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**REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS  
OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Cuenca (Ecuador), 29 September 2022

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## **A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

### **Place and date of the meeting**

1. The fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Cuenca (Ecuador) on 29 September 2022 as part of the fourteenth Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **Attendance<sup>1</sup>**

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries in their capacity as Presiding Officers: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Paraguay and Uruguay.

3. Also attending were representatives of the following member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

4. Also attending were representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### **Chair**

5. The Presiding Officers, as elected at the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in virtual format from 26–28 October 2021, were as follows:

Chair: Antigua and Barbuda

Vice-Chairs: Bahamas, Barbados, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Paraguay and Uruguay.

## **B. AGENDA**

6. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Report by the Chair on progress in the implementation of resolution 4(IV) of the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and of the agreements of the fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. New challenges for social institutions and regional cooperation.
4. Other matters.
5. Consideration and adoption of agreements.

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<sup>1</sup> See list of participants in annex 2.

## C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

### Opening session

7. At the opening session, statements were made by Raul García-Buchaca, Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Dean Jonas, Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda, in his capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

8. The Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of ECLAC highlighted the successful cooperation between ECLAC and UNDP, which, in close consultation and collaboration with the countries, enabled the development of 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 30 September–3 October 2019. The Agenda was a concrete tool in working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He underscored the extraordinary efforts of Latin American and Caribbean States in the previous three years to mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the structural problems that had deepened in the health-care and social protection systems. He called upon the countries to take advantage of meetings such as that one to get Latin America and the Caribbean collectively back on track to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development.

9. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP referred to the difficult context created by the pandemic, political crisis, inequality, discontent and people's mistrust of institutions. According to data gathered by UNDP, progress in human development had stalled in 90% of the countries. Latin America and the Caribbean was one of the most affected regions in that regard. He called upon countries to redouble their efforts to achieve new progress in human development. Multilateral efforts were needed as the pandemic had shown that institutional capacity had to be improved in countries to implement emergency policies in a context of uncertainty.

10. The Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda, in his capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, commented on the effects of the pandemic and climate change crises in his country and stressed the seriousness of problems stemming from limited financial resources. He underlined that meeting discussions would be key to exchanging ideas on how to improve sustainability and for countries to work jointly in that direction.

Report by the Chair on progress in the implementation of resolution 4(IV) of the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and of the agreements of the fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 2).

11. The Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda, in his capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, recalled the adoption of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development at the third session of the Conference. He also referred to the presentation of

the document *Disasters and Inequality in a protracted crisis: towards universal, comprehensive, resilient and sustainable social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean*,<sup>2</sup> presented at the fourth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development held in October 2021. At that meeting, the countries had emphasized the need to consider: (i) mental health as a problem affecting well-being, especially in the light of confinement measures to counter COVID-19; (ii) the difficulties faced by the most vulnerable households in meeting their basic needs; (iii) per capita GDP in the classification of middle- and high-income countries and their inability to access international funding and cooperation; (iv) the challenge of developing a vulnerability index in the region and (v) the capacity of social protection and emergency institutions at the local level, taking into account the specificities of the territories. He also referred to the meetings held while his country acted as Chair and to the reports on the activities of the Conference presented at other ECLAC intergovernmental meetings.

### New challenges for social institutions and regional cooperation (agenda item 3)

12. The participants in the round table were Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC; Kirk Humphrey, Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs of Barbados; Yorleny León Marchena, Minister of Human Development and Social Inclusion of Costa Rica; Paula Poblete, Undersecretary for Social Evaluation of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Affairs of Chile; Cayo Cáceres, Vice-Minister for Social Policy in the Ministry of Social Development of Paraguay; Andrea Brugman, Undersecretary of Social Development of Uruguay and Nancy Ampudia, Director of International, Bilateral, Multilateral and South-South Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador.

13. The Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC emphasized that while the pandemic seemed to be dwindling, its social impacts remained, and the region was facing higher levels of poverty, extreme poverty and inequality than before the pandemic. Reaching pre-pandemic levels of development would take time and would require investment in the social sphere. The discussion of institutional challenges went hand in hand with that of the need for universal social protection systems that encompassed differences, were based on the notion of citizenship rather than beneficiary, and were comprehensive, sustainable and resilient. Progress was urgently needed in the financial sustainability of social systems and the challenges that posed for regional cooperation. The economic crisis had no borders, hence the urgency of a cross-border vision of public policy and forums for exchange such as the fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference, which was a fitting occasion to share experiences, define opportunities and proposals for the region, and consolidate the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development through social institutions and cooperation.

14. The Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs of Barbados stressed that it was time to reform social protection systems. Some citizens felt that institutions were absent and therefore could not work in their interest. It was necessary to examine whether institutions were fulfilling their purpose, to rethink policy financing and to seek new forms of investment. He underscored the importance of the partnership between Latin America and the Caribbean, which offered great potential for mutual learning. Caribbean societies were at a disadvantage and UNDP could play a more proactive role in prioritizing the Caribbean given the new circumstances.

15. The Minister of Human Development and Social Inclusion of Costa Rica said that in the region, citizen demands were on the rise while economic resources were dwindling owing to less fiscal space, creating a need to boost economic growth. Population ageing called for policies with new perspectives, as older persons took on new roles in communities. Based on satellite accounts for unpaid work in Costa Rica,

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<sup>2</sup> LC/CDS.4/3.

it was estimated that that type of work represented 25% of GDP and that 80% of it fell to women. The government had proposed the development of national policy and legislation relating to care to create modern care offerings that would include telecare, telemedicine and virtual reality-based solutions, and would make it possible to reduce costs and reach the most remote areas of the country.

16. The Undersecretary for Social Evaluation of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Affairs of Chile highlighted coordination with ministries and actors from different spheres to make progress on the issues raised at the meeting. She referred to the problem of hyperfocusing, in which citizens were considered not ‘rights holders’ but ‘beneficiaries’. In that sense, calling them ‘users’ was a step forward. People who had made an effort and escaped poverty but had lost benefits felt a sense of injustice and punishment, as there was no transition or gradual withdrawal from programmes. The Government of Chile supported universalization, with broader programmes, better coverage and, most likely, similar spending. In conclusion, she pointed out that the goal was to focus on the universalization of fundamental rights.

17. The Vice-Minister for Social Policy in the Ministry of Social Development of Paraguay highlighted a successful reduction in poverty while maintaining macroeconomic balance in the preceding 20 years. He highlighted dialogue with campesino, Indigenous and grass-roots organizations in his country in response to demands from social organizations in the territory, and the launch of the Jajapo Paraguay National Poverty Reduction Plan. Historically, social demands had not been adequately addressed, so basic social coverage had been established to ensure a multidimensional and rights-based approach to poverty. Coordination problems existed at the institutional level and it was necessary to distribute work following a territorial approach. Measures were needed to avoid clientelism and the use of social programmes to political ends. He concluded by pointing out that any action should be the result of actual requests identified in the territories and that support from international cooperation was needed.

18. The Undersecretary of Social Development of Uruguay said that the subject of discussion was relevant given the need for foresight to analyse the institutional challenges of the current global situation. Population ageing would bring new policy challenges and new reforms would be required to ensure social protection. Poverty reduction was a priority objective in Uruguay, as was advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the building of a more equal society. Non-refundable international cooperation and multilateral loans were necessary, as well as support from the private sector.

19. The Director of International, Bilateral, Multilateral and South-South Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador stressed that the impacts of the pandemic had jeopardized the achievement of the SDGs. The countries of the region shared the same social challenges at a time of uncertainty. In Ecuador, a dilemma existed between growing demand and financing difficulties, as well as a need to control exogenous problems. Challenges had been addressed through cash transfers and the provision of services, as well as the prioritization of public spending with a focus on human rights and eliminating poverty and an emphasis on priority groups. She highlighted the development of universal, effective, transparent and sustainable social security strategies in collaboration with the private sector and citizens. It was important to improve exchange mechanisms in the region and to strengthen ties between social development ministries to share examples of national action and improve systems, including those in place for cross-border emergency management. She also underscored the need to further improve young people’s access to employment and take a multi-stakeholder approach to strengthening universal access to social services.

20. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Mexico stressed the importance for his country of direct unconditional transfers, which promoted universality.

21. The representative of Peru reaffirmed his country's interest and readiness to establish deeper ties with other countries. Many policies were being developed without the participation of vulnerable or remote populations (such as those in the Peruvian Amazon) and planned services did not meet their needs or were not compatible with local cultures or their vision of development. Regional cooperation made it possible to exchange successful experiences that could be implemented locally to everyone's benefit.

22. Lastly, the Chief of the Social Development Division of ECLAC stressed the urgent need for progress on investment in universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, in particular to ensure a truly transformative post-COVID recovery.

#### Other matters (agenda item 4)

23. The representative of Chile expressed her country's interest in chairing the Presiding Officers in the next term and said that her government was willing to host the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2023.

#### Consideration and adoption of agreements (agenda item 5)

24. The representatives adopted the agreements contained in annex 1 of this report.

### **Closing session**

25. At the closing session, statements were made by Raul García-Buchaca, Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of ECLAC; Luis Felipe López-Calva, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP, and Dean Jonas, Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda, in his capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

26. The Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of ECLAC highlighted the role of social institutions in the effective implementation of social programmes. He also stressed that multilateral action was crucial for progress in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development.

27. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNDP underscored the need to avoid social setbacks in the work to achieve sustainable and inclusive human development. He also emphasized that multilateralism made it possible to share experiences with a view to strengthening social institutions.

28. Lastly, the Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy of Antigua and Barbuda, in his capacity as Chair of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, called for international financing to meet the growing demands faced by the countries, especially those of the Caribbean subregion.





## Annex 1

**AGREEMENTS**

*At their fifth meeting, held in hybrid format in Cuenca, Ecuador on 29 September 2022, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, agreed to:*

1. *Emphasize* the importance of putting people and their rights at the heart of development and protecting the population from the impact of rising food and energy prices on poverty and food and nutrition insecurity, which have compounded the consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic over the past year;

2. *Reiterate* the conviction that multilateralism and cooperation are essential means for progressing with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region, including its social dimension, and that the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development makes a significant contribution to this process;

3. *Welcome* the presentation by the Chair on progress in the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development in 2022;

4. *Commend* the commitment to collaborative work and active participation by all the member countries of the Conference in the challenge of addressing the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the social consequences of the crisis caused by rising food and energy prices in 2022;

5. *Highlight* the importance of moving forward with the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, in particular by strengthening social policy institutions for the development of universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, to leave no one behind in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

6. *Request* the secretariat to expand the analysis and sharing of experiences with a view to strengthening social policy institutions and social protection systems in response to crises in the region, and to continue the processes of maintaining and updating the information contained in the Observatory on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular with regard to social institutions and non-contributory social protection policies and with the changing world of work;

7. *Commend* the Government of Ecuador, in its capacity as host, and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, in its capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers, for their role in carrying out the activities of the fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean;

8. *Thank* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in its capacity as secretariat of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, for the support provided in relation to the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development;

9. *Thank* the United Nations Development Programme for the joint organization of the fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the XIV Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean;

10. *Thank* the Government of Chile for its kind offer to host the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held in the second half of 2023, and request the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to convene that session on dates to be established in consultation with the host country.



## Annex 2

**LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES<sup>1</sup>**  
**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**A. Estados miembros de la Comisión/Member States of the Commission**

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- Dean Jonas, Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy, email: dean.jonas@ab.gov.ag

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**ARGENTINA**

Representante/Representative:

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**BARBADOS**

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**BELICE/BELIZE**

Representante/Representative:

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<sup>1</sup> Los datos de esta lista son los suministrados por los participantes en el registro correspondiente que se habilitó para la reunión. The information contained in this list is as supplied by the participants themselves, in the register provided for the meeting.

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**BRASIL/BRAZIL**

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- Lais Mendes Dantas, Coordinadora General de Gestión Estratégica de Asuntos Internacionales, Ministerio de la Ciudadanía
- Jailson Silva Flor, Asesor Especial del Ministro, Ministerio de la Ciudadanía
- Leonardo Lima Chagas, Subsecretario de Instituciones Internacionales de Desarrollo, Ministerio de Economía

**CHILE**

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**PANAMÁ/PANAMA**

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**PARAGUAY**

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- Manuel Tornato Frutos, Consejero, Embajada del Paraguay en el Ecuador

## **PERÚ/PERU**

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## **REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

### Representante/Representative:

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- Juan Manuel Mercedes Graciano, Ministro Consejero, Embajada de la República Dominicana en el Ecuador

## **SAN VICENTE Y LAS GRANADINAS/SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

### Representante/Representative:

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## **SANTA LUCÍA/SAINT LUCIA**

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## **URUGUAY**

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## **B. Sistema de las Naciones Unidas/United Nations system**

### **Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

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## **C. Secretaría/Secretariat**

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