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**REPORT OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS
OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

Virtual meeting, 18 March 2021

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The tenth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation was held virtually on 18 March 2021, within the framework of the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries in their capacity as Presiding Officers of the Committee: Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru.

3. Representatives of the following States members of the Commission also participated: Bahamas, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

4. The following associate members of the Commission were also represented: British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

5. Also in attendance were representatives of the following intergovernmental organization: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Chair and Vice-Chairs

6. At the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, the countries listed below had been elected to serve as the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean:

Chair: Costa Rica

Vice-Chairs: Argentina, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru

B. AGENDA

7. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Challenges and opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

¹ See annex 2.

3. A strategy for cooperation for middle-income countries
4. Action lines of the Committee on South-South Cooperation for the period 2021–2022
5. Adoption of agreements

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

8. At the opening session, statements were made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Christian Guillermet Fernández, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC.

9. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC, thanking Costa Rica for its leadership in chairing the Committee on South-South Cooperation, said that the meeting was a reflection of the will expressed in the Political Declaration on a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, which called for a large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive global response and the strengthening of international cooperation and multilateralism to combat the crisis. The region had changed considerably since the formulation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was not only that negative trends had been accentuated; the pandemic had devastated societies. Times were uncertain. The evolution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic would be largely determined by progress in vaccination, which was too slow, highly uneven across countries and subject to financial negotiations and the availability of resources. Latin America and the Caribbean must strengthen its regional, political and economic agreements, deepen intraregional cooperation and actively forge a united voice before the world.

10. With regard to cooperation, the Executive Secretary said that it was time to reconsider the criteria for measuring and classifying development and, where possible, to suspend the graduation of middle-income countries during the pandemic, moving towards a multidimensional approach to measuring poverty to address country-specific challenges. Other aspects such as capacities, knowledge-sharing, technology transfer, fiscal and inequality gaps, and the various stages of development of countries should be measured, with particular attention to their ease or lack of access to financial resources that could be mobilized, as well as access to markets. The task was daunting and she hoped that the discussion would be fruitful, culminating in agreements that would consolidate South-South cooperation and advance a unified voice for finding a way out of the crisis and moving towards a sustainable and inclusive development model.

11. The Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC, thanked the Commission for its support and the Vice-Chairs for their commitment. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the existing structural gaps in the region's political, economic and social systems, as well as existing inequalities. The countries of the region must be ever more united in the search for more comprehensive models for measuring development that reflected its multidimensional nature. Developing countries were home to most people living in poverty and comprised the majority of middle-income countries. However, financial, trade and official development assistance systems continued to follow a paradigm that overlooked this reality. The existing system promoted economic growth but did not take into account the equitable distribution of income or well-being in a broader view of sustainable development.

12. He said that, in this connection, the Chair had requested the secretariat to prepare a document on a strategy for cooperation for countries classified as middle-income and high-income, aimed at addressing the urgent needs of Latin America and the Caribbean. The document would consider current and future efforts to recover from the pandemic, presenting a common regional voice, to help to move forward on the path of development. Continued progress required learning from the experiences of countries in the region in South-South cooperation that would help to identify challenges and make the most appropriate policy decisions to improve structures, processes and methodologies. Lastly, he reiterated the need to continue to provide platforms for sharing best practices developed by countries.

Challenges and opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (agenda item 2)

13. The participants in this session were Rita Hernández, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC; Leslie Campbell, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee; Déborah Rivas Saavedra, Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee; and Juan Ignacio Roccatagliata, Minister, Department of Multilateral Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Worship and International Trade of Argentina, in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

14. The Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee, said that the session was intended as an opportunity for exchange towards establishing a road map for a resilient and inclusive recovery. The crisis had reshaped the economy and exposed structural gaps in political, economic and social systems and inequalities within and between countries. Consequently, various sectors had registered a loss of income and sources of employment. Urgent action was required to develop recovery mechanisms, capitalizing on scarce resources and building capacities to benefit the most vulnerable sectors. She said that solidarity had been the cornerstone on which Costa Rica had built its recovery and stressed that the pandemic could only be tackled through a global, regional and national effort. Lastly, she said that her country deemed the Committee on South-South Cooperation to be the most appropriate forum for deepening dialogue to bring about more effective cooperation to deal with the impact of the pandemic across all spheres of society, and that South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms were fundamental to achieving that goal.

15. The State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, in his capacity as Vice-Chair, said that economies were still grappling with the triple challenge of reduced revenues, higher health and social expenditure and job losses. South-South and triangular cooperation were crucial for developing countries to overcome the crisis. South-South cooperation could provide creative solutions for recovery but must complement, not substitute international development cooperation, which was needed to overcome the primary challenge of financing. The South-South cooperation agenda must focus on scaling up resources, enhancing policy space and building resilience. Development banks such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Latin American Reserve Fund (FLAR) could assist in those efforts. Triangular cooperation around reform to multilateral architecture and financing was also of great benefit. Health was another area of opportunity for South-South cooperation to guarantee equitable and reliable access to vaccines, the sharing of medical products and services and replication of good practices. However, the potential of South-South cooperation to drive a resilient recovery was encumbered by a pervasive lack of timely and reliable data, and the willingness and capacity to use them and insufficient integration of such cooperation in national development policies and systems. South-South and triangular cooperation —attainable through subregional, regional and interregional collaboration— remained crucial for developing countries to tackle the current crisis. The challenges ahead were many, but together it was possible to build forward better.

16. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, in her capacity as Vice-Chair, said that the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 was in jeopardy. Isolated efforts were insufficient and it was imperative to seek strategies that expedited the achievement of the SDGs and recognized the added value of South-South and triangular cooperation as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda and complementing traditional forms of international cooperation. The Vice-Chair from Cuba opined that, at the regional level, there was a need for institution-building in South-South and triangular cooperation and its follow-up, a common challenge being that of demonstrating progress in this area in the voluntary national reviews presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. She further stated that in the fight against COVID-19, the countries with the best results in terms of governance were those with the capacity to provide comprehensive responses beyond the health sector and that those capacities needed to be strengthened. Recovery must be built on medical and scientific cooperation, the involvement of academia in South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, as well as resources for medical, pharmaceutical and biotechnological innovation. Cooperation must help to accelerate product development, scale up manufacturing, expand the provision of technologies and ensure protection for all as well as COVID- 19 vaccination.

17. The Minister in the Department of Multilateral Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Worship and International Trade of Argentina, in his capacity as Vice-Chair, said that the challenges the pandemic posed to middle-income countries were also an opportunity to address those challenges so that cooperation would have a long-term structural impact. He highlighted two related challenges for middle-income countries: partnership and the search for financing. There was a need to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation funding lines for all countries, including middle-income countries, and to deploy creative solutions, with cooperation between the State, civil society and the private sector to find complementary forms of financing as well with the multilateral system. He said that to address the pandemic, some ministries in his country had developed interesting partnerships with the private sector and at the multilateral and United Nations levels, which could shape the future of cooperation to not only mitigate the impact of a crisis but also have an effect on social cohesion, education, innovation, productivity and export capacity, contributing to long-term development. He also noted the importance of collaboration between various regional platforms, leveraging their leadership in different areas. Lastly, he said that Argentina, as Chair of the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation for the next two years, intended to cooperate with the countries and the various regional platforms in those areas.

A strategy for cooperation for middle-income countries (agenda item 3)

18. The participants in this session were Rita Hernández, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC; Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and Mario Pezzini, Director of the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

19. The Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee, introduced the agenda item by saying that her country, like almost all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, had seen a steady decline in the flow and access to non-reimbursable cooperation resources for several years, mainly due to their categorization as middle-income and upper-middle-income countries by international financial institutions. The use of per capita GDP to measure development did not reflect the current reality, and it was essential to establish a road map for more effective and appropriate cooperation. The system must be reoriented and redesigned to take into account income distribution, equity and well-being, among other factors, in a multidimensional approach to sustainable development. Costa Rica, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, had requested

the cooperation of ECLAC in preparing a document that focused on the post-COVID-19 recovery and proposed a strategy for middle-income countries. The document would put forward a new narrative with a unified regional voice to address urgent needs in Latin America and the Caribbean, recognizing countries' needs in the area of international cooperation and in the search for a new vision of development and for strengthened and more comprehensive cooperation that took all factors into account. The initiative sought to shed light on the fact that effective, resilient and inclusive reconstruction must be based on the premise of a renewed spirit of global and regional solidarity. Lastly, she thanked ECLAC for its receptiveness to the request.

20. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC referred to the development challenges and the future of international cooperation in the post-COVID-19 recovery in the region. Challenges included how to ensure that middle-income countries had adequate access to the resources needed to cope with the crisis and move towards a transformative recovery and the heterogeneity in access to financing for graduated and middle-income countries, which were denied official development assistance and other cooperation and financing mechanisms despite the structural gaps and vulnerabilities that remained. The COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the problem. The document on middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery that ECLAC was preparing at the request of the Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation sought to respond to the above issues and to propose a strategy for recovery. The world was facing a change of era, marked by a crisis of multilateralism, geopolitical tensions and a new economic geography; new global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and migration; structural gaps across the region, with insufficient growth, low productivity and intersecting inequalities; and social discontent, with fragmented health services, education and social protection, all of which put the development agenda at risk. Latin America and the Caribbean was the region most severely hit by COVID-19, the most indebted in the developing world and had the highest external debt service relative to exports of goods and services. The region was facing another lost decade and the Caribbean subregion would see its external deficit widen from 4.5% to 17% of regional GDP.

21. The region also suffered a double asymmetry: it was one of the regions with the lowest greenhouse gas emissions (8.3%) and one of the most vulnerable to natural disasters, especially in Central America and the Caribbean. The Caribbean faced multiple vulnerabilities: more than 80% of its population lived in areas below 5 metres above sea level, it was highly vulnerable to climate change, depended heavily on imported food and imported other goods, tourism had collapsed in the first eight months of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (tourist arrivals had fallen 64%) and the subregion faced high debt levels. Resources were needed for a transformative recovery, which required greater fiscal efforts to combat the pandemic and more concessional financing, boosting economic recovery without austerity measures and maintaining and expanding fiscal stimulus measures, strengthening the progressiveness and efficiency of tax collection, increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of spending, supporting investment and technological development to increase productivity, and driving structural change to rebuild with equality and move towards sustainable welfare states.

22. ECLAC was proposing five policy actions to address liquidity needs, debt challenges and the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals: (i) expand and redistribute liquidity from developed to developing countries (through special drawing rights and the initiative to establish the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE)); (ii) debt relief for the Caribbean; (iii) strengthen regional cooperation by improving the lending and response capacity of regional, subregional and national financing institutions and strengthening their linkages; (iv) promote institutional reform the multilateral debt architecture, including credit rating agencies; and (v) expand the toolbox of innovative instruments (such as hurricane clauses and "SDG bonds") to improve debt repayment capacity and avoid over-indebtedness. A new cooperation model was needed for middle-income countries, which included most of the countries

in the region. Excluding China and India, middle-income countries accounted for 96% of the global external debt; they varied greatly and the responses and cooperation mechanisms must be tailored to their different levels of economic, social and environmental development. Cooperation mechanisms could not be based on per capita GDP alone. Since 2017, ECLAC, the European Commission and the Development Centre of OECD have been promoting a narrative based on the concept of development in transition that reinterpreted development and aimed to strengthen the role of cooperation, with development seen as a continuous process that was better measured through a multidimensional approach than by income levels.

23. ECLAC had also proposed an approach to complement the per capita income criterion: the structural gaps approach would make it possible to identify, quantify and prioritize the long-term obstacles preventing middle-income countries from achieving equitable and sustainable levels of development. Developing countries in transition had limited capacity to access or mobilize resources, and as per capita income in the region had increased, official development assistance as a percentage of GDP had decreased. There was a need for new approaches and modalities of cooperation and a reshaping of multilateralism, with multilateral cooperation at various levels that included new and traditional stakeholders, new sources of funding, technical assistance, debt relief, technology transfer and new strategic alliances. For a transformative recovery, the development model must ensure greater well-being and environmental sustainability; productive, trade and technological integration in strategic sectors; technology transfer (reviewing intellectual property regimes and strengthening international research and development networks); access to financing for development and productive investment; universal social protection with a basic income; inclusive and sustainable international governance in line with the 2030 Agenda for the provision of global public goods such as vaccines; climate security; financial stability and peace. ECLAC had defined eight drivers of a new development pattern on the basis of their strategic role in competitiveness, employment, greenhouse gas emissions and health: (i) energy transition towards renewable energy sources; (ii) sustainable mobility and urban space; (iii) the digital revolution; (iv) the health-care manufacturing industry; (v) the bioeconomy, biological resources and natural ecosystems; (vi) the economy of care; (vii) the circular economy; and (viii) sustainable tourism. In closing, she said that cooperation as an enabler of development required strengthening of domestic capacity, new modalities and stakeholders and new cooperation instruments.

24. The Director of the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) agreed with proposed orientation of the document under discussion and noted that the issue at hand was a paradigm shift from cooperation as charity to cooperation based on solidarity. According to the charity-based logic, once countries receiving financial resources rose above certain thresholds of extreme poverty, it was expected that automatic market mechanisms would keep them out of poverty, which was not the case. The geography of poverty had changed as extreme poverty also existed in middle-income countries, meaning that the logic of yesteryear was no longer applicable. The proposal to suspend graduation mechanisms made sense, not only for economic reasons but also because of the social and political tensions in middle-income countries. The geography of economic development had also changed, with the slowest growth registered in the OECD countries. He spoke to the need for alternatives to using GDP as a measure of poverty, for "reinventing" the data, noting that ECLAC had led the region in introducing new types of measurement. Moreover, the geography of cooperation had changed: there had been no increase in traditional cooperation—official development assistance—to address the COVID-19 crisis and it was proving to be a mechanism incapable of achieving its objective. Decision-making was a restricted process in the traditional cooperation structure, with the criteria for international cooperation decided by a limited few.

25. In the context described above, new players, such as China, India, South Africa and emerging and developing countries such as Cuba, were making significant contributions to international cooperation. New

objectives such as the SDGs and a long list of factors such as social objectives were also taken into account. There were also new ways of implementing cooperation: South-South cooperation did not follow the same criteria as traditional cooperation, and triangular cooperation had shown that for the sharing of experiences, not just the provision of financial resources, it was not enough to have only two actors (the giver and the receiver). There was resistance to the emergence of new stakeholders and new forms of cooperation. The United States and the Nordic countries in Europe tended to favour traditional cooperation; other countries viewed cooperation from a market perspective in order to move forward with their investments. A document originating from Latin American and Caribbean middle-income countries could be very useful for overcoming the resistance of conservative actors, to show that a new phase, a new paradigm, had begun, and that there were initiatives in that regard. Such a document should include the points proposed by ECLAC, in addition to issues related to financing, the need for future fiscal reform, investments for productive transformation and industrialization to break out of the middle-income trap, and the sharing of public policy experiences in different areas, such as vaccine diplomacy, data, country development strategies and sectoral policies. Neither traditional or new stakeholders should be the ones to take the lead on that agenda, so the regional dimension could be crucial. ECLAC could play that role in Latin America thanks to its capacity to implement the agenda and bring together various stakeholders, including from outside the region. A coherent investment policy necessitated a platform on which all parties could coordinate their investment, but the lead stakeholder must be from the region, and ECLAC must be present. There was a need to create such a platform for investment and to shift the criteria for cooperation from the outdated charity approach to the new solidarity approach. In that regard, OECD could play a supporting role in a process led by Latin America and the Caribbean.

Action lines of the Committee on South-South Cooperation for the period 2021–2022 (agenda item 4)

26. The participants in this session were Rita Hernández, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC; Laura Elena Carrillo Cubillas, Executive Director of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC; and José Antonio González Norris, Executive Director of the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI), in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC.

27. The Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that the Committee was a useful avenue for carrying out actions that would help to achieve individual and regional development goals. For Costa Rica, as Chair of the Committee, it was of great interest to continue the initiatives and actions of the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as knowledge-sharing and the definition and dissemination of indicators, measurements and studies that contributed to the regionalization of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. Accelerated action was needed to transform the development model and rebuild lives across the world, adopting innovative approaches to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable future. Based on that innovative premise, experiences and lessons learned from South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships should be shared. That should be done using tools for knowledge-sharing via information platforms, pro-innovation initiatives, technology transfer and the sharing of lessons learned on challenges and opportunities in dealing with COVID-19. The areas in which the Chair intended to intensify efforts included interregional meetings that fostered the sharing of experiences and best practices, as well as the creation of partnerships that would translate into concrete initiatives of common interest in South-South and triangular cooperation projects. The idea was to contribute to the joint efforts of the South-South Cooperation Committee towards a comprehensive, sustainable and green recovery.

28. The Executive Director of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee, said that Costa Rica had asked Mexico to continue its work in the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, which aimed to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of the governments of the region engaged in establishing or seeking to establish national mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Within the framework of the network, three thematic axes had been established: (i) strengthening governance for countries to include the implementation of the SDGs at national and subnational levels in their respective public policies; (ii) strengthening countries' statistical frameworks countries to enable them to fully monitor their efforts with a view to integrating them into voluntary national reviews on the implementation of the SDGs; and (iii) promoting South-South and triangular cooperation among the countries of the region and the support of other countries for cooperation. The statistical pillar had been identified as the priority, but the outbreak of the pandemic had hampered the planned regional work. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) would continue to assist activities and support for the planned work was also available thanks to German cooperation, Spanish cooperation and the European Union.

29. The Executive Director of the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI), in his capacity as Vice-Chair, said that, as expressed during the meeting and in view of the COVID-19 pandemic —the most serious, complex and urgent challenge countries were facing— it was imperative to strengthen the multilateral system and prepare for similar situations in the future. ECLAC had proposed very precise action lines to countries of the region for redefining development cooperation. South-South and triangular cooperation complemented regional development efforts to bring about the transformative recovery of the region and a return to sustainable and inclusive growth. The outcome document of the second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), held in Buenos Aires from 20–22 March 2019, was a road map for all countries of the global South and encouraged deeper engagement of Latin American and Caribbean countries with other regions of the world in their dual role as recipients and providers of cooperation in order to share knowledge and experiences. Progress had been made in South-South cooperation between the countries of the region and other developing countries or regions, such as projects carried out with South Africa (provider countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Mexico), or with Asia (provider countries: Argentina and Cuba). The pandemic threatened the progress of the 2030 Agenda and intensified existing inequalities —an issue other regions also faced— but it was also an opportunity to promote the sharing of knowledge and experience, as well as capacities to support other regions. Despite the difficulties, exchanges with other regions should continue to be strengthened, for example, by promoting entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems, the digitization of processes (mainly in areas related to health, education, food, overcoming poverty, strengthening value chains, small and medium-sized enterprises and the development of science and technology) and environmental protection, areas in which the region had made significant progress. In the case of Peru, as with other countries with dual roles, it sought to position itself as a provider of technical cooperation, sharing knowledge and best practices with the countries of the region, and aspired to do so with other regions in line with its foreign policy and on the basis of mutual benefit and complementarity. In that regard, it had launched various initiatives, for example, with Caribbean and South-East Asian countries. The pandemic would pass and he was confident that the Committee on South-South Cooperation, under the chairship of Costa Rica and with the support of the ECLAC secretariat, could build the momentum for comprehensive initiatives, innovative solutions and coordinated partnership mechanisms with an optimistic outlook for the future.

30. In the discussion that followed, the representative of Nicaragua said that his country wished to join the international movement to nominate Cuba's Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade, which was the highest expression of South-South solidarity and cooperation from Latin America and the Caribbean in the world, for the Nobel Peace Prize. He suggested that, in view of the growing inequality and the

importance of public health brought to light by the pandemic, public health as a whole (preferably free universal health care) should be considered with health-care manufacturing as one of the drivers of development proposed by ECLAC, since countries with greater public health capacity were better prepared to face future pandemics. Free universal public health was a basic need as well as universal education. Public health efforts must cover everyone in order to stop mutations of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

31. The representative of France said that on the second anniversary of BAPA+40, it was timely to reiterate the value that France attached to South-South cooperation as a framework for exchanges and source of peer learning, which was particularly important for pooling experiences and enhancing good practices. France considered it important for emerging countries to take on an increasing role in building development. While it participated little in triangular cooperation with emerging countries, France was interested in learning about good practices in that area as it was a useful means of promoting solidarity. Amid the pandemic, all efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda deserved attention, including what was termed the new cooperation paradigm that encompassed, among others, initiatives led by traditional donors, emerging donors, territorial entities, non-governmental organizations and private sector foundations. The French legislature was currently debating a programming bill on inclusive development and combating global inequalities, reflecting the intention to devote 0.55% of gross national income to official development assistance by 2022, based on principles of accountability and common interests with partner countries in order to ensure better results on the ground.

32. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that her country attached particular importance to South-South cooperation and to the values of solidarity, complementarity, respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, advancing sustainable development and respect for human rights. Her country had been active in South-South cooperation initiatives, not only in Latin America and the Caribbean but also in multilateral interregional cooperation settings. South-South cooperation was, in essence, inclusive and was based on the strengthening of direct and horizontal relationships between nations to promote voluntary cooperation with a view to tackling common development challenges in a spirit of solidarity. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded existing inequality and the indifference thereto, and highlighted the challenges of unjust economic models and the shortcomings of social protection systems. Measures taken to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic had overwhelmed global health systems and weakened economies, increasing poverty. The post-COVID-19 world must be more egalitarian, and South-South and triangular cooperation, particularly in the framework of intraregional blocs, were important tools to that end. The illegal imposition of unilateral coercive measures undermined national and regional efforts to address an unprecedented crisis and, amid a pandemic, denied millions of people access to medicines, treatments—including COVID-19 vaccines—and other resources to address the pandemic, and constituted a violation of human rights in developing countries. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism, solidarity and complementarity in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to a joint approach based on a vision of South-South and triangular cooperation among developing countries and their peoples.

33. The representative of Colombia said that more must be done to strengthen the capacity of countries in the region to produce vaccines and medical and protective supplies. There was a need to encourage knowledge-sharing through South-South and triangular cooperation. Colombia was drafting proposals along those lines for submission to the integration mechanisms to which the country belonged. The Colombian Presidential Agency for Cooperation was working on a knowledge management centre for South-South cooperation, which would include a section offering short courses on Colombian cooperation, a space for the interactive development of cooperation projects and a space for a community of practice. He said that Colombia would continue to support South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

34. The representative of Brazil stressed that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, South-South cooperation had much to contribute thanks to its characteristics such as flexibility and speed, demonstrated primarily in the initial stages of the pandemic; at that time, several countries of the region had carried out humanitarian cooperation actions, donated materials and medicines, sent volunteers and exchanged practices related to health protocols. Within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation, the use of knowledge agendas with the participation of increasingly experienced institutions from developing countries could be strengthened in order to accelerate progress in identifying innovative solutions to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The Committee on South-South Cooperation could continue to mobilize the technical structure of ECLAC to provide support to member countries requesting assistance from the Commission for conducting public policy exchange activities or studies on dealing with the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, including preparation for the post-pandemic era. With regard to middle-income countries, Brazil recognized that it was an important issue, particularly for some countries in the region that were affected by graduation decisions. In solidarity with these countries, Brazil had supported the pursuit of regional cohesion on the issue, for which clearer guidelines, as well as a common understanding, were still lacking. Regional solidarity on the issue was paramount, not forgetting the countries in the region that were not classified as middle-income. However, Brazil considered that discussion of the matter did not fall within the mandate of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC, since it focused on issues related to the development of South-South and triangular cooperation. The issue could be dealt with in other subsidiary bodies of ECLAC, if deemed necessary, taking into account the relevant United Nations resolutions, many of which had been drafted by countries of the region. It was therefore important for all to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions. It was not acceptable that, for some, United Nations pronouncements on climate change were a good thing but those on cooperation were not. With regard to the draft agreements, those considerations should be reflected in the draft text that had been approved in advance by the Presiding Officers, in order to register the opinions of member States and Brazil, and to ensure the success of the upcoming extraordinary meeting of the Committee. In paragraph five of the agreements, it would be important and preferable to include, beyond information-sharing on experiences of South-South cooperation, the presentation of a vision and leadership by the Commission that would enable the region to expand its South-South and triangular cooperation, including with other regions. There were many opportunities for cooperation with Arab, Asian and African countries that could be enhanced through the Commission, in line with the mandates in General Assembly resolutions. Any expansion of the activities of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC should be deferred pending the decisions of the twentieth session of the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation of the United Nations, to be held in June. That would ensure harmony and cohesion in the system, strengthening the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA).

35. The representative of Uruguay said that it was necessary to think as a region, regardless of the graduation of some countries, because the challenges were regional. All countries were making an effort to share knowledge and technical assistance with those who requested it within the framework of South-South cooperation. The issues to be addressed were related not only to countries classified as middle-income, but also the possible scenarios that countries could face in the future. Indebtedness was a persistent problem that delayed development and investment. Few triangular cooperation contributions respected the needs of the countries. ECLAC could play a role in that regard thanks to its technical and political mandate and its importance for the region, besides being a point of reference for OECD and in the international sphere. Despite its difficulties, Uruguay wished to be seen as a cooperation partner. He concluded by inviting participants to continue to reflect as a region with a single voice.

36. The Representative of Paraguay noted that the region was before a bleak panorama: COVID-19 had overwhelmed countries' response capacity and had exposed their structural weaknesses. She agreed with the criteria outlined by ECLAC and OECD and welcomed the strategy presented. South-South and triangular cooperation offered opportunities for sharing knowledge and good practices. Thanks to South-South cooperation, Paraguay had received strategic inputs and sent aid within its capacities. Triangular cooperation had also increased. Turning to challenges, she said that mechanisms must be adapted to the new cooperation modality. She also called for special consideration to be given to landlocked developing countries. The biggest challenge was to translate statements into action.

37. The representative of Panama reflected on the challenges faced by the countries of the region. South-South and triangular cooperation were tools to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Panama had participated in numerous forums for sharing experiences and good practices, had strengthened sectoral and institutional capacities and had conducted cooperation projects to promote sustainable development in cooperation with several countries in the region, international agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, all with a view to strengthening the health system amid a pandemic. The country had advanced in the procurement of vaccines and in the development of digital technologies. In addition, through the Regional Logistics Centre for Humanitarian Assistance, support had been provided to international humanitarian coordination efforts, particularly in the response to COVID-19. While Panama was a high-income country, it was not without inequalities and needs to be addressed.

38. The representative of Ecuador agreed on the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation for the achievement of the SDGs and other international commitments and on the need to strengthen coherence and synergy in international forums, including those on climate change and biodiversity, where a common voice highlighting needs and what cooperation could be provided should be presented. It was also necessary to speak with one voice on needs in response to the pandemic and to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation.

39. The representative of Honduras said that the pandemic had brought to light the spirit of solidarity as countries sought to safeguard the health of the population. COVID-19 had made it necessary to rethink the concepts of development and international cooperation, which must be scaled up to overcome the economic and social effects of the pandemic, and to consider multidimensional measurement criteria for the allocation of resources.

Adoption of agreements (agenda item 5)

40. At their tenth meeting, the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation adopted the agreements that figure in annex 1.

Other matters

41. Rita Hernández, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC, said that the date of extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation mandated in ECLAC resolution 749(XXXVIII), adopted by the Commission at its thirty-eighth session, would be announced two months before the meeting and that the reference and meeting documents would be circulated at least one month prior to the meeting.

Closing session

42. At the closing session, statements were made by Raul García-Buchaca, Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of ECLAC, and Rita Hernández, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation.

43. The Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis of ECLAC reaffirmed that international financial solidarity, renewed multilateralism, strengthened regional integration and a shift in cooperation paradigms, including a new proposal for regional cooperation, were urgently needed for a transformative post-COVID-19 recovery with equality and sustainability. Latin America and the Caribbean must lend a united voice to a global compact for the provision of essential public goods such as climate security, financial stability and global health, including universal and equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine. ECLAC had argued that as long as mass production, distribution and application of the vaccine were not achieved worldwide in a framework of solidarity, the combined impacts of the health and socioeconomic crises would continue to coexist. He welcomed the fruitful participation in the meeting of Presiding Officers and the adoption of agreements, which reflected the high level of commitment of the representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to South-South cooperation and transformative, sustainable and inclusive development. The meeting was a clear indicator that the Committee on South-South Cooperation was a very valuable space for reflection and for conducting discussions aimed at achieving regional development goals.

44. ECLAC had given priority to the request of the Chair of Costa Rica to prepare a document setting out a strategy for middle- and high-income countries that would include post-COVID-19 recovery initiatives and encompass a unified regional narrative to address the urgent needs of Latin America and the Caribbean. Development indicators needed to be redesigned, moving beyond per capita GDP to incorporate the real challenges of State governance in the unique and unprecedented circumstances posed by the pandemic. ECLAC appreciated the trust placed in it and hoped that the abovementioned document would be of assistance. Lastly, he applauded Costa Rica's work as Chair and its commitment in implementing ECLAC resolution 749(XXXVIII), adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the Commission, which called for an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation. Also commendable was the drive and commitment of Mexico and Cuba to continue the work of the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the support of Uruguay and international cooperation, in particular German and Spanish cooperation, and with the active commitment of the countries of the region. It was hoped that such initiatives would be strengthened, gain wider access to international cooperation funding and contribute positively to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region. He welcomed the proposal of the Presiding Officers to explore possibilities for rapprochement and sharing of experiences with other regions of the world and offered the Commission's support to facilitate communication channels with the other regional commissions and with Europe and Africa. The response to the health crisis must go hand in hand with decisive action to reverse the prevailing unsustainable development patterns. Without solidarity and collective regional cooperation, Latin America and the Caribbean would have no influence in redefining global governance and helping to bring about a paradigm shift in the prevailing global development pattern. The region must contribute to a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability, and cooperation and regional integration were key to this process. ECLAC would continue to support the achievement of those objectives and any others that might arise.

45. The Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, recalled the adoption of the agreements at the meeting. In closing the meeting of the Presiding Officers, she thanked the Vice-Chairs for their presentations on issues of common interest to the countries of the region and the ECLAC secretariat for its invaluable support in conducting and facilitating the meeting. The contributions would serve as inputs on the road to recovery with a focus on sustainability, helping to build a more egalitarian and inclusive region. Only through strengthened cooperation and a focus on solidarity would it be possible to place the region on a sustainable and inclusive development path to recovery from the health crisis. Greater investment was needed in social protection, disaster risk reduction, resilient infrastructure, agriculture and trade. She said that the countries of the region had an opportunity and a challenge to collectively build forward better. The new reality was a powerful vehicle for change and a chance to leverage shared ambition into a major push for international cooperation towards resilient and sustainable recovery that addressed the urgent needs of the people. No one should be left behind in the process, and that was why the search for a just transition that capitalized on digitization and innovation to ensure a future with less inequality and greater opportunity would continue to be pursued.

Annex 1

AGREEMENTS

At their tenth meeting, held virtually on 18 March 2021, the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation agreed to:

1. *Take note* of the action lines presented by the Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation for the period 2021–2022;

2. *Congratulate* the Chair for requesting that the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) prepare, as necessary, a document on a strategy for cooperation for countries classified as middle-income and high-income countries, to address the urgent needs of Latin America and the Caribbean;

3. *Thank* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for its willingness to prepare that document, with a view to the recovery after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;

4. *Reiterate* the importance of South-South cooperation among the countries of the region as a means to implement policies to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to bringing about a socially and economically sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery;

5. *Stress* the need to expand and deepen information-sharing on experiences of South-South cooperation conducted by member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean between Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions of the world, to foster exchanges of knowledge on issues of mutual interest;

6. *Continue* to support the activities of the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of the Committee on South-South Cooperation;

7. *Request* the secretariat to prepare a draft programme for the extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, to be held no later than the second half of 2021, as requested in ECLAC resolution 749(XXXVIII) on the Committee on South-South Cooperation, adopted by the Commission at its thirty-eighth session.

Annex 2

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