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REPORT

SEMINAR ON THE MEASUREMENT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Santiago, 27 and 28 January 2025

Note: This document is a translation of a Spanish original which did not undergo formal editing.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraph</i>	<i>Page</i>
Place and date of the meeting	1	3
Attendance.....	2–5	3
Summary of proceedings	5–51	3
Annex 1 List of participants	–	15

Place and date of the meeting

1. The seminar on the measurement of development and its relationship with international cooperation was held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago on 27 and 28 January 2025.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries of the region: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Representatives of Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom also attended.

3. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following associate members: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and United States Virgin Islands.

4. Attending from the United Nations Secretariat were representatives of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Statistics Division.

5. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the Ibero-American General Secretariat.

Summary of proceedings

6. At the opening session, José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of measuring development beyond gross domestic product (GDP) in order to improve international cooperation. He thanked Spain and the Ibero-American General Secretariat for their support in organizing the event. He referred to the Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, which emphasized the need to reform the international financial architecture and ensure adequate financing for developing countries. Latin America faced major challenges, such as low growth, high inequality and weak governance, and more comprehensive metrics were required to assess cooperation. Lastly, he highlighted the efforts undertaken by ECLAC to develop new measurement tools. The Commission had advocated the adoption of a broad, multidimensional development approach that went beyond averages based on income per capita to also incorporate sustainability, equity and different social and economic contexts. Various academic and international agency initiatives to build development metrics that went beyond GDP had been developed, largely grouped into analytical strategies (portfolios of indicators), summary strategies (composite indices), aggregate strategies (usually at country level) and microdata strategies. Notable examples of indicator portfolios were the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Well-being Framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index was a composite measure using aggregate data at the country level. A similar strategy was used by the United Nations to develop the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, which aimed to measure exposure to economic, social and environmental shocks and relevant coping capacity. The seminar aimed to foster dialogue on the issue, with a particular focus on the needs of Latin American countries.

¹ See the full list of participants in annex 1.

Concessionality criteria in development bank loans

7. The session was moderated by Daniel Titelman, Chief of the Economic Development Division of ECLAC, and the panellists were Elena Resk, economist at the World Bank Group in Chile; and Daniel Rodrigues Do Couto Silva, Federal Auditor of Finance and Control of the Ministry of Finance of Brazil.

8. The moderator underscored the need to rethink the metrics used to measure development and access to international financing, particularly for middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The use of per capita GDP as the main indicator had been called into question since it did not reflect the complexity of development or ensure sustainable access to financial markets. There were significant differences among middle-income countries, and it was difficult for them to access concessional funding and international cooperation. Their graduation left them in a paradoxical situation: while cooperation agencies considered them more developed and limited their access to soft financing, financial markets perceived them as riskier and imposed high interest rates. To address climate change, annual investment of 5–10 GDP points was urgently needed, which could not be sustained without cheaper and timely financing.

9. Elena Resk, economist at the World Bank Group in Chile, stressed the importance of rethinking per capita GDP as the sole criterion for resource allocation to emerging and developing economies, as it failed to adequately reflect structural challenges. She highlighted three key challenges in Chile that were also common across Latin America: internal inequality, marked by major gaps in income and access to basic services, particularly in regions outside Santiago; climate vulnerability, reflected in the droughts, forest fires and severe water stress that affected 70% of Chile's population; and the energy transition, as the country's key role in the production of copper, lithium and green hydrogen represented both a challenge and an opportunity for development. The World Bank and the International Finance Corporation had strengthened their presence in Chile, providing US\$ 600 million in financing programmes for green hydrogen, health and water, as well as investments in small and medium-sized enterprises, gender equality and decarbonization. Multidimensional and innovative approaches were needed to overcome the limitations of per capita GDP and ensure more effective and equitable international cooperation.

10. Daniel Rodrigues do Couto Silva, Federal Auditor of Finance and Control of the Ministry of Finance of Brazil, said that, like other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Brazil was a country of diverse realities. It had once been dubbed “Belindia”, a fictitious country with a minority population living in affluent conditions akin to modern advanced economies while the vast majority lived like low-income populations in India. That heterogeneity also existed in other countries of the region, even those considered middle- or upper-middle-income countries. Against that background, the region needed to strengthen metrics based on cost and risk variables that went beyond the traditional financial logic to address development challenges. Development projects must be differentiated from investment projects and therefore required different eligibility, and evaluation criteria. The outcomes of development projects—which aimed to yield social returns, benefits to a wide range of stakeholders and long-term sustainability, among other goals—were expected to boost the socioeconomic development of a country or region. In short, such projects should aim to transform people's lives in the long term, improving their socioeconomic, environmental or cultural conditions. In contrast, investment projects prioritized profitability and economic benefits. Given the current level of development of the countries of the region, progress was needed in the existing regional and global efforts to develop metrics beyond GDP that could facilitate access to international financing for middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as other regions.

11. In the ensuing discussion, statements were made by the representatives of Chile, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Cuba, Colombia, Argentina, British Virgin Islands and Peru. The representative of Chile emphasized the importance of using terminology that encompassed all developing countries, rather than focusing only on middle-income countries, and the need for countries of the South to propose an alternative metric at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Seville, Spain. However, he also acknowledged that political decisions were central in aid allocation and countries' graduation. Influencing those processes required a strong critical mass comprising Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, with the aim of transforming the international cooperation narrative. The representative of the Dominican Republic asked whether any data or studies existed on potential impacts to the international financial system of a possible reduction in middle-income and upper-middle-income countries' payment capacity, given the use of per capita GDP as an indicator and criterion for the allocation of funds and access to cooperation.

12. The representative of Mexico highlighted the importance of measuring development beyond GDP, incorporating indicators such as the Gini coefficient, the labour informality rate and the human development index, together with the multidimensional vulnerability index. A methodological approach was needed for such measurements, which should be considered at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and especially in the reform of the international financial system and multilateral banks. Mexico reaffirmed its commitment as co-facilitator of outcome document for the Fourth International Conference and called for integrating those efforts with initiatives such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Pact for the Future. There was a need for a vision of development beyond 2030 that considered multidimensional metrics and cross-cutting themes such as gender mainstreaming and digital inclusion. He proposed that ECLAC should coordinate the preparation of a follow-up document to establish a common position and strengthen international cooperation.

13. The representative of Uruguay underscored the need to avoid classifications that perpetuated the debate on middle-income and high-income countries, which was ultimately repetitive and did not result in substantive change. In addition to social and demographic effects, international cooperation also had economic and trade implications, affecting interest rates, trade restrictions and debt growth. Latin America faced high disaster-related costs and had to approach those challenges from a policy perspective. The discussion needed to be held at the decision-making level, with a common position backed by technical data. He also recommended the use of proper terms, such as gross national income, which was in line with internationally agreed language and would strengthen arguments in international forums.

14. The representative of Brazil recalled that the meeting was a technical one, not a negotiation, and stressed the importance of generating elements for a future proposal on multidimensional measurement of development. He also acknowledged the political nature of the discussions and the need to establish a common regional narrative to present a strong position at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. Premature metrics could be easily rejected, therefore priority should be given to identifying key elements that could subsequently be developed. The discussion should benefit all developing countries, not only middle-income countries, to avoid divisions in the global South. After thanking ECLAC for organizing the seminar, he expressed the hope that the discussions would serve as an input to strengthen the region's position in multilateral forums.

15. The representative of Ecuador stressed the importance of the opportunity for discussion prior to the conference in Seville and recalled Ecuador's participation in the troika for the thirtieth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. Although GDP had been criticized as a metric, its simplicity had made it possible to standardize the measurement of development, which broader metrics had not achieved in the financial sphere. He cautioned that an overly complex perspective could make it difficult to include

new indicators in international financial assessments. The language used in development financing must be understood by the financial sector, and development metrics should be translated into terms that reflected their impact on countries' repayment capacity. Lastly, he urged government representatives to find a middle ground between simplification and multidimensionality in order to ensure the viability of new proposals.

16. The representative of Cuba thanked ECLAC for organizing the seminar and referred to the important statements made by the panellists and government representatives. Although per capita GDP and gross national income were used to measure development, they did not suffice without the inclusion of social indicators. He also referred to debt, non-compliance with official development assistance and unilateral coercive measures affecting many countries. The approach adopted must be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and he recognized the challenges of achieving them in Latin America. While the seminar would provide key elements for discussion at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, defining a single metric to measure development was unfeasible and efforts should instead focus on developing indicators based on principles already agreed in international forums.

17. The representatives of the National Administrative Department of Statistics and the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia both took the floor and referred to internal gaps similar to those in Brazil and Chile. Mention was made of regional disparity in per capita income between Bogotá and other regions, such as Chocó, La Guajira and the Amazon region. The representatives echoed the comments by Uruguay and Brazil on the classification of developing countries and the need to use criteria other than GDP to measure development; underscored the importance of strengthening capacity to produce statistical data to more accurately reflect the differences across countries and regions; and asked the panellists to address how to build such capacity in the region, given the current asymmetry in data production.

18. The Director-General of International Cooperation of Argentina highlighted the importance of joining efforts and processes within the Ibero-American General Secretariat, ECLAC and other multilateral spaces in order to build a common position not just for the region but across the developing world. He stressed the need to go beyond the imposed classification of countries and to build a methodologically sound and politically viable proposal. It was also important to involve national statistical agencies and to use representative, universal indicators that could be understood by both the cooperation and financial spheres. Although there was limited time to prepare concrete metrics for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, he proposed to move forward with a proposal that could be further developed and structured in the future. Attention was drawn to the role of ECLAC in the context of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, together with the need to establish a common language to facilitate future negotiations in international forums.

19. The Special Envoy of the Premier of the British Virgin Islands spoke of the need to reform eligibility criteria for development assistance. Measuring development solely on the basis of per capita income was insufficient, particularly in the case of Caribbean small island developing States. Despite its high per capita income, the British Virgin Islands faced major challenges owing to its limited infrastructure, climate vulnerability and lack of access to financing for development. The territory's exclusion from official development assistance, the United Kingdom's aid budget and climate funds were an injustice, especially considering the devastating effects of hurricanes. ECLAC associate members should be included in the multidimensional vulnerability index and other measures of vulnerability in order to facilitate their access to financing for sustainable development.

20. The representative of Peru underscored the need to address the issue of indicators and the measurement of development in relation to international cooperation, which had been identified as a political matter at the twenty-ninth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in Cuenca (Ecuador). Cooperation agencies should have a voice at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in order to reflect the reality of developing countries. Donor countries were facing rising inequality, often attributed to migration, which had resulted in the redirection of resources originally intended for official aid towards domestic issues. It was important to avoid unproductive debates on income categories and to instead focus on building a unified position for the Fourth International Conference.

21. The moderator summarized the discussions by highlighting two major challenges. The first was the need to improve development metrics and to find more accurate indicators that went beyond GDP. The second was the urgent need to strengthen countries' capacity to access financial resources through cooperation and financial markets. Innovative financing mechanisms, including more comprehensive risk management strategies, such as the World Bank's efforts to combine various instruments, were essential. Ensuring sustainable access to financing was key to overcoming the development gaps outlined by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and would be a central theme at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and in future discussions on financial risk management.

Panel 2: State of the art in the measurement of development beyond GDP

22. The panel was moderated by Rolando Ocampo, Chief of the Statistics Division of ECLAC, and the panellists were Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (by video link); Anya Ihsan Thomas, Economic Affairs Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (by video link); Khalid Abu-Ismaïl, Chief of the Economic Development and Poverty Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (by video link); Miosotis Rivas Peña, Director-General of the National Statistics Office of the Dominican Republic and member of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Arturo Blancas, Vice-President of the Demographic and Social Information Subsystem of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico; and Mônica Mora y Araujo de Couto e Silva Pessoa, economist at the Institute of Applied Economic Research of Brazil.

23. The Director of the United Nations Statistics Division spoke of his experience in national accounts dating back to 1989 and noted that while GDP measured economic activity, it did not fully reflect well-being and sustainability, hence the efforts to move beyond that metric. Over time, alternatives had been discussed and the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs were regarded as a complement to GDP. In 2021, the United Nations commissioned a report on the topic, highlighting over 500 global initiatives. The Secretary-General had renewed the commitment to move towards more comprehensive metrics and proposed establishing an expert group to develop recommendations for sustainable development indicators that complemented and went beyond GDP. The importance of building capacity in countries to calculate the new indicators was also highlighted. Despite the need to go beyond GDP, any new metrics should be based on official statistics and be universally applicable and comparable over time and across countries.

24. The Economic Affairs Officer of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs presented the multidimensional vulnerability index, which had been designed following nearly three decades of advocacy and two years of intensive work by a high-level panel. The multidimensional vulnerability index, which the General Assembly decided to advance by virtue of resolution 78/322, adopted in August 2024, sought to complement GDP and measure countries' structural vulnerability. Its two-tiered structure comprised a universal-level vulnerability assessment and vulnerability-resilience country profiles. While the index did not replace GDP, it was designed to provide additional information about countries' vulnerability and

resilience, thus helping agencies and countries to design support programmes. Implementing the multidimensional vulnerability index had been complex, with difficult negotiations over what constituted vulnerability and how it was expressed in different economic contexts. The General Assembly resolution provided for the index to be voluntary, complementary and non-restrictive, with an interim secretariat ensuring its implementation. Efforts would also be made to integrate the multidimensional vulnerability index into the policies of international financial institutions and United Nations development programmes. While implementation challenges remained, its use was expected to increase over time, coupled with its promotion within the United Nations system and among international partners.

25. The Chief of the Economic Development and Poverty Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia presented various initiatives, underscoring the importance of going beyond GDP to measure material well-being and economic resilience. In recent years, work had been undertaken to redefine how to measure poverty at the global level in both absolute and relative terms, in line with the recommendations of the report of the Commission on Global Poverty of the World Bank (Atkinson report). The relationship between GDP growth and its impact on households had also been analysed, with results showing that in many regions, such as the Arab region, much of that growth did not reach households. In addition, indicators had been proposed to measure economic resilience, focusing on debt sustainability and responsiveness to economic shocks. Concerning the measurement of human development, the human development index had been enhanced to incorporate income, quality education, health and environmental sustainability as fundamental rights. An index of global challenges that included issues such as climate change and energy efficiency had been proposed, and was already being used in national reports, as was the case in Egypt. While the technical work was relatively straightforward, achieving global consensus on the matter was a considerable challenge.

26. The Director-General of the National Statistics Office of the Dominican Republic welcomed the participation of national statistical offices in the discussions and referred to the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sought to make data a cross-cutting theme at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. The Group, established in 2015, was composed of 22 national statistical offices, including those of Belize, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. At a meeting held in November 2024, discussions included the relevance of data to development and calls for additional funding and strengthening of statistical systems. Multidimensional measurement and enhanced understanding of the impact of data on decision-making also played an important role. Recent developments included the integration of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and Medellín Framework for Action on Data for Sustainable Development into key documents. The Dominican Republic remained committed to advocating for the strengthening of statistical systems and South-South cooperation.

27. The Vice-President of the Demographic and Social Information Subsystem of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico said that it was important to reconsider the exclusive use of GDP as a measure of well-being and development. While useful in certain respects, it did not fully reflect inclusive and sustainable well-being. He highlighted the work of various groups, such as the Expert Group on Well-being Measurement, under the mandate of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations, which had sought to develop conceptual and methodological frameworks for standardized measurement of well-being across countries, focusing on three key pillars: economics, social and demographic statistics, and environmental statistics. Attempts had been made to address some measurement gaps through the use of satellite accounts and other mechanisms, but challenges remained in their wider application. Countries and international organizations were working together to define indicators that could be used consistently and homogeneously. Mexico played a key role in coordinating such efforts, with the aim of developing strategic recommendations to strengthen the measurement of well-being and sustainable development within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

28. The economist from the Institute of Applied Economic Research of Brazil said that the seminar provided a welcome space to discuss alternative development indicators. Development comprised various interrelated dimensions, including the need to address climate change. Inequality, which remained a major challenge in Brazil, made the poorest families more vulnerable, especially to climate events. Brazil had created *Bolsa Familia* in 2003 to provide cash transfers to such families and reduce poverty, but that was not enough to eliminate structural inequality. The country had also developed a family vulnerability index to identify families most in need, with the aim of reducing extreme poverty. She highlighted the need for a multidimensional approach to poverty, taking into account education, work and health, among other factors, and for investment in public policies that improved family well-being.

29. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Colombia noted efforts to build indicators that went beyond GDP, saying that her country was in the process of considering the conceptual and methodological aspects of developing such indicators, for which the system of national accounts provided a key platform.

30. The representative of Brazil called for a clear and realistic approach to measuring development and cautioned against attempting to accomplish everything at once, which could lead to inaction. The Ibero-American General Secretariat, in its work on designing a multidimensional index to measure development, had sought to ensure a more targeted focus rather than incorporating too many dimensions. Existing mechanisms that no longer met the needs of the developing world, such as per capita GDP, should be refined. The United Nations could play an important role in organizing development cooperation initiatives to build the capacity of global South countries to implement new multidimensional indicators. Any proposal should benefit all developing countries and not be confined to regional interests. It was important to strengthen intraregional cooperation and training for national statistical systems to ensure that new indicators reflected reality.

Panel 3. The need for a new approach to measuring development on the road to Seville: implications for international cooperation

31. The panel was moderated by Luis F. Yáñez, Secretary of the Commission of ECLAC, and the panellists were Sergio Colina, Secretary of State for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain; Rolando Ocampo, Chief of the Statistics Division of ECLAC; Sergio Vinocour Fornieri, former Ambassador and current Director of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica; Enrique O’Farrill-Julien, Executive Director of the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AGCID); Mariano Berro, Managing Director of the Uruguayan International Cooperation Agency (AUCI); Cindy Rodríguez Mendoza, Undersecretary for International Cooperation and Promotion in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Honduras; and Lorena Larios Rodríguez, Secretary for Ibero-American Cooperation of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).

32. The moderator, after welcoming the panellists, recalled the first three International Conferences on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, Doha and Addis Ababa, and acknowledged challenges in looking ahead to the fourth. He hoped that the document that ECLAC would be presenting during the panel would invite an exchange of ideas on international cooperation and new ways to measure development.

33. The Secretary of State for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain emphasized the importance of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, which would mark 10 years since the Addis Ababa conference and the beginning of the 5-year countdown to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Spain would seek to leverage its role as

host of the Fourth International Conference to foster agreement and understanding on international cooperation and sustainable development metrics. He referred to Spain's multidimensional approach to sustainable development, going beyond income, and to its renewed commitment to ODA. Progress was needed on the development of new metrics, such as the multidimensional vulnerability index, and operational monitoring mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure accountability. A successful outcome of the Conference would be a clear, ambitious consensus, with concrete guidelines for action and an updated development financing framework.

34. The representative of Mexico, one of the countries serving as co-facilitator of the Fourth International Conference, said that it was important for all countries to provide input on the outcome document proposed by Spain, in particular at the meeting in New York at which the zero draft would be considered. The process should involve not only cooperation agencies but a variety of different ministries and national stakeholders, in order to address issues beyond cooperation. The outcome document must include multidimensionality as a key indicator for measuring poverty, transparency in financing and public policy implementation. A strong presence was needed at the meeting in New York to support proposals and ensure a coherent and objective process.

35. The Chief of the Statistics Division of ECLAC said that GDP failed to reflect inequality, environmental sustainability and overall well-being, and that measuring development exclusively through GDP limited ODA allocation. Accordingly, an ECLAC exercise had aimed to address challenges by designing a single index that could capture a range of development measurements beyond per capita GDP. After referencing a number of related international and regional initiatives, such as the human development index and the multidimensional poverty index, he presented the document, describing the exercise and its outcome: an index based on the 11 vital transformations for the region's development, built using data generated in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and other data from the United Nations and the World Bank. The exercise had resulted in the development of indicators that would allow a more comprehensive analysis than GDP, although data availability was a limiting factor. Agreed global indicators were necessary for international cooperation, and a multidimensional approach to measuring development was important in that regard. He highlighted New Zealand's adoption of a well-being budget based on multidimensional indicators as an example of a policy that went beyond GDP. Again, multidimensional challenges could not be captured by GDP alone; indicators needed to reflect actual well-being and the sustainability of the planet.

36. The Director of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica said that the seminar discussions offered Ibero-American countries a valuable opportunity to prepare for the Fourth International Conference, and he extended special thanks to the representatives of the Ibero-American General Secretariat and Spain, and to ECLAC for its important work in economic and social development. The seminar would help to restructure international cooperation to consider factors besides per capita GDP. ECLAC had demonstrated the viability of developing a more comprehensive development index, which should address structural gaps and countries' vulnerabilities. Such an approach, which ECLAC had previously introduced and which countries of the region had also applied, underscored the impracticable nature of a uniform system of classifying development, given that structural gaps differed significantly from one country to the next. He commended ECLAC on its proposed comprehensive development index, which encompassed broader dimensions of human development, rather than focusing exclusively on GDP, and which was based on the structural transformations that were hampering the progress of countries in the intermediate stage of development. Multidimensional indicators were indeed needed to evaluate development. She suggested that ECLAC take a closer look at key indicators like migration, environmental sustainability and vulnerability to economic shocks and natural disasters, and called for continued dialogue on the concept of development in transition, in particular how ODA should change and whether a broader definition of international cooperation for development could be compatible with the ECLAC-proposed index.

37. The Executive Director of AGCID recounted Chile's experience and lessons learned since its graduation from the category of least developed countries in 2017. Chile had received no prior notice or information about its graduation from the Development Assistance Committee and had only happened upon the news after the fact. Amid the ensuing uncertainty, Chile and Uruguay had considered it necessary to develop a joint strategy to navigate their new international position. Chile had adopted a two-pronged approach, deciding that it would attempt to change the model of graduation based on per capita GDP and continue to engage in triangular and South-South cooperation, in spite of its status as a high-income country. Over the years, Chile had sought to influence the discourse on development in transition, advocating for a multidimensional focus beyond GDP. Cooperation with Spain, the European Union, Japan and Germany had been crucial for Chile. Other Member States had withdrawn from or reduced support for the Development Assistance Committee, with significant consequences including lost opportunities for technical cooperation and assistance in key areas, such as climate change and human capital formation. Graduation had also meant the loss of concessional financing, impacting its access to cooperation mechanisms, but Chile had continued to work to advance multilateral cooperation nevertheless.

38. The Managing Director of AUCI said that evidence-based tools were important for international public policy decisions, highlighting the statistical work of ECLAC and the necessity of indicators for country comparisons. With more than 200 million people living in poverty in Latin America, there was a clear need to measure transparency, corruption and freedoms, among other aspects, rather than focusing exclusively on new indices. Uruguay's policy aim was to agree on a declaration that did not impose new measurement indicators but rather allowed for a multidimensional approach to concessional financing. Of the significant number of countries that had graduated in the region, only a few had access to support under exceptional conditions, such as that available to Caribbean countries in view of the severe environmental problems that they faced. There was a need to raise awareness of the magnitude of the region's problems and to strengthen public policies through education and skills-building, especially in digitalization and access to information. The purpose of statistics was to address real challenges, not create new indices that failed to reflect national realities.

39. The Undersecretary for International Cooperation and Promotion in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Honduras welcomed the opportunity that the seminar provided to consider regional challenges and opportunities. It was a critical moment to consider how development was measured and how international cooperation should adopt a multidimensional approach to meet actual requirements. Honduras had significant economic and social development challenges, and its GDP growth did not fully reflect social well-being. Poverty, inequality and access to basic services showed persistent gaps. Honduras agreed on the need for a new measurement approach that went beyond traditional indicators to address the economic, social, environmental and human dimensions of development. The country had actively contributed to discussions ahead of the Fourth International Conference, which it viewed as a crucial opportunity for a renewed commitment to sustainable development. An updated measurement approach would facilitate a more efficient allocation of international cooperation resources, ensuring their use for projects that address structural inequalities and foster inclusive development.

40. The Secretary for Ibero-American Cooperation of SEGIB, after thanking ECLAC for its invitation and for organizing the seminar, said that her organization had much to offer in terms of Ibero-American cooperation and collaboration with its 22 member countries. The fifteenth report on South-South cooperation had been important in documenting more than 10,000 cases of cooperation that had helped to identify project opportunities on science and technology, gender, and indigenous inclusion. Those cases would significantly enrich discussions ahead of the Fourth International Conference. The General Secretariat had a mandate from its 22 member countries to support that process and help to build a consensus position. However, some programmes were experiencing financial sustainability problems due to several

member countries' cessation of contributions. Innovative solutions, such as in-kind payment models, had been explored to address the situation. Confidence in international cooperation needed strengthening. There was also a need to improve communication strategies and narratives around international cooperation and to publicize its results to secure financing.

41. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Argentina asserted his country's firm belief in its ability to influence the policy debate at the Fourth International Conference and underscored the importance of that debate with regard to development. He recalled Argentina's graduation in 2000 based on the criteria established by OECD, along with the economic and social crisis that followed and the lack of international support in that context. Noting the inadequacy of using per capita GDP as the exclusive indicator of development, he expressed support for the ECLAC-proposed comprehensive development index while also acknowledging the challenges that its implementation and universal adoption would entail. He emphasized the need for consensus among countries, taking into account different realities, and referenced the Global Gateway Initiative, which represented a narrowing of the European Union's approach to international cooperation. He recognized the work of the Ibero-American General Secretariat and the importance of continued discussion on new ways to measure development that did not depend exclusively on per capita income; thanked ECLAC for its valuable technical work; and called for continued efforts to identify indicators that would better reflect countries' distinct realities, including the Caribbean's specific vulnerabilities and the impact of climate change.

42. The representative of Brazil agreed with the representative of Argentina, saying that the international cooperation discussion was both technical and political but that the global North had a tendency to focus on the technical, which the global South should resist. Referencing paragraph 38 (j) of the zero draft² of the Seville outcome document and clashing perspectives between North and South, he said that the crux of the matter was not only finance, but rather cooperation itself. Brazil called for certain concepts to be moved to the beginning of the paragraph and to not be addressed in financial terms only. It was important to build consensus, communicate agreed concepts to governments and ensure that they be included in the outcome document. Political discussions must be backed up by technical perspectives to ensure that the position of developing countries was not discounted. Arbitrary classifications that penalized countries for their development should be discarded, leaving only two categories: developed countries and developing countries.

43. The representative of Ecuador agreed on the importance of a strong technical foundation, without which any policy argument could be easily rejected. Given that ODA allocation was based on political criteria, calls to shift that focus must be technically sound. He thanked ECLAC for its work on the document presented, while noting that it could still stand to be improved, and he expressed interest in continuing to contribute technical comments, in particular with regard to distilling the 11 transformations into 5 indicators. Productivity was a key indicator, given that it had decreased even as technology had advanced. He called for the timely submission of comments and for an iterative process to ensure that any eventual narrative or political stance would have a technical grounding.

² "We decide to consider using complementary measures of progress that go beyond gross domestic product (GDP), including the multidimensional vulnerability index, as a complement to existing policies and practices, to inform development cooperation policies, including access to concessional financing. In this context, we reiterate the call made in the Pact for the Future for MDBs, in partnership with the United Nations Secretary-General, to present options and recommendations on new approaches to improve access to concessional finance for developing countries, including projects with positive externalities in middle-income countries, enhancing alignment and synergies for shared goals and coherently agreed policies. We encourage MDBs to implement recommendations ahead of the next replenishment cycles" (see [online] <https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/FfD4%20Outcome%20Zero%20Draft.pdf>).

44. The representative of the British Virgin Islands thanked the presenters and the representatives of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay for their statements of solidarity concerning the Caribbean and its challenges. In 2024, disasters and hurricanes had practically razed several small island developing States to the ground. He noted the extreme injustice of the British Virgin Islands' current exclusion from climate finance and called for small island developing States to be given access to concessional financing and loans that took account of their vulnerabilities, allowing them to rebuild and increase climate resilience.

45. The representative of Uruguay said that the debate over resource distribution in international cooperation was inherently political, in that it was zero-sum: any change in rankings would produce winners and losers. The only way to prevent some countries from receiving less was to increase the overall amount of financing available, a prospect that could not be guaranteed. From a technical perspective, per capita GDP was a key indicator of development, given its strong historical correlation with improvements in education, life expectancy, and the reduction of poverty and infant mortality. Admittedly, there were other important factors in the short term, such as income distribution and vulnerability to disasters, but per capita GDP remained a core economic metric. Rather than pursuing overly complex indicators that might invite disagreement, he suggested working on an abridged set of additional metrics that would help to substantiate certain countries' need for support without involving drastic changes to resource distribution.

46. The representative of Guatemala also underscored the need for development measurements that go beyond GDP and emphasized the importance of the 11 transformations identified by ECLAC, in particular with reference to institutional capabilities. In many countries, institutions did not have sufficient capacities to ensure sustainable development and, therefore, required support. She agreed with Brazil on the importance of technical evidence in shoring up policy debates and strengthening the region's political position and said that finding common ground was essential for joint progress. The Fourth International Conference should be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen Latin American and Ibero-American positioning on global challenges, such as climate change. Genuine influence would require a unified message.

47. The representative of Peru thanked ECLAC for preparing the document presented by the Chief of the Statistics Division and for the five proposed indicators. She joined the international consensus that measuring development should go beyond GDP and rejected the system that determined country graduation—and by extension, international cooperation—based solely on per capita income. A broader, multidimensional framework for international cooperation should be adopted, incorporating both technical and policy considerations. She acknowledged the value of the proposed indicators but warned of possible bias regarding some of the indicators owing to lack of data or perceived lack of relevance for certain countries. Analysis of those indicators should be expanded to minimize bias and maintain a policy focus. With regard to the changes that artificial intelligence would entail for development and cooperation, together with its potential to transform jobs, health, education and global risk management, analysis should focus on the effects on international cooperation. Social mobility should be included in the measurement of development. She joined others in expressing concern about migration, including both external migrants and those returning to their countries of origin, and about the impact on national capacities to ensure well-being and access to opportunities, and requested that the issue also be analysed in the context of development and cooperation.

48. The representative of Mexico thanked ECLAC for its meaningful work on the comprehensive development index, stipulating that its use in public policy in Mexico would have to be analysed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography. Her country was committed to conducting a detailed analysis of the index with other ministries to evaluate any elements for improvement. As other countries had already expressed, a uniform measurement applicable to all was impossible. Progress was needed on a more comprehensive approach to measurement, going beyond GDP. Indicators should be multidimensional,

although she expressed doubt about the relevance of a migration indicator. She did, however, agree with the representative of Peru that migration was a relevant topic for analysis, especially given the consequences of recently implemented migration policies. She reaffirmed Mexico's support for and cooperation with Caribbean countries and highlighted bilateral and regional cooperation in forums including the Association of Caribbean States, the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

49. The representative of the Dominican Republic stressed the importance of producing new indicators and data to measure progress in the countries and the region, with an emphasis on exploring alternatives to per capita income. Indicators should assess the structural gaps limiting development —inequality, poverty, investment, productivity, innovation, infrastructure, education, health, taxation, gender, environment and migration—, which were key to identifying countries' needs and greatest challenges so that the middle-income designation would no longer block access to international cooperation. Regarding official development assistance, it was important to acknowledge the particular circumstances of small island States in the Caribbean and the Pacific, which needed priority access to funds and support to combat climate change and ensure a more comprehensive approach to measuring their development. The impact of natural disasters could be severe, as evidenced by Hurricane Maria, which hit the Dominican Republic in 2017 and caused a 2.25% drop in GDP.

50. The Deputy Director of the OECD Development Centre expressed thanks for the invitation and recalled the origin of the discourse on development in transition. He underscored the importance of international cooperation and offered support for the joint pursuit of fundamental aims to strengthen financial cooperation and discuss how to ensure that development measurements take into account well-being.

Closing session

51. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC thanked all the participants for their meaningful contributions to the discussion, noting that the seminar's positive results had exceeded expectations. Although some participants had focused on technical aspects and others had focused on policy, there was broad consensus on the need for a new way to measure development beyond GDP. Despite its numerous correlations, GDP did not capture social, digital and education gaps or climate change, which were crucial for inclusive and sustainable development. Noting that the use of the middle-income country classification was falling out of favour, he emphasized the importance of more accessible financing. International financial architecture reform was needed to address financing gaps for climate action and the SDGs. There was an abundance of conceptual and methodological alternatives for measuring the multiple dimensions of development, and although the process was technically and politically complex, it was possible to build a composite index to achieve a more comprehensive approach to measurement beyond GDP. In closing, he underscored the importance of continuing the discussions into the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, where the region was to build a shared political narrative with Africa and Asia to make real progress on cooperation.

Annex 1

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