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# PROPOSED REGIONAL AGENDA FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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**INTRODUCTION**

The formulation of a regional agenda for inclusive social development is a mandate of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean at its second session, held in Montevideo, in October 2017. In resolution 2(II),[1] adopted on that occasion, the Conference agreed to construct a regional agenda for inclusive social development "based on public policies that address the region's structural inequalities and the new challenges arising from technological change and the necessary transition to an environmentally sustainable economy, with a focus based on rights, gender equality and the life cycle and an approach of universalism that is sensitive to differences, within the general framework of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The resolution also asked the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to provide technical assistance for the agenda's construction, considering the axes that structure social inequality in the region and the need to guarantee people's social, economic and cultural rights, with particular emphasis on policies that are fundamental to their well-being. As indicated in resolution 2(II), these policies cover contributory and non-contributory social protection, health and education, food security and nutrition, care, promotion of productive high-quality employment and decent work, the social institutional framework and financing social policies, and fostering South-South cooperation, promoting the exchange of experiences and lessons learned among countries.

Resolution 2(II) calls upon States, as part of the regional agenda, to address "the situation of particular inequality, discrimination and social and economic exclusion that affects children and adolescents, older persons, young people, women, indigenous peoples, the Afrodescendent population, persons with disabilities, those living in disadvantaged areas and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, together with migrants, populations affected by disasters and climate change and those displaced from their territories by conflicts". The resolution also urges States to involve civil society, academia and the private sector in the preparation and discussion of the regional agenda, in line with the multi-stakeholder approach enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following proposal for a regional agenda for inclusive social development seeks to respond to this mandate and thereby contribute to ending poverty and achieving greater equality and well-being in the region.

At their second meeting, held on 12 September 2018 in Panama City, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the work plan for formulation of the regional agenda for inclusive social development.[2] At their third meeting, held on 23 April 2019 in Santiago, the Presiding Officers endorsed a preliminary version of this proposal, in general terms.[3] The version presented below for discussion and consideration at the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean incorporates the comments received at the third meeting of the Presiding Officers and those conveyed subsequently in official communications from the countries.[4] This proposal also incorporates contributions from civil society, made in the spaces for dialogue provided for this purpose.[5]

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[1]   See resolution 2 (II) [online]: https://crds.cepal.org/2/en/documents/resolution-2ii-second-session-regional-conference-social-development-latin-america-and.html.

[2]   See the agreements adopted at the meeting [online] https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/19-00286_mds.3_agreements.pdf.

[3]   See the agreements adopted at the meeting [online] https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/18-00897_mds.2_agreements.pdf.

[4]   See *Proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development: comments by the member countries of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/CDS.3/DDR/3).

[5]   See *Proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development: comments from civil society* (LC/CDS.3/DDR/4).

# I. OBJECTIVES

## A. OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To support implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in areas linked to the mandates of the ministries of social development and equivalent entities, taking into account the achievements, opportunities and critical obstacles related to inclusive social development in the region.

## B. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Identify a set of axes and lines of action, taking into consideration the commitments already made by the countries of the region and their recent experiences, in order to safeguard and deepen the progress made in social development, end poverty and achieve greater social inclusion and equality.

- Promote high-quality public social development policies that enable the entire population to exercise their rights, leaving no one behind.

- Address the critical obstacles that hinder inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Strengthen the position of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the role of ministries of social development and equivalent entities in public agendas, bolstering intersectoral coordination of social policies.

- Promote regional and subregional cooperation spaces as a means of deepening progress towards inclusive social development, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

# II. PRINCIPLES

The proposed principles of the regional agenda for inclusive social development are aligned with the agreements and commitments assumed by States in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as those linked to other international and regional instruments in the areas of human rights, sustainable development and social development. These include United Nations instruments and declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). At the regional level, these principles are inspired by instruments such as the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, adopted by the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, adopted by the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the Organization of American States.

## A. THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AS A NORMATIVE PRINCIPLE

The rights-based approach, with its principles of non-discrimination and equality, participation and empowerment, and accountability and transparency, forms the normative basis for social policies aimed at achieving inclusive social development and sustainable development. Pursuant to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, these rights are central to policy goals, in particular in relation to access to social security and social insurance; work; protection and assistance for the family; an adequate standard of living, including the rights to food, housing and clothing; the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; education; and cultural rights. Economic, social and cultural rights also play a central role in policy design and implementation, considering the inherent dignity of the human person, the principles of universality, inalienability, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights, and the commitment of States to respect, protect, promote and make rights effective, which is consistent with the perspectives of comprehensiveness and complementarity set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## B. EMPOWERMENT AND AUTONOMY

Achieving greater levels of autonomy, independence and participation is key to the genuine integration of individuals, families and communities into development, so that they can choose and carry out their life projects in decent conditions, effectively enjoying rights, free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

## C. DIGNIFIED LIFE AND PROGRESSIVE WELL-BEING

In line with the right to an adequate standard of living and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, actions to achieve inclusive social development are governed by the principles of progressivity and non-regression. This entails ensuring adequate levels of well-being, going beyond the required minimum and instead aiming for the greatest possible level of development, according to the context of each country. When formulating and implementing social development policies, policymakers should opt for those that provide the greatest protection, the best entitlements and the greatest enjoyment of rights for individuals, families and communities.

## D. UNIVERSALISM THAT IS SENSITIVE TO DIFFERENCES

To achieve universal access to income, assets, capacities and the public and social services that are fundamental to guaranteeing rights and to high levels of well-being, policies must adopt a dual perspective. Firstly, policies must apply the principle of universality to access to social services, following a rights-based approach. Secondly, policies must actively aim to overcome existing gaps and inequalities, to "leave no one behind'. To this end, affirmative action is needed to break down access barriers for individuals and groups experiencing different forms of inequality, discrimination and exclusion. It also requires promoting greater effective equality among people, combating the culture of privilege and the naturalization of hierarchies —based on social origin, national origin, gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, migratory status or disability, or other factors— and the institutional practices that perpetuate them. Progress must also be made towards the full recognition of diverse identities and demands, as a prerequisite

for full inclusion and a culture of equality, fostering the adoption of gender equality, interculturalism and non-discrimination perspectives.

## E. AN APPROACH BASED ON REDISTRIBUTION AND SOLIDARITY, WITH FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Social policies must be based on a redistributive approach, redistributing resources to excluded and discriminated strata and people and providing priority protection to vulnerable populations, within a culture of equality and solidarity. It is also important that the maximum possible amount of budgetary and institutional resources be sought in order to ensure financial sustainability, notwithstanding respect for the sovereign decisions of States on these matters.

## F. A SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is based on the conviction of the integrated nature of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. Social development does not hinge solely on social policies; it also requires inclusive and sustainable economic growth and environmental stewardship. By the same token, higher levels of social development are required to facilitate environmental sustainability and enable economic growth.

## G. HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC POLICIES

High-quality social development policies put effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, sufficiency, social participation, transparency and access to information at the heart of decision-making. A solid institutional framework must be gradually constructed, with sufficient human, financial and technical resources, incorporating accountability mechanisms and enabling active participation by civil society[6] and the general public.

## H. PARTNERSHIPS AND SOCIAL COMPACTS TO CONSOLIDATE STATE POLICIES

In order to achieve social policy goals that go beyond addressing transitory circumstances, partnerships and social compacts are needed, with mutual responsibility and active participation by all stakeholders in society, and regional and subregional multilateralism as a fundamental part of the means of implementation. Within this framework, the State plays a central and irreplaceable role in protecting rights and achieving redistributive goals.

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[6] This includes organizations, independent groups, social movements and local, national and regional networks whose work focuses on social, economic and environmental justice, in any of the three dimensions of sustainable development, as established by the Mechanism for the participation of civil society in the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, whilst also taking into account the academia and the private sector.

## III. AXES AND LINES OF ACTION OF THE REGIONAL AGENDA
## FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
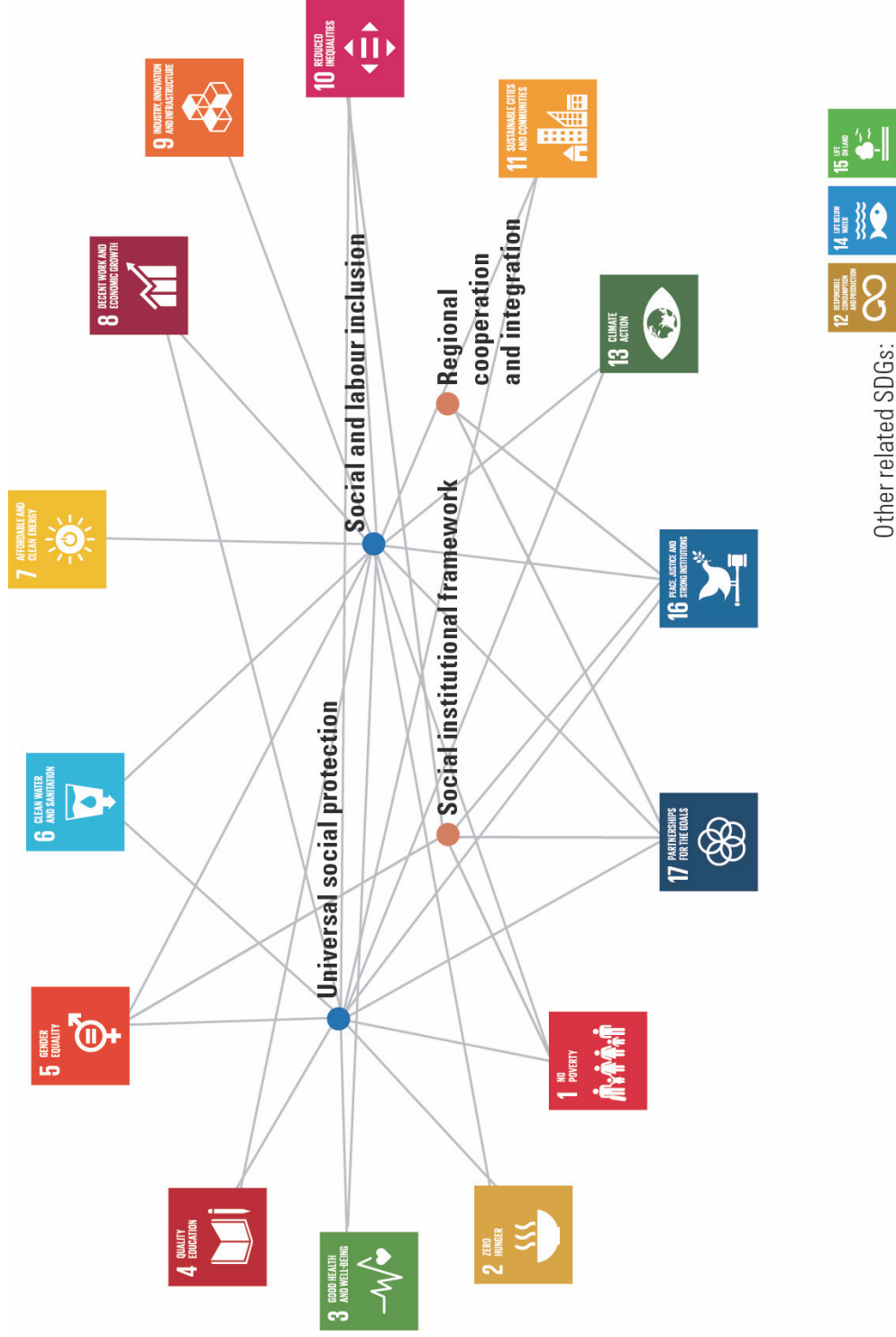
### A. PRESENTATION AND BASIS OF THE AXES

Linking the concepts of social development and social inclusion makes it possible to identify certain key dimensions and characteristics of inclusive social development, which, if achieved, would help to close gaps and reduce structural inequalities caused by the critical obstacles that hinder progress towards sustainable development. These dimensions and characteristics are the result of an analysis of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the main point of reference, as well as an examination of the critical obstacles faced by the region in this area, a study of the agreements on social development adopted in various intergovernmental forums in which countries' ministries of social development or equivalent entities participate, and review of the mandates of these institutions. With these considerations in mind, the regional agenda for inclusive social development is centred around four complementary axes, each with a set of lines of action, which are described later in this document. The axes are:

(i)     Universal and comprehensive social protection systems, to end poverty and significantly reduce inequalities.

(ii)    Policies to promote social and labour inclusion, to foster dual inclusion and leave no one behind.

(iii)   A strengthened social institutional framework, to implement high-quality social policies.

(iv)    Regional cooperation and integration, to progress towards inclusive social development and achieve sustainable development.

The depth, specific relevance and means of implementation of the proposed lines of action must be assessed in relation to the mandates and characteristics of the social institutional framework in place in each country and national circumstances. The lines of action proposed for each of the axes of the regional agenda for inclusive social development have been formulated in general terms and are aligned with the shared challenges the region faces in each area; their implementation at the subregional and local levels should take into account the specificities of each country and the heterogeneity of the region.

The four axes around which the regional agenda for inclusive social development revolves are interconnected and are directly related to all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have explicitly stated social aims. Axes 3 and 4 are means of implementing the policies included in axes 1 and 2 (see diagram 1).

**Diagram 1**

**Links between the axes of the regional agenda for inclusive social development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**



**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

## 1. Universal and comprehensive social protection systems, to end poverty and significantly reduce inequalities

Social protection systems make a pivotal contribution to ending poverty and reducing inequality. Social protection aims to guarantee universal access to income that permits an adequate level of well-being, as well as universal access to social services (such as health, education, water and sanitation), housing, labour inclusion policies and decent work. Thus, social protection seeks to effectively address gaps in access to well-being, enabling people to exercise their rights and participate fully in society. This makes it a key tool for inclusion. In addition to being linked to poverty, inequality and shortages of decent work, social protection policies relate to other critical social development obstacles in the region, such as the vulnerability of the population to emerging challenges, those related to the development of human capacities, and obstacles tied to institutional frameworks and policy financing. In particular, the design of social entitlements can be geared towards achieving effective synergies with other social policy goals, including ending hunger and child labour, reducing infant, child and maternal mortality, and completion of primary and secondary education. For all these reasons —from a universal and integral perspective— strengthening these systems is a cornerstone of the regional agenda for inclusive social development and a fundamental social investment in countries' development strategies.

In keeping with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the rights-based approach, social protection systems must be universal, acknowledging that access must be guaranteed for all. In addition, in line with the principle of universalism that is sensitive to differences, social protection entitlements and instruments must be prioritized and adapted for different populations, according to the forms of discrimination, exclusion and vulnerability they face, and to their needs and characteristics.

In order to be intrinsically comprehensive, the system must be designed to encompass the various components of social protection, including contributory and non-contributory elements, labour market regulations and care policies. In this regard, there is an intrinsic link between social protection and the social and labour inclusion policies developed under axis 2 of this agenda. This link is essential to ensure that social protection systems provide access to key policies, to ensure a sustained reduction in poverty and inequality and end intergenerational transmission of such scourges.

Social protection systems play a central role in the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see diagram 1), especially because of their link with ending poverty (SDG 1) and the fact that they are explicitly mentioned in target 1.3 ("Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable") and their link with reducing inequality (SDG 10), as reflected in target 10.4 ("Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality"). Social protection is also linked to other Goals through its role in ending hunger (SDG 2) and in facilitating access to health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), care policies (SDG 5), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), decent work (SDG 8) and housing (SDG 11). In addition, such policies contribute to resilience to climate-related risks and disasters (SDG 13), non-discriminatory policies (SDG 16) and policy coherence for sustainable development (SDG 17).

An examination of the agreements adopted between 2010 and 2018 in regional and subregional intergovernmental forums on social protection,[7] in which the ministries of social development and equivalent entities of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have participated, reveals that the

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[7] See a detailed view of these agreements in the Database of regional and subregional social development commitments [Spanish only] at: https://dds.cepal.org/compromisos/

issues on which there is greatest consensus are: (i) universal access to social protection as a means of protecting people's well-being in the face of social, economic and environmental risks; (ii) care as a right and the need to strengthen universal care policies and services within the framework of social protection; (iii) the comprehensiveness of social protection systems, moving towards interlinking their components (contributory, non-contributory, labour market regulation and care policies); (iv) the importance of giving priority in the design of these systems to groups that experience most vulnerability, discrimination or exclusion; (v) institutional strengthening of social protection systems, including fiscal sustainability strategies and intersectoral, horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms; and (vi) the importance of cooperation on social protection.

Ministries of social development and equivalent entities in Latin American and Caribbean countries play a key role in social protection policies. In the vast majority of cases, their missions and mandates[8] reflect their role in implementation of the system as a whole or in some of its core components, or reflect their links with various population groups, and especially those that are exposed to more serious risks and forms of exclusion and discrimination.

This axis seeks to promote the design and implementation of social protection systems with universal access and comprehensive operation, enhancing the quality of their policies, institutions and mechanisms. This means developing systems that incorporate the full range of functions relating to income protection, closing gaps in access to social services and to policies for labour inclusion and promotion of decent work. It also entails extending coverage of social protection and moving towards adequate social entitlements. All of this also relates to the conception of social protection as a policy that is intersectoral by nature, interlinking the work of the various central and subnational levels of government, and involving civil society organizations and the target population itself as rights holders and key participants in the processes, not merely "beneficiaries" or recipients of the various programmes. This conception also highlights the need for social protection policies to be adapted to the characteristics, capacities, assets and needs of the different populations, prioritizing those who experience the greatest exclusion and access gaps, employing an approach of universalism that is sensitive to differences and in harmony with the establishment of national social protection floors.

## 2. Policies to promote social and labour inclusion, to foster dual inclusion and leave no one behind

This axis seeks to reduce inequality through actions to foster social and labour inclusion of excluded populations and to combat discrimination in all its forms, thus contributing to promoting equal opportunities, equal treatment and equality of outcomes. The axis therefore adopts a broad perspective on social and labour inclusion, with a scope that includes, but is not limited to, social protection and promotion,[9] complementing and expanding on the vision and actions proposed in axis 1.

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[8] See the following link to the Institutional Framework Database for Social Policy [online]: https://dds.cepal.org/bdips/en/dim23.php for an overview of the mandates of the ministries of social development and equivalent entities in the region.

[9] The concept of social promotion (*promoción social*) is widely used in Latin America to refer to policies and programmes geared to strengthening the capacities of poor and vulnerable groups to autonomously improve their living conditions and generate income.

Equality is an ethical imperative, a core value of development and a key factor for international stability and for the construction of just and peaceful societies. It is also a key driver of sustainable development, promoting innovation, higher productivity and environmental protection.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals emphasize reducing inequality as an end in itself and as a cross-cutting condition for fulfilling the Agenda as a whole. The aim of ensuring that no one is left behind clearly reflects its universalist and inclusive commitment. The 2030 Agenda thus provides a suitable enabling framework for launching a new generation of policies and moving towards a new development model that will spark a virtuous circle of growth, equality and sustainability for current and future generations.

Policies that seek to overcome barriers to inclusion experienced by people impact on various interrelated dimensions of inclusive social development, contributing to achievement of SDG 1 (End poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

As indicated in the resolution adopted at the second session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to move towards inclusive social development and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it is imperative to give priority attention to the situation of particular inequality, discrimination and social and economic exclusion that affects children and adolescents; young people; older persons; women; indigenous peoples; the Afrodescendent population; persons with disabilities; those living in disadvantaged areas; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons; migrants, populations affected by disasters and climate change and those displaced from their territories by conflicts.

As ECLAC has emphasized, the vulnerability, discrimination and exclusion experienced by these populations are the result of historical, social and cultural patterns that have shaped and reproduced a complex web of asymmetries of power and access to resources, as well as maintaining a culture of privilege. This situation calls for adoption of comprehensive policies with a rights-based approach. These policies must combine a principle of universalism with affirmative actions capable of breaking down access barriers and dismantling the web of interwoven inequalities. It is therefore necessary to consider and address the simultaneous and cumulative discrimination and exclusion affecting people who experience multiple dimensions of these inequalities, such as indigenous women, children and adolescents living in poverty in rural areas, or young women of African descent. At the regional and subregional levels, the implementation of policies to reduce gaps in social and labour inclusion would have an impact on various critical obstacles for inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and particularly the persistence of poverty, vulnerability to poverty, inequalities, uneven development of human capacities, restricted access to decent work and social protection, and situations of violence, as well as insufficient financing for social policies.

An important role is played in this area by ministries of social development and equivalent entities, whose mandates are strongly linked to ending poverty, reducing inequalities and increasing inclusion of various population groups. In addition, at various meetings attended by ministries of social development and equivalent entities, between 2010 and 2018 a number of regional and subregional commitments and agreements were adopted relating to the need to pay particular attention to population groups experiencing higher levels of inequality, discrimination and social and economic exclusion, such as children and adolescents; older persons; young people; women; persons with disabilities; indigenous peoples; the Afrodescendent population; migrants; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people; rural

populations; people affected by disasters and climate change, people displaced by conflicts in their territory, and people living in poverty. The agreements also repeatedly mention social inclusion in general and address specific dimensions of this issue, such as access to education and health services and labour inclusion, including economic and financial autonomy, the need to foster decent, formal employment for different population groups, compliance with labour equality laws, and the creation of opportunities for upward labour mobility, with equity and inclusion for all. Lastly, another issue that appears frequently in inclusion-related agreements is the need to ensure the active participation of citizens on an equal footing, the inclusion of different population groups in the powers of the State, and the empowerment and fostering of leadership of historically excluded populations.

### 3. A strengthened social institutional framework, to implement good-quality social policies

A sound institutional framework is a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Indeed, the Agenda and inclusive social development can only be achieved through State commitments, hand in hand with a solid institutional system that gives policies and programmes continuity, coherence and legitimacy, beyond political and electoral cycles. Several targets and Goals of the 2030 Agenda focus on strengthening institutional frameworks in general and social policies and protection systems in particular: SDG 17 relates to the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDG 16 promotes peaceful, just and inclusive societies to facilitate access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In the social sphere, and particularly as regards social protection and inclusion systems, the 2030 Agenda also addresses institutional issues in certain Goals such as SDG 1 on ending poverty, SDG 10 on reducing inequality, and SDG 5, which emphasizes the importance of women's participation in the different phases of policy design and implementation. These specific mentions do not lessen the great importance of institutional frameworks in implementation of policies linked to the other Goals.

Progress towards high-quality social policies —that are effective, efficient, sustainable, participatory and transparent— cannot be made without an adequate institutional framework. Strengthening institutional frameworks entails progress in consolidating four interdependent areas. The first of these is establishment of a solid legal framework, pursuant to the key international agreements on social issues and human rights, by signing such instruments and applying them effectively at the national level through constitutional norms and national or even local legislation and regulations. The second consists of ensuring an organizational model that is suited to the challenges faced, with, for example, a coherent structure and division of labour and clear roles and communicational systems. This structure requires adequate technical and information capacities to fulfil its functions effectively and sustainably in the long term, taking into account the social and cultural characteristics of the population. It also demands models for horizontal and vertical interconnection, facilitating operations that are integrated from the central level through to the local level.

The third area concerns the formulation of appropriate instruments to manage social policy, including process mapping, integrated information systems, monitoring and evaluation systems, and equipment and capacities that are geared to the challenges faced. As regards this last point, a core theme is advancing in creation of information systems that are administratively and statistically relevant, with appropriate disaggregations to reflect gaps and discriminations relating to income, gender, age, ethnicity, race, territory, migratory status and disability, among other characteristics, as defined in target 17.18 of the 2030 Agenda ("By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts"). Likewise, it is crucial to move forward with the establishment of transparent, participatory management processes that allow civil society organizations,

academia, the private sector, trade unions and the population in general to be active and well-informed participants, who are aware of outcomes and perform suitable social oversight.

Lastly, another of the institutional elements that determine the scope and impact of policies and programmes is the area of financing and its sources, structure and amounts. Although financing of social development policies is indispensable to their implementation, it remains a challenge, because social spending is used as a variable for adjusting fiscal balances, which undermines the continuity, coherence and predictability of social policy action. In this regard, the construction and consolidation of an institutional framework that is commensurate to the challenges of sustainable development requires broad social and fiscal compacts to ensure adequate financing.

From all the foregoing, two general spheres of action emerge: formalizing, establishing or strengthening social institutional frameworks, and safeguarding and consolidating the financing of social policy. Indeed, since social institutional frameworks are the result of an ongoing process of construction and successive adjustments, even the countries that have made the most progress must maintain their efforts to improve policy quality and address new challenges and social demands. In countries that are developing new institutional frameworks, the challenge is also to establish, formalize or institutionalize policies and programmes that lack an adequate framework. Another shared challenge is to strengthen inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to achieve truly intersectoral (vertical and horizontal) policies. In each case, this entails specific processes of adjustment and political leadership to consolidate the role of ministries of social development and equivalent entities, in harmony with other sectoral actors at the national and subnational levels.

The priority of a sound institutional framework is present in various social agreements adopted in the region. There are key commitments to adapt regulatory frameworks to the international commitments assumed by States and to create departments to address social problems or different population groups, and bodies for coordination and technical-political dialogue. Likewise, the formation of a sound institutional framework as a problem, function or challenge is widely reflected in the mandates of ministries of social development and equivalent entities. In this respect, at least two major themes stand out: institutional coordination and policy management.[10] This shows that the countries of the region give priority to consolidation of institutional frameworks for social policies and programmes. Such consolidation is a priority in order to strengthen the quality and scope of social policies in general and social protection actions in particular.

### 4. Regional cooperation and integration to progress towards inclusive social development and achieve sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda has given considerable impetus to multilateralism and partnerships for sustainable development. Cooperation and integration among countries within the international community are included in the 2030 Agenda both as a desirable goal and as a means of implementation, especially in SDGs 16 and 17. Considering the magnitude of the commitments undertaken in the Goals, and the transformations they entail in the social, economic, cultural and political spheres of each country, it is crucial to understand that they cannot be achieved in isolation, since they involve the entire international community and require policy action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. Hence the importance of strengthening agreements and joint actions among countries in pursuit of the Goals. In addition, Latin America and the

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[10] Institutional coordination appears in the mandates of 11 countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay) and policy management is present in the mandates of 7 countries (Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama and Plurinational State of Bolivia).

Caribbean is a diverse region with numerous shared challenges, such as those linked to the critical obstacles for inclusive social development. It is highly vulnerable to poverty and inequality and there are access and participation gaps that affect certain population groups more severely.

This reflects the need to further develop regional forums for dialogue and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned, as part of a new paradigm in international cooperation aimed at strengthening national development priorities and domestic capacities to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. In the area of inclusive social development, countries can draw on a set of regional and subregional instruments and forums that facilitate efforts to systematize and link existing commitments, create spaces for cooperation, collaboration and sharing of experiences, and forge long-term partnerships.

An analysis of regional and subregional commitments in social development that relate to strengthening cooperation and integration reveals two key themes. Firstly, there is the need to strengthen various cooperation and integration mechanisms at different levels: regional, subregional and national. Secondly, there are different cooperation goals, including: sharing of experiences and knowledge between countries, based on the understanding that cooperation between countries is an effective tool for peer learning through dissemination of good practices and analysis of shared challenges; provision of technical assistance or training, either between countries or by donors or institutions; definition of shared goals, through regional agendas or plans or through the identification of shared priorities; implementation of specific regional projects; and, less frequently, establishment of partnerships to increase financing of agreed initiatives or projects and make such financing more efficient.

Ministries of social development and equivalent entities have been in operation for a shorter time than other sectoral bodies in the social sphere, such as ministries of health, education and labour. In most countries, their mandates focus on tasks at the national level, especially on implementation and management of social policies and programmes, and rarely address the international level. However, the growing international activism of ministries of social development and the ever-increasing number of forums related to regional and subregional social development have created a need for strengthened capacities in this area and especially for consolidation of South-South cooperation mechanisms.

## B. AXES AND LINES OF ACTION

### 1. Universal and comprehensive social protection systems



Design, consolidate and deepen national policies and social protection floors following the rationale of an integrated system: with comprehensive goals, universal coverage and pertinent entitlements, that is integrative towards participants, and adaptive to particularities of populations and territories.

**Lines of action**

1.1    Strengthen comprehensive and universal social protection systems that, in their design and operation, and in the design and operation of their policies and intervention models, mainstream the rights-based, gender, ethnic and racial, life-cycle, territorial and disability approaches.

1.2    Establish inter-institutional work mechanisms involving the various social, labour and economic bodies, which will serve to agree upon the scope of the social protection system, structure roles and coordinate joint implementation models, at the central and decentralized levels, in order to implement the system's various components and instruments. In addition, strengthen the links between social protection policies and social and productive inclusion policies, in order to guarantee mechanisms for sustained reductions in poverty and inequality.

1.3    Advance in consolidating the guarantee of a basic level of income for all, prioritizing those living in poverty and extreme poverty, considering appropriate coverage and amounts of income transfers, including non-contributory pensions for older persons and persons with disabilities, in conjunction with social security entitlements, and entitlements and transfers aimed at children and their families. Assess the desirability and feasibility of gradually and progressively incorporating a universal transfer for children and a citizen's basic income as active policies of social protection systems, given their contribution to eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and promoting inclusion in the face of emerging risks.

1.4    Move towards ever greater interlinkage between the components of social protection systems. Promote coordination with social security institutions to broaden their coverage, the adequacy of their entitlements and their sustainability, eliminating any discriminatory mechanisms that may persist in the design of their instruments, while drawing attention to the specific challenges faced by informal workers, unpaid caregivers, women, older persons, indigenous peoples, populations of African descent, persons with disabilities, the rural population and migrants.

1.5    Strengthen the guarantee of access to education, health and housing to enable the population to exercise rights, promoting linkages between sectoral policies and social protection, and seeking to increase coverage of these sectors, with a focus on the population most affected by poverty and social exclusion.

1.6    Incorporate care into social protection systems, interlinking care instruments with the other components, from a perspective of gender equality, rights, and the promotion of joint responsibility, advancing towards universalization of care. This entails ensuring the accessibility of care policies, combining time, resources, services and regulations for dependent persons, including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as caregivers of such dependants, paying special attention to the circumstances of young people who are not attending school and are excluded from the labour market owing to caregiving duties.

1.7    Define a set of instruments appropriate to the social protection needs of the population that, having emerged from poverty, is socioeconomically vulnerable and highly exposed to a return to poverty, guaranteeing protection of their income and access to mechanisms for social and labour inclusion. In addition, expand provision of entitlements to middle-income sectors, in line with the goal of universal social protection.

1.8    Incorporate into the design of social protection policies the principle of active search for eligible participants in order to reach all those living in poverty and vulnerability, with integrated social information systems to assist in identifying the requirements of the various populations, facilitating their access to social protection and closing existing gaps in coverage.

1.9     Consider the specific social protection challenges of informal workers, taking into account existing forms of informality and new forms that have arisen as a result of changes in the world of work, as well as the challenges related to the transition to an environmentally sustainable economy, promoting strategies for formalization of such workers and expansion of their access to social security.

1.10    Ensure that the entitlements included in social protection systems have a child-sensitive perspective, taking into account the specific risks affecting children, strengthening their access to services aimed at building their capacities, family entitlements and care. In particular, contribute to the consolidation of comprehensive early childhood care systems through programmes that link social protection, health, nutrition, early education and care actions, promoting the required intersectoral coordination.

1.11    Contribute to social protection initiatives for the prevention and eradication of child labour, strengthening existing actions by ministries of social development and equivalent entities, as well as enhancing coordination with other bodies in this area, such as ministries of labour, education, trade unions, civil society organizations and the private sector.

1.12    Increase awareness of the specific social protection needs of populations in rural areas, promoting initiatives aimed at overcoming gaps in access to entitlements, encompassing food security and considering linkages with local development strategies and strategies linked to the transition to environmentally sustainable economies.

1.13    Incorporate into social protection systems the challenges arising from the emerging risks affecting the region, including the impacts of climate change, the technological revolution in the world of work and in other spheres of society, violence and migration, designing instruments that are relevant to national and subregional realities.

1.14    Guarantee access to social protection for migrants at all stages of the migration cycle, taking into account the growing demand that migration flows place on related policies, and paying special attention to the circumstances of migrant children. Contribute to the construction and strengthening of agreements on the portability of social security entitlements. Also, treat social protection as one of the fundamental policies for addressing the root causes of migration in places of origin.

1.15    Contribute to increasing the response capacity of public institutions and the resilience of populations affected by humanitarian crises and disasters, especially those living in poverty, also taking into account the heightened vulnerability and limited response capacity of children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities to adverse effects during and after crises.

## 2. Policies to promote social and labour inclusion



Address the specific barriers faced by different populations, according to the priorities and realities of national contexts, and promote greater social and labour inclusion of all individuals, families and communities.

**Lines of action**

2.1    Deepen the analysis of the inequalities that affect different populations and how they intersect and exacerbate each other, manifesting as inclusion gaps in various areas, and expand dissemination of information on such inequalities.

2.2    Prioritize actions to equalize opportunities in early childhood and childhood, to ensure that children and adolescents enjoy their rights, treating such actions as a strategic commitment to end poverty and reduce inequality in a sustainable manner.

2.3    Further the development of policies and programmes that enable young people to build paths of inclusion, with a special emphasis on capacity development, including technological, digital and socio-emotional skills, access to decent work, the balance between education, work and family life, and participation, recognizing and responding to the heterogeneity of young people in the countries of the region. In particular, adopt measures to expand inclusion opportunities for young people who do not attend school, are outside the labour market or are in conflict with the law.

2.4    Promote actions that enhance the autonomy and dignity of older persons and full respect for their rights, including the right to live a life free of violence and to participation, with a focus on economic security, and access to health and long-term care.

2.5    Promote access to productive, high-quality employment and decent work for all.

2.6    Ensure the incorporation of the gender and ethno-racial approach into social and labour inclusion policies, aiming to eliminate stereotypes and all forms of discrimination that may exist in social policies.

2.7    Promote policies and programmes for inclusion of women in the labour market and production, particularly to eliminate the various barriers to women's labour market participation, with a focus on strengthening care policies and systems. Foster education and training initiatives, especially in areas from which women have traditionally been excluded, such as science, technology and innovation. Promote access to decent work and support measures to formalize employment among women, including paid domestic labour, as well as measures to achieve greater wage equality between men and women and better working conditions.

2.8    Undertake actions to promote racial equality and combat racism. As part of this work, processes must be developed to raise awareness of racism and ethno-racial inequality, including the incorporation of questions related to ethnic and racial self-identification in national statistical systems and in the administrative records of all programmes in the social area.

2.9    Guarantee the rights of people of African descent and their communities. Undertake direct actions to address the violence experienced by Afrodescendants and measures to break down the multiple access barriers they face in relation to education, health and decent work, through affirmative actions that may include active search mechanisms aimed at these populations and the definition of quotas reserved for them in education and in the labour market, and the application of a multiracial approach in health and education services.

2.10   Deepen efforts to recognize the collective rights of indigenous peoples and to promote equality and improvement in their living conditions through actions that incorporate an approach based on equality, non-discrimination and cultural diversity, including designing and implementing social and labour inclusion policies, encouraging the adoption of an intercultural approach to policy design and implementation —particularly in education and health— and ensuring indigenous people's access to basic services and infrastructure. Affirmative action policies must also be implemented to increase indigenous people's access to educational opportunities and decent work.

2.11 Combat homophobia and transphobia and take measures to ensure access to education, productive employment and decent work, without discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, with mechanisms to support inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons and eradicate the violence they experience.

2.12 Deepen efforts to ensure accessibility and opportunities for persons with disabilities, to ensure they enjoy their rights on an equal basis. Among other actions, this may include: mainstreaming the disability approach in social development policies; promoting awareness-raising initiatives to combat prejudices and stereotypes about persons with disabilities; fostering measures to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market and in production, such as access to technical and vocational education and training; ensuring reasonable accommodation in the workplace and implementing affirmative action policies, particularly in access to tertiary education and to employment.

2.13 Promote actions to recognize and value the positive contributions that migrants make to societies in destination and origin countries. Encourage the establishment of new public instruments to address migratory phenomena, for example by fostering policies and programmes relating to local development and employment generation in countries of origin and mechanisms to protect the rights of migrants, regardless of their legal status, throughout the migration cycle. Take action to promote the inclusion of migrants in education, health and decent work.

2.14 Advance in analysis of the impact of the various forms of violence on social and labour inclusion, governance, social cohesion and the enjoyment of rights. Put forward multisectoral policy proposals to address these impacts, including recognition of victims of violence and reintegration of people who have been in conflict with the law.

2.15 Reduce territorial inclusion gaps by implementing policies to increase access to basic services and infrastructure, including Internet access, and to improve equal opportunities in access to productive employment and decent work, taking into account the specificities of the population living in rural and disadvantaged areas, or in marginalized urban areas.

2.16 Undertake linked multisectoral actions that address the social, economic, political and environmental challenges relating to the promotion of rural development and the reduction of rural poverty. As part of this, expand access to natural and productive resources, services, technologies, markets and public procurement programmes and strengthen local governments and rural institutions, including family farmer organizations, producers' organizations and cooperatives, empowering people to participate in decision-making on rural development policies.

2.17 Support the social and solidarity economy as a means of addressing the deficit in decent work through access to finance, such as microcredit, microfinance and microinsurance schemes. Strengthen the skills of those engaged in the social and solidarity economy and bolster networks for sharing knowledge and experience. Facilitate links with the market and participation in public procurement programmes to promote the sustainability of production units in the social and solidarity economy, with differentiated strategies for urban and rural areas.

2.18 Promote actions to deepen financial inclusion of households, in order to promote their financial autonomy, enabling access to formal financial services for those who are excluded and improving use of the financial system among those who already participate in the formal financing system.

2.19 Promote access to housing policies and programmes, while working to improve the living conditions of populations living in informal settlements and inadequate housing.

2.20    Close the digital divide in terms of access, knowledge and skills, so that everyone can participate fully in the information society and harness the potential of technological tools to achieve greater inclusion in various fields, with a focus on older persons, persons with disabilities, those living in rural areas and low-income households.

2.21    Pursue efforts to take advantage of the changes resulting from the current technological revolution, in order to achieve greater social and labour inclusion, and to ensure that development initiatives in digital government in areas such as communication, remote assistance and digitalization of procedures take into account the specific cultural, educational and capacity-related characteristics of the various segments of the population, thereby enhancing effectiveness and efficiency and closing gaps.

2.22    Mainstream the social inclusion approach in decision-making processes in all public policies, including social policies in sectors such as health, education, work and housing, as well as economic and environmental policies. This includes promoting social and labour inclusion initiatives in ministries and secretariats responsible for production policies and technological development policies.

## 3. A strengthened social institutional framework



A sound institutional framework is a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and inclusive social development: both can be achieved only through State commitments, hand in hand with a solid institutional system that gives high-quality policies and programmes continuity, coherence and legitimacy; includes mechanisms for consultation and participation of the target population and civil society organizations; is accountable, transparent and not financially inefficient or open to political manipulation.

**Lines of action**

3.1    Establish, formalize and strengthen social institutional frameworks.

    3.1.1    Advocate for the adaptation of national legal frameworks to the mandates of the key instruments of international law related to guaranteeing human rights, and particularly economic, social and cultural rights.

    3.1.2    Strengthen the regulatory framework of ministries, secretariats and collegial bodies responsible for social development policies, as well as subnational and autonomous entities that participate in social policy management in the countries.

    3.1.3    Formulate regulatory and policy-design frameworks that guarantee the recognition, well-being and rights of the diverse groups of the population, ensuring their sustainability.

    3.1.4    Create and strengthen mechanisms for active participation by the target population and civil society organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation of social policies and programmes of the ministries of social development and equivalent entities.

3.1.5    Strengthen mechanisms for dissemination, transparency and accountability of existing entitlements and their allocation, considering in particular the accessibility requirements of groups subject to greater exclusion.

3.1.6    Strengthen horizontal coordination mechanisms at the central government level, for the management of intersectoral policies. Appoint an authority capable of ensuring that such mechanisms function and are properly structured —such as a social cabinet— in accordance with the mandates of ministries of social development or equivalent entities. In particular, develop regulations that give stability to social protection systems and provide intersectoral coordination mechanisms for operation of such systems, through measures such as the creation of high-level technical bodies.

3.1.7    Strengthen mechanisms for vertical coordination between the different levels of government, to avoid duplication, foster synergies, deepen decentralization and local development processes, strengthen technical and information capacities at all levels of government, and increase territorial ownership of social development policies.

3.1.8    Strengthen the rights-based and inclusion approach in the management processes of ministries of social development and equivalent entities, including clearly defined procedures and training initiatives for public officials.

3.1.9    Consolidate information, monitoring and evaluation systems for social entitlements, including records of the target or potential target population disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, race, age, territory, disability and other criteria that may be associated with increased vulnerability. Design these systems in such a way to allow them to be updated and monitored on a continuous basis, making them standardized and easily accessible for use by various public entities, enabling identification of gaps and inequalities in access to entitlements and reducing errors of exclusion or inclusion. Improve the quality of policies and fulfilment of policy goals.

3.1.10   Include and consolidate the statistical identification and visibility of different population groups in all the data sources and administrative records used in social policies and programmes, including: women, young people, older persons, indigenous peoples, persons of African descent, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons and homeless persons. Ensure that this information is properly stored and easily accessible for consultation through appropriate technologies for all public entities, civil society organizations and the general public, to foster development of evidence-based social policymaking.

3.2    Safeguard and consolidate the financing of social policy.

3.2.1    Prioritize, consolidate and safeguard the financing of social policy, protecting and guaranteeing resources, especially those aimed at the well-being of children, adolescents, and other more vulnerable populations that are subject to greater exclusion and discrimination.

3.2.2    Promote the sustainability of social protection entitlements, maintaining levels of investment at least at their present value and avoiding cuts. Advocate for the formulation of fiscal rules which, in line with the reaffirmation of the rights-based approach, ensure the necessary resources for policy sustainability.

3.2.3    Reaffirm, at the national and regional levels, the notion that social policy financing should be considered an investment. Encourage analysis of the impact of social policy financing on poverty and inequality, to advance in the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

## 4. Regional cooperation and integration

The 2030 Agenda has given a renewed role to multilateralism. Partnerships for sustainable development and cooperation and integration among the countries of the international community are included in the 2030 Agenda as desirable goals and as means of implementation of SDGs 16 and 17. Moreover, the increased international activism of ministries of social development and the growing number of forums related to regional and subregional social development have created a need for strengthened capacities and more robust South-South cooperation mechanisms.

**Lines of action**

4.1     Forge linkages between the commitments and exchanges of the various regional and subregional forums to support implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda, within the framework of the mandates of ministries of social development and equivalent entities and of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

4.2     Strengthen the spaces and capacities for international cooperation among ministries of social development and equivalent entities, through channels and mechanisms for South-South cooperation on development and social protection among Latin American and Caribbean countries and with other regions.

4.3     Create joint working groups on specific thematic and policy areas identified by governments, made up of specialized technical teams from countries, to promote experience-sharing and to foster common agendas at the regional and subregional levels and among countries from different subregions, as well as civil society participation and dialogue.

4.4     Promote the exchange of experiences relating to institutional frameworks and management of social development policies and programmes, especially with regard to best practices in intersectoral coordination and mechanisms to ensure their financing is sustainable.

4.5     Further comparative research and regional discussions on issues related to inclusive social development, strengthening and coordinating networks of specialists from government, academia, civil society, the private sector and other regional bodies.

4.6     Exchange and disseminate information and statistical data, taking advantage of regional and national public goods such as observatories and forums related to social development.