



**Thirty-eighth  
session of ECLAC**  
26–28 October 2020

16 October 2020  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-eighth session of the Economic Commission  
for Latin America and the Caribbean

Virtual meeting, 26–28 October 2020

### **Guidelines for panelists and moderator**

#### **Tuesday 27 October**

It is an honor for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Government of Costa Rica to have your participation in the thirty-eighth session of the Commission, especially in the session ‘**Challenges for the Caribbean to build back better**’ to be held on Tuesday 27 October.

Pursuant to item 6 of the provisional agenda and in accordance with ECLAC “Caribbean First” strategy, the session will provide a space to discuss the specific vulnerabilities and challenges faced by the Caribbean to build back better and foster solidarity and cooperation with the wider region. It will be an occasion for peer-to-peer learning and sharing of experiences among Caribbean countries and with the wider region to overcome persistent and new obstacles to effectively achieve sustainable development by 2030 in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. An energizing, dynamic and comprehensive reflection on challenges, opportunities and new ideas to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other SIDS agendas will be promoted as Caribbean member countries continue to be engaged in the Decade of Action for achieving sustainable development and building back better in these unprecedented times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a new sense of urgency to address holistically those challenges that continue to hinder the sustainable development of the Caribbean. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only exacerbated the long-standing vulnerabilities of the Caribbean as small island developing States, being mostly undiversified, tourism dependent economies with very high exposure to external shocks, especially hurricanes and the impact of climate change, but also redefined established norms and realigned priorities, while at the same time presenting new opportunities for growth and sustainable development that address the widening inequalities in Caribbean societies.

In an effort to provide responses to the challenges faced by Caribbean countries, ECLAC, in its most recent edition of *The Caribbean Outlook*, highlights the urgent financial, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the subregion through robust research and analysis, thereby offering evidence-based policy advice. During the session, this new publication will be launched and presented by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC. *The Caribbean Outlook* analyses the current circumstances and challenges facing the subregion and the immediate and medium-term responses that are required to build back better, including through new strategies and financial instruments to mobilize resources for the recovery while alleviating the liquidity and debt vulnerability challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also identifies opportunities that will prepare the region to thrive in a post-COVID-19 world, by emphasizing a people-centred approach in keeping with the aspirations of Agenda 2030 such that

development embraces the whole society including those persons and groups that have been historically forgotten or excluded from the development discourse.

**Date and time:** Tuesday 27 October 2020, from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm (Costa Rica time). To check the time of the session in your country, please consult the following link: <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/?low=c&sort=1>

**Modality:** The session will be held virtually, through the Webex platform, with simultaneous interpretation in English, Spanish and French. The Secretariat will send the connection details shortly.

**Language:** Interventions can be made in English, French or Spanish. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in these languages.

**Statements/Presentations:** Kindly send the written version of your intervention or PowerPoint presentation to the following email: [secretariadelacomision@cepal.org](mailto:secretariadelacomision@cepal.org) so that it can be uploaded to the website of the session of the Commission after the event.

**Documentation:** The publication *The Caribbean Outlook* and other documents related to the thirty-eight session will be made available on the following website: <https://periododesesiones.cepal.org/38/en>

#### **Methodology:**

This session will run for three hours **from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Costa Rica time / From 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm EST)**. The discussion will be guided by the moderator, the Honourable Kenneth Darroux, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and Diaspora Relations of Dominica and Vice-Chair of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee of ECLAC. The moderator will make short introductory remarks (10 minutes) introducing the topic and sharing his perspectives and innovative responses to rethink the sustainable development in the Caribbean in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Then will follow the presentation of the publication *The Caribbean Outlook* by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, which will last 30 minutes. Following the presentation by the Executive Secretary, each panelist will be invited to provide comments on issues raised in the publication, and to share their views on the current situation in the subregion. Please limit your contribution to 7 minutes. The moderator will then offer the floor to participants attending the session for comments or questions. Before concluding the session, the moderator will again pass the floor to the Executive Secretary of ECLAC and the panelists for final remarks. The session will then be closed by the Government of Costa Rica in its capacity as President of the Commission.

A list of speakers will be compiled for the moderator on the basis of requests received, in the following order: representatives of (1) countries; (2) United Nations system; (3) regional organizations; and (4) civil society. These interventions should not exceed 3 minutes in order to provide an opportunity for all those who request the floor to speak.

#### **Background:**

The [Caribbean Outlook](#) was inaugurated in 2018, offering a comprehensive assessment of the challenges faced by the subregion in its pursuit of sustainable development. The 2020 edition that will be presented during the session speaks to the fact that the global community has since been overwhelmed by a pandemic with multidimensional impacts, which has demanded a spate of far-reaching responses, including the closure of borders and businesses, which threaten a global recession, and disrupted every aspect of life and livelihoods.

Although various interventions employed in the Caribbean to slow the spread of the disease have been fairly effective, their implementation has had devastating multi-sectoral impact on the countries of the subregion, not least on their economic and financial dimensions. Indeed, many countries have been forced to begin the

tentative opening of their economies as it has become increasingly clear that, until a safe vaccine is developed, a strategy must be found to safely co-exist with the virus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has therefore served to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in Caribbean society, including access to ICT; access to education services; food insecurity; the vulnerability of women and girls with the significant increase in gender based violence; and the tremendous challenge to governments already burdened by high levels of public debt and debt servicing to provide support to flagging businesses and to offer welfare to increasing numbers of unemployed, particularly those in the informal sector and in the tourism sector, which have been especially hard hit. The new edition of *The Caribbean Outlook* offers perspective on how the subregion might address itself to the challenge of recovery and resilience building in the wake of COVID-19, including strategies to ensure that Caribbean countries achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SIDS sustainable development platform in this Decade of Action.

### **Guiding questions:**

The following questions are proposed as a reference to facilitate and guide the discussion. It remains, however, the prerogative of each panelist to determine the content of their presentation in entirety.

- What new initiatives and strategies should be prioritized, and which key challenges still need to be overcome to respond effectively to your country's vulnerability to negative external shocks, including future pandemics, with a view to ensuring that no one is left behind?
- What critical tools have been considered to support sustainable development with equality and build resilience by 2030 considering the financial constraints and limited access to low-cost long-term development resources faced by your country?
- What new approaches can be found to leverage the financial resources needed to accumulate both physical and high-quality human capital and to develop the knowledge base to drive sustainable development in the Caribbean?
- What new opportunities for resource mobilization have been identified at the national, regional or international levels to build back better in the Caribbean?
- What good practices and initiatives are being pursued in partnership with different stakeholders, including through South-South, SIDS-SIDS and triangular cooperation to address the situation of middle-income countries of the Caribbean?
- What recommendations would you make to foster stronger collaboration and partnership towards financing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the era of COVID-19?
- How can the recent initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond launched by the Governments of Canada and Jamaica and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, intended to bring financial relief to countries in deep economic distress, support your country's effort to address the diverse challenges exacerbated by the pandemic?
- How can the regional development framework offered by ECLAC and other institutions support your country's effort to build back better?