

Cuba and UNESCO will address the political, economic, and health challenges posed by the COVID

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**Health worker attending Colombian child during COVID-19 pandemic.
Red Cross/Colombia**

Paris, September 9 (RHC) The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, and Cuba will open an online forum on Thursday to address the economic, political, and health challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In a statement, UNESCO said that its director-general Audrey Azoulay, and the island's permanent delegate to the multilateral body, Yahima Esquivel, will chair the meeting. Public policy proposals will emerge, with emphasis on reducing social inequalities.

Employment, attention to the most vulnerable, social cohesion, and the recovery of human health and well-being would be the center of attention of the expected initiatives in a region that is particularly suffering from the pandemic's scourge.

In addition to the death of more than a quarter of a million people from Covid-19, the viral disease would cause a 9.1 percent drop in gross domestic product this year, according to projections by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC.

According to the commission, such a blow would mean a decade of income level decline for the region's inhabitants.

Panelists expected in the forum include Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Rigoberta Menchú, the professor of the University of Coimbra (Portugal) Boaventura de Sousa Santos and the president of the Casa de las Americas and former Minister of Culture of Cuba, Abel Prieto.

Also present will be Saskia Sassen, professor of sociology at Columbia University, Simone Cecchini, director of ECLAC's Social Development Division, Pablo Gentili, secretary of Educational Cooperation and Priority Actions of Argentina, and John Anton, professor of Higher National Studies of Ecuador.

Gabriela Ramos, Deputy Director-General of Human and Social Sciences of UNESCO, will close the debate, which will be summarized by the organization's representative in Guatemala, Cuban Julio Carranza.

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