



# 50th Latin American Council

## 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council Final Report

*50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council  
Caracas, Venezuela  
10 and 11 December 2024  
SP/CL/L.O/IF-24*



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# C O N T E N T S

<b>A.</b>	<b>PREPARATORY STAGE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>MINISTERIAL STAGE</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>DECISIONS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>DECISION N° 610</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR 2022-2026, 2025 UPDATE</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>DECISION N° 611</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2025</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>DECISION N° 612</b>	<b>AUDIT REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AT 31 DECEMBER 2023</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>DECISION N° 613</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>DECISION N° 614</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF THE BUREAU OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>DECISION N° 615</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>DECISION N° 616</b>	<b>AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 6 OF THE ANNEX TO DECISION N° 370 CONCERNING THE MEETINGS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>43</b>
	<b>ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL BLOCKADE IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES AGAINST CUBA</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>ANNEXES:</b>	<b>REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE MINISTERIAL STAGE</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>ANNEX I.</b>	<b>REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE RUBÉN DARIO MOLINA, VICE-MINISTER FOR MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS OF THE PEOPLE'S MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF VENEZUELA</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>ANNEX II.</b>	<b>REMARKS BY HER EXCELLENCY SCARLETH ROMERO, AMBASSADOR OF HONDURAS IN VENEZUELA AND CHAIR OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>ANNEX III.</b>	<b>REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR CLAREMS ENDARA, PERMANENT SECRETARY OF SELA</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>ANNEX IV.</b>	<b>LIST OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>67</b>

## A. PREPARATORY STAGE

In compliance with Article 12 of the Panama Convention, the Preparatory Stage of the “50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council” was held, under the face-to-face-virtual modality, on 10 December 2024. The activity took place at the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, in Caracas, at 11:00 a.m. (Venezuelan time).

Delegations from the following Member States participated in the meeting: Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. The following members of the Bureau were present: Her Excellency Scarleth Romero, Ambassador of Honduras in Venezuela and Chairperson of the Latin American Council; His Excellency Aquinas Clarke, Ambassador of Barbados in Venezuela and First Vice-Chairman; The Honourable Mr. David Alejandro Mora, Second Secretary representing Mr. Milton Rengifo, Ambassador of Colombia in Venezuela and Second Vice-Chairman; and His Excellency Dagoberto Rodríguez, Ambassador of Cuba in Venezuela and Rapporteur. Participants also included His Excellency Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA, and officials of the Permanent Secretariat.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following entities: the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); the Latin American Bank for Foreign Trade (BLADEX); CAF-Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean; the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS); the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); the General Secretariat of the Andean Community (SGCAN) and the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SG-SICA). Representatives of Brazil's Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) also participated.

### ITEM I. THEMES OF THE 50TH REGULAR MEETING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL

Once the quorum was established, Her Excellency Ms. Scarleth Romero, Ambassador of Honduras in Venezuela and Chair of the Latin American Council, welcomed all participants and declared the “50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council” open. She then submitted for consideration by the delegations the *Draft Agenda* (SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 1-24), which had been previously shared with the delegations by e-mail and having complied with Article 22 of the Rules of Procedure of the Latin American Council, and since no objection was presented, she considered it approved. She then read the *Annotated draft agenda and the themes for work* (SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 2-24) and submitted it for consideration by the delegations. Since there were no comments, she declared it approved and passed the floor to Ambassador Clarems Endara, who elaborated on it.

The Permanent Secretary began by noting that the agenda consisted of the following items: the *Draft Agenda* (SP/CLL.O/DT N° 1-24); the [\*Annotated draft agenda and the themes for work\* \(SP/CLL.O/DT N° 2-24\)](#); the *Forty-eighth Annual Report of the Permanent Secretariat*; the *updated Work Programme for 2022-2026*; the *Draft Administrative Budget of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2025*; the *Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat* and the *Proposed Audit for Fiscal Year 2024*. In other matters, the agenda included the *election of the new Bureau of the Latin American Council for the period 2024-2025*; the *election of a member of the Administrative Tribunal for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027*, a draft decision amending Article 6 of Decision 370, concerning the meetings of the Administrative Tribunal, and finally, the *Declaration Ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba*.

## 2

Since there were no comments, the Chair declared the agenda approved and passed the floor to the Permanent Secretary to continue with the presentation of the Annual Report of the Permanent Secretariat.

### ITEM II. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

The Permanent Secretary greeted and welcomed the audience. Afterwards, he presented the [\*Forty-eight Annual Report of the Permanent Secretariat \(SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 3-24\)\*](#) covering the period from December 2023 through December 2024, which describes the activities conducted in compliance with the *Work Programme for 2022-2026 (SP/CL/XLVII.O/DT N° 4-21)*. He began by recalling that SELA's objective is to coordinate proposals and design strategies to achieve integration with a regional vision that contributes to the development of the countries in the region, and that the words convergence and integration have guided SELA's work since the beginning of his mandate.

The Permanent Secretary noted that the *Work Programme for 2022-2026, 2024 update*, reached 85.1% of execution. The figures, by thematic area, indicate that 19 activities were conducted in Economic Recovery, representing 79% of execution. This area addressed topics such as the monitoring of regional trade, in which SELA developed an [\*Interactive Dashboard\*](#) available on its Web portal. In this connection, this new section of the portal shows indicators associated with the economic performance of LAC countries, regional trade and maritime port connectivity. Within the framework of the roundtables of chairs and secretariats of the regional integration mechanisms, he highlighted the construction of the Regional Convergence Matrix (RCM), which included the current policies and actions of the participating organisations, as well as the identification of the points of convergence among them.

He also referred to the "Forum on partnerships for strengthening trade and investment ties between China and Latin America and the Caribbean," which represented an opportunity to strengthen the region's ties with this country and to explore areas of interest for the development of a joint agenda to promote trade and technology transfer. Regarding port matters, he pointed out the considerable number of people participating in issues related to maritime and port security, in addition to the fact that the gender approach is becoming increasingly relevant in this sector, which points towards the construction of more resilient, innovative and committed port logistics communities.

Other highlights were the events associated with trade and competition; the mapping of productive niches; the promotion of public policies for tourism activities; the diploma courses with a gender approach; a workshop to strengthen the cocoa industry in the region and, more recently, the publication on SELA's Web site of the [\*Digital Directory of Cultural and Creative Industries \(DCCI\)\*](#), which aims to promote this important ecosystem and strengthen the supply and demand of these sectors.

In the area of Digitalisation and Infrastructure, six activities were conducted, representing a 75% execution rate and incorporating topics such as artificial intelligence and digital governance. It is worth highlighting the execution of the First Hackathon on disaster risk reduction. This activity was organised by SELA together with the Copernicus LACPanama Centre and the European Space Agency (ESA). In addition, he stressed that two events were dedicated to the topic of digital governance and cyberdiplomacy in LAC, with the first one analysing the challenges and opportunities and the second one discussing innovation and the future of LAC in the field of cyberdiplomacy and AI. The port theme was also addressed through a seminar on digital transformation and the adoption of innovative technologies in the sector. Also noteworthy was the panel dedicated to the promotion of rural digital connectivity to boost competitiveness and efficiency in the agri-food sector in LAC, and SELA's participation in the OLADE Energy Week with

two panels: one dedicated to the evolution of the electricity grid in LAC and the other to the progress towards a low-carbon hydrogen economy.

The Permanent Secretary said that SELA perceives regional integration as a process in which the economic aspect is a structural part of the definitions for the formulation of strategies, but that it is no longer the only way to support the region, and that this is the reason why the work programme reflects the highly relevant role of social development and, very fundamentally, of education and culture. Thus, in the area of Social Development, 15 activities were implemented, representing a 100% execution rate. The activities were related to the circular economy; South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC); integrated disaster risk management and climate change; challenges of international cooperation in the face of disasters; human mobility; behavioural economics; AI and diplomacy; capacity building in LAC integration; the socio-economic inclusion of migrants and their social insertion in the social security of host countries and strategies for the integration of migrant women and girls.

Afterwards, the Permanent Secretary provided details on the activities implemented that were not included in the Work Programme, such as the following: the "Seminar on European market access for the coffee and cocoa sectors," the meeting on "The challenges of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean," the Mapping of productive niches in 11 ALBA-TCP countries and its respective presentation of results, and the "Seminar on financial tools as an alternative for the promotion of international trade." Finally, the Permanent Secretary referred to the 14 cooperation instruments signed in 2024 with the following entities: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC); Venezuelan-Colombian Chamber of Economic Integration (CAVECOL A.C.); Bank of ALBA (BANALBA); European Institute of International Studies (EIIIS-Sweden); Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil (UCSG), of Ecuador; National Chamber of Commerce (CNC) of Bolivia; Institute of Latin American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR); and the George Washington University Competition Law Center (CLC). In addition, he referred to the more than 30 partner organisations in the implementation of the Work Programme; the use of the activities conducted by each of the member countries, and the publications issued between November 2023 and December 2024.

Precisely, as regards publications, he highlighted that the Permanent Secretariat, as a contribution to the enrichment, in terms of value added to the study and knowledge of the topics associated with the activities developed, carried out an intense editorial work that resulted in 11 monographic publications, in addition to issues 4 and 5 of its journal *CONVERGENCIA*. The following is a list of the publications published in the period December 2023-December 2024.

## 4

### 1. **CONVERGENCIA: MEETINGS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DIRECTORS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.**

In order to reaffirm its commitment with cooperation and integration to face challenges and strengthen relations among the countries of the region, SELA published in its journal *Convergencia* (Vol 1, No. 5, November 2024) the document *Meetings of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean - Historical Compendium 1987-2023*, which commemorates more than three decades of meetings to promote regional integration and cooperation. These meetings, based on SELA's main lines of action, have been an essential platform to debate, exchange and consolidate proposals to promote intra-regional integration and cooperation. The journal acknowledges the valuable contribution of strategic partners, including regional and international institutions, development agencies, NGOs, the private sector and universities, with special emphasis on the support of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund.

The historical compendium highlights significant milestones such as the *1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action* and the "Second UN High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2019," underlining how South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) has become a key mechanism for advancing towards the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The publication also highlights the role of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) in promoting SSTC and the importance of cooperation and integration to address regional challenges.

This editorial effort of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA not only makes visible the work of the organisation in the area of international cooperation but also reaffirms its commitment to continue generating conditions for an effective cooperation platform, facilitating processes and opportunities for the benefit of the countries of the region. The journal is a testimony to the value of cooperation and integration as essential tools to strengthen relations and address the situations that affect Latin America and the Caribbean.

### 2. **LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN FACING THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY.**

Within the framework of the effort to promote reference publications for the region, stemming from the implementation of our Work Programme, SELA published the book *Latin America and the Caribbean facing the challenges of integration in the 21st century*, a renewed compass for regional integration and glossary for unification. The publication provides guidelines for regional convergence and promotes global regionalism as a strategy to strengthen integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This book addresses the challenges and opportunities of regional integration in the current context. Throughout its pages, it analyses the need for a resignification of regionalism in Latin America and the Caribbean, proposing an approach of complex and global regionalism as a new form of governance for regional integration blocs. In addition, it emphasises the importance of inter-secretariat coordination promoted by SELA together with the region's integration mechanisms to manage convergence, and presents an analytical model based on a weighted SWOT matrix to establish preliminary interventions and a roadmap towards more effective integration.

This book offers a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the challenges and opportunities of regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean. It provides an analytical and strategic

framework for addressing these challenges, highlighting the need for greater coordination and cooperation among the countries of the region.

SELA's commitment to regional integration is reflected in its focus on promoting convergence, research and analysis, and inter-secretariat coordination. This book is a manifestation of that commitment, offering practical and theoretical guidance for moving towards more effective and sustainable integration.

The book is aimed at decision-makers, academics, regional integration experts and all those interested in the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a valuable tool for understanding integration processes and for formulating policies and strategies to promote greater cooperation and development in the region.

### 3. **TRADE AND COMPETITION: FINTECH IN THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION**

Rapid technological progress poses significant challenges in terms of regulation and competition. It is therefore essential to promote fair competition and to guarantee the protection of consumers of these services, ensuring that companies of this nature operate within a clear and transparent regulatory framework, fostering innovation and fair competition and safeguarding the rights of users.

Aware of this need, SELA is publishing the book [\*Trade and Competition: Fintech in the Latin American and Caribbean region\*](#), a compendium of specialised articles sharing the experiences of different regulatory authorities that work on a daily basis, both in the generation of related regulations and in the solution of derived problems that affect competition and, therefore, users.

This publication provides the contributions of the different authors who have participated in the preparation of this book in order to have a broader vision of the challenges that must be faced in the sector in relation to competition, being a significant contribution to the knowledge of the policies that exist on this issue in LAC. It also shows the heterogeneity that exists in the region, both in the problems that its authorities must deal with and the regulations that each country has developed.

### 4. **HANDBOOK ON CYBERDIPLOMACY FOR REGIONAL CONVERGENCE**

The [\*Handbook on Cyberdiplomacy for Regional Convergence\*](#) is a comprehensive work that deals with the importance and potential of cyberdiplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean. This handbook is presented as an essential resource for diplomats, government officials, academics and other actors interested in the region's digital future.

The handbook begins by highlighting the cultural and natural wealth of LAC and the importance of regional cooperation for sustainable development. It highlights how the digital revolution has transformed interactions and the need to adapt to these transformations in order to promote effective regional convergence. Definitions and differences between cyberdiplomacy, digital diplomacy and e-diplomacy are explored. Cyberdiplomacy is defined as the strategic use of cyber technologies in international relations, encompassing cybersecurity, cyberspace governance and critical infrastructure protection.



## 6

The handbook emphasises the relevance of cyberdiplomacy for strengthening regional cooperation and integration, highlighting its potential to catalyse economic development and innovation. It also addresses the protection of human rights and democratic governance online. It details effective social media communication strategies and the use of digital platforms in diplomacy. In addition, it looks at metaverse diplomacy and how emerging technologies are redefining international relations.

The publication dedicates a section to cybersecurity and foreign policy, exploring cyber threats and their impact on regional security. It also discusses strategies for strengthening cybersecurity at the regional level and collaboration among countries to address cyber threats. The intersection between cyberdiplomacy and human rights is examined, highlighting the importance of protecting privacy and promoting digital inclusion. It also addresses the digital economy, techplomacy and the use of digital currencies, highlighting their impact on regional economic development.

SELA plays a crucial role in promoting cyberdiplomacy in LAC. In line with the work programme, this publication is offered as a strategic contribution to face the challenges of digital transformation and strengthen regional integration. SELA has developed courses and activities in partnership with academic institutions and has promoted technical cooperation and policy harmonisation in cybersecurity and digital governance.

This handbook is a comprehensive guide that not only provides a theoretical and practical framework for cyberdiplomacy but also highlights the importance of regional cooperation and SELA's role in this area. It is a call to action for LAC countries to work together in building an inclusive and secure digital future.

## 5. SME POLICY INDEX: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

This second edition of the [\*SME Policy Index: Latin America and the Caribbean\*](#) provides information on policies affecting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in nine countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay), and offers regional trends together with country-specific analysis and recommendations.

The [\*SME Policy Index: Latin America and the Caribbean\*](#) is released against the backdrop of the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions and the reconfiguration of global value chains. The publication concludes that, in the aftermath of the pandemic, LAC governments are giving higher priority to SME development. Based on the recommendations of the 2019 edition, countries have improved their policy frameworks over the past five years, albeit at different speeds and with different approaches in the context of budgetary constraints.

Brazil and Paraguay, participating for the first time, have shown a strong commitment to SME development. All nine governments have taken significant steps to strengthen their operating environments, improve e-government services and support programmes that boost innovation and technology.

This publication aims to contribute to joint efforts to design and implement better policies that foster a successful transition to inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery in LAC countries through the strengthening of SMEs.

## **6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN AND CHINA: NOTES FOR A DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

In an increasingly interconnected world, China has become a major global player in trade, investment, financing and cultural cooperation, with a profound impact on the economic dynamics of our region. In this book, we explore in detail the relationship between Latin America and the Caribbean and China, examining both the challenges and opportunities presented by this interaction. This book provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between the two regions and proposes recommendations for strengthening and making the most of this strategic partnership.

This editorial effort offers a journey that traces the complex interaction between Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and China, through a detailed and comprehensive look at the relationship between LAC and China in different areas, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that this strategic partnership presents for both parties. Thus, we understand in these lines that betting on More and better integration also depends on strengthening the bi-regional relationship between LAC and Asia, and especially between Latin Americans and Caribbeans and China, conceived as one of the incubators of opportunities available for growth, development and well-being in our region.

From the analysis of Chinese trade, investment and financing in the region to the exploration of cultural cooperation and the challenges and policy proposals to strengthen this relationship, this book provides a comprehensive and rigorous overview of an issue of vital importance for the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly considering the fact that LAC is positioned as the second most important destination for Chinese foreign investment, with more than 2,700 Chinese companies operating in the region, especially in transport and energy infrastructure (SELA, 2022).

## **7. AI AND DIPLOMACY: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

This book is a seminal work that explores the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the field of international relations and diplomacy. This book aligns with the organisation's commitment to foster the development of negotiating skills and understanding of the application of diplomacy in the context of emerging technologies, as set out in its *Work Programme for 2022-2026*.

The book addresses different aspects of AI and its influence on diplomacy and international relations. From a historical and analytical perspective, the authors examine how AI is transforming the way diplomats collect and analyse data, predict trends and make decisions. AI not only improves efficiency in negotiations but also raises new ethical and governance challenges that need to be addressed by the international community. One of the highlights of the book is the analysis of government initiatives to regulate AI. It discusses the different approaches of countries and regions, such as the European Union, the United States, Brazil, Canada, India and China, in creating regulatory frameworks that ensure the safe and ethical development of AI. These frameworks seek to balance technological innovation with the protection of human rights and safety.

## 8

SELA, as an organisation committed to regional development, has played a crucial role in promoting digital cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions of the world. The publication of this book is an example of SELA's commitment to capacity building in the regional public sector, especially at a time when international relations are being redefined by the rise of new technologies such as AI. SELA has identified areas of opportunity and improvement for the benefit of the region, promoting projects such as the EU-LAC Digital Alliance and the Global Gateway, which seek to strengthen cooperation in digital matters and move towards an inclusive and sustainable digital agenda.

### 8. STRATEGIES AND PUBLIC POLICY PROPOSALS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF LAC

Public policies are the cornerstone for the functioning and development of countries. Through them, an attempt is made to respond to the multiplicity of needs, interests and preferences of groups and individuals that make up a society. Public policies are the leitmotiv, the pivot around which SELA's Work Programme for 2022-2026 revolves. This is so because its conception was based on the premise that only through adequate and well-structured public policies, in objective and balanced harmony with the environment at which they are aimed, can the path be opened to convert an idea or an approach into an assertive and transforming action that, based on a properly guided and planned intervention in reality, translates into changes that improve the living conditions of the members of a society and facilitate their progress, and that of their descendants, in a sustainable manner.

Thus, the effectiveness, impact and value of the activities included in SELA's work programme, as a promise to improve the lives of the inhabitants of its Member States, depend to a great extent on the degree to which it manages to promote, among its Member States, the design of timely and assertive public policies that are materialized in systematic government actions reflected in programmes, projects and initiatives aimed at satisfying the needs, demands and expectations of the population. In this way, a contribution is made to the fulfilment of the main objective of the organisation, expressed in its motto *More and better integration*, for the benefit of the member countries of SELA, of the region as a whole and, most especially, of the citizens living in the region.

As part of the efforts made in the design and execution of its Work Programme, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA prepared this book, which is made up of 12 documents containing public policy proposals related to an equal number of issues associated with several crucial areas for the sustainable development of its Member States and, in general, of the region, as perceived from the perspective of the aforementioned Work Programme and present in the programmes, projects and activities included therein. Such proposals aim to form a solid basis for the formulation of public policies, based on the conviction that building a better future for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a collective process.

The various proposals include key recommendations for the design of such policies. Thus, the recommendations made in the document *Public policy proposals for convergence and cooperation based on inter-secretariat work* include, among others, the following: i) the creation of training and technical assistance programmes focused on sustainability and digitisation; ii) the promotion of strategic partnerships between the public, private and civil society sectors; iii) the consolidation of a Regional Convergence Matrix (RCM) to serve as a follow-up and evaluation tool to monitor the progress of implemented policies and adjust strategies according to emerging needs; and iv) the adoption of a comprehensive vision that considers economic cooperation together with the adaptation of policies to local realities and to the new demands of the global environment in order to foster sustainable development and greater social cohesion in the region.

The document *Public policy proposals for the development of productive niches in Latin America and the Caribbean* presents the results and recommendations of the mapping of productive niches in LAC conducted by SELA in order to identify productive sectors with development potential in the region. For the purposes of implementing the proposed policies, it makes, among others, the following recommendations: i) to reinforce public policies aimed at developing and strengthening MSMEs; ii) to intensify regional cooperation through agreements that facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technologies; iii) to implement mechanisms to encourage investment in sectors with growth potential, which can be of a fiscal nature as well as training programmes and access to financing; iv) to promote productive articulation initiatives as tools to overcome structural barriers that limit the development of certain sectors; and v) to promote a more balanced and sustainable growth in the region.

Public policies aimed at improving conditions for MSMEs in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay are analysed in the document *Public Policy Index for SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean (IPPALC): towards an inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery*. To that end, the various strategies implemented to promote the development of MSMEs are examined, with a particular focus on initiatives that seek to strengthen the institutional framework and improve the operating environment for these enterprises, and the following recommendations, among others, are made: i) to implement public policies that eliminate traditional barriers to credit, such as high costs, collateral requirements and information asymmetries; ii) to explore more accessible financing alternatives that allow greater inclusion of MSMEs in credit markets; iii) to promote digitalisation in this type of enterprises so that they can compete in an increasingly digitised market; iv) to develop policies that facilitate the adoption of technologies such as e-commerce, data analytics and cloud computing, supported by training programmes for entrepreneurs in the use of digital tools; iv) to foster the integration of MSMEs in global value chains; and v) to promote the incorporation of sustainable practices, as MSMEs, through fiscal and financial incentives, can be encouraged to adopt practices that contribute to sustainability, such as the efficient use of resources and the implementation of more sustainable processes, aligned with the global objectives of decarbonisation and circular economy.

The policy recommendations contained in the document *Towards a fair and transparent competition policy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Consolidating best practices and strengthening the regional competition regime*, were derived from the experience of the "XII Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition in Latin America and the Caribbean (WGTC-LAC)," devoted to public procurement, coordinated by SELA and held in August 2024, in Honduras. Such recommendations include the following: i) to create a regional competition observatory and a digital platform managed by SELA, where relevant developments, news and contents are shared; ii) to improve training for authorities and public and private sector agents, with tools such as Moodle; iii) to foster technical cooperation through internships and exchange networks among competition agencies; iv) to enforce competition rules in public procurement, in order to ensure the necessary transparency and prevent anti-competitive practices, such as collusion and bid rigging, in tendering processes; v) to promote the use of data analytics tools and AI technologies as a measure to detect suspicious patterns in public procurement and to optimise monitoring processes in the markets; and vi) to promote a collaborative approach and a continuous exchange of experiences and best practices.

## 10

The relevance of public policies aimed at reducing inequality in the MSME sector in LAC is analysed in the document *Public policy proposals with a gender approach for sustainable MSMEs*, which also proposes policies that foster more equitable access to key resources and promote a more inclusive and sustainable business environment. The following are some of the main recommendations put forward: i) to establish training and mentoring programmes that are aligned with the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, such as the development of leadership skills and the creation of sustainable business models; ii) to offer technical accompaniment to support MSMEs in the sustainable development of their businesses that includes a comprehensive approach in key areas for business growth; iii) to design meeting agendas that allow women entrepreneurs to establish strategic contacts, break into new markets and generate opportunities for collaboration with other actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem; iv) to develop product catalogues as a strategy to increase the visibility of MSMEs, especially in sectors where supply tends to be fragmented; and v) to establish support and mentoring networks that facilitate the connection among women entrepreneurs and allow them to exchange knowledge, experiences and resources, generating a collaborative environment that fosters the growth of their businesses.

In the area of port logistics communities (PLCs), the document *Policy proposals for port digital transformation and its commercial impact in Latin America and the Caribbean* examines the current state of ports in LAC; identifies the main obstacles to their digitalisation and makes a series of recommendations aimed at a more effective adoption of relevant technologies. The following are some of them: i) to implement digital technologies that optimise logistical and operational processes; ii) to strengthen staff training with training programmes that enable them to become familiar with new technologies and effectively manage digital operations; iii) to increase security and regulatory compliance by implementing advanced systems that protect port operations and ensure data integrity; iv) to adopt technologies and procedures that minimise the environmental impact of port activities to help comply with current environmental regulations; v) to foster inter-institutional collaboration by creating partnerships between the public, private and academic sectors to share knowledge and resources in the field of port digitisation; vi) to implement port management systems through digital platforms in the cloud to centralise the administration of operations and improve coordination between the different actors in the supply chain; and vii) to develop training programmes in partnership with educational institutions and international organisations so that personnel are prepared to efficiently use new technologies and adapt to a constantly changing working environment.

As far as cultural industries in LAC are concerned, the document *Promotion of the creative economy in SELA countries: Strategies to strengthen cultural and creative industries* presents proposals for strengthening the cultural and creative economy in SELA member countries, based precisely on the pilot experience developed by the organisation in the construction of a [\*Directory of Cultural and Creative Industries \(DICC\) of Latin America and the Caribbean\*](#). In this regard, it makes the following recommendations: i) to create and optimise funds dedicated to cultural and creative industries, with a view to improving the planning and allocation of resources, so that they are adapted to the needs of the various cultural branches; ii) to compile reliable data that allow for the evaluation and adjustment of cultural policies on an on-going basis; iii) to produce annual reports in each country including indicators by sector, such as the number of projects supported, their economic impact and the evolution of the creative industries; and iv) to develop direct subsidy policies, such as discounts for specific groups in performances, and indirect subsidies covering the maintenance of cultural infrastructures and the organisation of open access events.

The document *Sustainable development of coffee and cocoa: SELA's initiatives for their strengthening and promotion in Latin America and the Caribbean* proposes the creation of a regional institution dedicated to promoting the competitiveness, sustainability and expansion of the coffee and cocoa industries in LAC. In order to move towards the realisation of such an institution, it is recommended to: i) establish an R&D Centre that focuses on the improvement of crop varieties and techniques and processing methods, as well as research on sustainable agricultural practices and innovative technologies; ii) implement training programmes for farmers, emphasising sustainable and organic farming practices, as well as workshops on quality control and processing; iii) foster strong partnerships with international organisations, research institutions and global stakeholders in the coffee and cocoa industries by engaging in collaborative projects to share knowledge, technology and best practices; and iv) establish a dedicated market intelligence unit to provide real-time data on global market trends and consumer preferences.

With regard to the need to strengthen LAC-China relations, the document *Strengthening economic cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and China: a proposal for diversification and sustainability* presents a series of public policy proposals aimed at strengthening economic cooperation between the two blocs through greater diversification and sustainability of Chinese investments in the region that are consistent with the SDGs. Among the recommendations made to materialise this proposal, the following stand out: i) to undertake a market study in collaboration with Chinese academic and governmental bodies; ii) to move towards a broader export structure that does not rely exclusively on primary products and instead includes value-added manufactured goods; iii) to design a joint strategy that fosters the creation of value chains specifically targeted at the Chinese market and builds on the region's capabilities and strengths in key sectors; iv) to improve the quality of education systems, with a particular focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) areas; v) to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technologies to modernise specific sectors, such as agriculture, renewable energy and advanced manufacturing; and vi) to invest in knowledge production and human capital capacity building.

The document *Strengthening South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) in Latin America and the Caribbean: a public policy proposal* presents a public policy framework aimed at strengthening South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSCT) in LAC. Some of the recommendations made with a view to activating the aforementioned framework are as follows: i) to strengthen institutional capacities, which implies increasing training and technical skills for public officials and local leaders; ii) to promote the exchange of experiences among the countries of the region, which is essential to establish connections and generate collective learning; iii) to facilitate, through SELA, platforms for dialogue and collaboration to share best practices and develop joint projects in areas such as education, health and climate change; iv) to increase the mobilisation of resources for SSTC projects; v) to implement a monitoring and evaluation system to measure the progress of SSST so that there is accountability and transparency in the implementation of projects; and vi) to activate the Working Group on SSTC, announced at the "XXXII Meeting of Cooperation Directors" (Lima, Peru, 27 and 28 November 2024), organized by SELA.

The paper *Public policy proposals for disaster risk management in Latin America and the Caribbean* is a follow-up to SELA's compendium of best practices, in collaboration with the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS), for disaster risk management with a social protection approach. Key recommendations include the following: i) to develop local capacities; ii) to promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) iii) to improve social protection systems to respond to people's needs before, during and after a disaster; iv) to develop strategies that also address disaster prevention

and mitigation; v) to make infrastructure more resilient to disasters, in addition to implementing

## 12

sustainable construction practices in risk-prone areas; vi) to promote community resilience by educating and empowering people to better prepare for future disasters; vii) to promote greater and more effective coordination between the institutions responsible for managing these systems and those responsible for disaster response and mitigation; and viii) to upgrade early warning systems so that communities can be given sufficient warning to evacuate or take protective measures.

The document *Cybergovernance and Cyberdiplomacy, artificial intelligence and digital governance: public policy proposals for the future of Latin America and the Caribbean* offers a set of public policy proposals to address the main challenges facing LAC in this context. These proposals include the implementation of recommendations such as the following: i) to create a regional framework for cooperation in cybersecurity that includes the signing of multilateral agreements to strengthen the capacities of States and address cyber risks; ii) to harmonise personal data protection and privacy policies, aligning the countries of the region with international standards and improving trust in digital platforms; iii) to foster the digitalisation of trade, especially through the inclusion of SMEs in digital platforms that allow them to access global markets; and iv) to implement public policies that promote investment in digital infrastructure and in the development of technological capabilities in key sectors, such as AI and the Internet of Things (IoT).

### 9. **CASOTECA: COLECTION OF SELA CASE STUDIES**

In order to promote economic cooperation and integration in the region through practical and detailed case studies, SELA published the book [\*Casoteca: Collection of SELA case studies\*](#), a compilation of case studies that analyse crucial issues for the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The book addresses issues such as cyberdiplomacy, digital transformation of ports, public value chains, mapping of productive sectors, regional competition and trade, gender policies, state capacities, MSME development, inter-ministerial convergence, trade relations with China and disaster risk management.

Aimed at government officials, academics and economic development practitioners, this book serves as a practical guide and educational resource. By presenting success stories and lessons learned, it fosters the exchange of experiences and collaboration among SELA member countries, contributing significantly to the resolution of common problems and the strengthening of regional integration.

### 10. **REGIONAL FABRIC: INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

In the 15th century, LAC became a region where natural resources were extracted for export to Europe, resulting in an economy based on the export of raw materials. In the 19th century, many of its countries achieved independence from colonial powers, but faced challenges such as land concentration and dependence on exports. Then, throughout the 20th century, the region experienced political and economic ups and downs, including moments of industrial growth and financial crises, and challenges related to inequality, poverty and governance persist.

At different periods in the region's history, efforts for more and better regional integration have been initiated. The purpose of this book, in that sense, is to emphasise that, in the face of current challenges, regional integration is not only desirable, but essential.

Globalisation, geopolitical changes and phenomena such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the importance of countries in the region collaborating on common solutions. [\*Regional Fabric: Integration and development in Latin America and the Caribbean\*](#) is a document that, in addition to having academic intentions, aims to explore practical routes towards greater cooperation among countries. Thus, it explores the dimensions of regional integration and its benefits for economic, social and environmental development. Each chapter analyses challenges and opportunities, from South-South cooperation to multilateralism in the 21st century, addressing issues such as technological, cultural and environmental integration.

Finally, it should be noted that in an increasingly globalised world, it is essential that the countries of the region work together to strengthen their economies and take advantage of the opportunities offered by integration, global value chains, international insertion and beneficial trade facilitation measures. On this path, regional convergence has become a priority goal for sustainable development and the reduction of inequalities in our region through a broad and sincere dialogue that allows bringing positions closer together and resolving differences in a constructive manner; in short, converging towards real integration.

## **11. [MAPPING OF PRODUCTIVE NICHEs IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN](#)**

The publication of the book [\*Mapping of productive niches in Latin America and the Caribbean: experiences and lessons learned\*](#) (November 2024), within the framework of the "Productive articulation programme for the strengthening and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region," was another contribution of SELA in this area, in 2024. This paper focuses on several aspects related to economic growth in the region and the role that different organisations such as SELA itself can play in economic recovery. It also starts from the premise that the identification and exploitation of productive niches is a crucial factor for boosting competitiveness and sustainable progress in LAC countries and highlights the importance of elements such as diversification and productive articulation among sectors; economic complexity; the identification of comparative advantages; and the methodology proposed by SELA. The latter focuses on the analysis of the productive capacities of the countries through the evolution of the labour factor, exports and the economic complexity of the goods produced.

As regards the area of communication, it was pointed out that, during the period covered by this report, SELA's global visibility received a great boost, which allows inferring that a very large number of people in the region and beyond received the organization's message and were permanently informed about its actions, its interactions with regional, international and extra-regional institutions, and the impact of its proposals to make LAC an increasingly more and better integrated region, for the benefit of its member countries and, most especially, of the men and women who live in the region and who expect SELA to contribute to the highest possible quality of life.



## 14

In terms of figures, in this area, SELA experienced a sustained growth in the production of contents for both the Web and social networks. Thus, 127 press releases were published on the actions of the Permanent Secretariat in terms of its mandate, in general, and the implementation of the work programme, in particular; 225 regional bulletins were published on the Web, in addition to 453 publications on Instagram, 1495 on X, 404 on Facebook and 214 on LinkedIn. In addition, five institutional videos and a newspaper were produced and shared monthly with our Member States.

The Permanent Secretary announced the launching of SELA's new Web site, stressing that it is based on a concept that, among other things, involves the presentation of contents in a modern, colourful, fresh and user-friendly way, features that are particularly noticeable in the cases of the [Interactive Dashboard Indicators](#), the Home Page and the [Directory of Cultural and Creative Industries \(DICC\) in Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

Finally, he said that 127 press releases and 225 regional bulletins had been published on our portal, which, he noted, had a combined total of 1,530,154 page views. He noted that rapporteurs' reports and other documents are now published in a more user-friendly way and that, to this end, a new, different design was adopted for each document generated from the work programme activities.

The Chair congratulated the Permanent Secretary on his presentation and gave the floor to the delegations to make their comments.

The delegations of Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela congratulated the Permanent Secretary for the high percentage of execution and the focus given to the Work Programme, in line with the needs of the region.

The Delegation of Venezuela requested that the project associated with LAC-China relations be included in the CELAC work agenda.

The Delegation of Trinidad and Tobago requested the publications submitted by SELA in English.

The Chair expressed her gratitude to the delegations for their remarks and asked the Permanent Secretary to continue with the next item on the agenda.

### ITEM III. UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022-2026

The Permanent Secretary presented the [Work Programme for 2022-2026, 2025 update \(SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 4-24\)](#).

At the end of his presentation on the work programme, he highlighted the **new activities (22)** for 2024, by thematic area, with an indication of the respective page in the work programme, as follows:

### **Economic Recovery (9)**

International Forum on cooperation for sustainable development between Latin American and Caribbean countries and the Eurasian Economic Union (p. 8); Training workshop on relevant antitrust issues for LAC civil servants (p. 14); Innovation and sustainability: towards the transformation of agribusiness in LAC (p. 16); Innovation and tourism: The keys to a competitive and constantly evolving sector (p. 18); SME Ecosystem - Policy and capacity building in Latin America and the Caribbean (p. 19); Seizing the opportunities of the industries of cultural and creative goods and services for economic recovery (p. 21); Seminar on strengthening creative ecosystems (p. 21); Self-management system for updating the [\*Regional Directory on Cultural and Creative Goods and Services Industries\*](#) (p. 22).

### **Digitalisation and Infrastructure (7)**

Contest of projects for energy solutions in Latin America and the Caribbean (p. 26); Workshop on sustainable productive development policies: green energies (p. 26); Seminar "Energy transition: A path towards sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean" (p. 27); Maritime and port cybersecurity (p. 29); Strategies for enhancing digital transformation for export support in Latin America and the Caribbean (p. 30); Innovative uses of rural digital connectivity in the tourism sector (p. 31); Seminar on waste management as a source of energy (p. 32).

### **Social Development (6)**

Public-private partnerships and promotion of the insurance sector for disaster resilience building with a socially inclusive approach (p. 40); Implementation of initiatives by national governments and international financial institutions to leverage financial investment in comprehensive disaster risk management and reduction (p. 41); ALCE-SELA regional meeting: alliance against climate change (p. 42); Regional forum on best practices in consular cooperation on migration issues (p. 43); Discussion panel on the progress and challenges of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) (p. 44); Discussion panel on "Women's participation in the reconstruction of the social fabric" (p. 46).

The Chair then passed the floor to delegations to express their views on the Draft Work Programme for 2022-2026, updated 2025. Since there were no objections, the Latin American Council adopted *Draft Decision N° 1 Work Programme for 2022-2026*.

## **ITEM IV. BUDGET OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR 2025**

The Permanent Secretary presented the *Draft Administrative Budget of the Permanent Secretariat for 2025* (SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 5-24). He pointed out that the budget of the Permanent Secretariat has remained unchanged, while operational costs in the host country have increased significantly, which has compromised the financial situation of the organisation. He also commented that, in 2024, there were some difficulties in executing bank transfers in the United States and, for this reason, he proposed that the Council authorise the Permanent Secretariat to seek alternatives for opening an account in one of the member countries.

## 16

In addition, he suggested that a working group should be set up in 2025 to review the budget issue.

The Chair passed the floor to the delegations to express their views on the matter.

The Delegation of Venezuela expressed its consent to the formation of a working group to review the budget.

Since there were no objections and bearing in mind the remarks made by the Permanent Secretary, the Latin American Council adopted *Draft Decision N° 2 – Administrative budget of the Permanent Secretariat for 2025*.

### ITEM V. ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

The Permanent Secretary presented the *Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat for fiscal year 2023*.

The Chair submitted the proposal for consideration by the delegations and, there being no objections, adopted *Draft Decision N° 3 Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat for fiscal year 2023*.

The Permanent Secretary presented the *Audit Proposal for the Fiscal Year 2024*, from which the most economic option of those presented was chosen, namely Martínez, Perales & Asociados.

The Chair submitted the proposal for consideration by the delegations and, there being no objections, the Latin American Council adopted *Draft Decision No. 4 Audit Proposal for Fiscal Year 2024*.

### ITEM VI. Other matters

#### 1. Election of the new Bureau

The Chair announced that the composition of the Bureau would be agreed upon by Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago, the nominated countries, with the indication of the respective positions. To that end, she submitted for consideration by the delegations *Draft Decision N°5 Appointment of the Bureau of the Latin American Council*.

#### 2. Election of a member of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA

The Permanent Secretary announced the election of a member of the Administrative Tribunal for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, in accordance with *Decision N°370 Administrative Tribunal of the Latin American Economic System*.

The Chair submitted the proposal for consideration by the delegations and, there being no objections, adopted *Draft Decision No. 6 Appointment of members of the Administrative Tribunal*.

In this regard, participants agreed that Peru would continue as Chair of this Tribunal, while Bolivia would be re-elected and a representative of the Dominican Republic would be incorporated, considering the list of three candidates proposed by that country.

The Permanent Secretary proposed an amendment to Article 6 of Decision N° 370, according to which the annual meeting of the Tribunal can be in person or virtual.

The Chair submitted the proposal for consideration by the delegations and, there being no objections, adopted Draft Decision *N° 7 Amendment to Article 6 of the Annex to Decision No. 370 concerning the meetings of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA*.

### **3. Declaration *Ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba***

The delegation of Cuba brought forward the document *Ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba* for the consideration of the Latin American Council on the Ministerial Stage.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago suggested some linguistic modifications to the Declaration presented, which were adopted.

The delegate of Peru requested the circulation of the modified Declaration and asked for greater clarity in the ninth paragraph. In addition, he asked for an update of the follow-up report on the implementation of the Helms Burton Act.

There being no further matters to discuss, the Chair declared the Preparatory Stage of the 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council closed.

## **B. MINISTERIAL STAGE**

The Ministerial Stage of the “50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council,” in compliance with Article 12 of the [Panama Convention](#), was held in the face-to-face and virtual modality on 11 December 2024. The ceremony took place at the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, in Caracas, at 11:00 a.m. (Venezuelan time).

The following personalities were present at the Bureau: Her Excellency Scarleth Romero, Ambassador of Honduras in Venezuela and Chair of the Latin American Council; His Excellency Mr. Aquinas Clarke, Ambassador of Barbados in Venezuela and First Vice-Chair; the Honourable Mr. Alejandro Mora, replacing His Excellency Milton Rengifo, Ambassador of Colombia in Venezuela and Second Vice-Chair; and His Excellency Dagoberto Rodriguez, Ambassador of Cuba in Venezuela and Rapporteur. Representing Venezuela, host country of the organisation, was the Honourable Mr. Rubén Darío Molina, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the People's Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela. Participants also included His Excellency Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA, and officials of the Permanent Secretariat.

Delegations from the following Member States of the organisation participated: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. Representatives of the following regional entities also participated: the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); the Latin American Bank for Foreign Trade (BLADEX); CAF - Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean; the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS); the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); the General

Secretariat of the Andean Community (SGCAN) and the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SG-SICA). Representatives of the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) of Brazil were also present.

## OPENING SESSION

The Chair of the Latin American Council greeted and welcomed the audience. She reiterated the relevance of SELA, which, she said, is recognized by the countries and institutions of the region. She expressed her satisfaction with the work carried out by the organisation and opened the Ministerial Stage of the 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council. She then gave the floor to the opening remarks, which were delivered by the following personalities:

**The Honourable Rubén Darío Molina, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the People's Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela,** made a historical review of the region, with special reference to the emergence and trajectory of SELA and its efforts to promote regional integration based on convergence and collaborative work among the various regional integration mechanisms in LAC. He recalled what he called the "growing context of the disastrous neo-liberal measures" of the 1970s, with their privatization packages and their intention to place the private over the public above national policies. He pointed out that SELA emerged from this context as a concrete and multilateral initiative that came to complement the progress made by the regional sub-blocs of South America, Central America and the Caribbean, with a Latin-Caribbean vision and action for economic integration aimed at overcoming LAC's dependence on developed countries.

He also recalled the adoption, on 1 May 1974, by the United Nations General Assembly, of the *Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO)* and the *Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States*, adopted on 12 December of the same year. He added that, in his opinion, both documents constituted two concrete antecedents of SELA as a body for cooperation, coordination and consultation, which meant the emergence of a new regionalism that tried to leave behind the approach and practice of dependence and supervised integration. He said that the NIEO was a set of proposals by developing countries to change global economic governance and eliminate dependence and economic colonialism, which sought to establish an international economic system based on sovereign equality, equity and cooperation among States.

Finally, he commented on and compared some of the limitations of the region with respect to its strengths, possibilities and advantages to achieve deep economic integration and SELA's role in contributing to make this aspiration possible.

**Her Excellency Scarleth Romero, Ambassador of Honduras in Venezuela and Chair of the Latin American Council,** summarized the intense diplomatic activity of her country and the commitments recently undertaken through the chairmanship of the Latin American Council, as well as the presidency pro tempore of CELAC and SICA, among others. She underscored the usefulness and importance of the SELA-CELAC relationship, which, she said, has built "a synergy that has allowed us to develop a mutual work with common objectives that define the pace and the path to follow." She expressed her deepest gratitude to Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA, for having generated "very strong opportunities for each one of the countries that make up this region and that have participated in a considerable number of activities." She also expressed her enthusiastic gratitude for the work of the men and women of SELA who carry out the invaluable work of the organisation, taking on the most varied challenges so that we can have the expected products of SELA's activities.

**His Excellency Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA**, underscored the special significance of this 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, which alludes to the history of an organisation that was created in 1975 with the aim of becoming a system of consultation and coordination for the Latin American and Caribbean region to adopt common positions and strategies on economic issues and that, especially in recent years, has evolved to become an organisation that sees integration as the only way to make true contributions of regional value. He said that SELA understands integration as a whole, in which the economic aspect is a structural part of the definitions for the formulation of strategies, but that it is no longer the only way to support the region. Thus, the organisation recognises the important role of social development and, very fundamentally, of education and culture in making LAC a convergent region.

He then said that ‘the region needs us’ and that this phrase is not commonplace, but a true call for coordinated work, for planned actions based on the understanding of the needs of Latin America and the Caribbean, and for concerted actions as a result of dialogue and intra-regional, subregional and extra-regional work. He went on by saying that more than an exhortation, it is a commitment that we assume at a time when regional integration organisations are entrusted with part of this responsibility by the nations we represent, especially in the case of SELA, an organisation with an outstanding representation of Latin American and Caribbean countries, “which forces us to understand the region, its history, its roots and its needs”.

The Permanent Secretary explained that the motto *More and better integration* became the initial motivation for this administration, and continues to be the guiding idea that has allowed us to present to such distinguished members an execution of over 85% of the work programme for 2024, with a scope that exceeds 4,600 impacts in the various areas related to the activities of the three thematic areas of SELA's work, as well as the 16 face-to-face meetings that brought together the main sectoral authorities of the region and hundreds of people who received training. He added that such figures, achieved through a work carried out with the greatest conviction and vocation for service, not only speak of the willingness and commitment of the Permanent Secretariat and its staff to perform their tasks and responsibilities, but also represent a call to generate a closer and more effective interaction with the departments and agencies of the Member States in order to make the best possible use of the various tools and the valuable information derived from this work.

He pointed out that such a commitment implies facing great challenges in assuming and responding to the mandate of our Member States: to make Latin America and the Caribbean a single region capable of overcoming inequalities, sustainable, resilient and modern that does not forget its origins and cultural ties, with common borders and histories and with common problems that also call for coordinated actions whose results are tangible in terms of improving the quality of life recognised by its citizens.

He then took a prospective look at the region based on facts and figures taken from the global context, concluding that “it is in our hands to become an influential area in the major multilateral debates with our own voice” and that “Latin America and the Caribbean is presented to the world as a source of solutions to major issues.” That is why, he added, now, more than ever, SELA is responding to regional needs and presenting public policy proposals to its Member States in the

## 20

various areas of action contemplated in the work programme. We are facing a regional dynamism that requires renewed and effective organisations, with a convergent vision and aware of the need to focus on adding value to the region through concerted actions. Therefore, SELA will continue to be a proactive organization, aimed at generating spaces for discussion and promoting knowledge through proposals coordinated with its members, materialising actions that will result in benefits for Latin America and the Caribbean, and serving as a space for meetings and coordination.

### PLENARY SESSION

#### 1. Adoption of decisions

The Chair submitted for consideration by the delegations the draft decisions defined during the Preparatory Stage.

Draft Decision N° 1 *Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for 2022-2026*. In the absence of any comments, [Decision N°610 Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for 2022-2026](#) was adopted.

Draft Decision N° 2 *Administrative Budget for the year 2025*. In the absence of any comments, Decision N° 611 *Administrative Budget for the year 2025* was adopted.

Draft Decision N° 3 *Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2023*. In the absence of any comments, Decision N° 612 *Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2023* was adopted.

Draft Decision N° 4. *Appointment of auditors for fiscal year 2024*. In the absence of any comments, Decision N°613 *Appointment of auditors for fiscal year 2024* was adopted.

Draft Decision N° 5. *Appointment of the Bureau of the Latin American Council*. In the absence of any comments, [Decision N° 614 Appointment of the Bureau of the Latin American Council](#) was adopted.

Draft Decision N° 6. *Appointment of members of the Administrative Tribunal*. In the absence of any comments, Decision N° 615 *Appointment of members of the Administrative Tribunal* was adopted.

Draft Decision N° 7. *Amendment to Article 6 of the Annex to Decision N° 370 concerning the meetings of the Administrative Tribunal*. In the absence of any comments, Decision N° 616 *Amendment to Article 6 of the Annex to Decision N° 370 concerning the meetings of the Administrative Tribunal* was adopted.

## **2. Adoption of the Declaration *Ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba***

The Chair commented that, as a result of the considerations made on the draft declaration at the Preparatory Stage, a final version of the declaration had been agreed upon. She then gave the floor to the delegation of Cuba to express its views on the draft declaration.

The Delegation of Cuba summarized the damage caused by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against its country and reiterated the deep gratitude of its government and the Cuban people for the support received by the delegations of the Member States and the Permanent Secretariat of SELA since 1996. With respect to the final text, he expressed his agreement with it and said he considered it unnecessary to reconsider it.

The Chair submitted the Declaration *Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade by the United States against Cuba* for consideration by the delegations and, as there were no declarations, the Latin American Council considered it to be approved.

## **3. Interventions by authorities of the Member States and SELA's Observer Organisations**

As far as governmental authorities were concerned, the host country was represented by the [\*Honourable Mr. Rubén Darío Molina\*](#), Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the People's Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, whose message was previously included in this report as Annex I.

On behalf of Honduras, the [\*Honourable Mr. Allan Oviedo\*](#), Director of the Office of Foreign Policy of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Honduras, referred to the SELA-CELAC relations under his country's chairmanship of the Latin American Council. In this connection, he commented on and pondered the results of the "XII Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition (WGTC)", held on 7 and 8 August 2024, and the "First Forum on Trade and Competition" (9 August 2024), in which, he said, important issues such as public procurement, the fight against corruption and Artificial Intelligence were given relevance. He also referred to the "China-Latin America and the Caribbean Development Forum," organised by ILAS-CASS (Institute of Latin American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) and SELA (Beijing, 27 and 28 August 2024).

He also highlighted the significance of the "First Coffee Summit" (Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 25 September 2024), organised by CELAC, at which, he said, an extension of payment for reforestation was obtained from the countries of the region. He then commented on the intense diplomatic activity carried out by Honduras from the various positions it had recently held in different regional institutional bodies such as, for example, the presidency pro tempore of CELAC and that of SICA.

Afterwards, [\*Ambassador Daniela Benjamin\*](#), Director of the Department of Regional Integration of Brazil, on behalf of the Brazilian Foreign Minister, expressed her country's commitment with strengthening the integration process in LAC and with the operation of the various bodies related to it. She underscored the importance of the SELA-CELAC alliance and, while celebrating the holding of the China-LAC Development Forum, coordinated by SELA, said that it would be very useful for the region to develop similar links with the European Union, as well as with the EU-LAC Foundation (created by the Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and CELAC in 2010). She also commented on the usefulness and importance of the relationship between SELA and the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD).



## 22

She supported SELA's coordination with regional institutions in terms of joint and cooperative work that allows for joining efforts and avoiding duplication of efforts. She added that this linkage could be extended to national institutions, as exemplified by the relationship between the organisation and the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA) of Brazil. She welcomed the SELA-IPEA cooperation agreement and expressed her hope that this instrument will be useful for all in terms of identifying new initiatives and proposing new ways to deepen cooperation and integration.

Finally, she said that her country is making the necessary efforts to return to SELA and to participate effectively in it, and that, in the meantime, she was very grateful for the willingness of the organisation and its Member States to continue involving Brazil in its activities.

Next, the floor was taken by the [Honourable Mr. Rodolfo Sabonge](#), Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Observer Body of SELA, who pointed out that the ACS-SELA relationship has been very close and that, at present, it refers to geopolitical, economic, social, and environmental changes which, in his opinion, are unprecedented in their impact on all. He highlighted three imperatives that are sine qua non conditions for the survival and development of the Greater Caribbean and Latin America in a regional, hemispheric and global landscape that is changing very rapidly and profoundly.

These imperatives, he explained, are the following: i) the need, in the face of multi-polarism, to give greater relevance and participation to multilateral organisations and, at the same time, greater coordination and complementarity between mechanisms towards a more coherent and integrated regional development policy; ii) multilateral development banks should be innovative in their structures and support instruments and also inject funding and intellectual leadership and expertise into development initiatives that are regional in scope and impact and not merely national in scope, which has dominated; iii) the need to accelerate joint action on key drivers of future development and integration that are best addressed at the regional level, namely: a) climate change and its consequences; b) connectivity, both physical and digital; and c) the use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a way forward.

Finally, he expressed the hope that, at this 50th Regular Meeting, the Latin American Council would be able to identify innovative ways of consultation and cooperation that would generate greater coordination with other multilateral bodies with a view to facilitating sustainable and transformative development for our great region of the Greater Caribbean and Latin America.

For his part, [His Excellency Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez](#), Secretary-General of the Andean Community (CAN), also an Observer Organization of SELA, participated online and highlighted the importance of the China-LAC Development Forum, coordinated by SELA, "whose conclusions are very important to propose a work agenda for better integration between Latin America and the People's Republic of China". He said that integration for the Andean Community translates into precise measures that "we can take for the benefit of the 114 million citizens that make up the Andean community" in areas such as free circulation of citizens; the existence of a free trade area, without the payment of tariffs; a digitalised system for international trade among the four Andean countries; and training, through digital means, for any Andean citizen, among others. Finally, he congratulated Ambassador Clarems Endara "for his fruitful and efficient work" and expressed the willingness of the four Andean countries and the SG-CAN continue cooperating in the development of activities with SELA.

In addition, the following personalities spoke remotely:

The [Honourable Mr. Nahuel Arenas](#), Regional Head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), expressed his satisfaction with the renewed partnership between SELA and UNDRR. He was speaking from St. Kitts and Nevis, where the regional mechanism for the evaluation of the *Regional Plan of Action for the Implementation of the SENDAI Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas and the Caribbean* was endorsed, which will allow all countries to review, every two or three years, the progress made in the area of disaster risk reduction. He noted that the partnership with SELA is particularly important because LAC is the region in the world that suffers the most economic losses due to disasters. He added that, for this reason, the public and private sectors must work together to ensure that all investments are properly informed. To that end, he informed that the UNDRR has an excellent work plan that will be implemented starting in 2025 and expects the participation of SELA and all its Member States.

The [Honourable Alvaro Velarca Hernández](#), Secretary-General of the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS), on behalf of Mr. Alejandro Robledo Aburto, President of the CISS, greeted the audience, all the Member States of SELA and, in particular, Ambassador Clarems Endara, in whom he recognized “a leadership sensitive to the major social and human problems of our region.” He said that in the last three years, SELA and the CISS have built bridges of collaboration that have resulted in actions through a very solid agenda for risk and disaster prevention. He added that both organisations have bet on building stronger institutions, as illustrated by the joint efforts developed in cooperation with the governing bodies of social security in Belize and the Dominican Republic. He stressed that both entities have placed at the centre of the regional agenda the guarantee of the right to social security as one of the most powerful mechanisms that States have to generate well-being and prosperity for all.

Finally, he said that both the CISS and SELA are willing to continue working hand in hand and strengthening their alliance as a great example that illustrates the value of “international cooperation as a way to improve the lives of all people in all corners of our continent.”

The [Honourable Mr. Mario Lubetkin](#), Assistant Director-General and Representative of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Latin America summarised the actions that FAO is carrying out in the area of regional cooperation for development in LAC, especially with regard to the transformation of agri-food systems. He stressed that the region occupies a key position in the production and export of food at world level. It also contributes 13% of global food production and represents more than 17% of the value of agri-food exports (2022), all of which shows, he said, its relevance at world level and its potential to advance towards sustained development.

He noted that, unfortunately, challenges such as climate change, loss of diversity, economic constraints and armed conflicts, among others, continue to affect food and nutritional security in the world and particularly in LAC. He then summarised the actions and strategies used by FAO to contribute to improving this situation, with special reference to LAC and pointing out the following as priorities: food security, climate change and the well-being of rural communities. He then stressed the importance of international cooperation and the efforts of governments to support FAO's work.

Finally, he acknowledged SELA's efforts to combat hunger and food insecurity, considering them essential pillars to achieve the SDGs and build a prosperous, equitable future for all people, leaving no one behind and that “both institutions will continue to work hand in hand on this path to achieve the results we are aiming for.”

**4. Transfer of Chairmanship of the Latin American Council to the new Bureau.**

The Chair announced the composition of the Bureau for the period 2024-2025, which is made up of the following personalities: His Excellency Milton Rengifo Hernández, Ambassador of Colombia in Venezuela and Chair; His Excellency Edmund Dillon, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago in Venezuela and First Vice-Chair; His Excellency Leopoldo De Gyves de La Cruz, Ambassador of Mexico in Venezuela and Second Vice-Chair; and His Excellency Dagoberto Rodríguez, Ambassador of Cuba in Venezuela and Rapporteur.

After the handover ceremony, the Honourable Mr. Alejandro Mora, Second Secretary of the Embassy of Colombia in Venezuela, on behalf of the government of His Excellency President Gustavo Petro; of His Excellency Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo and of His Excellency Milton Rengifo Hernández, Ambassador of Colombia in Venezuela and Chair of the Latin American Council, whose absence he justified, expressed his appreciation for the support of the Member States for the nomination of his country for the Chairmanship of the Bureau of the Latin American Council.

He went on to say that, through this Chairmanship, Colombia is reaffirming its interest in opening up spaces of leadership in multilateral scenarios where issues of a common agenda for shared progress are promoted, such as electricity interconnection; the adoption of bold measures for mitigating and adapting to climate change; the implementation of initiatives for equitable development and the participation of our communities; the fair energy transition and the harnessing of productive capacities. He stressed that Colombia holds the Presidency Pro tempore of the Andean Community, that on 13 December it will assume the Presidency Pro tempore of the Pacific Alliance and that in 2025 it will receive, from Honduras, the Presidency Pro tempore of CELAC. He added that, for all these reasons, "we will try to ensure that this position in the Bureau of the Latin American Council contributes to the natural complementarity, coordination and convergence between SELA and these mechanisms for regional integration and coordination, in accordance with the mandate to coordinate efforts."

The Chair opened the floor for delegations to express their concerns.

The Delegation of Cuba highlighted the intense work carried out by SELA, with a high level of execution (85%) of the activities scheduled for 2024. He acknowledged the contribution of the Member States in carrying out this work and congratulated the Permanent Secretariat and its work team for what, in his opinion, has been an impressive job. He also congratulated Honduras for its excellent chairing of the Latin American Council.

The Chair, there being no further matters to consider, expressed her gratitude for the presence of the delegations, the representatives of the regional institutions and the audience in general, and declared the 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council closed.

*D E C I S I O N S*

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C. DECISIONS

**DECISION N° 610****WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR 2022 -2026, 2025 UPDATE****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Articles 5 (2) and Article 15 (6) of the Panama Convention;

The document "Draft Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for 2022-2026" (SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 4-24); and

Decision N°587.

**WHEREAS:**

The Panama Convention establishing SELA is a broad and flexible instrument that allows for adapting the objectives and functions of the organisation to the changing realities of the international environment and for setting priorities according to the needs of Member States.

An agile and flexible regional organisation is necessary to develop appropriate and timely responses to the region's new challenges.

SELA should be adapted to the new circumstances, as a natural forum for the analysis and exchange of experiences of the countries in the region in matters related to the external economic agenda, as well as for the development of regional cooperation, in coordination with other organisations in the region.

The implementation of the activities of the Work Programme for 2022-2026 requires the updating of activities and the inclusion of new activities requested by the Member States.

**DECIDES:**

Article 1: To approve the update of the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for 2022-2026 (year 2025)

Article 2: In conducting the various activities contemplated in the aforementioned Work Programme, the Permanent Secretariat shall maintain regular contacts with the members of the Bureau of the Latin American Council and other representatives of the Member States.

**DECISION N° 611****ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2025****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Article 15 (5), Article 31 (6) and Article 36 of the Panama Convention and Article 6 of Decision 177.

**WHEREAS:**

The Permanent Secretariat needs to be provided with adequate financial resources to fully comply with the functions set forth in the Panama Convention and the Work Programme approved by the Latin American Council for 2025;

**DECIDES:**

**Article 1:** A budget shall be approved in the amount of US\$ 1,600,644 for the period from 01 January through 31 December 2025, according to the following distribution by category:

<b>CATEGORIES:</b>	<b>US\$</b>
<b>I. PERMANENT SECRETARIAT</b>	<b>1,600,644</b>
1. International staff	540,033
2. Local staff	518,048
3. Direct expenses – Work Programme and official travels	430,610
4. Communications, materials and administrative expenses	111,953
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,600,644</b>

**30**

Article 2: The Budget for the year 2025 shall be financed with the contributions from Member States, according to the current system of quotas, as set out hereunder:

<u>%</u> <u>APPLIED</u>	<u>MEMBER STATES</u>	<u>REGULAR</u> <u>QUOTAS IN US\$</u> <u>YEAR 2025</u>
<b>29,132%</b>	<b>GROUP I</b>	<b>466.303,36</b>
14,566%	ARGENTINA	233.151,68
14,566%	MEXICO	233.151,68
<b>40,685%</b>	<b>GROUP II</b>	<b>651.219,55</b>
8,137%	COLOMBIA	130.243,91
8,137%	CUBA	130.243,91
8,137%	CHILE	130.243,91
8,137%	PERU	130.243,91
8,137%	VENEZUELA	130.243,91
<b>16,544%</b>	<b>GROUP III</b>	<b>264.816,84</b>
1,379%	BAHAMAS	22.068,07
1,379%	BOLIVIA	22.068,07
1,379%	ECUADOR	22.068,07
1,379%	EL SALVADOR	22.068,07
1,379%	HONDURAS	22.068,07
1,379%	NICARAGUA	22.068,07
1,379%	PANAMA	22.068,07
1,379%	PARAGUAY	22.068,07
1,379%	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	22.068,07
1,379%	SURINAME	22.068,07
1,379%	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	22.068,07
1,379%	URUGUAY	22.068,07
<b>1,556%</b>	<b>GROUP IV</b>	<b>24.903,24</b>
0,389%	BARBADOS	6.225,81
0,389%	BELIZE	6.225,81
0,389%	GUYANA	6.225,81
0,389%	HAITI	6.225,81
<b>12,083%</b>	<b>HOST COUNTRY</b>	<b>193.401,07</b>
12,083%	VENEZUELA	193.401,07
<b>100,00%</b>	<b>TOTAL QUOTAS</b>	<b>1.600.644,00</b>

- Article 3: The Permanent Secretariat is authorized to make the necessary arrangements to explore the opening of an administrative office of the Permanent Secretariat in a country other than its headquarters, in order to ensure that the resources can be managed with the effectiveness and efficiency necessary for its normal functioning.
- Article 4: Member States shall be reminded of their commitment to comply with their budget obligations in a timely manner to enable the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to efficiently perform its functions.
- Article 5: The economic commitments of the Permanent Secretariat, related to the expenses of the Work Programme, payment of debts and obligations of the organisation, may be honoured with resources from the payment of current year quotas and due quotas of Member States.



**DECISION N° 612****AUDIT REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AT 31 DECEMBER 2023****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Article 15 (5) and Article 31 (7) of the Panama Convention; and

The Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2023 and the Audit Report that form part of document "Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2023" (SP/CL/L. O/DT N.º 6-24).

**DECIDES:**

**Sole Article:** To approve the Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat for the fiscal year from 1 January to 31 December 2023, conducted by the firm GV&A-GONZALEZ VALDEZ & ASOCIADOS.

**DECISION N° 613****APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Article 34 of the Regulations of the Permanent Secretariat, which stipulates, *inter alia*, "in selecting the external auditor, an attempt will be made to rotate the position among the Member States, as far as it is possible, and considering the financial implications;" and

The tenders from auditors received at the Permanent Secretariat, contained in the document "Audit proposal for the year 2024" (SP/CL/L.O/DT N° 7-24).

**DECIDES:**

**Sole Article:** To entrust Martínez, Perales & Asociados with the audit of the financial statements of the Permanent Secretariat for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024, under the regulations governing the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.

**DECISION N° 614****APPOINTMENT OF THE BUREAU OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Articles 9 and 14 of the Panama Convention; and

Article 23 of the Rules of Procedure of the Latin American Council.

**WHEREAS:**

The Panama Convention establishing SELA is a broad and flexible instrument that allows for adapting the objectives and functions of the organisation to the changing realities of the international environment and for setting priorities according to the needs of Member States.

There is a need for an equitable participation of the region in the composition of the Bureau of the Latin American Council.

Decision N°594 of the Latin American Council, with its Annex.

**DECIDES:**

**Article 1:** To elect the Government of the Republic of Colombia as Chair of the Latin American Council and the Government of the Republic of Cuba as Rapporteur for the period of sessions of 2025.

**Article 2:** To elect the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as First Vice-Chairman and the Government of the United Mexican States as Second Vice-Chairman of the Latin American Council for the period of sessions of 2025.

**DECISION N° 615****APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Decision N°370 of the Latin American Council; and

The document "Election of Members of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA" (SP/CL/XLVII.O/DT N°9-21).

**DECIDES:**

- Article 1: To elect Ms. Awilda Inés Reyes Beltre, of the Government of the Dominican Republic, as a regular member of the Administrative Tribunal of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027.
- Article 2: To re-elect Mr. Oscar Maidana, of the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, as a regular member of the Administrative Tribunal of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027.

**DECISION N° 616****AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 6 OF THE ANNEX TO DECISION N° 370  
CONCERNING THE MEETINGS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Decision N°370 of the Latin American Council and its Annex.

The Rules of Procedure of the Administrative Tribunal.

**WHEREAS:**

There is a need to guarantee due process in the cases filed with the Permanent Secretariat and heard by the Administrative Tribunal, this being the unique and final instance for such purposes.

It is essential that the members of the Tribunal meet as they choose, allowing for greater flexibility in scheduling and reducing travel time, and thus strengthening collaboration and mutual understanding among its members, which is essential for the effective functioning of the Tribunal.

The request of the Administrative Tribunal.

**DECIDES:**

**Sole Article:** To amend Article 6 of Annex to Decision N° 370 adopted at the XXI Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, held from 10 to 13 July 1995, regarding the Meetings of the Administrative Tribunal, by eliminating the obligation to hold no less than one period of sessions per year in person at the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat. As follows:

Current version:

"The Administrative Tribunal will hold no less than one period of sessions in the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat. The Permanent Secretary will provide the members of the Tribunal with the necessary offices, equipment and personnel to help them perform their duties."

Amended version:

"The Administrative Tribunal may meet virtually, hybrid or in person at the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat. The Permanent Secretary will provide the members of the Tribunal with the necessary offices, equipment and personnel to help them perform their duties."

***D E C L A R A T I O N***

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**E. DECLARATION**

**ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL BLOCKADE IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES AGAINST CUBA"**

The Latin American Council of SELA, gathered in the Ministerial Session of its 50<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting in Caracas on 11 December 2024;

**RECALLING**

The mandate given by the Member States of SELA to the Permanent Secretariat (Article 4, Decision No. 377) to submit an annual report on the enforcement of the Helms-Burton Law and the imposition of economic sanctions by the United States of America against Cuba;

That such sanctions by the United States not only adversely affect a Member State of SELA, but also seek to impose certain rules on the international community as regards its economic relations with Cuba;

Decision No. 112 of the Latin American Council, "Imposition of Economic Measures of a Coercive Nature," as well as Decisions Nos. 356 and 360, which reject the implementation of unilateral measures that may affect the free development of international trade, in violation of international law and the most basic principles of regional coexistence;

Decisions 377, 390, 401, 421, 432, 438, 444, 453, 463, 477 and 482 of the Latin American Council, on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba;"

The Declaration "Ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba," adopted by consensus by the Member States of SELA at the following Regular Meetings of the Latin American Council: XXXV, on 29 October 2009; XXXVI, on 28 October 2010; XXXVII, on 21 October 2011; XXXVIII, on 18 October 2012; XXXIX, on 28 November 2013; XL, on 28 November 2014; XLI, on 28 November 2015; XLII, on 27 October 2016; XLIII, on 30 November 2017; XLIV, on 27 November 2018; XLV, on 27 November 2019; XLVI, on 17 November 2020; XLVII on 30 November 2021; XLVIII on 30 November 2022; and XLIX, on 6 December 2023; all held in Caracas, Venezuela;

The relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly over the past 32 years, whereby an appeal is made to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States of America against Cuba;

**BEARING IN MIND**

The need to reaffirm, among other principles, the sovereign equality of all States, non-interference in the countries' internal affairs, and the freedom of trade and navigation, as established in numerous international legal instruments;

The declarations issued by Latin American and Caribbean Heads of State or Government at the Summits of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States concerning the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba;

The concern among Member States about the continued enactment and enforcement of laws and regulations, such as that enacted on 12 March 1996, known as the "Helms-Burton Law," the extraterritorial impact of which affects the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and the freedom of trade and navigation;

The declarations and resolutions arising from different intergovernmental forums, bodies and governments that reflect the rejection by the international community and public opinion to the enactment and implementation of such measures;

That during this year the persecution and prosecution of Cuba's international financial transactions continue to be one of the most distinctive features of the application of the blockade. In addition to constituting the main impediment to the economic and social development of the country, the blockade is the most significant obstacle to a greater expansion of Cuba's commercial links with the world and affects international cooperation with some countries;

That between 2017 and 2020 the United States administration adopted more than 240 measures aimed at affecting the most sensitive sectors of the Cuban economy and creating despair among its people, which remain in full force;

The inclusion of Cuba in January 2021 in the unilateral list of States Sponsors of Terrorism generates severe consequences for the country's economy, mainly in the financial banking sector, reinforces the dissuasive and intimidating effects towards third parties in their commercial relations with Cuba, as it limits the obtaining of credits and the payment of goods and supplies essential for the country's development;

That the analysis contained in the "Follow-up report on the application of the Helms Burton Law, 2018-2019," authored by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, describes in depth the impact of the blockade on various economic sectors of the Republic of Cuba, as well as the extra-territorial nature of the measures and provisions adopted in this connection by the United States of America;

That between March 2023 and February 2024, the Government of the United States maintained its policy of maximum pressure against Cuba and the rigorous application of the economic, commercial and financial blockade as its fundamental axis, involving unilateral measures with the greatest impact on the Cuban population and economy, continuing to reproduce and aggravate the devastating effects of this unilateral coercive policy, the longest and most extensive in history;

That the blockade continues to be the main obstacle for the development of all the potentialities of the Cuban economy, for the implementation of the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **DECLARES:**

1. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba is incompatible with and in violation of International Law, contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the rules of the international trading system and freedom of navigation;
2. The Latin American Council strenuously condemns the enforcement of any law or measure contrary to the International Law, such as the Helms-Burton Law; therewith, it calls upon the Government of the United States to put an end to its implementation;
3. The Permanent Secretariat must continue to examine this issue of special relevance for the external relations of the region, in accordance with Decision N° 482, and keep the Latin American Council informed about its evolution by maintaining this item on its agenda;



4. The Latin American Council requests the Government of the United States to comply with the provisions of consecutive Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, and therewith, to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade that remains in force against Cuba;
5. The Latin American Council of SELA recalls and reasserts Decision N° 112 of the Latin American Council in relation to the "Imposition of economic measures of a coercive nature" and Decisions N° 356 and 360, which rebut the implementation of unilateral measures that affect international trade and violate international law and the most essential principles of regional coexistence.

**ANNEXES:**  
**REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE MINISTERIAL STAGE**

***A N N E X I***

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**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE RUBÉN DARIO MOLINA, VICE-MINISTER FOR MULTILATERAL  
AFFAIRS OF THE PEOPLE'S MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF VENEZUELA**

We are very pleased and happy to be here. So once again, I would like to greet you on behalf of the Venezuelan people; the Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros; Foreign Minister Yván Gil, who, unfortunately, was unable to join us today due to a last-minute unforeseen circumstance that prevented him from attending.

We salute the Permanent Secretary, Ambassador Clarems Endara, dear brother; the Ambassador of the Republic of Honduras in Venezuela and Chair of the Latin American Council, Scarleth Romero, who has held this position for a year now.

Our colleague and friend from the Republic of Colombia, who, from now on, will take the baton for next year, which is going to be a very interesting year for SELA.

The entire SELA team that makes it possible for us to receive all the information on the decisions taken by the States.

All ambassadors, business representatives and all those who are connected to this 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This Latin American Council is the preamble to the first 50 years of the creation of SELA, which took place on 17 October 1975, 49 years ago. Thus, 2025 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of this organisation.

It is necessary to remember that context of the growing application of neoliberal measures, with its privatisation packages; the superimposition of the private over the public; placing the responsibility of the State under the almost absolute legal protection of the private; transnationals over national policies; repression in order to apply that policy. That moment was considered the end of history.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, much of it began in Chile with the dictatorship of the murderer Augusto Pinochet in the 1970s, with 1973 as a turning point, not only because of the coup d'état against the martyred president Salvador Allende and his socialist proposal for Chile, but also because of the energy crisis of that year, which had a negative impact on the world economy, and the imposition of the so-called petrodollars.

But it should also be noted that in that decade of the 1970s, opinions and examples were being set for the strengthening of the so-called showcase democracies, formal or representative, such as Venezuela's. Conventions that first imposed the capitalist model, and then the neoliberal model as the only option to eradicate the poor. However, it was actually the integrated option to achieve the objective of banishing from the region any influence of revolutionary, participatory, protagonist and co-responsible democracy, such as the one enjoyed by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, by the will of its people, for the last 25 years.

Thus, in this context, the initiative to create SELA arose as a concrete and multilateral development that would complement with its particularity the advances of the subregional blocs of the South, Central America and the Caribbean with a Latin American and Caribbean vision and actions for economic integration in order to begin to overcome dependence on developed countries, make our potential in the region visible, and forge a new mechanism of regional scope to participate, without intermediaries, in the interregional and international economy. It did so by appealing to the need for cooperation and complementarity in the face of the challenges posed, at that time, by the declaration of the UN General Assembly, adopted in May 1974, on the *Programme of Action for the Establishment of a New*

*International Economic Order (NIEO)* and the *Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States*, adopted on 12 December of the same year, instruments that formed two precedents of what SELA would become and that nurtured the creation of this organisation as a regional body for cooperation, coordination and consultation, with Caracas, the birthplace of the Liberator Simón Bolívar, as its headquarters.

SELA's trajectory over the following 25 years showed the relative effectiveness of the first efforts of the first Latin American and Caribbean integration mechanism, where its members agreed to lay the foundations of the institutional framework mandated by the Panama Convention, which showed the emergence of a new regionalism that attempted to leave behind the approach and practice of dependency and an integration under the tutelage of the hegemonic centres of power.

This was the first evidence for SELA to promote and, in some cases, reach agreements to assume common positions on such critical issues for the region as the complex problem of the foreign debt, as well as the decision regarding the acceptance of the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation (WTO), known as the *Uruguay Round*, and even the colonial FTAA proposal, defeated 20 years ago in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

The political and institutional evolution of SELA was firmly materialised with the entry of Cuba, which was blockaded, and, from 1979, with the entry of Nicaragua, breaking the political blockade and under the protection of cooperation with the Latin American and Caribbean region, through SELA.

In particular, the support of the Member States was obtained to create the "Action Committee for the Reconstruction of Nicaragua." Nevertheless, SELA's leading role in complex political situations in some of the region's countries was gradually diminished by the decision of the Member States themselves, given the lack of concrete results of the countless contributions required to make progress on social issues within SELA.

Social issues were always overlapped by economic issues. In this first stage of its first 25 years, social issues were an appendix, a tangential issue compared to the centrality and its substantive priorities in economic matters.

From the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, SELA gradually began to observe and accompany the emergence of new instances of union and subregional and regional integration such as ALBA-TCP, MERCOSUR, UNASUR, CELAC and the Pacific Alliance, among others. Due to their nature and the composition of their membership, these entities were not born in competition with SELA, but rather as a complement to the latter in terms of objectives and purposes.

Thus, SELA begins to evolve and gives greater priority to one of its fundamental purposes and objectives, within the framework of economic integration, that is, to promote regional and intra-regional cooperation, as well as to support and link systematically with the rest of the processes of political coordination and Latin-Caribbean integration, with specialised support.

With ups and downs, advances, pauses and setbacks, over the last 20 years we have been witnesses and co-protagonists of the reconfiguration of SELA as an integration mechanism that has been redirecting its efforts to reposition itself as a great articulator of economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean based on greater efforts of convergence among the existing mechanisms.

Dear friends:

SELA is today and will continue to be relevant and valid. The Panama Convention created it with its updates and variants that, necessarily, we have to make in the face of such a changing world. SELA maintains its force of articulation, complementarity and convergence with institutional trajectory and convening capacity to coordinate, cohere and institutionalize a multidimensional coordination mechanism to help achieve Latin-Caribbean economic integration.

Ambassador Endara, we have entrusted you with the activities of follow-up, evaluation, study, research, diagnosis and drafting of proposals of SELA, conceived in response to the mandates of the Member States, in each of the three thematic areas of SELA's *Work Programme for 2022-2026*, namely: Economic Recovery, Digitalisation and Infrastructure and Social Development, which together constitute one of the major pillars, at this time, to continue moving forward. These three axes, with their variants and updates, will continue to be relevant for SELA. All of this in a very complicated context at this time due to the application of criminal, illegal and unjust unilateral coercive measures that are not only directed at Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, but at all the member countries of SELA and SELA itself.

By preventing these illegal measures, we need to strengthen our economies and complement each other. We must cooperate in an increasingly interconnected world. No one has the capacity to meet his or her own needs. The sum of all is the main strength for poverty eradication, for economic prosperity, for fair trade and sustainability and protection of Mother Earth.

The mandates of the Member States of SELA, as reflected in its Work Programme, constitute the vanguard of the issues in the face of the subregional, regional and global challenges and substantive agendas, in order to contribute to multilateral strengthening, and the hinge of support to advance in the deep economic integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, within its diversity, allowing to identify common risks and threats, but, above all, taking advantage of the strengths and opportunities of each of the coinciding interests even in the midst of diversity and even different national realities.

A deep economic integration is based on structural objectives, with the first pivotal point being the relationship among the various actors and socio-economic, regional and subregional agents in the public and private sectors for productive integration and their leading role in the strategic concession (sic) and the development of value chains.

A second pivot is represented by the growth of intra-regional trade which, until now, has been a marginal statistical indicator for the purposes of economic integration in our region.

Unfortunately, the intra-regional trade indicator has not been a strong point for our region either, despite the potential of each of the countries that make up SELA. We must make economic and commercial aspects a strategic asset of deep integration. We have everything to do so: raw materials, knowledge, infrastructure and strategic partnerships. We must strengthen these potentialities more and more every day and, very importantly, consider a key demographic element within our region: the human capital represented by more than 600 million inhabitants.

Intra-regional trade continues to be one of the great challenges for LAC, which is why it is a priority for our integration that international trade grows. Its importance lies in the need to reduce the high dependence of the region's foreign trade on extra-regional markets, but without disregarding these markets. Diversification should also be towards Latin American and Caribbean markets, based on the possibility of greater regional industrialisation that allows the transformation of the exportable supply to be sustained by increasing the value added in the production of goods and services. Consequently, this bodes well for SELA's institutional scenario for its next 50 years, which will be next October. There are positive expectations and there always have to be.

This is the fourth year of implementation of the *Work Programme for 2022-2026* that we have mandated to our Permanent Secretary and his team. We are convinced that SELA's institutional trajectory will be strengthened for the benefit of greater interrelation and synergy with its peers, the mechanisms for political coordination and integration in LAC. In other words, convergence, which, incidentally, was mandated by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), on a recurrent basis, when here, in Caracas, Venezuela, barely 13 years ago, on 3 December 2011, that community was launched.

In this regard, in view of the recent Bicentenary of the Battle of Ayacucho, two days ago, an epic that closed the independence of South America; 200 years after the convening of the Congress of Panama by Liberator Simón Bolívar on 7 December 1824; and in view of the definitive overcoming of colonialism and economic neo-colonialism, we propose to the Member States of SELA to deepen its strategic repositioning in Latin America and the Caribbean, in all multilateral forums, with special emphasis on the continuity of support to CELAC and the promotion of convergence of regional integration mechanisms.

Note the importance of this word, convergence. It is not elimination. It is convergence. Let us delve deeper into the issues that bring us closer and complement each other. Let us take on the challenge of continuing to address the issues and areas necessary to move forward together in the economic sphere and let us have a strategic agenda for SELA to be presented at a major event on 17 October 2025.

On its 50th anniversary, let us have a SELA with achievements and goals accomplished in order to eventually celebrate, in style, the 100th anniversary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.

Thank you very much.

*A N N E X I I*

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**REMARKS BY HER EXCELLENCY SCARLETH ROMERO, AMBASSADOR OF HONDURAS  
IN VENEZUELA AND CHAIR OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL**



Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is difficult for me to address you after the tremendous words of our dear Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rubén Darío Molina. I believe that he has already fulfilled a whole record of advice, proposals, guidelines and directives that we, as Latin American and Caribbean countries, represented here today, should champion.

Your Excellencies, members of the Bureau of the Latin American Council. Good morning to all of you. Once again, Vice-Minister Rubén Darío Molina, it is always a pleasure to share spaces with you.

My greetings to our colleagues from Colombia, from Cuba, our Permanent Secretary of SELA, Mr. Clarems Endara, our dear Ambassador, who still faces a tremendous challenge to continue opening new paths.

To all the official delegations and, in particular, to the Heads of Mission here today, who are attending this 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council.

To the observer organisations that are accompanying us in person, some of them, and via this telematic system, others. I would not want to miss the opportunity to greet those who have already confirmed that they are accompanying us today. I would like to send our fraternal greetings to the representatives of the following organisations: the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); the Central American Integration System (SICA); the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); the Andean Community; the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS); the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (ICCA); ALBA-TCP; the General Secretariat of the Andean Community; the Court of Justice of the Andean Community and CAF-Development Bank of Latin America. We also welcome the representation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil and the Institute for Applied Economic Research Foundation (IPEA) of that country.

Approximately one year ago, we had the challenge of undertaking this challenge, after a long time of not having participated directly in SELA as the Republic of Honduras, which we assumed at the time, precisely as a historic moment for the Government of our country, headed by President Xiomara Castro Sarmiento.

After many years, as I was saying, when Honduras had not been part of this economic system, we had the opportunity to start in a masterful way, as it was under the confidence and faith entrusted to us as the pro tempore presidency of this organisation.

At that time, when we took on this task of a year of working together in support of Latin American integration, I remember, and I am going to quote myself because I believe that these are words that also echo in each and every one of us here today in the face-to-face and virtual system where, as part of the foreign policy of our Government, Honduras, we have been open to the peoples and nations of the world. Undoubtedly, we also trust that each of the countries and States represented here have exercised equality of purpose, in order, in one way or another, to strengthen those ties of Latin Americanism that we have been losing.

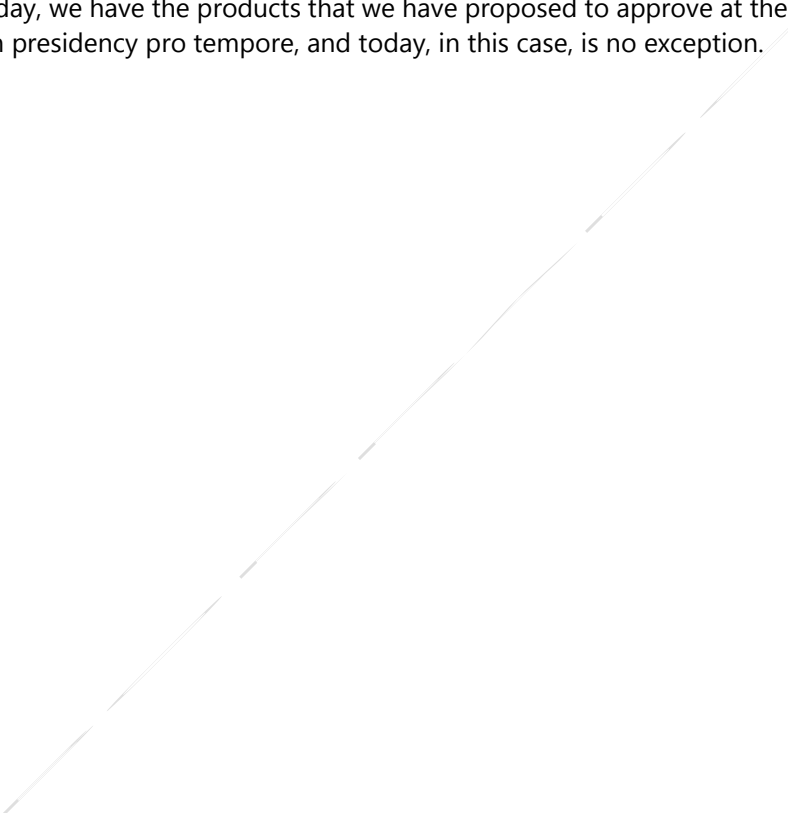
We have a point of reference in Honduras, in Central America, where, as in South America, we have historical vanguard figures such as a Central American champion whose criteria and dreams of Central American integration we have faithfully followed, namely General Francisco Morazán.

In this regard, we have been tackling each of the steps, each of the spaces, each of the opportunities that we have taken this past year. And, well, there are still a couple of months to go. We have also

assumed the Presidency Pro Tempore of CELAC, an organisation that has been working with SELA or that SELA has been working with CELAC, whichever way you want to look at it. The important thing is the synergy, the symbiosis that has been generated from this work.

Indeed, this synergy has allowed us to develop mutual work with common objectives that define the pace and the path to follow. I do not want to miss the opportunity to infinitely express my gratitude to Ambassador Clarems Endara and SELA for generating very strong opportunities for each one of the countries that make up this region and that have participated in a very considerable number of activities conceived, developed and coordinated by SELA.

Such participation has not only taken place in Honduras, but also in other parts of the world, in other parts of the Caribbean region, in the Latin American region, and in this connection, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you, but above all, and here, to my left, I would like to express my infinite gratitude to those men and women who every day carry out this invaluable work for SELA, who are the collaborators. They often take on the challenges of running around all the delegations so that, at the end of the day, we have the products that we have proposed to approve at the end of each term, at the end of each presidency pro tempore, and today, in this case, is no exception.



***A N N E X I I I***

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**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR CLAREMS ENDARA,  
PERMANENT SECRETARY OF SELA**

His Excellency Yván Gil, People's Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Honourable Rubén Darío Molina, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the People's Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Honourable authorities of the Bureau of the Latin American Council;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors representing the Member States of SELA, accredited to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Honourable representatives of national and international organisations and other institutions of the Member States of SELA who are present in person or virtually.

This 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council has a special significance. I am referring to the 50 years of history of an organisation that was created in 1975 with the idea of becoming a system of consultation and coordination for Latin America and the Caribbean to agree on common positions and strategies in economic matters and that has evolved to become today an organisation that sees integration as the path par excellence for making real regional contributions.

At SELA, we understand integration as a whole, in which the economic aspect is a structural part of the definitions for the formulation of strategies, but which is no longer the only way to leverage the region's development. It is precisely for this reason that we recognise the important role played by the social, political and, very fundamentally, the educational and cultural spheres in making this a convergent region.

The Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region needs us and this phrase is not a commonplace. It is a true call for coordinated work, for actions planned on the basis of an understanding of regional needs, for concerted actions resulting from dialogue and intra-regional, subregional and extra-regional work.

More than an exhortation, it is a commitment that we assume at a time when the regional integration organisations are conferred part of the sovereignty of nations and that we must exercise with the responsibility that each country confers on us, even more so in the case of SELA, an organisation with an outstanding representativeness, 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries are members, which obliges us to understand the region in order to take a step towards regionalism.

*More and better integration* became the initial motivation of this administration and continues to be the articulating idea that allows us to present to such a distinguished membership a percentage of execution of the *Work Programme for 2022-2026*, updated 2024, of over 85%, with a scope that exceeds 4,600 beneficiaries in the different activities of SELA's three work areas, namely: economic recovery, social development, and digitalisation and infrastructure.

We are facing a reality marked by great challenges, but the mandate of our Member States has been clear: to make LAC a single region capable of overcoming inequalities, sustainable, resilient and modern, that does not forget its origins and cultural ties, with common borders and histories that also make us share common problems that call for coordinated actions whose results are tangible in the improvement of the quality of life of our citizens and catapult the repositioning of Latin America and the Caribbean in the world.

We are a region with great opportunities, capable of transformation and which has made consistent progress despite the effects of the crises of recent years. World Bank figures show that the region has fully recovered the GDP lost after the pandemic shock. Most countries, with a couple of exceptions, will

meet inflation targets by 2024, i.e. we are facing a remarkable recovery, which puts us on the perfect ground for development and the future.

The world economy is expected to grow by 3.2% in 2024, which is one tenth of a percentage point lower than in 2023 and still below the historical average of 3.8% annual growth observed between 2000 and 2019. Private consumption is also expected to pick up, as lower inflation levels support real household incomes, according to ECLAC's October 2024 report.

As far as world trade is concerned, the expectation is that the decline in inflation in 2024 will lead to a recovery in consumption of manufactured goods, which would boost growth in the volume of trade in goods. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), world trade volume growth is expected to be 2.6 % in 2024.

In addition, countries' efforts to increase the resilience of their supply chains, shorten them and decouple them from geopolitically distant nations are creating a scenario of increasing geo-economic fragmentation.

The Latin American and Caribbean region is considered a biodiversity superpower, with one of the largest endowments of natural capital in the world, but it is also true that we have major challenges when it comes to green energy.

The region has enormous potential for the production of green hydrogen at competitive prices and has large reserves of many of the most important critical minerals for the new economy such as lithium, copper, nickel, graphite, silicon, as well as rare earths, high grade iron ore and many others. The region gives us everything, it is in our hands to add to its existing wealth.

At SELA, we have understood that Latin America and the Caribbean is presented to the world as a source of solutions to major issues, and all of this can lay the foundations for growth that is not only more sustainable, but also more sustained. That is why SELA, an up-to-date organisation, can respond to regional needs and present public policy proposals to its Member States in the different areas we have to address.

We are facing a regional dynamism that requires renewed, effective organisations with a convergent vision. We believe in the need to focus on adding value to the region through concerted actions and we are committed to continue being a proactive body that not only generates spaces for discussion but also promotes knowledge through coordinated actions with its members; formulates proposals; materialises actions that are reversed in benefits for the region and constitutes an excellent space for meeting and agreement.

In an increasingly globalized world, it is essential that the countries of the region work together to strengthen their economies and take advantage of the opportunities offered by integration, global value chains, international insertion and beneficial measures in the area of trade facilitation.

On this path, we at SELA have understood that regional convergence has become a priority goal for sustainable development and the reduction of inequalities in our region through a broad and sincere dialogue that allows for bringing positions closer together and resolving differences in a constructive manner; in short, converging towards real integration.

Within the framework of this, the 50th Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, on the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System, I reaffirm my commitment to

the promotion of integration, and I am grateful for the trust placed in my administration by such worthy authorities.

Thank you very much

***A N N E X I V***

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