

Technical note
**Fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social
Development in Latin America and the Caribbean**

13 January 2021
1.30–3.30 p.m. New York time (UTC-5)

By virtue of resolution 682(XXXV), adopted in May 2014, the member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) approved the establishment of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean as a subsidiary body of the Commission. The goals of the Conference include to promote the improvement of national social development policies; to promote international, regional and bilateral cooperation among national offices and international and regional agencies; to exchange experiences in relation to social matters and support and provide technical inputs to various regional forums; and to contribute from the perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean to the discussions and proposals considered by the Commission for Social Development of the United Nations.

To date, three sessions of the Conference have been held. The first session was held in Lima in November 2015, the second was held in Montevideo in October 2017 and the third was held in Mexico City in October 2019. At that last session, and by virtue of resolution 2(II), adopted during the second session of the Conference, the member countries adopted the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development (resolution 3(III)), which includes four axes: (i) universal and comprehensive social protection systems; (ii) policies to promote social and labour inclusion; (iii) a strengthened social institutional framework; and (iv) regional cooperation and integration. The countries adopted the Agenda and requested technical assistance from the secretariat to develop prepare a draft plan of work to support the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development and to present it to the Presiding Officers of the Conference at their fourth meeting in 2021.

The ongoing crisis in the region caused by coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has made it necessary to implement measures to protect the entire population —not just those living in poverty, but also those who, while not poor, are vulnerable. ECLAC projections point to a possible increase of 4.5 percentage points in poverty and 7.1 percentage points in extreme poverty, bringing the number of people living in poverty in 2020 to 230.9 million and the number of people in extreme poverty to 96.2 million (ECLAC, 2020). Inequality is also expected to rise in the region, considering the impact of movement restrictions on the labour market. The document *Critical obstacles to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean: background for a regional*

agenda (LC/CDS.3/3), presented at the third session of the Conference, highlighted the challenges related to structural gaps in the region that were obstacles to progress in inclusive social development and improving well-being. Today, those gaps have widened and the region must join forces to bring about change. In response to this emergency situation, in the first half of 2020 the Chair of the Conference, in conjunction with the secretariat, convened two ministerial meetings (one for Latin America and one for the Caribbean) to address the challenges facing social institutions amid the changes brought about by the lockdown. Two technical meetings were also held with teams from ministries of social development to discuss the obstacles to recovery in the region and progress on the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, and to create spaces for cooperation among the countries.

The fourth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Conference will take place in conjunction with the XII Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which will be held virtually, from 12 to 14 January 2021. During the meeting, a brief overview of the social situation in 2020 will be presented. There will be a discussion on the progress in the lines of action under the four axes of the Agenda, as well as an analysis of the plan of work proposed for the implementation of the Agenda.

Preliminary programme:

1.30–1.40 p.m.	Welcome remarks
1.40–1.50 p.m.	Adoption of the agenda
1.50–2.10 p.m.	Presentation by the secretariat on the social situation in the region in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
2.10–2.25 p.m.	Presentation by the Chair on progress in the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development
2.25–3.10 p.m.	Comments and general discussion
3.10–3.20 p.m.	Other matters
3.20–3.30 p.m.	Consideration and adoption of agreements

Format and time:

The meeting will feature two presentations and a discussion forum for country representatives to comment and exchange ideas.

The meeting will be held virtually via the Zoom platform. Meeting information and links will be circulated shortly.

The meeting will take place from **1.30 to 3.30 p.m. New York time (UTC-5)**.