



SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE
TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
URBANIZATION

COVID-19 EDUCATION

STUDY ON EDUCATION DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGIES

NEW STUDY ON DISASTER RISK
MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Contents

- 4** Study on education during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 6** Bridging the digital divide towards sustainable urbanization
- 10** Study on Geospatial Technologies and Data in Disaster Risk Management in the Caribbean
- 12** Seven Caribbean countries get Sustainable Development Goals support
- 14** Bahamas general election set for 16 September
- 16** US donates COVID-19 vaccines to Haiti – the country's first supply



About us

Issued on a monthly basis, The Hummingbird offers insights into the latest projects, publications, technical assistance missions and research carried out by ECLAC Caribbean. In addition to these, sneak previews are provided of the most salient upcoming events, alongside enriching follow-ups to previously covered issues. With a view to featuring a variety of facets of Caribbean life and lifestyle, The Hummingbird also zooms in on cultural activities and landmark occurrences through an eye-opening regional round-up.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor: Johann Brathwaite
Copy Editor: Denise Balgobin
Publication Design: Blaine Marcano

Cover Image: Pixabay

Please see our contact details on the back cover of this newsletter.

International Days

11 July

World Population Day

15 July

World Youth Skills Day

18 July

Nelson Mandela International Day

30 July

World Day against Trafficking in Persons

Upcoming Events

19 - 20 August



Extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation


25 August

ECLAC participates in the World Water Week 2021


25 - 26 August

Virtual meeting: Social policy tools and analysis of inequalities to confront the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.


Like us on Facebook

**ECLAC Caribbean**
Posted Aug 14


Would you like to know the measures and actions in course to address the pandemic, organized by country and region?
More here: <https://bit.ly/2SdWx5T>




Like · Comment · Share

**ECLAC Caribbean**
Posted Jul 30


Two-thirds of young people surveyed by the United Nations in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020 had a regular or negative opinion of the State's responses to the pandemic. Get to know the main findings of the UN's survey: <https://bit.ly/2U6cBrb>



Like · Comment · Share

**ECLAC Caribbean**
Posted Jul 6

"We must pick up the pace toward economic, climate and gender justice, and transition to a care society..." Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of #ECLAC. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3yAcNy1>



Like · Comment · Share



STUDY ON EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is dedicated to the achievement of high-quality education and eliminating disparities in “access to all levels of education for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”, however, COVID-19 threatens to reverse its hard-earned progress, with the threat of an education deficit to an entire generation of children. Likewise, related goals such as SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) risk losing momentum as they depend on access to quality education. It is therefore imperative, that we investigate the effects of the current pandemic on our subregion’s education sector.

The pandemic has had a major impact on the education of Caribbean students, as the closure of education facilities from March 2020, impacted nearly 12 million learners in 29 Caribbean countries. Schools

are now preparing for reopening and some have already resumed in-class sessions.

A new study from ECLAC Caribbean, entitled “Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Access, Inclusion and Psychosocial Support”, provides an analysis of the impact of remote learning on students in the Caribbean.

School closures, class interruptions and the cancellation or postponement of assessments and examinations have all had detrimental consequences for children’s academic education. The closures also undermine the role that schools play in supporting children’s social development, physical and mental health and well-being. Further, schools often provide safe spaces for children and can protect them from a range of harmful experiences such as abuse, violence, teenage pregnancy and exposure to crime.

Data collection included the use of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews for essential primary data, as well as, the review of various secondary data sources. Sources of information from across the Caribbean included: Ministries of Education (MoEs); school principals and teachers; representatives of civil society organizations; and other stakeholders, for example parent-teacher associations and student councils.

The study itself will evaluate the impacts of school closures with a particular focus on the psychosocial dimensions of remote learning, education access and barriers to education for children from vulnerable and marginalized groups. It will identify best practices and lessons learned, and advance recommendations on how to build a resilient, more inclusive and equitable post-pandemic education system. ■



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA WELCOMES THE RETURN OF CRUISE TOURISM

Tourism hopes are high in Antigua and Barbuda as the country welcomes the return of cruising, signaling the rebound of the vibrant cruise tourism sector.

The mood was celebratory as Windstar Cruises' Star Breeze, coasted into Antigua's, Saint John's Harbour in mid-July, greeted by a symbolic water cannon salute, the booming of tugboat horns, and lively steelpan performances.

On hand to officially welcome Captain Ricardo Pinzon and over 200 passengers and crew on board the luxury vessel, was Minister of Tourism, Charles Fernandez, chief executive officer of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Colin C. James, general manager of the Antigua Cruise Port Dona Regis-Prosper, chief health inspector, Sharon Martin, alongside other health and tourism stakeholders.

"Today is truly an exciting day for Antigua and Barbuda's cruise industry.

It is one that we have been working hard towards with our health authorities and International Cruise lines to ensure that we restart in a safe and sustainable manner to the benefit of all stakeholders", said Minister Fernandez.

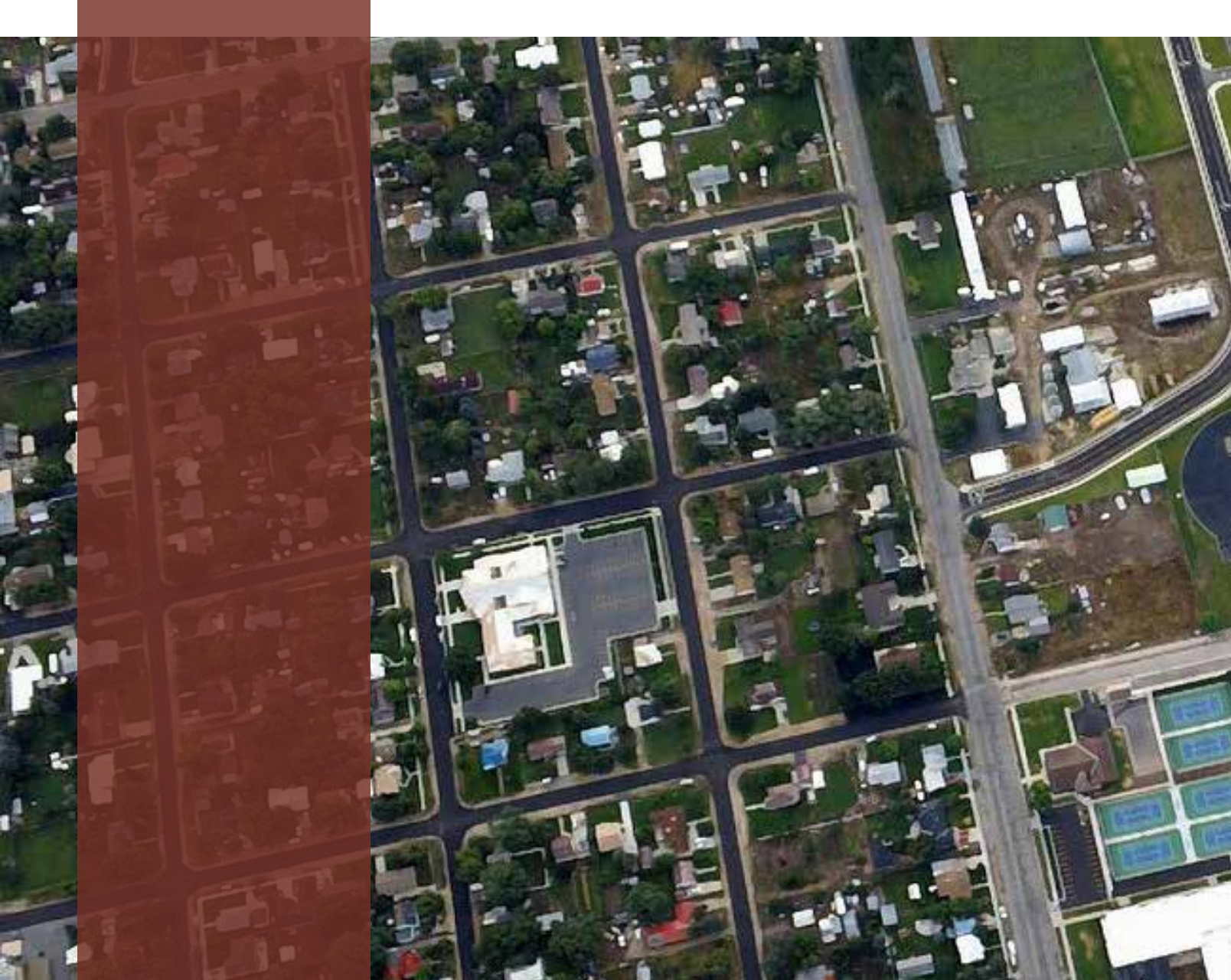
Antigua's cruise ship sector was poised for exponential growth just prior to the pandemic. This is the first revenue cruise that the country has received in over a year. It comes at a time when Antigua and Barbuda has more than 37,000 of its 98,000-person adult population vaccinated, and COVID-19 cases are at an all-time low following the successful ongoing management of the health crisis.

A third of Antigua and Barbuda's labour force is employed in the tourism industry. In preparation for the safe restart of the cruise sector, Antigua and Barbuda tourism officials invested in training tourism workers, certified approximately 400 tourism businesses for COVID-19 protocol, and improved

port infrastructure to include the completion of a fifth berth. They have also held discussions with the Antigua Cruise Port management and the Ministry of Health, to develop robust health and safety protocols.

Regis-Prosper said: "Nothing could have given me greater joy today than the sight of the Star Breeze pulling into the port. We are absolutely thrilled to welcome this fabulous yacht-style cruise ship and its passengers and crew to Antigua and Barbuda. In recent weeks, we have been in many discussions with the Windstar Cruises team and the government to determine how to make this trip, and voyages to come, as safe and successful as possible for everyone involved.

All crew and passengers on Windstar Cruises' Star Breeze are fully vaccinated. Over 60 passengers disembarked the vessel to enjoy organized tours in Antigua and Barbuda. ■



Bridging the digital divide towards
SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented global attention to the close relationship between urbanization and health and the need to incorporate health, and well-being into urban planning and development. Good health and wellbeing outcomes in physical environments, including cities and other urban settlements can only be achieved in dialogue with multiple stakeholders, with strong collaboration across sectors and at varying levels of government, and by promoting intergovernmental cooperation at regional and subregional levels.

[READ MORE](#)



Bridging the digital divide towards sustainable urbanization

In collaboration with UN-Habitat, ECLAC Caribbean organized an interactive two-hour session at the Caribbean Urban Forum's (CUF) 10th anniversary conference, which was hosted virtually by the University of Guyana in mid-June. The topic of the session was "Sustainable urbanization: bridging the digital divide, from knowledge to action." Participants included urban planners, environmental experts, municipal managers, policymakers, academics and allied professionals with an interest in urban issues in the Caribbean.

The session was an opportunity for representatives from different sectors to present and exchange ideas on how best to make use of the existing mechanism(s) in place to promote

sustainable urbanization. Special attention was given to the new opportunities made possible by the application of digital tools in support of COVID-19 response and recovery processes. Caribbean countries are enabling their communities by accelerating their progress in the areas of e-learning, business, telemedicine, and strategic deployment of technology. In the short-term, communities benefit from increased access to information and current emergency responses, while in the long-term there is tremendous potential to drive economic development and social equality.

In response to strategic sustainable urbanization efforts in the Caribbean and effective implementation of

SDG 11, "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", the Subregional Action Plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), identified a set of guidelines and priorities. Action areas identified for the Caribbean-specific objectives are: 1) National urban policies; 2) Urban legal frameworks; 3) Urban and territorial planning and design; 4) Financing urbanization; 5) Local implementation; and 6) monitoring framework and mechanisms for follow-up. The Plan was developed by ECLAC, UN-Habitat, and the subregional representatives of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Housing and Urban Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI), with the participation of diverse urban Caribbean



“ *The platform is open for use by all government entities, citizens, NGOs and other users who need to access geospatial resources.* ”

stakeholders who make up the Caribbean Working Group (CWG) for the implementation of the NUA.

Moderating the session for ECLAC Caribbean at the 10th CUF was Catarina Camarinhas, who pointed to a recent decision of MINUEVI in December 2020, through the Declaration of Bogotá, to create a Technical Secretariat which will be jointly supported by ECLAC and UN-Habitat. This Secretariat will offer support to member states in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery, particularly on issues of housing, the development of integrated national and local urban policies, the need for better urban statistics, and support to the follow-up of the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and the NUA.

The session introduced a range of geospatial digital tools which may be used to assess and measure spatial vulnerability factors that could hinder social inclusive development and promote spatial segregation. These included the Urban Inclusion Marker, which measures the level of inclusion of a city and its potential contribution to integration and prosperity. CARIGEO was also introduced as a collaborative effort spearheaded by the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM): Americas, ECLAC, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), representatives of Member States and Territories within the Caribbean, academic institutions, private sector organizations and civil society.

CARIGEO engages the agencies of the region involved in statistical applications and national mapping, with a view to generating and disaggregating geospatial and territorial data. The work being done in Jamaica was highlighted, showcasing concrete geospatial applications for spatial planning and sustainable urbanization in Jamaica. The country has recently launched its National Spatial Planning Information Technology Platform, to ensure that spatial technology and information drives the planning and development process of smart growth and smart cities. The platform is open for use by all government entities, citizens, NGOs and other users who need to access geospatial resources.

The Regional Urban and Cities Platform (more widely recognized as Plataforma Urbana) was also highlighted as a space to exchange information on urban and territorial development issues at national and sub-national level in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Themes showcased on the virtual platform include social cohesion and equity, urban frameworks, spatial development, urban economy, urban ecology and environment, and housing and basic services. The platform also includes urban statistics, financing, planning and legislative instruments, among other resources for LAC countries and cities.

The use of digital tools and geospatial information is considered integral to the strategy of Caribbean countries to promote resilient recovery.

Concepts, such as smart growth and smart cities integrated approaches based on inclusive planning, efficient and equitable provision of basic services and the promotion of sustainable development practices, can be key to address growing urbanization challenges and leverage the opportunity of resilient, well planned and managed urbanization as an important priority for Caribbean countries and territories.

The presentations persuaded policy makers to carefully integrate socio-economic policies and programmes for vulnerable groups at both national and community levels. Effective sustainable urban policy can, in turn, create prosperity and enhance the quality of life for all. MINURVI was recognized as a valuable space for intergovernmental coordination and cooperation towards promoting the sustainable development of human settlements. Furthermore, to articulate the analysis and formulation of sustainable development policies at all levels, it is necessary, to promote better interaction between the Forum, its virtual platform, and the various subsidiary bodies and intergovernmental meetings of ECLAC.

The session concluded that the resilience of cities to health challenges will depend not only on well-prepared healthcare systems, but also on the way cities are planned, managed and equipped to address the challenges of urbanization in the 21st century. ■



STUDY ON GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGIES AND DATA IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Caribbean states have made considerable progress in updating their Disaster Risk Management (DRM) frameworks, identifying natural hazard risks, strengthening building codes, and establishing early warning systems. An essential component of the DRM process involves the sourcing of geospatial data as it can significantly improve the effectiveness of DRM strategies and actions. Useful data can be acquired through; crowdsourcing geospatial data (which refers to generating a map using informal social networks and web technology); geographic information systems (GIS); and satellite remote sensing. Caribbean states should, therefore, seek out a clear understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with these new technologies when developing policy.

Countries of the subregion are at varying stages in the adaptation and use of these technologies and data applications, including policymaking, legislative procedures, determining technology availability and application

requirements, and defining capacity requirements.

This approach is also consistent with the emerging global guidelines to provide geospatial support to DRM in all its phases. In fact, under the umbrella of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) a Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters deliver references regarding governance, capacity building, data management, common infrastructures and resource mobilization in these matters.

To support this continued advancement in DRM at the national and subregional level through the application of these technologies, ECLAC Caribbean has commissioned a study on the applications of geospatial technologies and data in DRM in the Caribbean.

The study aims to be quite comprehensive and will review relevant policies, legislative

frameworks, data and institutions. Key stakeholders, including regional partners for DRM in the Caribbean, will be approached for interviews so as to incorporate their ideas and opinions. Detailed national assessments in The Bahamas, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will also be undertaken so as to provide an in-depth assessment of the variety of geospatial technologies applied. The study will take particular interest in; data integration, data analysis and dissemination practices, national policies, legal and institutional frameworks, as well as, technological and capacity status.

The data will be used to identify gaps and provide recommendations on priority areas and strategies to advance the use, accessibility, and uptake of geospatial technologies for DRM in the Caribbean. The outcome of this research is also expected to contribute to the ongoing regional and global discussions on DRM, and inform subregional capacity building on the use of technology and innovation in DRM. ■



JAMAICANS URGED TO PREPARE FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness is encouraging his countrymen to take the unpredictability of the hurricane season seriously, and to take all precautions necessary.

Holness said: "If you have not already done so, ensure you have access to critical supplies, fix leaks and undertake the necessary repairs to roofs, ensure drains are clear and for those in low lying and flood prone areas, plan your evacuation routes to activate at short notice".

The PM noted that estimates for flood damage as a result of the passage of Tropical Storm Elsa earlier in July so far has amounted to JA \$803 million.

Holness reported that the National Works Agency (NWA) continued damage and loss assessment to determine the costs of permanent repairs. He clarified that the assessment so far was divided into two categories; the cost to clean and clear roadways and drains of silt and debris, and the cost to make roads accessible. The assessments were underway to determine the damage to major road networks across the country, and the Ministry of Local Government and the relevant agencies would then undertake the cleaning and clearing of roadways and drainage systems.

So far, over 25 road networks between the parishes of St. Ann, St. Mary, Portland, St. Thomas and St. Catherine have been shown greatly affected by the inclement weather. ■

SEVEN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES GET SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS SUPPORT



THE GLOBAL GOALS For Sustainable Development

ECLAC Caribbean continues to provide support to the countries of the subregion towards achievement of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through ongoing initiatives of research and analysis. In this regard, seven Caribbean countries are currently receiving support in their implementation of SDG 6, which deals with water and sanitation. These are The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

ECLAC is assisting in their examination of institutional arrangements for integrated water resources management, and their assessment of progress on implementation of SDG 6. ECLAC Caribbean will analyze the gaps in implementation with a view to advising on remedial action.

ECLAC Caribbean has fully embraced the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, approved by the 2020 High Level Political Forum as a dynamic new initiative to deliver fast results, in keeping with the objectives of the UN Secretary-General's Decade of Action to accelerate SDG implementation by 2030. The SDG 6 framework for action is driven by five accelerators, involving focused improvements in access to financing; data and information; capacity development; innovation; and governance. This framework assessment undertaken in the Caribbean revealed that less than 50 per cent of Caribbean SIDS had the necessary data to monitor progress under SDG 6, while 60 per cent of the countries lacked substantial data to support more than four of the eleven SDG 6 indicators.

Overall, the subregion's approach to water resources management was adjudged fragmented, requiring special attention to the development of appropriate mechanisms responsive to the peculiarities of the subregion (Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWP-C), 2019).

Six of the beneficiary countries will receive technical support to facilitate the conduct of national studies, and the coordination, and timely delivery of the reports.

Trinidad and Tobago will receive support for the conduct of a national assessment on the implementation report on the Degree of Integrated Water Resources Management Implementation. ■

DOMINICA INCREASES MINIMUM WAGE



The Cabinet of Dominica has taken the decision to increase the minimum wage in Dominica effective 1 September 2021.

Rayburn Blackmoore, Minister with responsibility for Labour, stated that “the setting of a minimum wage should ensure maximum benefit to the persons who will be affected. It is also important to note that the government of Dominica does not have a fixed minimum wage across all wage categories, but instead the minimum wage is set per category and seeks to cover the most vulnerable range of workers.”

Minister Blackmoore explained: “This long-overdue minimum wage review was undertaken to ensure that the economic realities of the present-day were adequately captured. The Ministry of National Security and Home Affairs consulted with all stakeholders in undertaking this minimum wage review, inclusive of a market survey to assess the

current wage undertaken by the labour division, and consultation with international partners such as the International Labour Organization (ILO)”.

“It is our view therefore that this extension of workers covered by the minimum wage order will ensure better treatment for these categories of workers who were previously among the most vulnerable workers who were not covered by the minimum wage order. This review may be seen as the first step of an annual or bilateral review undertaken to refine the minimum wage, and to monitor the effects of the new minimum wage for the relevant categories as the government seeks to empower its citizens,” he concluded. ■

The image shows the flag of the Bahamas, which consists of three horizontal stripes of blue, yellow, and blue, with a black triangle at the top left corner. The flag is waving in the wind against a clear blue sky.

BAHAMAS GENERAL ELECTION SET FOR 16 SEPTEMBER

Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis has confirmed that elections will be held on 16 September 2021. "It is time for you, the people, to choose who you will elect to form the next Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas," the prime minister said in a recent address to the nation.

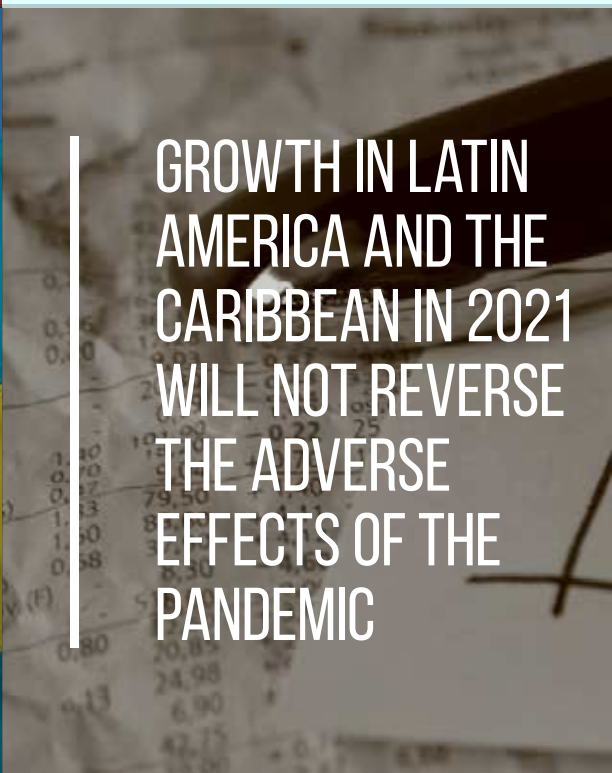
Minnis dissolved the House of Assembly on 19 August, a day after he ended the parliamentary session before an open sitting. The open sitting was organized to allow citizens a chance to voice their opinions on matters facing the nation.

The Prime Minister thanked Bahamians for working with his government to combat the virus in face of personal and financial loss. He said his government has been working to ensure that citizens had access to lifesaving vaccines.

To date, the Bahamas has received almost 40 thousand doses of the one-shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine. This adds to 128,000 Pfizer shots received from the US in early August. Together with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines on hand, Minnis said the Bahamas has been able to access over 550,000 vaccine doses.

He said: "A new mandate is needed to ensure that a Government is in place to do this difficult work over the long term as we are reaching a critical turning point in the pandemic. We have a long tradition of peaceful elections. Let us continue that proud tradition. We must discuss the issues rigorously and peacefully, contrasting our various visions for the country. We can now vaccinate ourselves out of the emergency phase of the pandemic. This does not mean the pandemic will quickly go away".

Minnis has called on all political parties competing in the election to follow the COVID-19 protocols. ■

The image shows a close-up of a document with various numbers and text, possibly a financial report or a statistical table. The numbers are in different colors and sizes, and the text is in a serif font.

GROWTH IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN 2021 WILL NOT REVERSE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

In a recently published report, ECLAC has increased its projected average estimate for growth in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in 2021 to 5.2 per cent, a figure that reflects a rebound from the deep contraction of 6.8 per cent registered in 2020, due to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This expansion, however, will not be enough to ensure sustained growth, because the social impacts of the crisis and the structural problems in the region have deepened, and will continue in this vein during the recovery.

The report, entitled, "The recovery paradox in Latin America and the Caribbean. Growth amid persisting structural problems: Inequality, poverty and low investment and productivity", was presented by ECLAC's Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena, in a virtual press conference in which she urged governments to keep emergency transfer policies in place to bolster an economic recovery that is sustainable over time; more just, egalitarian and environmentally-friendly.

"We need policies for a transformative recovery with an emphasis on investment. Industrial policies and technologies to drive growth in sectors that are more



technology intensive and that generate quality jobs. Restructure health and education systems. Sustain the transfers, universalize basic emergency income, implement bonds to fight hunger, ensure access to a basic digital basket, strengthen support for MSMEs. Push cross-cutting and sectoral policies to move toward a new model of development," she stated.

ECLAC further projects that in 2022 LAC will grow by 2.9 per cent on average, a slowdown compared with the rebound in 2021. There is also nothing to indicate that the propensity to low growth that existed prior to 2020 will change. The structural problems that retarded growth in the subregion before the pandemic have become more acute and these will have negative repercussions on economic and labour market recovery, despite the uptick in growth in 2021 and 2022.

The crisis brought on by the pandemic has increased inequality and poverty, affecting mainly women, school children and older people. Furthermore, COVID-19 arrived at a time when the regional economy was stagnating; unprepared to handle such challenges as the long-term investment crisis;

rising unemployment and the need for sustainable product diversification. While fiscal measures adopted by the countries have been significant, these have been insufficient in both quantity and duration.

ECLAC anticipates that the pandemic will also leave 2021 in a worsened environmental state that will be difficult to restore. Although there were temporary improvements in air quality and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions initially, emissions will increase by 5 per cent this year. At the same time, a 35 per cent drop in budget or spending for environmental protection was observed in 11 countries of the region* during 2019-2020.

The outlook for foreign trade is more favorable, given that regional exports are expected to increase, following noticeable decline in 2020.

On the matter of financing for development, the ECLAC report warns that high levels of debt reduce fiscal space and put recovery and future growth at risk. In the case of the small island developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean, the situation is even more acute and unsustainable; in some

countries public debt exceeds 100 per cent of GDP.

"In light of all these challenges, we need a new international financial architecture to respond to the emergency and development needs in the region", emphasized Bárcena.

She suggested that a multilateral forum was needed to debate the conditions for issuing new debt and restructuring current debt. She also advocated for a multilateral agency to provide credit qualification; for the inclusion of middle-income countries in all relief initiatives with access to both concessional and non-concessional liquidity; for the implementation of innovative financing instruments, such as green bonds and SDG bonds; and for the capitalization and strengthening of development banking at all levels.

"Efforts to achieve a transformative recovery must learn from the environmental crisis: the windows of opportunity will also begin to close if we don't act now", said Bárcena. ■

* Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.



US DONATES COVID-19 VACCINES TO HAITI – THE COUNTRY'S FIRST SUPPLY

The US government has donated 500,000 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to Haiti. In June, the US government had listed Haiti “and other CARICOM countries” as beneficiaries in the Caribbean to receive COVID-19 vaccines from its planned global donation of 80 million doses.

The US statement committed approximately 14 million doses for Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti and the Dominican Republic being beneficiaries in the Caribbean.

PAHO director, Dr. Carissa Etienne, said the donation to Haiti was quite promising. She noted that PAHO, along with other partners, remained committed to supporting the Haitian people in these uncertain times, and urged other international organizations to join them in supporting the COVID-19 response for Haiti.

She reported that PAHO had delivered “significant personal protective equipment, helped expand care for COVID-19 patients and provided thousands of tests and laboratory materials to strengthen surveillance activities” in Haiti, within recent weeks.

“We have also helped train community health workers and have supported the Ministry of Health in preparing for COVID-19 vaccine introduction and setting up new systems to dispel rumors and COVID misinformation”.

Haiti's Minister of Public Health and Population, Dr. Marie Gréta Roy Clément, said the vaccines will be administered for free. “In public health, vaccination remains one of the most effective interventions. This first allocation of vaccines puts an end to a long period of waiting, not only for the Haitian population, but also for the people of the region who were very concerned that Haiti was the only country in the Americas that had not yet introduced the COVID-19 vaccine”. ■



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN URGED TO DEVELOP PLATFORMS FOR PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING VACCINES AND MEDICINES

ECLAC Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena, has declared that Latin America and the Caribbean can and should become an actor in the development and production of new vaccines, in the framework of a concerted regional health strategy. She was speaking during the recently concluded XXI Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), as she presented progress on the Comprehensive Plan for Health Self-Sufficiency.

The Comprehensive Plan is a programmatic blueprint that ECLAC is developing at the request of CELAC for strengthening the production and distribution of medicines, particularly vaccines, in the region's countries and for reducing external dependence.

During her presentation, Bárcena addressed the situation of health care systems and the pharmaceutical industry in the region amid the pandemic, along with the priority actions to be implemented to strengthen them and the components of the Comprehensive Plan.

She recalled that Latin America and the Caribbean is the region most affected by the pandemic, with just 8.4 per cent of the world's population but 32.5 per cent of



COVID-19-related deaths worldwide.

Bárcena warned about unequal access to vaccines, specifying the asymmetries within the region and those vis-à-vis the rest of the world. She noted that in Latin America and the Caribbean, just 16.8 per cent of the population has completed the full vaccination scheme, while in the United States and Canada, that figure rises to 49.3 per cent of the population, with a surplus of vaccines. Meanwhile, Europe has 44.6 per cent of its population vaccinated, she added.

"We are concerned that some countries' acquisitions exceed their vaccination needs. The European Union, United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Japan account for 43.9 per cent of purchase commitments, with just 12.9 per cent of the global population," she emphasized.

Bárcena noted that the health-care manufacturing industry in the region is marked by a low level of technological development and high dependence on the production of multinational companies and imports. In 2019, imports doubled exports, with the deficit exceeding US \$20 billion dollars.

"Why did this pandemic catch us at such a bad time? Because we import everything, that is part of the problem. Our national and regional industry produces generic drugs, but not innovative medicines. We have very low investment in research and development, which we must boost," Bárcena stated.

She detailed the eight priority areas of the Comprehensive Plan, along with its five lines of action. The priority areas include joint purchasing by public health systems, consortiums for financing research and production, clinical trial platforms, intellectual property, an inventory of regional capacities, regulatory standards, the development of regional suppliers, and universal access to vaccination and primary health care.

The five lines of action on which progress has been made, and on which further progress is proposed at a regional or subregional level, consist of a regional mechanism for vaccine purchases, the creation of consortiums to accelerate vaccine development, platforms for clinical trials, access to intellectual property, and an inventory of regional capacities.

Bárcena emphasized the importance of strengthening existing regional mechanisms for joint vaccine purchases, such as the Revolving Fund of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), PAHO's Strategic Fund, and the Pan-American Network for Drug Regulatory Harmonization.

Furthermore, she stressed the relevance of articulating sectors and actors through subregional integration bodies such as the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Pacific Alliance.

Finally, Bárcena specified that the plan proposes four pillars for joint action, covering a range of national and regional actors: technology development, product development, manufacturing and purchasing, and delivery and universal access. ■

Caribbean Fish Soup

Preparation: 35 minutes

Cook: 1 hour

Additional: 30 minutes

Servings: 8

What you will need:

Ingredients

- 2 whole fish, scaled and cleaned, or more to taste
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 8 cups water
- 4 green bananas, chopped
- 1 pound pumpkin, cut into 1-inch pieces, or more to taste
- 2 potatoes, chopped
- 2 ears corn, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 ounces carrots, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup chopped okra
- 4 scallions, chopped
- 1 hot chile pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves stripped

How to Make it:

1. Rinse fish with lemon juice; drain.
2. Bring water to a boil in a large bowl. Add fish; simmer until soft, about 30 minutes.
3. Strain fish, reserving broth. Let fish cool. Remove bones, trying to keep large pieces of fish intact.
4. Bring broth to a boil. Add green bananas, pumpkin, potatoes, corn, carrots, okra, scallions, chile pepper, garlic, salt, pepper, and thyme.
5. Bring back to a boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer until potatoes are almost tender, about 10 minutes.
6. Stir in fish.
7. Simmer until flavors combine, about 5 minutes more.
8. Remove soup from heat and let stand before serving, about 30 minutes.



CONTACT US

ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean,
1 Chancery Lane, P.O. Box 1113,
Port of Spain,
Trinidad and Tobago.

MEDIA CONTACT

Tel.: 1 868 224 8075

E-mail: eclac-media-pos@eclac.org

SOCIAL MEDIA



<https://www.cepal.org/en/headquarters-and-offices/eclac-caribbean>

