

Guide on Supporting a Post-COVID-19 Green Economic Recovery





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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact across all regions of the world. Its effects, along with the public health measures that governments have taken to curb the rate of infection, have contributed to a global economic and social crisis. For 2020, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) projects the region's GDP growth rate to drop by 9.1% from 2019, and the unemployment rate to increase to ~13.5%, up from 8.1% in 2019.¹ Moreover, the sharp decline in tourist arrivals —“in the first five months of the year by around 45% in South America, 45% in Central America, 34% in Mexico and 50% in the Caribbean, compared with the same period in 2019”² —has hurt a significant economic sector for the region. The social impacts of the pandemic are also severe; a decade and a half of progress on social welfare could be lost and will disproportionately affect traditionally marginalized groups.³

In the immediate aftermath of the World Health Organization's declaration of a global pandemic, governments' responses focused on prioritizing resources for the health sector to protect public health, ensuring access to essential goods and services, providing financial support to economic sectors affected by sudden closures, such as small- and medium-sized businesses, and protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable populations, among other actions.^{4,5} To support economic recovery in the long term, governments will play a critical role in shaping the outlook for the future and the level of economic and environmental burden that will be put on youth and future generations.

Given this critical juncture, will governments follow a business as usual approach or will they strive to build forward betterⁱ for more resilient social and economic systems? The latter would promote a green economic recovery—a path towards sustainable development that would simultaneously improve human health, prevent future disease outbreaks, create decent jobs, improve social welfare, and promote intergenerational equality. The time to act is now. Every year it becomes increasingly difficult to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement—a sobering cause for concern given that the impacts of climate change will outweigh those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fortunately, there is also cause for optimism. If governments implement “green stimulus” efforts as part of their strategies for recovery from the pandemic, they can “stimulate short-run economic activity while at the same time preserving, protecting and enhancing environmental and natural resource quality both near-term and longer-term.”⁶ To build a country's resilience, it is important that government recovery responses not only aim to transition towards a green economy but also safeguard human rights, ensuring policies are designed to include and meaningfully respond to population needs.

To this end, parliaments can play an important role through their oversight and budget approval functions to ensure that economic recovery packages invest in green jobs and promote green economies to address climate change, mitigate disaster risk, and contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, parliamentarians can influence decision-making in favour of green and sustainable measures through parliamentary debates. Lawmaking and adequate budget allocation will be required to further promote green investment and provide frameworks that support systemic changes to close the inequality gap and prioritize inclusive and environmentally positive activities.

The objective of this guide is to provide a brief synopsis of the reasons for which a green economic recovery is essential for a more equitable and environmentally sound future and to guide parliamentarians on supporting this endeavour. The guide provides an overview of the science, illustrating the severity of the climate and environmental crisis, as well as the social, environmental, and economic benefits of investing in a green future. It also references available resources, tools, and international frameworks that can be used to guide strategies and identify opportunities for sustainable investment. Due to the brevity of this publication, readers are highly encouraged to consult the cited references for more in-depth analyses.

ⁱ A term that promotes that during a recovery/reconstruction phase of a disaster, such as COVID-19, countries should not build back to the status quo which created many of the vulnerabilities that triggered the crisis, but rather take the opportunity to build resilience and capacity and take actions to move towards a sustainable development model to better manage future disaster risk.



Why should parliaments support a green recovery and why now?

Scientific evidence demonstrates that climate change threatens every sector of society

The climate emergency continues to be a major global threat and without decisive action, it will lead to impacts far worse than those produced by COVID-19. It is therefore important that as the world grapples with the pandemic, efforts to address climate change, environmental health, and social inequalities take priority.

Economic shutdowns at the onset of the pandemic led to a reduction in emissions; it is estimated that overall carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions will be 4-7% lower in 2020 compared with 2019 levels.⁸ However, these reductions are minimal in the context of decades of ecological overshoot. Moreover, emissions are already starting to rebound in some countries as economic activities restart.⁹

To make significant and lasting contributions, it is necessary to invest in low-carbon industries and climate action on a meaningful scale. Even with the 2020 reductions, current emissions of both CO₂ and methane (CH₄) are not compatible with emissions pathways that would limit global warming to 1.5°C or well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.¹⁰ Curbing global warming is critical given its role in increasing the frequency of extreme weather events, including heatwaves, droughts, flooding, winter storms, hurricanes, and wildfires. Notably, the number of recorded disasters due to natural hazards increased by approximately 75% in the 2000-2019 period when compared with the previous twenty years (1980-1999) and generated approximately US\$ 2.97 trillion in economic losses worldwide.¹¹

Climate change is affecting productivity and economic growth by impacting the supply and demand of economic goods and services, including in the tourism sector, and the ability of businesses to operate due to extreme weather events and natural hazards, while also placing strain on transport infrastructure and health care services and facilities.^{12,13} The Inter-American Development Bank projects that by 2050, damages caused by climate change could cost the Latin American and Caribbean region US\$ 100 billion annually.¹⁴ Changes in precipitation patterns and quantities are aggravating the occurrence of natural hazards, which in turn affects the water supply available for drinking, sanitation, and agricultural and industrial activities.¹⁵ It also exacerbates land degradation and desertification, contributing to food insecurity.¹⁶ Furthermore, climate change is significantly altering ecosystem parameters; together with unsustainable human consumption levels and use of Earth's resources, this is making habitats inhospitable, threatening the survival of diverse species and ultimately resulting in the loss of biodiversity, with consequent costs to human health and well-being given that biodiverse ecosystems contribute to food production, access to freshwater, biomedical research, and the availability of traditional medicines, among other benefits.¹⁷

It is therefore paramount that confronting climate change remains a priority and that this historic moment serves as a catalyst for bold government actions to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects by properly preparing for future disasters to build resilience and ensure that no one gets left behind.



Figure 1: Graphic taken from The United in Science Report, provides an overall summary of the key messages of recent reports that illustrate the current and projected climate and environmental impacts and the general emission trends.⁷

Co-benefits to building back greener

Opportunity to improve human health by protecting the environment

A healthy environment benefits human health because it ensures water and air quality, minimizes exposure to contaminants and waste, and protects social and economic determinants of health from the aforementioned impacts of climate change. If governments prioritize a healthy and clean environment and recognize it as a human right they can help redefine and repair the relationship between people and nature, while preventing the exacerbation of vulnerabilities created by environmental degradation, climate change, and disasters.¹⁸

During the peak period of quarantine and reduction in human mobility in Latin America, the concentration of pollutants in the air fell and air quality improved.¹⁹ Given that respiratory illnesses kill 300,000 people in the Americas each year, the health benefits of committing to long-term improvements in air quality are clear: a thriving environment and policies that work to limit the release of contaminants would decrease respiratory morbidity and mortality in the region.²⁰ Investments in new green spaces could also simultaneously reduce air pollution and create healthier built environments that encourage physical activity, benefitting both physical and mental health.

Confronting climate change and environmental degradation (e.g., deforestation) could also prevent the emergence/re-emergence of certain diseases and lessen the prevalence and intensity of zoonotic diseases, which are diseases transmitted between animals and humans; notably, 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic diseases.^{21,22,23} In addition, a green recovery could benefit poor and otherwise marginalized communities who are disproportionately affected by the deterioration of the environment and are often victims of environmental racism, a form of systemic racism whereby racialized communities are disproportionately forced through poverty and ghettoization to live in proximity to environmental hazards and, as a result, experience higher rates of related health issues.^{24,25} Furthermore, taking climate action would help reduce the number of people exposed to climate-related risks and who are susceptible to falling into poverty—an important social determinant of health—by up to several hundred million by 2050.²⁶

An understanding of the relationship between health and the environment reinforces the argument for a green recovery—an approach that has the potential to reduce current population health concerns, prevent future health crises and associated morbidity and mortality, and save health systems millions of dollars that would otherwise be dedicated to reacting to health issues.²⁷

Opportunity to create future-friendly jobs and diversify economies

Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to suffer a severe economic recession as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with corresponding effects on the labour market. Indeed, according to the International Labor Organization, it is the most affected region in the world in terms of losses in hours worked and labour income earned,^{28,29} which can be partly attributed to the inability for a large portion of occupations in the region to transition to remote work.³⁰ In the first half of the pandemic, an estimated 34 million workers in Latin America and the Caribbean lost their jobs, affecting women and young individuals at a higher proportion because of their overrepresentation in sectors more heavily affected by the crisis, including the retail, restaurant, domestic service, tourism, and construction, as well as the informal sector. The Caribbean region was especially affected by its high dependence on tourism.³¹

The pandemic has shown that there is a case for economic diversification in the region and presents an opportunity to restructure economies. A green and equitable recovery process offers an opportunity to improve the state of the economy, reduce inequalities, and restore the environment, which carries the potential of creating 15 million net new jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean, with more than half being low- and medium-skilled jobs.³² In addition, caring for nature would also help ensure the sustainability of jobs that are reliant on natural systems.³³ Furthermore, implementing circular economy practices aimed at reducing wasteful uses of natural resources would contribute to diversifying economies and limit environmental impacts and social risks, especially in communities where livelihoods are reliant on natural resource sectors.³⁴

A just transition is essential to ensuring that workers in non-sustainable industries are not left behind; a green recovery means that these individuals would be given access to retraining programs to facilitate their transition to employment in emerging green industries. This same opportunity would be extended to individuals with lower education levels and to women in order to foster gender equity within industries that have traditionally been predominated by men.

Opportunity to reduce inequities and promote inclusiveness

To rebuild toward more equitable societies, the protection of the environment, social welfare, and the economic wellbeing of all needs to be ensured. The pandemic has illustrated its differentiated impact on historically marginalized populations, as many other crises in the past. Social characteristics such as gender, age, income, type of employment, level of education, ethnicity and race, immigration status, living with a mental or physical disability, and sexual orientation, among others, have played an important role in determining people's capacity to manage and overcome illness from COVID-19, as well as the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic; these factors have affected their ability to stay home and their access to health care and basic necessities, among other social and economic resources.³⁵ For example, women, particularly those living in poverty and/or belonging to racialized groups, are at a higher risk of infection and experience greater losses of income and disproportionate burdens of care and domestic work.³⁶ A green recovery is an opportunity to both recognize the gendered impacts of crises and promote women as agents of change by financing their green businesses and community projects and ensuring an intersectional representation of women during decision-making processes.

Response policies have the potential to reduce socioeconomic inequities by embracing a just transition that bridges workers from unsustainable "sunset industries" to green, well-paid work, thus increasing job opportunities, including for historically marginalized individuals and those working in the informal sector, which are disproportionately women. Employment-related recovery policies could also contribute to reducing the rural-urban divide and gender inequities within countries, considering that 46% of the rural population in Latin America and the Caribbean lives under the poverty line and women make up half of that population.³⁷ Modernization and innovation focused work programs, investments in infrastructure in rural areas and strengthening social protection (e.g., unemployment benefits) to support displaced workers and communities affected by the impacts of climate change could play a role in reducing these inequities.³⁸ Modernization efforts would not only create jobs but allow for greater access to information and education. Furthermore, expanding renewable energy could improve access to reliable energy sources for lower-income communities, particularly in rural areas; restoring land and implementing more sustainable agricultural practices could also improve smallholder farmers' incomes and food security.³⁹ Energy retrofits could help households reduce their energy bills, which would benefit low-income households in particular. Finally, investing in climate adaptation would increase community resilience to climate change and associated disasters, preventing significant financial losses.

Ultimately, all decisions made by governments now will impact future generations. Current levels of production and consumption, climate inaction, and environmental degradation are unsustainable; youth today are speaking out on the world they will inherit. By simultaneously addressing the climate crisis and economic instability, a green recovery would seek to address the unfair burden that is being placed on future generations not only because of rising public debt but because of the significant climate and environmental debt they are set to inherit, thus aiming to close this intergenerational divide.

As illustrated in this section, taking climate action and prioritizing environmental concerns in recovery efforts would contribute to addressing environmental and social injustices, improving the health of vulnerable populations and helping reduce/prevent the exacerbation of vulnerabilities of current and future inequities.^{40,41} It should come as no surprise that countries with stronger social protection, equitable access to health care (based on need and not ability to pay), as well as higher levels of public trust in government and solidarity have been better equipped to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴² This crisis has accentuated the need to build on such policies and transform current development models to address existing systemic injustices by working to reduce income inequality, committing to end corruption, ensuring access to decent work (especially for poor and remote communities), and ensuring that gender equality is at the core of these actions.⁴³



Focus areas for policy actions that support a green recovery

Given the urgency of the climate emergency and the potential co-benefits of a green recovery for population health, economic opportunities, and for reducing inequities, there are many reasons to support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Green stimulus policies have also been shown to offer more long-term benefits compared with investments in business as usual policies.⁴⁴ Allocating resources to “clean physical infrastructure, building efficiency retrofits, investment in education and training, natural capital investment, and clean research and development” are among the green policies with the most climate impact potential and that are most likely to gain widespread public support; additionally, these can be implemented relatively quickly and many are labour intensive which would immediately help stimulate the economy, as well as provide positive long-term economic returns.⁴⁵ The pandemic also provides a good opportunity to transform societies by encouraging their adoption of more inclusive and climate-friendly practices as post-crisis and transitional periods have historically been a vehicle to systemic change and adaptations in consumer behaviours.^{46,47}

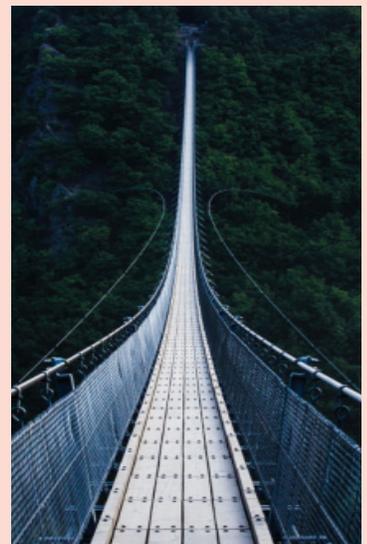
Designing policy actions in support of a green recovery could involve an array of approaches. For example, nature-based solutions—actions to address societal challenges and provide human well-being by conserving, sustainably managing, and restoring ecosystems—are a way of leveraging the ecosystem services that natural landscapes provide and can inform investments included in recovery packages. Investments in green infrastructure, biodiversity protection, ecosystem conservation and restoration, and in promoting a circular economy that aims to minimize resource use and pollution, are also critical.⁴⁸

Policies can also focus investments on a variety of economic sectors to arrive at the aforementioned co-benefits for health, the economy, and the environment. For instance, green investments in agricultural and fishery practices, land and water management, and practices that address global food markets and systems would not only preserve natural resources but also protect the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and improve food security and access to healthy nutritious food, which decreases vulnerability to other health risks, reduces waste and helps confront climate change. Moreover, good water management practices that protect and restore watersheds can help address water scarcity issues and ensure water quality, thereby preventing waterborne diseases.⁴⁹

Several United Nations agencies, think tanks, international organizations, and academic institutions have developed recommendations on priorities for investments and legislative and policy actions that would generate the most benefits in terms of meeting immediate socioeconomic needs caused by the pandemic and paving the way for long-term sustainable development. They have also made recommendations for transparent and evidence-based decision-making, which include making information easily accessible to the public, integrating strategies for gender mainstreaming and impact assessments on vulnerable populations, and, where possible, including opportunities for public participation.^{50,51,52,53}

Climate Action Pathways roadmap to a zero-carbon economy

The Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, published a series of Pathways to provide an “overview of the transformational actions and milestones needed for system transformations within sectors, as well as the synergies and interlinkages across the thematic and cross-cutting areas that assist all actors to take an integrated approach”.⁵⁴



The following are a selection of recommended policy actions that parliamentarians can consider supporting during the recovery process to both strengthen national climate change mitigation efforts and bolster economic growth (i.e. promote a green recovery). Some of these policy actions can be implemented quickly and support the creation of immediate jobs that help raise employment and confront climate change, these actions are identified with a (⚡) symbol:

Infrastructure

- ⚡ Improve energy efficiency of buildings and households in communities by improving insulation, green building practices, efficiency of appliances, and heating/cooling systems.
- ⚡ Modernize urban and rural areas by installing infrastructure to allow access to broadband, especially in lower-income communities and rural areas, and make high-speed internet more accessible and affordable to enable remote work.
- ⚡ Strengthen infrastructure resilience and prioritize gender-responsive disaster risk management planning.
- 🔴 Establish or strengthen national and sub-national early-warning systems, and ensure there are adequate communication plans and technology to disseminate warning messages to turn early warning information into early action.⁵⁵

Natural Capital and Agriculture

- ⚡ Conserve and enhance natural capital by planting more trees, increasing green space, and improving urban landscaping, installing green roofs/gardens, restoring degraded lands and ecosystems, and protecting natural spaces and riparian zones (the interface between land and a body of water) by, for example, protecting or planting mangroves, etc.
- 🔴 Build resiliency by improving agricultural practices through efficient water, soil, and nutrient management, improved grazing practices, and value chain efficiencies by incorporating circular economy practices.

Renewable Energy

- 🔴 Expand investments in and usage of renewable energy and research green technology such as carbon capture.⁵⁶
- ⚡ Transition to transportation that runs on electricity from renewable energy sources, making these options more widely available, incentivizing their use, and providing investments for infrastructure to support this transition.

Private Sector Subsidies or Support

- 🔴 Include conditions for a transition to net zero emissions by 2050 as part of financial support packages to industry and identify consequences for failing to comply with such conditions.
- 🔴 Implement policy frameworks that incentivize, enable, and provide certainty to the private sector to invest in a green recovery, as well as transition towards green and inclusive business models that support the country's objectives of achieving climate neutrality and a circular economy.^{57,58}
- 🔴 Avoid providing new subsidies or bailouts for oil and gas sectors.^{59,60,61}
- 🔴 Gradually reduce existing fossil fuel subsidies and start taxing emissions, diverting these savings to social and environmental welfare programs.

Incentives and Financing

- Introduce a carbon tax or another carbon market mechanism to increase State revenues and accelerate the uptake of low emission technologies and practices.

Education

- Invest in education and training to address immediate unemployment levels, facilitate a just transition which includes addressing any job loss associated with the transition away from unsustainable industries, and ensure more gender-equitable workforces.



Frameworks to guide green recovery efforts

This section offers a brief overview of existing international frameworks that can offer valuable guidance to parliamentarians on supporting a green recovery that integrates social, economic, and environmental factors with the aim of improving the sustainability, resilience, and equity of societies.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, offers 17 universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with respective targets and indicators that encapsulate and integrate the economic, social, and environmental realms of society. This tool offers a roadmap of what a just and sustainable future looks like for current and future generations and provides strategies for building resilience against future shocks. It can be used to identify priorities and guide policymaking and resource allocation that is conducive to achieving these priorities.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has retrogressed the progress made in fulfilling the SDGs;⁶² the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) predicts that there will likely be a decline in global human development.⁶³ However, governments still have an opportunity to mitigate the harms caused by this regression and avoid further declines by ensuring that recovery efforts are aligned with the SDGs and that these goals are integrated within national development strategies. Recovery policies should be designed considering the different interactions between the SDGs and involving multiple sectors and stakeholders, including civil society, in a coordinated manner to ensure that they do not negatively influence other goals.⁶⁴ Thus, efforts to identify and address knowledge and data gaps, such as whether data is disaggregated by gender and other sociodemographic and socioeconomic variables, are needed to inform recovery policies and actions that synergistically benefit COVID-19 responses and help achieve the SDGs. Such policies should also incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess their progress over time.⁶⁵

To apply the 2030 Agenda framework in their efforts to promote a green recovery, parliamentarians can:⁶⁶

- ✓ Establish a committee or assign responsibilities to one or several committees to monitor progress towards the SDGs.
- ✓ Define an agenda of legislative priorities based on the goals and their targets, and national realities.
- ✓ Promote the collection and publication of adequate gender-disaggregated data to meaningfully design and monitor policies to accomplish these goals.
- ✓ Include a study (or complete a checklist) for every bill noting how it will impact the SDGs, including the national budget bill and any supplemental economic recovery bills (consult the last page of Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals for a checklist that lawmakers can use to ensure that parliamentary functions are conducted through an SDG lens).
- ✓ Review and improve communications and interaction strategies and mechanisms between the parliament and the public to ensure they are effective and reaching all population segments, especially under-represented and marginalized groups and enabling their voices to be heard.
- ✓ Promote open parliament reforms to improve interaction with civil society as well as strengthen transparency and access to information, accountability, public participation and high ethical standards in parliamentary work in accordance with SDG 16.



Figure 2: The following publication, [Parliament's role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals](#), developed by ParlAmericas and UNDP offers additional insights on the important role of parliaments and examples of mechanisms that parliaments are employing to support the implementation of the SDGs.⁶⁷

Nationally Determined Contributions to meet the Paris Agreement's goals

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are countries' concrete commitments to fulfilling the Paris Agreement's goals to limit global warming to 1.5°C or less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.⁶⁸ To achieve this, global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must be halved during the next decade and reach net zero early in the second half of the century.⁶⁹ Under the Paris Agreement, countries are expected to submit enhanced NDCs in 2020. A survey conducted in Latin America identified that 13 of the 15 countries in the region plan on submitting new or updated NDCs in 2020, which aim to improve mitigation and adaptation endeavours; establish better monitoring, reporting, and verification mechanisms; and mainstream gender, human rights, and a just transition.⁷⁰

However, there is still concern that the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic will lead countries to pause or reduce climate action, given the human and financial resources being diverted to address COVID-19 and rising domestic debt. It is therefore important to note that these issues are not mutually exclusive; a country's NDC can offer a roadmap to specific areas of future economic growth and innovation that will create jobs in the short term, alleviating the immediate unemployment strain and improving social and natural capital.^{71,72} Promptly investing in climate mitigation and adaptation and aligning these investments with the priorities of the 2030 Agenda can prevent locking in the high emission levels projected for 2030 and lead to a more sustainable form of development.⁷³ The commitments encompassed in the NDCs can also prevent future financial losses from climate inaction which is estimated to be between 1.4 and 4.3% of annual GDP by the end of the century in Latin American and the Caribbean,⁷⁴ as well as reduce climate and disaster risk and increase productivity.⁷⁵

To apply the NDC framework in their efforts to promote a green recovery, parliamentarians can:⁷⁶

- ✓ Ensure the government submits their enhanced NDC in 2020.
- ✓ Study the NDC, monitor progress, and ensure that its implementation plan continues to progress or is adapted so that the objective can still be reached given new realities.
- ✓ Ensure that new legislation and policies do not contradict the NDC objectives and make amendments to existing legislation to achieve consistency with climate goals.
- ✓ Hold parliamentary debates to discuss progress or shortcomings in meeting GHG targets and adapting to climate change.
- ✓ Engage the views and needs of civil society, so that these are reflected in recovery responses, including through the identification of good climate practices at the local level that can inform legislation.
- ✓ Verify that there is sufficient budget allocated to fulfilling the goals of the NDC and the creation of a green economy.



Figure 3: The following publication, [Parliamentary action plan on climate change](#), developed by the IPU offers additional insights on the important role of parliaments in strengthening the international responses to climate and provides recommended legislative actions to help drive the climate agenda.⁷⁷

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and national climate adaptation plans

The United Nations blueprint for reducing disaster risk, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, was adopted by Member States five years ago. It is a common and agreed tool to better prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to all risks, including systemic risks and biorisks. Applying this framework could play a significant role in ensuring future biological hazards do not turn into disasters.⁷⁸ COVID-19 has illustrated that countries need to raise their resilience by better understanding risk, comprehending its systemic nature and its interconnectedness at every level, allowing them to prepare for future shocks, thus preventing or reducing the impact of future disasters as a result of natural, biological, and/or anthropogenic (human-made) hazards.⁷⁹ Improving disaster preparedness will require identifying knowledge and technology gaps, such as inadequate early warning systems,⁸⁰ and addressing systemic risks and gaps in social protection to minimize social vulnerabilities and inequities. The COVID-19 pandemic could become a catalyst to transform the way in which society and our economic and political systems are structured and organized, fomenting an approach to development that is risk-informed and resilience-focused.

In our highly globalized world, many national systems are interconnected and dependent on each other; that is, national and international environmental, social, and economic activities of a country affect other sectors and/or countries. Similar interconnections can be found at a national level between 1) different economic sectors; 2) socioeconomic structures, such as underlying inequities, unemployment levels, and other vulnerabilities; and 3) the level of exposure to hazards and the interaction between such hazards. These complex relationships are vulnerable to sudden shocks to any one of their components, which can have a cascading effect onto many subsystems and/or sectors and potentially disrupt whole systems. For example, with the COVID-19 crisis, countries struggled to acquire personal protective equipment as global demand for these goods surged at the same time that supply chains had been disrupted. This had successive and often profound effects on national and sub-national health systems and their ability to safely respond to the public health emergency.⁸¹ For this reason, countries need to have coordinated and multisectoral approaches, founded on good disaster risk reduction governance, that pre-emptively assess and manage the interactive risks to whole systems. Developing these approaches requires countries to put in place a whole-of-government approach, including cross sectoral exchanges between national and local entities, as well as civil society, private sector and the scientific community, to guide and lead strategies, policies, legislation and plans on disaster risk reduction.

The international and scientific community, including the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Meteorological Organization, recommends avoiding the term “natural disaster” because it implies that disasters occur naturally without being triggered and are therefore unavoidable. However, although hazards (e.g., earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, landslides) can be natural, disasters are not. A natural hazard only becomes a disaster when societies do not properly manage risks and adequately address exposure and vulnerabilities. It is important for governments to create national disaster risk strategies and address the existing socioeconomic inequities that affect a population’s vulnerability to hazards. Instead of the term “natural disaster,” the term “disaster” has been recommended, or if more specificity is required, “disaster as a result of a  Hazard type  hazard.”⁸²



To apply the Sendai Framework in their efforts to promote a green recovery, parliamentarians can:⁸³

- ✓ Learn about and support the development of National plans for disaster risk reduction, aligned with country development programmes and climate change adaptation strategies, and ensure budgetary support for their implementation.
- ✓ Assess existing national and local legislation on disaster risk reduction and its connection and compatibility with existing legislation on climate change; ensure that disaster risk reduction laws respond to more than just natural hazards.
- ✓ Ensure that disaster risk legislation and national disaster risk reduction strategies consider systemic risks and promote risk governance systems⁸⁴ (system that facilitates the coordination between multiple stakeholders with sufficient capacity and information to effectively manage and reduce disaster and climate related risks).
- ✓ Investigate whether there are adequate early warning systems and multi-hazard early warning system mechanisms in place and accompanying communication plans to disseminate early warning information.
- ✓ Carry out a national vulnerability assessment to identify the populations and areas most affected by COVID-19, climate change, and disasters, as well as high-risk areas to strengthen protection mechanisms for those most vulnerable to risks. The assessment should include the actions being undertaken by different actors, valuing the lived experiences, traditional knowledge, and skills of women, vulnerable groups, and Indigenous peoples.
- ✓ Guarantee the representation and participation of women, Indigenous peoples, and historically marginalized groups in decision-making, including in the development of mechanisms for disaster risk reduction and for climate change adaptation at all levels.
- ✓ Coordinate, where possible, with the oversight agencies on the adequate use of the resources during the emergencies, and especially during the post disaster reconstruction phase.
- ✓ Modify laws and regulations that facilitate risk-based investment and integrate climate change adaptation measures, promoting innovation and the use of new technologies and sustainable energy.



Figure 4: The following publication, [Parliamentary protocol for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation](#), developed by ParlAmericas and UNDRR offers additional insights on the important role of parliaments in building disaster resilient societies and provides recommendations on how to achieve the objectives of the Sendai Framework.⁸⁵



Parliamentary checklist for a green and sustainable economic recovery

Parliamentarians can consider the following questions as they seek to promote a green and sustainable economic recovery through their representation, legislative, and oversight duties:

Parliamentary Function	Guiding Questions
<p>Representation - Engaging with constituents to understand their needs and concerns and promote a green recovery</p> <p>Is engagement with constituents being utilized to...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> understand diverse lived experiences and challenges associated with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and identify differential impacts? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> promote the co-benefits of a green recovery, including the creation of green jobs? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> mitigate concerns that a green recovery implies a tradeoff for jobs creation and other economic benefits? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> understand youth perspectives and concerns on the generational burden of climate change and environmental degradation? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> promote public participation in decision-making processes related to recovery from the pandemic and its manifold socioeconomic impacts, ensuring an intersectional representation of women and traditionally marginalized populations?
<p>Oversight - Ensuring government actions and budget priorities are aligned with the objectives of a green and sustainable recovery</p> <p>Do government measures for recovery from the pandemic...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> improve social welfare and address inequities? Do they respond to the needs of the population, including the segments most vulnerable to disasters and other systemic shocks? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> allocate funds for climate action? Does this funding surpass resources from previous years? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> align with national development plans, national disaster risk reduction plans, and efforts to achieve the SDGs? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> include an intention to submit an updated NDC and show concrete investments in the measures needed to reach this commitment, including in renewable energy sources, and publish information on progress? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> incorporate nature-based solutions that can improve the relationship between humanity and nature? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> include an updated disaster risk reduction strategy that not only addresses natural hazards but also biological and anthropogenic (man-made) hazards? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> avoid supporting carbon intensive industries, or if they do, are there conditionalities tied to the support? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> support the creation of green jobs, including with training programs to facilitate a just transition for workers in unsustainable industries?

Lawmaking - Studying and proposing bills that promote the objectives of a green and sustainable recovery

Do recovery bills...

- ✓ consider their impact on climate change, disaster risk reduction, and/or the achievement of the SDGs and its coherence with the respective development agenda (Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework and 2030 Agenda)?
- ✓ threaten the progress of the 2030 Agenda or any of the SDGs?
- ✓ address the differential impacts of COVID-19 and climate change and environmental degradation on women and girls, populations living in poverty, persons living with disabilities, Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, Indo-descendants and indentured descendants peoples, members of the LGBTQI community, and displaced persons and migrants, among other marginalized populations?
- ✓ recognize and seek to alleviate the long-term burden of the climate crisis on youth?
- ✓ draw on the best available evidence on the impacts of the pandemic and current and future impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, including data disaggregated by gender and other socioeconomic and sociodemographic variables?
- ✓ integrate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating their impact, including their impact, if any, on socioeconomic inequities?
- ✓ protect and promote human rights, including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights?
- ✓ recognize current and future systemic risks, including from climate change, and aim to build resilience to these shocks?
- ✓ avoid the term “natural disasters,” to recognize that disasters, and their differential impacts, are neither natural nor unavoidable (please refer to the Sendai Framework section, explaining the use of the term)?
- ✓ support a just renewable energy transition that ensures workers employed in non-sustainable industries are not left behind?
- ✓ consider the views of civil society and population segments most likely to be affected by the bill, obtained through a public participation process?



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International Secretariat of ParlAmericas
703 - 155 Queen St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6L1 Canada
Telephone: + 1 (613) 947-8999
www.parlamericas.org | info@parlamericas.org

