

ECLAC CARIBBEAN

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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 followups 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

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

International Days

11 February

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

20 February

World Day of Social Justice

21 February

International Mother Language Day

Upcoming Meetings

26 February

Virtual meeting of experts on policies of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus and projects of transboundary relevance in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

15 - 18 March

Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development 2021 - Santiago, Chile.

16 March

#ForumLAC2030 Event: "Rights-Based Sustainable Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean - placing human rights and the 2030 Agenda at the core of the responses to build forward better"





New ECLAC Caribbean study addresses adverse impacts of non-communicable diseases on Caribbean countries

The high prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the Caribbean is an issue of continuing concern, demanding sustained efforts to control their causes, these diseases and their risk factors.

The Caribbean Heads of Government have recognized the threat posed by NCDs and seek to mitigate their effects, often articulating the critical relationship between health and development. This position aligns well with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's commitment to ensure that individuals fulfil their potential in a healthy environment.

Economically, NCDs constitute a major burden on the healthcare system, significantly impacting lowand middle-income developing countries. A global challenge, data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that ischemic heart disease, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), all of which are NCDs, represented the three leading causes

of death globally in 2019. In fact, up to 36 million people die annually from all NCDs (equivalent to 63 per cent of global deaths) and of this number, 14 million die prematurely. Premature deaths can reduce a country's labour force, compounding the economic disadvantages already caused by NCDs.

Manifesting its effects across all social strata, NCDs in the Caribbean have caused between 57 per cent (Haiti) and 83 per cent (Barbados) of all deaths (WHO 2018). Risk factors such as alcohol consumption, tobacco smoking, physical inactivity, and obesity, which are common to NCD patients, are also prevalent throughout the subregion and are a cause for concern. Even more concerning is the subregion's high rate of childhood obesity, which was recognized by Caribbean Heads of Government as "the greatest threat to the health of future generations".

The prevalence of risk factors throughout the subregion, coupled with already high NCD statistics,

spell a future of rising healthcare expenses. Public expenditure on health, however, remains below the recommended level. In fact, a recent ECLAC study highlighted this concern, explaining that healthcare expenditure across the Caribbean should be about 6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The study also finds that, in reality, figures are quite low, ranging from 0.8 per cent of GDP in Haiti to 4.4 per cent in Barbados (ECLAC 2020).

In its study, ECLAC makes a case for a renewed focus on addressing NCDs, given their potential to constitute an even greater burden in the future. The prevalence of NCDs and of the risk factors which amplify them will only increase healthcare costs. The example of Trinidad and Tobago is given, where NCDs accounted for 53 per cent of hospital admissions between 2010 and 2015. Similarly, in Anguilla, about half of all deaths annually are due to popular NCDs such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. For Anguilla, NCDs account for more than 50



per cent of the annual cost of providing healthcare in the country (PAHO 2017). During 2011–2012, the National Health Fund (NHF) in Jamaica paid individual benefits amounting to US\$30.65 million for subsidies to cover medication costs for individuals with NCDs, representing 7.63 per cent of Government Expenditure on Health for 2011. Through these examples, the study emphasizes that NCDs should not be overlooked or dismissed as negligible but instead considered strategically.

NCDs are slowly paving the way for a range of problems across the subregion. Decreased labour productivity, workforce morbidity, and increased healthcare costs are all strains to Caribbean economies. Thus, early preparation serves as the subregion's best defense against the expensive and literally life-threatening costs of ignoring NCDs.



International organizations seek to assist and support Caribbean tourism

Some international tourism organizations have signaled their intention to boost the travel industry in the Caribbean, which has been negatively affected by the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This comes on the heels of a UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) study of data to solve the most important problems facing the sector in the subregion, caused by the pandemic.

The UNWTO and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) recently announced their common intentions and the search for strategies to assist the economic sector in the Caribbean.

Both entities gathered their members virtually, for two days in February 2021, to address the main challenges, especially the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic (travel and movement restrictions) in the Caribbean area. The workshop brought together 130 participants from 23 States, including the heads of national tourism administrations, national statistics offices, central banks and authorities addressing migration.

CTO's Acting Secretary-General, Neil Walters, welcomed the technical assistance offered by UNWTO and spoke to the importance of data and statistics in the preparation of postpandemic recovery programs.





Environment Ministers commit to better and GREENER PANDEMIC RECOVERY MEASURES



new landmark agreement was recently signed by Caribbean Environment Ministers, outlining a set of concrete decisions which will boost green recovery in the subregion, following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Environment Ministers commit to better and greener pandemic recovery measures

On 2 February 2021, the signing of the Bridgetown Declaration took place at the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of **Environment of Latin America** and the Caribbean organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Government of Barbados.

The Bridgetown Declaration includes the establishment of a subregional Action Plan to restore ecosystems, a Circular Economy Coalition, an Integrated Environmental Information System, and a second, updated Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme.

The Ministers called for the integration of environmental issues to be placed at the heart

of the subregion's COVID-19 recovery strategies, with economic reactivation based on social inclusion, low carbon and resilient economies, and the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

"The impending global response to the COVID-19 pandemic teaches us to work together to combat the common challenges to the planet and humanity," said the Ministers in the Declaration.

The Ministers considered that economic, fiscal, and financial packages and recovery investments should stimulate sustainable development efforts, both in the short and the long term, in order to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the

Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Ministers agreed to eight decisions that will be presented at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The Assembly, the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, will be held under the overarching theme, "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals."

Further detail on the eight decisions is as follows:

1. A commitment to tackle all forms of pollution. An integrated approach to address the threat of pollution, with





The impending global response to the COVID-19 pandemic teaches us to work together to combat the common shall as teaches us to work together to combat the common challenges to the planet and humanity.



calls to countries in the region to minimize waste generation and to progressively eliminate inappropriate final waste disposal practices.

- 2. The establishment of a Circular Economy Coalition for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be led by a steering committee composed of four high-level government representatives on a rotating basis and eight permanent strategic partners. This coalition is designed to implement circular economy practices.
- 3. Accelerate climate change ambition. Considering the climate emergency, the Ministers recognized that countries must not postpone climate action and that post-pandemic recovery efforts should not imply a reduction in resources for climate change. They stressed the need to implement responses to the post-COVID-19 crisis in alignment with the Paris Agreement. They encouraged countries to develop and submit updated and ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) before COP26, and emphasized the importance of promoting international, regional, and South-South cooperation.
- 4. An Action Plan to preserve biodiversity and restore ecosystems. With biodiversity declining at an unprecedented rate, the ministers adopted a Plan for the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the goal of strengthening collaboration for conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- 5. An Integrated Environmental Information System. The Ministers agreed to promote a regional Integrated **Environmental Information** System to strengthen the science-policy interface in Latin America and the Caribbean and, notably, to support monitoring the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.
- 6. A stronger Emergency Preparedness Network. The Ministers emphasized the importance of considering the environmental dimensions of emergencies in the political agenda of this region, which is the second most disasterprone region on the planet. They also supported the consolidation of the Regional **Emergency Preparedness and** Environment Network, including

the development of the Network work plan for the 2021-2022 period.

- 7. Promote gender equality. Ministers urged all countries of the region to develop affirmative actions within the framework of environmental public policies that recognize women's contributions to sustainable development, as well as the existing gaps in access to natural resources and the negative impacts on women and girls derived from their unsustainable exploitation.
- 8. Small island developing States (SIDS) development. The Ministers took into account the new and emerging challenges faced by the SIDS in coping with the socio-economic difficulties resulting from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including, inter alia, disruption to key economic sectors such as tourism and transport, disruption in supply chains for critical medical and food supplies, and the inequalities regarding access to digital technology, constraining the delivery of education and e-commerce services.



SIDS side event takes stock of climate change, the disaster awareness situation, and statistics for disaster in the Caribbean

Representatives from National Statistical Offices, Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency authorities and some Environment and Climate Change Ministries from countries in the Caribbean recently participated in a SIDS virtual side event organized by ECLAC officials at their headquarters in Santiago, Chile.

The stakeholders were brought together to examine the state of climate change and disaster awareness in the Caribbean, and ways to improve climate change, disaster statistics and indicators of production in the SIDS context. Another topic explored was the links between statistical production and policymaking related to climate change adaptation and resilience.

The event introduced the project, entitled "Caribbean relevant climate change and disasters indicators for evidence-based sustainable development policies", which focuses on statistics for disaster, and incorporates COVID-19-related data and statistics as a natural component.

The representatives showed strong commitment to participating in the project and contributing to capacity-building efforts to develop and use climate change and disaster-related statistics and indicators. The side event also encouraged dialogue between producers and users of data from different Caribbean SIDS countries, and development partners on the challenges of producing and using

climate change and disaster-related indicators, the emerging practices and opportunities to synergize their efforts.

ECLAC Caribbean Director, Diane Quarless - a panelist at the side event - underscored that the project sought to enhance the readiness of the beneficiary countries to manage climate change and disaster risk reduction, including related COVID-19 challenges, by strengthening their statistical and institutional capacities towards improving policy coherence in the implementation of the SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework."

Compared with other regions,

Latin America and the Caribbean has historically made a minor contribution to the factors leading to climate change. However, the region is acutely vulnerable to negative consequences, particularly the small island developing States (SIDS) of the Caribbean that have been continuously impacted by hazardous events, such as tropical storms, floods and landslides.

So far, global focus on measuring greenhouse gas emissions has not provided much support to better measure climate change impacts including damages and losses due to natural disasters, and adaptation indicators, which remain the most relevant issues for the Caribbean. The slow pace of development of new statistical methodologies, and the challenges with timeliness and quality of data among Caribbean countries, hamper the production and use of relevant indicators in informing policy decisions and actions that are aimed at addressing climate change and disaster vulnerability and building resilience.

Given the challenges of statistical capacity experienced by most Caribbean countries, ECLAC is launching this new project (2021-2023) to support capacity building in the national statistical systems in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean countries, with a view to institutionalizing climate change and disaster-related data collection and indicator production.

Building on the current work already being implemented by important stakeholders in the subregion - including the CARICOM Secretariat and the United Nations Statistics Division - the project will also seek to enhance the capacity of policymakers to use these indicators for more effective climate change and disaster risk reduction related policy decision-making. It is anticipated that this will contribute to more targeted implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities Of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and other international agreements.



Intenrational Women's Day

"International Women's Day is a call to action for accelerating progress towards gender equality and ending gender-based violence (GBV), with this year's theme being #ChooseToChallenge. It recognizes that individuals must choose to speak up in the face of gender inequality and GBV and that, collectively, we can create a more inclusive society for women and girls.

We must collectively #ChooseToChallenge harmful behaviours and practices against women and girls taking place in homes, workplaces, and communities across the Caribbean. We call on men as the main perpetrators of gender-based violence (GBV) and therefore the main agents of positive change, to challenge their friends and family members when they disrespect women and engage in discriminatory behaviours.





ECLAC joins interagency committee of Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem

ECLAC recently accepted an invitation from the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem+ (CLME+) to become a member of their newly formed Interagency Coordination Committee.

The CLME+ is a regional initiative which supports a multilevel institutional approach to coastal and ocean ecosystem management in the wider Caribbean. The CLME+ region covers the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) and the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (NBLME).

Artie Dubrie, Coordinator of ECLAC Caribbean's Sustainable Development and Disaster Unit, said ECLAC's membership was especially important at this time, given the impact of the

pandemic on the subregion. "It is to be recognized that during the COVID-19 public-health controls, many of the ocean-based economic activities were listed as essential services, thereby sustaining continued operations in these sectors. The build forward better recovery from COVID-19 redirects member countries to our dependencies on the ocean and its resources. New opportunities are emerging from sustainable investments in the Caribbean Sea and providing economic, social, cultural, climatic, aesthetic, and environmental benefits."

Dubrie noted that, historically, the Caribbean Sea, Caribbean coastal zones and bordering oceans define the cultural, geo-political, economic, social and environmental identities of the subregion. The Caribbean Sea contains vast endowments of natural resources, ocean-based foods, ecosystem, marine and maritime services. It also has the potential as a generator of renewable energy.

"The region can tap into these resources to support poverty reduction, food-security, energysecurity, disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation, and ocean conservation. Development of an ocean-based economy will also provide for more green-blue careers in several disciplines, as well as opportunities through new economic activities in both the traditional and emerging oceanbased sectors.

Co-funded by the Global

Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), this initiative is being implemented based on the common position taken by member countries. This includes the sustainable management of shared marine resources, which necessitates a regional approach and with the active engagement of governments, civil societies, the private sectors, inter and extra regional developmental partners alike.

The CLME+ region occupies a globally significant position in terms of its share in the total coverage of key tropical marine habitats known to deliver substantial contributions to globally important ecological processes. Approximately 10 per cent of the world's coral reefs, and around 20 per cent of the world's remaining mangrove forests are located within the CLME+ region.

In the management of the CLME+ region, participating member countries, developing partners and other stakeholders have established that in order to achieve sustainability and equity in the management of the shared resources, a long-term, intergovernmental mechanism is necessary. Currently this intergovernmental structure is managed by an Interim Coordination Mechanism with on-going developments for the establishment of a regional "Ocean Governance" Coordination Mechanism.

In keeping with its support of sustainable management of ocean resources, ECLAC continues to participate in the meetings of the CLME+ initiative and have a supporting role for ocean governance and oceans-related sustainable development in the Caribbean.



Jazz and Blues Festival going virtual in Jamaica

This year's edition of the Jamaica Jazz and Blue's Festival is going virtual. The music event will be held from 4 to 6 March, and will feature an additional charity segment to help raise funds for industry professionals affected by COVID-19.

The event, which will be held under the theme "Bringing Back the Magic," will focus on "sharing the rich music, culture and passion that Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival fans have become accustomed," according to the Jamaica Tourist Board.

"We are pleased to welcome the return of the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival and laud the organizers on the charity element," said Donovan White, Jamaica's Director of Tourism.

"In past years, the event has been a big draw for visitors looking to enjoy some quality entertainment in Jamaica. Although it will be virtual this year, we believe this event serves as a precursor to what we can expect in 2022, when music lovers will be able to join us again for an in-person experience."

This year's lineup includes Grammy winner Jon Secada, with a number of Jamaican artists including Richie Stephens, Lila Iké, Tessellated, Jah9 and Mortimer. ■



Caribbean resilience building in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only been sudden but has required significant readjustment on the part of world economies with far-reaching effects anticipated in the short to medium term. For vulnerable Caribbean economies already challenged by high debt service payments, external support is needed to fill the resource gap.

A new study from ECLAC Caribbean, entitled "A Case for Financing: Caribbean Resilience Building in the face of COVID-19", provides an assessment of the impact of pandemic-imposed restrictions across six critical sectors as well as policy recommendations to ensure a swift recovery, and makes a case for greater external concessional financial support to the fiscally challenged economies of the subregion. The sectors examined include health, tourism, international transportation, energy, education and social protection.

The tourism sector had virtually

collapsed, with mainstay stay-over visitor arrivals falling between 58 and 78 per cent in 2020. Direct losses are estimated to be between US \$22 and US \$28 billion. With respect to energy, total real GDP is estimated to fall by 4.4 per cent (US\$1,023 million) in Trinidad and Tobago and by 8.2 per cent (US\$305 million) in Guyana, and total nominal GDP is expected to decline by 13.5 per cent (US\$3,211 million) and 20.5 per cent (US\$1,121 million), respectively.

The health sector, during the first three quarters of 2020, accrued costs of US\$260.2 million in expenditures and the end of the pandemic is not yet in sight. This does not address the long-term vulnerability issues to develop an early warning health infrastructure and build "smart hospitals" to anticipate and mitigate future health pandemics and climate change effects.

Further, social protection, citizen security and education systems

will require considerable resources to build out the broadband infrastructure, managerial and operations structures that will include the poor and vulnerable and other groups, including persons with disabilities. These are areas of great significance as COVID-19 has exposed the inequalities and inefficiencies in the delivery of public service across the subregion.

The study finds that the enormous costs and limited external funding requires a relaxation in debt service payments and increased availability of grant resources to address the subregion's vulnerabilities and support the implementation of the SDGs.

The pandemic has spared no country, and each is doing its best to flatten the infection curve. The Caribbean is no different and, given the limited capacity of its health systems to address existing health needs, every available strategy must be deployed to suppress higher rates of COVID-19 transmission.

COVID-19 presents a clear and present danger to the countries of the Caribbean. It has strained budgets, as Caribbean countries struggle to access vaccines to meet the health needs of their population, respond to growing unemployment and support their economies.

COVID-19 could not have come at a more challenging time for the subregion, which is still recovering from the global financial crisis of 2008-2009. Average growth for the goods producing economies was 6.4 per cent before the crisis (1999-2008) and 0.2 per cent after the crisis (2009-2019). For the service-based economies, growth was 2.0 per cent before the crisis and 0.4 per cent after the

At the same time the debt burden (Debt to GDP) was 67.9 per cent for the Caribbean as a whole; 68.3 per cent for goods economies, and 75.4 per cent for services economies. Low growth, high debt, and high debt servicing costs have meant lower fiscal space and increasing challenges to address the effects of climate change and critical aspects of the SDGs.

These issues are being compounded by annual hurricane effects and a rash of sargassum blooms on the beaches, in a region that is known to be the most vulnerable among all SIDS. In 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria wrought some US\$93 million in damage and losses. More recently, Hurricane Dorian affected many countries but the most affected was the Bahamas, with estimated damage at \$2.5 billion, plus losses estimated at \$717.3 million and additional costs up to \$220.9 million. The total cost was approximately \$ 3.4 billion or 1 per cent of the Bahamas GDP.

COVID-19 represents a perfect storm for these economies which cannot sustain a prolonged closure but whose economic performance relies heavily on the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response in major external markets as in the case of the tourism economies.

The study seeks to complement several other impact assessment studies that recognize the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the Caribbean people and economies. Its purpose is to lay out the challenges and make a case for providing external concessional financial support to economies that were already facing many obstacles and would continue to struggle without such support. ■

New ECLAC report

highlights how COVID-19 caused setback in

Labour Market **Participation**

for Women in the Region

In a newly released special report, ECLAC stresses that it is essential to advance policies that contribute to post COVID-19 recovery with a focus on gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The report outlines how the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on employment and labour conditions for women in Latin America and the Caribbean, causing a setback of more than a decade in the context of progress achieved in labour market participation.

The report, which was launched at a press conference by Alicia Bárcena, ECLAC's Executive Secretary, estimates that around 118 million Latin American women are living in poverty, 23 million more than in 2019.

According to the report, the rate of job market participation by women was at 46 per cent in 2020, while for men it was 69 per cent (in 2019, these rates were 52 per cent and 73.6 per cent, respectively). It is further estimated that the average unemployment rate for women reached 12 per cent in 2020. In 2020, the study explains, there was a mass exodus of women from the labour force, many of whom have not returned to search for employment, given increased care demands at home.

"The women of the region are a crucial part of the frontline response to the pandemic. Some 73.2 per cent of people employed in the health sector are women, who have had to face extreme working conditions such as long workdays, in addition to increased risk of contagion as health personnel. All of this in a regional context in which salary discrimination persists, where salaries for women who work in the health sector are 23.7 per cent lower than men's in the same sector," pointed out Bárcena.

She underscored the need for the Caribbean and Latin America to invest in the care economy; to recognize it as a potentially dynamic sector contributing to the recovery, with multiplier effects on wellbeing, the redistribution of time and income, labour participation, growth and tax revenue.

Bárcena encouraged governments to "prioritize health workers in their vaccination strategies - including persons who provide associated services like cleaning, transport and care – as well as those working in education systems and domestic health, most of them women, who are a fundamental pillar for the care and sustainability of life."■

Easy Greek Spanakopita Appetizers

Total Time: Prep: 45 min. Bake: 15 min.

Makes: 2-1/2 dozen

What you will need:

- 2 packages (10 ounces each) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons snipped fresh dill
- 3/4 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 15 sheets phyllo dough (14x9-inch size)
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- Optional: Tzatziki sauce, lemon wedges and fresh dill sprigs

How to Make it:

Step 1: Preheat oven to 425°. In a large bowl, mix the first 9 ingredients. Place 1 sheet of phyllo dough on a work surface; brush with butter. Layer with 2 additional phyllo sheets, brushing each layer. (Keep remaining phyllo covered with plastic wrap and a damp towel to prevent it from drying out.)

Step 2. Arrange 3/4 cup spinach mixture in a narrow row along the long end of phyllo to within 1 in. of edges. Fold bottom edge of phyllo over filling, then roll up. Brush end of phyllo dough with butter and press to seal. Repeat 4 times with phyllo sheets, butter and the spinach mixture. Place rolls on a parchment-lined 15x10x1-in. baking pan, seam side down.

Step 3. Cut rolls diagonally into 2-in. pieces (do not separate). Brush tops with remaining butter. Bake until golden brown, 12-15 minutes. If desired, serve with tzatziki sauce, lemon wedges and dill sprigs.

Step 4. Freeze option: Cover and freeze unbaked rolls on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet until firm. Transfer to a freezer container; return to freezer. To use, bake rolls on a parchment-lined 15x10x1-in. baking pan in a preheated 375° oven until heated through and golden brown, about 25 minutes.



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