

**38<sup>th</sup> session of the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean  
(ECLAC)**

**Closing session panel on the decade of action and financing for development  
Remarks by Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Permanent  
Representative of Guyana and Chair of the Group of 77 and China,  
Wednesday, 28 October 2020**

1. I am very pleased to join Honourable Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina Mohamed and Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Ms. Alicia Barcena to speak on the decade of action and financing for development. I therefore thank ECLAC for their kind invitation to the Chair of the Group of 77 and China and indeed for convening this meeting.
2. The timeliness of this session cannot be overstated. Apart from the direct health impacts of COVID-19, an economic crisis of unknown proportions is inevitable for our countries. A crisis that will go far beyond 2020, with the potential to reverse past development gains. For example, even before the crises Latin America saw an increase in the number of under-nourished people from 39.3 to 40.5 million according to FAO. The question then becomes, how do we ensure that developing countries safeguard their development progress and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. How do we ensure that financing for development is accelerated for the entire Sustainable Development Agenda, including the commitments made in the Paris Agreement? We need an enabling international environment to do so.
3. We have already witnessed the crisis exacerbating existing structural problems of developing countries. The rate of economic growth has fallen sharply, debt levels have increased, FDI has declined, remittance flows have receded, and unemployment and poverty levels have and continue to climb as the recession

deepens. In these circumstances, the enormous efforts of Governments to stave off a human catastrophe must be commended.

4. It is also imperative that we analyze the main lessons from this experience and reset our path for a more inclusive, balanced and sustainable development.
5. In this regard, I commend you, Ms. Barcena, for the ground-breaking analyses that ECLAC continues to deliver, including the position document you presented at this session on “*Building a New Future: Transformative Recovery with Equality and Sustainability.*” With the increasing emphasis on implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the importance of financing for development, which is the focus of this meeting, we must centre our thinking on some critical actions as we chart the way forward. Allow me to highlight in brief some of these, which, I am sure, may have been mentioned before in the preceding sessions.
6. First, building policy coherence and institutional capacity is key to identify the policy challenges and good practices for enhancing SDG implementation. Current institutional mechanisms will require significant updating, and best practices in policy coherence must be scaled up and replicated. This approach offers opportunities to: forge stronger political commitment and leadership at all levels; systematically integrate implementation actions across sectors; make informed policy choices; analyse potential policy effects, and; provide for institutional coordination, stakeholder participation and monitoring and reporting of progress.
7. Secondly, access to Finance is critical to global recovery and economic growth. Financial markets are often concentrated and focused almost exclusively on short-term profits rather than the long-term requirements for sustainable development. This situation poses significant challenges for sustainability, as well as for small vulnerable economies and must be addressed by the multilateral financial institutions.

8. Thirdly, one of the lessons of the crisis is the need for the Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFI) to adopt new approaches to risks and to reduce the pro-cyclical nature of financial flows to countries in need of support. For many developing countries, financial flows from MFIs are important in dealing with short-term balance of payments and fiscal challenges. However, such short-term flows are not sufficient to deal with the deep structural and historical challenges that many countries face, particularly the small vulnerable economies. Countries with limited access to global capital markets, therefore, rely heavily on their relationship with the multilateral financial institutions and the access to financing this provides.
9. Fifthly, high levels of external debt now threaten the viability of many developing countries. For such countries, high debt levels and debt servicing obligations must be addressed within the overall structure and vulnerabilities of their economies.
10. Fourthly, ODA is often a catalyst for investment and FDI flows for many developing countries. ODA flows can be leveraged to facilitate foreign direct investment, to complement opportunities for South-South Cooperation, and to develop strong public-private partnerships that take full cognizance of the economic, environmental and social costs of partnership initiatives.
10. Finally, trusted development partnerships must be forged, with support from the UN Development System. As a knowledge provider and capacity building institution, the UN Development System can focus on the practical value that fits local conditions, identify lessons learnt and replicate good practices across regions. As a convener, the UNDS should continue to promote dialogue and collaboration among diverse interest groups and stakeholders, with the view to maximizing the impact of partnership arrangements.
11. As repeatedly stated, the 2030 Agenda provides the framework to respond effectively to these challenges. To complement national actions, regional

organizations like ECLAC play an important role in applying the SDG framework to the regional context, particularly to identify and analyze new sources of growth, as well as to address social cohesion and environmental degradation. Intensified efforts are also required to guide interventions in social sectors, such as education, health, and social protection.

I thank you