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**REPORT OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS
OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

Santiago, 23 April 2019

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The ninth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of Latin America and the Caribbean was held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago on 23 April 2019.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries in their capacity as Presiding Officers of the Committee: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico and Panama.

3. The following member countries of the Commission also participated: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Portugal and Spain.

Chair and Vice-Chairs

4. At the thirty-seventh session of ECLAC, the countries listed below had been elected to serve as the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean:

Chair: Cuba

Vice-Chairs: Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay

B. AGENDA

5. The Presiding Officers adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Cooperation with the Caribbean.
3. Report on the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (Buenos Aires, 20–22 March 2019).
4. Report on the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean.
5. Other matters.

¹ See annex 2.

C. PROCEEDINGS

6. Ileana Núñez, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, addressed the opening session.

7. The Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, said that the meeting had been convened further to some important developments, such as the completion of the first cycle to review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region and the upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019; the discussion around the repositioning of the United Nations development system; and, specifically in the area of South-South cooperation, the follow-up to the second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, which had been held recently in Buenos Aires. In that context, the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC was an ideal forum to assess the outstanding challenges and in which to put forward and implement operational actions that would help to build the capacities of the countries of the region, to narrow persistent structural gaps and to eliminate inequalities, the basis for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The greatest challenges regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda were rooted in strengthening the means of implementation, especially with regard to ensuring inclusive, concessional and equitable financing, based on a comprehensive approach to measuring and evaluating development, as well as the need to build capacities, institutions, knowledge and human resources at the different levels.

8. Lastly, she said that Cuba, in its capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, supported the constructive and transparent dialogue, on the premise that countries could draw on multilateralism and international development cooperation as resources to forge a different outlook for current and future generations, a reality in which all people would have equal opportunities to enjoy their rights and where no one is left behind.

9. The Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation then submitted the provisional agenda, which was adopted without amendment.

Cooperation with the Caribbean (agenda item 2)

10. The Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation reiterated the Presiding Officers' commitment to the Caribbean and said that Cuba identified with the challenges faced by the Caribbean countries, given that it was one by virtue of its culture, history and traditions. Cuba also shared their vulnerability to weather events and the financial weaknesses characteristic of small island States, which had been worsening in Caribbean countries owing to their high levels of indebtedness and the lack of paths of integration, among other matters. She reiterated her country's willingness to work together with the secretariat of the Commission to build the capacities of Caribbean countries and accelerate their integration into the rest of the region, in line with the "Caribbean first" policy launched at the thirty-seventh session of ECLAC in Havana in May 2018.

11. Enrique Oviedo, Political Affairs Officer of the Office of the Secretary of the Commission, said that ECLAC was committed to putting the island Caribbean countries at the top of the region's agenda. The Caribbean countries faced exclusion on two counts: (i) because they were considered middle-income

countries —some had even graduated—, which, in specific terms, implied a lack of access to concessional financing and other forms of trade and cooperation facilitation; and (ii) because they were located in one of the subregions most vulnerable to the effects of extreme natural events (made worse by climate change), which meant they were exposed to repeated external shocks that caused significant losses and cumulative damages and the resulting real setbacks, tighter fiscal space and a high level of external debt. Those factors were very difficult to overcome without international cooperation. In addition, correspondent banking was withdrawing as a result of derisking policies, which had hit those Caribbean economies highly dependent on services, including tourism.

12. He said that the international community and cooperation could not remain oblivious to those phenomena; ECLAC had launched and was making real progress in the debt for climate adaptation swap initiative in the most affected countries based on the creation of a resilience fund, which would be partially sustained by the interest generated by that debt, with a view to promoting resilient investment and adaptation to climate change. However, none of that would be possible without an enabling international cooperation environment and the real political will of all stakeholders, including the international development banks. Lastly, the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development would review the challenges facing the Caribbean within the framework of Agenda 2030. The Presiding Officers of the South-South Cooperation Committee should be attentive to the Forum's efforts in that regard and to the identification of the Caribbean's needs (including institutional, statistical and financial), because the Forum provided space to arrive at solutions, such as, for example, the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

13. The representatives welcomed the Chair's initiative to add cooperation with the Caribbean to the Presiding Officers' agenda, as it should be a priority for the region. They also welcomed the information provided by the Chair and ECLAC on the subject and urged the Secretariat to continue its efforts to produce information on the subregion in order to contribute to the search for solutions to address its vulnerabilities.

14. A number of representatives said that the Presiding Officers of the South-South Cooperation Committee should continue to prioritize the Caribbean countries and that they, in turn, should share their experiences with regard to key issues for the region, such as climate change resilience and adaptation or the institutional framework to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, among others.

15. Lastly, the representatives said that priority must be given to the Caribbean in the tasks arising from the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, as well as in the implementation of the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Report on the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (Buenos Aires, 20–22 March 2019) (agenda item 3)

16. The Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, congratulated the Government of Argentina on the successful Conference held in Buenos Aires in March 2019, which had reaffirmed the principles of South-South cooperation and recognized the close relationship between it and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She also noted that the outcome document recognized the role of the regional commissions and their contribution to supporting and training countries in assessing the

quality and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes aimed at improving data collection at the national level for the development of common methodologies to measure the impact of those cooperation modalities.

17. The Political Affairs Officer of the Office of the Secretary of ECLAC said that Latin America and the Caribbean had assumed its duty to contribute, after 40 years, to a new agenda that reflected global and local challenges to development-orientated international cooperation, in order to achieve the desired growth and sustainable development of the 2030 Agenda. Paragraph 6 of the outcome document adopted by countries during the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires recognized that South-South and triangular cooperation contributed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieving the overarching goal of eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, as it shared the comprehensive vision of development contained in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, that balanced the three dimensions of sustainable development —economic, social and environmental. Paragraphs 7 and 8 also recognized that South-South cooperation was conducted among countries of the South, and that such cooperation was a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit. The document acknowledged the voluntary, participative and demand-driven nature of South-South cooperation, which should not be seen as official development assistance.

18. Lastly, he said that the document stressed that South-South cooperation was not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation. The Commission was honoured that paragraph 21 of the document reaffirmed the key role of the regional commissions and United Nations country teams in supporting and promoting South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. ECLAC welcomed the importance given in the document to the development of country-led systems to evaluate and assess the quality and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and the fact that it encouraged all actors to support initiatives for information and data collection, coordination, dissemination and evaluation of South-South cooperation, upon the request of developing countries. The Commission also welcomed the document's acknowledgement of the interest of some developing countries in establishing a methodology for accounting and evaluating South-South and triangular cooperation. He reiterated the Commission's commitment to supporting countries in those tasks.

19. The representative of ECLAC said that international cooperation must move from a traditional development vision towards a more universal one. That new paradigm for international cooperation should take into account the multidimensional nature of development and go beyond traditional measurements of economies' levels of development, such as gross domestic product (GDP). Those measurements did not reflect a country's real capacity to access or mobilize resources, nor did they help to determine the level of social and economic well-being. Moving up the income scale did not necessarily guarantee a higher standard of living or the ability to mobilize more resources to finance efforts to close existing development gaps. Lastly, attainment of the 2030 Agenda and the wider use of its means of implementation required various forms of South-South and triangular or trilateral cooperation that would involve trade and facilitate capacity building, knowledge exchange, technology transfers, financing for development and investment in infrastructure, among other measures.

20. The representative of Argentina gave a brief overview of the agenda of the Conference, drawing attention to its achievements and expressing thanks for the support received which had ensured a successful meeting 40 years after the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

21. The country representatives expressed their thanks to Argentina for the excellent organization of the Conference and their satisfaction with the results, highlighting in particular the defence of the visions and positions of the region and developing countries on South-South and triangular cooperation.

22. They requested the ECLAC secretariat and the Committee on South-South Cooperation to take the lead in the follow-up to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and to report back to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

23. Lastly, they requested the Presiding Officers to incorporate into their work the guidelines arising from the Conference, paying special attention to the work of all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Report on the network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 4)

24. Under this agenda item, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, in her capacity as Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, said that the proposal to establish a network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean had been presented by Mexico at the seventh meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation and had been approved by the member States of the Commission pursuant to resolution 730(XXXVII) at its thirty-seventh session. The main objective of the Network was to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of the governments of the region engaged in establishing or seeking to establish national mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, she reiterated Cuba's support for its implementation.

25. The representative of ECLAC said that the Network was an excellent example of South-South cooperation in the region. The cooperation project sought to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of the governments of the region in three areas: (i) national strategies and mechanisms for inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination to monitor achievement of the SDGs; (ii) the preparation of statistics and methodologies for calculating SDG indicators; and (iii) the promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation schemes focused on the 2030 Agenda. The Network had held a planning workshop for the core group in Mexico City on 21 September 2018, at which a structure had been defined that needed to be ratified. The Commission would act as the technical secretariat, providing logistical and technical support for the implementation of the Network. ECLAC would also be responsible for the technical coordination of the project (acting as the focal point for the coordination of the activities and tasks established by the core group). Political coordination would be carried out by Cuba, in its capacity as the presiding country of the Presiding Officers of the South-South Cooperation Committee, accompanied by Mexico, in its capacity as the country which had proposed the initiative. The Network would have three working groups, one for each pillar: strategy, statistics and cooperation.

26. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of the countries agreed that the Network needed to be launched in 2019 and that real progress must be made in the efforts to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of the governments of the region in the areas of statistics, strategy (institutional development) and cooperation at the fourth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, to be held in Havana in April 2020, as well as at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, to be held in San José in May 2020.

27. The representatives also asked ECLAC to produce a road map for the three pillars to guide work in the medium term. The countries could review and work on the roadmap, by pillar, at the first working meeting of the Network in the second half of 2019.

28. The representatives stressed that the Caribbean countries should be actively involved in the activities related to each pillar of the Network, and in the working meetings. They also said that the Caribbean countries had much to offer with regard to each of the three pillars of the Network.

29. The representatives said that a first working meeting of the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean must be held, attended by representatives of Mexico, Uruguay and ECLAC as the core group and possible donors to the Network, in order to develop its programme of work, identify and mobilize resources and establish a financial management mechanism for available funds.

Consideration and adoption of agreements

30. At their meeting in Santiago on 23 April 2019, the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation adopted the agreements that figure in annex 1.

Annex 1

AGREEMENTS

At their meeting in Santiago on 23 April 2019, the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation agreed to:

1. *Thank* and commend the Argentine Republic upon the successful organization of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Buenos Aires from 20 to 22 March 2019;

2. *Hold* the tenth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation in the second half of 2019 and decide that the topics to be discussed will include follow-up on the outcome of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation;

3. *Reiterate* the importance of South-South cooperation for the region, as well as the opportunities it offers for the Caribbean subregion, in line with the “Caribbean first” strategy;

4. *Reiterate also* the importance of the coordinated participation of Latin American and Caribbean South-South cooperation mechanisms in the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean and of carrying forward the work of the Network;

5. *Hold* the first working meeting of the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean in Havana on 27 and 28 May 2019 and the second working meeting of the Network in Mexico City in October 2019.

Annex 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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