



POST COVID-19 RECOVERY

ECLAC CONTRIBUTES TO HEALTHY
DISCUSSION ON SUSTAINABLE
RESPONSES

DEBT

ECLAC SHARES DEBT PROJECTIONS
AMID COVID-19 IMPACT FOR
CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

DISASTER APP

ECLAC ATTENDS VIRTUAL LAUNCH
OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
APPLICATION



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About us

Issued on a monthly basis, The Hummingbird offers strategic insights into the latest projects, publications, technical assistance missions and research carried out by ECLAC Caribbean. In addition to these, sneak previews are provided of the most salient upcoming events, alongside enriching follow-ups to previously covered issues. With a view to featuring a variety of facets of Caribbean life and lifestyle, The Hummingbird also zooms in on cultural activities and landmark occurrences through an eye-opening regional round-up.

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International Days

11 July

World Population Day

18 July

Nelson Mandela International Day

20 July

World Chess Day

30 July

International Day of Friendship

Upcoming Meetings

6 - 10 July

Human Rights Council, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, 28th session - Geneva

14 - 17 July

Economic and Social Council, High-level segment, including the three-day ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development - New York





ECLAC shares debt projections amid Covid-19 impact for Caribbean countries

There is growing evidence that the high public debt of the Caribbean will continue to compromise the economic growth trajectory of the subregion, if not addressed. Following the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2008-2009, average growth rates have not reached their pre-crisis levels, while public debt has remained stubbornly high.

This was one of the key points made by ECLAC Caribbean Deputy Director, Dr. Dillon Alleyne, during the virtual meeting entitled 'The Community of Practice – Financing for Development in the Caribbean', which was held on 09 June 2020.

In his presentation, Dr. Alleyne invited participants to note that in 2019, 11 Caribbean economies

had debt-to-GDP ratios which exceeded the accepted sustainability threshold of 60%, and several rank among the most highly indebted countries in the world. In 2019, the total debt burden of the Caribbean stood at US\$57.6 billion; and the average debt to GDP ratio is 67.9 %, with three economies' debt nearing 100% (of GDP).

Since the GFC, the average growth rate of the Caribbean has been 0.6%, which is decidedly lower than both the pre-GFC level (2003-2007) of 4.8% and the average growth rate of 4.8% among developing countries post-GFC.

Speaking on the role of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in motivating financing for

development (FFD), Dr. Alleyne noted that health pandemics including COVID-19 are another layer of vulnerability – in addition to hurricanes, drought, floods and last but not least, climate change.

There is a huge financing gap between the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and what is required. He also pointed out that "At the international level, there was a delinking between the FFD in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the goals of the SDG/SAMOA and only financing for climate change was directly integrated."

He said that with respect to financing, VNRs can address what we can do for ourselves as Caribbean SIDS, while highlighting the financing gap. The COVID-19

challenge has revealed vulnerabilities which were hitherto not fully appreciated. For example, there is evidence of inequality in access to ICT, and a need strengthen health infrastructure including the building of smart hospitals.

Dr. Alleyne signaled that COVID-19 will result in a significant loss in tourist expenditure and foreign exchange, given the shutdown of the industry. This will result in a dramatic fall in service exports and in the GDP growth rate.

Given the uncertainty regarding the progress of COVID-19, he outlined three different scenarios describing the immediate economic future of the subregion. The first optimistic scenario assumes the 'lockdown' period with near zero arrivals continues until June 2020. It also estimates that most countries would get the pandemic under control so that from July onwards, arrivals would gradually return over nine months to 70% of the expected level of visitors by March 2021.

Next, he described a base assumption that would see the 'lockdown' period of near zero arrivals continue until September 2020. Most countries would then get the pandemic under control and from October, with arrivals gradually returning to 60% of the level forecast at baseline over a period of nine months.

Finally, he outlined a pessimistic scenario which assumes the 'lockdown' measures being lifted in September, but with countries not succeeding in getting the spread of the virus under control. Such premature re-opening of the economy would then lead to a second wave of infections, intensified by falling temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere. Travel restrictions would have to

be re-implemented until at least December 2020. Beginning in January, arrivals would gradually return to 50% of the level forecast at baseline over a period of nine months.

Dr. Alleyne summarized that GDP growth rates would be reduced by 6.1 percentage points in the optimistic scenario, 7.5 % in the base scenario and 8.0 % in the pessimistic scenario. The loss of visitor exports is estimated at 33.6% of exports of goods and services in the optimistic scenario, 40.8% in the base scenario and 43.3% in the pessimistic scenario.

Across the subregion, the total expected loss in visitor expenditure from both stayover and cruise arrivals will be US \$22 billion in the optimistic scenario, US \$26.7 billion in the base scenario and US \$28.3 billion in the pessimistic scenario.

The impact on the sector will be demonstrated in key channels including reduced earnings by hotels, taxi drivers and craft vendors; and in lower purchases from the commerce, distribution and agriculture sectors. This will severely dampen the earnings and livelihoods of small business owners and workers across these sectors. Job losses in this sector will disproportionately affect women; on average in the Caribbean 10.5% of the female labour force works in hospitality and food service industries, compared to 4.6% for males (ILOSTAT).

Globally cruise lines have completely shut down services, with revenue losses for operations in the Caribbean estimated at US \$0.6 billion or 74% of revenues for six months of 2020. Global airline losses amounted to US \$252 billion of revenue passenger kilometres (RPK's) representing a 70% fall year on year. For regional

airlines, projected revenue losses were 92% if disruptions were to exceed eight months of 2020.

While commercial shipping did not suffer the same level of disruption, congestion in global hubs affected supply chains. Within the Caribbean, reduced capacity load is likely to result in short-sea service consolidations which could reduce long term shipping services post COVID-19.

The availability of international transportation is critical to sustaining the Caribbean's economy, given the region's high dependence on critical imports such as energy, food, and consumer goods, as well as the role of both air and sea transport in driving the subregion's tourism economy.

The sub-region however is not a direct investor in international transportation and is therefore fully dependent on global transportation suppliers. Successful emergence from the anticipated impacts of COVID-19 would require strong advocacy, lobby and representation and continued promotion of the Caribbean brand in order to sustain the derived demand necessary to sustain transportation services.

One regional airline has fallen victim to the impact of Covid-19. The regional airline LIAT is to be liquidated and this will have negative implications for those many workers employed to the airline. This airline was significant in facilitating the movement of persons including tourists, across the region. Hopefully a reconstituted carrier or a new carrier will take its place since LIAT was a vital complement to existing regional air transportation. ■



*The
Hummingbird*



ECLAC contributes to healthy discussion
on Sustainable Responses for a

POST COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY



Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from 13 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean met on 11 June 2020 in an online meeting which focused on responses for a post sustainable COVID-19 economic recovery.

The meeting was organized for the parliamentary personnel to engage with experts for discussions on legislative and public policy responses that promote sustainable and inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19. At the same time, they considered the gendered impacts of the pandemic and the promotion of the 2030 Agenda.

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ECLAC contributes to healthy discussion on Sustainable Responses for a Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery

The meeting was opened by Elizabeth Cabezas, President of ParlAmericas, who declared that, “although this pandemic constitutes a tragedy, we can choose to remember it as that, or we can see it as a great opportunity that allows us to think about the future. We can legislate to improve these structures that currently make us so vulnerable and above all, we can think about entering the future with a country with better foundations and a better society, because the world will not be the same after this COVID-19 pandemic.”

The meeting featured

presentations from Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); Monika Queisser, Head of Social Policy Division of the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Therese Turner-Jones, General Manager of the Country Department Caribbean Group of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and Diane Quarless, Director, ECLAC Caribbean.

The presentations highlighted the current and projected economic impacts of COVID-19 in the region with a special focus on the differentiated impacts on

women. Moreover, the panelists pointed to recovery strategies that could be implemented by governments to ensure responses are inclusive, gender-sensitive, and environmentally sustainable.

Quarless reiterated that the Caribbean is already grappling with high public debt and low growth. “There is growing evidence that the public debt of the Caribbean has reached unsustainable levels that will continue to compromise the economic growth trajectory of the subregion, if not specifically addressed.”



“

The impact of COVID-19 has been more severe for Caribbean economies with average growth in the subregion projected to be -6.9% in 2012, much lower than the average for developing economies which is forecasted at -1.0%. ...

- Diane Quarless, Director - ECLAC Caribbean

”

“The impact of COVID-19 has been more severe for Caribbean economies with average growth in the subregion projected to be -6.9% in 2012, much lower than the average for developing economies which is forecasted at -1.0%. This has strengthened urgency for debt relief and building resilience as prescribed by the ECLAC Debt for Climate Resilience Initiative.”

Quarless further explained that ECLAC is pursuing an initiative to help three countries in the first instance, as Phase One of its Debt for Climate Adaptation Swap Initiative.

Quarless also addressed a range of development issues which will continue to consume the attention of Caribbean governments notwithstanding the challenges presented by COVID-19. These included addressing poverty and inequality; advancing women’s empowerment; investing in human capital especially our youth and young girls; addressing high levels of unemployment and migration; improving policies to enhance social protection for vulnerable groups including older persons; increased attention to addressing the underlying causes of NCDs; and investing in

risk management and resilience building. An area of particular interest identified was the need for strengthened ICT infrastructure, given the growing importance of internet access and online communication to commerce, education and governance.

The meeting was further enriched through a series of interventions by the parliamentarians, which allowed for the sharing of good practices and further deliberation on strategies for resilient recovery in the post COVID-19 environment. ■



Gaston Browne 'not prepared to give up' on airline

Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, is not prepared to give up just yet on the financially burdened airline LIAT, even as other shareholder governments have already voted in favour of its liquidation. In fact, Browne is moving to establish LIAT (2020) Ltd. to replace the ailing operation. Browne made his position clear in a letter addressed to other major shareholder governments – Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Dominica, Roosevelt Skerrit and Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves.

In the letter, he proposed that the group reconsider liquidating the airline and “reorganize” it instead. At the same time, Browne has announced that “as a contingency arrangement” his government “intends to launch LIAT 2020 Ltd as early as possible” as a suitable replacement, should the other shareholders decide not to

consider its reorganization. The Antigua and Barbuda Head of government said he deeply regretted that at a recent meeting of shareholders the group was unable to agree “on the importance to our regional integration project of maintaining the operations of LIAT 1974 Ltd, and to its further value as a feeder airline to transport tourists between the countries of the Caribbean”. He expressed disappointment that a majority decision was made to liquidate the airline, with “no further discussion”, a step to which he objected. “We in Antigua and Barbuda, cannot abandon LIAT. LIAT did not abandon the Caribbean people. LIAT did not fail the region, it transported the region’s people safely for over six decades. It is those who undermined it, by encouraging transient profit-seekers in competition, that failed it,” said Browne.

“It is also troubling to my

Government that shareholder governments in LIAT 1974 Ltd would decide by majority vote to liquidate the airline without putting in place any arrangements for meeting obligations to creditors and employees,” said the Antigua leader.

Browne said the creditors were now disadvantaged by the “failure” of shareholder governments to seek to negotiate with them reasonable terms for affordable repayment. With respect to workers being laid off since the beginning of April without any form of compensation, Browne said: “A similar circumstance applies to the employees of LIAT, who are all CARICOM nationals. Surely, it is the obligation of governments, particularly as shareholders of LIAT, and therefore, the employers of LIAT staff, to work out some form of negotiated compensation for them.” ■



Prime Ministers Mia Mottley and Ralph Gonsalves (Photo via Barbados Government Information Service)

Virtual hand-over ceremony for CARICOM Chairmanship

Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) hosted a special conference on 03 July 2020, which saw Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley of Barbados, handing over the reins to incoming chairman, Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Twentieth Special Meeting of CARICOM was held via video conference, made available throughout the region. CARICOM Heads decided at their Ninth Special Meeting in April this year to stage the handing-over ceremony at the beginning of July.

Circumstances surrounding the need to manage the spread of the COVID-19 virus influenced the decision to have the Forty-First Regular Meeting of Heads of Government rescheduled to 02 and 03 September 2020 in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

During the 03 July virtual meeting, CARICOM leaders also addressed a number of procedural matters. As CARICOM Chairman, among other things, Prime Minister Mottley hosted the 31st Intersessional Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, from 18 and 19 February 2020 in Barbados, and held a number of

Special Meetings in March and May to map out a strategy to address the COVID-19 crisis.

In addition, as Conference Chairman, Mottley was able to facilitate a high-level meeting between CARICOM Heads of Government and owners/ chairmen of leading cruise lines to discuss mutual matters of interest.

The relationship which was established between the cruise ship principals and the Conference of Heads enabled the members of the Community to have frank and cordial discussions with cruise industry representatives about the impact of COVID-19 on cruises in and around the Caribbean.

Prime Minister Mottley also has lead responsibility for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy in the region's quasi cabinet. ■

* The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has 15 member states – Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. There are also five associate members – Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.



ECLAC attends virtual launch of disaster preparedness `app`

A new app in the form of a free virtual reality game, entitled *Masters of Prep*, will soon assist people with disabilities to cope better in disaster scenarios.

The app was developed by the Digicel Foundation with co-funding from the Inter-American Development Bank's Innovation Lab. The game, created in collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago's Office of Disaster Preparedness (ODPM) and the national Fire Services, is presented in the form of an animated room where the player participates in a school or home hazard hunt.

The app is described as the first disaster preparedness game developed to give students with disabilities the opportunity to practice real-world skills in a safe environment.

'Masters of Prep' is the only game like it in the Caribbean that is accessible to young, deaf children, and was developed to aid in the capacity-building training for persons with disabilities, as part of the Foundation's *'Preparing You'* disaster-preparedness programme. This programme was launched in 2015 as a disaster preparedness and emergency evacuation pilot project for persons with special needs.

Attending the virtual launch of the app for ECLAC Caribbean was Sustainable Development Officer Artie Dubrie, who commended the initiative and indicated that she looked forward to the app being made available for download and encouraged that it be shared with other countries in the Caribbean.

"We at ECLAC see this project as a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about inclusive practices and disaster risk reduction strategies that address the accessibility of communication, evacuation procedures and early warning systems. The project is as an important landmark in advancing innovative approaches in DRM in the region", Dubrie stated.

"We are happy to support approaches that consider people with special abilities as intervenors or pro-actors in innovative products required for effective Disaster Risk Management."

The *Masters of Prep Game* is live in the Google Play store and available for download. ■



European investment bank to invest in Barbados water supply and sanitation infrastructure

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has agreed to support water investment in Barbados, to improve water supply.

The US \$12 million loan to the ministry of finance will allow the Barbados Water Authority (BWA) to rehabilitate the island's drinking water distribution network by improving efficiency, service quality, and resilience to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

The investment will also lead to improvements to deteriorating wastewater treatment facilities. The EIB loan will allow for the modernization of water supply and sewerage systems on the island. This should result in substantial energy savings, reduced water loss in networks, and improvement in wastewater treatment operations.

The investment will focus on the rehabilitation of aged infrastructure including pipes, and reservoirs, and will better protect the water supply in Barbados

from climate change and more frequent extreme weather events.

Barbados' efforts to develop investments in keeping with establishing climate resilience will also benefit from the European Union loan. This investment also has high social and environmental impact.

EIB vice-president Emma Navarro said: "The EIB is delivering to ensure secure supply of clean water and ensure that water infrastructure is protected from a changing climate. As the largest international lender to the water sector worldwide, the EIB is pleased to be financing and providing its expertise to this project. This project will help to increase access to more efficient and reliable water supply in Barbados and build on our strong track record of supporting high-impact investment on the island and across the Caribbean". ■



Jamaicans advised to brace for influx of Sargassum along beaches island-wide

The Caribbean region over the last 10 years has seen a dramatic increase in algal blooms and in extensive deposit on beaches and other coastal zones of the Sargassum seaweed (Sargassum species).* The beached sargassum is resulting in significant socio-economic and environmental impacts. The sectors particularly affected are tourism, fisheries port operation and other socio-economic activities of coastal communities. In 2020 Sargassum influx is occurring at the same time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the hurricane season. The Caribbean countries are therefore having to manage these three crises concurrently.

ECLAC recognizes the importance of having a comprehensive economic and social assessment on the impact of the Sargassum and including the development of sustainable ocean economies. This comprehensive assessment will have to consider that the Sargassum impacts can extend over the prolonged period of March to September with other variations based on location and intensity of impacts. The economic, social and environmental assessment methodologies will therefore have to consider these variables.

Recently, the National Environment Planning Agency (NEPA) of Jamaica advised the public to

expect an influx of the sargassum along several beaches across the island in the coming months. "Jamaica, like several Caribbean Islands, has been impacted by the seaweed which was spotted offshore of the island. Some beaches across the island, particularly in Portland, Saint Thomas, Saint Catherine and Westmorland are already being heavily impacted," a NEPA release stated. It is believed that the influx of seaweed is related to heightened ocean temperatures and the availability of nutrients discharged from major rivers within the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico.

"The seaweed forms into large mats and is transported by ocean currents towards the Caribbean, washing up on beaches throughout the region," said NEPA.

The environmental agency warned that as the seaweed decomposes on the seashore it produces an odour that attracts insects. It noted that leaving the seaweed on the beach is perhaps the simplest and lowest cost solution.

However, NEPA noted that there are instances where it becomes necessary to remove the seaweed. Should that need arise, removal of sargassum should be carried out manually through



the use of non-intrusive methods (no heavy equipment and machinery) such as hand raking or beach raking equipment with a perforated conveyor belt. This is the best method for minimal erosion of the sand and damage to the beach. Accumulated sand should be returned to the beach after raking. ■

* Sargassum is a brown marine alga (seaweed) which is generally associated with the Sargasso Sea of the North Atlantic Ocean. It is made up of leafy appendages, branches and round, berry-like structures. These “berries” are actually gas-filled structures (mostly oxygen) which aid in buoyancy, allowing the sargassum to float on the ocean surface, available at: <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/principal/getattachment/17762/Sargassum-Management-Brief.pdf.aspx>, December 2019



Aquaculture & aquaponics becoming mainstream in Dominica

The Fisheries Division of Dominica’s Ministry of Blue and Green Economy, Agriculture and National Food Security continues to explore new agricultural methods while addressing climate resilience within the fisheries sector.

The country benefits from a UN FAO (Climate Change) CC4FISH Project, which includes the development of the aquaculture industry and introduces the wider population to the concepts of aquaponics. In this regard, on 22 June 2020, a nutrient film technique (NFT) aquaponics system was installed within the water feature of the Government Headquarters building.

The water feature is quite spacious, and a Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) aquaponics system was designed within it. Aquaponics involves the soil-less culture of crops, fertilized by fish wastewater. The NFT system comprises large PVC pipes, with holes to accommodate plants grown in cups or net pots. Water is then pumped through the pipes, directly supplying the roots of the plants with the requisite nutrients for growth. The continuous flow of water ensures that the roots of the plants are adequately oxygenated.

The materials for the demonstration NFT system were locally sourced and cost approximately 300 XCD. It was installed by an FAO consultant and two fisheries officers. The plants stocked into the system were provided by the Division of Agriculture’s Plant Propagation Unit.

The Government Headquarters building in Roseau contains a water feature complete with ornamental plants and fish including 10 large koi. Given that the building houses eleven government ministries/offices and is visited by a wide cross-section of people on a daily basis, it provided the ideal location for a demonstration aquaponics system on the island. ■

Puerto Rican Alcapurria

Alcapurrias are savory fried Puerto Rican meat fritters. Ingredients for fillings and dough used for alcapurrias can vary, but this food is most commonly made with green bananas and yautía (can be substituted with yams or potatoesssss) for the dough and ground beef or pork for the filling. While the portability of alcapurrias makes them popular at beachside snack stands, alcapurrias are also excellent as entrees or appetizers at home.

What you will need:

Dough Ingredients:

- 4 green bananas or 3 green plantains
- 4 pounds yautía root, (potato or yam can also be used)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 package of annatto seasoning, or all-purpose seasoning

Filling Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef
- 2 tsp sofrito (or salsa)
- Chopped vegetables (optional)

Method:

1. Start by preparing your filling. First, cook your ground beef and sofrito together in a skillet. Once the ground beef is finished cooking, take the skillet off the heat and allow it to cool. If you are adding any chopped vegetables to your filling, cook those in the skillet before adding the ground beef.
2. It's now time to make the dough. If you are using whole plantains or green bananas and yautía, peel both and grate them by hand or with a food processor. You can also use pre-frozen grated yautía to save time. Next, grind these ingredients with a food processor to create a fine dough. Finally, add your achiote seasoning and mix until combined. Chill the dough in the refrigerator.
3. Set a large piece of parchment paper or foil on the countertop and grease it lightly with oil. Use your hand or a ladle to scoop out about one-quarter of a cup of the dough onto the surface. With your hand or a spoon, make a basin in the middle of the pile of dough where the filling will go. Put about a tablespoon of the filling into the basin and fold the dough over from the sides to enclose the filling. If necessary, add some more dough over the top. Repeat this process to make more alcapurrias until you have used up the remainder of the dough and filling.
4. You are now ready to cook the alcapurrias. While deep frying is often preferred, you can also pan-fry alcapurrias. Pre-heat the oil and carefully put the alcapurrias into the oil. Fry for about seven minutes on each side, watching for the fritters to turn a rich golden brown color. Finally, remove the alcapurrias from the oil and drain them on a paper towel until they are cool enough to eat.
5. If you have more alcapurrias than you need at the moment, you can always freeze uncooked ones for later. This can be ideal if you want to have some ready for an upcoming party or other event. Just put them on parchment and slip them into a freezer bag in the meantime, then fry them as instructed when you are ready. You don't even have to thaw the alcapurrias before frying them.

This recipe makes 15 servings of about 300 calories each. Each serving has 10 grams of protein, 38 grams of carbohydrates and 11 grams of fat.



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