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Latin America's Pursuit of Perfection: How the Region's Efforts to Achieve UN's 2030 Sustainable Agenda is Quickly Becoming the New Standard Other Countries Should Follow

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Latin America’s Pursuit of Perfection: How the Region’s Efforts to Achieve UN’s 2030 Sustainable Agenda is Quickly Becoming the New Standard Other Countries Should Follow

Kenneth Black†

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I. Introduction

In September 2000, the United Nations (“UN”) General Assembly passed the Millennium Declaration: an ambitious fifteen-year agenda signed by 149 member-states¹ involving eight goals (the “MDGs”) targeted to “establish a just and lasting peace all over

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¹ *Millennium Summit (6-8 September 2000)*, UNITED NATIONS, http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/millennium_summit.shtml [<https://perma.cc/J92W-PWAZ>].

the world”² and “to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people.”³

The project was deemed a success for its achievements, like having lifted “more than one billion people out of extreme poverty”⁴ or increasing the primary school net enrollment rate by eight percent in developing regions of the world.⁵ Despite the accomplishments, the UN recognized there was much left to be done: “60 per cent of the world’s one billion extremely poor people lived in just five countries[,]”⁶ and the “[d]isparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced.”⁷

Building upon the successes and lessons learned from The Millennium Declaration project (“MDG Agenda”)⁸ in September 2015, representatives of all 193-member nations of the UN met in New York City to discuss a new and even more ambitious global agenda “to end poverty by 2030.”⁹ The new agenda, aptly titled “The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development,” was unanimously adopted by all 193-member nations¹⁰ and entered into force January 1st, 2016.¹¹

² G.A. Res. 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, ¶ 4 (Sept. 18, 2000), [hereinafter *2000 Millennium Declaration*].

³ *Id.* at ¶ 5.

⁴ U.N. Secretary-General, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 3 (2015) [hereinafter *Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*], [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf) [https://perma.cc/LSJ3-DZKL].

⁵ *Id.* at 4.

⁶ *Id.* at 3.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ See generally U.N. Secretary-General, *Managing the Transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: What it Will Take*, U.N. Doc. E/2015/68 (Apr. 24, 2015) [hereinafter *Sustainable Development Goal Indicators*] (providing a framework for the transition from the Millennium Development project to the 2030 Sustainable Development Project, including a description of the evolution of the policy developments between the two projects).

⁹ Press Release, Sustainable Development Summit, Historic New Sustainable Development Agenda Unanimously Adopted by 193 UN Members (Sept. 25, 2015), <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/historic-new-sustainable-development-agenda-unanimously-adopted-by-193-un-members/> [https://perma.cc/Y2FA-83EP].

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *17 Goals to Transform Our World*, UNITED NATIONS, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/> [https://perma.cc/ZS2R-NQG6].

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (“SDG Agenda”) is a comprehensive plan consisting of 17 goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, intended to “stimulate action over the next [fifteen] years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.”¹² The SDGs include goals such as “end[ing] poverty in all its forms everywhere,” “ensur[ing] sustainable consumption and production patterns,” “reduc[ing] inequality within and among countries,” and “promot[ing] sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, [with] full and productive employment and decent work for all.”¹³ Importantly, the SDG Agenda acknowledges that a “robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework will be critical to the implementation and success of the SDG Agenda.”¹⁴ The SDG Agenda, therefore, includes several follow-up and review processes at the regional, national, and global levels.¹⁵ Generally, the SDG Agenda emphasizes rigorous, data-driven, evidence-based indicators against which performance will be measured.¹⁶

The Economic and Social Council (“ESC”)¹⁷ prepared a comprehensive list of indicators for each goal and accompanying targets against which the performance of member states will be measured.¹⁸ Using these indicators with data from national and international statistical reporting mechanisms, the UN Secretary-General is tasked with preparing an annual progress report for

¹² G.A. Res. 70/1, pmb., Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sept. 25, 2015) [hereinafter *The 2030 UN Sustainable Agenda*].

¹³ *See id.* at 14 (providing the comprehensive list of Sustainable Development Goals).

¹⁴ *See id.* at ¶ 72.

¹⁵ *See id.* at 31–35.

¹⁶ *Id.* at ¶ 74(c).

¹⁷ As one of the main organs of the United Nations, the primary purpose of the Economic and Social Council is to advance the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, by: providing overall guidance and coordination amongst UN entities; providing political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development; reviewing progress in implementing sustainable development commitments; and providing overall guidance and coordination to the United Nations development system, along with other roles. G.A. Res. 68/1, annex, The Review of the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (Sept. 20, 2013).

¹⁸ Economic and Social Council, Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, U.N. Doc. E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1 (Feb. 19, 2016).

review at the high-political forums,¹⁹ in addition to a General Assembly review of global performance every four years.²⁰

The Secretary-General's progress reports will be supported in large part by the work of the ESC, which will work with each of its five regional commissions to gather required information.²¹ One of these commissions in particular, and the focus of this note, is the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ("ECLAC").²² It has taken the appropriate initial steps in supporting the mission of the Secretary-General and the ESC directly to achieve the mission of The SDG Agenda in the Latin America region.²³

ECLAC's first annual report ("ECLAC SDG 2017 Report")

¹⁹ *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, *supra* note 12, ¶ 83. Established in 2013, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ("HLPF") was created as the main United Nations platform on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, with the purpose of "provid[ing] political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments," amongst others. G.A. Res. 67/290, Format and Organizational Aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, ¶¶ 2, 7 (July 9, 2013). The HLPF is set to meet annually with the Economic and Social Council for performance and implementation reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals. *Id.* at ¶¶ 7–8.

²⁰ *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, *supra* note 12, ¶ 87.

²¹ *See Sustainable Development Goal Indicators*, *supra* note 8, at 8–11.

²² The Economic Commission for Latin America ("ECLAC") was founded in 1948 with the mission to "facilitat[e] concerted action for dealing with urgent economic problems," to "make or sponsor such investigations and studies of economic and technological problems," and to "sponsor the collection, evaluation and dissemination of such economic, technological and statistical information," within the Latin American region. Economic and Social Council Res. 106 (VI), U.N. Doc. E/712/Rev.1, at 4 (Mar. 5, 1948). ECLAC is one of five such regional economic commissions of the Economic and Social Council organ of the UN. *Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC*, UNITED NATIONS, <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/subsidiary-bodies-ecosoc> [https://perma.cc/J363-APGY]; *see also The United Nations System*, UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION (2017), http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/pdfs/17-00023e_UN%20System%20Chart_8.5x11_4c_EN_web.pdf [https://perma.cc/9ZKA-WE9V].

²³ Econ. Comm'n for Latin America & the Caribbean, *Annual Report on Regional Progress and Challenges in Relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*, U.N. Doc. LC/L.4268(FDS. 1/3)/Rev. 1 (2017) [hereinafter *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*]; *see also* the following report for a color-coded map of countries considered part of Latin America and Caribbean for the purposes of The SDG Agenda: U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL, *THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT 2016* 51 (2016), <http://www.un.org.lb/Library/Assets/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2016-Global.pdf> [https://perma.cc/7Y8K-X6U4].

reviews its region's historic performance against the selected indicators within the Sustainable Development Goals, identifies specific root issues causing underperformance against those goals, illustrates the strategy and accompanying action plan to resolve those root issues, and, finally, addresses how ECLAC will measure progress against its initiatives.²⁴

The region's ability to develop such a comprehensive plan is quite a remarkable feat considering the scope of the SDG Agenda, the breadth of structural issues impeding the gathering of sufficient data to enable meaningful analysis, and the inherent complexity of incorporating a wide range of stakeholder interests. Despite these efforts, intuition and pragmatism suggests that achieving the 17 goals is highly unlikely. Indeed, this is in many ways but another attempt at very ambitious goals (the MDG Agenda project a recent example); goals not so different from those the region previously fell short of achieving.²⁵ And yet, here we are with another agenda perhaps even more ambitious than the previous one.

What this note attempts to do is two-fold. First, it introduces ECLAC's plan of attack under the SDG Agenda as a response to the region's experiences under the MDG Agenda. Second, it introduces notable issues the SDG Agenda faces, evaluates how the ECLAC plan addresses these issues, and suggests how the plan may be modified to better account for them.

II. Analysis

A. *ECLAC's MDG Experience and the Upgraded Plan Under The SDG Agenda*

In this section, the goal is to identify: what worked, what did not work, and why; recommendations for future developments; and how ECLAC has incorporated those recommendations into its latest plan to achieve the SDGs.

1. *Lessons Learned from MDG*

As Alicia Bárcena (the Executive Secretary of ECLAC) acknowledges, before "blazing [the] new trail [under the SDG Agenda], we must examine the successes and failures . . . of our

²⁴ *See id.*

²⁵ *See generally Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, supra note 4* (reviewing both global and regional performance against each of the eight goals).

previous steps.”²⁶ ECLAC does just that by combining studies from 20 different UN bodies²⁷ on the region in a comprehensive post-MDG report, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Looking ahead after the Millennium Development Goals. Regional Monitoring Report on the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015* (“ECLAC MDG 2015 Report”).²⁸ Additionally, the ECLAC SDG 2017 Report provides substantial context and data analysis to complement the findings of the ECLAC MDG 2015 Report.²⁹ The two reports are used in conjunction in the following analysis.

Overall, the region’s performance in pursuit of the MDGs was quite astounding. The region made improvements against each of the eight MDGs.³⁰ But as mentioned, there were significant failures in each of the goals.³¹ While there are several important reasons

²⁶ Econ. Comm’n for Latin America & the Caribbean, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Looking Ahead After the Millennium Development Goals. Regional Monitoring Report on the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015*, U.N. Doc. LC/G.2646, at 6 (2015) [hereinafter *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*].

²⁷ *Id.* at 7.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ See *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23; see also *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26.

³⁰ Goal 1—Eradicate Poverty and Hunger: Reduced Extreme Poverty by 63% Points. *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26, at 13. Goal 2—Achieve Universal Education: 75%-point decrease in illiteracy rates among young people aged 15 to 24 years old. *Id.* at 24. Goal 3—Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women: Increased access rates for girls to formal education. *Id.* at 28. Goal 4—Reduce Child Mortality: By 2013, reduced by two-thirds the mortality rate for children under five years. *Id.* at 36. Goal 5—Improve Maternal Health: 39% reduction in maternal mortality rates (although significantly below the target, still an improvement). *Id.* at 43. Goal 6—Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases: Increased coverage of antiretroviral treatment from 26% to 41% between 2010 and 2013 in the Caribbean. *Id.* at 51. Goal 7—Ensure Environmental Sustainability: Halved the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. *Id.* at 64. Goal 8—Develop a Global Partnership for Development: Uptrend in net official development assistance from international agencies and significant tariff decreases on exports resulting from free-trade agreements and other factors. *Id.* at 71, 74, 76.

³¹ Goal 1: 71 million people still in extreme poverty in 2014. *Id.* at 14. Goal 2: Approximately four million children of primary school age not enrolled in the education system in 2013. *Id.* at 22. Goal 3: By 2013, access to primary education for girls much less than that of boys, while gender inequality in the labor market remained strong. *Id.* at 29, 30. Goal 4: Only five countries met the goals, while the remainder, failed—Haiti with a rate of 70 child deaths per 1,000 births in 2013. *Id.* at 36. Goal 5: “By 2013, no region in the world had progressed enough to meet the target of a three-quarters reduction in maternal mortality from 1990 levels.” *Id.* at 43. Goal 6: By 2012, still almost half a million

why and how those successes and failures occurred, all can be condensed into four key takeaways. First, there must be increased participation of and cooperation amongst key stakeholders—i.e. private, intergovernmental, public, and social sectors. Where such cooperation was lacking, there were either gross inequities in performance between countries, or failed movement altogether. For example, as a result of partnering with neighboring countries to develop free-trade agreements, the region enjoyed 94% tariff-free exports of raw materials and other products within the region, thereby satisfying part of its MDG Eight targets.³² Additionally, the region was able to “eradicate measles almost completely” because of the cooperation amongst national programs and campaigns to vaccinate children.³³ However, technology asymmetries and trade imbalances between countries resulting from a failure to coordinate external changes in fiscal policy between countries not only “[weighed] on growth in a global economy,” but also created instability in global financing, which has had a significant impact on the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) nations.³⁴

Second, public policy implementation is necessary to have a meaningful chance of achieving future success. For example, under MDG Three, public policies were needed to increase women’s access to labor markets and ensure continued employment.³⁵ The emphasis is strongest under MDG Seven, clarifying that failure here was effectively a direct result of the governments’ failure to

cases of Malaria reported annually, and only 77% of Tuberculosis detected with current detection methods. *Id.* at 53-54. Goal 7: Actual increase in carbon dioxide emissions, and millions of hectares of tropical forests cleared annually for agricultural needs of increasing populations. *Id.* at 59, 62. Goal 8: Decreased development assistance from international communities by 6.4% points, *id.* at 72, and only 20% of the population in most Central American countries has access to internet. *Id.* at 77.

³² *Id.* at 74, 76.

³³ *Id.* at 38 (asserting that to decrease child mortality rates, a “multidimensional, multi-system approach to care is required . . .”).

³⁴ See *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 15–17 (asserting that “[m]ultilateral cooperation is needed to restore governments’ ability to work together to stabilize global finances and regulate and manage the impact of [fluctuations in commodity markets] on national economies”); *id.* at 19 (adding that cooperation amongst governments is crucial to prevent migratory conflicts as population increases to achieve sustainable peace).

³⁵ *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26, at 30 (“Public policies must therefore continue to be developed in order to improve women’s access to the labour market and ensure that they remain in employment throughout their lifetime.”).

“mainstream[] into sectorial policies” environmental considerations, thereby inhibiting implementation of effective environmental protections against the overwhelming effects of industrialization, energy, and infrastructural developments.³⁶ Moreover, in the context of women’s economic autonomy, macroeconomic policies must be refocused to “soften the impact of economic slowdowns . . . and create the conditions for long-term job creation[.]” and “increase[e] women’s participation in the economy[, which] requires an integrated approach and consistency between economic and social policies.”³⁷ In contrast, where there was significant governmental involvement or policy creation, such as in combatting diseases and developing global partnerships (MDG Six and Eight, respectively), the region was able to provide increased access to treatments³⁸ and develop economically beneficial multilateral rules with the World Trade Organization.³⁹

Third, the region needs increased access to resources—i.e. funding—for all efforts, but must also avoid dependence on external resources by increasing investments in research and development (R&D), technology development, and related education. For example, in MDG Six, the sharp disparities in performance amongst the region’s countries were heavily influenced by access to treatment therapies.⁴⁰ In order to improve this result, the region must “reduc[e] the heavy dependence on international funding mechanisms[.]” and significantly increase governmental funding commitments for antiretroviral treatments.⁴¹ Additionally, under MDG One, reductions in poverty and other employment achievements were due in large part to external economic factors and favorable labor markets.⁴² Conversely, the middle- and upper-middle-income countries of the region received less funding as a result of their country-income status, leading to continued high levels of poverty and inequality.⁴³ Moreover, cooperation with other governments (as discussed in the first takeaway) will enable

³⁶ *See id.* at 59.

³⁷ *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 30.

³⁸ *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26, at 5.

³⁹ *Id.* at 76.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 51.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.* at 13–14.

⁴³ *Id.* at 74.

improved foreseeability of global financial trends and improved response and protection. A more foundational protection from these external effects, however, will come by strengthening “technological capacity by investing in education, [R&D] and product and process design innovation, . . .” which will inherently build domestic capacity.⁴⁴ The added benefit of such an investment is increased access to higher-quality education, higher-quality jobs, and “economic productivity through diversification and technological upgrading.”⁴⁵

Fourth, the countries must let the environmental dimension “guide efforts to increase investment and strengthen technological capabilities.”⁴⁶ Under the MDG regime, despite having created environmental legislation, the region failed the MDG Seven targets in part because they failed to “take the environmental externalities of economic activity properly into account[]” in their fiscal and industrial development initiatives.⁴⁷ To avoid such failures moving forward the LAC nations need to adopt policies that shift “the production structure towards more technology-intensive sectors with more dynamic demand and a lower environmental impact, . . .”⁴⁸ improve the “scope and quality of urban public services . . . ,”⁴⁹ drive “[a] change in the energy mix” from oils to renewable energies,⁵⁰ and create more protections to prevent “the degradation of the biophysical environment[]” from natural disasters.⁵¹ By investing in the environment, “employment, technology and environmental dimensions converge[,]”⁵² inevitably moving the region towards the “knowledge-intensive sectors that generate good-quality jobs” that are “key to overcoming inequality

⁴⁴ See *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 20.

⁴⁵ *Id.*; see also *id.* at 36 (“Without building endogenous capacities in new technologies, it will be impossible to reduce vulnerabilities.”).

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 31.

⁴⁷ *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26, at 59; see also *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 62 (recognizing that the region’s carbon dioxide emissions have increased due to human activity, yet there is little to know evidence that the region’s nations have made structural changes in production, consumption, and land usage to address emissions issues).

⁴⁸ See *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 31.

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 31–32.

⁵⁰ See *id.* at 32.

⁵¹ See *id.* at 32–33.

⁵² See *id.* at 35.

and eradicating poverty[.]” a target of the SDG 2030 Agenda.⁵³

In summary, ECLAC determined its plan to achieve the SDG Agenda and its 17 goals must address the following:⁵⁴

- 1) Increase participation of and cooperation amongst key stakeholders—i.e. private, intergovernmental, public, and social sectors;
- 2) significantly improve public policy development, implementation, and enforcement;
- 3) increase access to resources while minimizing blind dependence on external entities; and
- 4) make environmental protection a central factor in all initiatives.

With these overarching goals in mind, we turn to ECLAC’s plans to address these MDG takeaways in pursuit of achieving the SDG Agenda.

2. *The ECLAC SDG Agenda Plan of Attack*

The first issue addressed by the ECLAC SDG 2017 Report is that in order to succeed, “the [SDG Agenda] needs to be integrated into national planning instruments”⁵⁵ Indeed, the ECLAC plan is to ensure public agenda-setting, policy planning, policy implementation, and follow-up and review.⁵⁶ Under this framework, each country has already begun to create policies and infrastructures to address the 17 SDGs that simultaneously ensure inter-agency and inter-sector cooperation.⁵⁷

For example, the Government of Chile has already created a

⁵³ *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26, at 81.

⁵⁴ Both reports emphasize that eliminating inequalities amongst races, genders, and other divisions is preclusive to achieving the SDG Agenda. *Id.* at 82–83; *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 36–37. However, since (1) all the SDGs include elements of reducing inequalities, and (2) applying the four takeaways to the 17 SDGs will necessarily include equality elimination, the reports stress the importance of developing follow-up and review policies to enable improved performance tracking. *ECLAC MDG 2015 Report*, *supra* note 26, at 84 (clarifying that ECLAC will facilitate “consultations on financing for development and accountability” in addition to regional commission monitoring “as part of the follow-up and review mechanism” under the new Agenda); *see ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 58–59.

⁵⁵ *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 41.

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 41–42.

⁵⁷ *See id.* at 42–53.

“National Council for Implementation of the 2030 Agenda,”⁵⁸ whose main functions are to “advise the President . . . on implementation and follow-up[,] . . . act as a coordinating body within Chile[,] . . . and coordinate with governmental, international, private sector and civil society organizations.”⁵⁹ Such developments ensure not only that policies to achieve the SDG Agenda are implemented, but also that the relevant stakeholders are involved.

The LAC countries have also begun to “coordinate planning and budgeting” to appropriately “allocat[e] resources to implement actions.”⁶⁰ To obtain the funding required to achieve the SDGs, countries are increasing private sector financing (albeit limiting dependence on such financing)⁶¹ by identifying opportunities for joint work amongst regional partners and other international entities,⁶² and by creating forums to partner with firms and multinationals.⁶³ Such efforts are not only facilitating the needed policies required to implement and enforce the actions required to achieve the SDGs, but also open additional financing channels through inter-entity cooperation and budgetary tendering by governments—each of which should increase access to required resources.

What is baked into these policy actions and budgetary preparations is the need to consider the environmental protection goals. For example, in the Dominican Republic’s policy structure, the High-Level Inter-Agency Commission (“HLIAC”) for

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 47 (adding that social, economic, and environmental committees are involved in the implementation of this agenda).

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 47–48, Diagram II.3; *see also id.* at 53, Box II.1 (providing an example of how Peru, through political covenants, has ensured parliamentary alignment with the SDG Agenda by requiring “elected authorities [to] undertake to pursue policy measures to promote comprehensive and inclusive development in accordance with the State policies laid down by the National Agreement, the [SDG Agenda] and the agreements of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change . . .”).

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 56; *see also id.* at 56, Box II.3 (addressing the efforts several countries have taken to ensure adequate budgeting is available for nation and region-wide achievement of the SDG Agenda, despite the recent adoption of the SDG Agenda).

⁶¹ *Id.* at 57.

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.* (asserting that Mexico has created the Partnership for Sustainability platform including 80 Mexican firms and multinationals “whose purpose is the sharing of information on the integration of the [SDG Agenda] into business models . . .”).

Sustainable Development ties directly to the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Development, which includes the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, and the Ministry of Energy and Miners—ministries whose operations directly affect the environment.⁶⁴ Similarly, Colombia's HLIAC is directly connected to the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development.⁶⁵ Such direct connections, especially at this early a stage of the SDG regime, is at least a great start to ensure that the environmental policy dimension is “guide[d] [by] efforts to increase investment and strengthen technological capabilities.”⁶⁶

Overall, the ECLAC countries have managed to comprehensively: review their performance against the MDGs, identify the root causes for both failures and successes under the MDG regime, determine how to apply those lessons to the SDG Agenda, and implement a strategy and plan to increase the chances of achieving the SDGs. While this achievement is nothing at which to gaff, there are some significant challenges, many of which are outside the control of the region that will impact the region's ability to achieve the SDG Agenda. The next section explores what those challenges are, evaluates how capable the current plan is in absorbing those challenges, and provides some recommendations for future review of how the ECLAC strategy may minimize the impact of such challenges.

III. The Ability of the ECLAC SDG Plan to Weather the International Political and Economic Storms

Despite the seemingly robust nature of the ECLAC SDG Plan, many international issues raised by academics and research institutions alike threaten the region's chances of achieving the SDGs. The following threats and ECLAC's ability to survive them will be discussed in succession: (1) Internal Governance—the ability of national governments to align different stakeholders with competing interests; (2) External Governance—the ability to maintain amicable cooperation in the international arena; (3) Accountability—how the UN will ensure all appropriate measures are taken; and (4) Population growth and migration.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 52, Diagram II.8.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 49, Diagram II.4.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 31.

A. *Bringing Together the Right Stakeholders at the Right Time While Ensuring Alignment of Interests is A Very Tall Order.*

First, replacing high-pollution generating forms of energy (e.g. coal) with cleaner and more sustainable energy sources will not only be costly economically (e.g. steady layoff of employees, required re-education of those employees, etc.),⁶⁷ but will meet at least as much if not more resistance than that encountered in developed countries like the U.S. or Mexico.⁶⁸ Many of the LAC countries have relied on oil, mining, and exportation of other natural resources to support their economies.⁶⁹ Managing the transition by ensuring adequate protection for employees, while simultaneously investing in technological development, and ‘protecting’ the interests of the heads of these industries will be a significant challenge at least.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Nadja Popovich, *Today's Energy Jobs Are in Solar, Not Coal*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 25, 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/04/25/climate/todays-energy-jobs-are-in-solar-not-coal.html?_r=0 [<https://perma.cc/AXV4-5JSF>].

⁶⁸ Despite evidence to the contrary, the Trump Administration argues that adhering to the Clean Power Plan would defraud the economy and render coal miners jobless. Coral Davenport et. al., *What Is the Clean Power Plan, and How Can Trump Repeal It?*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 10, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/climate/epa-clean-power-plan.html> [<https://perma.cc/W9F9-T4B7>]; see also Jennifer A. Dlouhy, *Trump to Argue Obama's Clean Power Plan Violates U.S. Law*, BLOOMBERG (Oct. 5, 2017), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-05/trump-is-said-to-argue-obama-s-clean-power-plan-violates-law> [<https://perma.cc/CTY9-28JZ>]. Even in Mexico, worries stemming back to 2012 regarding the sincerity in implementing climate change policies that would be detrimental to the countries oil and gas giant, Pemex. See Marcelo Teixeira, *Mexico's Climate Law to Face Challenge Under New President*, REUTERS (July 24, 2012), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-climate-policy/mexicos-climate-law-to-face-challenge-under-new-president-idUSBRE86N0A220120724> [<https://perma.cc/2BYL-UFBP>]; see also Dana Nuccitelli, *Harvard Scientists Took Exxon's Challenge; Found it Using the Tobacco Playbook*, GUARDIAN (Aug. 23, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-percent/2017/aug/23/harvard-scientists-took-exxons-challenge-found-it-using-the-tobacco-playbook> [<https://perma.cc/KD76-3DEU>] (showing how energy giants like Exxon fight against the business harm climate change could cause).

⁶⁹ See *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 15 (“Countries’ rates of long-term growth are determined by their ability to innovate or close the gap vis-à-vis the technology frontier, except those that benefit—often only temporarily—from the ‘commodity lottery’ (abundant natural resources in great demand).”).

⁷⁰ James Patterson, *3 Challenges Facing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals*, WORLD ECON. F. (Aug. 4, 2015) [hereinafter Patterson, *3 Challenges*], <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/3-challenges-facing-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals/> [<https://perma.cc/QF4N-PBVE>] (answering questions like “[w]ho will need to be involved in developing, producing, installing and maintaining the

Indeed, these challenges exist “not only for energy, but also for addressing poverty, food, health, education, water, biodiversity, and the many other issues within the SDGs.”⁷¹

Thus far, ECLAC seems to be doing alright in managing the probability of reconciling various and conflicting interests in this effort by including important stakeholders at the outset of the planning process. As mentioned, the SDG Agenda has only been in effect since January 1, 2016, and already the LAC countries have aligned the governments with SDG Agenda oversight commissions to assist with appropriate policy implementation and monitoring, which inherently includes managing varying stakeholder input.⁷² For example, Mexico’s Partnership for Sustainability platform including 80 firms⁷³ provides exactly what is required in such difficult settings—a forum in which the varying interests may be discussed, balanced, and appropriately considered. Given the robustness of the efforts to involve and align all stakeholders following lessons learned under the MDG regime, this issue, at least for now, seems to be appropriately considered by the region’s SDG-achievement plan.

B. Geopolitics and the Era of Populism Pose a Significant Threat to SDG Success

Bertelsmann Stiftung,⁷⁴ a German NGO part of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network,⁷⁵ asserted in its SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017⁷⁶ that the rising “‘my country first’

technologies to provide universally accessible energy?” and “[w]ho is involved in determining what is ‘reliable’ and ‘affordable’ for different communities in different parts of the world?” leads to answers that may be determinative regarding the country’s ability to achieve the SDGs).

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² See, e.g., *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 57 (Mexico’s Partnership for Sustainability).

⁷³ See *id.*

⁷⁴ BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/about-us/> [<https://perma.cc/592D-GLML>].

⁷⁵ See generally *Vision and Organization*, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK, <http://unsdsn.org/about-us/vision-and-organization/> [<https://perma.cc/72Y2-CC7F>]. See also *SDSN Reports Archive*, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK, <http://unsdsn.org/resources/publication/type/sdsn-reports/> [<https://perma.cc/4GWL-VN3T>] (“Bertelsmann Stiftung and SDSN release 2017 edition of the SDG Index and Dashboards Report.”).

⁷⁶ *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017*, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

approach by many heads of government threatens the realization of the SDGs” not just for those countries, but that of developing countries as well because of “[i]nternational spillover effects caused by many industrialized countries[.]”⁷⁷ This “spillover effect” occurs when “the actions of one country, or the lack thereof, affect the ability of others to fulfill their obligations under the SDG Agenda.”⁷⁸ Examples include “unsustainable consumption patterns that externalize environmental and social costs to other countries.”⁷⁹ Moreover, this creates the added negative affect of inhibiting the cooperation deemed so critical to achieve the SDG Agenda.

Despite ECLAC’s efforts in their SDG achievement plan, this trend in geopolitics is quite concerning. Indeed, the Trump Administration has taken actions to modify if not terminate NAFTA,⁸⁰ it has placed sanctions on Venezuela,⁸¹ and has begun re-

SOLUTIONS NETWORK (July 2017) [hereinafter *SDG Index and Dashboard Report 2017*], <http://sdgindex.org/assets/files/2017/2017-SDG-Index-and-Dashboards-Report--compact.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/9KLN-THU9>].

⁷⁷ Christian Kroll & Robert Schwarz, *Ahead of G20 Summit: ‘My Country First’ Approach Threatens Achievement of Global Goals*, BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG (July 6, 2017) [Kroll, *Ahead of G20 Summit*], <https://www.bertelsmannstiftung.de/en/topics/aktuelle-meldungen/2017/juli/ahead-of-g20-summit-my-country-first-approach-threatens-achievement-of-global-goals/> [<https://perma.cc/ZGC6-ZAXA>] (“Not only does a rising trend of nationalism and protectionism impede the implementation of the goals, but as the report shows, industrialized countries are not serving as role models. Many of the richest countries in the world are nowhere near achieving the global policy objectives but also deteriorate the implementation process for poorer countries because of negative spillover effects.”).

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ *Id.*; see *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 15 (explaining that due to hyper-globalization, surplus countries may continue to import raw materials in a manner that conflicts with the SDGs).

⁸⁰ Martin Pengelly, *Trump Threatens to Terminate NAFTA, Renews Calls for Mexico to Pay for Wall*, GUARDIAN (Aug. 27, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/27/donald-trump-camp-david-nafta-mexico-wall-canada> [<https://perma.cc/7P5S-J46Q>]; Jacob M. Schlesinger & Paul Vieira, *Trump to Test High-Pressure Negotiating Style as U.S.-Canada NAFTA Talks Resume*, WALL ST. J. (Sept. 3, 2018), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-to-test-high-pressure-negotiating-style-as-u-s-canada-nafta-talks-resume-1535992792> [<https://perma.cc/8TEG-L99D>].

⁸¹ Alexandra Ulmer & David Lawder, *Trump Slaps Sanctions on Venezuela; Maduro Sees Effort to Force Default*, REUTERS (Aug. 25, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-venezuela-sanctions/trump-slaps-sanctions-on-venezuela-maduro-sees-effort-to-force-default-idUSKCN1B5216> [<https://perma.cc/9XZQ-JWZR>]; James Oliphant, *Trump Threatens Venezuela with Unspecified ‘Military Option,’* REUTERS (Aug. 11, 2017), <https://in.reuters.com/>

implementing sanctions on Cuba.⁸² If such threats were to come to fruition, the LAC countries' economies would certainly suffer.⁸³

To protect itself from such possibilities, ECLAC must increase involvement of "other agents of change, such as businesses, cities, citizens and civil society."⁸⁴ By diversifying those invested, the countries will increase their insulation from such threats by having access to an increased pool of resources. Additionally, the more stakeholders that are economically involved, the more industry voices will be available to deter such protectionist leaders from acting counter to the interests of ECLAC and the SDG Agenda. This may mean reaching out to international businesses located in those countries with populist-spouting leaders to encourage their involvement in ECLAC regional efforts (mind you the United States is a member nation of ECLAC).⁸⁵

1. The UN must find effective ways to hold governments accountable for their performance against the SDG goals

First, there looms a significant issue in how the UN will hold

article/usa-venezuela-military/trump-threatens-venezuela-with-unspecified-military-option-idINKBN1AR2H1 [https://perma.cc/46TJ-VGQ4].

⁸² Tim Ahmann, *U.S. to Maintain Cuba, Venezuela Sanctions Until Freedoms Restored: Trump*, REUTERS (Oct. 13, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-sanctions-cuba-venezuela/u-s-to-maintain-cuba-venezuela-sanctions-until-freedoms-restored-trump-idUSKBN1CI21V> [https://perma.cc/TMP7-LQ8T].

⁸³ *The Benefits of International Trade*, U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, <https://www.uschamber.com/international/international-policy/benefits-international-trade> [https://perma.cc/LK5S-SPD3]; see Dawn Paley, *NAFTA Traffic*, 49 NACLA REPORT ON THE AMERICAS, Summer 2017, at 173 (citing the positive economic effects of NAFTA on the Mexican automotive industry); see also Andrew Walker, *Is Free Trade Good or Bad?*, BBC NEWS (Jan. 18, 2017), <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-38209407> [https://perma.cc/67FB-RNGW] (explaining that trade generally is a win-win for involved countries, and even when locals lose, there is generally enough gain earned by winners to more than compensate, suggesting that it is then up to internal policy-makers to ensure adequate distribution of the wealth generated from the trade).

⁸⁴ Marcel Kok et al., *Beyond Cockpit-ism: New Agents of Change for the SDG Agenda*, THE BROKER (Mar. 11, 2015), <http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/Post-2015-shaping-a-global-agenda/Beyond-cockpit-ism-new-agents-of-change-for-the-SDG-agenda> [https://perma.cc/TK9K-EWTX].

⁸⁵ Date of Admission of *Member States and Associate Members of ECLAC*, ECON. COMM'N FOR LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN, https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/pages/files/fecha_de_incorporacion_de_los_estados_miembros_de_la_cepal_eng_0.pdf [https://perma.cc/TZR2-PHK9].

nations that signed the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda accountable for failing to attempt to achieve the goals. Moreover, how will the UN treat developed countries when their failure to implement the agenda creates “negative spillover effects” that directly prevents other neighboring countries from achieving the agenda?⁸⁶ Additionally, the list of indicators created by the Economic and Social Council fails to consider “inputs” (i.e., “did nation X invest what they said they were going to invest in addressing issues A, B, and C.”).⁸⁷ Thus, while the UN is able to monitor performance, it is unable to monitor what actions are taken (or not taken) in generating those performance outputs. This would seem most important where countries are failing to achieve the goals (Sweden, the best performing country against the SDGs, is only at 85.6% achievement).⁸⁸

Possible solutions here are for the LAC countries to hold themselves accountable,⁸⁹ and to continually collaborate with international institutions supporting the SDG Agenda, which would strengthen ties to those institutions.⁹⁰ They have taken the first major steps in implementing policies aligned with the SDG Agenda: they are involving entities from both public and private sectors that, with varied interests, serve as an internal accountability system. While the system currently works as an apparent “honor-system,” so far the ECLAC region is doing alright.⁹¹

2. *Handling local and international population growth*

⁸⁶ See Kroll, *Ahead of G20 Summit*, *supra* note 77.

⁸⁷ See Patterson, *3 Challenges*, *supra* note 70; see also *Sustainable Development Goal Indicators*, *supra* note 8, Annex III.

⁸⁸ See Kroll, *Ahead of G20 Summit*, *supra* note 77.

⁸⁹ See Emilie M. Hafner-Burton & Kiyoteru Tsutsui, *Human Rights in a Globalizing World: The Paradox of Empty Promises*, 110 *AJS* 1373, 1380 (2005) (stating that overcoming the lack of international enforcement mechanisms arguably depends upon the “domestic mobilization of actors supporting compliance.”).

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 1386 (“Government ratification of international law does not improve human rights practices alone, but a country’s linkage to international civil society . . . can and does influence governments to change their human rights practices for the better.”).

⁹¹ *Id.* at 1401–02 (concluding that: (1) “There is no systematic evidence to suggest that ratification of human rights treaties in the UN system itself improves human rights practices . . .” and (2) “global civil society has a positive impact . . .” on a country’s human rights practices such that linkage to international civil society essentially serves “the function of much-needed enforcement mechanisms[.]”).

will continue to pose significant problems

By 2050, the population of the African continent is set to double.⁹² According to Mario Pezzini, Director of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the inability of African countries to absorb such population growth will increase migration patterns across continents.⁹³ If the recent migration of refugees from the Middle East has taught us anything, it is that the developed world has neither the cultural or political maturity, nor the adequate infrastructural capabilities required to absorb large numbers of immigrants.⁹⁴

The LAC countries are no strangers to mass immigration and migration of refugees to their countries.⁹⁵ Brazil boasts the largest population of Japanese descendants outside of Japan, the largest Syrian population outside of Syria, and the largest concentration of African descendants outside of Africa.⁹⁶ Ecuador's Constitution, considered by some as "one of the most progressive constitutions in the world," has a "No [O]ne is [I]llegal" immigration policy.⁹⁷ In 2014 and in the wake of the most recent refugee crisis, at least 17

⁹² Bill Hinchberger, *4 Biggest Challenges to Achieving the SDGs*, DEVEX (Apr. 5, 2016) [hereinafter Hinchberger, *4 Biggest Challenges*], <https://www.devex.com/news/4-biggest-challenges-to-achieving-the-sdgs-87979> [<https://perma.cc/T4BY-95P6>].

⁹³ *Id.* ("[M]igration is not just a temporary phenomenon . . . [and] will not end because we slightly adjust controls at the border.").

⁹⁴ *Why Latin America Could be the Next Frontier for Syrian Refugees*, JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS AND POL'Y (Apr. 24, 2017), <http://jmepp.hkspublications.org/2017/04/24/syrian-refugees-latin-america/> [<https://perma.cc/MY5Z-G48K>] ("[A] defining feature[] of the Trump presidency thus far has been the so-called 'Muslim ban,' which . . . [bans] all refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries entering the United States. Europe is also experiencing a rise in populist and xenophobic sentiment[.]").

⁹⁵ See Robert Muggah, *Europe's Refugee Crisis is Making Headlines, but Latin America's is Just as Alarming*, WORLD ECON. F. (Mar. 27, 2017), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/refugee-crisis-migration-europe-latin-america/> [<https://perma.cc/82ZB-WQ5E>].

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ECUADOR, Oct. 20, 2008, Title II, art. 40 ("The right to migrate of persons is recognized. No human being shall be identified or considered as illegal because of his/her migratory status."); Carla Gonzalez, *Europe Closes Borders for Refugees, Latin America Opens Doors*, TELESUR (June 20, 2017) [hereinafter Gonzalez, *Europe Closes Borders*], <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Europe-Closes-Borders-for-Refugees-Latin-America-Opens-Doors-20170619-0008.html> [<https://perma.cc/5BFP-8EAR>].

Latin American countries re-adopted their 1984 declaration,⁹⁸ the Cartagena Declaration.⁹⁹ The Declaration established a legal and institutional framework amongst participating countries to not only support the influx of refugees and asylum seekers to the region, but also to establish rights for those refugees to be protected by participating nations.¹⁰⁰

Despite a historically progressive attitude in Latin America towards accepting refugees, the region is experiencing significant difficulties accommodating displaced people. Colombia has the largest internally displaced population in the world, with approximately 7.2 million people uprooted, resulting from an extended civil war and rural displacement from coca crop fumigations¹⁰¹ — an issue that still plagues the region today.¹⁰²

Likewise, Venezuela's recent political and economic turmoil (in addition to U.S. sanctions¹⁰³ that have further squeezed the nation's

⁹⁸ *30th Anniversary of Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*, UNHCR: THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY (Sept. 2014), [http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/operations/54b53bc69/30th-anniversary-cartagena-declaration-refugees-newsletter.html?query=Cartagena Declaration on Refugees](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/operations/54b53bc69/30th-anniversary-cartagena-declaration-refugees-newsletter.html?query=Cartagena%20Declaration%20on%20Refugees) [https://perma.cc/AVZ3-RTT8].

⁹⁹ CARTAGENA DECLARATION ON REFUGEES, UNHCR: THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY (1984), [http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/about-us/background/45dc19084/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection.html?query=Cartagena Declaration on Refugees](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/about-us/background/45dc19084/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection.html?query=Cartagena%20Declaration%20on%20Refugees) [https://perma.cc/7XC6-JQ2C].

¹⁰⁰ Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, (Nov. 21-22, 1984), https://www.oas.org/dil/1984_cartagena_declaration_on_refugees.pdf [https://perma.cc/8X4A-Q6J9].

¹⁰¹ Gonzalez, *Europe Closes Borders*, *supra* note 97 (“That is larger than those from other war-torn countries such as Syria with 6.3 million displaced and Iraq with 3 million.”).

¹⁰² Marissa Esthimer, *Protecting the Forcibly Displaced: Latin America's Evolving Refugee and Asylum Framework*, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (Jan. 14, 2016), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/protecting-forcibly-displaced-latin-america%e2%80%99s-evolving-refugee-and-asylum-framework> [https://perma.cc/8GR2-BPDG].

¹⁰³ Since the first major political sanction against Venezuela in 2014 by the Obama Administration, Executive Order 13692, the Trump Administration has issued three sanctions in the form of Executive Orders within a nine-month window, which prohibit United States persons from: purchasing new debts, bonds, dividend payments, or other securities issued by the Venezuelan Government, Exec. Order No. 13,808, 82 Fed. Reg. 41,115 (Aug. 29, 2017), <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13808.pdf> [https://perma.cc/A9SH-2556], purchasing or dealing in all forms of digital and crypto-currencies issued by the Venezuelan Government, Exec. Order No. 13,827, 83 Fed. Reg. 12,469 (Mar. 21, 2018),

already troubled economy), have spurred emigrations in what experts claim could be upwards of two million of its citizens to neighboring countries.¹⁰⁴ Brazil and Colombia have been the largest recipients of the Maduro-era Venezuelan refugees, absorbing more than 60,000 and 96,000 Venezuelans, respectively, within the last year alone.¹⁰⁵ Although the Colombian government is “tightening controls with Venezuela” and “impos[ing] stricter migratory controls,” the country has otherwise seemingly avoided national conflict in absorbing these refugees thus far.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, Brazil, a country suffering from its own significant economic and political struggles despite being the largest economy in South America, has experienced significant resistance to a persistent influx of Venezuelans.¹⁰⁷ For example, within the state of Roraima, one of the poorest Brazilian states and the recipient of the vast majority of Venezuelan migrants, the local government sued the federal

<https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13827.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/65EN-M7JH>], or purchasing or dealing in equity interests, accounts receivables, and collateral in which the Venezuelan Government has “greater than 50% ownership interest” Exec. Order No. 13,835, 83 Fed. Reg. 24,001 (May 24, 2018), https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/venezuela_eo_13835.pdf [<https://perma.cc/BNE5-VTDG>]. See Exec. Order No. 13,692, 80 Fed. Reg. 12,747 (Mar. 11, 2015), <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13692.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/SV44-QK9F>].

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Boadle, *Venezuelan Migrants Pose Humanitarian Problem in Brazil*, REUTERS (Dec. 11, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-crisis-brazil/venezuelan-migrants-pose-humanitarian-problem-in-brazil-idUSKBN1E51KV> [<https://perma.cc/2ZLX-MUMR>].

¹⁰⁵ Colombia counts upwards of 550,000 Venezuelans residing within its borders. See Anggy Polanco & Anthony Boadle, *Colombia, Brazil Tighten Borders as Venezuelan Crisis Deepens*, REUTERS (Feb. 8, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-colombia/colombia-brazil-tighten-borders-as-venezuelan-crisis-deepens-idUSKBN1FS2VW> [<https://perma.cc/9HZ7-BLJG>]; Dom Phillips, *Brazil: Judge Shuts Border to Venezuelan Migrants Fleeing Hunger and Hardship*, GUARDIAN (Aug. 6, 2018) [hereinafter Phillips, *Judge Shuts Border to Venezuelan Migrants*], <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/06/brazil-shuts-border-venezuelan-migrants> [<https://perma.cc/2QU8-LADX>]; *Venezuela Crisis: More Migrants Cross Into Brazil Despite Attacks*, BBC (Aug. 21, 2018) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-45254368> [<https://perma.cc/PQS5-FHNC>].

¹⁰⁶ See Polanco & Boadle, *supra* note 105.

¹⁰⁷ Guilherme Russo, *How Brazilians View Their Country's Economic and Political Crises*, PEW RES. CTR., July 6, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/06/how-brazilians-view-their-countrys-economic-and-political-crises/> [<https://perma.cc/649F-CZMB>].

government, “demanding that it close the border with Venezuela.”¹⁰⁸ As a result, a Roraima judge temporarily “blocked Venezuelans from entering.”¹⁰⁹ In addition, former President Michel Temer ordered Brazil’s federal police to end Brazilian mob attacks against Venezuelan migrants and take control over the highways connecting the two nations.¹¹⁰ Although this is but one immigration-related issue, it does not appear that similar future incidents will be handled any better under Brazil’s new President, Jair Bosonaro.¹¹¹ Overall, these South American governments and others working to welcome internally and externally misplaced people are struggling to integrate these people into society,¹¹² provide appropriate accommodations to new arrivals,¹¹³ and help them gain employment.¹¹⁴

The keys for the ECLAC region to prepare itself for ongoing and future migrations will be to: (1) ensure it has adequate infrastructure to accommodate the coming population increase; (2) create a sufficiently robust economy to provide jobs to incoming migrants; and (3) create social mechanisms to minimize potential cultural tensions resulting from mixing ethnicities. The first two

¹⁰⁸ Ernesto Londoño, *Their Country is Being Invaded: Exodus of Venezuelans Overwhelms Northern Brazil*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 28, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/28/world/americas/venezuela-brazil-migrants.html> [<https://perma.cc/GRU8-A2XS>].

¹⁰⁹ Phillips, *supra* note 105.

¹¹⁰ Dom Phillips, *Brazil Calls in Army After Mob Attacks Venezuelan Migrants*, GUARDIAN (Sept. 2, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/02/brazil-army-venezuela-border-migrant-crisis-attacks> [<https://perma.cc/4HT7-QACS>].

¹¹¹ Jon Lee Anderson, *Jair Bolsonaro’s Victory Echoes Donald Trump’s, with Key Differences*, NEW YORKER (Oct. 30, 2018), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/jair-bolsonaros-victory-echoes-donald-trumps-with-key-differences> [<https://perma.cc/4YCK-4E86>] (“Globally, Bolsonaro’s imminent ascension to Brazil’s Presidency has appended Brazil to the growing ranks of nations ruled by authoritarian populists who openly espouse bigoted, misogynistic, homophobic, and anti-immigrant views, as well as violence as a means of problem-solving.”); Sam Meredith, *Who is the ‘Trump of the Tropics?’: Brazil’s Divisive New President, Jair Bolsonaro—In His Own Words*, CNBC (Oct. 29, 2018), <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/10/29/brazil-election-jair-bolsonaros-most-controversial-quotes.html> [<https://perma.cc/FNQ9-SHYH>] (“The scum of the earth is showing up in Brazil, as if we didn’t have enough problems of our own to sort out.”).

¹¹² Gonzalez, *supra* note 97.

¹¹³ Jonathan Watts, *A Long Way from Home: Syrians Find Unlikely Refuge in Brazil*, GUARDIAN (Mar. 11, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/11/syrians-refuge-brazil-latin-america-war-refugees> [<https://perma.cc/MK6R-994Q>].

¹¹⁴ *Id.*

seem to be adequately addressed in the current SDG achievement plan.¹¹⁵ By focusing on investments in R&D and technologies to support development of environmentally friendly technologies and a supporting education system, the LAC countries will indirectly create an economic system that is sufficiently robust to absorb the influx of migrants.

Other than the underlying efforts to promote equality, mechanisms to minimize potential cultural tensions from immigrations are not immediately considered within the SDGs or the ECLAC plan framework.¹¹⁶ Here, the LAC nations should first look to the examples of the Scandinavian countries, and most recently the example of Canada, to understand how those governments have been able to outperform all other countries in achieving the SDG Agenda while taking on more Middle Eastern refugees per capita than all other nations.¹¹⁷

Canada in particular boasts “one of the highest levels of foreign-born populations in the world” and “currently admits more immigrants annually relative to the size of its population than most countries.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, Canada has managed to “reconcile important welfare state objectives”¹¹⁹ while largely avoiding the internal populist backlash other countries like Poland, Italy, and

¹¹⁵ See *SDG Index and Dashboard Report 2017*, *supra* note 76, at 9–31.

¹¹⁶ See *The 2030 UN Sustainable Agenda*, *supra* note 12, at 14–27. See generally *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 41–61 (excluding tracking indicators, the range discusses the specific plans and mechanisms taken by LAC nations).

¹¹⁷ With Sweden’s generosity in accepting more refugees per capita than any other nation, there is much other countries can and should learn from Sweden’s experience; primarily, that without the support and cooperation from other nations, such altruistic missions can be destructive. James Traub, *The Death of the Most Generous Nation on Earth*, FOREIGN POL’Y MAG. (Feb. 10, 2016), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/10/the-death-of-the-most-generous-nation-on-earth-sweden-syria-refugee-europe/> [https://perma.cc/BAP6-C7P6]. Despite the recent struggles of Scandinavian nations regarding the refugee crisis, they still outperform all other member nations to the SDG Agenda, each taking the top four ranks (Sweden = 1, Denmark = 2, Finland = 3, Norway = 4, Germany = 6, Canada = 17, United States = 42, Brazil = 56, Mexico = 58). See *SDG Index and Dashboard Report 2017*, *supra* note 76, at 10. And most recently, Canada has been the example to which Scandinavian countries have referenced for policy guidance. Trygve Ugland, *Canada as an Inspirational Model: Reforming Scandinavian Immigration and Integration Policies*, 4 NORDIC J. OF MIGRATION RES. 144, 144–52, July 10, 2014 [hereinafter Ugland, *Canada as an Inspirational Model*], <https://doi.org/10.2478/njmr-2014-0016> [https://perma.cc/GK8W-LTRD].

¹¹⁸ Ugland, *Canada as an Inspirational Model*, *supra* note 117, at 145.

¹¹⁹ *Id.*

even Scandinavian countries have recently experienced.¹²⁰ Canada has achieved these results through a history of social multicultural inclusion supported by inclusive policies. More specifically, Canada has engrained two primary features in its immigration policies that LAC countries should look to adopt. First, Canada takes a selective approach to immigration by actively aiming to attract and admit immigrants capable of contributing to the Canadian economy.¹²¹ In this system, points are “assigned to those most likely able to enter the Canadian labour force” and able “to be reunited with their families.”¹²² Moreover, under this system, Canada provides private sponsorship to immigrants so that immigrants have both financial and emotional support upon arrival.¹²³ This group represents “nearly two-thirds of the migrants coming to Canada each year,” including twenty-five percent of all immigrants seeking reconnection to families and ten to fifteen percent of which are refugees.¹²⁴

Second, Canada has a set of multicultural citizenship policies recognizing and celebrating diversity within its public institutions.¹²⁵ Canada was the first country to pass a national multiculturalism law recognizing ethno-cultural diversity through the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988,¹²⁶ which was subsequently enshrined in section 27 of the Canadian constitution.¹²⁷ These amount to the world’s strongest multicultural policies, which, amongst others, allow dual citizenship, provide

¹²⁰ See Paul Hockenos, *Poland and the Uncontrollable Fury of Europe’s Far-Right*, ATLANTIC (Nov. 15, 2017) (reporting on a march in Poland over the country’s independence weekend, containing 60,000 people with “extremists from Italy, Sweden, Hungary, Slovakia, the U.K. and elsewhere” in attendance), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/11/europe-far-right-populist-nazi-poland/524559/> [<https://perma.cc/R6E8-TZH3>].

¹²¹ Ugland, *Canada as an Inspirational Model*, *supra* note 117, at 145.

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ *Id.*

¹²⁴ *Id.* (explaining Canada’s combined point and sponsorship system of immigration based on an applicant’s age, education, experience, language, skills, and other factors).

¹²⁵ *Id.* at 145, 146–47.

¹²⁶ CANADIAN MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION AT PIER 21, <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-multiculturalism-act-1988> [<https://perma.cc/Y629-VH2V>].

¹²⁷ See Canadian Multiculturalism Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. 24; see also Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 27, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, *being* Schedule B to the Canada Act, 1982, c 11 (U.K.).

public funding for ethnic group organizations and activities, provide dress code exemptions under certain circumstances, create earmark funding specifically for immigrant populations, and enable immigrants access to all social benefits afforded Canadian nationals.¹²⁸

Notably, although Scandinavian countries enjoy the top ranks in immigration performance per the SDG indicators, their immigration policies are much more restrictive and quite different than Canada's.¹²⁹ Generally, Scandinavian immigration policies are more assimilationist rather than multiculturalist. They significantly limit immigrants' access to social benefits compared to Danish natural citizens,¹³⁰ and they no longer allow legal family reunification.¹³¹

Despite these negative aspects of Scandinavian immigration policy trends, the region's mixed economy of private capitalism, a robust welfare state, and general open immigration policies has helped the likes of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway outperform the likes of America,¹³² the United Kingdom,¹³³ and in many ways Germany,¹³⁴ in the immigration context. The LAC countries can

¹²⁸ Ugland, *Canada as an Inspirational Model*, *supra* note 116, at 145.

¹²⁹ *See id.* at 146.

¹³⁰ *Id.* at 146–47.

¹³¹ *Id.* at 146 (“[A]lthough family reunification is still possible, the legal claim to it is revoked.”).

¹³² Clare Foran, *Making America More Like Scandinavia*, ATLANTIC (July 12, 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/nordic-countries-united-states/490847/> [<https://perma.cc/A49V-WEBJ>].

¹³³ *See* Patrick Page, *The Way Asylum Seekers are Treated in the UK is a Silent Scandal*, GUARDIAN (May 27, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2017/may/27/asylum-seekers-silent-scandal-home-office-legal-aid-cuts-refugees> [<https://perma.cc/MQ6Y-2E3H>] (acknowledging a system that is severely underfunded with workers who are overstretched and thereby unable to provide the support asylum seekers require, often leading to violations of human rights or international law); *see also Report on UK's Failing Asylum System Launched*, MIGRANTS' RIGHTS NETWORK (July, 10, 2017), <https://migrantsrights.org.uk/blog/2017/07/10/report-on-uks-failing-asylum-system-launched/> [<https://perma.cc/YA2L-MA2U>].

¹³⁴ Stefan Trines, *Lessons From Germany's Refugee Crisis: Integration, Costs, and Benefits*, WORLD EDUC. NEWS + REV. (May 2, 2017), <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/05/lessons-germanys-refugee-crisis-integration-costs-benefits> [<https://perma.cc/8AVX-QHWP>] (explaining that Germany's approach to refugee integration, which targets specific priorities such as workforce integration and education, has generated challenges involving language barriers, job placement, mitigating social animus, providing access to higher education opportunities, and even enabling access to

also use the examples of these countries to better understand what *not* to do to avoid political, social, and economic issues internally in response to the continuing refugee crisis. Where cooperation amongst all key stakeholders is crucial, any dissidence or disruptions to that cohesion can frustrate the region's ability to achieve its SDG achievement plan.

IV. Conclusion

There is no lack of challenges the LAC countries face in the pursuit of achieving the SDG Agenda. The region has the largest equity inequality amongst all regions of the world,¹³⁵ faces widespread internal corruption,¹³⁶ is home to the vast majority of the most dangerous cities in the world,¹³⁷ and is excessively vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economy.¹³⁸ While the aforementioned external issues pose potentially the largest external threats to the region's success, it is by no means comprehensive (e.g. the unpredictability and increasingly destructive nature of the global climate).¹³⁹

the financial aid required to attend higher education); Valentina Romei et. al., *How Well Have Germany's Refugees Integrated?*, FINANCIAL TIMES (Sept. 19, 2017), <https://www.ft.com/content/e1c069e0-872f-11e7-bf50-e1c239b45787> [<https://perma.cc/DHM6-2YWK>] (providing a data-driven review of the effectiveness of Germany's attempts to integrate accepted refugees, including the costs—financial and political—and the relative success of job-placement programming).

¹³⁵ See ECLAC MDG Report 2015, *supra* note 26, at 82.

¹³⁶ Lawrence Weiner, *How Mexico Became So Corrupt*, ATLANTIC (June 25, 2013), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/how-mexico-became-so-corrupt/277219/> [<https://perma.cc/487Z-BU5V>] (providing further insight into the way Mexico became so corrupt, the scope of corruption throughout the country's institutions, and how the country may overcome its history of corruption); Travis Waldron, *Brazil's Corruption Crisis is Everyone's Problem*, HUFFINGTON POST (July 19, 2017), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/brazil-corruption-lula-global-problem_us_596f89fae4b05453c5ccf699 [<https://perma.cc/PXR4-PNTE>] (reviewing how Brazil's corruption issues have penetrated the highest levels of Brazilian government, and the impact these events have on the global community).

¹³⁷ Christopher Woody, *The 50 Most Violent Cities in the World*, BUSINESS INSIDER (Apr. 8, 2017) (“Of the 50 cities on the list, 43 are in Latin America, including 19 in Brazil, eight in Mexico, and seven in Venezuela.”). <http://www.businessinsider.com/most-violent-cities-in-the-world-2017-4/#1-caracas-venezuela-had-13035-homicides-per-100000-residents-50> [<https://perma.cc/2BSJ-C3QY>].

¹³⁸ See ECLAC Progress Report 2017, *supra* note 23, at 22 (explaining that the lower long-term growth rates in the region are because of “weak investment and persistent vulnerability to external shocks.”).

¹³⁹ See Hinchberger, *4 Biggest Challenges*, *supra* note 92 (“[C]onsequences of fragile

Despite these challenges, what is most promising about the region's chances of success is the apparent broad acceptance of the challenge and how it has inspired such exigent, purposeful, and inspired action amongst the LAC nations. The plan is comprehensive. It considers the lessons learned from the MDG regime and before. It is data and evidence driven. Numerous international, national, public, private, and other organizations are involved in the efforts.¹⁴⁰ And most importantly, at least at this stage, the LAC governments have demonstrated the political will to settle their differences by developing and implementing policies and mechanisms to ensure SDG Agenda success. While most LAC countries are still ranked fairly low in the SDG Index Dashboard,¹⁴¹ if the regional efforts continue at this pace, not only should the region see improvements in that index, but it may also become the model from which other countries may follow.

states and societies—ranging from public health crises to terrorism—will all impact how the SDGs can be implemented.”).

¹⁴⁰ See *ECLAC Progress Report 2017*, *supra* note 23, at 105–07 (including a table with all of the regional countries providing support to others); see also *ECLAC MDG Report 2015*, *supra* note 26, at 85 (providing a sampling of the organizations involved).

¹⁴¹ See *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017*, *supra* note 76, at 10–11.