Fourth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Bogotá, 4 and 5 April 2024

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REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Bogotá, 4 and 5 April 2024

UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The fourth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was held in Bogotá on 4 and 5 April 2024.

Attendance[1]

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of ECLAC: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Portugal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye and Uruguay.

3. The United Nations Secretariat was represented by the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia and by the Director of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, who participated remotely.

4. Also represented were the following United Nations agencies, funds and programmes: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Food Programme (WFP).

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations also participated: Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), European Union, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

6. Representatives of non-governmental organizations also attended.

B. AGENDA

7. The Conference adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
2. Election of the Executive Committee.
3. Presentation of the document *Science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive productive development: guidelines for 2024–2025*.
4. Thematic discussion panels.
5. Other matters.
6. Consideration and adoption of agreements.

[1] See the full list of participants in annex 2.

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

8. At the opening session, statements were made by Luis Yáñez, Secretary of the Commission of ECLAC; Mireia Villar, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia; Yesenia Olaya, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia; and Gustavo Petro Urrego, President of Colombia.

9. The Secretary of the Commission, speaking on behalf of the Executive Secretary, thanked President Gustavo Petro and the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia for hosting the meeting. He highlighted the country's public policies on science, technology and innovation and, in particular, the proclamation of 2024 as the Year of Science in Colombia. A series of initiatives had been implemented under the National Policy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2022–2031 in order for the country's science agenda to support the implementation of the National Development Plan 2022–2026, which sought to double investment in research and development (R&D) and drive progress towards a knowledge economy.

10. The Secretary of the Commission said that Latin America and the Caribbean was in a development crisis characterized by three main traps: low growth, high inequality and weak institutional and governance capacity. Between 2014 and 2023, average growth in the region had been a mere 0.8% per year, less than half the 2% recorded during the "lost decade" of the 1980s. ECLAC espoused the view that science, technology and innovation were the drivers of the productive transformation needed by the economies of the region to achieve the sustainable and inclusive productive development sought. Productive development policymaking, including for science, innovation and technology policies, was a collaborative effort by multiple stakeholders from the private sector, academia and civil society, among others. The bottlenecks that limited the transformation of production in the region, and thus its productivity, could be identified and addressed by working together.

11. The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia highlighted the importance of science, innovation and technology for sustainable development and productivity in the region. Colombia sought to overcome low total factor productivity by boosting investment in R&D and establishing a robust innovation ecosystem. She stressed the need for a national innovation and technology strategy to diversify production, which should focus on closing talent gaps, strengthening entrepreneurial capacity and fostering territorial development policies. Climate change adaptation and democratizing access to knowledge and innovation were important, in particular at the regional level. The United Nations stood ready to support the consolidation of that national strategy in Colombia.

12. The Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia said that coordination and cooperation among the countries of the region had been set in motion in that Ministry, grounded in a belief in working together on the basis of informed discussions and shared interest in key issues such as biodiversity, the bioeconomy and technological innovation in furtherance of life, human rights and peace. The government was working on a new vision for science, and an epistemic dialogue had been established between traditional knowledge and science, technology and innovation in service of people, territories and respect for rights, to foster peace as well as social, economic and environmental justice.

13. The President of Colombia expressed appreciation for the historic contributions of ECLAC, as the regional organization of the United Nations, to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and analysed the role of science, technology and innovation in the current global and regional geopolitical context. He said that science was directly related to freedom, meaning that for Latin America and the Caribbean, it was linked to a social and political struggle. One of the main challenges for the region was the establishment of its own

cutting-edge think tanks and research networks. States must finance those networks to enable them to develop freely and foster human progress by applying knowledge to the problems affecting the region's territories, incorporating Indigenous and grassroots knowledge to prevent climate collapse.

Election of the Executive Committee (agenda item 2)

14. The following members were elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of ECLAC:

Chair: Colombia

Vice-Chairs: Argentina
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Brazil
Costa Rica
Mexico
Uruguay

Presentation of the document *Science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive productive development: guidelines for 2024–2025* (agenda item 3)

15. The document was presented by Marco Llinás, Chief of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC. The document underscored the importance of strengthening coordination between science, technology and innovation and productive development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular against a worrisome regional backdrop of sluggish productivity. The presentation was divided into three sections. In the first, the Chief referred to the elements required to gain an overview of the productivity challenge facing the region and the new vision of ECLAC on productive development policies. In the second, he presented a brief analysis of science, technology and innovation in the region. In the third, he highlighted the challenges of the current juncture and presented concrete lines of action to address it, which set the course for the work of the Conference for the next two years. He proposed the establishment of four working groups, focused on the following topics: (i) science, technology and innovation instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development; (ii) science, technology and innovation governance; (iii) science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach; and (iv) strategic sectoral and technological agendas. He described the significance of the work of each group, based on a set of guiding questions. Lastly, he presented recommendations for next steps, also emphasizing the importance of effective governance that coordinated the work of multiple stakeholders and the need for a territorial approach to science, technology and innovation. It was urgent to implement comprehensive policies that linked science and innovation with productive development to boost well-being in the region.

16. In the ensuing discussion, the Deputy Director of Humanistic and Scientific Research of the National Council for Humanities, Sciences and Technologies of Mexico underscored the importance of the opportunity for cooperation that the Conference presented to the countries. Ensuring that public policies on the humanities, science, technology and innovation occupied their rightful place in public life was a challenge. Over the past six years, Mexico had recognized that the humanities were an essential part of that agenda, adopting a humanistic approach even in the legal framework through the Humanities, Science, Technology and Innovation General Act. All governance actions and instruments should focus on citizens and productivity was linked to social well-being. Mexico supported the key role of the humanities, science, technology and innovation as catalysts for the achievement of well-being and productivity goals and was committed to actively participating in the proposed agenda.

17. The Vice-Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications of Costa Rica expressed his country's interest in participating actively as Vice-Chair and in the working groups, in particular the group focused on science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach, recognizing the significance of regional dynamics in a small country. Costa Rica was also committed to encouraging State actions implemented across more than one term of office and to inclusive actions, in particular those that fostered the participation of women and rural residents in information and communications technologies.

18. The President of the National Council for Innovation, Science and Technology of Uruguay said that the meeting was important for addressing the common problems faced by different governments. Each country had specific characteristics, and context and traditions must be taken into consideration. The issue of governance had been studied in Uruguay in recent years, with a particular focus on science, technology and innovation. Linkages, coordination and the need for long-term State policies were particularly important, as were public and private investment and incentives for the private sector to boost knowledge transfer and its impact on productivity. Exchanging experiences and collaborating across the public and private sectors and at the national, regional and international levels was key. Uruguay stood ready to participate in the working groups.

19. The Deputy Minister of Science and Technology in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of the Dominican Republic highlighted the main challenges faced by countries in those areas. The science, research and technology system in his country was relatively new, but it was being defined through a dynamic process and was generating research and innovation. An "open science" approach was being used, and funding policies encompassed the social sciences, humanities and arts to broaden the scope of research and innovation in the country. Communication and cooperation between the various scientific disciplines was important, especially in the context of the crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. He mentioned public policy strategies to improve coordination and information exchange between the various public stakeholders and the encouragement of public-private partnerships, which had yielded good results. The Dominican Republic fully supported the establishment of the working groups and stood ready to participate.

20. The Undersecretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation of Chile acknowledged that countries were confronted with a wide range of research, science, technology and innovation challenges. The opportunity to explore different pathways was welcome in a policy context that differed from the industrial policy panorama of the twentieth century and was driving the incorporation of domains of knowledge ranging from the humanities and arts to the social and natural sciences. She emphasized the need to move towards comprehensive and sustainable development with a merging of productive development and social well-being. She mentioned the Sustainable Productive Development Programme of Chile, which took a social and environmental approach, and the work on developing human capital and establishing public institutions to conduct research in key areas. It was also important to strengthen higher education institutions, foster collaboration between universities and the private and public sectors, and step up investment in science, technology and know-how.

21. The Undersecretary for Science and Technology of the Innovation, Science and Technology Secretariat of Argentina said that the presentation had been inspiring and that it challenged people to think differently in a regional context of sluggish R&D spending. There was a need for responsible disruption. All science and technology investment should drive development of the productive sector and of the region. She raised questions about the lack of private sector investment in the region and addressed the macroeconomic conditions affecting investment in her country. She underscored the importance of reflecting on how to establish closer ties with the private sector and eliminate bureaucratic stumbling blocks to encourage R&D investment. Lastly, she mentioned the important role played by Argentina in developing vaccines during the COVID-19 crisis.

22. The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba welcomed the opportunity presented by the Conference to share experiences and seek responses to the challenges faced. It was important to adopt an approach focused on humanism and the social sciences in science, technology and innovation policy, and to closely link them with educational policies to build scientific potential in various sectors. Concrete problems must be addressed using a holistic approach and all stakeholders must participate, including from the private and public sectors, universities and research centres. Lastly, she said that Cuba stood ready to work with other countries on science, technology, education and cooperation.

23. The Deputy Minister of Research and Applied Knowledge at the Ministry for the People's Power for Science and Technology of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that science, technology and innovation were important instruments for regional integration and sustainable productive development. He suggested the development of endogenous science and technology to reduce dependence on foreign technology. A balance must be struck between productive growth and social equity. He proposed an exchange of experiences and the establishment of regional science and technology governance, and noted the importance of addressing the territorial and sectoral aspects of the agenda and of cooperating with other multilateral organizations.

24. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology of Barbados said that science, technology and innovation were critical for development, and acknowledged that there were challenges with respect to financing, skills and risk aversion. She said that steps were being taken in Barbados to strengthen public-private partnerships and invest in R&D to stimulate the knowledge economy and boost productivity. Dialogue was also important to transform economic and social development for the better.

25. The Head of Innovation and Technology in the National Technological Institute of Nicaragua said that his government was committed to cooperating in implementation of the science, technology and innovation agenda. It was crucial to work together on equity and sustainability in order to drive local innovation and community development. His country was committed to fostering science, technology and innovation at the local level and to valuing communities' traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.

26. The Director of the Industry and Innovation Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister of Guyana emphasized the need for dialogue between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to determine the lines of work and areas for cooperation on science, technology and innovation. Science and technology were critical for progress in Guyana and the region, in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He underscored the importance of creating an enabling environment for innovation that incorporated inclusivity and cooperation, and called for increased investment in R&D. His country was committed to spurring innovation in various sectors, such as energy, tourism and health, and to working closely with other member States to achieve regional progress on science, technology and innovation.

Special statement

27. In her special statement, Ayaka Suzuki, the Director of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, underscored the importance of science, technology and innovation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The upcoming Summit of the Future, to be held in September in New York, would be critical in terms of making a commitment to future generations, and the need to address common challenges by working together, through inclusive projects, was urgent. She mentioned the work done by the Scientific Advisory Board on policymaking based on expertise. Lastly, she emphasized the work of the United Nations on science, technology and innovation, including that of the High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, which would issue key recommendations for the future on digital issues.

Thematic discussion panels (agenda item 4)

28. Four thematic discussion panels and a special session were held, which are detailed below.

Panel 1: Channelling science, technology and innovation to solve strategic problems (Strategic sectoral and technological agendas)

29. The moderator of the panel was Claudia Cepeda, Head of the Office of Technological Development and Innovation in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia, and the panellists were Yesenia Olaya, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia; Rubens Diniz, Chef de Cabinet in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Brazil; Benjamín Barán, President of the National Science and Technology Council of Paraguay; Carolina Gainza, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation of Chile; Paula Nahirñak, Undersecretary for Science and Technology of the Innovation, Science and Technology Secretariat of Argentina; and Adianez Taboada, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba.

30. The moderator emphasized the critical role those policies played in countries' productive development and the need to focus investment on priority areas. The purpose of the panel was to discuss concrete actions relating to productive development policies and the implementation of strategic agendas, and the importance of financial support for their achievement.

31. The Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia said that intersectoral coordination in the National Science, Technology and Innovation System was important to establish a national scientific agenda aligned with the 2022–2026 *Colombia, Potencia Mundial de la Vida* National Development Plan. She said that investments in science, technology and innovation had been prioritized, in keeping with the views of Mariana Mazzucato in that they focused on mission-oriented productive development. The Minister mentioned five mission-oriented research and innovation policies focusing on the energy transition, the bioeconomy, health sciences, the human right to food and science for peace. Those policies sought to solve concrete problems and strengthen the national economy, fostering scientific and technological development in cooperation with a variety of stakeholders, including from the private sector and civil society, to advance science, technology and innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

32. The Chef de Cabinet in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Brazil drew attention to women leaders in the region, noting the support provided to women and their empowerment in science. Global challenges such as climate change and disinformation must be addressed, and science and technology were essential for fair, peaceful and sustainable socioeconomic development. He called for closer regional cooperation among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, through a variety of instruments, to confront those challenges together. He also emphasized the importance of transforming knowledge into innovation and wealth for the benefit of society, and said that Brazil stood ready to strengthen cooperation on research and share infrastructure. His country was committed to cooperating in the development of a common agenda for the next two years and was interested in hosting the fifth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies of ECLAC.

33. The President of the National Science and Technology Council of Paraguay referred to the country's 2030 National Development Plan and the science, technology and innovation agenda developed for the same time period. He emphasized the importance of boosting the competitiveness and sustainability of science in Paraguay and the need to strengthen the country's resilience to pandemics and other challenges. The development of high-value foods and biotechnology products was another key area and he mentioned science, technology and innovation investment projects implemented in the country in recent years. It was important for countries to share those agendas and work together in areas such as energy and water.

34. The Undersecretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation of Chile referred to the central role of science, technology, knowledge and innovation in addressing productivity and sustainable development challenges. Chile was implementing a programme for sustainable productive development for the transition to a socially and environmentally sustainable development model, coordinated by various ministries. She noted that R&D contributed to the structural transformation of the national productive system, considering the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. She also mentioned the importance of science, technology and innovation policies for training new generations of researchers, cooperation on disruptive technologies, and recognition of the value of the humanities, arts and social sciences in the country's sustainable development. Developing science and technology was critical for achieving progress towards a model for sustainable and cohesive development in the region.

35. The Undersecretary for Science and Technology of the Innovation, Science and Technology Secretariat of Argentina said that in late 2023, the law on the National Plan for Science, Technology and Innovation 2030 had been unanimously adopted in her country. The development of the plan had included strategic agenda-setting, with territory-focused public policies, and had involved all social and economic stakeholders in the country. It was important to implement the plan and ensure the appropriate linkages, coordination and measurement of results. In that regard, four pillars were needed: linking and transfer, infrastructure, information and coordination.

36. The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba mentioned the challenges facing developing countries owing to restrictive financial policies and unilateral coercive measures, such as the blockade imposed by the United States against her country. She also referred to the Cuban experience in the development of science and technology since 1960, noting that illiteracy had been eradicated and there was universal access to free education. A network of scientific research institutions had been created and areas of focus included health, biotechnology and the environment.

37. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Mexico noted that it was important for countries to identify and share areas in which common strategies could be implemented. One of the greatest science and technology challenges was the uptake of public policies by a variety of government bodies and society at large, including the population, universities and research centres. In Mexico, although policies focusing on the humanities, science, technology and innovation had faced inter-agency hurdles, progress had been made in establishing strategic relationships. He noted that a number of government bodies —including the ministries of public education, health and the economy— had worked collaboratively with the private sector, especially on the development of national medical instruments and addressing security and migration issues. He also mentioned efforts to explore and exploit lithium and the importance of building national capacities through training and research infrastructure.

38. Lastly, the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines noted that countries like Chile, Cuba and Paraguay had applied science, technology and innovation to problem-solving in a practical manner, an approach that was also relevant in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, most research in that subregion had been confined to universities and had failed to translate into practical applications that could solve local problems.

Panel 2: The challenge of public-public and public-private coordination: recent experiences (Science, technology and innovation governance)

39. The panel was moderated by Marco Llinás, Chief of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC, and the panellists were Francisco Durán, Deputy Minister of Research and Applied Knowledge at the Ministry for the People's Power for Science and Technology of the Bolivarian

Republic of Venezuela; Mercedes Aramendía, President of the National Council for Innovation, Science and Technology of Uruguay; William Mejía, Director of Educational Technology in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of El Salvador; Shahrukh Hussain, Director of the Industry and Innovation Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister of Guyana; Vladimir Terán, Executive Director of the Electronic Government and Information and Communications Technologies Agency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia; and Ovidio Claros Polanco, Executive President of the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce.

40. The moderator said that coordinating and linking efforts in science, technology and innovation was key for productive development. Although meaningful progress had been made in those areas, there was significant room to better integrate those efforts, which were often fragmented across government bodies, sectors and levels. A series of critical questions would need to be addressed over the next two years in the framework of the Conference, under the chairship of Colombia, on how to improve institutional arrangements to enhance the governance of national innovation systems, fostering more effective relations between the institutions supporting research and innovation in business, improving coordination of science, technology and innovation with productive development efforts and ensuring long-term policy continuity. International cooperation on science, technology and innovation must also be strengthened.

41. The Deputy Minister of Research and Applied Knowledge at the Ministry for the People's Power for Science and Technology of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela provided a detailed summary of his country's science, technology and innovation efforts and noted that the Ministry had been established in 1999 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Organic Act had been passed in 2001. The National Fund for Science, Technology and Innovation had been established and the government was working with communities to develop national production. One example was *Alianza Científico-Campesina*, a partnership programme between farmers and scientists. Steps were being taken to confront challenges such as economic sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic, including by establishing the Presidential Scientific Board and the Science-Technology Hub. He emphasized the importance of the recently established Sectoral Vice-Presidency for Science, Technology, Education and Health and the forthcoming launch of the Dr Humberto Fernández-Morán Great Mission for Science, Technology and Innovation. The country-wide public consultation on the seven transformations needed in the country by 2030 was focused on scientific and technological independence.

42. The President of the National Council for Innovation, Science and Technology of Uruguay said that the country had worked for decades on strengthening its science, technology and innovation sector, since the founding, in 1961, of the Council, which was reorganized in 2006. Cooperation in those areas was critical for sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. Science, technology and innovation stakeholders came from a wide range of sectors, from academia to the productive sector, and she emphasized the need for effective coordination among them. She put forward recommendations for addressing problems that had been identified with respect to coordination, process simplification, strengthening of financing and fostering of knowledge transfer. A more robust institutional hierarchy was critical in the governance of science, technology and innovation systems and relationships grounded in trust must be fostered between the ecosystem's stakeholders. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of multidisciplinary work and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels to enhance sustainable development.

43. The Director of Educational Technology in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of El Salvador said that intersectoral cooperation was key for addressing national issues such as the successful transition to a safer and more peaceful country. Pending challenges included the need to align long-term policies and improve coordination across the public, private and academic sectors. Initiatives were under way in his country to foster innovation and cooperation, including calls for tenders for joint projects and the establishment of the Innovation Secretariat of the Office of the President. Education in science and technology was critical, as was the role of the government in establishing policies to boost innovation and cooperation.

44. The Director of the Industry and Innovation Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister of Guyana reflected on the importance of intersectoral cooperation for seizing opportunities in science, technology and innovation to further sustainable growth. He noted the efforts in the country to foster technological innovation, including through telecommunications deregulation and by strengthening information and communications technology infrastructure. More effective coordination was needed among R&D stakeholders, and he put forward strategies to encourage collaboration, such as the establishment of digital innovation hubs and incentives for cross-sectoral cooperation. His country was working to close the digital gap in remote areas and remained committed to addressing common challenges through international cooperation.

45. The Executive Director of the Electronic Government and Information and Communications Technologies Agency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia said that stakeholders from the public, private and academic sectors had participated in preparing the 2030 Digital Agenda in his country. Coordination between those sectors was crucial for the implementation of strategies aligned with the digital agenda and he recommended fiscal incentives and financing programmes to encourage private sector participation in R&D. For that agenda to be implemented, agreements for collaboration, public-private cooperation and knowledge transfer must be forged. He also emphasized the importance of adapting other countries' experiences to the context of his country, taking into consideration factors such as geography and population density.

46. The Executive President of the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce said that the Chamber played a unifying role in public-public and public-private coordination on science, technology and innovation. It cooperated with the government and other entities to advance science, technology and innovation projects in the country. Bringing together all stakeholders, including universities, companies and government organizations, was key for bolstering technological development and innovation. The Chamber of Commerce was working on linking local and national science, technology and innovation projects in an effort to ensure their continuity across changes of government. The institution also played a key role in technology training and skill-building for companies and citizens and in furthering the internationalization of innovative national projects.

Panel 3: Design and implementation of science, technology and innovation policies with a territorial approach (Science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach)

47. The moderator of the panel was Diana Rúa, Head of the Office of Vocational Education and Training in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia, and the panellists were María Camila Díaz, Vice-Minister of Talent and Social Ownership of Knowledge in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia; Orlando Vega, Vice-Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications of Costa Rica; Adrián Suárez, Secretary for Science and Technology in the Government of the Province of Santiago del Estero of Argentina; Alexander Serrano, Head of Innovation and Technology in the National Technological Institute of Nicaragua; Paola Pabón, Prefect of Pichincha Province in Ecuador; Fábio Guedes Gomes, Coordinator of the Thematic Chamber for Science and Knowledge Development of the Interstate Consortium for Sustainable Development of the North-East of Brazil; Curtis King, Minister of Education and National Reconciliation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; and Davin Jagessar, Assistant Programme Coordinator in the Ministry of Planning and Development of Trinidad and Tobago.

48. The moderator said that although Latin America and the Caribbean was a key region in the global economy, it was grappling with disparities in science, technology and innovation. To overcome those divides, investments must be made in human talent, innovation and technology and the generation of new knowledge. Coordination between the different levels of government to encourage effective collaboration and synergistic action on science, technology and innovation was fundamental.

49. The Vice-Minister of Talent and Social Ownership of Knowledge in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia noted that the country's five mission-oriented policies had been designed with local participation. A total of 17 socialization initiatives had been implemented during that process, with a particular focus on the one in the Amazon region. She also emphasized the importance of the social ownership policy, whose implementation was seen as crucial and for which specific instruments had been established. The country's territories were diverse and thus required tailored approaches. She mentioned initiatives such as Orquídeas, Mujeres en la Ciencia 2024 and Orquídeas - Agentes para la paz 2023, as well as affirmative action and gender-sensitive calls for participation. She noted three key issues in her country: institutional presence in the territories, where the lack of branch offices presented a challenge; the transformation of innovation ecosystems in the territories; and the importance of diversifying funding sources.

50. The Vice-Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications of Costa Rica said that his government was interested in addressing territorial disparities. Costa Rica had made a significant change in 2021 with the establishment of a unit in the Ministry tasked with closing territorial divides. All its initiatives, such as scholarship and funding awards, were focused on drawing applicants from rural areas. The country's 82 local governments played a crucial role in disseminating the calls for applications. He highlighted the prioritization of rural areas and some of the initiatives implemented, such as the opening in those areas of science-focused high schools with senior-year programmes, and noted that it was important to ensure that such State-led initiatives were sustainable over the long term, with a particular emphasis on the bioeconomy.

51. The Secretary for Science and Technology in the Government of the Province of Santiago del Estero of Argentina provided details on the strategic plan unveiled in 2023, which was in its first quarter of implementation, and on a consensus pertaining to seven bicentennial goals, which addressed key issues such as productive innovation, water, health, education tailored to the labour market and a paradigm shift with regard to oil. These instruments were aligned with the recommendations made in ECLAC documents. He also noted the need to develop products with greater value added and to increase exports, which had led to the formulation of a strategy involving the participation of a range of institutions including universities, research institutes and the provincial government, together with 36 other local institutions, such as non-governmental enterprises and organizations. Three workshops had been held to design the plan, with 300 people participating in 30 working groups, and six thematic pillars had been identified. He noted a strong consensus and a shared vision for a sustainable territory where the economic, social and political dimensions were balanced. A concrete example of implementation with regard to the social and health pillar was the establishment of a provincial council to discuss medicines and allocate resources to address issues such as dengue fever. The strategic plan aimed for balanced growth that would benefit those who had the least and needed the most.

52. The Head of Innovation and Technology in the National Technological Institute of Nicaragua recognized that science, technology and innovation were key drivers in building knowledge and a culture of complementarity, solidarity and equity. Science, technology and innovation policies were being implemented through management tools such as the 2022–2026 National Poverty Prevention and Human Development Plan and the Creative Nicaragua national programme, developed jointly by several government bodies. It was important to tackle productivity and competitivity at all levels, and in Nicaragua, that was being accomplished through a national network of 15 research and academic centres that proposed alternative ways of addressing local needs and fighting poverty. He mentioned national and local initiatives, including local committees, thematic round tables and cooperation networks, which supported the implementation of policies based on local circumstances and knowledge socialization. Lastly, he underscored the importance of leveraging the wealth of ancestral knowledge and ensuring that R&D processes were adapted to territories and local needs, by improving territory-focused resource allocation.

53. The Prefect of Pichincha Province in Ecuador emphasized the value of multilateralism and the importance of establishing a group on local governments, in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future, to ensure that the voices of the territories were represented. She underscored the vital role of local governments, in particular their close relationship with communities and growing importance in times of economic crisis. Local governments expected national governments to have national strategies that would support the development of coherent local strategies. She also noted local governments' knowledge of the territory and their desire to work with small and medium-sized enterprises, establish employment policies to combat regional unemployment and protect people from the growing influence of organized crime and drug trafficking. Funding and decentralization were needed in order to strengthen local governments' policy- and project-implementation capacity.

54. The Coordinator of the Thematic Chamber for Science and Knowledge Development of the Interstate Consortium for Sustainable Development of the North-East of Brazil spoke of the challenges the Chamber faced and its main lines of work. The Interstate Consortium was an example of successful governance, fostering decentralization and the strengthening of joint government procurement initiatives. He spoke of the importance of information-sharing and of improving the position of the northeastern region with regard to the central government. The Consortium was actively working with 20 thematic chambers, including the science chamber, which played a key role. One of the main issues was meeting the expectations of the scientific community in confronting the major challenges of the twenty-first century, especially in areas like biotechnology. In northeastern Brazil, where the large universities were located, steps were being taken to address those challenges and leverage the scientific potential of the region to contribute to sustainable development.

55. The Minister of Education and National Reconciliation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines spoke of the current challenges and initiatives in the country, which, with a population of 110,000 scattered across 32 islands, faced significant transportation and connectivity hurdles owing to the variable nature of the territory. In various sectors, gaps were the result of historical factors, and science, technology and innovation must be applied in practical ways to tackle contemporary problems like climate change. In 2023, work had begun on designing a science, technology and innovation policy, which would serve as a strategic framework for leveraging that potential and empowering citizens to address the challenges of the future, capitalizing on the transformative power of emerging technologies. It was a vision for sustainability and the development of a creative, innovative society that could deliver a wide range of jobs and reduce dependence on the State. The policy focused on areas including education, cultural preservation, natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship and the digital transformation. Although the country did not have its own university, it was served by the University of the West Indies. Developing local capacity across the entire country was important. That would mean supporting education for the future in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and ensuring that rural schools had scientific laboratories beginning at the secondary school level.

56. The Assistant Programme Coordinator in the Ministry of Planning and Development of Trinidad and Tobago noted progress and challenges in education and innovation in his country. The first education policy had been implemented 13 years earlier, and over the previous five years, a solid system of R&D tax incentives had been established. However, there were difficulties in ensuring that those investments had a real impact and tangible benefits. The country had worked with IDB and the European Union to fund subsidy programmes targeting entrepreneurs who had brought innovative products to market. Those subsidies served as an incentive for demonstrating the power of R&D and de-risking investment, an approach that had been better received than the programme of tax incentives, since subsidies were granted before investment, helping to mitigate risk. The system encouraged academic researchers to translate their research into industrial applications, with financial support and the participation of the business community.

The strategy was based on hands-on learning, and both the education policy and the first national innovation policy (2017–2020) had used an R&D approach. Despite the potential lag between investments and outcomes, the country had seen its ranking on the Global Competitiveness Index rise by 6 points in eight years owing to products developed under the education policy.

Panel 4: Innovative instruments for strengthening science, technology and innovation (Science, technology and innovation instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development)

57. The moderator of the panel was Nicolo Gligo, Economic Affairs Officer of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC, and the panellists were Andrés Triana, Deputy Director of Humanistic and Scientific Research of the National Council for Humanities, Sciences and Technologies of Mexico; José Miguel Benavente, Executive Vice-President of the Production Development Corporation of Chile; Genaro Rodríguez, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of the Dominican Republic; Guillermo Anlló, Regional Specialist with the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Programme of the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO; Marva Howell, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology of Barbados; and Daniel Stagno, Specialist in the Competitiveness, Technology, and Innovation Division of IDB.

58. The moderator summarized the topics addressed during the meeting and said that it was time to begin discussing how to translate the ideas put forward into policy instruments. The questions that would guide the discussion included which instruments or mechanisms were the most effective and feasible to implement in the different national contexts, how resources should be divided between basic and applied science, how to direct science, technology and innovation efforts towards strategic areas or national challenges, how to improve policy monitoring and evaluation, and how to incorporate the gender perspective into the design and implementation of policies and instruments to achieve productive development that was actually inclusive, among others.

59. The Deputy Director of Humanistic and Scientific Research of the National Council for Humanities, Sciences and Technologies of Mexico explained his country's view of the importance of advancing policies that strengthened the role of science, technology and innovation in economic and social development. He addressed the need to prioritize the allocation of resources and efforts in strategic research areas in order to foster technological development and innovation, according to each territorial context. It was also important to coordinate and align sectoral and cross-cutting policies related to health, security and the energy transition, among others. The gender perspective must be incorporated into science, technology and innovation policies to encourage equal participation of men and women in academic training and equal opportunity in that field.

60. The Executive Vice-President of the Production Development Corporation of Chile described the different support mechanisms for science, technology and innovation and then mentioned that the need to strengthen institutional capacities was critical, not only to solve problems but also to identify and address them in a comprehensive manner. In his country, efforts were being made to direct resources towards encouraging science and technology research to address productive sector issues. One example was an instrument known as Public Procurement for Innovation, a mechanism to incentivize bidders to develop technology solutions for public problems. Complementarity between the science, technology and innovation efforts of the public and private sectors was important, and it was particularly critical to leverage the country's science and technology and use it effectively. Strengthening those sectors would also create better opportunities for the region's development.

61. The Deputy Minister of Science and Technology in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of the Dominican Republic emphasized that the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in his country had been addressed through innovative instruments, which had been critical in coordinating effective responses and ensuring the continuity of essential services. The strategy for democratizing access to education and spurring local development through innovation and research was key. He also referred to his country's priority sectors for investment and the work being done at the national level to coordinate the public and private sectors, owing to budget constraints.

62. The Regional Specialist with the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Programme of the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO acknowledged the current global challenges and resource limitations and explained how R&D resources were managed in Latin America and the Caribbean. Coordinating science, technology and innovation policies in the region was paramount for the achievement of common aims, and the issues and demands requiring their implementation in each national context must be identified so that the different countries could work together and discuss how to jointly address them, keeping in mind the circumstances of each territory.

63. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology of Barbados emphasized the need to prioritize the areas that could benefit from science and technology and to bear in mind that innovative instruments would help countries achieve social and productive development as long as they were fit for purpose. Cooperation between the public, private and academic sectors and civil society was important to overcome limitations and achieve common goals. In her country, the Ministry of Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology had been established to foster the design of innovative science- and technology-based policies and overcome gaps in that regard. She also emphasized the need to foster a national culture of innovation from primary schools through to university institutions.

64. The Specialist in the Competitiveness, Technology and Innovation Division of IDB said that there was a problem with companies investing in R&D owing to a lack of incentives and knowledge of the available instruments. He described the challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean related to a lack of coordination in innovation ecosystems and said that it was important for policy instruments to target specific market constraints and failures with a view to maximizing the impact of R&D investment.

Special session: presentation of the publication Latin American Economic Outlook 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development

65. Participating in the presentation of the publication were Marco Llinás, Chief of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC; Sebastián Nieto Parra, Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Unit at the OECD Development Centre; Camilo Cetina, Head of the Office of Digital Transformation in the Department of Physical Infrastructure and Digital Transformation of CAF; and Manuel Fernández, International Cooperation Officer of the Delegation of the European Union to Colombia.

66. The Chief of the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC underscored the need for an ambitious investment agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean to drive more robust, sustainable and inclusive growth and break out of the low-growth trap in which the region was entangled. He emphasized the importance of productive development policies that linked the productive transformation to greener and more sustainable growth and social inclusion. The region was confronted by stubborn structural issues, such as low growth and stagnant productivity, as well as high levels of poverty and informal employment. Investment in the region was insufficient and better use must be made of foreign investment to drive innovation and employment. He emphasized the need for more progressive fiscal policies and enhanced tax collection in order to address those challenges, noting that regional collaboration

and multilateral cooperation were fundamental in that regard and in seizing opportunities for sustainable development. A comprehensive and collaborative approach was thus needed to foster investment and productive development in the region.

67. The Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Unit at the OECD Development Centre said that high labour informality, which affected two thirds of the region's population, prevented people from improving their living conditions. Investing in physical capital was essential for generating formal employment, and attention should be directed towards leveraging foreign direct investment to drive development and employment. While the region had the potential to attract investment in renewable energies, challenges nonetheless remained, such as the weak recovery of foreign investment in the wake of the 2019 crisis and the need to ramp up cross-border investments in that sector. Investing in sectors such as food manufacturing and sustainable construction was important to drive employment, but there was also a need to ensure that job creation did not widen social gaps. Labour policies and social programmes should enhance social inclusion, encouraging citizen participation and engagement. Public participation in designing and assessing investment projects was critical to foster dialogue and ensure that their benefits were equitably distributed. National development plans were important for defining participatory strategies to foster public-private investment in strategic areas such as the digital transformation, the pharmaceutical industry and the energy transition.

68. The Head of the Office of Digital Transformation in the Department of Physical Infrastructure and Digital Transformation of CAF noted the importance of closing investment gaps and highlighted the role of development finance institutions as catalysts for private and public investment. It was important for those institutions to work with multilateral development banks, such as CAF, to provide preferential access to funding and technical assistance resources. Those institutions had a positive impact on financing for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and in strategic sectors such as the energy transition and digital economy. He also mentioned growth in thematic bonds linked to sustainability in the region and highlighted initiatives such as the bonds linked to nationally determined contributions in Uruguay and other financial products that rewarded good performance on sustainability issues. Sustainable finance efforts and regulations should be harmonized at the national, regional and international levels to capture a broader investment base and improve the design and monitoring of sustainability indicators.

69. The International Cooperation Officer of the Delegation of the European Union to Colombia highlighted the investments and reforms needed to transform the productive model. He emphasized the importance of dialogue and cooperation between different stakeholders, including governments, financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. He mentioned the renewed commitment between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the Global Gateway initiative for advancing sustainable investments that addressed global issues such as climate change and improved the competitiveness and reliability of global supply chains. The approach of the Global Gateway investment agenda was truly innovative. It would be implemented through Team Europe, a partnership between the European Union, its member States, development finance institutions and the private sector. He mentioned specific examples of priority projects, such as cooperation on the green hydrogen industry and the financing platform for renewable hydrogen in Chile. He also highlighted the commitment to sustainability through rigorous environmental and social investment criteria. In closing, he said that the European Union remained committed to fostering a robust partnership with the region, working together with key institutions like CAF, ECLAC and the OECD Development Centre.

Special statement by Carlo Pietrobelli, holder of a UNESCO Chair on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development in Latin America at the United Nations University-Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT)

70. The holder of the UNESCO Chair on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development in Latin America at UNU-MERIT said that in the current era of environmental and digital transitions, the availability of natural resources in Latin America was a blessing, provided that the investments in innovation required to fully harness their potential were ensured. The dissemination and adoption of technology were pivotal in the highly heterogenous context of Latin American countries, marked by deep inequalities. Renewed efforts to boost the capacities of Latin American companies were critical and the potential advantages of value chain integration and nearshoring could only be mobilized through active policies to capture value and innovation. He highlighted three areas of opportunity: the energy, digital and green transitions; the need for policies tailored to the heterogeneity of Latin American countries; and leveraging the reorganization of international industrial production. He also mentioned the region's poor performance in terms of productivity and innovation and recommended policies aimed at improving participation in global value chains, including strategies to attract investment, support for local suppliers, and R&D capacity-building. Those themes suggested that significant challenges lay ahead in catalysing comprehensive development in Latin America and the Caribbean, centred around public-private cooperation and strengthening the entrepreneurial sector.

Consideration and adoption of agreements (agenda item 6)

71. The member States of the Conference adopted resolution 1(IV), which is contained in annex 1.

Closing session

72. At the closing session of the meeting, statements were made by Luis F. Yáñez, Secretary of the Commission, and Yesenia Olaya, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia.

73. After acknowledging the leadership of the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia as Chair of the Conference, an important subsidiary body of ECLAC, the Secretary of the Commission said that the adoption of resolution 1(IV) paved the way for collaborative, multi-stakeholder collaboration on the four lines of work for the period 2024–2025: (i) science, technology and innovation instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development; (ii) science, technology and innovation governance; (iii) science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach; and (iv) strategic sectoral and technological agendas. Discussions over the two days of the meeting had provided content, experiences, proposals and initiatives that could be a first step for the development of responses to the questions raised in the document *Science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive productive development*.

74. The Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia thanked the participants, and emphasized the importance of regional cooperation on science and technology for fair and equitable development in Latin America and the Caribbean. She proposed that scientific cooperation continue to be strengthened, with an inclusive and territory-based approach, prioritizing the most vulnerable communities, and called for ongoing, effective communication between countries to advance, over the next two years, in building a more prosperous and equitable region.

Annex 1

RESOLUTION 1(IV)

The member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean participating in the fourth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies, meeting in Bogotá, on 4 and 5 April 2024,

Considering that, in resolution 672(XXXIV), adopted at its thirty-fourth session, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean approved the establishment of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies as a subsidiary body of the Commission,

Bearing in mind that, in accordance with the same resolution, the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies must elect an Executive Committee consisting of a chair and six members, and that one of the functions of the Executive Committee is to prepare a biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities in support of policies on science, innovation and information and communications technologies to be submitted to the member countries of the Conference for adoption,

Bearing in mind also that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, as technical secretariat of the Conference, is responsible for making available to the Conference the facilities and documents that have been approved by the Committee,

1. *Take note* of the document prepared by the secretariat entitled *Science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive productive development: guidelines for 2024–2025*.[1]

2. *Approve* the workstreams for 2024–2025 set forth in the above-mentioned document to define a biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities in support of science, technology and innovation policies: (i) science, technology and innovation instruments for sustainable and inclusive productive development; (ii) science, technology and innovation governance; (iii) science, technology and innovation with a territorial approach; and (iv) sectoral and technological strategic agendas;

3. *Decide* to establish working groups for each approved workstream to define the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities in support of science, technology and innovation policies for 2024–2025;

4. *Also decide* to hold the next meeting of the Executive Committee of the Conference in the second half of 2024 with the aim of approving the workplan of each working group for 2024–2025, among other matters;

5. *Agree* to hold the fifth meeting of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies in Brazil on a date to be determined;

6. *Thank* the Government of Colombia for its outstanding work in hosting the fourth meeting of the Conference.

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[1] LC/CCITIC.4/3.

Annex 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS[1]

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