

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
**ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS
FOR THE CARIBBEAN**



Report of the 2025 Caribbean Youth Dialogues

Caribbean subregional preparatory seminar
for the United Nations Economic
and Social Council Youth Forum



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC



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REPORT OF THE 2025 CARIBBEAN YOUTH DIALOGUES

**CARIBBEAN SUBREGIONAL PREPARATORY SEMINAR
FOR THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
YOUTH FORUM**

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A. BACKGROUND

1. According to the United Nations Population Division's 2022 data, the Caribbean subregion has a total population of approximately 44.5 million people. Of this population, about 8.9 million individuals are aged between 15 and 29, representing roughly 20% of the total population. These figures underscore the significance of youth in the Caribbean's demographic landscape, highlighting the importance of addressing their unique challenges and harnessing their potential for sustainable development.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an opportunity to galvanize action aimed at promoting greater inclusion of youth in all spheres. This roadmap recognizes in several of its goals the centrality of the full incorporation of youth as a necessary condition to move towards more inclusive societies, in which no one is left behind, on a path to sustainable development. However, youth in the Caribbean face many challenges that need to be addressed as precursors to creating environments that enable them to reach their maximum potential to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, thereby leaving a legacy for future youth generations.

3. From a social perspective, the Caribbean is grappling with high poverty rates, inequality, escalating levels of crime and violence, elevated youth unemployment, and an increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases. The subregion experiences some of the highest youth unemployment rates globally, with limited formal job opportunities. Notably, unemployment among young women has averaged around 30% since 2000, compared to 22% among young men.¹ Escalating levels of crime and violence, including gender-based violence, is one of the main threats to peace, security and community safety, with the subregion also experiencing one of the highest rates globally.

4. From an environmental perspective, Caribbean small island developing States (SIDS), due to their size and geographical location, are characterized by fragile natural environments; fresh-water scarcity; exposure to natural disasters (earthquakes and volcanic eruptions); and threats associated with the effects of climate change (higher intensity hurricanes, floods, landslides, and droughts).² The impacts of climate change are becoming more evident in the subregion with more observed very hot days and nights in a year, rising sea levels and recent influxes of sargassum blooms which have negatively impacted coastal communities and economies.³

5. The main goal of the Caribbean Youth Dialogues is to collect regional youth perspectives about the main discussion topics at this year's United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum guided by the theme "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind". The dialogues consisted of several panels, in which various Caribbean perspectives were examined via discussions and presentations with youth representatives and experts.

B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place and date of the seminar

6. The Caribbean Youth Dialogues was held virtually in preparation for the ECOSOC Youth Forum on the 26 and 27 March 2025.

¹ F. Jones, "Population and development in the Caribbean (2018–2023): accelerating implementation of the Montevideo Consensus", Studies and Perspectives series-ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, No. 124 (LC/TS.2024/2-LC/CAR/TS.2024/1), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2024.

² ECLAC (2022), "The Caribbean Outlook, Recovery and Resilience Repositioning the Caribbean Post COVID-19". Twenty-ninth session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC).

³ Climate Studies Group Mona (Eds.). (2020), "The State of the Caribbean Climate". Produced for the CDB.

2. Attendance⁴

7. The Caribbean Youth Dialogues was attended by Caribbean youth and youth organizations from the member States of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, and the associate members of Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Additionally, Bonaire was represented at the dialogues. Experts from various academic institutions, civil society organizations, United Nations Secretariat, Agencies, Funds and Programmes, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Public Health Agency, the Caribbean Development Bank, and the Commonwealth, as well as independent youths also participated.

3. Agenda

1. Opening remarks
2. Panel: a promise to living better (SDG 3: Good health and well-being)
3. Panel: a promise to her (SDG 5: Gender equality)
4. Panel: a promise to decent work and prosperity (SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth)
5. Panel: a promise to the sea (SDG 14: Life below water)
6. Key conclusions and closing

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening remarks

8. In his welcoming remarks, the Coordinator of the Statistics and Social Development Unit of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean expressed his pleasure in the regional commission's convening of the Caribbean Youth Dialogues in close coordination with youth leaders. He noted that this subregional platform provides an opportunity for young people to engage in youth-led discussions on the SDGs to critically examine both the challenges they face and their contributions toward achieving the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development of Caribbean SIDS. This year's ECOSOC theme of "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind" could not be more relevant, as youth with their creativity, innovation, and energy, are well positioned to drive these discussions and lead transformative change.

9. The Chair of the Caribbean Development Bank Future Leader Network stated that the Caribbean is home to 44.5 million people, including approximately 8.9 million youth aged 15 to 29, and in some territories, youth are defined up to age 35. She emphasized that this represents a significant portion of the subregion's population whose voices and perspectives must be included in regional and global decision-making spaces. Although young people are often seen as inexperienced, many of the challenges facing the region such as unemployment, inequality, climate change and rising crime, are intergenerational in nature. The Chair underscored that it is therefore the responsibility of youth to lead the search for solutions, as the future ultimately belongs to them. The Chair explained that over the following two evenings, participants would explore ways to address these issues through science-based and technical solutions. She highlighted the

⁴ See annex I for a full list of participants.

strength of the panels and speakers, expressing hope that their insights would inspire creativity, collaboration, and ongoing engagement beyond the dialogues. These dialogues would further provide opportunities for participants to share experiences, exchange ideas and brainstorm practical approaches to building a better and more sustainable future for the Caribbean. In closing, the Chair extended appreciation to ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean for recognizing the potential of youth and for their support in organizing such a meaningful and impactful event.

10. The Commonwealth Youth Delegate from Trinidad and Tobago welcomed participants to the Caribbean Youth Dialogues, expressing appreciation to all youth leaders and attendees for joining the collaboratively created space for young people across the subregion. She explained that the Commonwealth Youth Council serves as the official representative body for more than 1.2 billion young people across the Commonwealth. The Council operates as a coalition of national youth councils and youth-led civil society and private sector organizations across 56 member countries, underscoring its extensive reach and influence. She extended appreciation to ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean for their instrumental roles in organizing and sustaining the Caribbean Youth Dialogues over the years, and further thanked her coordinating co-leads for their collaboration, friendship, and collegial spirit throughout the planning process, emphasizing that the success of the event would not have been possible without them.

11. The CARICOM Youth Ambassador for Antigua and Barbuda expressed his enthusiasm at being at the Caribbean Youth Dialogues which has brought together a passionate group of young people dedicated to shaping a better future for the Caribbean. He explained that his organization- the CARICOM Youth Ambassador (CYA) Programme, which was established over 30 years ago, has built a strong network of bold and forward-thinking young leaders who actively influence policy, strengthen regional integration, and promote youth advocacy and empowerment across the Caribbean. He noted that the CYA network is composed of diverse representatives from most CARICOM member States, bringing together a wide range of professions, backgrounds, and expertise that enhance their collective impact. He also emphasized the Programme's strong alignment with the SDGs and the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan. In concluding, he expressed eagerness to participate in the discussions over the next two days, noting his anticipation to learn from others, share experiences, and contribute to meaningful and action-oriented dialogue.

2. Panel: A promise to living better (SDG 3: Good health and well-being)

12. The panel brought together youth representatives, policymakers and development partners to discuss the intersecting challenges affecting health and well-being (SDG 3) among young people in the Caribbean. It provided a platform to examine key issues such as mental health, sexual and reproductive health, food security and data governance. Discussions focused on identifying practical solutions, strengthening regional cooperation, and amplifying youth voices in shaping health and development policies.

13. The panel underscored that mental health continues to be one of the most neglected dimensions of youth well-being in the Caribbean. Young people reported high levels of anxiety, depression and suicide, as well as increased substance abuse. Financial instability was also identified as a major stressor, with economic pressures related to school fees, employment and household responsibilities contributing to emotional strain and reduced overall well-being. Participants further noted that in a subregion highly vulnerable to natural hazards, the impacts of climate change extend beyond environmental and economic damage to severely affecting mental health. Following disasters such as Hurricane Beryl in 2024, youth experienced heightened loneliness and isolation due to communication disruptions, along with anxiety linked to job losses, property damage and the disturbance of daily routines. These challenges are further exacerbated by limited access to mental health support services, persistent stigma and cultural barriers, limited understanding among parents and guardians, a shortage of trained professionals and a lack of trust in existing services due to concerns about confidentiality.

14. Participants recommended that mental health awareness be strengthened across schools and workplaces through the adoption of mental health-friendly policies, including stress management programmes, professional counselling and safe spaces for open dialogue. They encouraged the use of digital platforms and social media to raise awareness and improve access to mental health information. Calls were also made to expand and decentralize mental health services to ensure accessibility, and to increase budgetary allocations and policy support for the mental health sector.

15. Further discussions revealed that sex education programmes in schools remain inadequate, with young people expressing that the health and family life education curriculum focuses primarily on puberty and anatomy while neglecting crucial aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Participants noted that while youth culture in the Caribbean is becoming more open and sex-positive, conversations around sexually transmitted infections and diseases remain limited, leaving many without the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about their sexual health. It was recommended that young people be engaged in open, age-appropriate and comprehensive discussions about sex and sexuality as part of broader HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. Participants stressed the importance of improving access to youth-friendly health services and tailoring public health messaging to resonate with young audiences through the use of relatable language and media. For example, popular music could be leveraged to promote messages about sexual health and protection. Additionally, participants underscored the importance of demystifying life with HIV/AIDS by fostering greater empathy and awareness of its mental, social and emotional dimensions.

16. Participants also identified the absence of health data governance frameworks as a growing concern. They stressed the need for clear regulations to protect personal information, ensure ethical data use and build public trust, particularly given the sensitive nature of health data related to mental health or HIV/AIDS. The lack of interoperability among healthcare systems within and across Caribbean countries was reported to further hinder the secured sharing of medical records and the continuity of care. It was noted that young people can utilize the Caribbean Cooperation in Health framework, developed by CARICOM, as a mechanism to hold policymakers accountable and ensure progress in regional public health governance. At the same time, positive developments were highlighted, such as UNICEF U-Matter initiative operated in collaboration with the Government and the private sector in Jamaica, which is a 24/7 mental health chat line co-designed with youth. The service is zero-rated by two major telecommunications providers in Jamaica, allowing free access to all users. Regionally, the CARICOM Single ICT Space was cited as a step toward achieving healthcare interoperability and more efficient health data management.

17. Concerns were also raised about changing dietary preferences across the Caribbean, with youth increasingly opting for imported, ultra-processed foods over traditional local cuisine. It was noted that approximately 80% of food consumed in the subregion is imported, much of it high in sugar, sodium and saturated fats, contributing to poor mental and physical health and the rise of non-communicable diseases. The panel also highlighted that the lack of regulation in food marketing allows for aggressive promotion of unhealthy food products, particularly to children, which significantly shapes food preferences and consumption habits. Participants advocated for the introduction of health-conscious food labelling requirements and stricter regulations on food marketing to promote healthier consumption patterns. They also emphasized the potential of technology to drive social transformation and health improvements across the subregion. This includes leveraging advanced tools such as artificial intelligence, as well as simple and accessible solutions like SMS campaigns, which can effectively reach rural populations and bridge information gaps.

18. Participants called for greater government and donor support to civil society and non-governmental organizations that provide essential services such as food, housing, transportation to clinics, safe spaces free from stigma and discrimination, mentorship, and employment-related resources. They also urged investment in local food systems to address regional food insecurity by strengthening agriculture, reducing reliance on imports and supporting youth engagement in farming. Programmes such as the Youth

Agricultural Homestead Programme in Trinidad and Tobago and the Future Farmers Initiative in Barbados were cited as positive examples of youth empowerment through access to land, training and mentorship in sustainable agriculture. It was further noted that where land constraints exist, investments should be made in promoting sustainable farming practices suited to the specific contexts of each country.

3. Panel: A promise to her (SDG 5: Gender equality)

19. The panel focused on SDG 5: Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls in the Caribbean and examined the persistent challenges hindering gender equality and policy responses within the subregion. Participants explored practical solutions to strengthen national gender machineries, promote inclusive partnerships, and foster social and legislative reforms that advance women's empowerment and equality for all.

20. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls remain a central priority under SDG 5 in the Caribbean. Despite meaningful progress in policy formulation, many countries continue to face persistent implementation gaps and capacity constraints within their national gender machineries. Although gender focal points and policy frameworks have been established across the subregion, a clear disconnect remains between these policy commitments and the mobilisation of the necessary human, financial, technological, and institutional resources. This disconnect limits the effective execution of gender policies and programmes, particularly at the local level, where institutional capacity is often most constrained. Nonetheless, several promising developments have emerged across the subregion. Partnerships between National Youth Councils and national gender machineries are strengthening youth engagement in gender advocacy and policymaking, demonstrating the importance of inclusive, intergenerational collaboration in advancing gender equality across the subregion.

21. The scarcity of disaggregated data continues to exacerbate these challenges related to gender equality. Insufficient data disaggregated by age, sex and socioeconomic characteristics restricts the subregion's ability to track progress accurately and design evidence-based interventions. Consequently, Caribbean realities are often subsumed within broader Latin American and Caribbean analyses, obscuring the distinct experiences and needs of women and girls in the subregion. Addressing this gap requires targeted and practical actions such as strengthening national gender machineries through comprehensive assessments of their structures, authority and resource allocations to support more effective coordination and implementation. At the same time, enhancing data systems to enable the regular collection of sex- and age-disaggregated information across all SDG indicators is essential for informed decision-making. Empowering young people to advocate for improved national statistical systems and to demand accountability for inclusive, gender-sensitive data practices will be key to ensuring sustained progress toward gender equality in the Caribbean.

22. Legal discrimination remains another barrier to equality. Antiquated laws in some countries continue to marginalise vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI+ persons, thereby entrenching exclusion and inhibiting social and economic participation. These legislative gaps are compounded by deeply rooted patriarchal norms that persist across several societies. In many contexts, men continue to occupy positions of authority by default, while women must fight to be heard and represented. Cultural attitudes formed early in life often reinforce gendered expectations, discouraging both girls and boys from pursuing careers or roles perceived as unsuitable for their gender.

23. The lack of comprehensive family-friendly policies represents a further obstacle to women's empowerment. While most Caribbean countries provide paid maternity leave, access, duration and eligibility vary significantly and often fall below international standards. Paternity leave, where it exists, remains limited, perpetuating traditional caregiving roles that place a disproportionate burden on women. Moreover, rigid work structures, the absence of flexible working arrangements and the scarcity of affordable childcare options make it difficult for women to balance professional and family responsibilities.

These structural inequalities contribute to women’s continued under-representation in the labour force and in leadership roles, as well as persistent wage disparities and limited access to decent work. Reforming labour and family policies remains an urgent priority for achieving gender equality in the Caribbean. Expanding and standardizing maternity and paternity leave, introducing flexible work arrangements and investing in affordable childcare services would promote more equitable participation in the workforce and support a sustainable work–life balance for all. At the household level, parental education and awareness initiatives are equally important for challenging entrenched gender norms and modelling equitable relationships, thereby shaping future generations’ perceptions of leadership and equality. Legislative progress, such as amendments to the Sexual Harassment Act in Jamaica, represents a positive step toward fostering safer and more equitable work environments.

24. In addition, recognizing the potential of the “Pink Economy”, the economic opportunities associated with LGBTQI+ tourism highlights the broader benefits of legal and social inclusion. Reforming or repealing discriminatory laws that marginalize LGBTQI+ persons and other vulnerable groups is not only a human rights imperative but also an opportunity to strengthen regional competitiveness and unlock new avenues for economic growth.

25. These actions grounded in data, inclusion and collaboration can therefore drive the transformative change needed to realise SDG 5. Through their advocacy, innovation and partnerships, young people across the subregion remain pivotal agents in shaping a more equitable, inclusive and prosperous Caribbean future. Collaboration remains key to overcoming implementation gaps. Innovative partnerships between youth organizations, civil society groups and community-based initiatives can generate localized solutions and promote grassroots empowerment. Increased investment in non-governmental and civil society organizations is equally vital, as they are often best positioned to address the needs of marginalized populations. In education, introducing comprehensive and age-appropriate gender and sexuality education can help dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote equality from an early age, while culturally sensitive teaching methods can ensure that these lessons are effectively received within diverse communities.

4. Panel: A promise to decent work and prosperity (SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth)

26. The panel discussion on SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth explored the persistent employment challenges faced by young people in the Caribbean, including skills mismatch, limited access to financing and the lack of support for non-traditional work models. It highlighted innovative national initiatives aimed at improving youth employability, entrepreneurship and financial inclusion. Participants also shared practical recommendations for creating a more inclusive, sustainable and youth-driven regional economy that fosters decent work opportunities for all.

27. Under SDG 8, which seeks to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, young people across the Caribbean continue to face significant barriers to entering and thriving in the labour market. Participants noted that a persistent mismatch between the skills acquired through academic or technical training and the demands of the labour market remains one of the subregion’s foremost challenges. Employers often prefer candidates with prior work experience, which disadvantages young graduates who are seeking to enter the workforce for the first time. Many employers are reportedly reluctant to give young people a chance, even when they possess the requisite qualifications. As a result, large numbers of youth, despite having university degrees resort to accepting low-paying or informal jobs that do not align with their academic backgrounds or long-term aspirations. This mismatch contributes to widespread underemployment and discouragement among young professionals who are unable to find suitable employment in their trained fields, including agriculture, technology, education and health. Over time, this disconnect erodes their acquired skills and diminishes their motivation to contribute meaningfully to national development.

28. To address these challenges, participants underscored the importance of early exposure to different career pathways through initiatives such as career days, immersion programmes and graduate schemes. Such opportunities are seen as vital for helping students make informed decisions about their professional futures, diversifying the labour force and reducing brain drain. It was also recommended that public and private sector partnerships be strengthened to ensure accessible training opportunities for all youth, not only for those who are academically exceptional. Participants further emphasized that young people should take a proactive approach by conducting their own research, seeking internships, volunteering and networking to identify areas where their skills can be best applied.

29. Limited access to financing was also identified as a key barrier to youth entrepreneurship and innovation. Young people who wish to start businesses often struggle to secure funding because financial institutions typically prioritize clients with established credit histories or collateral. Participants proposed that regional banking institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank, collaborate to create or expand financing mechanisms tailored for young entrepreneurs. It was further suggested that governments introduce incentives and concessions to encourage commercial banks to employ qualified youth and provide accessible funding for youth-led start-ups.

30. Participants also drew attention to the lack of institutional support for young people working in the gig economy.⁵ Many youths expressed a preference for flexible, non-traditional forms of employment rather than the conventional nine-to-five work structure. However, they observed that the formal employment system in the Caribbean has not evolved to accommodate these emerging work patterns. Consequently, individuals in the gig economy often lack essential protections such as job security, health insurance and pension plans. Strengthening social protection systems to include non-traditional workers was therefore identified as a priority to improve their quality of life and economic resilience.

31. Another pressing concern raised was the continued brain drain from the subregion. Limited career prospects and the absence of attractive professional opportunities have prompted many of the Caribbean's brightest minds to seek employment overseas. To mitigate this trend, participants recommended creating more pathways for professional growth within the region and fostering environments that encourage young people to invest their skills locally.

32. Examples of promising initiatives were shared, including the work of the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association Youth Advocacy Movement, which helps young people develop leadership and workforce readiness skills. The National Internship and Apprenticeship Programme in the Turks and Caicos Islands, similar to the On-the-Job Training Programme in Trinidad and Tobago, was also highlighted as a successful model for facilitating school-to-work transitions. In addition, The Turks and Caicos Islands has implemented mandatory soft skills and life skills programmes focusing on communication, teamwork, problem-solving, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and community development which are considered key competencies that equip youth for meaningful participation in the labour market.

33. Finally, participants emphasized that achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth requires balancing academic education with life skills development. Both were seen as equally critical for preparing young people to adapt to a rapidly changing world of work. They further encouraged the use of media as a powerful tool to inspire, inform and connect youth. Through digital platforms, radio and television, youth-led storytelling and entrepreneurship features can amplify success stories, shift social narratives and motivate other young people to explore new economic opportunities. By investing in human capital, promoting inclusive labour policies, and empowering young people through skills development and access to finance, the Caribbean can create a more dynamic, innovative and equitable economic future.

⁵ The gig economy refers to a labour market characterized by short-term, flexible and freelance work arrangements rather than traditional, long-term employment. In this system, individuals (often called gig workers) are paid for specific tasks, projects or "gigs" instead of receiving a regular salary.

5. Panel: A promise to the sea (SDG 14: Life below water)

34. The panel on SDG 14: Life Below Water explored the urgent need to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources in the Caribbean. It brought together youth advocates and environmental innovators to discuss the subregion's key challenges, including limited ocean literacy, inadequate funding and weak policy integration of youth perspectives. Participants highlighted creative youth-led solutions such as sustainable innovations using sargassum, and called for stronger advocacy, education and regional cooperation to protect the Caribbean's marine environment.

35. The participants highlighted several pressing challenges facing Caribbean youth and their engagement with ocean sustainability. It was observed that, although many young people in the Caribbean live in SIDS, there remains a general lack of understanding about the importance of the ocean and its critical role in sustaining life, livelihoods and culture. Participants noted that despite being surrounded by vast marine resources, many youth are unaware of the economic, environmental and cultural value of the waters that define their nations. This gap in understanding has limited youth participation and advocacy in ocean-related issues that directly affect their communities.

36. Participants also emphasized the issue of inadequate funding for initiatives under SDG 14. It was pointed out that this goal has received less than 2% of global environmental and climate-related financing, including allocations from the Green Climate Fund. While multiple funding mechanisms exist, they are highly competitive and SIDS are often overlooked in global financing structures. As a result, many youth-led or community-based projects that could contribute to marine conservation struggle to secure resources for implementation.

37. Another major concern raised was the inadequacy of school curricula in addressing contemporary climate and ocean challenges. Many young people reported that they have had to educate themselves on critical environmental issues such as the impact of sargassum seaweed, rising sea levels and coral reef degradation, because these topics are often missing from formal education systems. The lack of ocean literacy within national curricula was said to contribute to a broader disconnect between youth and their environment, leaving them less equipped to advocate for sustainable ocean management and climate resilience in their countries.

38. In discussing potential solutions, participants highlighted the importance of increasing youth advocacy and engagement. They noted that Caribbean youth could draw inspiration from their Pacific counterparts, who demonstrate a strong sense of ocean stewardship that extends beyond economic value to encompass identity, culture and food security. Strengthening youth-led advocacy campaigns was seen as a critical step toward fostering a deeper appreciation for the ocean and motivating young people to take a more active role in marine conservation.

39. To address funding gaps, it was recommended that Caribbean countries work collectively to establish regional environment-related funds, rather than relying primarily on external donors. Such mechanisms would allow for more direct access to resources and greater autonomy in financing local conservation and sustainability projects. Participants also underscored the importance of inclusive governance, pointing out that key international and regional frameworks often fail to reference or include youth. It was therefore recommended that young people be involved at every stage of sustainable development planning, from consultation and design to implementation and monitoring.

40. Strengthening legislative and regulatory frameworks was also seen as vital for protecting marine ecosystems. Participants urged greater regional awareness of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. They noted that to date, only a few Caribbean member signatories have ratified the agreement, and Caribbean youth should familiarize themselves with its provisions and advocate for wider regional adoption.

41. Panellists further encouraged young people to take responsibility for their own learning, rather than waiting for formal education systems to fill the knowledge gap. Free online courses, interactive learning platforms and community workshops were identified as valuable tools for building awareness and technical understanding of climate and ocean issues. Participants also called for greater collaboration between the public and private sectors through a system of matching investments. They proposed that when governments allocate funding for youth-led environmental projects, private sector entities could match these contributions to amplify their impact and expand opportunities for meaningful youth participation.

42. The discussion underscored that sustainable ocean governance in the Caribbean requires not only institutional and financial reforms but also a shift in mindset that places young people at the centre of ocean advocacy, innovation and stewardship. By increasing awareness, access to funding and collaboration across generations and sectors, Caribbean youth can play a leading role in conserving the subregion's most valuable and defining resource, its ocean. One notable example was a young innovator from Saint Lucia, who is tackling the problem of sargassum seaweed by transforming it into eco-sustainable prosthetic limbs. Her work was recognized as a creative and practical response to both environmental and social issues by turning a widespread ecological nuisance into a valuable resource that improves lives. This initiative demonstrates how young Caribbean leaders are harnessing local materials and traditional knowledge to design sustainable solutions. Participants noted that her work exemplifies the kind of youth-driven innovation and entrepreneurship needed to advance SDG 14, proving that with the right support and visibility, young people can drive impactful change in ocean conservation and sustainable development.

6. Key conclusions and closing

43. The Commonwealth Youth delegate for Trinidad and Tobago applauded the dedication and creativity of Caribbean youth in driving sustainable development across the subregion. She stressed on the important recommendations coming out of the discourse, highlighting in particular the need to enhance access to financing and entrepreneurial support for youth, modernizing education to prepare them for new economic opportunities and expanding national programmes that connect education, skills and employment. She also emphasized the call for increased climate and ocean financing with youth inclusion in governance, translating international commitments into national legislation and strengthening community-led implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. She ended by expressing her gratitude to ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean for its leadership and to all facilitators, speakers and youth advocates for their commitment to progress. The session ended with a collective call for continued collaboration, innovation and advocacy to ensure that young people remain central to the achievement of the SDGs in the Caribbean.

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World Food Programme (WFP)

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F. United Nations Specialized Agencies

Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO)

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G. Intergovernmental organizations

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L. Secretariat

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Annex II**PROGRAMME****Wednesday 26 March**5:30 pm to 5:45 p.m. **Opening remarks**

- Abdullahi Abdulkadri, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
- TeHilla Maloney, CDB Future Leader Network Chair
- Jemiah Prince, Commonwealth Youth Delegate, Trinidad & Tobago
- Esquire Henry, CARICOM Youth Ambassador for Antigua & Barbuda

5:45 pm to 6:45 p.m. **A promise to living better (SDG 3: Good health and well-being)**

Moderator: Luke James-Trim, CARICOM Youth Ambassador for Tobago

- Regina Bakhteeva, Caribbean Multi-Country Office, United Nations World Food Programme
- Dr. TeHilla Paul, Public Health and Social Impact Advocate, Trinidad & Tobago
- Rianka Chance, UN Youth Advisory Group, St. Vincent & the Grenadines
- Dr. David Adams, University of Oxford Leadership Delegate, Guyana
- Gabrielle Mollineau, Fulbright Scholar & Public Health Advocate, Trinidad & Tobago

Debate with Youth

Interventions

- Danielle Mullings, PAHO Youth for Health group member, Jamaica
- Chelsea Antoine, Program Support Officer, Caribbean Public Health Agency, Trinidad & Tobago

6:45 pm to 7:45 p.m. **A promise to her (SDG 5: Gender equality)**

Moderator: Jemiah Prince, Commonwealth Youth Delegate, Trinidad & Tobago

- Darren Carter, Young Professional- Gender Equality, Caribbean Development Bank, Barbados
- Randall Theodule, Human Rights Activist, St. Lucia
- Amanda Slew, Commonwealth Youth Council Regional Representative for the Caribbean and the Americas, Commonwealth Youth Council, Jamaica
- Sabrina Barnes, Youth Ambassador, Jamaica

Debate with Youth

7:45 pm to 8:00 p.m.

Wrap-up and conclusions

- TeHilla Maloney, CDB Future Leader Network Chair

Thursday 27 March

5:30 pm to 5:35 p.m.

Opening Remarks

- Esquire Henry, CARICOM Youth Ambassador for Antigua & Barbuda

5:35 pm to 6:35 p.m.

A promise to decent work and prosperity (SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth)

Moderator: Tamoy Campbell, Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network, Jamaica

- Rahym Agustin-Joseph, Rhodes Scholar for the Commonwealth Caribbean, St. Lucia
- Osaze Moraldo-Bowen, UWI Barbados Guild President, Trinidad & Tobago
- Arielle Neely, Youth Employability Activist, The Turks & Caicos Islands
- Stephon Gabriel, President, Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association

Debate with Youth

Interventions

- Lenz Wendy Civil, Founder, HART'S Community, Haiti
- Leo Bourne, Public Relations Officer, South Caicos Regatta Committee, The Turks & Caicos Islands

6:35 pm to 7:35 p.m.

A promise to the sea (SDG 14: Life below water)

Moderator: Tamoy Campbell, Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network, Jamaica

- Marver Woodley, Senior Operations and Policy Manager, Department of the Blue Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and the Blue Economy, Antigua & Barbuda
- Isaiah Thomas, Membership and Engagement Officer, Commonwealth Blue Charter Ocean and Climate Youth Working Group
- Amber Turner, Founder, Miss Sustainability & Bahamas National Youth Ambassador, Bahamas
- Jenna Williams, Caribbean Youth Environment Network, St. Lucia
- Dana-Marie Salinas, AOSIS Fellow & Environmental Lawyer, Trinidad & Tobago

Debate with Youth

7:35 pm to 7:45 p.m.

Key conclusions and closing

- Jemiah Prince, Commonwealth Youth Delegate, Trinidad & Tobago



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