on the themes of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development with subnational integration bodies is key to strengthening this type of collaboration.

ECLAC, in its capacity as technical secretariat of the Regional Conference on Social Development, is responsible for supporting countries and working groups in terms of organization, systematization of themes and discussions, provision of information and technical analysis. To this end, the Observatory on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with its databases, documents and spaces for joint work and virtual community, is a key instrument for development. ECLAC also provides support by coordinating communication between countries.

The offices of the resident coordinators, together with the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other instances of international cooperation are strategic partners for collaboration in the work of the countries, in particular with regard to technical and financial support.

2. Working groups

For the organization of work and the deepening of the axes of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, it has been proposed that work should be organized on the basis of subregional themes and spaces.

- (a) Thematic groups: as proposed by the Presiding Officers of the Conference, these are organized around the four axes of the Agenda. The work begins with four thematic groups:

³ For example, the Central American Social Integration Secretariat (SISCA) and its Social Integration Council (CIS), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and its MERCOSUR Social Institute (ISM), the Development and Social Inclusion Technical Group of the Pacific Alliance, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), among others.

- (i) Universal and comprehensive social protection systems.
- (ii) Policies to promote social and labour inclusion.
- (iii) Social institutional framework.
- (iv) Regional cooperation and integration.

These thematic working groups would provide the framework to move towards more targeted work in sub-working groups to further explore some issues and facilitate the exchange of ideas regarding possible means of implementation. The lines of action proposed for each axis of the Agenda are useful to select and prioritize these sub-working groups. Some examples are specific areas highlighted during the year, such as care systems, the social and solidarity economy, implementation challenges and good management practices, among others.

In addition to the axes and lines of action, emerging needs and challenges, owing to the social, political, environmental and economic context, can be raised as key issues for the formation of sub-working groups, either for a limited time or with a greater scope. This is the case, for example, of the social protection challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the social emergencies associated with climate and disasters.

Table 1 outlines the working groups currently active on the website of the Social Development Community of Latin America and the Caribbean of the Conference, along with the subgroups and participating countries.

Table 1
Thematic working groups on the website of the Social Development Community of Latin America and the Caribbean, subgroups and participating countries

Groups	Subgroups	Countries participants
The social crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the response of the ministries of social development	Challenges in implementing social protection measures	Ecuador
	Post-pandemic economic reactivation and social and labour inclusion	Uruguay
Social protection systems: progress and challenges	The challenges of universalization	Costa Rica
	Social protection and care policies	Ecuador
	Challenges of integration of contributory and non-contributory dimensions	Mexico Paraguay
Policies to promote social and labour inclusion	Social and solidarity economy	Mexico
	Vulnerable groups	Uruguay
A strengthened social institutional framework	Territorialization of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development at the local level	Mexico Paraguay
Regional cooperation and integration	South-South cooperation	Argentina Chile Uruguay
<i>Leaving no one behind in the Caribbean</i>		
Civil society		

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

- (b) Subregional groups: in light of the characteristics of certain geographic areas of the region and the development of regional integration and cooperation initiatives in line with the themes of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, they can function as subregional, binational or cross-border working groups involving the states, departments or provinces of several countries.

Each working group should have at least two people to coordinate and oversee the work. Of these, at least one would be a representative of the country's ministry or secretariat, and one would be a representative of ECLAC.

As a complement to the groups formed by the representatives of the countries participating officially in the Regional Conference on Social Development, discussion groups can be formed among other actors that participate actively in its meetings. For example, the group format can be used by civil society organizations for their discussions and proposals for the implementation of Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development.

3. Means of implementation

In order to implement the working groups of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, a community of virtual or in-person exchanges should be established and based on the following components:

- (a) Virtual work or discussion meetings at intervals agreed by the members. At least three meetings should be scheduled each year for each group, as agreed by the group at the suggestion of the coordinators.
- (b) Thematic seminars involving the participation of specialists and presentation of countries' specific experiences. These seminars and meetings can be open or closed, as decided by the participating countries, in conjunction with the group coordinators.⁴
- (c) Observatory on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean as a point of reference for the Conference and the Agenda to systematize information and documentation.⁵
- (d) Virtual community of the Conference, to share opinions, information and documents, convene meetings and other actions. It will be a tool to provide updated information on new issues and discussions that arise, as well as new data and research available for each axis of the Agenda.
- (e) Records and memory aids of the work of each group, systematized by each coordinator with support from ECLAC and available to all members. Dissemination would be subject to the decision of the group.
- (f) Repository of documents and agreements of each working group: instrument linked to the Observatory and the respective virtual community groups.

⁴ As an example, on 3 December 2020, ECLAC organized a workshop on social information systems and social records in Latin America with regard to progress and challenges in the face of COVID-19. See [online] <https://comunidades.cepal.org/desarrollosocial/es/grupos/evento/encuentro-virtual-taller-de-discusion-sistemas-de-informacion-social-y-registros>.

⁵ See [online] <https://dds.cepal.org/observatorio/index-e.php>.

The means of implementation proposed here are only indicative and can be adapted and complemented with other activities and initiatives that strengthen exchanges and participation among members.

4. Format of agreements and proposals

The themes discussed and agreements reached in the working groups will not be binding, but will be suggestions and guidelines to be taken into account in the implementation of each country's policies.

5. 2020–2021 timeline

Table 2
2020–2021 timeline

Activity	2020							2021									
	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Call for participation in the working groups																	
Meeting to determine groups																	
Definition of priorities and plan of work for each group																	
Seminars and workshops																	
Preparation of a document summarizing priorities in the lines of action, systematization of seminars and workshops																	
Preparation of the plan of work for the following biennium																	
Adoption of the 2022–2023 plan of work of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development at the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean																	

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

B. EXAMPLE OF A PLAN OF WORK FOR THE REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION AXIS

1. Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean is a diverse region, but it presents challenges shared by all countries, such as the reduction of the poverty, inequality and gaps that characterize the inequality matrix. In addition to the existing critical obstacles, there are now challenges relating to the post-pandemic recovery in the region.

Within this framework, cooperation and integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the axes of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development and also one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda, is especially important. This axis is key for the region, given that the goals of each country cannot be achieved in isolation and that coordinating policies at the national, subregional, regional and global levels is central to achieving results more efficiently and sustainably.

The Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development can be used to accelerate progress in social issues and, within the framework of the Regional Conference on Social Development, the Presiding Officers have proposed working together and in a coordinated manner through thematic groups linked to the four axes. The website of the Social Development Community of Latin America and the Caribbean has been developed for this purpose and allows each working group to operate autonomously.

With regard to regional cooperation and integration, a discussion forum on South-South cooperation was set up through the coordination of Chile, Uruguay and ECLAC.

2. Meeting to establish and define activities

The first meeting was held on 21 October 2020 and involved the participation of a large number of Latin American countries. Experiences of the Pacific Alliance and Uruguay's Red Calle project were presented, and there was a discussion on how to leverage these instances and continue coordinated work, which is addressed by this proposed plan of work. Based on this meeting, table 3 presents activities to develop a plan of work for 2020–2022.

Table 3
Activities proposed for the plan of work of the regional cooperation and integration axis

Activity	Description
1. Sharing of experiences	Ninety-minute monthly virtual meetings in which two or three experiences are presented by countries on a voluntary basis
2. Systematization of experiences	Recording of experiences on the website of the Social Development Community of Latin America and the Caribbean, including those presented at meetings, as well as others that are proposed. There was also a proposal to upload a short video on the programmes or policies of each country.
3. Expert workshops (subject to feasibility)	Definition of themes for special seminars for those in charge of international relations, inviting them to make presentations during the virtual meetings.
4. Virtual visits	Alternative to face-to-face meetings where a country or institution can present a "virtual visit" relating to one of its policy experiences, fostering South-South cooperation.
5. Intersectoral meetings	Coordination of meetings with substantive teams from social development ministries and other ministries addressing inclusive social development issues.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

In addition to the activities indicated above, the first meeting also highlighted the need to include other government sectors in the discussions in order to expand the scope and to address specific issues such as financing cooperation, for which it has been proposed to create special spaces for discussion.

3. Coordination

The working group on regional cooperation and integration is coordinated by the international cooperation representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Affairs of Chile and the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay, together with a representative of the Social Development Division of ECLAC.