



**Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of Senior Officials: COVID-19
26 November 2020, Video Conference**

1. The Extraordinary Meeting of Senior Officials: COVID-19, of the Latin America - East Asia Cooperation Forum, celebrated on November 26, 2020, held by the Zoom platform.
2. The opening of the meeting was led by His Excellency Mr. Roberto Álvarez, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, who stated that a year ago was celebrated the “IX (Ninth) Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Relations Foreign Affairs” and the “XX (Twentieth) Meeting of Senior Officials” of this Forum. A year later, we meet again, but in sadly different circumstances. I express that practically every country in the world has suffered the devastating health, social and economic consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

He indicated that this pandemic has highlighted the shortcomings of social protection systems around the world, showing their limits and deficiencies. I express that everything indicates that it will be the worst crisis in the last 50 years and experts point out that it could be understood as the greatest social and economic challenge that humanity has faced since World War II.

He reiterated that for Latin America and the Caribbean the health and economic impact threatens to destroy a decade of social progress, in the same way he expressed that ECLAC has already predicted a fall in regional GDP of 9.1%, while in the specific case of the Dominican Republic it will be 5.3%. In cruder terms, he indicated that this implies that in our region an increase in unemployment is estimated by 44 million people and an increase in poverty by 45 million,

primarily impacting vulnerable groups such as youth, women, Afro-descendants and indigenous people.

The Minister expressed that facing the pandemic has been expensive and painful. The border closures and the reduction of economic activity were necessary measures, but they have caused serious damage in the economies and productive sectors of our countries.

In a world as globalized as the current one, solidarity and coordination between States is essential to stop, or at least slow down, this situation and get out of it, mitigating the economic and social consequences. Aware of this situation, the Dominican Republic, as Regional Coordinator for Latin America, has promoted a space for dialogue regarding these aspects.

He expressed that during the coordination meeting held last September, the proposal to hold this meeting was brought to the table, and it has been seen how the member countries have welcomed this idea with a very good opinion.

He indicated that the present delegations during the meeting can see first-hand models of success in containing the spread of the virus, and that they serve as a basis for generating impact policies in the countries of both regions.

He also thanked the exhibitors who accompany us during the meeting, such as Korea, Singapore and Costa Rica, for taking a space from their busy and important agendas, expressing that they are key axes in their countries in the fight against the pandemic.

In addition, he thanked the representatives of ECLAC and ESCAP, who also provided some insights on the most effective steps for cooperation in the post-covid economic recovery.

He indicated that the path to recovery in terms of social progress and well-being for people requires a great effort and mutual cooperation from the countries. Authorized voices such as President Carlos Alvarado of Costa Rica who have called for the creation of a “global Marshall Plan.”

The Dominican Republic has proposed to the Latin American and Caribbean region to explore the path of a regional investment fund based on South-South cooperation, which will allow a route to be traced towards the transition to economies that are more resilient to future pandemics and other threats like climate change, whose effects we are already experiencing. I express that the gravity of the situation forces us to innovate and think big.

To conclude, Minister Álvarez commented that this year we cannot focus primarily on the institutional development of FEALAC, it is always possible to obtain valuable initiatives from this important space. However, the Dominican Republic reaffirms its commitment to strengthen bi-regional relations, aware of the potential that this strategic association represents for the development of our countries and our societies in multiple critical areas for the recovery from this serious global crisis.

3. The Official Photo was taken.
4. The delegations were led by the Dominican Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Republic of Argentina, Negara Brunei Darussalam, Republic of Chile, Republic of Cuba, Republic of Korea, Republic of Indonesia, Republic of Paraguay, Republic of Suriname, Kingdom of Thailand, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Republic of the Philippines, United Mexican States, Republic of Guatemala, Republic of Costa Rica, New Zealand, Japan, Republic of Panama, Republic of Peru, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Ecuador, Malaysia, Republic of Colombia, Republic of Singapore, Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Cyber

Secretariat and as special guests ECLAC and ESCAP. **List of participants Annex 1.**

Agenda item 1: Presentation of Experiences in the Management of COVID-19.

5. Ambassador Hugo Fco. Rivera Fernández, Vice Minister for Economic Affairs and International Cooperation of the Dominican Republic takes the word and recalls that interventions are of 15 minutes for each speaker.

The moderator indicated that due to connection and audio problems from the Dominican Republic, the first speaker was going to change, according to the order of the program.

6. The word was taken by Mr. Pedro González Morera, Vice Minister of Health of the Republic of Costa Rica, who began his career as a General Assistant Physician for external consultation. He is a doctor by profession and has a master's degree in Health Services Management. In addition, he has more than 20 years of experience working for the Ministry of Health and the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS). **Presentation annex 2.**
7. The word was taken by Dr. Jong-koo Lee, Ambassador for Global Health Security of the Republic of Korea, who is a professor at the Seoul National University School of Medicine (SNUCM, Global Health and Community Medicine for the Hospital residence). Recently, he is managing a 3-year investigation for the promotion of the health of the elderly through community participation. He has been Ambassador for Global Health Safety since June 2020. **Presentation annex 3.**
8. Dr. Derrick Heng takes the word, Director of the Public Health Group of the Ministry of Health of Singapore, who has the responsibility to monitor Communicable Diseases and Non Transmissible Diseases. His areas of work include public health

policy and surveillance of the aforementioned diseases; public health aspects of pandemic preparedness and response; analysis of population health and provision of public health intelligence to support policy and planning; and international cooperation. Dr. Heng has been involved in policy initiatives in the areas of HIV, TB, tobacco control, obesity, chronic disease screening and mental health in Singapore. **Presentation annex 4.**

Agenda item 2: Presentations "Current Situation and Post COVID-19 Economic Reactivation".

9. Vice Minister Rivera told the delegations that the speeches lasted 15 minutes for each entity and that they would give the floor to the exhibitors.
10. Mr. Zebulun Kreiter spoke. He is an Economic Affairs Officer at the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile, where he supports institutional initiatives and publications. Previously, Zebulun conducted research and helped develop analytical tools to support trade policy decision-making in Latin America and the Caribbean at ECLAC's International Trade and Integration Division. **Presentation annex 5.**
11. The word was addressed by Ms. Sweta C. Saxena, Chief of the Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (ESCAP), currently on leave from the IMF to serve as Head of the Division for Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand. He led the 2019 ESCAP flagship report "Ambitions Beyond Growth" and the 2020 flagship report "Towards sustainable economies". At the IMF, she has worked on multilateral surveillance of the G20 countries, in the Research Department, and fragile countries in the African Department. **Presentation annex 6.**

12. The word was taken by Ms. Van Nguyen, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), who has worked as a Sustainable Development Officer for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It supports ESCAP initiatives and cross-cutting projects for the implementation, monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also provides direct support to the UN ESCAP senior management in their contribution to the implementation of the UN Development system reform.
Presentation annex 7.

13. Vice Minister Rivera expressed that the support that we have always received from ECLAC and ESCAP in FEALAC has been transcendental to fulfill our role of being a bridge of opportunities for our countries, once again thank you for your interventions and for your willingness to work with us in the coming years with the post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

Agenda item 3: Questions and answers.

14. Vice Minister Rivera addresses his question to Mr. Zebulun Kreiter, Economic Affairs Officer, Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). *"Being a well diversified economy, where it has affected us the most is the part of tourism, with an 8.5% reduction in tourism." What recommendations would ECLAC make for countries like the DR that find themselves in this vulnerability?*

15. Mr. Zebulun Kreiter, responded that the priority is to reduce the impact of the pandemic on those who work in that industry, including employment protection systems for SMEs such as social security. In the long term, it is necessary to adapt to the new conditions, taking into account the sectors of the population that could return to travel sooner. Regarding interregional cooperation, he

recommends paying attention to supply chains, seeking to ensure that industries have close partners.

16. Cambodia posed a question to Mr. Zebulun Kreiter, Economic Affairs Officer, Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). *"According to the impact assessment, some sectors are affected and others are moderately affected by the pandemic," so what would be the most appropriate economic recovery plan after the pandemic given a series of structural reforms put in place?*
17. Mr. Zebulun Kreiter replied that the correct answer depends on the interests of each country, as each country has different conditions in terms of fiscal space.
18. Malaysia posed a question to Dr. Derrick Heng, Director of Public Health at the Singapore Ministry of Health. *"Singapore continues doing periodic checks among foreign workers." Who pays for these screening tests? Is screening mandatory or voluntary?*
19. Dr. Derrick Heng replied that periodic controls are carried out on some sectors of workers, he explained that the cost is borne by the government, and that it is justified that an outbreak of a port, for example, is very probable, for which tests are carried out periodically for early detection.

Agenda item 4: Closure of the meeting.

20. Ambassador Hugo Fco. Rivera Fernández, Vice Minister for Economic Affairs and International Cooperation of the Dominican Republic, expressed that he would like to thank the government and the Dominican people for the participation of all members in this meeting.

He especially reiterated gratitude to the exhibitors who have given us their experiences in handling this pandemic that affects us all with such care.

He expressed that we are going through difficult times, a time to unite and work together to recover from the social, economic and health ravages that this pandemic will leave behind.

He indicated that sharing knowledge and experiences in this matter is essential to overcome this terrible problem. He expressed that, today more than ever, FEALAC, as a space for dialogue between the regions of Latin America and East Asia, is becoming a transcendental mechanism.

He reiterated that the commitment is to continue with the dialogue to strengthen bi-regional relations, aware of the potential that this strategic association represents for the development of our countries and our societies in multiple areas, through cooperation.

He expressed that each of these meetings is a special occasion to generate valuable initiatives that contribute to alleviating the damage caused to families directly or indirectly affected by COVID-19.

Vice Minister Rivera appreciates the participation in this meeting and closes the meeting.