

DECISION N° 494

**REGIONAL PROGRAMME ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION
OF INTEGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,

HAVING SEEN:

The document "Proposal for a Regional Cooperation Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean" (SP/CL/XXXIV.O/DT N° 11-08/Rev.1).

CONSIDERING:

The conclusions and recommendations made by the Member States of SELA within the framework of the Regional Seminar for Consultation on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, 16 and 17 July 2008) and the Regional Meeting on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, 18 July 2008).

DECIDES:

Sole Article.- To approve the Regional Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean (2009-2011), to be implemented within the framework of the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat.

I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

In July 2008, SELA conducted two important activities related to social issues that form part of the integration process in our region.

The Regional Seminar for Consultation on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 16 and 17 July, with an active participation of representatives of Latin American and Caribbean social organizations; and the II Regional Meeting on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 18 July, with the participation of representatives of the Member States and all of the integration subregional organizations.

Generally speaking, the most relevant issues subject to analysis and debate during the Regional Seminar for Consultation and the II Regional Meeting included the following, among others:

- a) There is a need to overcome the essentially commercialist approach to the integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, which requires strengthening the political dimension, the productive dimension, the social dimension and the cultural dimension of regional integration.
- b) Inequality generates more poverty and constrains development, which reveals how intimately related these three concepts are: inequality, poverty and development. This issue must be at the centre of the discussions and proposals about the social dimension of integration and development.
- c) The accumulated social problems must be confronted and solved as soon as possible. In this connection, participants pointed out that our region faces three different challenges: i) how to move ahead in a transition within our countries that gives priority to social matters; ii) how to make progress with a vision of Latin American and Caribbean integration so that our region as a whole can face the challenges of development with social inclusion; and iii) how to strengthen regional mechanisms that allow for undertaking effective projects for social development.
- d) In general, there has been little progress as regards the social component of Latin American and Caribbean integration; and participation of social actors in outlining policies on integration or social development has not reached the appropriate level of impact required for them to become effective yet.
- e) There is a need for a multidisciplinary approach – a need to transversalize – the analysis and treatment of the social dimension of development and integration. In this connection, homogenous social programmes must be avoided, because due to the existing differences or specific characteristics, some plans or projects can have positive results in certain contexts but not in others.

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With respect to the role that SELA should play as regards social development and the social dimension of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, participants in both events highlighted that:

1. SELA must become the forum for debates and regional rapprochement aimed at coordinating and exchanging ideas concerning the achievements and lessons learned about social development and social dimension of integration in LAC.
2. It is absolutely necessary to work on the linkage of networks for the definition and development of social programmes, which requires “horizontal” coordination. In this connection, the institutional strengthening of subregional integration schemes in LAC is indispensable in order to enable them to adopt a new comprehensive vision of the issues related the social dimension of development. In this field, SELA should also play a key role as a forum to coordinate analyses and proposals on the social dimension of integration.
3. In order to materialize the above-mentioned objective, in the opinion of the representatives of social organizations in LAC, and the delegates of Member States and subregional integration organizations, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA should:
 - a) promote exchanges of experiences and, particularly, best practices at the subregional level on the social dimension of integration so as to analyze the feasibility of implement them at the regional level;
 - b) support training activities for public and private sector actors to help them face the challenges of poverty and social exclusion;
 - c) encourage the creation of new funds for social projects with a regional scope;
 - d) identify national networks of social development organizations (SDOs) in the region, which could be integrated into a single network with Latin American and Caribbean reach; and
 - e) the Permanent Secretariat, in collaboration with other organizations, should submit an Annual Report to the Latin American Council on the achievements and initiatives in the area of social development and integration.

At the end of the debates, the representatives of the Member States recommended the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to draft a proposal for a Regional Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, which should be submitted for consideration to the XXXIII Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The fundamental goal of this regional programme is to create, within the framework of SELA, a permanent forum for analysis and proposals to coordinate exchanges of the most relevant experiences in the region as regards social development and the social dimension of integration.

This general goal will be accomplished by complying with the following specific objectives:

- a) To contribute to the gradual coordination of the various efforts underway at the subregional level in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to support development with social inclusion in the countries of the region.

- b) To promote the exchange of information, analyses, experiences and best practices as regards the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies to promote the social dimension of integration processes in LAC as well as economic development with social equity in the region.
- c) To conduct training and professional improvement activities in order to support institutional capacities in the Member States of SELA and in the various integration and cooperation organizations existing in the region, for outlining, implementing and evaluating social development policies.
- d) To disseminate information about relevant analyses as well as best practices as regards the social dimension of integration at the regional level.
- e) To prepare and distribute an annual report on the achievements and initiatives in the area of social development and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

III. ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED

The Permanent Secretariat of SELA would conduct various activities to comply with the objectives proposed for this Regional Programme.

Particularly, it would be necessary to conduct the following annual activities:

1. A Regional Seminar for Consultation with social organizations of the region for exchange of opinions and proposals on the social dimension of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. A Regional Meeting on Social Dimension of Integration and the Development, with the participation of representatives of the Member States in Latin America and the Caribbean directly related to the design, implementation and evaluation of social development programmes and policies; as well as delegates of the subregional integration organizations in charge of promoting plans to support social development in the Member States.

This Regional Meeting on the Social Dimension of Integration and Development could also serve to make consultations and promote coordination between the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and the officials of integration and cooperation organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean responsible for regional and subregional programmes on the social dimension.

3. A Training Workshop for public sector officials in the Member States of SELA related to the processes to outline, execute and evaluate national programmes for social development.
4. Creation and development of the Regional Observatory on the social dimension of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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IV. PERIOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME

This Regional Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean should be conducted during a period of three years (January 2009 – December 2011). A second stage of the programme could be undertaken, in case the States Members of SELA decide to do so upon the conclusion of the process to evaluate its effectiveness in December 2011.

V. BUDGET

(Budget figures do not appear in our Website)