



## Declaration of Bridgetown

**XVI Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean**

**30-31 October and 1 November 2024. Bridgetown, Barbados**

The Ministers responsible for social, economic, and environmental areas from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Bridgetown, Barbados, from October 30 to November 1, 2024, for the XVI Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, convened under the theme **"Resilience in Action: Social Policies to Navigate Uncertainty"**, jointly organized by the Government of Barbados, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

**Gathered** with the purpose of sharing experiences, fostering collaboration, and discussing strategies to strengthen social, economic, and environmental policies, we reaffirm our commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable development across the region, particularly in light of the ongoing challenges posed by economic instability, climate change, and social inequality.

**Recognizing** the following:

- The significant socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by our region, characterized by persistent inequalities and high vulnerability among large segments of the population. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed limitations in our social protection systems, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive frameworks that can withstand various crises.
- That the region is heavily impacted by the climate crisis, which is hindering social development gains and therein reinforcing the need to integrate the framework of resilience into social protection systems.
- The ongoing geopolitical tensions and economic instability that threaten the stability of our nations, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and challenging our collective efforts towards achieving sustainable development.
- The unilateral use of economic, financial and commercial measures hinders and limits the development and interrelation of our countries, and negatively impacts the well-being of our populations.
- The necessity of aligning our public policies with development priorities, emphasizing the commitment to “leave no one behind” as we advance towards a more equitable future. This requires not only robust social policies but also innovative financing mechanisms that can support inclusive growth.
- The recognition that the region's economic recovery must be inclusive, sustainable and transformative, focusing on enhancing productivity, promoting decent work opportunities, ensuring food and nutritional security, and reducing poverty in all its dimensions. We need to foster an environment that encourages economic resilience, especially for those who are most vulnerable.
- The imperative to enhance digital inclusion and innovation as tools for social and economic advancement. Access to technology and digital services must be equitable and just, ensuring that marginalized communities can benefit from advancements and opportunities provided by the digital economy.



- The cultural diversity of our region, as a valued, promoted and protected asset, and a pillar of sustainable human development and an opportunity that allows for establishing harmonious and respectful relationships between communities, being a potential to confront exclusion and discrimination.

### ***Regarding Social Protection***

1. We recognize the critical need to enhance adaptive social protection systems that can respond effectively to the vulnerabilities faced by our populations, particularly in light of the challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing climate-related crises, demographic changes, growth stagnation, and geopolitical conflicts. Our commitment is to develop inclusive social protection frameworks that not only provide immediate assistance during emergencies but also promote long-term resilience and empowerment of the population.
2. We acknowledge that social protection systems must be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all segments of society, particularly for informal workers, children and teens, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, the homeless, migrants and refugees, and other vulnerable groups who often face systemic barriers. The importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into our social protection policies is paramount, ensuring that women have equal access to resources and support. We will explore strategies to dismantle the barriers, where they exist, that prevent vulnerable groups from benefiting fully from the benefits of social protection programs.
3. We recognize that fighting hunger is essential to effectively eradicating social inequality. When addressing poverty, it is imperative that food becomes central to our policies, since the lack of access to nutritious food perpetuates cycles of poverty and exclusion. We understand that social protection should promote food and nutritional security of the population; these elements are essential to achieving comprehensive well-being. Promoting social equity also implies ensuring that each individual has the necessary resources to satisfy their basic need for food. A commitment to socioeconomic inclusion is necessary to eradicate hunger and achieve social justice, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper and live with dignity.
4. We commit to implementing gender-responsive budgeting practices that address the specific needs of women and promote their autonomy and economic empowerment. This includes promoting national Care and Support policies and systems, as well as ensuring that social safety nets are designed to support women's role as caregivers and that they receive adequate resources to improve their livelihoods and well-being. By prioritizing gender equality in our social policies, we aim to reduce the disparities that contribute to women's vulnerability and foster a more equitable society.
5. We emphasize the necessity of integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into social protection systems. This involves creating mechanisms and instruments that not only provide immediate relief during crises but also empower communities to adapt to long-term environmental changes. We will promote initiatives that link social protection with disaster risk reduction and climate resilience measures, ensuring that the most vulnerable populations are equipped to withstand future shocks.



6. We recognize that the success of social protection systems depends on the active participation of all stakeholders, including local governments, civil society, faith-based organisations, and the private sector. We will foster collaborative approaches that encourage community ownership of social protection initiatives, ensuring that programs are responsive to the specific needs and contexts of the populations they serve.
7. We will explore the use of digital technologies to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of social protection programs. The implementation of digital identification systems and mobile platforms can improve targeting and service delivery, ensuring that assistance reaches those who need it most.
8. We promote the development of a culture of research and development of evidence-based policies while fighting against the culture of misinformation that is also a reflection of inequality.
9. We are aware that the countries in the region are becoming aged societies with the implications for increasing burdens on families and the state budget and the need to develop policies to address this phenomenon. We highlight the potential of creating National Support and Care Policies and Systems to promote social well-being, as well as to boost the economic and social development of our nations in a global context of aging and care crisis.

### ***Regarding the Use of Innovation and Technology***

10. We acknowledge the transformative potential of innovation and digital technology as pivotal tools for enhancing resilience and inclusivity across our region. In recognizing that the digital transition presents both opportunities and challenges, we commit to harnessing technology to strengthen social policies, improve service delivery, and foster economic growth, without neglecting respect for the cultures and values of different societies, especially indigenous and traditional ones.
11. We emphasize the importance of ensuring that digital transformation is inclusive by design, aiming to bridge the digital divide that exists among various socio-economic groups. We will prioritize efforts to improve access to digital technologies for marginalized communities, including rural populations and low-income households. This includes investing in necessary infrastructure and training programs that empower individuals by providing the skills needed to participate fully in the digital economy.
12. We commit to leveraging innovative technologies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. By adopting digital solutions such as e-governance platforms, mobile applications, and data analytics, we aim to streamline processes, enhance transparency and efficiency, and improve citizen engagement. These efforts will help ensure that social services are more responsive to the needs of the population, particularly during times of crisis.
13. We recognize that fostering a culture of innovation requires collaboration across all sectors of society. We will encourage partnerships between governments, innovation labs, private sector actors, academic institutions, and civil society organizations to promote research, development, and the dissemination of innovative solutions. By working together, we can identify and implement best practices that leverage technology to address pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.
14. As we embrace technological advancements, we must also prioritize the protection of individuals' data and privacy as we embrace technological advancements. We will work to establish robust regulatory



frameworks that ensure responsible data management and cybersecurity while fostering an environment that encourages innovation. Safeguarding citizens' rights in the digital space is essential for building trust and confidence in technology-driven initiatives.

15. We will explore the role of technology in enhancing climate resilience across the region. By leveraging data-driven approaches and digital tools, we can better predict and respond to climate-related events, ultimately minimizing their impact on vulnerable communities. Initiatives such as climate-smart agriculture and digital monitoring systems can empower communities to adapt to changing environmental conditions. We remember that climate change affects not only productivity but also the survival of small rural producers, which is why they should be considered amongst the priority groups in this process of inclusion and technological development.

### ***Regarding Financing for Development***

16. We recognize that sustainable financing is crucial for achieving the development goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda, particularly in the context of the economic challenges faced by our region. As we strive to build resilience against future shocks, we commit to exploring innovative and inclusive financing mechanisms that align with national development priorities.
17. We support the call for greater financial resources to be allocated to climate action, resilience and adaptive social protection, taking into account that the region is affected by larger and deeper shocks. We reiterate the importance of a policy mix consisting of fiscal, market and regulatory mechanisms, which could include, as appropriate, the use of carbon pricing and non-pricing mechanisms and incentives towards carbon neutrality and net zero.
18. We emphasize the need to restructure our fiscal policies to ensure that they support sustainable development. This includes aligning tax systems and strengthening national efforts to effectively implement progressive taxation. Budget allocations should be aligned with national development priorities, prioritizing investments in health, education, care systems and environmental sustainability. By creating fiscal frameworks that respond to both immediate needs and long-term development goals, we can improve our ability to navigate uncertainties.
19. We commit to enhancing domestic resource mobilization as a basis for financing sustainable development. This involves increasing the efficiency of tax collection, broadening the tax base and implementing progressive tax reforms that address inequalities, promoting income and wealth distribution. We recognize the importance of tackling tax evasion and avoidance, by all taxpayers. To achieve this purpose, we recognize that it is important to move towards international tax cooperation on progressive taxation.
20. We will actively seek to strengthen public-private partnerships as a means to generate employment and income opportunities, as well as mobilize investments for critical infrastructure and social services. By creating enabling environments for private sector engagement, we can leverage private capital to support development initiatives that address the most pressing economic, social and environmental challenges.
21. We commit to exploring the use of innovative financing instruments such as green bonds, sustainability-linked loans, and state-contingent debt instruments. These tools can provide flexible



financing options that align with climate resilience and social equity objectives. By diversifying our financing sources, including through proposals such as contained in the Bridgetown Initiative, we can enhance our ability to respond to emergencies and invest in long-term development.

22. We acknowledge that financing for development must also prioritize gender equality and social inclusion. We will work towards implementing gender-responsive budgeting practices that ensure adequate resources are allocated to acknowledge and guarantee autonomy to women and marginalized communities. By addressing the specific needs of these groups, we can enhance overall social cohesion and economic resilience.
23. We recognize the importance of regional cooperation in mobilizing financing and knowledge for development. By sharing best practices and collaborating on financing strategies, we can collectively address common challenges and maximize the impact of our investments. This includes fostering partnerships with international financial institutions to ensure that support for development initiatives is obtained without discrimination between countries.

### *Closing*

24. We recognize the substantive contributions of UNDP and ECLAC, which contributed to the successful development of the work of the Forum and urge both organizations to continue strengthening the Forum as a space for exchange, good practices and collective construction in the social area for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs in the region.
25. We underscore the need to promote greater regional cooperation initiatives between the different development actors, as well as for resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
26. We urge UNDP to continue to actively support countries to promote their development priorities, within its mandate, in coordination with the competent national authorities and with the participation of relevant actors.
27. We thank the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil, for accepting the mandate to hold the VI Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC and the XVII Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2025.

Finally, we would like to thank the Government of Barbados for its generous hospitality and efforts in coordinating and preparing the Forum, and UNDP and ECLAC for their invaluable contribution in hosting this event.

Signed by the Ministries in charge of social, economic, and environmental areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Bridgetown, Barbados, on November 1, 2024.