



**United Nations**

# **Review of Management and Administration in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)**

**Management Letter of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Jorge T. Flores Callejas and Aicha Afifi**



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*Executive summary***Review of Management and Administration in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (JIU/ML/2019/1)**

The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system included in its Programme of Work for 2019 a Review of Management and Administration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which has two outcomes: a management letter that is presented in this document and a report that will be finalized in early 2020.

This management letter should be placed in the context of the current Secretary-General's reform efforts, in particular: the reform of the regional dimension. The main objective of this management letter is to present some of the preliminary findings from the review in a timely manner, providing key elements which could be necessary, in the view of the Inspectors, for the informed decision-making of relevant parties aiming at strengthening the regional dimension as part of the ongoing reform of the United Nations Development System.

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**Abbreviations**

BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action
DCO	Development Coordination Office
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanisms
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSC	South-South cooperation
TCDC	Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations development system
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group





## I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system included in its Programme of Work for 2019 a Review of Management and Administration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The Programme of Work for 2019 was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 73/287. The review is currently underway; it is expected to be finalized and presented to management and to the appropriate body of the General Assembly in 2020.

2. The terms of reference of the review give particular attention to the steps taken by ECLAC in the context of the United Nations reforms and the repositioning of the United Nations Development System (UNDS), including ECLAC regional coordination role vis-à-vis other United Nations and non-United Nations regional actors and the division of labor within the region. They also refer to the response provided by ECLAC to the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda while effectively assisting Member States of the region.

3. This management letter is prepared as part of the review of Management and Administration of ECLAC; however, it should be placed in the context of the current Secretary-General's reform efforts, in particular: the reform of the regional dimensions. The main objective of this Management Letter is to present some of the preliminary findings from the review in a timely manner, providing key elements which are necessary, in the view of the Inspectors, for the informed decision-making of relevant parties aiming to strengthen the regional dimension as part of the ongoing reform of the UNDS.

### A. Methodology

4. This Management Letter is an intrinsic part of the current review of Management and Administration of ECLAC. A second part of the review will address, inter-alia, issues related to its governance and to the internal management of ECLAC, including human resources, financial and information management, as well as partnerships and other relevant issues. Consequently, the same methodology applies to both products; the methodology used combines qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis. JIU follows a collaborative approach with its stakeholders, seeking comments and suggestions during the review process which includes, inter alia:

- The preparation of preliminary terms of reference further updated with the output of meetings with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of Member States.
- A desk review of documentation of relevant governing bodies, mainly the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the different ministerial meetings of the region, including governance reports and decisions;
- A desk review of internal policies in the form of organizational directives, administrative instructions and other internal documents from ECLAC Secretariat;
- A questionnaire was administered to Member States of the Latin American and Caribbean region on the value of ECLAC;
- A corporate questionnaire was also administered to ECLAC management covering the main areas of management and administration;

5. Missions were undertaken to New York, where the JIU team conducted preliminary consultations with Member States and relevant officers of the United Nations; followed by Mexico D.F, Santiago de Chile, Port of Spain and Guatemala City where interviews took place with the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, senior managers and other personnel in charge of the main administrative, management and oversight functions at ECLAC Headquarters and subregional offices. The JIU team also held interviews with other stakeholders and partners of ECLAC, including representatives of national governments and institutions benefiting from ECLAC operational activities.

## **B. Background**

6. The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) was established by Economic and Social Council resolution 106(VI) of 25 February 1948 and began to function that same year. The scope of the Commission's work was broadened afterwards to include the countries of the Caribbean, and by resolution 1984/67 of 27 July 1984, the Economic Council decided to change its name to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

7. ECLAC is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. It was established with the purpose of contributing to the economic development of Latin America, coordinating actions directed towards this end and reinforcing economic ties among countries of the region and with other nations of the world. It should be noted that the promotion of the region's social development was later included among its primary objectives. The 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, together with several Asian, European and North American nations that have historical, economic and cultural ties with the region, comprise the 46 Member States of ECLAC. Fourteen non-independent territories in the Caribbean are Associate Members of the Commission.

8. ECLAC Headquarters is located in Santiago, Chile. In 1951, the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico City was established, serving the Central American subregion, and in 1966, the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean was founded in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, ECLAC maintains country offices in Buenos Aires, Brasilia, Montevideo and Bogotá, as well as a liaison office in Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mandate and functions**

9. The terms of reference of the Commission, which is the governing body of ECLAC, were adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at its sixth session and the Commission is subject to the general supervision of ECOSOC. The mandate given to ECLAC allows it to deal with the social aspects of economic development and the interrelationship of economic and social factors. The Commission is empowered to make recommendations on any matters within its competence directly to the Governments of members or associate members concerned.

10. ECLAC serves as secretariat of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies, as follows: the Committee of the Whole, the Committee on South-South Cooperation, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Council for Planning, the Statistical Conference of the Americas, the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Conference on Science, Innovation, Information and Communications Technologies and the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

11. ECOSOC, through its resolution 1998/46, mandated Regional Commissions to hold regular inter-agency meetings in each region, giving birth to the Regional Coordination Mechanism, with a view to improving coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system. Subsequently and since 1999, meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM) have been convened by the Regional Commissions, focusing on regional policy and programming aspects.

12. Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2000/5 promulgated the functions to be executed by ECLAC. Annex I contains a complete list of these functions. However, it is worth noting the following regarding its functions:

- Promotes economic and social development through regional and subregional cooperation and integration;
- Formulates and promotes development cooperation activities and projects of regional and subregional scope commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region and acts as an executing agency for such projects;

- Assists in bringing a regional perspective to global problems and forums and introduces global concerns at the regional and subregional levels;
- Coordinates ECLAC activities with those of the major departments and offices at United Nations Headquarters, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations with a view to avoiding duplication and ensuring complementarity in the exchange of information.

13. The activities of ECLAC are further informed by its strategic framework for 2018-2019 and continue to respond to the needs of the countries in the region, serving as a regional forum and facilitator in building regional consensus, supporting public-policy formulation to meet the development challenges facing the region and promoting and conducting multilateral dialogue, sharing knowledge and networking at the interregional, regional and subregional levels. The Commission promotes intraregional and interregional cooperation through coordinated actions with other regional commissions and collaborates with other regional organizations, including the United Nations entities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Previous work of the JIU**

14. JIU conducted a review of ECLAC in 2012<sup>3</sup>. The objective of the review was to provide guidance for improvement in areas such as, executive, financial and human resources management; accountability; information management; internal communication flows; partnerships; and regional coordination within the United Nations system. Additionally, the review examined the role of ECLAC in the Latin American socioeconomic context and its position in the coordination of regional integration and cooperation activities, including its coordinating role outside the United Nations system and interactions with major regional and subregional stakeholders. It contained six recommendations and all of them have been implemented however, with different degrees of success.

15. Most of the conclusions of the 2012 review are still valid. Among these:

- The review recognized the long-standing reputation of ECLAC as a regional think tank; its contribution to socioeconomic development thinking in Latin America and the Caribbean is widely recognized and appreciated by Member States in the region. Furthermore, the Inspectors noted the high level of satisfaction of the representatives of Member States and other stakeholders in the region regarding the services rendered and the work done by ECLAC, including in the form of technical assistance.
- Regional cooperation and integration is at the heart of the mandates and activities undertaken by ECLAC, which specifically include the promotion of economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean with a tailored driven approach not only to the different subregions but also to a particular country or a territory with the aim of meeting their specific needs.
- The review highlighted and stressed the enduring issues of inefficient regional coordination. The Inspectors concluded that despite clear mandates, delineated functions and the repeated efforts to clarify the necessary division of labour between United Nations entities, there was a high degree of overlapping, thus inefficiencies, in the coordination of United Nations activities at the regional level, mostly due to the complexity of governance and different accountability frameworks of all actors including the United Nations entities present in the region. The review called for a clear division of labour between RCM, led by ECLAC, and the United Nations Development Group, Regional Team for Latin America and Caribbean, now renamed as United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). This entrenched matter is one of the issues to be addressed within the Secretary-General's regional United Nations development system optimization and restructuring efforts.

16. The JIU, in its report "The role of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator: a benchmarking framework for coherence and integration within the United Nations system", already highlighted the need and provided guidance for enhanced regional coordination.<sup>4</sup>

17. It should be noted that other reports of the JIU are also significant in the context of the current review and of the reforms launched by the Secretary-General; for example, the review of cooperation among the United Nations regional commissions (JIU/REP/2015/3) looked into the cooperation between the regional commissions and other United Nations system entities, especially in the framework of RCM and the interface between regional and global governance and decision-making bodies of the regional commissions.

18. The review of the JIU on South-South cooperation<sup>5</sup> (SSC) highlighted, inter-alia, ECLAC's work on dialogue and policy development for SSC; indicating that it was the only Regional Commission with a sessional committee on SSC, established as early as 1979. The Inspectors concluded that the role of the United Nations Regional Commissions in promoting SSC and Technical Cooperation as a key tool for accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals needed to be enhanced through the design and implementation of a subregional, regional and/or interregional strategy. At the legislative level, the establishment of an SSC Committee at ECLAC was considered a good practice that should be replicated by the other Regional Commissions.<sup>6</sup>

19. Nevertheless, new studies have been conducted recently, including by entities external to the United Nations oversight machinery, as part of the wide-range reform of the Secretary-General, which have reconfirmed, inter-alia, the issues highlighted in several reports of the JIU and of other internal oversight bodies.

20. **The Inspectors are convinced, that reforms need to capitalize on existing good practices and take into consideration the result of the analysis of previous reform efforts in order to benefit from lessons learned and avoid inefficiencies.**

## II. ECLAC: Supporting the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean

21. The following findings and some of the preliminary conclusions included in the following paragraphs are the result of a desk review of relevant documentation, combined with the analysis of responses to the questionnaire sent to Member States of the region, including a focus group meeting with experts of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) as well as of the interviews held with United Nations staff, including ECLAC senior management, government officials, members of academia and other relevant stakeholders.

### A. ECLAC institutional strengths

#### **A recognized regional think-tank and knowledge hub on social and economic development.**

22. It is widely recognized that for the last seventy years ECLAC has been performing as a regional think tank on a wide variety of development issues, generating evidence-based knowledge for public policy development in the Latin American and Caribbean region. In doing so, the Commission has built an impressive intellectual capability, networking and in-depth understanding of the region development actors, challenges and potentials.

23. Drawing upon its long experience and recognized capacity to monitor development issues and analyse their impact on the regional and national policy agendas, ECLAC has positioned itself as the main source of information and analysis for public policy on the broad spectrum of economic, social and environmental sustainability issues on the region's development agenda. ECLAC's think-tank role is materialized through, inter-alia, its flagship publications: Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean; Social Panorama of Latin America; Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, International Trade Outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean.

24. ECLAC professional and technical staff understand the dynamics of the region and have accumulated valuable regional, subregional, as well as national and territories, knowledge on different areas of expertise, which facilitates and supports the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and the provision of technical cooperation activities that directly benefit the countries and territories of the region.

➤ **ECLAC is perceived as an honest broker; it is a trusted source of regional knowledge and data that would not be otherwise available to countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean region. This is an asset that in the view of Inspectors should be preserved in the current restructuring of United Nations regional configuration and which could render additional benefits, for example, in the context of the monitoring and reporting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

### B. ECLAC: platform for regional knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices

25. Through its intergovernmental machinery, including ten sectoral subsidiaries bodies, ECLAC also plays an important role as an impartial forum for the fostering of public policy debate, the exchange of good practices, knowledge sharing and networking at the regional and subregional levels, as well as the promotion of regional positions in global forums. In this regard, ECLAC provides a voice to countries in special situations including Landlocked developing countries (LLDC), Small Island developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Middle-income Countries (MIC) in addition to the territories.

26. The importance of the role of ECLAC was confirmed by Member States interviewed, who indicated that ECLAC is an impartial partner, sharing best practices and supporting their commitment to address global challenges as well as persistent structural ones.

27. Much has been said and several reports have highlighted the value of the regional dimension as a bridge between the local, regional and global levels. Furthermore, it is part of ECLAC mandate described in previous paragraphs. It is widely accepted that several challenges faced by countries and territories cannot be confronted just through national plans and actions. In this regard, transboundary issues specific to the region, such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, the impact of natural disasters, migration, trade integration as well as infrastructure and logistics to facilitate trade, crime, illicit flows and tax evasion, among others, cannot be effectively tackled without a coordinated regional approach. The regional level is necessary to efficiently confront the most important challenges faced by the Latin America and Caribbean region.

28. The regional dimension provides a platform to offer regional solutions and answers to global challenges while informing the elaboration of national plans. The establishment of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development<sup>7</sup> can serve as an example of the outcomes produced as a consequence of the regional debate. The purpose of the meetings of the Forum is to share experiences and best practices among the Latin American and Caribbean countries regarding actions taken to implement the SDGs in the region.

➤ **ECLAC should continue its facilitator role as the secretariat of the forum for regional debate and its support to Member States efforts in implementing the SDGs in the region.**

### **C. ECLAC: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs**

29. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, ECLAC has provided support to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda. ECLAC has put forward that integration and regional cooperation are the foundations to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda allowing countries to jointly address economic and transboundary issues that affect the implementation of the SDGs with a focus on several pillars for action:

- (a) developing and strengthening regional and national institutions to promote policy coherence and the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, including observatories on gender equality, planning and energy;
- (b) mainstreaming SDGs into national planning and national budgets, ensuring policy and institutional coherence, consistency and coordination;
- (c) strengthening the capacity of Member States to collect, process, analyze and disseminate data, statistics and indicators;
- (d) analyzing and promoting innovative avenues for the means of implementation taking into consideration regional and subregional specificities in financing, technology and trade;
- (e) generating spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue and knowledge sharing among government, business and citizens, enhancing coordination with United Nations system, regional entities and a diverse range of stakeholders.

#### **Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development**

30. In May 2016, the Member States of ECLAC adopted resolution 700(XXXVI) establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. The forum is a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDGs, its targets and means of implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

31. The objective of this multi-stakeholder Forum, which convenes annually Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector and representatives of civil society

under the auspices of ECLAC, is to generate a regional platform for peer-learning and exchange, enabling the countries of the region to share experiences and good practices.

32. In a few years, this Forum has become one of the most relevant and productive in the region. This is because, inter-alia, the involvement of all relevant stakeholders with an essential commitment: to leave no one behind and to put people at the centre of sustainable development.

33. The Forum evolves as the region evolves and it adapts its programme to the priorities of the region. For instance, the first session of the Forum held in 2017, included a peer-learning platform exchange in which participants shared their insights on developing institutional mechanisms for the follow-up of the then newly adopted Agenda and addressing gaps in capacities and data for measuring the SDGs implementation in the region. In the second session in 2018, the Member States commended the work carried out by ECLAC through its 70 years of existence and its continued efforts to support country-led processes. This session also included a segment on continuity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The third session of the Forum, held in April 2019 sought to provide an opportunity for the countries of the region to reflect upon the policies needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda, based on the experiences gathered through the first cycle of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

34. In 2017 the Forum welcomed 800 participants and 3 side events; in 2018 the Forum convened 1,000 participants and over 30 side events, and in 2019 1,200 participants took part in its plenary and over 50 side-events were organized, which speaks to the increasing relevance of the event and the recognition of a wide variety of stakeholders of this platform as a legitimate space for exchange on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region.<sup>8</sup>

35. The open participation in the regional forums of the regional representatives of the United Nations, including Resident Coordinators of countries in the region, funds, programmes and specialized agencies, is an important step to enhance regional coordination while informing the national level. **The Inspectors welcome and encourage the open and diverse participation in this Forum, in particular the regional teams of UNSDG and of the respective Resident Coordinators of the region.** It is a simple measure, with a view to enhancing collaboration, which in itself will not completely solve the issue of overlapping at the regional level; however, it may contribute to a better understanding of the regional issues at stake, in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The sharing of information and experiences can help to reduce inefficiencies, as confirmed by the Secretary-General "... we have witnessed early signs of the benefits from strengthened collaboration between the regional commissions and the regional teams of the UNSDG. This was visible, for example, in the regional forums on sustainable development held in 2019, with a level of engagement and contributions by the wider United Nations system that had not been seen to date."<sup>9</sup>

#### D. ECLAC programme of work alignment with the 2030 agenda

36. In addition to above initiatives intended to reshape the regional governance architecture of the region to better face the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda, ECLAC has realigned its programme of work accordingly. The overall strategy of the Commission for achieving the objectives of the programme is structured around 13 interdependent and complementary subprogrammes.

37. In an effort to ensure the alignment of ECLAC activities with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a restructuring was proposed in the strategic framework for ECLAC for 2018–2019<sup>10</sup>: the integration of subprogramme 4, "Financing for development", with subprogramme 3, "Macroeconomic policies and growth" was proposed in response to the increasing demands from Member States for analysis and policy proposals to tackle the new challenges for macroeconomic policymaking within the framework and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

38. A key element of both agendas was a focus on domestic resource mobilization and its complementarities with external resource mobilization. The integration of the two

subprogrammes allowed the Commission to increase the capacity to design new macroeconomic policies — fiscal, monetary and financial — geared towards mobilizing domestic and external resources in line with the goals and targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG8 “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, and SDG17, “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”. It has also facilitated the introduction of new areas of work that arise from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, namely, illicit financial flows, tax coordination and transfer pricing, among others. Synergies resulting from the integration of the two subprogrammes will allow ECLAC to better respond to demands from member countries in these new areas, as part of the fit-for-purpose efforts carried out by the Commission.<sup>11</sup>

39. It should be noted that the SDGs having a higher weight in ECLAC activities are: Goal 17, Goal 8, Goal 16 and 10. Eight subprogrammes are aligned with Goals 17 and 8; seven subprogrammes with goal 10 and six programmes with Goal 16.

40. Through the analysis of relevant subprogrammes documentation and multiple interviews held with ECLAC senior management, including heads of subprogrammes, the Inspectors determined the alignment of ECLAC subprogrammes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see Annex II for a detailed list of the 13 subprogrammes). The below figure illustrates the alignment of the subprogrammes with the 17 SDGs.

#### SDGs with higher presence in ECLAC programming



41. The SDGs with less presence in terms of the number of subprogrammes impacting on them are: Goal 14 addressed mainly by only one subprogramme and Goals 15 and 6 addressed mainly by two subprogrammes. It should be noted that elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are integrated, multilevel and interdependent and the achievement of some SDGs contributes to the advancement of others in a differentiated manner. Only one subprogramme is directly linked to SDG14, nonetheless activities implemented by other subprogrammes contribute to the achievement of this SDG. In that sense in 2016, ECLAC proposed to the four member countries of the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru) a number of measures intended to strengthen their cooperation in the commercialization of fishery and aquaculture products in global markets.

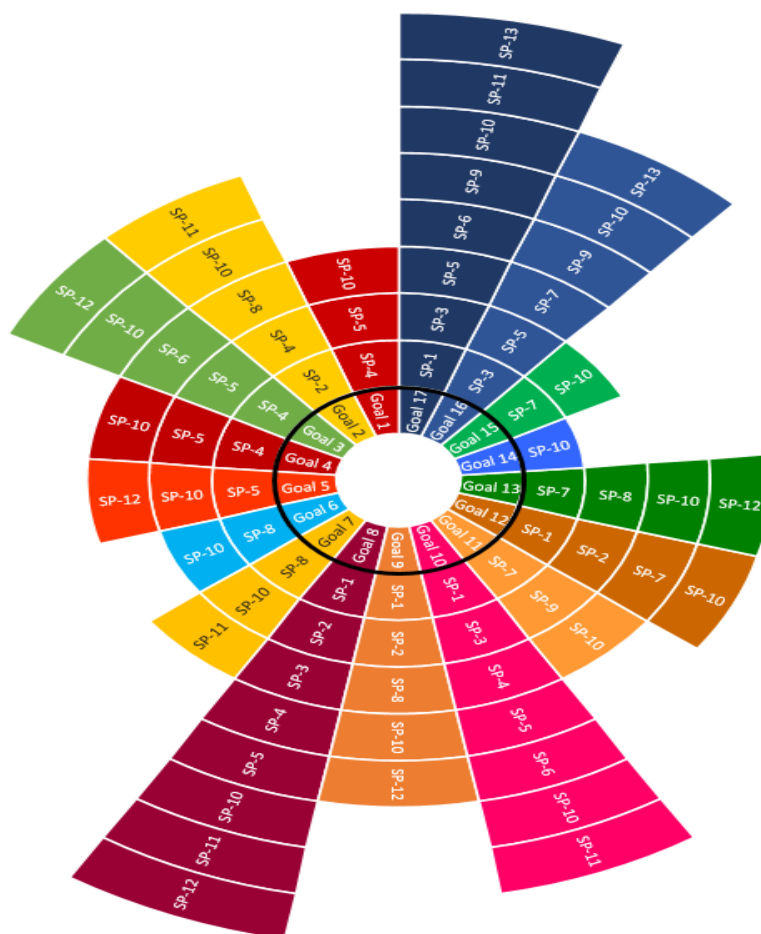
42. During a side event of the 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of ECOSOC, from 16 to 18 of July 2019, ECLAC's Executive Secretary explained that “in the particular case of ECLAC, the institution has lent its support to countries in the presentation of their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on progress made on the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the resident coordinators in those countries have collaborated on the exchange of experiences, with special emphasis on actions developed to meet the SDGs under review this year (SDG 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17)”.

#### SDGs with lower presence in ECLAC programming





Figure  
ECLAC subprogrammes (SP 1 – 13) alignment with the SDGs (Goals 1- 17)



43. The Inspectors are pleased to note the existence of mechanisms to capture the needs and priorities of Member States of the region for the achievement of the SDGs (i.e. the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development), they also welcome the alignment of ECLAC programming with the SDGs which will facilitate the implementation of ECLAC's programme in a manner consistent with the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the basis for the monitoring and reporting towards the achievement of the SDGs is also established in the region. Statistical work is one of the ECLAC recognized strengths and the demand for statistical support is expected to grow to meet reporting needs of the 2030 Agenda.

## E. Monitoring and reporting on the SDGs

44. This review found that the existing regional reporting mechanism are complex and overlapping, in this regard it is necessary that regional reporting on progress towards the achievement of the SDGs be uniform across different regions and consistent with the global indicator framework (230 indicators for the 2030 Agenda) to effectively highlight critical gaps and challenges. The list of SDG indicators agreed upon by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016 will be subject to refinements and improvements as methods and data availability improve. **In the view of the Inspectors, ECLAC should continue assisting the region in monitoring and reporting on the SDGs given its convening role on the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA), which serves as the regional interlocutor of the global United Nations Statistical Commission.**

45. The Secretary-General in his system-wide strategic document has established that, at the regional level, annual reporting on system-wide regional results of the United Nations in support of the 2030 Agenda, will be coordinated by the Regional Economic and Social Commissions with the support of the Development Coordination Office (DCO).<sup>12</sup> This office

is tasked with managerial and oversight functions of the recently established Resident Coordinator system and mandated to respond to needs and demands of the United Nations Country Teams and the UNSDG. Its objective is to better empower the new Resident Coordinator system which should be independent and fully dedicated to coordinating development activities on the ground and to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

46. ECLAC and its networks have been instrumental in facilitating global consensus on the global indicators framework. However, there is still plenty of work to be done, including on development and harmonization of regional and national indicators. It will be critical that ECLAC continues to coordinate with the agencies, funds and programmes of the UNDS to generate a single set of statistics with comparable methodologies for the 2030 Agenda.

47. Furthermore, the creation of the Network for the strengthening of national capacities for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDGs-LAC Network) is an example of ECLAC activities and its contribution. This initiative was conceived within the framework of the technical cooperation between Mexico and Germany and was put to the consideration of the Member States by Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, with the objective of strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of the governments of the region for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including, inter-alia, the generation of statistics and methodologies for the calculation of SDGs indicators and promotion of South-South and Triangular Cooperation schemes focused on the 2030 Agenda. The proposal was submitted to Member States at ECLAC's 37th session in 2018 and adopted by resolution 730(XXXVII). Membership to the network is voluntary and it is integrated mainly by the member countries of the Forum, providing a space to map capacities, sharing knowledge and providing cooperation. The core group of the Network also includes representatives from Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, the European Union and UNDP. The members of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, in their third meeting (April 2019), welcomed this project.<sup>13</sup>

➤ **ECLAC is one of the main regional assets of the United Nations system; it is uniquely positioned to facilitate the regional debate among a wide range of regional stakeholders and to capture the regional, as well as national priorities, of the countries and territories of Latin America and Caribbean in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Inspectors confirm the alignment of ECLAC programme of work with the SDGs.**

## **F. ECLAC South-South and subregional cooperation in the Caribbean region**

### **South-South Cooperation**

48. As reflected in the report "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2018" (A/73/63-E/2018/8) SSC displays an increasing trend. A growing number of countries have either created agencies dedicated to SSC or have boosted SSC capacities within their cooperation institutions. Furthermore, it should be noted that support for knowledge sharing and mutual learning is the leading type of South-South cooperation assistance requested.<sup>14</sup>

49. SSC has deep roots in the Latin American region, after five years of preparatory work, the first United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) took place in Argentina in 1978, adopting the Buenos Aires plan of action for promoting and implementing technical cooperation among developing countries (BAPA). BAPA was the first major blueprint for TCDC, providing new orientations in approaches to development cooperation among developing countries. General Assembly resolution 33/134 of December 1978 endorsed BAPA and in 1979 ECLAC established a sessional committee on SSC - the Committee on South-South Cooperation.

50. The Nairobi outcome document<sup>15</sup> reaffirmed the key role of the United Nations system and its Regional Commissions in supporting and promoting SSC. It further called on the latter to play a catalytic role in SSC and TC, and in strengthening technical, policy and research support to the countries in their respective regions.<sup>16</sup> More recently, General Assembly resolution 73/291 recognizes the role of the Regional Commissions in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, in accordance with their respective mandates.<sup>17</sup>

51. The Regional Commissions are natural spaces for SSC. The Inspectors could confirm through interviews with representatives of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) the active and pioneer role of ECLAC in the context of SSC. ECLAC effectively contributes to enhance South-South cooperation and coordinated action among countries from the region on major issues of common concern. Through the work carried within the framework of its Committee on South-South Cooperation ECLAC also contributes to improving quality of data and analysis, particularly in the planning, programming, reporting and follow-up of South-South cooperation activities.

52. There is still room for improvement regarding the effective implementation of SSC, as noted by the Secretary-General, “while 87 per cent of resident coordinator survey respondents noted that Governments had South-South cooperation activities, only 56 per cent stated that UNDAFs “substantively address” South-South and triangular cooperation”<sup>18</sup>.

➤ **The Inspectors are convinced that ECLAC, given its unique position in the regional and subregional contexts, can contribute further to the inclusion of SSC activities and priorities in national plans. ECLAC should collaborate with UNCTs to ensure the inclusion of relevant south-south cooperation initiatives in national plans of countries from the region.**

#### **Sub-regional cooperation in the Caribbean**

53. To address the specific challenges of the Caribbean, ECLAC launched during its 37th Commission Session in May 2018 its “Caribbean first” strategy.

54. This strategy encompasses several elements including promoting options for cooperation for Middle-Income/SIDs Caribbean countries, supporting a strategic advocacy on de-risking and providing countries in the subregion with the necessary support to implement the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, as well as the Samoa Pathway; it also intends to support capacity-building for national statistical systems to bridge the data gap, including continued support for resilience and adaptation, as well as supporting the establishment of an interagency task force including the banking sector.

55. As part of its Caribbean First Strategy and in an effort to address the challenges that the Caribbean region is facing to access external financing, ECLAC has launched a debt swap initiative for climate change, and the concomitant establishment of a Caribbean Resilience Fund for climate change adaptation and mitigation. This proposal has been well received by Caribbean Member States, the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat; it has been presented in several fora including the ECOSOC.

56. During 2018, ECLAC provided support to Caribbean countries delivering technical assistance through identification of the achievements, gaps, resource needs and remaining challenges towards sustainable development. In preparation for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SAMOA Pathway held in New York in September 2019, as mandated by the GA resolutions 70/202, 71/225 and 72/217, the Caribbean countries signed the San Pedro Declaration aiming to facilitate sustained focus on addressing the sustainable development challenges faced by Caribbean SIDS.

57. **The Inspectors welcome the launch of ECLAC’s “Caribbean First” strategy; it is a positive development which addresses the concerns expressed by the JIU in its 2012 review regarding the need to enhance the support provided by ECLAC to the Caribbean subregion. They expect that ECLAC’s “Caribbean First” strategy is harmonized with the outcomes of the ongoing review of multi-country offices in the Caribbean subregion, as part of the wider United Nations development system repositioning process.**

## **G. Regional Coordination of the United Nations system: an opportunity to address an entrenched issue.**

58. Regional coordination in the United Nations system has remained an issue in the last decades; as described in previous paragraphs, the JIU has addressed the issue in several of its reports. The Secretary-General in his last Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPRs) has also included regional coordination as one of the elements of his reform efforts. For the sake of conciseness, this management letter does not include a detailed history of the multiple attempts to enhance this long-standing issue.

59. Regional coordination is a core function of the regional commissions' mandate. Since 1999 meetings of RCM have taken place in response to resolution 1998/46 of the ECOSOC which mandated the regional commissions to hold regular inter-agency meetings in each region aiming to improve United Nations system coordination. These meetings have been convened by the regional commissions focusing on policy and programming issues of a regional nature and guided by regional priorities.

60. Since 2006, regional coordination has evolved around two interrelated groupings. The first is more outward looking from a United Nations system-wide perspective. This is formed by the RCMs, focusing on the analytical and normative work and activities of a transboundary nature, for which the regional commissions act as a catalyst using, inter alia, their convening power at both the intergovernmental and the secretariat levels. The second stream with a more inward focus on coordinating the services of the United Nations country teams, for which UNDP, as former manager of the resident coordinator system, was the catalyst, resulted in the former United Nations Development Group (UNDG) regional teams, now known as UNSDG. In the 2016 quadrennial review Member States called for the full implementation of a statement of collaboration between UNDG and the regional commissions. While some progress was achieved, a number of commitments in the statement of collaboration remained unfulfilled.

61. In an effort to address the remaining issues, the Secretary-General launched the first phase of optimization of the regional mechanisms and structures in the second half of 2018 aiming to improve collaboration between different United Nations actors at the regional level. As a result, the 2016 statement of collaboration between the regional commissions and the regional teams of the UNSDG has been superseded by a series of arrangements for increased collaboration among United Nations entities, including the regional commissions. The optimization phase includes several actions, inter-alia: a more thorough and integrated analysis of regional and transboundary issues as part of the national plans; the regional commissions in all regions have been invited to join regional UNSDG peer review mechanisms; a protocol for country engagement by regional commissions and/or non-resident agencies has been devised to ensure that resident coordinators are informed of all in-country development activities; meetings of the regional coordination mechanisms and of the regional teams of the UNSDG are now held jointly or back-to-back in all regions; resident coordinators are now invited to participate in regional conferences and platforms and UNSDG members are increasing their participation in the regional forums on sustainable development under the auspices of the regional commissions; mapping of publications and knowledge products is expected to be done in all regions.<sup>19</sup>

62. **The Inspectors welcome all the above actions that in their view will contribute to enhanced coordination through more frequent interaction and open communications. However, more needs to be done in their view to confront the persistent unclear division of labour and lack of proper coordination across United Nations entities and other challenges faced by “the forgotten level”<sup>20</sup> as described by some when referring to the regional dimension. A much clearer interface is needed between Member States, the regional commissions and country teams, as determined by the interviews held by the Inspectors.**

63. The set of arrangements indicated above will be supplemented by an additional restructuring of the regional assets of the United Nations as indicated by the Secretary-General<sup>21</sup> proposals focusing on five areas.

### **Creation of a new coordination mechanism**

64. A unified mechanism for coordination in each region, or regional platform, was proposed to be established by the Secretary-General (A/74/73-E/2019/4). However, the ECOSOC in resolution 2019/5 did not endorse this proposal but called for further regional review and options on a region-by-region basis. These platforms would integrate the different United Nations coordination mechanisms that currently exist. The Deputy Secretary-General will chair the high-level meetings of the regional collaborative platforms in all regions, as indicated in ECOSOC resolution 1998/46 Appendix III and the DCO would serve as the secretariat for the collaborative platforms subject to the ongoing regional review.

### **Establishment of strong knowledge management hubs in each region**

65. The Secretary-General plans to establish strong knowledge management hubs in each region, by pooling the policy expertise, by or across sectors. This undertaken will be led by the regional commissions and the DCO, in close consultation with the regional teams of the UNSDG pending ongoing deliberations.

66. The JIU in its 2012 review of ECLAC<sup>22</sup> already concluded that “the history of ECLAC together with its reputation as a respected source of regional socioeconomic knowledge, empower ECLAC to assume a renewed and stronger coordinating role at the regional and subregional levels.” The work undertaken for the preparation of this review also confirms this extent as indicated in previous paragraphs. The Inspectors expect that the final responsibilities and in particular the division of labour is further clarified to clearly delineate the respective responsibilities of the regional commissions and of the DCO.

### **Enhancing transparency and results-based management at the regional level**

67. In his proposal the Secretary-General also intends to enhance transparency and results-based management at the regional level. In his view, “this will require the strengthening of regional and subregional intergovernmental forums to further engage Member States and other stakeholders on region-specific issues that may require collective action, such as trade, fiscal policies, technology, migration and climate change.”<sup>23</sup> As indicated in previous paragraphs, ECLAC is already a well-established regional forum providing a space for regional debate and the discussion of regional priorities, including the regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the monitoring and reporting of the SDGs. **Thus, the Inspectors welcome the initiative proposed by the Secretary-General to place the responsibility of the coordination of the annual reporting on system-wide results of the United Nations at the regional level in support of the 2030 Agenda under the regional commissions.**

### **A region-by-region change management process**

68. The Secretary-General proposes to launch a region-by-region change management process that will seek to consolidate existing capacities with regard to data and statistics, as well as other relevant analytical functions that may be currently duplicative. This exercise will be undertaken in full consultation with each regional commission and respective regional team of the UNSDG.

### **Administrative services to regional offices through common back offices**

69. The fifth and last area addressed by the Secretary-General in his regional dimension reform is related to the optimization of services provided at the regional level, it intends to identify administrative services that could be provided more efficiently to regional offices through common back offices (such as human resources and procurement). Where feasible, co-location in common premises will also be sought.<sup>24</sup>

70. The Inspectors welcome the region-by-region approach. It is widely recognized that regional commissions are different from each other and that they have historically evolved in different contexts. Furthermore, the specific geography and the current number and location of the regional, subregional and national offices in the region should inform, inter alia, the preparation of a specific regional cost case study that could serve as the basis for further decision making. In this regard, the Inspectors would like to reiterate the suggestion contained in the JIU 2012 review: “... UNDG members take into consideration the benefits of locating their regional coordination offices, when feasible, within Regional Commissions’ premises in certain locations.”<sup>25</sup>

### III. Conclusions

71. Member States have consistently emphasized the importance of the regional dimension in the work of the UNDS as a bridge to inform, both global and national policies. However, there is an urgent need for enhanced coordination at the regional level as concluded by several reviews, including some prepared by the JIU.

72. At the regional level, regional commissions are uniquely positioned to play an important role by engaging more systematically with UNSDG regional groups, DCO and country teams to provide support for normative and policy capabilities, but more important by feeding regional priorities into the United Nations system. The regional level is “the link” between global and country levels, thus its importance is strategic and the role to be played by regional commissions should be consequently a primary one; not just because of their unique positioning, as the connecting level, but also because the wealth of regional knowledge accumulated through time. Furthermore, their convening power and the experience acquired in serving Member States as secretariats of different intergovernmental bodies qualify them to coordinate the mainstreaming of regional and subregional priorities into the United Nations system. The Inspectors believe that the secretariat of the new Regional Coordination Platform would highly benefit from its integration within regional commissions’ premises. This would ensure consistency across the global, regional and country levels, with specific regional priorities being addressed in accordance with the demands of countries from the region and the outcomes of the respective regional forums on sustainable development and other regional intergovernmental processes which ECLAC has been successfully supporting in the last decades. However, the location of the secretariat of the new Regional Coordination Platform together with other important decisions are part of the second phase of the regional review and subject to a region-by-region analysis and further consultations with Member States. The Inspectors hope that the content of this management letter can inform the regional case for Latin America and the Caribbean.

73. The Inspectors recommend the systematic and regular participation of regional commissions in the preparation, review and regular update of the new United Nations Cooperation Frameworks.

#### Recommendation 1:

The Secretary-General should request ECLAC, in consultation with relevant actors, to elaborate no later than March 2020 a proposal on how to include regional and subregional priorities in a systematic manner in the United Nations Cooperation Frameworks in the region, as appropriate, including the regular revision, updates and evaluation of individual Cooperation Frameworks.

74. To conclude, the inspectors invite the Secretary-General to consider the relevant findings presented in section II of this Management letter considering the specific needs of each a region as requested in the General Assembly and the ECOSOC resolutions<sup>26</sup>.

#### Main findings and conclusions:

ECLAC is perceived as an honest broker; it is a trusted source of regional knowledge and data that would not be otherwise available to countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

ECLAC has played an important role as secretariat of the forum for regional debate. It should continue its facilitator role and its support to Member States’ efforts in implementing the SDGs in the Latin American and Caribbean Region.

ECLAC as a regional entity should continue to promote and facilitate the regional debate among a wide range of regional stakeholders.

ECLAC should continue to contribute effectively to South-South cooperation with the aim of enhancing coordinated actions on major issues of common concern of countries of the region.

## Annex I

### **Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2000/5 (7 February 2000)**

#### **Organization of the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

“Section 2-Functions and organization

2.1 The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC):

- (a) Provides substantive secretariat services and documentation for the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;
- (b) Undertakes studies, research and other support activities within the terms of reference of the Commission;
- (c) Promotes economic and social development through regional and subregional cooperation and integration;
- (d) Gathers, organizes, interprets and disseminates information and data relating to the economic and social development of the region;
- (e) Provides advisory services to Governments at their request and plans, organizes and executes programmes of technical cooperation;
- (f) Formulates and promotes development cooperation activities and projects of regional and subregional scope commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region and acts as an executing agency for such projects;
- (g) Organizes conferences and intergovernmental and expert group meetings and sponsors training workshops, symposia and seminars;
- (h) Assists in bringing a regional perspective to global problems and forums and introduces global concerns at the regional and subregional levels;
- (i) Coordinates ECLAC activities with those of the major departments and offices at United Nations Headquarters, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations with a view to avoiding duplication and ensuring complementarity in the exchange of information.”

## **Annex II**

### **Programme 18 - Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean**

Subprogramme 1. Linkages with the global economy, regional integration and cooperation

Subprogramme 2. Production and innovation

Subprogramme 3. Macroeconomic policies and growth

Subprogramme 4. Social development and equality

Subprogramme 5. Mainstreaming the gender perspective in regional development

Subprogramme 6. Population and development

Subprogramme 7. Sustainable development and human settlements

Subprogramme 8. Natural resources and infrastructure

Subprogramme 9. Planning of public administration

Subprogramme 10. Statistics

Subprogramme 11. Subregional activities in Central America, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico

Subprogramme 12. Subregional activities in the Caribbean

Subprogramme 13. Support for regional and subregional integration and cooperation processes and organization



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.cepal.org/en/about-eclac-0>
- <sup>2</sup> A/71/6 (Prog. 18), para. 18.4.
- <sup>3</sup> Review of Management and Administration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), JIU/NOTE/2013/2.
- <sup>4</sup> JIU/REP/2009/9, Benchmark 7: Regional Coordination Mechanisms and Regional Directors' Teams are effectively promoting coherence and integration at the regional, subregional and country level.
- <sup>5</sup> South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system, JIU/REP/2011/3.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 124.
- <sup>7</sup> At the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held in May 2016, the Member States adopted resolution 700(XXXVI) establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.
- <sup>8</sup> ECLAC response to the JIU corporate questionnaire.
- <sup>9</sup> A/74/73-E/2019/14, para. 102.
- <sup>10</sup> A/71/6 (Prog. 18).
- <sup>11</sup> ECLAC response to JIU corporate questionnaire.
- <sup>12</sup> UNSDG, The United Nations System-Wide Strategic Document (SWSD) to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 10 July 2019, p. 17.
- <sup>13</sup> ECLAC response to JIU corporate questionnaire.
- <sup>14</sup> Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2018 (A/73/63 – E/2018/8), paras. 178 and 183.
- <sup>15</sup> In 2008, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of BAPA, the General Assembly decided, in resolution 62/209, to convene a High-level United Nations Conference on SSC, which was held in Nairobi in 2009. South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/3, para. 21.)
- <sup>16</sup> Nairobi outcome document in General Assembly resolution 64/222, annex, paras. 10, 11 and 21.
- <sup>17</sup> BAPA+40, Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, A/RES/73/291, para. 27 (i).
- <sup>18</sup> A/73/63-E/2018/8 para. 184.
- <sup>19</sup> A/74/73-E/2019/14 para. 101.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., para.108
- <sup>21</sup> A/74/73-E/2019/14, paras. 109-116.
- <sup>22</sup> JIU/NOTE/2013/2, para. 29.
- <sup>23</sup> A/74/73-E/2019/14, para.114.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., para. 116.
- <sup>25</sup> JIU/NOTE/2013/2, para. 49.
- <sup>26</sup> General Assembly resolution 72/279 and ECOSOC resolution 2019/15.