

**Speech for Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of International Development,
Kamal Khera,**

Head of Delegation of Canada to:

**38th Session of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean—
Dialogue of Foreign Ministers**

Monday, October 26, 2020; 12:00-15:00 p.m., virtual meeting

INTRODUCTION

- Distinguished colleagues, Executive Secretary Alicia Bárcena, President Díaz-Canel of the Republic of Cuba, Secretary-General Angel Gurría of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of the United Nations, President Alvaro Quesada of Costa Rica, and Ministers: it is a pleasure to be here with all of you today.
- Excellency, President Alvarado: thank you for hosting this virtual session in these challenging circumstances.
- I am pleased to be able to take part in these discussions with you, at a time that is of the utmost importance to Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, and to the rest of the world.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cuba and President Díaz-Canel for holding the pro-tempore presidency of the ECLAC these past two years.

ECLAC

- Canada recognizes and appreciates the very important work carried out each year by ECLAC.
- The Commission is a key source of valuable analysis and knowledge, which supports all of our countries in ensuring evidence-based policy and decision-making.
- The Commission is also an important convener, fostering dialogue and collaboration among our countries.

COVID-19 AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

- Canada welcomes the focus of this 38th Session—building a new future through a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability. This discussion comes at a critical moment in our region’s history.
- Indeed, COVID-19 has hit our hemisphere with full force, with an impact felt in all regions, from north to south. Our hearts go out to all of those who have lost loved ones to this terrible virus.
- COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses in long-term structural economic growth in the region, as well as the fragility and inequalities in access to health care. It has also made clear that our efforts to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence must be reinforced.

- The pandemic threatens the decades of progress on poverty reduction and achieving gender equality that we have worked so hard to attain.
- We are also witnessing increasing insecurity, instability, and further marginalization of vulnerable people.
- As Minister Champagne said last week at the OAS General Assembly, our response to the current situation will shape our region for generations to come:
 - The COVID-19 pandemic represents a window of opportunity to rebuild new and more inclusive social contracts. Canada is working closely with its partners in the region to help governments develop inclusive pandemic response measures, ensure the protection of human rights, and continue to deliver public services.
 - We are also working toward the equitable development and distribution of safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. Just last month, Prime Minister Trudeau announced a \$220M contribution to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility to purchase doses for low- and middle-income countries.

- Canada is adjusting our international assistance initiatives to continue supporting partner countries in the region so that they can meet their longer-term development objectives, while also responding to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19.
- As Minister Champagne underlined at the OAS General Assembly, Canada is committed to cooperating with other countries in the hemisphere when it comes to facing the pandemic and its consequences.
- The reality is the same for all of us: none of us will successfully recover if countries outside our borders are not also secure.
- Now it is all the more important to foster greater solidarity and dialogue, and to listen to one another's needs.

THE CARIBBEAN

- Canada particularly recognizes the vulnerability of Caribbean states. This was true following the 2017 and 2019 hurricanes, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and is also true with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- We also know that the need for timely access to finance, which can support economic and climate resilience, is more important than ever.
- Prime Minister Trudeau was pleased to join Jamaican Prime Minister Holness and UN Secretary-General Guterres on September 29 in convening a 2nd Leaders' meeting on financing for development, including in the Caribbean.
- Our Caribbean friends face a particularly daunting challenge with COVID-19, given their heavy reliance on tourism. We applaud the measures Caribbean states have put in place to contain the virus' spread.
- But the region is now facing serious economic impacts. Small Island Developing States are the group most economically affected by the pandemic. In fact, the projected economic contraction for 2020 is 4.7%.
- The IMF is forecasting a 10.3% contraction for tourist-dependent economies in the Caribbean. And these numbers may be optimistic.
- Canada is supporting the Caribbean through the \$20M Canada Caribbean Adaptation Fund that provides risk insurance premiums for nine CARICOM countries, creating some fiscal space to manage the pandemic, without compromising protection from other natural disasters.

INEQUALITY

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated and exposed existing inequalities, especially those for women and girls, as well as discrimination from other marginalized groups such as people with disabilities and those living in extreme poverty.
- We must redress inequalities and recognize inequality as one of the root causes of low structural growth in the region.
- Canada has put inclusion and equality at the centre of its agenda – both domestically and internationally.
- Canada is advancing a progressive, feminist agenda that promotes gender equality, human rights, prosperity, and democratic governance.
- It is well-known that women and girls bear the brunt of inequality and exclusion—and that this reality is further exacerbated by other factors such as age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Exclusion holds women and girls back from being able to develop their full potential, and from contributing to their communities and societies. Inclusion has the potential to make those communities and societies more efficient, more productive, and more prosperous.

GROWTH AND INNOVATION

- There is much to be done if we are to achieve the sustainable development goals and address structural obstacles to growth. A massive effort is needed if we are to implement such an ambitious plan.
- This is also an opportunity to explore new approaches to tackling some of the toughest issues this region faces.
- Since 2009, Canada has provided more than \$7 billion in international assistance to the region (\$888 million of that in 2018-2019 alone).
- Some of this assistance has gone toward helping to increase the productivity of small and medium-sized firms. We have increased our commitments to innovative finance to make that possible.
- The Government of Canada strongly encourages innovation both at home and abroad. We are exploring new approaches to our international relationships, to our development programming, and to our trade policies and practices.
- And we must work together with the private sector to push for innovative solutions. Entrepreneurs and companies are critical to the economic recovery of our hemisphere. That is why it is important to harness their power.

CONCLUSION

- Distinguished colleagues, the challenges we face requires transformative solutions that can only come from a shift toward more innovative, inclusive and sustainable approaches that benefit everyone equally.
- Canada will continue to stand with its partners in the region, and we will work together to end the threat of COVID-19 and to achieve our common goal of a more just and prosperous hemisphere.
- Thank you. Merci.