

**Intervention by His Excellency, Mr. Eugene  
Rhuggenaath**

**Prime Minister of Curaçao**

**Dialogue of Ministers of Latin America and  
the Caribbean on the Post-Pandemic  
Economic Recovery**

**38<sup>th</sup> Session of ECLAC**

**26 October 2020**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin my intervention by thanking the United Nations Economic Council for Latin America and the Caribbean for this opportunity. In addition, I would also like to take this opportunity to

thank Alicia Bárcena for your leadership and ensuring that our voices and concerns are heard. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Costa Rica for organizing the 38<sup>th</sup> session of ECLAC. In particular, I would like to congratulate President Alvarado and the Chair, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Solano Quirós.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are a region that has survived much in the past. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic has dealt an incomparable blow. This is, as has been aptly pointed out in the research done by ECLAC, one of the many blows that we as a region have received

in recent times. I do not have to explain to this particular audience that it is an immense blessing to be able to live in this amazing region. At the same time, no one knows better than we do about the struggles that we have to withstand.

Even before the pandemic, the slow economic growth, various crisis in the region, inequalities in our societies, and planetary security are other challenges we deal with on a daily basis.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is time for us to try out a different approach. We cannot simply expect to see progress if we keep executing the same ideas and policies. As stated in

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the Building a New Future document, “The right mix of environmental policies, together with economic, technological and industry policies, can relaunch development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with redistribution as a crucial component.”

I would like to take a moment to discuss an idea that would combine a mix of this: a focus on technology and research and development.

To be honest, it pains me to see, that we have not been able to develop at the same rate as the rest of the world. Especially, since we are a region founded on pioneers and innovation. It was the Nobel Prize laureate, Gabriel Garcia Márquez that once stated that “Caribbean reality resembles the wildest

imagination". And believe me, we have used this imagination in the past. Our region produced various Noble laureates for literature and music legends.

Our region has also produced some of the most ingenious inventions of our lifetime. Just think of technological advancements such as photography, the color TV and the ballpoint pen. We also have made various health advancements such as the artificial heart, the contraceptive pill and the neonatal artificial bubble.

It has not stopped there. Even today we keep developing ourselves for the future. And it gives me such pride to see the youth taking the lead on this.

Curaçao is also continuously developing in this direction. One of the projects that has stuck by me most this year is the Living Lab that is currently being developed. The Living Lab is our energy transition project which is being executed by our national refinery.

This way sustainable solutions are being sought for one of the Caribbean's great challenges; which is energy for our local community.

This Living Lab provides for the perfect collaboration between the government, entrepreneurs and scientist & academics. Our Living Lab involves companies such as TNO (the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research),

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Damen Ship repair, Curaçao Ports Authorities, the Curaçao Oil refinery and Aqualectra, which is our utility company. This collaborative approach facilitates and ensures there is a broad support from our community.

It is my vision to offer Curaçao has the Living Lab for collaboration in our region. For a moment, please imagine a center where many of the challenges can be solved in a multi-disciplinary way. Where multilateral collaboration is encouraged. Where the people working will be driven by the best and brightest of our region, as well as people from abroad. It will be an inclusive process taking people from all classes, all genders and all nationalities.

This will not be an easy process as this means more investment in social development, healthcare and education. But what will achieve is an integral sustainable development agenda for the region. An agenda to develop the best solutions for our regions. Solutions to ensure our resilience and solutions to ensure our sustainable development and as Secretary General Guterres reaffirmed this morning "to leave no one behind."

Mr. Chair, Ladies and gentlemen,

This may seem like something of the far and distant future. But this should not deter us from starting to work on it today. Our region has the ability, and we have the knowledge. We just need the drive to work

towards this new goal. All we have to do is take the first step.

When presenting a vision such as this, it is important to remember the goal you are working toward. My biggest incentive is to work for the youth and leaders of the future.

It is important to remember, that our time here where we can do something is limited. As the great former Secretary of the United Nations often quoted: "The world is not ours. It is a treasure that we hold in trust for future generations." Let us demonstrate that we are worthy of this trust.

Thank you.