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Economic System

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Sistema Econômico  
Latino-Americano e do Caribe

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Système Economique  
Latinoaméricain et Caribéen

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# Final Report

*XL Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council  
Caracas, Venezuela  
26 to 28 November 2014  
SP/CL/XL.O/IF-14*

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**A. RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT**

1. In compliance with the provisions set forth in Article 12 of the Panama Convention, the XL Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council was held in the headquarters of SELA in Caracas on 26 and 27 November 2014.
2. Participants included delegations from the following Member States: Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela; representatives of the following organizations: Organization of American States (OAS), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP); as well as His Excellency Didacus Jules, Ambassador of the Republic of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Permanent Secretary of SELA, His Excellency Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri, and officials from the Permanent Secretariat of SELA.

**ITEM I. ORGANIZATION OF WORKS**

3. A Meeting of Head of Delegations, prior to the formal opening of the Preparatory Stage, took place on 26 November, which considered the election of the Bureau of the Latin American Council.
4. The Bureau of the Latin American Council was made up as follows: His Excellency Ruy Carlos Pereira, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil in Venezuela, as Chairman; Her Excellency Sharon Weber, Ambassador of Jamaica in Venezuela, as First Vice-Chairperson; His Excellency Ramón Leets, Ambassador of Nicaragua, as Second Vice-Chairman; and the Honourable Ramiro León Torras, Specialist of the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Investment of Cuba, as Rapporteur.
5. The opening of the Preparatory Stage was in charge of Her Excellency Sharon Weber, Ambassador of Jamaica in Venezuela, in her capacity as First Vice-Chairperson of the Latin American Council. On behalf of her government, she thanked the Member States, in particular the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for her election and expressed her readiness to fully support the activities of the Latin American Council and those of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA.
6. The delegations thanked the Honourable Beatriz Méndez de la Hoz, Charge d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the Republic of Guatemala in Venezuela and outgoing Chair of the Latin American Council, for her work at the helm of the Latin American Council, and congratulated the members of the new Bureau on their election and their successful conduction of the Preparatory Stage. They also thanked the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri, and the staff of the Permanent Secretariat, for their technical and logistic support and hospitality offered during the event.
7. The Ministerial Stage was opened by Ms. Solka Agudelo, Coordinator of Regional and Multilateral Affairs of the Vice-Ministry for Latin America and the Caribbean, of the People's Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who congratulated the new Bureau on their election and underscored the importance of the event. She also expressed the readiness of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to collaborate with the Bureau's activities during its mandate. Likewise, she stressed the

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importance that her government gives to the work carried out by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, particularly those activities related to the process of integration and convergence of Latin America and the Caribbean. The text of her speech is included in Annex I.

8. Then, His Excellency Ruy Carlos Pereira, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil in Venezuela, in his capacity as Chairman of the Bureau, stressed the importance of the event and the studies presented by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA on the evolution of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, considering them transcendental for future undertakings in the area of coordination and convergence of regional integration. In his speech, Pereira congratulated the Bureau on their election and reiterated the readiness of his government to support its activities during its operation, as well as the activities of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA. The text of his speech is included in Annex I.
9. In turn, the Permanent Secretary of SELA congratulated the members of the Bureau on their election, welcomed His Excellency Miguel Octavio Mejía Miranda, Ambassador of the Republic of Panama in Venezuela, Her Excellency Lou-Anne Burns Martínez, Ambassador of the Republic of Belize in Venezuela, who attended a Latin American Council meeting for their first time, and thanked the outgoing Bureau for its valuable management, with special reference to the Honorable Beatriz Méndez de la Hoz, Charge d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the Republic of Guatemala in Venezuela and outgoing Chairwoman of the Latin American Council, expressing recognition for the valuable support that she gave to the efforts of the Permanent Secretariat.

In his speech, the Permanent Secretary underscored that, in accordance with the provisions of the Panama Convention, the role of SELA follows two directions: firstly, focusing on international economic, trade, investment and cooperation relations with third parties, and secondly, pursuing the goals of cooperation and exchange among Member States; both purposes could be summarized as the incorporation of Latin America and the Caribbean into the global economy. Such insertion, he said, should include more organized and systematic joint actions than those in place so far in the institutional and regulatory area of multilateral governance, in whose reform the region could play a highly constructive role as regards economic integration itself, including both subregional integration and its articulation and convergence, leading to a common Latin American and Caribbean economic space.

He pointed out that integration in Latin America and the Caribbean has taken place at varying pace and geometry, with a predominantly subregional logic, adding that higher levels of integration in the region will require a progressive migration of goals and efforts to the regional level, thus allowing the countries to further cash in on complementarities and economies of scale stemming from deep integration.

Then, the Permanent Secretary explained the actions conducted by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to offer a clear vision of the evolution and current situation of subregional integration processes, on the basis of a comparative analysis of the performance of the different integration mechanisms (ALBA-TCP, AP, CAN, CARICOM, MERCOSUR and SICA). He added that the corresponding studies were aimed at promoting a conceptual categorization of the evolution of each mechanism, as well as assessing their growth rate and future potential for achieving effective integration of the Member Countries.

Based on the results of the studies, the Permanent Secretary made a series of considerations on the current situation of the region with respect to its subregional integration processes, stressing the following necessary actions:

- i) Renew the concept of regional integration, by coordinating efforts that transcend the elimination of tariffs and are oriented towards the productive dimension of the integration process, while strengthening regional institutions as a source of consensus and guarantee of compliance with the commitments undertaken, facilitating decision making to deepen cohesion.
- ii) The political will of countries should turn into concrete actions for facilitating trade and promoting productive development, where national efforts are geared towards the elimination of non-tariff barriers and the promotion of industrialization, through the generation of better conditions for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- iii) Address the Latin American and Caribbean integration process in a comprehensive manner, based on an agenda with a far-reaching vision, with short, medium and long term goals that allow for an integration process with a variable geometry, which, at the same time, should effectively link national and subregional efforts.
- iv) Take a deliberate, concerted action which is performed collectively within the different integration mechanisms and takes into account the circumstances and requirements of conciliation with others.

In order to expand and streamline the support given by SELA to the regional integration process, the Permanent Secretary submitted for consideration by the Latin American Council "a proposal for the Permanent Secretariat to formally undertake the mandate for follow-up of Latin American and Caribbean Integration, within the context of deepening and convergence of the existing mechanisms, with the ultimate goal of making proposals".

Finally, the Permanent Secretary pointed out that the formalization of his proposal by virtue of a Decision by the Latin American Council would strengthen the institutional foundations of SELA for implementing its Work Programme in this regard. He said that strengthening the technical capacity of the Permanent Secretariat and endow it with the necessary institutional framework would allow for in-depth and constant study of the most important issues for regional integration through methodologically rigorous research, developed to suit the requirements of Member Countries. Such a move, he added, would also strengthen the implementation of the mandate from the Latin American Council itself and the CELAC and would help prepare documentation and technical notes for CELAC's own agenda, basically in the economic area. The text of his speech is included in Annex I.

10. The delegation of Mexico congratulated the members of the Bureau on their election and stressed the importance of the work carried out by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA during the year, as well as the reports presented at the meeting. The delegate said that his government endorses the proposal for the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to take on the role of technical secretariat of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), considering that such a move must respond to a specific request of CELAC. Finally, he made a request so that the speech of the Permanent Secretary was distributed as a working paper of the meeting.

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11. The Chairman submitted for consideration by the delegations the Draft Annotated Agenda and Organization of Works (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 2-14), which was approved without amendments and includes the following items:
  - I. Organization of Works
  - II. Forum: "Coordination and Convergence in Latin America and the Caribbean"
  - III. Annual Report of the Permanent Secretariat
  - IV. Work Programme for the year 2015
  - V. Budget of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015
  - VI. Institutional matters
  - VII. Other Matters

Next, the Permanent Secretary opened the meeting and invited the officials of the Permanent Secretariat to make their presentations on the items described above.

**ITEM II. FORUM: "COORDINATION AND CONVERGENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN"**

12. The Forum "Coordination and Convergence in Latin America and the Caribbean" was opened by the Permanent Secretary, who stressed the importance of this issue for the development of integration and cooperation among Latin American and Caribbean countries, and referred to the document "Opportunities and challenges for coordination and convergence of subregional integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean" (SP/CL/XL.O/Di. No. 12-14), which was submitted by the Permanent Secretariat as a contribution to the debates during the Forum. Then, he introduced the speakers and gave them the floor.
13. Dr. Tomás Mancha, Director of the University Institute of Economic and Social Analysis (IAES) at Universidad de Alcalá in Spain, spoke about Convergence and Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean: A vision from Europe. He explained that the concept of convergence had been raised during the process of creation of the single currency in Europe and is associated with the idea that integration processes do not generate equality among the countries concerned, but they should maintain a few indicators or benchmarks that tend towards agreed values. He added that the largest growth experienced by most developing countries depends less on how much advanced economies grow and more on how they manage to reduce their gaps in productivity levels.

Dr. Mancha stressed the need to pursue convergence through the development of manufacturing industries and modern services, redirecting the flows of resources to these sectors, based on the certainty that convergence is not easily accomplished. He added that rapid growth in the developing world requires proactive policies that encourage structural transformation, innovation and the emergence of new industries; the same type of policy that advanced economies implement today to stand at their privileged positions.

Finally, he explained that in Latin America and the Caribbean, where integration efforts have been extensive, there is still a long way to go, not only because some of them are new, but also because the political desire for integration required to consolidate such initiatives has not materialized in the region.

14. Dr. Jaime Estay, SELA's Consultant, made a presentation entitled An approach to the challenges to convergence in Latin America and the Caribbean, in which he highlighted what he called "the elusive convergence" and its objective in the development of regional integration. He recalled that convergence in Latin America and the Caribbean, within the framework of the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model, initially focused on a regional market and a multilateral payment mechanism. Then, it advanced towards a Latin American common market with the following three results: i) Links among the various mechanisms and the emergence of new ones; ii) Partial advances within mechanisms; and iii) The crisis of the 1980s and the deterioration of integration. He referred to the fragmentation of integration under the neoliberal model, highlighting the diversity of bilateral agreements on free trade and liberalization of investments signed by countries in the region.

Then, he expounded on the new contents of integration in the twenty-first century; the overcoming of fragmentation; the emergence of new mechanisms; and CELAC vis-à-vis the potential and challenges for convergence in LAC. This leading mechanism has defined a shared agenda, on which the fundamental activity of the countries making up the Community has been focused. He added that such activity has been channeled through "special meetings", which have represented a significant space for the development of the Community and should become a privileged space for the definition of goals and tasks of regional scope, the compliance of which will pave the way towards convergence of national policies led by the implementation of such goals and tasks. Finally, he stressed that attention should be paid to the issue of cooperation between regional and subregional integration mechanisms in order to advance towards convergence, referred to the various regional and subregional integration mechanisms that today co-exist in the region.

15. Daniel Stagno and Eduardo Piña, Officials of the Direction of Studies and Proposals of the Permanent Secretariat, presented their views on the Opportunities and challenges for coordination and convergence of subregional integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean, making emphasis on the commercial dimension of integration; the required infrastructure; the productive dimension; and the complementary efforts that the region should make in accordance with the integration process.

They explained that the integration effort in LAC has focused on the progressive elimination of tariff barriers to expand domestic markets and strive for greater international integration that boosts the economy of the region and internally capitalizes on the benefits associated with the increase in trade flows. They added that despite this effort, the region has not experienced great changes as regards its weight and role in world trade, having been merely a supplier of raw materials and receiver of value-added manufactured products.

Among the factors that explain this behaviour are the following: i) The weak dynamism of intra-regional trade; ii) Fostering extra-regional trade; iii) The broad dispersal of efforts that has slowed down the integration process; and iv) The strong presence of asymmetries between the countries and the subregions. Therefore, they noted, it is necessary to increase intra-regional trade flows, on which major consensuses might be reached; define an agenda for regional action that establishes priorities, strategies and time frames; and develop infrastructure initiatives for trade and transportation.

In addition, they noted that the region should move towards more complex and diversified productive structures which, while including higher technological and knowledge contents, enable LAC countries to go from producing few goods that everyone produces to producing many goods that few can produce. They also highlighted, as part of the necessary public



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policies for production transformation, the promotion of a higher level of research and development (R&D) and local innovation, based on LAC production coordination through regional value chains and greater inclusion in the global value chains.

Finally, they noted as complementary efforts: the strengthening of the institutional framework for decision-making, under flexible and cooperative schemes that boost trade facilitation and promote productivity and competitiveness in the region; and the challenge of building the technical, operational and policy capabilities posed by the re-dimensioning of the regional integration process.

16. The Permanent Secretary thanked for the presentations made by the speakers and invited the delegations to make their remarks on the matter.
17. The delegation of Cuba noted that new identity signs in the field of regional cooperation should be pursued to define and implement a coordination and convergence strategy that leads to a comprehensive productive development. Given the diversity of situations, a suggestion has been made to find a balance between the emergency measures that should be taken in the short term and the attention to structural problems that allows for, in the medium and long terms, an increase in national and regional agricultural production and the diversification or autonomy of the energy matrix of countries.

The delegate explained that the productive dimension is the strategic focus of regional integration. To reduce inequality, in addition to establishing a social policy, it is necessary to change the production and export structure, creating quality jobs and moving towards activities involving greater sophistication. To that end, the delegate pointed out the following priority actions for regional integration:

i) Establish a new equation that inter-relates the State, market and society in a dynamic and positive way; ii) Promote growth to be equal and be equal to grow; iii) The transformation of the production structure should be based on six pillars, namely: investment, integration and innovation to support productive convergence, decent and sufficient work, and environmental sustainability; iv) Make the most of synergies for productive convergence between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger companies, on the one hand, and inter-regional enterprises, on the other; v) link efforts to integrate production with the main trends of new international production industrial structures; and vi) Promote the creation and adaptation of technologies, with special reference to the information and communications technologies (ICT) to support the generation of new knowledge as a catalyst for the innovative production process.

Finally, the delegation recommended continuing the analysis of the nature and scope of industrial and productive development policies through the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Productive and Industrial Development, in coordination with CELAC. The text of his intervention is included in Annex I of this report.

18. The Permanent Secretary welcomed the remarks of the Cuban delegation, which he described as a very important and comprehensive presentation on the subject and considered absolutely relevant to the Forum. As Permanent Secretary of SELA, he conceptualized it as a guide for the future work of the Permanent Secretariat in this area. He greatly appreciated the arguments in favour of the presented proposals, from which he highlighted one of fundamental importance: the continuation of activities on productive and industrial development, which ultimately is productive integration, in compliance with

CELAC's mandate to SELA. In this regard, he underscored the results of the Meeting of High-Level Officials on Productive and Industrial Development in Latin America and the Caribbean that took place at the Permanent Secretariat, prior to the ministerial meeting on the subject held in April 2014 in San Jose.

The Permanent Secretary said that it is a topic that still has many possibilities to be developed, which SELA will continue to give great attention, and for this reason it forms part of the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for 2015. Finally, he stressed that the ideas contained in the statement of the Cuban delegation represent a significant contribution to the future work on this matter.

19. The delegation of Mexico welcomed with enthusiasm the eventual adhesion of the Eastern Caribbean countries to SELA. He thanked and briefly commented on the presentations, emphasizing their usefulness for the discussion on the Latin American and Caribbean integration process *vis-à-vis* the European integration, despite the technical contents of some of them. The delegate pointed out that the period mentioned by Jaime Estay, referring to Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), was characterized not only by the pioneering integration agreements, such as the Treaty of Montevideo (1960), but also by others in which integration was addressed fundamentally from a commercial perspective. He commented on the re-directioning of the integration process towards bilateralism with the Treaty of Montevideo (1980). He praised the inclusion of the concept of regional productive chains as well as the relevance of infrastructure in the debates on the integration process, contained in the document submitted by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA. Finally, he emphasized the need to continue conceiving regional integration from a productive perspective, taking into due account the importance of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
20. The Permanent Secretary acknowledged the relevance of the remarks of the Mexican delegation, underscoring the reference to the document submitted by SELA and recalling that it was drafted in compliance with a commitment taken on by the Permanent Secretariat in this absolutely crucial phase of the integration process, which, he said, requires a qualitative change in integration modalities within the whole process.
21. The delegate of Argentina noted that the different stages of integration efforts throughout the history of Latin America and the Caribbean have always been characterized by dichotomies, which, he insisted, will continue to exist. In addition, he noted that convergence would be a very long-term effort. He expressed his view that the neoliberal stage did not come with democratic political processes, since in many countries of the region, it was imposed by force from positions of power, which, he recalled, mediatized national development processes.

The delegate agreed with Jaime Estay's view that at present there is a new stage which, in his opinion, for some reason, has combined political processes that have led to a convergence in national and popular projects in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. This has allowed for accomplishing objectives that were unthinkable a few years ago, such as the creation of CELAC, which, he said, was born when the project of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) was rejected in November 2005.

In concluding, the delegate thanked the Permanent Secretariat for publishing the Note of 11 July 2014 in support of Argentina as regards the dispute over the so-called "Vulture Funds". He extended his gratitude to all the Member States of SELA for the support that Argentina

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received at the United Nations in order to secure the drafting of Resolution 68/304, with the purpose of seeking an international regulation with respect to debt restructurings.

22. The Permanent Secretary thanked the Argentine delegate for his remarks, particularly for highlighting the extra-economic or extra-academic factors, which, obviously, may be decisive factors, and sometimes even absolutely vital for the integration process.
23. The delegate of Peru recalled that the proposal for regional integration is a longstanding one, and that LAC countries have striven to make integration possible through mechanisms in accordance with geographical proximity, which first included the community level, and went on the subregional and regional levels. He added that all the integration mechanisms have pointed to the need for achieving coordination and convergence among them. Finally, he noted that the region has gradually gone from strictly geographical integration to bilateralism, and it is now in a new phase, which, precisely, seeks the convergence of regional mechanisms.
24. The Permanent Secretary highlighted the idea expressed by the Peruvian delegation with respect to the need to make the different integration processes converge in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this connection, he added that Europe did not confront such an enormously complex task, because in that case it was only one mechanism, albeit a tentative, fledgling one, which also faced many obstacles and a lack of political will which sometimes put its very survival at stake, especially when it came down to discussing the monetary union. He said that LAC should seek real integration within each mechanism, the efficiency of the integration process within each one of them, in order to achieve – in a complementary phase – their articulation and convergence. Finally, he referred to the even more difficult and necessary goal to make them converge into a unique space with all of them as a common basis.
25. The delegation of Guyana argued that efforts at productive integration have been made before and that it is necessary to take a closer look at the historical evolution of the process and learn from it, so that productive integration can be achieved from the lessons learned. In comparing Latin America and the Caribbean with other regions, the delegate raised the following questions: What is the difference between Latin America and the Caribbean and the Asian countries? Why are those countries so developed and we are so backward? In his opinion, the difference lies in productivity, but beyond that it involves a mental attitude. The delegate said that CELAC's relations with the United States and Europe should develop "on different bases". Finally, he said that integration and productivity need to be linked and that both of them must also be connected with policies.
26. Referring to the importance of non-economic factors, the Permanent Secretary recognized that solving technical problems, by itself, does not ensure the success of an integration initiative. For this reason, he said, SELA should play a more active role and seek to modify aspects as regards governance of multilateral organizations in commercial and financial areas. He pointed out that the agenda proposed by SELA for Latin American and Caribbean integration includes not only technical aspects, but also extra-economic or extra-technical aspects.
27. The delegation of Barbados said that, sometimes, the time required for nations to come together and reach agreements is underestimated; thus, she recommended "being extremely careful about the pace at which we move towards certain goals". She noted that CARICOM has set many goals and, in recent years, the Community has realized that such goals and

objectives are still valid and even essential, but that the time frames to achieve them were not realistic. She underscored the need to involve Latin American and Caribbean citizens so that they can understand the meaning and the usefulness of this process and enthusiastically participate in its construction. She also stressed the importance of what he called the cultural dimension of integration, subregional groups, asymmetries, the service economy, education, innovation and natural resources, at the service of the integration process.

28. The Permanent Secretary reiterated that the study submitted by the Permanent Secretariat is a conceptual document which is intended to help develop more important issues that will be prioritized on the basis of further considerations.
29. The delegation of Ecuador welcomed the inclusion of the issue of productive transformation into the debates on Latin American and Caribbean integration, pointing out that it would be advisable to add productive investment and outline concrete proposals. Recognizing the value of multilateral integration, the delegate praised the contributions of the bilateral approach to integration, citing Ecuador's experiences with Peru and Colombia as examples, particularly in the area of energy integration. Finally, he highlighted the importance of SELA's role in contributing to enhance the capacities of the organizations involved in the integration process of Latin America and the Caribbean, saying that, indeed, SELA and CELAC have a joint effort to carry out.
30. The Permanent Secretary said that the debate has touched on many important and valuable references for the work carried out by SELA and, for the purposes of discussion and inclusion into future activities, he proposed to deal with those issues at the next meeting of the Informal Working Group, since they could be of interest for the representatives and, eventually, serve as a basis and a guide for the Permanent Secretariat.
31. Dr. Tomás Mancha referred to the need to start from a fundamental question with a view to guiding the regional integration process: What do we want to do with integration in Latin America and the Caribbean? In his opinion, the problem of Latin America and the Caribbean is not about dichotomies but about heterogeneity, as happened in Europe; and since in economics it is not advisable to make experiments, the best thing to do is to learn from experience, and in this regard the most complete integration process is that of Europe. Furthermore, he drew attention to the fact that "becoming integrated has advantages and disadvantages and deepening integration also has advantages and disadvantages". He referred to the bilateral integration experiences in Europe, which, he said, do not affect what he called the Community acquis.
32. Dr. Jaime Estay pointed out that integration in Latin America and the Caribbean is an issue that required much reflection, action and political decision, if the purpose is to move ahead towards a more advanced stage. Beyond how we call what has happened with integration, the most important thing is to identify the changes and what those changes imply, what are their main contents and whether speaking of a new stage of integration can be justified or not. He said that it is necessary to recognize that we are facing an integration that has significant differences with the previous integration process and, based on that, we should see how we are going to call the previous process and the current process. But it must be acknowledged that there are differences that must be processed, not only in terms of reflection, but also in terms of actions and as part of the policy strategies.

He noted that it is equally important to recognize that in today's integration processes there are different visions, there are significant levels of differences in concepts, projects and

strategies; and at the same time, we should try to make such recognition help us process those differences. The idea is not to say that we cannot make progress because there is no agreement, he said. The idea is recognizing the disagreements, see how we can take advantage of them, and how those areas where there is agreement can serve as a basis to move towards new stages. For this purpose, he said, it would be good to have an explicit recognition that the Latin American and Caribbean universe is quite heterogeneous.

He recalled that, despite such heterogeneity, the region is participating in an integration process that brings together the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which had never happened before. In addition, there is an agenda that includes virtually all the relevant topics facing the region and that should pave the way for a process of greater linkage not only from the economic point of view, but also in the political, cultural and humanistic fields and in the use of resources, environmental protection and gender issues, among others.

Finally, he said that Latin America and the Caribbean must create regional conditions that are denied to the region at a global level, adding that a basis for moving forward is, precisely, the shared balance of 50 years of integration efforts that have had insufficient results.

33. The Permanent Secretary adjourned the debate, thanked the speakers for their presentations, and gave the floor to the Chairman of the Latin American Council.
34. The Chairman expressed his view that that there cannot be integration without the people, and that integration is not intended for the enterprises, but for the people. Such is the experience of Europe, he said, without going into details about that experience. He pointed out that the great novelty of Latin America and the Caribbean is that it continues to build structures that take into account the people and open a way for the free movement of persons, because that is the purpose of integration, he said. He reiterated the importance and the value of the principles of peace, democracy, prosperity and solidarity, as well as the union in diversity, as premises for the regional integration process.

### **ITEM III: XXXVIII ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT**

35. The Permanent Secretariat of SELA submitted its "[Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of Activities of the Permanent Secretariat](#)" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 03-14) for the period from September 2013 to October 2014, which details the activities conducted in compliance with the [Work Programme for the year 2014](#), as well as other related tasks carried out by the organization in accordance with the mandates it has received.
36. The Chairman thanked the Permanent Secretariat for the presentation of said document and invited delegations to take the floor for remarks on this matter.
37. The delegations congratulated the Permanent Secretariat on the report submitted and stressed the far-reaching scope and importance of the tasks conducted. In their statements, the delegates highlighted the following aspects:
  - i) The need to include UNASUR, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Mesoamerica Project in the activities focused on evaluating the various integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in the studies proposed for Activity I.1.1. of the Work Programme for 2015.

- ii) Keeping permanent follow-up of the issue of public procurement as a tool for LAC development and, in this connection, holding consultations with the relevant authorities of the Member States for preparing a regional public procurement programme.
  - iii) Strengthening South-South Cooperation activities and defining them within the Work Programme 2015.
  - iv) Finding mechanisms for submitting the studies and reports conducted by the Permanent Secretariat to the authorities responsible for the relevant issues;
  - v) Addressing the issue of the usefulness of SELA studies, rather than focusing only on research, and proposing mechanisms and procedures for their implementation.
  - vi) Ensuring a greater involvement of the Embassies of Member States accredited to Caracas in the activities related to the management of statistical information to support the studies conducted by the Secretariat.
  - vii) Deepening follow up of the topics of disaster risk and the impact of migrants' remittances as part of the region's development.
  - viii) Re-activating SELA's Results-based Evaluation Group and, in this connection, those Member States that have not done so yet were urged to respond the evaluation questionnaires prepared by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and timely sent by the Permanent Secretariat.
  - ix) Reinforcing the activities related to South-South cooperation; and,
  - x) Expanding the cooperation provided by SELA to the development of the work agenda of CELAC.
38. Referring to the remarks made by the various delegations, the Permanent Secretary highlighted the following aspects:
- i) The studies on the various integration processes initially referred to the subregional mechanisms, but the Work Programme for the year 2015 will also deal with the evaluation of other integration organizations, such as UNASUR and ALADI.
  - ii) The issue of public procurement, which was considered to be a factor of convergence in the region, will be monitored under the suggested terms.
  - iii) The development and interoperability of International Trade Single Windows has been a priority for the Permanent Secretariat, which will continue making efforts in this area at the regional level.
  - iv) Relations with the Embassies in Caracas have been a constant concern of the Permanent Secretariat, and it intends to strengthen them.
  - v) With respect to the Caribbean countries, the Permanent Secretary highlighted the ongoing preparation of a support programme for that subregion, jointly with UNIDO and the Governments of Jamaica and Barbados.
  - vi) Concerning SELA's cooperation with CELAC's agenda, he pointed out that expanding and deepening it will depend on the requests that the *Pro Tempore* Presidency of CELAC might make.
  - vii) The Permanent Secretary underscored the importance and timeliness of the studies on convergence of the integration process being carried out by the Permanent Secretariat, as well as the activities on disaster risk and the impact of migrants' remittances on the economic development of many countries in the region.

On behalf of the officials of SELA and himself, the Permanent Secretary expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome given to the report submitted, saying that it was intended to strengthen administrative continuity, while keeping the orientation of serving Member States by providing useful elements for public policy making.

Since there were no further remarks from the delegates, the Chairman declared the report approved.

#### **ITEM IV: WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR THE YEAR 2015**

39. The Permanent Secretariat submitted the "[Draft Work Programme for the year 2015](#)" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 4-14), the activities of which, in compliance with Decision N° 440 of the Latin American Council, were divided into three thematic areas, namely: Intra-Regional Relations, Technical and Economic Cooperation, and Extra-Regional Relations. The Permanent Secretariat also stated that during the preparation of the contents of the Draft Work Programme, the objectives of the Work Programme for the year 2014 were assessed for compliance. Furthermore, the recommendations made by the Member States during the various activities and meetings carried out in 2014 were also included.

The Chairman thanked the Permanent Secretariat for submitting the Draft Work Programme for the year 2015 and highlighted the exchanges carried out during the year between the Secretariat and the Embassies of the Member States in Caracas. Afterwards, he invited the delegations to take the floor and make comments on the Draft Work Programme.

40. The delegation of Ecuador referred to the issue of public procurement, thanking the Permanent Secretariat for preparing a study on the subject and requesting the organization to follow up on the issue. Furthermore, the delegation stressed the need to enhance cooperation between SELA and CELAC, so that SELA could strengthen the agenda of the Community, in particular as regards the relationship between integration and productive investment. Furthermore, the delegate considered it advisable to analyze the evolution of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in Activity I.1.1.
41. The delegation of Peru made the following proposals: Deepen the analysis of the evolution of ALBA-TCP, PETROCARIBE and CARICOM within the context of regional integration; evaluate the economic relationships between LAC and the Arab countries on the grounds that they have a financial overhang that could increase relations; and monitor and assess the impact of migrants' remittances on the development of recipient countries.
42. The delegation of Mexico proposed to include the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Mesoamerica Project in the activities focused on the evaluation of the various integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in the studies proposed in Activity I.1.1. of the Work Programme for 2015.
43. The delegation of Venezuela made the following proposals: i) Differential treatment for PETROCARIBE in Activity I.1.1, "Follow-Up report on integration agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean: CAN, CARICOM, MERCOSUR, SICA, ALBA-TCP and PA"; ii) Including the study on the establishment of Complementary Economic Zones in Project I.2, "Considerations for deepening coordination and convergence among LAC countries, based on the progress made on the proposal of the Complementary Economic Zone ALBA-PETROCARIBE-MERCOSUR-CARICOM"; iii) Deepening the various analyzes and studies on coordination and convergence of regional and subregional mechanisms and organizations in LAC; and iv) Take note of the results of the following seminars: Integration Process with Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, Chile, on 24 and 25 November 2014; and the International Seminar on Integration and Convergence in South America, with the

participation of UNASUR, MERCOSUR, ALBA-TCP, ALADI and the Pacific Alliance, to be held in Guayaquil on 3 and 4 December 2014.

44. The Brazilian delegation mentioned the advisability of improving SELA's relations with ECLAC and, within that context, it affirmed that the Permanent Secretariat must work in coordination with other Latin American and Caribbean organizations. Additionally, the Delegation of Brazil reckoned that the studies on the different regional integration mechanisms and foreign economic relations of LAC should not include conclusions or recommendations, but contributions to enrich the debate in Member States, including the embassies headquartered in Caracas. In this regard, the delegation deemed it advisable to use the Informal Work Group more intensively. Concerning the area of international economic cooperation – especially the SELA-SME Programme – the delegation underscored the interest in a broader dissemination of the results of the various activities through what it called the “digital classes”.
45. The delegations deemed it necessary to include the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Mesoamerica Project in the studies on the various integration agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, regarding the programme for the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports, they raised the proposal to analyze the integrated data exchange networks among the ports where transport monitoring is documented by local and national authorities.
46. The Delegation of El Salvador proposed changing the expected result of the Activity “Review and analysis of implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation” and including a diagnosis and resolution strategies for a wider scope.
47. During the XL Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, the Permanent Secretary reiterated the importance that he attaches to the implementation of Decision 539 of the Council within the framework of the collaboration and technical support between SELA and CELAC. Also, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela restated the proposal that it had submitted for consideration at the XXXIX Regular Meeting so as to transform the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) into the Technical Secretariat of CELAC, which was welcomed by various countries of the region and should be further discussed. The delegations of Mexico and Costa Rica, recognizing the work carried out by the Permanent Secretariat, stated that the proposal for the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to become the Technical Secretariat of CELAC must be considered by CELAC itself, including the relevant information it may receive from SELA. There was consensus on this issue.
48. The Permanent Secretary made several remarks on each one of the statements made by the delegations, highlighting the following aspects: i) With respect to the relationship of SELA with CELAC, he pointed out that deepening it depends on the requests submitted by CELAC and that the tasks carried out so far have prioritized productive and industrial development and trade facilitation in LAC. The latter of these issues has had the important support of CAF-development bank of Latin America. ii) The issue of public procurement will be enhanced in accordance with the proposal made, and the Permanent Secretariat will convene a Regional Meeting for the first half of 2015. iii) The studies on the various integration agreements have referred to subregional mechanisms, but upcoming studies will also cover UNASUR, the ACS and the Mesoamerica Project. iv) the activities of the Working Group on Trade and Competition in Latin America and the Caribbean (WGTC) go beyond the control of the Permanent Secretariat, therefore the relationship of SELA with the Working Group remains under observation. v) It does not seem to be advisable to develop a specific



project on migrants' remittances in the Work Programme for 2015, because this subject is widely treated by several regional organizations. vi) Regarding the proposal to internally conduct a preliminary study on the economic relations between Arab countries and Latin America and the Caribbean, he considered that the poor availability of resources forces the organization to be selective in the area of external economic relations; however, the Permanent Secretariat could internally conduct a brief study on this matter, without scheduling a related meeting. vii) With respect to Activity I.1.1, a separate chapter on the Complementary Economic Zone will be drafted. viii) The Secretariat will intensify its work on the evolution of the BRICS Group and its relationship with Latin American and Caribbean countries. ix) The studies conducted by the Permanent Secretariat must include conclusions and recommendations as part of the value added that SELA is mandated to offer to its Member States. x) The functions of the Informal Work Group are of an eminently informative and consulting nature; and xi) The Results-Based Evaluation Group of SELA has its own working methods and is controlled by three member States, which have until now counted on the technical and logistic support of the Permanent Secretariat.

Finally, the Permanent Secretariat underlined the organization's willingness to add the adjustments and observations made by the delegates to the Draft Work Programme for 2015.

49. The Latin American Council reiterated its full support to the continuing work of the Permanent Secretariat in compliance with the Panama Convention, which envisages to support the integration processes of the region and encourage coordination among them, or with Members States of SELA, particularly with respect to those activities aimed at promoting greater harmonization and convergence, duly respecting the commitments entered within the framework of such processes. In this regard, the Council requested the Permanent Secretariat to consider the strengthening and rapprochement that has characterized the evolution of Latin American and Caribbean integration in the Work Programme.
50. In this context, the Latin American Council requested the Permanent Secretariat to keep the Member Countries of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System, on the basis of direct contacts with the *Pro Tempore* Presidencies of the Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR, informed about the coordination between both mechanisms, because of the present importance of this issue for the region. Such contacts would allow for gathering information to timely decide, during 2015, about the format and characteristics of the treatment that SELA will give to this issue.
51. The Chairman thanked the delegations for their remarks and declared the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015 approved with the adjustments submitted by delegations.
52. In this connection, the Council approved Decision N° 546, "Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015".

**ITEM V: ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR THE YEAR 2015 AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**a. Budget**

53. The Permanent Secretariat submitted for consideration by the delegations the "Draft Administrative Budget of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015" (SP/CL/XLO/DT N° 5-

14), along with its corresponding statement of reasons. The Budget, which maintains the same amount and structure of income and expenses as that of the year 2014, was approved.

54. When asked about the failure to conduct some activities outlined in the Programme for 2014, the Permanent Secretary recalled that SELA's budget has remained unchanged since 2003. He added that, taking into account the growing inflation in the host country and the adjustments in the foreign exchange rate, the organization has been able to save in dollars and fully comply with its activities, thus achieving a margin of savings in dollars that may help to fill in vacancies, especially in the Direction of Studies and Proposals.
55. In this regard, the Council approved Decision N° 547, "Administrative Budget for the year 2015".

**b. Administrative matters**

**Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2013**

56. When asked about the capability for collecting debt, the Permanent Secretary explained that no provision sets forth any punishment or reduction of debt based on the period in arrears. In response to the question whether there was any provision that allows for writing off outstanding budget quotas, the Permanent Secretary explained that there was only one Decision of the Latin American Council which applies exclusively to outstanding debts up to the year 2006, and that there is no other measure applicable to the debts subsequent to that year.
57. The Permanent Secretariat submitted for consideration by the delegations the "Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2013" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 6-14), which was approved. In this connection, the Council approved Decision N° 548.

**c. Audit Proposal for the year 2014**

58. Delegates agreed that the criteria for future nomination of auditing firms would be the rotation of bidders, based on their expertise and auditing costs, in compliance with Article 34 of the Regulations of the Permanent Secretariat.
59. Based on the foregoing, the Permanent Secretariat submitted for consideration by the delegations the "Audit Proposal for the year 2014" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 7-14), which was approved. In this regard, the Council approved Decision N° 549, "Designation of Auditors for 2014".

**ITEM VI: INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

**Election of a Member of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA**

60. The Permanent Secretariat explained that on 31 December the term for which Dr. Róger Yépez was elected as a member of the Administrative Tribunal expires. The Secretariat indicated that so far it has only received the nomination of Dr. Yépez from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and that a proposal has been made for him to be elected.

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61. The Delegation of Ecuador suggested the advisability of preserving the principle of alternation in the appointments of the Administrative Tribunal and proposed reviewing the provision in the Regulations under which the Tribunal shall meet once a year, which was approved. In this regard, the Council requested the Permanent Secretariat to submit the relevant proposal during the XLI Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council.
62. The Permanent Secretariat submitted for consideration by the delegations the document "[Election of a Member of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA](#)" (SP/CL/XLO/DT N° 8-14). In this connection, the Council approved Decision N° 550, "Designation of a Member of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA".

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

63. The delegation of Venezuela highlighted the contents of document SP/CL/XLO/Di 2-14 "Follow-up report of the application of the Helms Burton Law, 2013-2014" and proposed the Declaration "Ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba".
64. The delegation of Mexico expressed its support to said Declaration and proposed that it was unanimously approved.
65. The delegations of Peru, Bolivia and Brazil endorsed Venezuela's initiative and supported Mexico's proposal.
66. The delegation of Cuba, on behalf of its government, thanked the delegations for their solidarity.
67. The Chairman submitted for consideration by the Council the Draft Declaration, which was unanimously approved. The text of the Declaration is included in section C of this report.

### **ITEM VII: OTHER MATTERS**

68. No other matters were raised for discussion.

### **CLOSING SESSION**

69. In the closing session, the Permanent Secretary expressed his gratitude and recognition to the delegations of the Member States for their active support during the event. He underscored the importance of the Decisions and agreements reached, making special emphasis on the relevance they have for the process of coordination and convergence of Latin American and Caribbean integration, saying that the meeting was successful in every sense. He also informed that, as of January 2015, Ambassador Román Mayorga will join the Permanent Secretariat of SELA as Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation, replacing Dr. Juan Acuña, who ended his term and to whom he expressed his recognition for his work at the helm of that Direction. Finally, the Permanent Secretary thanked the staff of the Permanent Secretariat for their dedication, performance and efforts during the event.
70. In turn, the Chairman thanked the Permanent Secretary and the staff of the Permanent Secretariat for the support received during the meeting, wished the best of success to the new Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation who will start his duties in January

2015, and expressed his recognition to the outgoing Director. He praised the consensus reached during the event, stressing that they demonstrate unity amid diversity, which will help SELA to make progress in facing the challenges of this new scenario for the Latin American and Caribbean integration process. Immediately afterwards, the Chairman adjourned the XL Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council of SELA.

**B. DECISIONS**

**DECISION N° 546****WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR THE YEAR 2015****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Article 5, paragraph 2, of the Panama Convention;

Article 15, paragraph 6, of the Panama Convention, and

The document "Draft Work Programme for the year 2015" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 4-14-Rev. 4).

**CONSIDERING:**

The contents and spirit of Decision N° 440, adopted by the Latin American Council at its XXVIII Regular Meeting, held in Caracas in April 2003;

The work carried out by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA during the year 2014, in compliance with Decision No. 535 of the Latin American Council;

The scope of Decisions N° 527 and 539 regarding the technical support that the Permanent Secretariat should provide to the Work Programme of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC),

**DECIDES:**

Article 1: To approve the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for the year 2015, taking into account the debates carried out during the Council Meeting, as reflected in the Report.

Article 2: In carrying out the various activities foreseen in its Work Programme, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA will keep regular contact with the members of the Bureau of the Latin American Council and the other representatives of the Member States.

## **FOREWORD**

The Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015 takes into account the guidelines established by the XXVIII Latin American Council, through its Decision No. 440, according to which the activities are structured in three areas: Intra-Regional Relations, Economic and Technical Cooperation, and Extra-Regional Relations.

It must be noted that the Work Programme for the year 2015, as set forth in Decision 527, adopted in 2011 by the XXXVII Latin American Council, attaches priority to the link that must be kept between the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and the process of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), particularly with respect to contributing to the fulfilment of the Caracas Action Plan 2012 and the subsequent mandates and recommendations adopted within the framework of CELAC.

The Work Programme for the year 2015 is designed in accordance with the regular budget of the Permanent Secretariat for this administrative period (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 5-14), in terms of the costs indicated therein, particularly without increasing the annual quotas of the Member States. However, it does foresee supplementary financing through technical cooperation agreements with international and regional institutions. The detailed direct costs for each of the three areas and their corresponding projects can be seen in the chapter "Budget for the Work Programme 2015" of the aforementioned document.

In implementing the Work Programme for the year 2015, the Permanent Secretariat intends to continue ensuring communication, cooperation, coordination, complementarity and synergy with the other regional organizations and mechanisms referred to in the Caracas Declaration of CELAC, and very especially, to lend its cooperation and support to the Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC, insofar as it is required.

The Work Programme for the year 2015 includes 18 studies and 28 meetings of diverse nature and coverage, of which 7 are workshops and forums of the SELA-SMEs Programme. With respect to the studies, 63% of them are expected to be drafted internally and the rest by hiring external consultants under terms of reference prepared by the Permanent Secretariat.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) aims at contributing to the regional integration process through a series of multidimensional initiatives to ascertain the status of integration at the subregional level, analyse opportunities and challenges for its advancement and identify concrete actions for achieving such an important goal.

The Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015 has been structured on the basis of three key thematic areas: Intra-Regional Relations, Economic and Technical Cooperation, and Extra-Regional Relations. The thematic organization of the Work Programme is in compliance with Decision 440 of the Latin American Council (2003).

The area of Intra-Regional Relations contains a series of activities whose main objective is to support the Latin American and Caribbean integration process as regards institutional, economic, infrastructural and technological issues. Particularly, this area includes follow-up assessments of the institutional, economic and social evolution of various subregional integration mechanisms, previously studied by SELA during 2014.

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The Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for 2015 makes special emphasis on the opportunities and challenges for institutional and regulatory coordination and convergence of the various integration mechanisms operating in the region. In line with this objective, the Programme examines, cooperation, coordination and complementarity among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the specific possible analysis for cooperation between MERCOSUR and the Pacific Alliance, and between Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

In compliance with the mandate of CELAC, and with a view to making strides with the dialogue between the public sector and the private sector on productive development – a crucial issue for Latin America and the Caribbean – the Permanent Secretariat is planning to organize a Regional Meeting on productive and industrial development in Latin America and the Caribbean to follow up on the First Ministerial Conference on productive and industrial development and the Regional Meeting of business organizations on productive and industrial development in Latin America and the Caribbean, both held in San José in 2014, which will bring together representatives of business organizations, authorities of public institutions linked to productive development, and officials from international organizations in order to exchange views and proposals for enhancing regional competitiveness.

Similarly, the intra-regional area includes a large set of studies and meetings focused on regional trade facilitation. These activities include the conduction of the VII Regional Meeting on foreign trade single windows (VUCE), as well as the continuation of the programme for the creation of the network of Latin American and Caribbean digital ports, the First Regional Workshop on open government, and the coordination and management of a number of specialized portals that allow for disseminating relevant information on the regional integration process.

Traditionally, the area of economic and technical cooperation aims at promoting multilateral and bilateral technical cooperation among countries in the region.

In this connection, two important initiatives are proposed for 2015. On the one hand, the programme to support economic and technical cooperation including the "Regional Meeting on partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean", and on the other, the "XXVI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors", whose central topic will be port cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Additionally, in the area of Economic and Technical Cooperation continuity is given to the SELA-SMEs Programme. It includes a series of meetings focused on productivity, competitiveness and design of public policies aimed at promoting and supporting SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Programme also includes seminars on financing and guarantees to support small and medium-sized enterprises.

Within the framework of the SELA-SMEs Programme, the Permanent Secretariat envisages a methodological proposal for preparing an index of public policies for SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean, following the example of similar indexes implemented by the OECD and ASEAN. This methodology would be a way to quantify and compare the degree of progress in the core areas of public policies for SMEs in the countries of the region.

The SELA-SMEs Programme provides a complementary approach to the meetings, analyses and other efforts conducted by SELA in the field of the productive transformation of Latin America and the Caribbean.



Finally, the Work Programme presents its area of Extra-Regional Relations. The main objective of this thematic area is to analyze trends and prospects of the commercial and financial relations among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean with different economic blocs of interest. Particularly, this area focuses in assessing economic relations with the Association of Southeast Asian countries (ASEAN) – one of the economic blocs with greater reception and export of foreign direct investment and greater potential for growth – with the European Union – a bloc with strong trade and financial links with the region – and with the BRICS Group – a bloc that represents a commercial and financial partner of important magnitude for the region and whose initiatives on issues related to development banking could be an attractive financing alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015 envisages the conduction of 18 studies and 28 meetings at different levels. Through these activities, SELA aims at comprehensively treating the multiple dimensions of the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean. Through a rigorous study of fundamental issues, for a healthy economic dynamics, as well as organizing events that strengthen cooperation among stakeholders at regional level and the considerations and proposals for the necessary public policies to make progress with the integration process, SELA makes its contribution to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive social development and economic prosperity for the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

## AREA I. INTRA-REGIONAL RELATIONS

**PROGRAMME: ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT TO LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN INTEGRATION**

**PROJECT I.1. Assessment of Latin American and Caribbean integration processes**

**Activity I.1.1. Follow-up report on integration agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean: Andean Community (CAN), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), Central American Integration System (SICA), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA-TCP), PETROCARIBE, Pacific Alliance (AP) and UNASUR**

### **A. Background and justification**

The Permanent Secretariat of SELA prepared during 2014 six (6) studies on the evolution of Latin American and Caribbean subregional integration agreements: Andean Community (CAN), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the Central American Integration System (SICA), as well as the new integration and cooperation mechanisms that have arisen in the recent years, such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America – People's Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP) and the Pacific Alliance (AP). In addition, in compliance with Activity I.1.6. of the Work Programme for the year 2013, the Permanent Secretariat prepared the study entitled PETROCARIBE Energy Cooperation Agreement (SP/Di N° 3-13).

These studies analyze relevant aspects of each integration agreement in the institutional, economic, trade and social areas. The terms of reference for the studies were structured according to several issues that describe the status of the integration agreements and facilitate the

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comparative analysis among them, namely: macroeconomic convergence, common commercial policy and efficient movement of goods, services and factors of production.

Based on the aforementioned studies, the Permanent Secretariat aims to generate added value to the regional integration process by conducting a comparative analysis of integration stages within each mechanism. The result of this analysis will help formalize an idea on the status of regional integration.

The above procedure will facilitate the diagnosis of opportunities and challenges for the advancement of the Latin American and Caribbean integration. In addition, it will contribute to the proposal of public policy options best suited for the structural realities and short and long-term objectives of each mechanism.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Follow up studies carried out in compliance with the aforementioned activities and prepare a new study on the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)
2. Incorporate statistical observations and institutional initiatives that have been raised after the preparation of the studies to have a broader basis for analysis adjusted to the reality of mechanisms.
3. Assess the status of mechanisms according to the economic integration theory they are based on. From the conceptual point of view, locate each mechanism in the integration stage that matches their current dynamics.
4. Based on the categorization of mechanisms, analyze challenges and prospects for progress of regional integration.
5. Make public policy recommendations focused on efficiently promoting such progress.

## **C. Expected results**

One analytical document aimed at assessing the integration mechanisms within the framework of the regional integration theory. The document will include a chapter with public policy recommendations, designed to boost the progress of such mechanisms in their respective stages of integration.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of reference for the study	March
Preparation of the study	April – June
Translation and publication	July

### **Activity I.1.2. Assessment of economic and cooperation relations among Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico**

#### **A. Background and justification**

During the last years, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA has made proposals to promote trade among Latin American and Caribbean countries. Such is the case of the commercial circuits of South America, Cuba-Latin America and the Caribbean, Central America-CARICOM, Central America (the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean) and CARICOM (the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean). At this time, emphasis will be made on the circuit Central America-Caribbean-Mexico. The analysis will be focused on the important role that Mexico has played in trade,

investments, cooperation and external relations of Central American countries, with which it has negotiated a single trade agreement from bilateral agreements it had established with such countries. In addition, CARICOM and Central American countries share mutual business interests and have signed several trade agreements, which may be connected with those established between Mexico and Central America, in order to take advantage of the geographical proximity and the potential market in goods and services, as well as to encourage investment among themselves in the greater Caribbean region. Moreover, the promotion of trade and investments requires a review of the exportable offer; potential demand; trade, geographic and trade facilitation barriers; and the available institutional instruments for the promotion of exports and investments.

## **B. Objectives**

The objective of this activity is to analyze the network of cooperation, economic and trade agreements in the region covering Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean; possibilities for their coordination and convergence; and the existing or potential mechanisms and modalities to promote and diversify economic and trade relations.

## **C. Expected results**

An analytical document in accordance with the proposed objectives and the conduction of an event to discuss results and recommendations.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of reference for the study	February
Preparation of the study	March - May
Translation and publication	June
Regional Meeting	July

### **Activity I.1.3. Assessment report on intra-regional trade in Latin America and the Caribbean**

#### **A. Background and justification**

In compliance with Activity I.1.2 of the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2013, SELA carried out a detailed study on the regional integration of trade in goods and services entitled "Assessment report on regional free trade agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean: 1980-2011."

Given the intrinsic and instrumental importance of trade in goods and services for the advancement of the Latin American and Caribbean integration process, the Permanent Secretariat has decided to update the study prepared in 2013, thus enriching the technical debate on the next steps in the regional trade integration.

Considering the effects on the demand for goods and services from Latin America and the Caribbean, as a result of the incipient economic recovery in developed nations and the slowdown in developing economies, the analytical emphasis of this update report will be on the review of new trends in the regional trade in goods and services in the aftermath of the year 2011.

## B. Objectives

Update the study "Assessment report on regional free trade agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean: 1980-2011," prepared by the Permanent Secretariat in the year 2013. In particular, the period 2012-2014 is expected to be incorporated into the analysis, depending on the availability of data.

## C. Expected results

One update report of the study *Assessment report on regional free trade agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean: 1980-2011*, prepared by the Permanent Secretariat in compliance with Activity I.1.2 of the Work Programme for the year 2013. The analytical component of the report will focus on the information about the period 2012-2014.

## D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Terms of reference for the study	June
Preparation of the study	July – August
Translation and publication	September

### Activity I.1.4. Analysis of trade flows in goods and services among CARICOM countries with other Latin American and Caribbean countries. Elements and recommendations to promote and diversify relations

#### A. Background and justification

The Permanent Secretariat, upon a mandate of the Latin American Council, will continue the work begun in 2011 to identify elements and policies that would be required to promote and expand intra-regional trade in goods and services among the countries of the region.

In 2012, the Permanent Secretariat conducted studies focused on the modalities and mechanisms to promote intra-regional trade, on the one hand, among the countries of South America and, on the other, among the countries of Central America and the Caribbean. In 2013, it prepared the study on trade relations between Cuba and Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2014, the Permanent Secretariat conducted a study called "Analysis of trade flows between CARICOM and Latin America. Policy recommendations for its promotion, stabilization and diversification". The results of this study point to a slow but steady increase in trade liberalization between CARICOM and Latin America during the period 2000-2010. However, as of 2011, there has been an important change in the trends of trade between CARICOM and the rest of the region. More precisely, exports from CARICOM to Latin America, since that year, started to increase very rapidly, especially in the Group of countries exporting goods, whereas imports to CARICOM from Latin America have declined, particularly in the group of countries exporting services.

This recent change in the trade dynamics between CARICOM and the rest of Latin America could have an impact, in the long term, on the mechanics of the trade integration process between both subregions. Therefore, it is crucial for policy makers to identify the factors behind this change in business trends and understand the possible implications of these trends in terms of regional integration.

**B. Objectives**

To conduct a Regional Meeting with the following objectives

1. Get to understand the factors that changed the dynamics of foreign trade between CARICOM and Latin America after 2010.
2. Understand the possible implications of the new dynamics of trade for both subregions.
3. Outline policy orientations and lines of action to try to increase and diversify intra-regional trade in Latin America and the Caribbean and encourage the emergence of new relations and economic interdependencies in the field of regional integration.

**C. Expected results**

Conduct a regional meeting.

**D. Activities and schedule**

Activities	Dates
Convening of Regional Meeting	May
Regional Meeting	July - Guyana

**Activity I.1.5. Report on the regional integration process 2015****A. Background and justification**

The Permanent Secretariat conducts analyses and systematic investigations on the Latin American and Caribbean integration process, focusing on its main aspects and interrelations. It relies on official reports, statistics and studies prepared by the various integration and cooperation instances in the region to develop its own analyses on the evolution of the Latin American and Caribbean integration process, trends and composition of investments, institutions and other topics of regional interest.

In line with the consolidation of CELAC, the Permanent Secretariat aims to contribute to the development of an up-to-date and comprehensive vision of the integration process.

**B. Objectives**

1. Follow up the evolution of the Latin American and Caribbean integration process.
2. Offer the Member States a multidimensional vision of the progress of the Latin American and Caribbean integration, as well as an approach to the possibilities for coordination and convergence among the current processes.
3. Offer a multidimensional vision of the challenges to be faced by the Latin America and Caribbean integration process.
4. Update and expand the database held by the Permanent Secretariat within the framework of the CEDIC-SELA project on trade and investment flows among the Caribbean, Central American and South American countries.

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**C. Expected results**

1. Publication of the monthly *Bulletin on integration of Latin America and the Caribbean*, which summarizes the evolution of the integration process and the main related activities carried out by SELA and the other regional and subregional integration schemes.
2. Presentation to the Member States of the annual Report on the Regional Integration Process 2015. This report must include a comprehensive analysis of the progress and difficulties for the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean. On this occasion, the dimensions of integration to be analyzed include: international context, institutional changes, trade in goods and services, direct intra-regional investment, macroeconomic convergence, trade facilitation and achievements in the social area.
3. Collect statistical information on topics of interest related to the regional integration process through the CEDIC-SELA project and continually update the *Database on International Trade*.

**D. Activities and schedule**

Activities	Date
Bulletin on integration of Latin America and the Caribbean	Monthly publication
Preparation of terms of reference for two (2) chapters of the Report	February - March
Preparation of the two (2) chapters	June
Report on the Regional Integration Process 2015	30 September

**Activity I.1.6 Establishment of Complementary Economic Zones as a strategy for deepening the coordination and convergence among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean**

**A. Background and justification**

Over the last few years, the negotiations between sub-regional integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean have tended to privilege the process of regional integration, taking into account the asymmetries among the countries without affecting human rights or environmental and labour laws.

In the Second Special Summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) and PETROCARIBE, held in Caracas on 17 December 2013, an agreement was reached to expand the economic space of complementation with other regional mechanisms, such as MERCOSUR and CARICOM.

This impulse towards a new model of intra-regional economic relations was manifest in the interest in building a Complementary Economic Zone (CEZ) among ALBA, PETROCARIBE, MERCOSUR and CARICOM, privileging complementarity and strengthening and diversifying the production and commercial exchanges among our countries, as guidelines for economic integration, rather than competition between the countries.

In this respect, it includes the results of the XVLI Summit of MERCOSUR, carried out in Caracas on 29 July 2014, which underlined the will of the Member States to advance towards the establishment of the ALBA-PETROCARIBE-MERCOSUR-CARICOM Complementary Economic Zone.

Additionally, it counts on the technical support that the Permanent Secretariat of SELA has offered to focus the studies on integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, the deepening of coordination and convergence among countries of the region, the integral evaluation of the industrial and productive development, and particularly the promotion of investments and the identification of regional production chains.

Likewise, the potential of the region in natural resources and the significant capacities of the countries to create value added might become the starting point for the formation of a productive engine for the development of Complementary Economic Zones.

The proposed study can contribute to lay the foundations for the emergence of new economic relations and interdependency for the multilateral instruments by means of the sovereign use of the industrial, financial and natural resources capacities, with the result of leading the region to gain importance as an economic actor in the world.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Stimulating the rapprochement and dialogue between the countries of the region on the complementary economic zones to invigorate the Latin American and Caribbean integration through the productive complementarity among the main mechanisms of sub-regional integration.
2. Evaluating the impact of establishing the ALBA-TCP-PETROCARIBE-MERCOSUR-CARICOM complementary economic zone on the evolution of the process of regional integration.
3. Contributing to the analysis of the evolution of the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **C. Expected results**

1. An analytical document evaluating the opportunities of the establishment of complementary economic zones.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of reference for the study	February
Preparation of the study	May
Translation and publication	June

### **PROJECT I.2. Considerations for deepening coordination and convergence among Latin American and Caribbean countries**

#### **Activity I.2.1. CELAC: Regional Meeting on Productive and Industrial Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Public and private sectors**

##### **A. Background and justification**

In the Plan of Action adopted by the II Presidential Summit of CELAC, held in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014, SELA was entrusted with the task of organizing, with the support of ECLAC and CAF-development bank of Latin America, a Regional Meeting of business organizations on productive and industrial development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The goal of this event

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was to encourage representatives of unions and the private sector in the region to incorporate their analysis and proposals into the process of creation of productive and industrial development strategies within the framework of CELAC, as well as to stimulate the investment institutions and development banks to adopt or expand the financing mechanisms for the development of infrastructure and investment related to productive integration programmes in the region.

This request was ratified at the VIII Meeting of National Coordinators of CELAC, held on 9 and 10 April 2014 in San José, Costa Rica. The next Regional Meeting, scheduled to take place with the collaboration of the Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC in San José, Costa Rica, on 13 and 14 November 2014, was postponed after making the relevant consultations with the counterparts, taking into account the difficulties to ensure broad participation of the private business sector.

The topics on the agenda for this event are the result of issues discussed at the Meeting of Ministers of Economy and Industries of CELAC, carried out by the Pro Tempore Presidency on 10 and 11 April 2014 in San José, Costa Rica. They include: productive and industrial development policies, value chains and partnerships, employment and productivity, and sustainable production and energy.

Against this background, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA will organize the Regional Meeting, which will bring together representatives of business organizations, authorities of public organizations related to productive development and officials of international organizations in order to exchange views and proposals from the presentations and conclusions of the two above-mentioned events.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Encourage dialogue between the public and private sectors in the drafting and implementation of industrial policies that contribute to the productive development of CELAC countries.
2. Promote a space for encounter between representatives of the public and private sectors in the region in the field of industrialization and development so that they can exchange ideas, proposals and experiences on the priority areas of the agenda for productive and industrial development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **C. Expected results**

1. Organize a Regional Meeting among representatives of the public and private sectors in the region to discuss aspects on productive and industrial development in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. A document that compiles the conclusions and recommendations arising from the meetings on productive and industrial development conducted by the Permanent Secretariat.
3. Discuss proposals and recommendations for a regional policy on industrial and productive development.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Extending invitations and organizing the meeting	January - March
Preparation of document	March
Conduction of the meeting	June



## **Activity I.2.2. CELAC: Study on coordination, cooperation and complementarity in Latin America and the Caribbean**

### **A. Background and justification**

Since the First Summit of CALC – which brought to life CELAC – in December 2008, one of the priority lines of action of CELAC has been complementarity, cooperation and coordination among the integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In paragraph 36 of the founding document of CELAC, the Caracas Declaration, the signatories decide to “commit the willingness of our Governments to guide the regional mechanisms and organisms, to promote among themselves communication, cooperation, articulation, coordination, complementarity and synergy, where appropriate, and through their respective executive bodies, in order to contribute to the achievement of the integration goals set forth in this declaration...”

At the Havana Summit, held in 2014, CELAC issued a Special Declaration on Strengthening Integration, which stresses the need to “seek practical means for the strengthening of the efforts geared at consolidating integration through, inter alia, deepening of the interrelation, complementariness, cooperation and convergence between regional and sub-regional integration mechanisms...”

Understanding the concepts of coordination, cooperation and complementarity, both in their theoretical and practical dimensions, is of particular importance for the progress of the Latin American and Caribbean integration process. In addition, promoting a profound understanding of the economic and institutional factors is crucial to facilitate or prevent the effective coordination among regional integration mechanisms.

### **B. Objectives**

1. Assess progress in terms of coordination, cooperation, complementarity and convergence among countries and integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. Assess the challenges of coordination, cooperation, complementarity and convergence among countries and integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **C. Expected results**

1. An analytical document to assess the progress and challenges of integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of coordination, cooperation and complementarity. The document should contain public policy considerations based on previously analyzed patterns and trends.
2. Conduction of a Regional Meeting.

### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of reference for the study	January
Preparation of study	February - March
Translation and publication	April
Convening of Regional Meeting	March
Conduction of Regional Meeting	May

**PROGRAMME: TRADE FACILITATION**

The concept of trade facilitation refers to the set of provisions that make international trade and each link in the international supply chain more efficient. They include the simplification, rationalization and harmonization of customs procedures in compliance with international standards, as well as those procedures required by regulatory agencies involved in import and export operations. Other procedures may include those related to logistics and transport for the material movement of goods and the activities associated with their payment, without forgetting the fundamental support provided by the Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for that purpose.

In December 2013, consensus was reached to sign the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement within the framework of the so-called "Bali Package". This agreement is considered of great importance for the world trade, with one of its main features being the fact that, once ratified, it will enable the incorporation of provisions that are specific, more uniform, effective and easy to use. In this connection, the Agreement can act as a mechanism for convergence among trade agreements in areas related to trade facilitation, as it establishes common minimum provisions and the possibility of addressing equivalent commercial disciplines through standardized, streamlined and simplified procedures and languages.

ICTs are central elements of the provisions negotiated at the WTO, since trade flows of goods rely on information flows, without which import and export operations cannot be materialized. In addition, progress in the physical movement of goods cannot be lost as a result of inefficiencies in the administrative and documentation procedures, which can be largely overcome by appropriate use of ICTs.

Thus, the WTO Agreement allows for the appropriate ICT support to achieve the main objectives raised as regards the acceleration of customs procedures; cost-effective and accelerated trade facilitation; greater efficiency and transparency; and reduced bureaucracy and corruption. In fact, these technologies reduce discretionary interventions by public officials and private operators and have a significant impact on reduction in time and transaction costs associated with commercial operations, as they facilitate and accelerate data capture, storage, processing and transmission to different stakeholders, leading to accurate, reliable and expeditious management of information in line with increasingly faster logistics and transport mechanisms.

The Agreement explicitly defines the use of tools such as Single Windows in international trade, so that crosscutting information can be provided only once and at a single point of entry along the international supply chain, making it possible to accelerate the processing of information and commercial documents and gain in competitiveness and efficiency of international trade.

It should be noted that the agreement should include the various reflections and concerns expressed by developing countries, since the beginning of the negotiation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in the WTO, as regards the costs of implementing it.

The TFA is expected to be useful only if the various institutional and social costs, as well as the resources that must be defrayed so as to ensure the sustainability of the changes required to conform to the TFA, are duly taken into account.

**PROJECT I.3. Regional Meetings on International Trade Single Windows****Activity I.3.1. VII Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows****A. Background and justification**

With the Organization of the VII Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows, the Permanent Secretariat will continue its effort to contribute to the consolidation of International Trade Single Windows as an essential tool for trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean, within the framework of the regional integration process. They are considered a key component of the e-government strategies aimed at achieving an optimal relationship between citizens and the State, depending on the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) with the ultimate goal of promoting the development of a modern, efficient and flexible State characterized by an integrated public management; institutions based on citizen participation, efficiency and effectiveness of the public service, and digital inclusion.

The earliest background of this event was the First Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows (Bogotá, 25 and 26 March 2010), organized by the Permanent Secretariat and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Colombia, with the support of the IFC of the World Bank Group.

Also in 2010, the Permanent Secretariat and the National Customs Service (SNA) of Chile organized the First Workshop: International Trade Single Windows. Considerations and proposals for regional action under the Latin American Pacific Rim Forum (Valparaiso, Chile, 30 November and 01 December 2010), with the coordination of the Working Group on Trade Facilitation, Infrastructure and Logistics of the Latin American Pacific Rim Forum in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama and the support of the IDB and CAF-development bank of Latin America.

In 2011, the III Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows: Paperless Trading and Risk Management in Trading Operations (Lima, 29-30 November). On that occasion, the Permanent Secretariat shared efforts with the Ministry of Commerce and Tourism of Peru, under the auspices of USAID Trade Facilitation Project and CAF-development bank of Latin America.

The IV Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows: Public policies and intersectorality for a globalized, logistic and sustainable foreign trade was held in La Antigua, Guatemala (30 and 31 October 2012). On that occasion, the Permanent Secretariat counted on the valuable partnership with the Association of Guatemalan Exporters (AGEXPORT).

The V Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows: Measuring the impact of Single Windows on countries' economies and adoption of international recommendations – A needed debate took place in Mexico, D.F., from 30 October to 1 November 2013, and was organized by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, the Secretariat of Economy, the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit and the Tax Administration Service of Mexico.

As the aforementioned events, the VII Regional Meeting of International Trade Single Windows has been promoted by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to boost the analysis of the most relevant experiences in this matter in the region, with a view to generating recommendations that eventually result in policies and programmes for the optimization of processes and results. The

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ultimate goal is to boost international trade of countries that have incorporated this tool and to facilitate efforts aimed at consolidating the International Trade Single Windows throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, as part of e-commerce and e-government strategies.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Discuss emerging and innovative issues with an impact on the design and development of International Trade Single Windows in Latin America and the Caribbean, as an essential tool for intra- and inter-regional trade facilitation.
2. Provide cutting-edge analytical elements that contribute to the progress and strengthening of International Trade Single Windows in Latin America and the Caribbean and their relationship with other links in the international supply chain.
3. Disseminate information about the best practices stemming from projects/programmes for the design and implementation of International Trade Single Windows, making emphasis on the methodologies, procedures and resources that have proved to be effective in the area of cross-border paperless trade, under the criteria of interoperability, efficiency, compatibility of standards and security.
4. Generate convergence for the development of International Trade Single Windows, aiming at unifying the required criteria for implementing common processes and systems with the capacity of exchanging information, intended to develop organizational and technological interoperability and harmonize data on the basis of international standards.

## **C. Expected results**

Organization of the VII Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows, in order to analyze critical and emerging issues related to the development of International Trade Single Windows and disseminate the most significant experiences in this matter in those countries of the region that are developing them or intend to incorporate them in the short term. To that end, the Meeting is expected to be attended by representatives of the Member States linked to the design and implementation of Single Windows, as well as related instances such as customs, ports and ministerial bodies related to procedures for import and export of goods and services. As it has been the case in all previous events, representatives of international and multilateral organizations related to these processes are also expected to participate in this meeting.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Planning and organization of the VII Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows	July – August
Conduction of the VII Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting on International Trade Single Windows	24 and 25 September

### **PROJECT I.4. WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation**

#### **Activity I.4.1. Review and analysis of implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation in countries of the region**

##### **A. Background and justification**

The importance attached to this topic is widely supported by estimates that show that customs regulations and formalities can have a greater impact on international trade than customs duties,

which have traditionally been at the core of debates on trade barriers. In addition, some estimates account for the importance of achieving savings in logistics costs and customs delays through the implementation of actions related to trade facilitation, with the magnitude of this effect with respect to GDP having been measured in the APEC economies. Moreover, the importance of the issue can also be confirmed when a review is made of the causes of the low participation of SMEs in international trade, where bureaucratic procedures or administrative obstacles gain in relevance. An analysis has also been made of the impact of administrative inefficiencies of customs offices and entities responsible for international trade in terms of the effective integration of developing countries into the global economy, for which inefficiencies in customs and transport are obstacles to their integration into the global economy and affect their competitiveness.

Accordingly, it is of great interest for the Permanent Secretariat to make a careful review and analysis of the implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and related provisions in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Also, this agreement should include, since the very beginning of the negotiation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, the various reflections and concerns of developing countries on the costs of implementation of this agreement.

The agreement is thought to have an effect if it takes into account the various institutional and social costs as well as the resources that will have to be defrayed to make the sustainable changes required to conform to it.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Provide the Member States with relevant information on the state of the art in the implementation of provisions contained in the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation in Latin American and Caribbean countries.
2. Contribute to a regional dialogue about the importance of a harmonious implementation of this agreement in the Member States of SELA, so that it represents an effective contribution to the competitiveness of the countries individually and the region as a whole.
3. Identify the possible strategies and the and the expected costs in order to move ahead with the implementation of the provisions contained in the WTO Agreement.

## **C. Expected results**

A study that includes the review, analysis and outlook of the implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Preparation of the terms of reference of the study by the Permanent Secretariat	January
Hiring of consultant and preparation of the study	February – May
Distribution of the document to the Member States	June
Presentation of the study	October

**PROJECT I.5. Programme for the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean network of digital and collaborative ports**

The competitiveness of international trade in our countries is source of wealth and progress for society, in particular for the business fabric and thousands of workers of extractive, manufacturing and services industries in each country. Therefore, ensuring an efficient port system, integrated to transport systems, is key from every point of view. The lack of understanding and the weak implementation of public policies and public-private actions in the maritime-land interface contribute to the creation of a true "grey zone," which is extremely negative for the competitiveness of international trade as a whole.

Latin American and Caribbean ports should enter a new phase of modernization, allowing maritime and land transportation to move towards new standards of service and to reduce costs in the global supply chain. The objective is to turn ports and port areas into true critical links in the global supply chains, within the framework of generation of sustainability, productivity, low costs and customer service, which represent the new components expected to induce competitiveness for a globalized foreign trade.

In line with regional interests and international trends, SELA has developed a systematic management, aimed at delving into issues of international trade and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), building intra-regional dialogues, achieving concerted action, and participating as a trusted third party in proposals for international cooperation to promote regional initiatives on such issues. Thus, during the year 2014, some headway has been made in the first phase of the "Programme for the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean network of digital and collaborative ports: Strengthening logistic port communities, service and technological innovation standards for a globalized, competitive and logistically sustainable international trade," within the framework of the non-refundable technical cooperation agreement between CAF-development bank of Latin America and the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and with the participation of the ports of Manzanillo and Veracruz, in Mexico; Buenaventura and Cartagena, in Colombia; Callao, in Peru; San Antonio and Valparaíso, in Chile; and Balboa and Colon, in Panama.

**Activity I.5.1. Programme for the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean network of digital and collaborative ports. Expansion and institutionalization of the network****A. Background and justification**

The programme Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports, started in 2014 as a support for the port-logistics sector, has undertaken the task of strengthening the various aspects of logistics competitiveness, from the institutional framework, which involves port-logistics communities, the regional public-private partnership on logistics and national logistics plans, to the operational framework, which includes best practices for synchronizing ship-maritime-land operations and collaborative technologies such as port single windows, logistics coordination systems and logistics modules to interoperate with International Trade Single Windows.

As more countries and their port communities develop real trade facilitation and transport networks, with emphasis on the reference model for competitiveness of the port-logistics chain proposed in this Programme, some headway should be made in minimizing the structural flaws in our region. In addition, the Programme suggests a set of support subsystems, such as the strengthening of methodological support groups, made up of research and innovation centres,

which provide technical support to every port community in each region and country. The Program also aims to provide the network with more regional institutions.

For 2015, the second stage of this Programme is expected to be developed on the basis of its expansion and institutionalization, which means to increase the base of the member countries and port communities (from 9 to 15 port communities and from 5 to 9 countries), promote the implementation of actions related to the reference model for competitiveness of the logistics chain provided for by the network, present proposals for the institutionalization of the network and continue to build institutional and technological lines of action that contribute to closing gaps in logistical sustainability and competitiveness.

The countries, and their main port communities, that benefited from the Programme during its first year of implementation were Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Panama, which set goals for improved inter-institutional collaboration and exploration of collaborative logistics technological projects, as proposed by the network reference model. In addition, each country created methodological support groups, made up of research centres, universities and independent researchers linked to knowledge management in the areas of logistics, ports and intermodal transport, with emphasis on the region where port communities are inserted.

This second stage of the Programme is expected to strengthen collaborative activities of countries and pioneer port communities and to make some progress with actions in the new regional port communities in Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay, since it is highly feasible to move forward on the replicability of preliminary results in other Latin American and Caribbean countries.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Strengthen efforts to support the collaborative management and implementation of measures related to the reference model in the nine port communities addressed in the first stage of the Programme, namely: Manzanillo and Veracruz in Mexico; Balboa and Colon in Panama; Buenaventura and Cartagena in Colombia; el Callao in Peru; and Valparaíso and San Antonio in Chile.
2. Make some progress in the early stages of conceptualization, mobilization of members and strategic planning in the new regional port communities, such as Altamira in Mexico; Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago; Puerto Limon in Costa Rica; Guayaquil in Ecuador; Paita in Peru; and Montevideo in Uruguay.
3. Advance in the first formal institutionalization of the network of digital and collaborative ports of Latin America and the Caribbean based on an institutional feasibility study, and consolidate the dissemination of results and information on the network through the creation and development of a Web platform for exchange of information.

## **C. Expected results**

1. Strengthening, expansion and institutionalization of the network of digital and collaborative ports, within the framework of the Programme for the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean network of digital and collaborative ports: strengthening logistic port communities, service and technological innovation standards.
2. Design of implementation guide and instrument for measuring the degree of implementation of the best practices promoted by the reference model for port-logistics competitiveness.

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3. Creation of a Web platform that ensures the permanent exchange of information and best practices in port-logistics communities, contributes to the dissemination and management of information generated by regional and subregional institutions on this issue, and contributes to the progress of electronic governments, in the context of trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Deepening of current and expansion of new port communities (technical visits and workshops)	January – March 2015 August – October 2015
Design of implementation guide of reference model and design and implementation of Web site	January – August 2015
Study on institutional sustainability	April – July 2015
Dissemination: Regional meeting of representatives of port communities and VII Meeting on International Trade Single Windows	October 2015; November 2015
Final Report	December 2015

**PROGRAMME: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES (ICTs) AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY****PROJECT I.6. Regional Seminar on Open Government****Activity I.6.1. I Regional Seminar on Open Government****A. Background and justification**

Within the framework of the support to initiatives aimed at the implementation and consolidation of the e-government in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Permanent Secretariat has developed an extensive experience at the regional level that leads to the significant improvement of actions and impacts by the State as manager of public services and responsible for the transactional relationship between citizens and the institutions, in accordance with the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT); extension of the citizens' right to access public services; simplification of processes under the re-engineering involving virtualization, reduction and digitization of procedures and requirements; the ecological public service management through a significant reduction of the use of paper; transparency in public administration; time and cost savings; qualitative improvement of relevant information and guarantee of timely responses to citizenship, in order to strengthen electronic e-government platforms aimed at fostering a modern and flexible State structure, a comprehensive public administration and new institutions based on citizen participation, efficiency of public services and digital inclusion.

The Permanent Secretariat, in its interest in dealing with topics of interest to the Member States and contributing to the goals of the Regional Plan of action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean - eLAC 2015, has decided to identify, monitor and disseminate information on innovative and emerging trends. In this connection, the open government is a new aspect in the development of e-government.

Moreover, the open government points to democratic governance through participatory practices; the provision of organized, transactional and available government public domain information; the generation of collaborative spaces leading to the construction of citizen participation networks in



the definition of public policies and social oversight, that is, the State as a guarantor of quality of life of citizens.

In this regard, the Permanent Secretariat proposes the promotion of a debate on public policies related to best practices, achievements, enabling factors, obstacles, pending issues and challenges to be assumed in the field of open government, specifically electronic commerce, with particular emphasis on the simplification of public procedures for trade facilitation and investment, as well as for strengthening the rule of law and democratic governance.

In compliance with the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for 2014, the "Regional Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on Open Government as a strategy for Electronic Government: Towards transparency and efficiency of administrative procedures" was scheduled to take place this year. However, as the VIII Red GeALC and III e-Government Ministerial Meeting coincided with the planned seminar, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and the UNCTAD e-Regulations programme decided to postpone it for the year 2015.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Define and work on an agenda that includes emerging issues in the areas of e-government and open government, with the aim of discussing and disseminating topical issues of relevance to Member States.
2. Provide Member States with an up-to-date and relevant perspective on public policies in the areas of e-government and open government, with particular emphasis on transactional banking and administrative efficiency.
3. Contribute to the consolidation of a space for convergence and exchange of achievements and innovative experiences, in which authorities, experts and researchers on e-government and open government in Latin America and the Caribbean dialogue on such issues in the context of public administrations of Member States.

## **C. Expected results**

Conduction, in collaboration with the UNCTAD *e-Regulations* programme, of the First Regional Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on Open Government as a strategy for Electronic Government: Towards transparency and efficiency of administrative procedures.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Preparation of the thematic agenda of the I Regional Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on Open Government as a strategy for Electronic Government: Towards transparency and efficiency of administrative procedures	January – February
Definition, contacts and invitation to experts, researchers, public officials and international organizations responsible for public policies in the areas of e-government and open government	February – April
Conduction of the I Regional Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on Open Government as a strategy for Electronic Government: Towards transparency and efficiency of administrative procedures	May
Preparation and distribution of the Final Report to the Member States of SELA	May

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**PROJECT I.7. Management and coordination of specialized portals****Activity I.7.1. Management and coordination of the specialized portal on CELAC****A. Background and justification**

The Web page referred to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which can be accessed through SELA's Web site, was created in 2011 in order to support the systematization of relevant information for the Community. Since its creation, it covered all the information published in the official Web site of the Pro Tempore Presidency, some background with the developments that led to the creation of CELAC, including the most remote: the Amphictyonic Congress of Panama, the III Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean on Integration and Development (CALC) and the XXII Summit of the Rio Group, which were held on 2 and 3 December 2011 in Caracas.

It also includes all of the documents originally published on the Portal of the People's Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where the Community was created in December 2011, in addition to the information included in the respective pages of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Cuba and Costa Rica, the country that currently holds the *Pro Tempore* Presidency.

The Web page of SELA to support CELAC, as the maximum instance of Latin American and Caribbean institutions, and, therefore, of the highest relevance in the informational policy of the Permanent Secretariat, is systematically updated by incorporating the official documents produced and available digitally. To do so, SELA takes as a source the Web site of the *Pro Tempore* Presidency of CELAC, hosted in the portal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country that holds it.

As part of the optimization of the portal of SELA, currently under development, the page dedicated to the CELAC will become a specialized portal within the domain "sela.org". This is intended for CELAC to be presented with its own identity on the Internet through a graphic design based on an information-oriented structure and mechanisms for locating the contents. Note that with this new development users will have available a compendium of the documents generated by the different *Pro Tempore* Secretariats since the creation of CELAC in 2011.

**B. Objectives**

Conclude the construction of the portal specialized on CELAC, thus contributing to preserve, systematize, manage and disseminate the information and the official documents generated by the various instances of CELAC.

**C. Expected results**

- 1 A specialized Portal as an attractive, easy-to-use tool to facilitate the knowledge of the accomplishments and achievements of CELAC, through the dissemination of information and documents generated by the Community, as a further contribution of SELA to the regional integration process.
- 2 An increase in the number of visitors interested in having timely, relevant and up-to-date information on CELAC and its significance for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

**D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Completion of the process to construct the portal specialized on CELAC	January – April
Quality control and validation of the activities and the time frames referred to in the contract with the provider responsible for the construction of the specialized portal on CELAC	January – April

**Activity I.7.2. Management and coordination of the specialized portal on South-South Cooperation****A. Background and justification**

With the emergence of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation have been gaining greater relevance in Latin American and Caribbean countries, in view of the high potential that those instruments may have on economic and social development policies and, above all, to promote well-being among the most vulnerable sectors of society. South-South Cooperation is based on solidarity, complementarity, equality, non-conditionality and respect for sovereignty.

The IX Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, in 1983, adopted Decision 156, which designates the Permanent Secretariat as the “regional focal point for the exchange of information on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)”. Later on, the XI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico in 2010, entrusted SELA with the task of creating a digital space with information resources for the International Cooperation Directors in the region.

This portal contributes to the exchange of information and documents on cooperation and technical assistance in the region. In addition, the Permanent Secretariat publishes every two weeks the “Bulletin on South-South Cooperation”, which contains information on the current situation of cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**B. Objectives**

Collect and disseminate information and documentation on South-South cooperation in the region, especially among International Cooperation Directors in Latin America and the Caribbean, the various actors in charge of regional cooperation and the users of SELA’s cooperation network.

**C. Expected results**

1. Maintain and develop the portal of South-South Cooperation for the International Cooperation Directors in Latin America and the Caribbean, on SELA’s Web site.
2. Continue preparing and disseminating the Bulletin on South-South Cooperation among the International Cooperation Directors in Latin America and the Caribbean and the users of SELA’s cooperation network.

**D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Adaptation and updating of the Portal of South-South Cooperation	2015
Bulletin on South-South Cooperation	Fortnightly

### **Activity I.7.3. Management and coordination of the specialized portal on Free Trade Zones**

#### **A. Background and justification**

The creation of this portal has as background the First Conference of Government Authorities of Free Trade Zones of Latin America and the Caribbean (Cali, Colombia, 20 and 21 September 2012), which was organized by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA with the support of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism of the Republic of Colombia.

On that occasion, participants recommended SELA to create a bank of knowledge and exchange of information on industrial and free trade zones in the region. Such a recommendation was considered by the Latin American Council (XXXVIII Regular Meeting, Caracas, 17 to 19 October 2012), which included the creation of a portal referred to free trade zones in the Work Programme for 2013.

During the XXXIX Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, the Permanent Secretariat announced the process to create this specialized portal and on 11 June 2014 it was published on SELA's Web site.

This specialized portal was designed following avant-garde usability and accessibility criteria, so that users can find useful and relevant information on this topic. Therefore, in addition to being a bilingual portal, it includes in its contents the directory of free-trade zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, a compendium of public policies of interest for the subject, a directory of associations related to the subject, their relationship and direct links to organizations and national institutions responsible for generating official statistics, links to upcoming and past events, publications and news, among other elements.

#### **B. Objectives**

1. Become a database of knowledge and exchange of information on free trade zones in the region that allows for an effective follow-up to industrial policies and instruments related to free trade zones, the evolution of their activity, their integration with the productive sector of the national customs territory and the trends of business within those areas, based on some common indicators to measure their performance and development.
2. Become a tool *par excellence* for collecting, organizing, systematizing and disseminating relevant information regarding free trade zones in Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### **C. Expected results**

1. Permanent and timely update and an increase in the number of users consulting the portal, which would enhance the usefulness of this tool for the Member States.
2. Greater and more efficient control and dissemination of information on free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Da5te</b>
Collection of relevant information to update the database records, through the corresponding national authorities.	January-December
Inclusion of news and documents, as well as information resulting from events	January-December

#### **Activity I.7.4. Management and coordination of the specialized portal on the RedVUCE**

##### **A. Background and justification**

Within the framework of its policy and sustained action to promote the implementation of the Foreign Trade Single Window in Latin America and the Caribbean, as a key tool to promote trade facilitation in the region and to promote e-commerce and e-government initiatives, on 4 July 2013, the Permanent Secretariat undertook the re-engineering of contents, design and administration of the Portal of the **Inter-American Network of Single Windows (RedVUCE)** with the technical and financial support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), at the request of the *Pro-Tempore* Presidency of the RedVUCE, held by El Salvador.

This portal has enhanced the visibility of RedVUCE on the Internet and has facilitated a greater Digital Bibliographic Control and a broader dissemination of the intellectual production on the subject of Single Windows, with special reference to its practical and theoretical achievements in Latin America and the Caribbean and the subsequent impact of such advances on trade facilitation in the region.

By optimizing this tool, the Permanent Secretariat promotes the greatest possible synergy in terms of a permanent exchange of information and best practices, and contributes to the achievement of transactional governments, which is the essential goal of e-government, within the context of trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The portal was presented to the public during the V Meeting of the Inter-American Network of Single Windows (RedVUCE), held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on 29 and 30 May 2014.

##### **B. Objectives**

Manage and maintain the Portal of the Inter-American Network of Single Windows (RedVUCE) up to date, on the basis of the inputs provided by the coordination of RedVuce.

##### **C. Expected results**

A timely updated Portal of the Inter-American Network of Single Windows (RedVUCE).

##### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Permanent update of the Web portal	January-December

#### **Activity I.7.5. Management and coordination of the specialized portal on Public-Private Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean**

##### **A. Background and justification**

The creation of partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction has gained great relevance at the regional level, in view of the enormous potential for support that can be offered by the private sector in disaster situations, which is vital to complement government action.

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The issue already forms part of the agenda of Latin American and Caribbean institutions specialized in risk management, particularly the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), with which the Permanent Secretariat has been working in close coordination and collaboration.

Forging strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors involves previously identifying potential allies. Hence the importance of promoting the directory of private enterprises committed to risk management and creating a digital space that allows for concentrating all the information and documents produced as regards this issue at the regional level, in order to raise awareness about the importance and need to move forward in building such strategic alliances for action before, during and after the occurrence of an adverse event, whatever its type, and thus to contribute to risk management and humanitarian assistance.

### **B. Objectives**

1. Collect and disseminate information, documents and successful experiences as regards public-private partnerships to reduce disaster risk in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. Identify enterprises and associations of the Latin American and Caribbean private sector that are interested in contributing and cooperating in disaster risk reduction and support mechanisms for humanitarian aid with a global, comprehensive and prospective approach, in coordination with the national authorities in charge of risk management.
3. Prepare a monthly bulletin on the issue of disasters and humanitarian aid in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to disseminate it through the network of users of SELA and, particularly, through the directory of enterprises and private associations, and national focal points responsible for disaster risk reduction in the Member States of SELA.
4. Support the dissemination of the information and documents generated by regional and subregional institutions in charge of disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean (CAPRADE, CDEMA, CEPREDENAC, REHU, CELAC, UN/ISDR and OCHA), in compliance with their mandates on the subject; as well as the "Forum for Coordination and Cooperation of the Subregional Mechanisms for Disaster Risk Management of the Americas", the "Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction" and the "Regional Meetings on International Humanitarian Assistance Mechanisms".

### **C. Expected results**

1. Maintenance and updating of the Portal on Public-Private Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. Preparation and dissemination of the monthly bulletin of the Portal on Public-Private Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Development and updating of the directory of enterprises and private associations concerned and sensitive to the issue of disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to promote dissemination of information among those stakeholders.

### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Maintenance and updating of the Portal on Public-Private Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean	2015
Directory of enterprises and private associations interested in Disaster Risk Reduction	June

### **Activity I.7.6. Management and coordination of the specialized portal on SMEs**

#### **A. Background and justification**

Initially, the information concerning SMEs was managed in the SELA through the portal of the Programme of Institutional Cooperation for the Development of SMEs (IBERPyme), which was suspended in 2011. At present, that information is managed through the Web page of the SELA-SMEs Programme which includes a selection of the contents of the IBERPyme Program, among other things.

The process to create the specialized Web portal for the SELA-SMEs Programme portal was started in 2014.

#### **B. Objectives**

1. Conclude the creation of a specialized portal for the management and dissemination of information and documents on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America and the Caribbean, in accordance with the areas defined in the SELA-SMEs Programme: Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Partnership, internationalization, and access to financing, with special emphasis on the dissemination of the strategies and public policies for SMEs applied in the countries of the region.
2. Support the cooperation actions of the Permanent Secretariat for creating and strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Create a network of contacts with public and private entities to facilitate the location of officials responsible for public policies, as well as the representatives of the sector in the Member States.

#### **C. Expected results**

A Web Portal specialized in SMEs, which facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and information about major developments in the area of SMEs in the Member States of SELA.

#### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Conclusion of the process to create the SELA-SMEs Web Portal by the corresponding provider.	January-April
Quality control and validation of the activities and timeframes foreseen in the contract with the provider responsible for creating the SELA-SMEs Web Portal.	January-April

### **Activity I.7.7. Design, development and maintenance of the specialized portal on the Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports**

#### **A. Background and justification**

In line with the region's interests and the international trends, SELA has conducted a systematic work aimed at delving into international trade issues and the application of Information and Communication Technologies, encouraging intra-regional dialogues, taking concerted action, and participating as a reliable third party with proposals for international cooperation intended to promote regional initiatives on trade facilitation issues.

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In 2014, within the framework of the Non-Refundable Technical Cooperation Agreement signed between CAF-development bank of Latin America and SELA, the Permanent Secretariat undertook the first phase of the Programme for the creation of the Network of Latin American and Caribbean digital and collaborative ports: Strengthening logistic port communities, service standards and technological innovation, with the participation of the ports of Manzanillo and Veracruz, in Mexico; Buenaventura and Cartagena, in Colombia; El Callao, in Peru, San Antonio and Valparaiso, in Chile; and Balboa and Colon, in Panama.

In 2015, the Permanent Secretariat plans to advance into the second phase of this Programme, in order to expand it and institutionalize it. This involves broadening and deepening the base of members countries and port communities (from 9 to 15 port communities, and from 5 to 9 countries), promoting the implementation of actions concerning the Reference Model of Competitiveness of the logistic chain proposed by the network, and institutionalizing the network. On this basis, it will be possible to continue to build lines of institutional and technological action that contribute to bridge sustainability and logistic competitiveness gaps.

Increasing visibility and having the possibility to disseminate, transfer and share the knowledge and information generated in the context of this Programme and other related instances is a key element to advance towards the institutionalization of the Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports promoted by SELA.

## B. Objectives

Carry out the process of designing and constructing the specialized portal of the Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports, thus helping to preserve, systematize, manage and disseminate knowledge, information and the documents generated by the different instances of the network and other related entities.

## C. Expected results

1. A specialized portal as a key tool for institutionalizing the Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports.
2. Maintenance and updating of the specialized portal.

## D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Terms of Reference and hiring	January
Execution of the contract – Process of designing and constructing the specialized portal of the Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports	February – July
Maintenance and updating of the specialized portal	From July onwards

### **PROJECT I.8. Distance learning course for the Caribbean on the legal aspects of electronic commerce**

#### **Activity I.8.1. Distance learning course for the Caribbean on the legal aspects of electronic commerce**

##### **A. Background and justification**

New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have boosted e-commerce, thus contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. However, it is also evident that the legal



framework existing in Latin American and Caribbean economies is still fragile, and that it is important to promote the use of those technologies by means of an appropriate legal framework. In this connection, UNCTAD provides technical assistance to governments of developing countries in creating legal frameworks to regulate the use of ICTs, while promoting the dissemination of national and international legal regulations.

Since 2007, UNCTAD has conducted courses in Spanish on electronic commerce for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The results of these courses allowed participants to analyze and compare cyber legislations in different countries, and discuss possible options for the harmonization of legislations, security of transactions and trade facilitation. In turn, SELA has supported UNCTAD in organizing and disseminating information about the courses that were conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2014, and the complementary face-to-face workshops in 2010, 2012 and 2014.

Taking into account the importance of extending these courses to non-Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries, SELA, along with the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), considers carrying out in 2015 a distance learning course on electronic commerce in English, which would be taught from UNCTAD's Platform for Distance Education, of the "Train for Trade" Programme.

This activity seeks to improve knowledge about the advantages of e-commerce, and to provide training and strengthen professional and institutional capacities as regards the legal framework for electronic commerce among the authorities in charge of drafting legislations on this matter and other stakeholders from the private sector involved in e-commerce.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Build capacities among government officials in Caribbean countries responsible for developing the national regulatory frameworks in the area of ICTs, in order to encourage improvement in policy-making in this field.
2. Gain knowledge about the development and scope of e-commerce in the Caribbean, and exchange experiences among participants from the region.
3. Encourage the use of ICTs in the Caribbean.
4. Identify areas for actions to improve the development of ICTs at the national and regional levels.

## **C. Expected results**

This distance training course on electronic commerce and cyberlegislation, aimed especially at Caribbean officials, will allow participants to improve their knowledge about ongoing development of ICTs, the internationally used instruments for their regulation, promotion and development, to share national and subregional experiences, and to use the knowledge gained to promote the adaptation of national legislations and business in their countries.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Convening of distance training course	February - March
Selection of participants	April-May
Conduction of distance training course	June

**AREA II. ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION**

**PROGRAMME:** SUPPORT TO ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

**PROJECT II.1.** Strengthening economic and technical cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean

**Activity II.1.1.** XXVI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean

**A. Background and justification**

The Meetings of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean have been organized by SELA since 1987, with the purpose of exchanging ideas, experiences and best practices as regards high priority issues on the agenda for cooperation and development assistance, from a regional perspective.

In this connection, the Latin American Council of SELA has adopted two decisions to strengthen this space for encounter. Decision 156, of 1983, designated SELA as the "regional focal point for the exchange of information on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries", and Decision 538, of 2012, on the "Meetings of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean ", further supported this meeting.

In 2015, the central topic for the XXVI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors will be "Port cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Digital ports. Status and prospects". This event will be held in Dominican Republic, with the co-sponsorship of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development.

It should be noted that a Latin American and Caribbean cooperation programme to support the port sector and strengthen its institutional aspects – such as the logistic port communities and the new and guaranteed standards of service and technological innovation, whose achievements are evidenced in the implementation of Port Single Windows and their interoperability with the Foreign Trade Single Windows – would be a suitable complement to the regional efforts to make progress in foreign trade and transport facilitation through port logistics efficiency.

Also noteworthy is the importance of cooperation in aspects that encourage governments to commit themselves to developing projects on port technological innovation (Port Single Windows), within the context of their interoperability with the Foreign Trade Single Windows. For that reason, this event will allow for presenting an overview on the status of their development and the areas where cooperation could further strengthen Foreign Trade Single Windows, Port Single Windows and the establishment of digital ports.

In addition, it will provide an excellent opportunity to present the achievements and results of the "Programme to create the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports: Strengthening logistic port communities, service standards and technological innovation for a globalized, logistically competitive and sustainable trade", which is being carried out by SELA since 2014, together with CAF-development bank of Latin America.

## B. Objectives

The Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean has the following objectives:

1. Submit an assessment of the status of port cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly on the initiatives in the area of digital ports.
2. Identify and list major successful experiences and best practices on port cooperation and digital ports in Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Identify areas for cooperation in the field of ports and digital ports among the countries of the region and with other regions, particularly Asia and Europe.

## C. Expected results

1. Make an analysis on the current situation of port and digital ports development cooperation in Latin American and Caribbean countries.
2. List major cooperation initiatives underway in Latin America and the Caribbean, at the country level as schemes for integration and cooperation, as well as the experiences in Asia and Europe, to promote and encourage the development and port cooperation and digital ports.
3. Identify successful experiences and best practices on development and port cooperation, for establishing digital ports in Latin America and the Caribbean.
4. Identify opportunities for international cooperation, South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation in order to boost initiatives and experiences on port cooperation and digital ports in LAC.

## D. Activities and schedule

The XXVI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean will last two days. Participants will include representatives from national focal points responsible for international cooperation, regional and international organizations, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, as well as experts and other actors specialized in the port area.

Activities	Date
Preparation of a study on "Port cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Digital ports. Situation and Prospects"	February
Convening the XXVI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean"	March
Conducting the XXVI Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean. Dominican Republic	April

### Activity II.1.2. Regional Meeting on Partnerships between public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean

#### A. Background and justification

Forging strategic alliances for disaster risk reduction among the public and private sectors is a top issue on the agenda of Latin American and Caribbean institutions specialized in risk management. This agenda is supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) and

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the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with which the Permanent Secretariat has worked in close coordination and collaboration.

The issue of humanitarian aid is one of the priorities of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which has promoted and supported the regional meetings on International Humanitarian Assistance Mechanisms (MIAH). One of the objectives of MIAH Action Plan is "to encourage strategic partnerships with the private sector", which are coordinated by SELA.

In order to avoid duplication of efforts and waste of time and resources, SELA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations to promote cooperation and coordination in the area of disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2012 – 2015, thereby actively supporting the meetings of the "Regional Platform for disaster risk reduction in the Americas", organized by the UN/ISDR.

SELA has conducted five (5) regional meetings to analyze and promote public-private sector partnerships for disaster risk reduction: i) "Regional Seminar on Public Investment and Financial Mechanisms, Insurance and Reinsurance against Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Recent Experiences" (Mexico City, Mexico, 22 and 23 November 2012); ii) Regional Seminar "Cooperation between governments and the private sector for disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean: Focus, progress and challenges" (Panama City, Panama, 17 and 18 November 2011); iii) Regional Seminar "Partnerships between public and private sectors for disaster risk management: Continuity of government and continuity of operations during disasters" (Lima, Peru, 7 and 8 June 2012); iv) II Regional Seminar "Partnerships between public and private sectors for disaster risk management: Continuity of government and continuity of operations during disasters" (Cartagena, Colombia, 1 and 2 August 2013); and v) III Regional Seminar "Partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk management. Continuity of government and continuity of business and operations during disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Achievements and experiences from the perspective of local governments and enterprises" (Samborondón, Ecuador, 14 and 15 October 2014).

These regional meetings have evidenced the need to continue strengthening the mutually beneficial and complementary relation between the public and private sectors, thus allowing for enhancing the capacity of society and its institution to prevent disasters and respond to them, and, above all, to promote the construction and consolidation of resilient communities.

In 2015, the Permanent Secretariat has scheduled the conduction of the IV Regional Meeting "Partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean: Corporate social responsibility in risk management". This activity will be held jointly with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR).

## **B. Objectives**

1. Continue to promote the creation of public-private partnerships for disaster risk reduction.
2. Identify and analyze successful experiences in risk management and disaster prevention from the perspective of enterprise and corporate social responsibility.
3. Further support and strengthen the Promoter Group of Partnerships in the private sector for disaster risk reduction in the Americas.
4. Continue to support the coordination and cooperation of the work performed by the UN/ISDR and OCHA in the field of strategic alliances between the public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction.

5. Further promote the continuity of Government and continuity of business and operations during disasters, from a regional, comprehensive and forward-looking perspective.

### C. Expected results

Conduct the IV Regional Meeting on “Partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean: Corporate social responsibility in risk management”.

### D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Conduct the “IV Regional Meeting Partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean: Corporate social responsibility in risk management”	July

### Activity II.1.3. Latin American and Caribbean cooperation in the area of trade and competition. UNCTAD-SELA joint project. Working Group on Trade and Competition (WGTC)

#### A. Background and justification

Upon convocation by SELA and UNCTAD, Regional Seminars on Trade and Competition in Latin America and the Caribbean were held in April 2009 and May 2010 in Caracas and Brasilia, respectively. Both meetings were attended by authorities in charge of international trade and competition from the Member States of SELA, as well as officials of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other institutions, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The agendas for such seminars dealt with issues related to international trade and defence of competition, potential for regional cooperation in the areas of trade and competition, enforcement of competition rules, and contribution of the competition policy to economic development. They also underscored the technical assistance needs for institutional capacity-building and the experience gained from implementing the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices, adopted by the United Nations in 1980.

After the meeting in Brazil, SELA Member States recommended the Latin American Council to establish the Working Group on Trade and Competition of Latin America and the Caribbean (WGTC). By Decision No. 519 of the XXXVI Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council of SELA, held on 27, 28 and 29 October, the WGTC was formally established. It is made up of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and the General Secretariat of UNCTAD.

The I Meeting of the WGTC took place in Bogotá, Colombia, on 4 and 5 July 2011, and aimed to confirm and formalize the Group as a unique regional forum of authorities of trade and competition for regional coordination, consultation and cooperation, as well as to promote consistency among trade and competition policies in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The II Meeting was held in Lima, Peru, on 18 and 19 June 2012. There, participants discussed the contribution of competition clauses in regional trade integration agreements, public procurement and its relationship with trade and competition, and the challenges posed by cross-border anti-competitive practices in emerging and developing countries.

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The III Meeting, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 24 and 25 September 2013, focused on trade and competition in the energy and hydrocarbons markets, institutional capacity-building in trade and competition, competition policy in the telecommunications sector, provision of goods and services, promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), inter-institutional cooperation, and recent legislative reforms in the area of trade and competition in the countries of the region.

At the IV Meeting, the WGTC met for the first time in the subregion of the Caribbean, in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on 5 and 6 November 2014. The issues discussed were: litigations of Latin American and Caribbean countries at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and underlying competition issues; trade and competition on the food market; collusion and transparency in government procurement; air transport and free competition; mass media as strategic tools for the promotion of competition; competition policy and trade facilitation measures, as well as a space dedicated to the discussion on the future of the WGTC.<sup>1</sup>

## B. Objectives

Hold the V Annual Meeting of the WGTC in the second half of the year 2015. It will include joint analyses and exchange of experiences among the authorities of trade and competition on some of the issues suggested at the IV Meeting of the WGTC.

## C. Expected results

Organization of the V Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition in Latin America and the Caribbean (WGTC) in the second half of the year 2015.

## D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Organization of the V Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition in Latin America and the Caribbean (WGTC)	2nd half of the year 2015

### Activity II.1.4. Public procurement systems in Latin America and the Caribbean

#### A. Background and justification

At the request of the Government of Ecuador, the Permanent Secretariat prepared the study **"Public procurement as a tool for development in Latin America and the Caribbean"** (SP/Di No. 11-14) within the framework of Work Programme of SELA for the year 2014. This study has the following objectives: 1. Analyze the role of public procurement in the economy of the countries in the region; and 2. Assess the situation of the various public procurement systems in Latin American and Caribbean countries. The document analyzes the importance of public procurement in the economy of the countries in the region, describes the international initiatives and agreements on public procurement, reviews the handling of public procurement in free trade agreements negotiated by some countries in the region and assesses some experiences related to the handling of public procurement in the various subregional integration schemes.

<sup>1</sup> See the Final Report on the IV Annual Meeting of the WGTC 2014

**B. Objectives**

This activity is aimed at disseminating and discussing the document prepared by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for 2014.

**C. Expected results**

Conduction of a regional meeting.

**D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Convening of Regional Meeting	March - April
Conduction of Regional Meeting	May

**PROGRAMME: SELA-SMEs**

**PROJECT II.2. Latin American and Caribbean Regional Programme for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

In October 1998, during the VIII Ibero-American Summit held in Porto, Portugal, the creation of the Institutional Cooperation Programme for the Development of SMEs (IBERPYPME) was approved. It was managed and implemented by the Permanent Secretariat for 13 years, during which the dissemination of the SMEs-related strategies and public policies implemented in the countries in the region was encouraged. Circumstances related to the economic crisis in Spain prevented the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) from continuing to provide the annual subsidy it gave to SELA to support the activities of the IBERPYME Program, so it had to be suspended.

However, based on the successful experience of the SELA-IBPERPYME Programme and on the complementary efforts of the Permanent Secretariat for implementing a special programme for the Member States of the Caribbean through seminars and forums, the Latin American Council, at its XXXVIII Regular Meeting, held in Caracas, Venezuela, from 17 to 19 October 2012, approved the SELA-SMEs Programme, intended to ensure continuity of the cooperation activities carried out by the Permanent Secretariat for the creation and strengthening of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America and the Caribbean.

During the past 14 years, the Permanent Secretariat has encouraged the dissemination of the strategies, programmes and public policies applied in the countries of the region to promote SMEs in issues related to partnerships, coordination and productive integration, clusters, business networks, export consortiums, innovation and productivity, productive chains, and financing and guarantee systems for SMEs.

An issue considered by the Permanent Secretariat to be of the utmost importance is the subject of public policies for SMEs, due to its cross-cutting nature with other areas. For this reason, in 2014, the Permanent Secretariat started an effort as regards this issue, holding three (3) workshops – in Bolivia, Honduras and Trinidad – in order to gain knowledge about experiences with public policies in the countries of the region. The information stemming from those events was gathered and analysed by a consultant to include it in the document entitled “Public policies to support MSMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean (SP/CL/XL.O/Di N° 20-14).

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Also in 2014, other meetings were held to analyze topics such as handicraft SMEs, internationalization of SMEs, productive coordination and innovation. In addition, a special analysis was made of the impacts of a specific sector, the fashion and clothing industry, on the development of SMEs in Caribbean countries, for which a seminar was held in Barbados. On the issue of funding, progress was made towards the design of mechanisms for creating a Regional Guarantee System for Caribbean SMEs.

Based on these results, in 2015, the Permanent Secretariat is planning to carry out a series of activities focused on deepening the promotion of public policies to support SMEs, strategies for productive coordination, fostering guarantee systems in the region and disseminating innovation mechanisms to improve competitiveness of SMEs.

### **Objectives**

The SELA-SMEs Programme aims at contributing to strengthening the entrepreneurial development of SMEs in the 28 Member States of SELA and the remaining five Caribbean States that are members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), by strengthening institutional capacities of government and business focal points, outlining projects to encourage the creation of new productive units and consolidate existing ones, technological transformation, inclusion in international markets and productive coordination of SMEs through national and international strategic partnerships.

Similarly, efforts will be made to promote the creation and development of financial systems, particularly those intended to create and strengthen national and regional guarantee systems, to facilitate access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises.

### **Expected results**

1. Capacity-building of focal points in SELA's Member States responsible for programmes for developing SMEs in matters related to productivity, internationalization, innovation and financing.
2. Exchange of institutional experiences as regards programmes to promote improvements in the supply of products and services of SMEs.
3. Support the creation of thematic networks on SMEs.
4. Encourage cooperation among the Member States of SELA.
5. Timely and concrete technical assistance in accordance with the demands of Member States for cooperation in developing projects for SMEs.
6. Preparation of bi-monthly Bulletin on SMEs (SELA-SMEs Programme).
7. Inventory of institutions and experts specialized in various issues related to SMEs.

### **Activity II.2.1. Seminar on the fashion and garment industry and economic development in the Caribbean**

#### **A. Background and justification**

During the "Seminar on the Apparel Industry and Economic Development in the Caribbean", held in Bridgetown, Barbados, analyzed the problems faced by the SMEs sector in the Caribbean, particularly those micro-enterprises working in the fashion and apparel sectors, identifying several niches with a high potential for these Caribbean businesses to develop (clothed for men and women, wedding dresses, accessories and upholstery). In addition, the seminar also examined the increased activity of this sector in the Brazilian, Mexican and African markets, which has rapidly



emerged within the textile industry and has attracted several international high fashion brands to different countries of the region.

Among the main conclusions and recommendations of the seminar held in Barbados, experts and representatives pointed to need to promote the development of a fashion industry with potential for global marketing, change strategies in terms of the use and adoption of the sectoral method to reposition the sector with a key focus on the capacity of designers and manufacturers to create partnerships, and the design of a single identity for selling brands. Furthermore, they made a recommendation to promote the establishment of national associations and a Regional Association of fashion designers, and they stressed that the revival of the cultivation of cotton in Barbados must be supported by the public sector.

The textile industry has always been a very active sector in the global economy. In particular, the fashion design industry has recorded an increase of US\$ 1.7 trillion in 2012, employing about 75 million people worldwide.

The CARICOM countries have remained on the margins of the industrial sector of fashion design, and their products have not yet been able to enter international markets in a significant way. However, there are numerous SMEs, particularly micro-enterprises, engaged in the apparel industry and in fashion design.

In this connection, based on the recommendations issued by the meeting in Barbados, the Permanent Secretariat has considered conducting a second seminar on the implementation and development of programmes related to partnerships in the apparel and fashion industry in the Caribbean, primarily focused on coordination mechanisms for enterprises in the textile sector, particularly micro-entrepreneurs. The meeting – to be organized by the Permanent Secretariat together with the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) – would analyze and promote partnerships among companies in the textile sector in the OECS region and the Caribbean as a whole.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Raise awareness among Member States of SELA of the importance of strengthening sectors with potential for development; in this case, the textile sector, as a mechanism for economic growth and employment generation.
2. Increase awareness of the importance of value chains in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to facilitate goods manufacturing opportunities, knowledge sharing and access to textiles and raw materials.
3. Review successful programmes for implementation of activities related to the fashion industry.
4. Promote the creation of a network of institutions and experts related to the industry.
5. Promote an exchange of the best practices implemented in other regions, such as Latin America and Africa, where best practices allowed the sector to penetrate international markets and whose experiences can be replicated in Barbados and other Caribbean countries.
6. Foster and strengthen training of personnel in the design and manufacture of products related to the fashion industry.

## **C. Expected results**

1. Promote follow-up and research consultancies on the fashion design industry in order to boost the areas that must be addressed.

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2. Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of prior actions undertaken in this industry and the challenges that the Caribbean countries have failed to overcome for their products to enter international markets.
3. Train the regional private sector on the economic potential of the fashion design sector to attract investors to support the industry.

**D. Activities and schedule**

Activities	Date
Organization of the "II Seminar on the apparel and fashion industry and the economic development in the Caribbean"	July The Caribbean

**Activity II.2.2. Regional Meeting on public policies to promote and support SMEs****A. Background and justification**

The design and implementation of public policies for SMEs should be aimed at providing the SMEs sector with a set of tools galvanizing their own development. Such policies should help achieve a substantial improvement in business competitiveness, based on better and more infrastructure, ready access to information for decision-making, better management of the knowledge available, guaranteed access to technology, encouragement of innovation, legal and administrative reform for business facilitation and development of the sector as well as more and better options to ensure access to credit and markets. Consequently, governments must adopt policies that facilitate access to useful strategic tools for the development of SMEs, consistent with economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection.

In 2014, three Regional Training Workshops on public policies to promote and support SMEs were held. One of them was conducted in Bolivia and was aimed at South American countries; the second one was held in Honduras and was directed to South American countries; and the third one was in Trinidad and Tobago, involving Caribbean countries.

At those meetings, presentations were made about the various mechanisms and methodologies applied by the countries of the region as regards the design, implementation and evaluation of the outcomes of public policies. As a result, a proposal to create a network for dissemination and exchange of information to representatives of each Member State was made, in order to have permanent consultations on issues of interest for the institutions involved in the events (for instance: productive coordination, business development centres, sustainability and scaling-up of initiatives); to disseminate information on events of interest in which they could participate, and exchange successful experiences. The information from these three workshops was compiled and analyzed by a consultant into the conclusions and recommendations of the document on "Public Policies to support MSMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean" (SP/CL/XL.O/Di N° 20-14).

Public policies are based on an institutional model in which the various sectors (productive, academic, technological, governmental and financial) are coherently inter-related. At the same time, they are responsible and decisive agents in the development process. This is also a cross-cutting issue with respect to other subjects under analysis, such as partnerships, productivity, innovation, empowerment and internationalization.

It is also necessary to consider those public policies that encourage "entrepreneurial economy"; i.e. public policies intended to support innovative, knowledge intensive entrepreneurs, which therefore generate benefits for the entire production system and encourage other companies to

pursue the same path. For this reason, in 2015, the Permanent Secretariat intends to conduct a Regional Forum on Public Policies to promote and support SMEs, which brings together all those officials responsible for the issue of SMEs in the Member States of SELA and analyze this and other subjects.

## **B. Objectives**

1. Support the initiatives and efforts of Member States for effective implementation of the public policies strategies and instruments, through technical assistance and advice directly or through triangular cooperation to contribute to the participation of SMEs in regional value chains.
2. Gather and disseminate information on best practices in designing and implementing public policies in order to bolster the participation of SMEs in regional value chains, which serve to support the efforts undertaken by concerned Member States;
3. Promote meetings among different stakeholders, both public and private, for the implementation and evaluation of public policies for SMEs.
4. Train government officials in designing and implementing public policies for SMEs and evaluating their impact.
5. Gain knowledge about the various successful methodologies applied by the countries of the region, as well as at the international level, for designing and implementing policies, and evaluating the results achieved.
6. Exchange among officials and entrepreneurs of SMEs as regards strategies to make better and more efficient public policies.
7. Identify institutional mechanisms to favour a permanent public-private dialogue.
8. Collect and disseminate information of legislations on SMEs in the region.

## **C. Expected results**

1. Development and implementation of a network for permanent exchange among government officials responsible for public policies for SMEs, and promotion of interconnection among them through a specific link on SELA's Web site.
2. Collection and dissemination of information on best practices in designing and implementing public policies to support SMEs.
3. Collection and dissemination of information on legislations applied in the countries of the region.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

Conduction of a Meeting on Public Policies for exchanges of successful experiences and analysis of the implementation of best practices for SMEs.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Organization of the "Regional Meeting on public policies to promote and support SMEs"	March Colombia

### **Activity II.2.3. Seminar on financing and guarantee systems to support SMEs in the Caribbean**

#### **A. Background and justification**

The Permanent Secretariat has been permanently involved in the efforts made by the region for establishing and consolidating Guarantee Systems through the yearly conduction of the Ibero-American Forums of Guarantee and Financing Systems for SMEs. Furthermore, the Permanent Secretariat has introduced this topic to the Member countries, which are already starting to gradually deal with it, in order to promote the creation of a financial mechanism to ensure swift access to credit for SMEs, especially in Central America and the Caribbean.

Within this context, the Permanent Secretariat organized and conducted the "Seminar-Workshop on Guarantee Systems in Central America" in 2013, with support from the Development Bank of El Salvador (BANDESAL), in San Salvador, El Salvador, which was aimed at financial and business organizations in the region, in order to gain knowledge about the subject and inform about the progress made as regards financing mechanisms for SMEs. For 2014, it is also organizing the activity "Programme for the creation of a Guarantee System for the Caribbean," which will be held in Georgetown, Guyana. This activity counts on the support of the Caribbean Community.

In 2015, the Permanent Secretariat has foreseen the conduction of one (1) Seminar on Guarantee Systems in the Caribbean, in order to analyze possibilities to establish a suitable guarantee system for Caribbean SMEs.

#### **B. Objectives**

1. Conduct a pre-feasibility study on the creation of a Regional Guarantee System for SMEs in the Caribbean.
2. Review the achievements concerning innovative financial mechanisms and instruments to complement guarantee systems.
3. Promote the integration of work teams in the region in order to make progress for launching regional guarantee systems.

#### **C. Expected results**

1. Move ahead towards the creation of guarantee systems in the Caribbean.
2. Incorporation of national and subregional financial institutions to support the development of a Regional Guarantee System.
3. Training officials on the guarantee systems supporting SMEs.

#### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of Reference and hiring	January-February
Preparation of the study	May
Conduction of a seminar on financing and guarantee systems to support SMEs in the Caribbean	September Jamaica

#### **Activity II.2.4. Seminar on financing and guarantee systems to support SMEs in Central America**

##### **A. Background and justification**

The Permanent Secretariat has been permanently involved in the efforts made by the region for establishing and consolidating Guarantee Systems by conducting the Ibero-American Forums of Guarantee and Financing Systems for SMEs on a yearly basis. The Member States have started to promote the creation of a financial mechanism to ensure swift access to credit for SMEs, especially in Central America and the Caribbean.

Within this context, the Permanent Secretariat organized and conducted the "Seminar-Workshop on Guarantee Systems in Central America" in 2013, with support from the Development Bank of El Salvador (BANDESAL), in San Salvador, El Salvador, which was aimed at financial and business organizations in the region, in order to gain knowledge about the subject and inform about the progress made as regards financing mechanisms for SMEs. In 2014, it also organized the activity "Programme for the creation of a Guarantee System for the Caribbean," held in Georgetown, Guyana. This activity was supported by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

For 2015, the Permanent Secretariat has foreseen the conduction of a Seminar on Guarantee Systems in Costa Rica and another one in Jamaica, in order to make strides towards the creation of regional guarantee mechanisms to facilitate access to credit for SMEs, both in Central America and the Caribbean.

##### **B. Objectives**

1. Conduct a pre-feasibility analysis as regards the creation of Regional Guarantee Systems for SMEs in Central America.
2. Review the achievements concerning innovative financial mechanisms and instruments to complement guarantee systems.
3. Promote the integration of work teams in Central America, in order to make progress for launching regional guarantee systems.

##### **C. Expected results**

1. Move ahead towards the creation of guarantee systems in Central America.
2. Incorporation of national and subregional financial institutions to support the development of Regional Guarantee Systems.
3. Training officials on the guarantee systems supporting SMEs.

##### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of Reference and hiring	January-February
Preparation of the study	May
Conduction of a seminar on financing and guarantee systems to support SMEs in Central America	September Costa Rica

## **Activity II.2.5. Regional Meeting on export consortiums**

### **A. Background and justification**

Since 2013, the Permanent Secretariat has worked on the issue of export consortiums as a partnership mechanism for promoting exports and internationalisation of artisans and micro and small-sized enterprises.

The Permanent Secretariat organized and conducted the Workshop on Internationalization and Promotion of SMEs Consortiums in the Caribbean, which was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in July 2013. This activity was organized jointly with the Agency for Development of Exports from the Caribbean (CEDA) and the Centre for Export and Investment of Dominican Republic (CEI-RD). As a result, participants agreed to organize training workshops for trainers of business consortiums and networks in the Caribbean.

In July 2013, the Permanent Secretariat organized and conducted the "Regional Workshop on Development of Handicraft SMEs" in Barranquilla, Colombia, together with *Artesanías de Colombia*, of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism. On that occasion, representatives of the handicraft industry of the Ministry expressed their interest in delving deeper into the topics and methodologies of Origin and Export Consortiums presented during the event.

In January 2014, a Workshop on Export Consortiums was held in the cities of Piura and Lima, Peru, with the support of the regional government of Piura and the Committee on Small Industry of Peru. It was aimed exclusively at representatives of the Caribbean countries that participated in the event conducted in Dominican Republic in 2013, so as to allow them to visit export consortiums underway and to outline proposals for the creation of export consortiums in the Caribbean.

In September 2014, the Permanent Secretariat held a Second Workshop on the development of Handicraft SMEs in Quito, Ecuador, which informed about the progress in creating consortiums of the crafts sector in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru.

### **B. Objectives**

1. Contribute to developing and strengthening business and governmental institutional capacities for the development of productive coordination projects, such as clusters and productive consortiums.
2. Disseminate information about strategies for productive coordination as well as the development of clusters, linkages, local productive developments and industrial districts among other successful strategies.
3. Identify best practices for outlining and launching export consortiums
4. Exchange of experiences via Internet.
5. Online training for creating export consortiums.

### **C. Expected results**

1. Training of officials and representatives of the private sectors as regards projects for productive coordination, and export and production consortiums.
2. Collection and dissemination of documentary material on experiences of different instruments and arrangements for productive coordination.
3. Identification of ongoing or potential productive coordination projects.

4. Mobilization of institutional capacities and experts from countries of the region with extensive experience to provide technical assistance to applicant countries via triangular cooperation.

#### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Organization of the "Regional Meeting on export consortiums"	May - Brazil

#### **Activity II.2.6. Regional Meeting on innovation, competitiveness and productivity**

##### **A. Background and justification**

SMEs should consider constant improvements in their products and services. Therefore, encouraging innovation processes is of the essence. In most cases, such processes involve the implementation of technological and organizational changes to meet the issues of competition and changing markets. Additionally, ongoing technological changes have contributed to a rapid jump to a "real time" economy, which leads to improved business productivity.

In order to meet the demands of entrepreneurs and governments on this issue, SELA has organized courses, seminars and other training activities, in an attempt to convey the concepts and methodologies to promote innovation and boost productivity and competitiveness, thus favouring a more efficient business management by SMEs.

In 2013, the Permanent Secretariat conducted the Seminar on Technology Transfer Mechanisms for SMEs, in Lima, Peru. This activity was organized jointly with the Small Industry Committee of Peru (COPEI). During the activity, a review was made on the progress achieved, the strategies and tools to support the process of effective technology transfer. Information about the main successful stories in the Andean Region, in order to promote innovation as a strategic tool to support the improvement of SMEs competitiveness and productivity. In addition, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Peru shared their experiences.

In mid-October 2014, a "Seminar on Innovation for SMEs" was conducted, which was supported by the National Direction of Handicrafts, Micro and Small-sized Enterprises of Uruguay (DINAPYME). The meeting evaluated the progress as regards this issue in the region and presented the study "Identification of Successful Experiences for the Implementation of Innovation Processes in Companies" (SP/STGIP/DT N° 2), prepared by the Permanent Secretariat.

According to the results of this study, a recommendation was made to conduct a Regional Forum on Innovation, Competitiveness and Productivity, focused on the new public policy instruments to foster innovation and improve productive business efficiency.

##### **B. Objectives**

1. Review the concepts, strategies, mechanisms and tools to support the process of effective promotion of innovation within enterprises.
2. Identify and disseminate successful experiences and provide working methodologies to drive innovation and knowledge management processes in the areas of productivity, quality and competitiveness, in order to outline activities, programmes and workshops focused on the areas identified.

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3. Train officials and entrepreneurs for the development of innovation processes to improve competitiveness and productivity in SMEs.
4. Present successful cases in promoting innovation processes in enterprises.
5. Review government and private sector programmes to encourage and support promotion of innovation.
6. Disseminate information about successful experiences in promoting innovation.

### C. Expected results

1. Capacity-building among participants on concepts, working methodologies and design of strategies to stimulate innovation processes.
2. Identification of successful experiences developed by public and private institutions in the region in implementing methodologies to incorporate innovation as a strategic factor for improving competitiveness and productivity in enterprises.
3. Uploading of the documents on successful experiences in innovation onto the Web Portal of the SELA-SMEs Programme.

### D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Organization of the "Regional Forum on innovation, competitiveness and productivity of SMEs"	October Peru

## Activity II.2.7. Methodological considerations for developing an Index of Public Policies for SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean

### A. Background and justification

The economies of Latin American and Caribbean exhibit great structural differences in their economic and political systems; thus, different economic incentives will result in different strategies for private sector entrepreneurship. While the need for the region's governments to implement policies to enhance private productive activity is undeniable, it is not less true that the initiatives to be undertaken should hinge on the structural realities of each nation.

It is essential for those who outline and implement public policies aimed at boosting the development of SMEs to have in-depth knowledge of the factors affecting the possibility of establishing and maintaining business initiatives in their respective economies. Therefore, the governments of the region could benefit from a tool that allows them to quantify the status of SMEs in their respective countries. With such tool, each government could focus its efforts on those areas it deems to be of priority, thus optimizing the investment of resources for public policies aimed at SMEs.

Implementing an Index of Public Policies for SMEs would allow for a more accurate assessment of those areas that need to be attached priority in every economy. At the same time, such index would serve as a useful tool for taking standardized and comparable measures to make progress towards facilitation of entrepreneurship in the region.

### B. Objectives

Propose a methodology for preparing an index that allows for making an accurate assessment of the status and progress of public policies for SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean.



**C. Expected results**

1. One report prepared by the Permanent Secretariat containing the necessary methodological considerations for outlining an Index of Public Policies for SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on the methodology designed by the OECD.
2. Conduction of a Regional Seminar at the headquarters of SELA.

**D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Preparation of report	January-February
Translation and publication	March
Preparation for Regional Seminar	February
Conduction of Regional Seminar	April

**AREA III. EXTRA-REGIONAL RELATIONS**

**PROGRAMME:** Evaluation and promotion of extra-regional economic relations of Latin American and Caribbean countries

**PROJECT III.1.** ANALYSIS AND PROPOSALS TO PROMOTE EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

**Activity III.1.1.** Analysis of the economic relations of Latin America and the Caribbean with the European Union

**A. Background and justification**

Traditionally, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA keeps track of LAC trade and economic relations with the countries of the European Union, and it also organizes regional meetings aimed at identifying the most important areas for closer ties with the European Union. These activities conducted by SELA have contributed to support the analyses for outlining the positions to be adopted by the Member States of SELA within the framework of the LAC-EU summits. The next CELAC-EU Summit will take place in Brussels in June 2015, and on that occasion the Permanent Secretariat intends to submit an analytical document with elements to contribute to outlining a position for Latin America and the Caribbean.

**B. Objective**

The basic objective of this activity is to update the contents, conclusions and recommendations of the study prepared in 2014 on the economic relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union countries in relation to the CELAC-EU Summit, in order to help in setting up the position of the Member States of SELA vis-à-vis the next CELAC-EU Summit, scheduled for June 2015 in Brussels.

### C. Expected results

An update of the analytical document drawn up in 2014 on the current situation and prospects of the economic and cooperation relations between the countries of LAC and the EU, taking into account any changes in economic and trade policies of European countries and their impact on the economies of LAC countries. Such document should also include a review of the cooperation agreement adopted by CELAC and the EU in January 2013 in Chile.

### D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Forwarding document to the Member States, the Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC, and to related regional organizations	May

#### Activity III.1.2. Analysis of the economic and financial relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the BRICS countries

##### A. Background and justification

The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are emerging as a group that intends to define a common agenda to boost their joint growth and try to have an impact on the global scene. These countries add up to nearly 40% of the world's population, 15% of trade and 25% of the global GDP; moreover, they are playing an increasingly vital role as driving forces of the world economy.

At the Regional Meeting on Latin American and Caribbean Economic Relations with emerging countries (BRICS), organized by SELA together with the Institute of Applied Economic Research of Brazil (IPEA) in Brasilia, on 18 November 2013, an initial analysis was conducted on the economic and trade relations between the BRICS and LAC. On that occasion, it was evidenced that there is ample room for expanding, deepening and strengthening trade, investment and cooperation between the BRICS Group and LAC countries. In this connection, establishing the BRICS Development Bank is considered to be of the utmost importance, because it is intended to mobilize resources for infrastructure and development projects not only in the BRICS countries but also in other emerging economies, such as the Latin American and Caribbean countries, which could even have a special stake in the Bank.

##### B. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify areas of opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean in its economic, commercial and financial aspects with the BRICS. On the other hand, it is expected to analyze the evolution of the BRICS countries, and to examine the characteristics, structure and projects of the BRICS Development Bank and its prospects to establish links with financial institutions for development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

##### C. Expected results

1. An analytical study on the importance of the BRICS Group as regards its economic, trade, investment, financial and cooperation aspects, and to determine potential mechanisms and specific areas to deepen existing relations with the rest of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Particularly, the study should contain the characteristics, structure and projects of

the BRICS Development Bank and the prospects for its relations with financial institutions for development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. Conduction of a regional seminar at the headquarters of SELA

#### **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of Reference for the study	February
Hiring of Consultant	March
Delivery of the study	June
Translation	July
Preparation for a regional seminar	June
Conduction of a regional seminar	September

### **Activity III.1.3. Analysis of the economic relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the ASEAN**

#### **A. Background and justification**

Founded in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is made up by Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. This block represents 11% of the GDP of Asia-Pacific (with a growth rate above 5% since 1990), 24% of the region's exports, 23% of its imports and 17 % of its population. From the political point of view, its importance lies in the role that the group plays as a coordinator of dialogue and integration in Asia-Pacific through initiatives such as the following:

1. ASEAN + 3, including China, Japan and South Korea.
2. The East Asia Summit (EAS), along with China, Japan, South Korea, United States, India, Russia, Australia and New Zealand.
3. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), together with China, Japan, United States, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Russia, European Union, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and East Timor.
4. Seven of its members belong to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

As a result, the strategic location of these countries and the articulation of their economies with the major economies of Asia make ASEAN a significant part of Asia, a region that has an increasingly significant impact on the generation of global product and trade.

Therefore, it is clear that the Southeast Asian countries and their integration and cooperation institutions, such as ASEAN, must be regarded as a counterpart of relevant interest for the Latin American and Caribbean economies.

However, as shown by the statistics of trade flows and direct investment, Latin America and the Caribbean has a relatively very low participation in trade and investment in the ASEAN region. Exports from Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be focused on raw materials and manufactures based on natural products, with a strong impact of cyclical factors, very low contribution to value chains in the region, and a very precarious reception of FDI originating in that region. Changing this reality and ensuring that our region can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the development and growth prospects of ASEAN depends on the

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analysis of the constant political and economic coordination that takes place in that region, in which the ASEAN plays an important role as a means of inclusion and linkage. In this connection, if Latin America and the Caribbean achieve a deeper insertion into global value chains, the interaction with the ASEAN will increase.

## B. Objectives

The central objectives of this activity are: to carry out an analysis of the economic, trade and investment relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the countries that make up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with the purpose of developing policy proposals, with a medium and long term perspective, and to evaluate future opportunities and challenges faced by the Latin American and Caribbean region and diversify such relations.

## C. Expected results

An analytical document of the current status of trade exchanges and FDI flows between Latin America and the Caribbean and Southeast Asia with policy proposals to promote them and diversify them. These analyses would be discussed during a regional meeting convened by SELA.

## D. Activities and schedule

Activities	Date
Terms of Reference or the study	February
Hiring of Consultant	March
Preparation of the study	April-June
Regional Meeting	September

### Activity III.1.4. Analysis of the economic and financial relations of Latin America and the Caribbean with the Arab world

#### A. Background and justification

The countries of the Arab world play an increasingly important role in the global economy. With a combined GDP of US\$ 3.192 billion (PPP, 2012), the Arab countries are, in general, the owners of large oil reserves, providers of significant tourist services and the source of immense direct investments to other economies.

The relations between Latin America and the Arab World received a notorious impulse with the establishment of the South America-Arab Countries Summit (ASPA). Such cooperation space, created in May 2005 during the First ASPA Summit, which took place in Brasilia, is based on a wide agenda of issues related to political, economic, cultural, scientific, technological and environmental coordination. Moreover, the ASPA mechanism has been institutionalized through the summits, meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and working groups accompanied by business representatives.

One way for bilateral rapprochement followed until now is the negotiation of trade agreements; another one is the signing of agreements for the promotion of investments, which has created a foundational basis for the promotion of commercial, investment and business flows. Bilateral trade between the two regions is still incipient. It is concentrated on few products and the proportion of trade represents a very low percentage of the total trade that each country conducts with the world.

It appears, therefore, as a prime need for Latin America and the Caribbean to make a profound evaluation of the present commercial and financial relations with the Arab world, by updating the studies made by SELA in 2011. At the same time, it is extremely important to systematically analyze the opportunities and challenges for strengthening mutually beneficial bilateral relations.

## **B. Objectives**

The essential objective of the document is to study the evolution of the economic and cooperation relations of Latin America and the Caribbean with the Arab world, while identifying opportunity areas – in trade, finance and cooperation – that the Arab countries can offer to the region through the strengthening of bilateral relations.

## **C. Expected results**

The basic objective of this activity is keeping up-to-date the contents and conclusions of the report conducted by SELA in 2011 on the economic relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the countries of the Arab world. Additionally, the study must encompass an analysis of the opportunity areas that the Arab countries offer to the region by strengthening bilateral relations.

## **D. Activities and schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>
Terms of reference of the study	March
Hiring of consultant	April
Submittal of the study	July
Translation	August

**DECISION N° 548**

**AUDIT REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AT 31 DECEMBER 2013**

**THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,**

**HAVING SEEN:**

Article 15, paragraph 5, and Article 31, paragraph 7, of the Panama Convention; and,

The Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2012 and the Auditor's Reports that form part of document "Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2013" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 6-14).

**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 2013.

**DECISION N° 549****APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR THE YEAR 2014****THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,****HAVING SEEN:**

Article 34 of the Permanent Secretariat Regulations which, among other provisions, stipulates that "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 audit services bids received by the Permanent Secretariat, encompassed in document "Audit proposal for the year 2014", (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 7-14).

**DECIDES:**

Sole Article: To designate **PGFA PERALES, PISTONE & ASOCIADOS**, as the firm in charge of auditing the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2014, bearing in mind the rules that govern the System.

**DECISION N° 550**

**DESIGNATE A MEMBER OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL OF SELA**

**THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,**

**HAVING SEEN:**

Decision N° 370 from the Latin American Council; and

The document "Election of a Member of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA" (SP/CL/XL.O/DT N° 8-14).

**DECIDES:**

Sole Article: To elect **Róger Yépez** as Member of the Administrative Tribunal of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System for the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2017.



**C. DECLARATIONS**

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

The **Latin American Council of SELA**, gathered in its Ministerial Session, in Caracas on 28 November 2014.

**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 application of the Helms-Burton Law and the economic sanctions of the United States of America against Cuba;
- That the adverse effects of such sanctions of the United States not only affect one Member State of SELA, but also impose certain rules to the international community as regards 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 Nos. 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 XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII and XXXIX Regular Meetings of the Latin American Council (Caracas, 29 October 2009, 28 October 2010, 21 October 2011, 18 October 2012, and 28 November 2013, respectively);
- The corresponding resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly over the past 23 years urging 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 the States, non-interference in the countries' internal affairs, and the freedom of trade and navigation, as established in numerous international legal instruments;
- That despite the expectations of the international community, the administration in the United States has not eliminated the series of rules and laws governing the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba; instead it tightens them;
- That during this year, harassment of international financial transactions in Cuba has been one the most significant features of the blockade. In addition to being the main obstacle to economic and social development of the country, the blockade is the most important obstacle to further expansion of Cuba's trade links with the world and seriously curbs international cooperation to and from the country;

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- That the economic damage caused to the Cuban people by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba until April 2014, considering the U.S. dollar depreciation against the international price of gold, amounted to US\$ 1,157,327,000,000;<sup>2</sup>
- That the decision adopted by the current U.S. Government on 10 September 2012 to extend once again the Trading with the Enemy Act shows the U.S. government's determination to uphold one of the key elements of the legal framework on which the policy of blockade against Cuba is based;
- That the analysis contained in the document drafted by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA "Follow-up report on the application of the Helms Burton Law, 2013-2014" presents a detailed description of the impacts of the blockade on various economic sectors of the Republic of Cuba, as well as the extra-territorial nature of some of the measures and provisions adopted in this connection by the United States of America.

**DECLARES:**

1. The economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States of America against Cuba violates the International Law and is contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the rules of the international trade system and the freedom of navigation;
2. The Latin American Council strongly condemns the application of any law or measure contrary to the International Law, such as the Helms-Burton Law, and in this connection, it calls upon the Government of the United States to put an end to their 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, with a view to making a decision during the XLI Regular Meeting of 2015,
4. The Latin American Council makes a call to the Government of the United States so that it complies with the provisions of a number of consecutive Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade that it keeps in force against Cuba.

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<sup>2</sup> Data from the Follow-up report of the application of the Helms Burton Law, 2013-2014, presented by the Permanent Secretariat during the XL Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council in 2014.

**SPEECHES DURING THE MINISTERIAL STAGE**

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR ROBERTO GUARNIERI,  
PERMANENT SECRETARY OF SELA**

Your Excellency Mr. Ruy Carlos Pereira, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chairman of the Latin American Council.

Honourable Ambassador Alexander Yáñez Deleuze, Vice-Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean, People's Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the host country of SELA.

Members of the Bureau of the Latin American Council.

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Delegates of the Member States of SELA.

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps.

Representatives of international organizations.

Officials and staff of SELA.

Ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honour to speak to you and welcome you to the headquarters of SELA, within the framework of the XL Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council.

In an increasingly ampler and diverse regional institutional context, in terms of geographic scope, media coverage and goals, SELA is the economic technical body where virtually all the Latin American and Caribbean States converge.

Except for those States comprising the Association of Eastern Caribbean States, whose statutory incorporation we have actively encouraged and hope to formalize soon, our membership is the same as that of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

The Panama Convention establishing SELA was signed in 1975, with the primary goal to coordinate public cooperation policies and negotiation positions with non-member countries and global forums.

It was based on the recognition of an essential commonality of interests amidst a diversity of political systems and economic organization of member countries, as well as assessment of the potential for joint action to increase and enhance Latin American and Caribbean presence and participation in the global economy and strengthen the region's influence on key issues related to the organization of trade and global finance and international monetary system.

Thus, an institutional platform was established to galvanize joint actions and projects intended to realize the potential of intra-regional cooperation and exchange, reduce LAC's high dependence on the global economy and instability arising from its fluctuations, while strengthening our control and autonomy vis-à-vis the internal economic process.

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The founding purposes of SELA are twofold: firstly, focusing on international economic, trade, investment and cooperation relations with third parties and secondly, pursuing the goals of cooperation and exchange among Member Countries.

For better understanding, such purposes could be summarized, in the first place, as the incorporation of our region into global economy, which in our view should also include more organized and systematic joint actions than those in place so far in the institutional and regulatory area of multilateral governance –a field where Latin America and the Caribbean could play a highly constructive role. Another purpose is economic integration itself, including both subregional integration and its articulation and convergence, leading to a common Latin American and Caribbean economic space.

Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean has taken place at varying pace and geometry, with a predominantly subregional perspective. Higher levels of integration in the region will call for progressive migration of goals and efforts to the regional level, thus allowing the nations to further cash in on complementarities and economies of scale stemming from thorough integration.

In order to form a regional vision leading to coordination, cooperation and articulation of efforts among Latin American and Caribbean nations, a clear vision of how the different regional integration processes have evolved and their current status is needed.

With this goal in mind, SELA undertook a comprehensive assessment of the performance of the various subregional integration mechanisms, using a common methodology that facilitated comparative analysis.

Six studies were conducted, focused on assessment of the subregional integration mechanisms in place in Latin America and the Caribbean, namely ALBA-TCP, AP, CAN, CARICOM, MERCOSUR and SICA. In such documents, SELA thoroughly assessed the evolution in time of integration mechanisms, both institutionally and in the economic and social areas. The ultimate goal of this initiative is promoting a real possibility of conceptual categorization of the evolution of each mechanism, as well as assessing their growth rate and future potential for achieving effective integration of the Member Countries.

For supplementing the subregional analysis, SELA implemented a theoretical approach in connection with the necessary and sufficient conditions to achieve higher levels of regional integration. In this regard, the Permanent Secretariat was entrusted with the task of evaluating the opportunities and challenges for cooperation, coordination, articulation and convergence of efforts and objectives among the subregional integration mechanisms operating in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Such studies allowed SELA to identify significant statistic and dynamic characteristics of the Latin American and Caribbean integration process that I will explain now.

On the one hand, in order to expand domestic markets and achieve greater and better incorporation into the international arena, countries in the region have devoted much of their integration efforts to cement business relationships under preferential terms. In this sense, tariff barriers have been pinpointed as the major obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. Therefore, negotiations have focused largely on phasing them out.

During the nineties, with the establishment of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the strengthening of the Andean Community

(CAN), the integration process was given a major boost. Today, such momentum has enabled the creation of a network of preferential trade relations, which already in 2010 covered 89% of overall intra-regional trade flows.

However, and even though major progress has been made in eliminating tariff barriers, intra-regional trade has not grown in an important and sustained manner. In fact, in 2013, only 20% of total exports and 18 of total imports accounted for internal trade.

Currently, virtually all intra-regional trade in Latin America and the Caribbean is conducted under preferential terms. However, this has not resulted in a substantial increase in trade flows or significantly higher levels of openness among countries.

In this regard, the region shows a weak performance compared to the progress made by other regions.

A comparison with other trading blocs in the world -including the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), where more than 65% and 26%, respectively, of total exports is conducted among members of the same block- found some weaknesses of trade in the region.

The positive global economic context of the last decade -which boosted the price of commodities- encouraged the region's specialization as exporter of raw materials and importer of manufactured products, at the expense of the creation of a modern and diversified productive fabric that would enable the establishment of regional value chains and reposition the role of Latin America and the Caribbean in global trade flows.

Further, the region is faced with significant gaps in innovation, sophistication and technological expertise compared to relatively more developed economies in the world. This, combined with deficiencies in trade and transport logistics infrastructure, has hit the overall productivity of the stakeholders, thus affecting the competitiveness of the Latin American and Caribbean bloc and hampering the consolidation of the initiatives seeking productive complementarity.

The causes of the low dynamism of intraregional trade relations include poor trade and transport logistical infrastructure and low trade complementarity, the continuation of non-tariff barriers such as the advance license scheme and implementation of stringent sanitary and phytosanitary inspections.

Since Latin America and the Caribbean is lagging behind in the implementation of measures aimed at facilitating trade, the region is placed at a disadvantageous position in a global context where progress has been made in the development of technologies that promote digital interconnection and the provision of logistics services at competitive prices.

Relative to the world average, in the region the costs and completion time of foreign trade operations are higher, which is negatively affecting productivity and competitiveness. This hampers the generation of competitive regional value chains that promote regional trade relations and thus the level of cooperation in searching for greater consensus in favour of integration.

Meanwhile, progress has been made worldwide in streamlining the processes of international trade, thus paving the way for global value chains, increasing trade flows with a higher aggregate content and increasing the benefits associated with trade, in the countries involved.

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A fundamental readjustment of the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to promoting self-sustaining intraregional trade to higher levels of traded value added and realizing the potential of the domestic market as a source of productivity and economic growth is necessary and urgent.

Further, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the varying national views about openness to international trade have translated into different capabilities to address the challenges of globalization, and to undertake regional and global productive complementarity initiatives.

Such diverse paces and strategies for incorporation into the international arena have thwarted joint efforts, as they have promoted proliferation of bilateral agreements with third countries which, despite widening trade relations with the region, diminish in the short term the region's negotiation and coordination power for achieving joint projects.

In this context, the region should strengthen and widen coordination and cooperation spaces, under a flexible incorporation scheme, that allow for articulation of the national views and efforts towards the common goal of deepening regional integration.

Therefore, Latin America and the Caribbean should foster trade facilitation mechanisms that lower both costs and transaction time. In this regard, higher development of information and communication technologies allowing for simpler and standardized trade requirements and formalities, performance of land infrastructure projects and phase-out of non-tariff barriers are some of the areas where decisions can be made to bolster trade relations.

Additionally, the regional integration process in areas other than trade appears to be in an early stage. In this regard, it is worth noting the case of productive integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is a priority of the Programme of Action of CELAC, under the item of productive and industrial development. The high-level preparatory meeting for the Ministerial Meeting of San Jose in April this year was hosted by SELA at this venue in October last year, as mandated by CELAC.

The generally accepted theory of economic development describes trade openness and good institutional performance as the most important factors in influencing the economic growth of a nation. Either way, there is positive evidence of evolution and economic openness in Latin America and the Caribbean over the last decades.

However, overall, the economic performance of the nations in the region has been significantly lower than anticipated based on institutions and trade openness.

A more updated vision of economic development, without disregarding the importance of these factors, shifts the leading role to the productive transformation processes. According to this view, nations should modify their production structures so that they can develop a greater variety of goods and services, and at the same time, may include a higher ratio of domestic value added in exports.

A critical factor for productive transformation of the region is innovation, through local generation of technology and the incorporation of external technologies to domestic production processes. A key instrument for achieving this objective is Foreign Investment, extra-regional and intra-regional. Currently, at the extra-regional level, Foreign Direct Investment is mainly allocated to mining activities and natural resource-intensive manufacturing. These activities typically generate few links



with the rest of the national production structure, thus limiting the transfer of technology and production capacity to the region.

Conversely, in the intraregional sphere, FDI patterns are more encouraging, as they focus on the production of goods and services generating technology and skills relatively easy to adapt to other activities and sectors. This means they have a larger ripple effect. An example is the area of ICTs, which ranks first in terms of intraregional FDI.

However, in qualitative terms, intra-regional FDI is at an embryonic phase, even though it has received a positive treatment in the region under public policies. In this sense, the productive dimension of Latin American and Caribbean integration will benefit significantly if efforts are made to attract and adequately regulate external FDI to areas prone to productive linkage.

Similarly, initiatives for internationalization of enterprises in the region able to compete in the Latin American and Caribbean markets will be vital. Such initiatives should come hand in hand with efforts bolstering productive linkage among multinational companies and small and medium-sized enterprises in the region.

In the social sphere, regional integration has been intermittent. Efforts to address social issues such as poverty and inequalities should be deepened. The social area does not only have an intrinsic value, but it also has an instrumental value in moving forward towards integration faster, which has an impact on the progressive reduction of the social debt in the region.

Additionally, subregional integration mechanisms have acknowledged people's right to transit, travel or migrate with their national identification. Further, they have articulated social security systems and social and labour regulations in the community space.

In general, migration has been addressed as a common issue and steps have been made towards regionalization. The establishment of UNASUR and the expansion of SICA, with the entry of Panama, Belize and the Dominican Republic, as well as the Grand Caribbean, Mesoamerican, Pacific and Amazonian integration efforts, pave the way for Latin American and Caribbean rapprochement.

However, subregional and regional efforts, while in place, are not binding, and implementation in each nation has been different in terms of scope and pace. Long-term social development goals have been outlined and mechanisms such as the Central American Plan 2000-2020, subregional agendas such as the Integrated Plan for Social Development of CAN, as well as the CARICOM Strategic Plan or the Strategic Plan for Social Action of MERCOSUR have been established. However, the social dimension of integration still has a strong domestic bias.

Since short-term national interests have commonly prevailed over medium- and long-term collective strategies, social initiatives have been weakened and have not been undertaken in their complementary dimension as policies fostering participation and societal links. At the same time, the prevalence of national interests has become a stumbling block in completing the task of sharing sovereignty and launching supranational entities allowing for the articulation of efforts required to achieve true social integration.

A deep multi-dimensional regional integration process calls for a complex institutional framework throughout the region.

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The objective of such institutions will be ensuring progress of national and subregional initiatives towards a consistent direction in line with the regional vision.

In this way, steps will be taken towards progressive reduction of the economic and political costs that curtail the deepening of the integration process.

Thus, the foregoing mirrors the need to renew the concept of regional integration by coordinating efforts that go beyond the elimination of tariffs and focus on the productive dimension of the integration process. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen regional institutions as a source of consensus and ensure fulfilment of the commitments, thus facilitating decision-making for deepening cohesion.

The political will of the countries should be mirrored by concrete measures for trade facilitation and promotion of productive development. National efforts should be directed towards the elimination of non-tariff barriers and promoting industrialization through the creation of better conditions for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Overall, the region should boost the technological complexity of production processes through higher investment in research and development, in order to promote innovation and production of goods with a higher level of technology. In parallel, the region should facilitate the generation of regional value chains for development of industrial complementarity initiatives.

Additionally, the region should work on improving its logistics performance for reducing costs and times of trade flows. This requires completion of infrastructure works for physical and digital interconnection to optimize international trade procedures.

This virtuous circle, associated with the modernization of production processes and trade facilitation, would encourage inward foreign direct investment. In addition to transferring technology and knowledge to local businesses, this would boost the industrial complexity and productive system in the region.

The strategy to promote intra-regional trade must go beyond tariff considerations and focus on achieving production changes and the creation of regional value chains. This will facilitate export diversification and generation of higher value-added goods, thus allowing a wider participation of the region in world trade and reducing its exposure to fluctuations in the global economy.

In parallel to the construction of regional institutions, nations should focus on generating technical, operational and political skills enabling the public sector to meet the challenges of deepening the integration process. In this context, coordination, cooperation and articulation of efforts among nations and subregional integration mechanisms are essential tools.

The greater the progress in dimensions other than trade, the greater the benefits associated with higher levels of trade integration. Similarly, wider trade integration will leverage progress in the other dimensions of integration.

Latin America and the Caribbean would benefit from convergence of national and subregional regulations directly related to key trade and production integration issues into a regional vision -at a variable yet steady pace. In order to deepen the integration process, amalgamating public procurement standards, regulations on foreign investment, treatment of intellectual property rights and sanitary and phytosanitary regulations into standards in line with the goals of the region would be particularly beneficial in the long term.

Also, a thorough process of regional integration will require a comprehensive institutional infrastructure at the regional level. This infrastructure would not operate above the national and subregional institutions, but in parallel. The objective of a regional institutional infrastructure will be to ensure that national and subregional initiatives to move towards a direction that benefits the region, thus helping to progressively reduce costs that curtail cooperation, coordination and articulation.

There are two issues pending that are particularly relevant to lay the foundations for implementation of public policies aimed at deepening the integration process, namely, the harmonization of asymmetries and the fight against institutional capture. Both factors lead to significant bias in the distribution of the gains associated with integration; asymmetries from the international point of view and capture from the local perspective. In the absence of equitable distribution of the benefits associated with integration, both from trade and production, the perceived costs for national societies will hamper the progress of the process, thus thwarting the possibility of forming virtuous cycles that result in greater future prosperity .

While each nation must take on integration at their own pace and according to their priorities, the commitment to increasing levels of macroeconomic convergence -within reasonable standards- will be critical to advance the integration process. National efforts seeking fiscal responsibility, as well as price and exchange rates stability, will help overcome the obstacles preventing higher levels of trade and production integration from being achieved in Latin America and the Caribbean.

A slow recovery in most developed economies and slowing down emerging economies further encourage structural change in the region. The Latin American and Caribbean region has to undertake a profound transformation: a process to overcome the dependence on raw materials by generating increased domestic value added. This would open a door for thousands of people to leave poverty behind and live in prosperity. Such change can be achieved by deepening trade and economic integration. However, this will require cooperation, coordination, articulation and convergence of efforts among nations and among integration mechanisms.

The multidimensional nature of the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean requires a comprehensive approach. In this regard, a vital step is the preparation of a regional agenda outlining a broad vision with short-, medium- and long term objectives. This agenda should pave the way for an integration process with a variable geometry while effectively linking the national and subregional efforts.

A shift in the direction and content of the Latin American and Caribbean integration process will not take place spontaneously as a result of the current state of affairs. A deliberate, concerted and collectively implemented action taking into consideration the circumstances and needs for conciliation with others is required under the different integration mechanisms.

It is a shared responsibility, and the countries bearing the larger weight have the major responsibility, both directly, because of the measurable consequences of their own decisions, and because of the demonstration and induction effect, to ensure consistent support from other partners and all participants and stakeholders.

The Permanent Secretariat is preparing within the context of the guidelines the Latin American Council may deem relevant for contributing to such process, via the ultimate assessment and proposal of goals and requirements for implementation.

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In this connection, and for strongly and deliberately bolstering this process, please allow me to submit for consideration by the Latin American Council a proposal for the Permanent Secretariat to formally undertake the mandate for follow-up of Latin American and Caribbean Integration, within the context of deepening and convergence of the existing mechanisms, with the ultimate goal of making proposals.

Formalization thereof by virtue of a decision by the Latin American Council would strengthen the institutional foundations of SELA for implementing its work programme in this regard. Strengthening the technical capacity of the Permanent Secretariat and provide it with the necessary institutions would allow deep and constant study of the most important issues for regional integration through methodologically rigorous research, developed to suit the requirements of Member Countries. Thus, SELA will remain focused on identifying key opportunities and challenges for the efficient advancement of the process of Latin American and Caribbean integration, generating additional value for Member Countries.

Such move would also strengthen the implementation of the mandate from the Latin American Council itself and the CELAC and would help prepare documentation and technical notes for CELAC' s own agenda basically in the economic area.

The Directorate of Studies and Proposals, which was virtually inactive this year, has been a key factor in the proposed restructuring of the Permanent Secretariat, as approved by the XXXI Meeting of the Latin American Council. The expected substantial strengthening of the Directorate next year, without any increase in the budget for 2015, would help accomplish those functions, for which I am ready, in my capacity as Permanent Secretary, to take responsibility.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by the Latin American Council this year, particularly Your Excellencies Ambassadors of Guatemala, Brazil and Barbados, members of the Board.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and recognition to them and to all the Ambassadors members of the Informal Working Group, as they provided continuous support and guidance to the Permanent Secretariat.

Finally, I would like to voice my deep gratitude and personal appreciation to the staff of the Permanent Secretariat, whose traditional service vocation for achieving the goal of Latin American and Caribbean integration has yielded a consistent and highly satisfactory work.

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY RUY CARLOS PEREIRA AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BRAZIL IN THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA AND CHAIRMAN OF THE LATIN  
AMERICAN COUNCIL**

Honourable Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri, Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA);

Honourable Mrs. Solka Agudelo, Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Latin American Council;

Distinguished Members of the Bureau of the Latin American Council;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Delegates of the Member States of SELA;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Representatives of the diplomatic corps;

Representatives of international organizations;

Officials of SELA;

Ladies and gentlemen:

Good night to you all. I would like to express my gratitude to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for accompanying us on behalf of the Deputy Foreign Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Permanent Secretary has delivered a wide-ranging speech with his ideas about the future of integration in our region, which will surely be subject to careful analysis in the capitals of each one of the Member States. My compliments also go to the dear officials and collaborators of the Permanent Secretariat, who perform an extraordinary work to produce significant results amid a shortage of resources, and to my respected colleagues and dear members of the Latin American Council, who, just like me, are alternate officials since higher-level officials are not here because of their various duties and priorities, but deserve all the support and appreciation of this Chairmanship.

I'm going to make a very brief statement, in view that it is already quite late. I wanted to reconsider an issue that was mentioned during the forum: the question of dichotomies. I think that it is very important to be clear that this Council is the governing body of SELA and that it reflects the confluence – not necessarily the convergence, because they are two different concepts – of the willingness of the Member States. For SELA to move ahead, we must have confluence of national wills, and since I'll be very brief, I cannot miss the opportunity to deal with this issue, which I think is very important, because it will certainly be the subject of analyses, evaluations, reflections and conversations in our capitals. I am referring to the proposal made by the Permanent Secretary at the end of his speech so that SELA assumes the mandate of operating as a Technical Secretariat of CELAC in the commercial and economic areas and with a view to integration.

As far as I know, there is no unanimous opinion about this specific topic and I think it is necessary to bear in mind that, in this regard, there really are dichotomies, and that the different positions of the Member States should be taken into consideration. I guess the Permanent Secretary expects his proposal to be considered and examined tomorrow during the next working session of the Council, or at any other session. And I mention this because in the opinion of the Chairmanship, it is a fact that Latin America and the Caribbean forms part of a changing world and it is relatively

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vulnerable to various factors, on which the Permanent Secretary has sharply led us to reflect. They include the issue of coordination at the level of physical infrastructure, which also covers different sub-items ranging from energy to transport in its different modalities. My fellow colleague, the Ambassador of Barbados, said that, in the case of the Caribbean countries, we have to think about air transport rather than land transport. That is a reality; and as our Ambassador said, we have so little knowledge of ourselves that when we think of infrastructure in Latin America we do so in terms of the mainland, but do not remember that most of the Caribbean countries are surrounded by the sea.

So, we face the issue of infrastructure, as well as the issue of relative prices in international markets. Our main exports are losing value. Commodities already had their boom, but we are now going downhill. Now we have to deal with a matter of redistribution of income in our countries. Our concern is that the neediest sectors of society receive greater income. The mechanisms to achieve this vary from society to society, and policy options to enable these mechanisms also vary; but that is a good example, among many others, of what could be done to achieve unity amid diversity. We all want to expand prosperity in our societies, particularly for those who historically have not had a fair access to it. I suppose that at some point in time this will have to form part of the subjects for analysis at SELA, because it is also fundamental for making progress in the regional integration process. But it will only be so, if we all, without exception, agree that it is worth including it in the Work Programme of the organization.

The extraordinary quality of this organization has allowed it to make progress towards the direction we all have decided to take; and its high ethics and professionalism have kept it alive against all odds. In this regard – and my fellows of the Bureau know this – on several occasions, I have mentioned that I believe that a special feature that we should consider about SELA is that it thinks of the Caribbean, that it takes into consideration the specific characteristics of the Caribbean, and this effectively makes it a really Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.

There are many specific features and aspects about the Caribbean. Regional and subregional mechanisms in the Caribbean are by far more advanced than those of Latin America in many ways. Of course, there can be many things that serve to encourage the Caribbean process integration to make strides. But in this connection – and I already proposed it to the Permanent Secretary the last time we held a regional meeting – the terms of reference for the studies hired by SELA should contain a requirement for the studies on any given subject to mandatorily include a specific section devoted to the Caribbean, so that the Caribbean gains greater weight in our regional integrationist thinking.

I am not going to take much longer in going into further considerations. I was really surprised by the news that Brazil would assume the Chairmanship of the Latin American Council. Thus, on behalf of President Dilma Rousseff – who, as you know, was recently re-elected by the majority of voters in fully computer-aided and unquestionably free elections – on behalf of Foreign Minister Luis Figueredo – who was consulted as regards the position we are holding now – and on my own behalf, I would like to thank you all and your governments for your confidence in me, and most of all in my country. In any case, rest assured about counting on the best of my efforts to respond to your expectations, so that the Latin American Council can operate as intended: as a collective organ that gathers opinions and makes its own decisions.

A week ago, Foreign Minister Figueredo visited Chile and met with his counterparts of MERCOSUR and the Pacific Alliance. Now, I will recall some remarks made by Figueredo because I think they can serve to guide our work in the next session of the Latin American Council. He said that, from the standpoint of Brazil, we should keep in mind some basic concepts as regards integration. First

of all, the region has different architectures for integration, and we could corroborate that during the debate of the previous session. Secondly, no country is turning its back on any other. I believe that it is essential to be clear about this fact, because it was not always like that and it means that we have travelled a long road. In addition, another fundamental concept is that we are all busy and concerned about identifying common points among these different architectures and positions, so as to promote the regional integration process on that basis. As Minister Figueredo said, we are looking for common ways to move ahead in the same direction, with the same purpose; and since we have different architectures for integration and different geographical, demographic, economic, social, political and ideological conditions, such goal can only be accomplished if there is dialogue and respect for differences. Our motto must be convergence despite differences and unity amid diversity, as I said before.

And this integration process only makes sense, paraphrasing the Foreign Minister and our President Dilma Rousseff, if it brings about prosperity, solidarity, peace and democracy. All we can do at the various economic, social, infrastructure, health and education levels makes sense if it leads us towards a condition that brings together these four elements: prosperity, peace, democracy, and solidarity. We can add others, but those are the fundamental ones, and I hope that the Latin American Council, with the orientation, perception and support of you all, can take advantage of the extraordinary professional quality and functional competition of the Permanent Secretariat, led by our Secretary, who has just provided us, as I have said, with a very attractive roadmap for debate about how we should go forward.

It does not mean that we are all in agreement. Even this issue will be addressed in some way tomorrow, but it is a fact that we must reflect on a comprehensive set of elements, such as priorities and strategies that we will implement at SELA.

At the CELAC Summit, held in January this year in Havana, President Dilma Rousseff said: "In the last five years, we have advanced firmly towards increasing consensuses. This word is key, since regional consensuses are badly needed because of our diversity. We are a region with an extraordinary ethnic, cultural and geographic variety. We chose different political and economic models, and this requires respectful dialogue and carefully constructed consensuses. We are united in many things, such as the fight against poverty."

Thank you.

**SPEECH BY MS. SOLKA AGUDELO, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC  
OF VENEZUELA TO THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL**

Your Excellency Mr. Ruy Carlos Pereira, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil and Chairman of the Latin American Council;

Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri, Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA);

Honourable Ambassadors, Chargés d'Affaires, Representatives of International Organizations accredited to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Officials of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System;

Ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Vice Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean, Alexander Yáñez, I extend you a friendly and Bolivarian greeting at the opening of this XL Meeting of the Latin American Council of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA).

It is the understanding of integration as an essential instrument for the integral development of our countries what has made this process gain the greatest importance in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Integration dynamics are still in a stage of construction and definition in which the present political, economic and social situation of the region and the world context should be pondered in order to face the great challenges of the process of Latin American and Caribbean integration.

This integration, which reaches beyond the mere commercial aspects, must envision a strategic project that lays the foundations for an economic, political, social and cultural union. The process covers, among others, the following elements:

- a. Our region possesses objective conditions for advancing in a sustained manner in the strategic perspective of union and integration, which would invigorate the independence and sovereignty of the region.
- b. There exists political will among the Heads of State and Government to advance together in an honest, transparent political dialogue, in harmony and reciprocal respect.
- c. Over the last few years, our region has experienced a significant economic and social development, with macroeconomic stability and improvements in the social indicators for poverty reduction, income distribution and formal employment.
- d. However, we are facing a less favourable international context for the economies of the region because of the progressive stagnation in the prices of raw materials for export and the reduction of foreign direct investment, as a result of the slow recovery of the world economy and a lower pace of growth in emerging economies.
- e. The reordering of economy and trade in the world has been marked by accelerated technological changes and the creation of negotiation models for the major economic zones, under the industrial leadership of the United States, the European Union, China, Russia and India, and also with the emergence of global value chains and the trend towards the formation of integrated macro-regions.



- f. Geopolitics, finally, has as well a new order, with the new configuration of world power, with the central role of the global emergent actors, such as the BRICS group, which is opening way to the end of unipolarity, and the emergence of the multipolar and multicentered world.

These new conditions represent challenges to the region, which should consolidate industrial and commercial integration, with the goal of improving quality of its international economic insertion by means of sovereignty profiting of its industrial, financial and natural capacities, leading the region to gain importance as an economic stakeholder in the world.

It is essential, therefore, to undertake the drive of scientific and technological knowledge, physical integration, productive complementation for sustainable economic development, sovereign use of the natural resources, incorporating industrial value added and overcoming social inequalities in order to reach well-being for our peoples.

I would like to recall the words of Commander Chávez: "*Latin America has begun a change, and a new face is appearing in Latin America and the Caribbean. We are living crucial times. A time is dying and a new one is dawning.*"

For this reason, we congratulate SELA for the perception of the historic moment it shows by adding the new forms of regional integration to its areas of study. These include the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), the PETROCARIBE Energy Agreement, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (ECLAC), among others, all of which respond to the new, liberating dynamics that our Latin American and Caribbean region is going through.

At the same time, we want to underscore the importance, for our region, of the efforts for the coordination and convergence of the organizations and mechanisms of regional and sub-regional integration, tending to construct common perspectives that propel the necessary transformations for the promotion of the integral development of our peoples.

These thoughts lead us to the need to advance in strengthening the multilateral spaces consolidating the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States as the major mechanism for Latin American and Caribbean union.

This is why the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has proposed to transform the Latin American and Caribbean System into the Technical Secretariat of the ECLAC. The proposal, presented in the XXXIX Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, held in Caracas from 27 to 29 November 2013, was well received by several countries of our region and the debate continues to deepen within both integration spaces, as the Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Ruy Carlos Pereira, has pointed out in his previous speech.

The experience of SELA in generating economic thought and action is noteworthy. As a regional organization, it has made an enormous contribution to ECLAC during the last two years, a period that has given a growing strength to the relation between them.

In this connection, we also celebrate the inclusion in the Work Programme for 2015 of a number of activities expected to contribute to the process of institutional consolidation of ECLAC.

We would also like to emphasize the debate, hosted by the Latin America Council, on the need to analyze the proposal for the establishment of the complementary economic zones as a strategy for

a more profound coordination and convergence among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

As you all know, some countries have been promoting the formation of the ALBA-PETROCARIBE–MERCOSUR-CARICOM complementary economic zone as a new model of intra-regional economic relation, and we expect this proposal to be discussed and analyzed in this important space of regional integration.

Lastly, we want to ratify, with a Bolivarian conviction, the words of the Liberator Simón Bolívar in a letter addressed to General Santiago Mariño on 16 December 1813: *"Divided, we will be weaker, less respected by the enemies. Union will be our strength and will make us all formidable. The nation of all the Americans must be only one."*

Thank you very much.

**SPEECH BY MR. RAMIRO DE LEÓN TORRAS, SPECIALIST OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
TRADE AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA**

Your Excellency Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri, Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA);

Your Excellency Mr. Ruy Carlos Pereira, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil and Chairman of the Latin American Council;

Members of the Bureau of the Latin American Council;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Delegates of the Member States of SELA;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Representatives of the diplomatic corps;

Representatives of international organizations;

Officials of the staff of SELA;

Ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to the Government and the Bolivarian people of Venezuela, as well as to the Permanent Secretariat, for the courtesies extended to us.

After the Great Recession, which has yet to be completely overcome, new identity signs in the field of regional cooperation in LAC should be pursued to define and implement a coordination and convergence strategy that leads to a comprehensive productive development.

Even before this "Great Recession", it was widely known that reorienting productive development posed enormous challenges to LAC, where the sacrifice of the real economy, for the sake of financial balances and price stability in the short term, had been greater, more sustained and more widespread than in other regions.

In addition to the industrial sector, the primary activities – the production of foods and raw materials in agriculture and mining, in particular those associated with energy and industrial raw materials – are important components of productive integration in LAC.

Given the diversity of situations, a suggestion has been made to find a balance between the emergency measures that should be taken in the short term and the attention to structural problems that allows for, in the medium and long terms, an increase in national and regional agricultural production and the diversification or autonomy of the energy matrix of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Integration is a process that covers multiple dimensions, namely: economic, political, social, cultural and environmental. The productive dimension is the strategic focus of regional integration. To reduce inequality, in addition to establishing a social policy, it is necessary to change the production and export structure, creating quality jobs and moving towards activities involving greater sophistication.

That is why Latin America and the Caribbean require a series of new or renewed priorities, among which are the following:

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- Establish a new equation that inter-relates the State, market and society in a dynamic and positive way.
- Confronting the greatest challenge – inequality – can no longer be delayed. “Social equality and an economic dynamism to transform the production structure are not at odds with each other. We should grow to be equal and be equal to grow,” as has been proposed by ECLAC.
- The transformation of the production structure should be based on six pillars, namely: investment, integration and innovation to support productive convergence, decent and sufficient work, and environmental sustainability.
- We should take the most of synergies for productive convergence between larger companies and SMEs, as well as between the most prosperous and the relatively more depressed regions.

Productive integration efforts must take into account the main trends of the new international industrial/production structures:

- a) Technological change. The challenge of technological change requires developing countries to advance towards more complex industrial/production structures.
- b) Creation and adaptation of technologies. The generation of new knowledge and innovative production processes depends on the availability of substantial investment resources and large markets.
- c) Information technologies. These widely used technologies are implemented in a number of production activities, not only in high-technology industries, but also in traditional industries and increasingly in services and primary sectors.
- d) Breakup of production processes. The existing forms of organization of production break up the production process itself, i.e. production segments are relocated in subsidiaries or companies integrated to a manufacturing network at the global and regional levels.
- e) Differentiated returns. The capacity of generating returns depends on the segment in which each country is inserted within the value-added chain.

These five items are a powerful argument in favour of productive integration, since an integrated structure that combines technical, financial and marketing capabilities has better chances to respond to challenges and requirements such as those proposed.

In this connection, policy actions and main guidelines for regional productive development involve:

- Regaining priority space for the industrial and productive development policy in national policies, and promoting initiatives and projects for productive integration within subregional integration processes.
- Components of the productive development strategies: industrial policy; agricultural development and food security policy; energy policy; policy on infrastructure development; and innovation, science and technology policies.

In view of the foregoing, the following proposals are made:

- Follow up on the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Productive and Industrial Development in coordination with CELAC and continue analyzing the following issues: the nature and scope of industrial and productive development policies; the potential contribution of its main components; and the critical review of regional and subregional cooperation efforts in the production area to promote the most promising projects.

Invitations should continue to be extended, in addition to the Governments of the region and regional and subregional institutions in LAC, to the agencies of the United Nations system: UNIDO, FAO and UNESCO.

- Based on this Conference, actions will be prioritized in related areas: education and training, scientific and technological development, research and development institutions, support to infrastructure development projects, agricultural and food security policies, and public policies to support SMEs.
- It is necessary to redouble efforts to achieve development with a strategic horizon through structural change and investment in human capabilities.
- The State must increase the progressiveness of fiscal policies and public spending, with strengthened institutions that promote equality in their various fields.
- Environmental sustainability cannot be postponed; it requires broad agreements and poses challenges to patterns of consumption and production.
- It is imperative to combine the use of natural resources with the move towards a more diversified production structure, with greater incorporation of technical change and generation of quality employment to support societies with higher levels of equality.
- A Development Bank is required to promote internal innovation and convergence.

*A N N E X I I*

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**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**I. DELEGATIONS****ARGENTINA****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Carlos Cheppi  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Argentina  
Avenida El Empalme,  
Edif. Fedecámaras; Piso 3  
Urbanización El Bosque, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 731-3311  
Cell phone: (0424)180-1491  
Fax: (58-212) 731-2659  
E-mail: [politica\\_evene@mrecic.gov.ar](mailto:politica_evene@mrecic.gov.ar)

**DELEGATES:**

Claudio Gell  
Counsellor Minister  
Embassy of Argentina  
Avenida El Empalme,  
Edif. Fedecámaras; Piso 3  
Urbanización El Bosque, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 731-3311  
Fax: (58-212) 731-2659  
E-mail: [politica\\_evene@mrecic.gov.ar](mailto:politica_evene@mrecic.gov.ar)

**HEAD OF DELEGATION:****BARBADOS**

Sandra Phillips  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Barbados  
Calle La Guairita con Av. Ppal. de Chuao  
Edificio Los Frailes, Piso 5, Oficina 501  
Urbanización Chuao, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 313-3425 / 313-3426  
Fax: (58-212) 991-0333  
E-mail: [sphillips@foreign.gov.bb](mailto:sphillips@foreign.gov.bb)

**BELIZE****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Lou-Anne Burns Martinez  
Ambassador  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Nemo Building  
Belmopan, Belize  
Telephone: (501) 822-2167  
Cell phone: (44) 790883678  
Fax: (501) 822-2854  
E-mail: [annielow-burns@mfa.gov.bz](mailto:annielow-burns@mfa.gov.bz)

**BOLIVIA****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Luis Trigo Antelo  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Plurinational State of Bolivia  
Av. Luis Roche con 6ta. Transversal  
Qta. "Embajada de Bolivia"  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 263-3015  
Fax: (58-212) 261-3386  
Email: [emboliviave@yahoo.es](mailto:emboliviave@yahoo.es)

Javier Sucojayo de la Cruz  
Counsellor  
Embassy of the Plurinational State of Bolivia  
Av. Luis Roche con 6ta. Transversal  
Qta. "Embajada de Bolivia"  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 263-3015  
Fax: (58-212) 261-3386  
Cell phone: (0412) 910-9788  
Email: [jhsucojayo@gmail.com](mailto:jhsucojayo@gmail.com)  
[javiersucojayo@hotmail.com](mailto:javiersucojayo@hotmail.com)

**BRAZIL****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Ruy Carlos Pereira  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Brazil  
Calle Los Chaguaramos con Avenida Mohedano  
Centro Gerencial Mohedano, Piso 6  
Urbanización La Castellana, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 918.6000 (master)/ 918 6002/ 6036  
E-mail: [despachobrasil@gmail.com](mailto:despachobrasil@gmail.com)

**DELEGATES:**

Nilo Dytz  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Brazil  
Calle Los Chaguaramos con Avenida Mohedano  
Centro Gerencial Mohedano, Piso 6  
Urbanización La Castellana, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 918.6000 (master)/ 918 6002/ 6036  
E-mail: [nilo.dytz@itamaraty.gov.br](mailto:nilo.dytz@itamaraty.gov.br)



**COLOMBIA****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Luis Eladio Pérez  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Colombia  
2nda. Avenida de Campo Alegre  
c/ Av. Fco. De Miranda, Torre Credival, Piso 11  
Urbanización Campo Alegre, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 630-9500  
Fax: (58-212) 263-8974 // 261-1358  
E-mail: [venezuela@cancilleria.gov.co](mailto:venezuela@cancilleria.gov.co)

**DELEGATES:**

Jaime Barrera Martínez  
Plenipotentiary Minister  
Embassy of Colombia  
2nda. Avenida de Campo Alegre  
c/ Av. Fco. De Miranda, Torre Credival, Piso 11  
Urbanización Campo Alegre, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 630-9500  
Fax: (58-212) 263-8974 // 261-1358  
E-mail: [jaime.barrera@cancilleria.gov.co](mailto:jaime.barrera@cancilleria.gov.co)

Sara Rocío Prieto  
First Secretary  
Embassy of Colombia  
2nda. Avenida de Campo Alegre  
c/ Av. Fco. De Miranda, Torre Credival, Piso 11  
Urbanización Campo Alegre, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 630-9500  
Fax: (58-212) 263-8974 // 261-1358  
E-mail: [sara.prieto@cancilleria.gov.co](mailto:sara.prieto@cancilleria.gov.co)

**COSTA RICA****DELEGATES:**

Jorge E. Valerio H.  
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.  
Embassy of Costa Rica  
Av. San Juan Bosco Edif. For You, PH entre  
1era. y 2da. Transversal (frente a Plaza Altamira)  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 265 7889/ 267 1104  
E-mail: [embcr-ve@rree.go.cr](mailto:embcr-ve@rree.go.cr)

**CUBA****HEAD OF DELEGATION**

Rogelio Polanco Fuentes  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Cuba  
Calle Roraima, Esquina Avenida Río de Janeiro  
y Calle Choróni. Quinta "Marina"  
Chua, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 991-2769 / 992-2045  
E-mail: [Ambassador@embajadacuba.com.ve](mailto:Ambassador@embajadacuba.com.ve)

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**ALTERNATE HEAD OF DELEGATION:** Ramiro de León Torras  
Specialist  
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment  
23 e Infanta, Vedado  
Havana, Cuba  
Telephone: 838-0372  
E-mail: [ramiro.leon@mincex.cu](mailto:ramiro.leon@mincex.cu)

**DELEGATES:** Lisvan Aleaga  
Economic Attaché  
Embassy of Cuba  
Calle Roraima, Esquina Avenida Río de Janeiro  
y Calle Choroní. Quinta "Marina"  
Chuao, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 991-6661 / 992-2045  
E-mail: [lisvanaleaga@gmail.com](mailto:lisvanaleaga@gmail.com)

Luis Cepeda Serrano  
Economic Counsellor  
Embassy of Cuba  
Calle Roraima, Esquina Avenida Río de Janeiro  
y Calle Choroní. Quinta "Marina"  
Chuao, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 991-2769 / 992-2045  
E-mail: [lacswolf@yahoo.es](mailto:lacswolf@yahoo.es); [oc1@embajadacuba.com.ve](mailto:oc1@embajadacuba.com.ve)

## CHILE

**DELEGATES:** Hernán Nuñez  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Chile  
Paseo Enrique Eraso Edif. Torre La Noria, Piso 10  
Sector San Román, Urbanización Las Mercedes, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 992-5364/991-3014/993-1538/5770  
Fax: (58-212) 992-0614  
E-mail: [hnunez@minrel.gov.cl](mailto:hnunez@minrel.gov.cl)

Sebastián Labra  
Second Secretary  
Embassy of Chile  
Paseo Enrique Eraso Edif. Torre La Noria, Piso 10  
Sector San Román, Urbanización Las Mercedes, Caracas  
Telephones: (58-212) 992-5364/991-3014/993-1538/5770  
Fax: (58-212) 992-0614  
E-mail: [slabra@minrel.gov.cl](mailto:slabra@minrel.gov.cl)

**ECUADOR****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

José Rafael Serrano  
Ambassador  
Regional Integration Division  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility  
Carrión E1-76 y Av. 10 de Agosto  
Quito – Ecuador  
Telephone: (593-2) 299-3200  
E-mail: [joseserrano48@hotmail.com](mailto:joseserrano48@hotmail.com)

**DELEGATES:**

Gabriela Cárdenas  
Regional Integration Division  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility  
Carrión E1-76 y Av. 10 de Agosto  
Quito – Ecuador  
Telephone: (593-2) 299-3200  
E-mail: [gcardenas@cancilleria.gob.ec](mailto:gcardenas@cancilleria.gob.ec)

Tania Barahona  
Second Secretary  
Embassy of Ecuador  
Av. Principal de la Castellana con 2da. Transversal  
Edif. BANCARACAS, Piso 8, Of. 805  
Urbanización La Castellana, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 265-0801 / 264-7790  
Fax: (58-212) 264-6917

**EL SALVADOR****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Luz Estrella Rodríguez  
Vice-Minister of Economy  
Alameda Juan Pable II y Calle Guadalupe Edif. C1,  
Centro de Gobierno, San Salvador  
Telephone: (503) 25905275 (76) Despacho  
E-mail: [Luz.rodriquez@minec.gob.sv](mailto:Luz.rodriquez@minec.gob.sv)

**DELEGATE**

José Carlos Herodier Candel  
Counsellor Minister  
Embassy of El Salvador  
Calle Roraima, Quinta "O" (Cuzcatlán), Urbanización Chuao,  
Municipio Baruta, Estado Miranda  
Telephones: (58-212) 991-1553/993-7824/8720  
E-mail: [embajadaelsalvadorenvenezuela@gmail.com](mailto:embajadaelsalvadorenvenezuela@gmail.com)

**GUATEMALA****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Beatriz Méndez de la Hoz  
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.  
Embassy of Guatemala  
Avenida Francisco de Miranda, Torre Dosza, 1° piso  
Urbanización El Rosal, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 952-5247/ 954-0146  
Fax: (58-212) 954-0051  
E-mail: [b.mendez@minex.gob.gt](mailto:b.mendez@minex.gob.gt)

**GUYANA****HEAD OF DELEGATION**

Geoffrey Da Silva  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Guyana  
2da. Avda. entre 9 y 10 Transversal, Quinta Los Tutis,  
Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 261 7745/ 267 7095  
E-mail: [embguy@cantv.net](mailto:embguy@cantv.net); [embguyccs@gmail.com](mailto:embguyccs@gmail.com)

**HAITI****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Lesly David  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Haiti  
Qta. San Rafael, 8va. Transversal,  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: 267 8409  
Cell phone: 0416-6305555  
Fax: 261 9068  
E-mail: [info@ambassadehaitivenezuela.org](mailto:info@ambassadehaitivenezuela.org)

**DELEGATE:**

René Luc Desronvil  
Counsellor Minister  
Embassy of Haiti  
Qta. San Rafael, 8va. Transversal  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 262-1194  
Fax: (58-212) 261-9068  
E-mail: [info@embassyidehaitivenezuela.org](mailto:info@embassyidehaitivenezuela.org)

**HONDURAS****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Karen Iveth Moradel  
Director for International Promotion  
Secretariat of Foreign Affairs  
Centro Cívico Gubernamental, Boulevard Kuwait  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
Telephone: (504) 2236-0300  
E-mail: [Karen.moradel@sre.gob.hn](mailto:Karen.moradel@sre.gob.hn)

Fernando Suárez Lovo  
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.  
Embassy of Honduras  
Av. Principal de La Castellana con 1ra. Transversal  
de Altamira. Edf. Banco de Lara, Piso 8, oficina B-2  
Urb. La Castellana, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 261-4693/ 263-3184  
Fax: (58-212) 263-4379  
E-mail: [ehonduven@cantv.net](mailto:ehonduven@cantv.net)

Hilda Landaverde  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Honduras  
Av. Principal de La Castellana con 1ra. Transversal  
de Altamira. Edf. Banco de Lara, Piso 8, oficina B-2  
Urb. La Castellana, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 261-4693/ 263-3184  
Cell phone: (0424) 109-6551  
Fax: (58-212) 263-4379  
E-mail: [hlandaverde@gmail.com](mailto:hlandaverde@gmail.com)  
[ehonduven@gmail.com](mailto:ehonduven@gmail.com)

#### **JAMAICA**

##### **HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Sharon Weber  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Jamaica  
Calle La Guairita, Edificio Los Frailes, Piso 5  
Urbanización Chuao, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 991-0466/6955  
Fax: (58-212) 991-5708/6055  
E-mail: [embjaven@cantv.net](mailto:embjaven@cantv.net); [embjaven@gmail.com](mailto:embjaven@gmail.com)

Shae - Alicia Lewis  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Jamaica  
Calle La Guairita, Edificio Los Frailes, Piso 5  
Urbanización Chuao, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 991-0466/6955  
Fax: (58-212) 991-5708/6055  
E-mail: [embjavez2@gmail.com](mailto:embjavez2@gmail.com)

#### **MEXICO**

##### **HEAD OF DELEGATION**

Leandro Arellano Reséndiz  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Mexico  
Calle Guaicaipuro, Edificio FORUM, Piso 5  
Urbanización El Rosal, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 952-3850  
Fax: (58-212) 952-3003  
E-mail: [Ambassadorven@sre.gob.mx](mailto:Ambassadorven@sre.gob.mx)

114

**DELEGATE**

Raúl Cueto Martínez  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Mexico  
Calle Guaicaipuro, Edificio FORUM, Piso 5  
Urbanización El Rosal, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 952-3850  
Fax: (58-212) 952-3003  
E-mail: [rcueto@sre.gob.mx](mailto:rcueto@sre.gob.mx)

**NICARAGUA****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Ramón Leets Castillo  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Nicaragua  
Av. El Paseo, Qta. Doña Dilia  
Urbanización Prados del Este, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 977-3270/ 3289  
Fax: (58-212) 977-3973  
E-mail: [embanic@live.com](mailto:embanic@live.com)

**DELEGATE:**

Ronaldo Sandoval  
Administrator  
Embassy of Nicaragua  
Av. El Paseo, Qta. Doña Dilia  
Urbanización Prados del Este, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 977-3270/ 3289  
Fax: (58-212) 977-3973  
E-mail: [embanic@live.com](mailto:embanic@live.com)

**PANAMA****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Miguel Octavio Mejía Miranda  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Panama  
Centro Profesional Eurobuilding  
Piso 8, Oficina 8-D, Urbanización Chuao  
Telephone: (58-212) 992-9182 / 992-9093  
Fax: (58-212) 992-8421  
E-mail: [mmejia@mire.gob.pa](mailto:mmejia@mire.gob.pa)

**DELEGATES:**

Yolanda Alemán de Bacarani  
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.  
Embassy of Panama  
Centro Profesional Eurobuilding  
Piso 8, Oficina 8-D, Urbanización Chuao  
Telephone: (58-212) 992-9182 / 992-9093  
Fax: (58-212) 992-8421  
E-mail: [embapanamacaracas@gmail.com](mailto:embapanamacaracas@gmail.com)

Emmanuel López Pérez  
Assistant to the Ambassador  
Embassy of Panama  
Centro Profesional Eurobuilding  
Piso 8, Oficina 8-D, Urbanización Chuao  
Telephone: (58-212) 992-9182 / 992-9093  
Fax: (58-212) 992-8421  
E-mail: [panave2010@gmail.com](mailto:panave2010@gmail.com)

#### **PARAGUAY**

**HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Enrique Jara Ocampos  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Paraguay  
Quinta Helechales N° 4204 4ta. Avenida  
Entre 7ma y 8va. Transversal  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 264-3066  
Telefax: (58-212) 263-2559 / 267-5543  
E-mail: [embaparven@cantv.net](mailto:embaparven@cantv.net); [embaparven@mre.gov.py](mailto:embaparven@mre.gov.py)

**DELEGATE:**

Derlis Paredes Dominguez  
Official of the Embassy  
Quinta Helechales N° 4204 4ta. Avenida  
Entre 7ma y 8va. Transversal  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 264-3066  
TeleFax: (58-212) 263-2559 / 267-5543  
E-mail: [embaparven@cantv.net](mailto:embaparven@cantv.net); [embaparven@mre.gov.py](mailto:embaparven@mre.gov.py)

#### **PERU**

**HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Mario López Chavarri  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Peru  
Av. San Juan Bosco con 2da Transversal  
Edf. San Juan, Piso 5  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: 264-1672 / 264-1420 / 264-1271  
E-mail: [mlopez@embajadaperu.org.ve](mailto:mlopez@embajadaperu.org.ve)

**DELEGATE:**

Carlos Sánchez del Águila  
Counsellor  
Embassy of the Republic of Peru  
Av. San Juan Bosco con 2da Transversal  
Edf. San Juan, Piso 5  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: 264-1672 / 264-1420 / 264-1271  
E-mail: [csanchez@embajadaperu.org.ve](mailto:csanchez@embajadaperu.org.ve)

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**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC****DELEGATE:**

Pedro T. Vásquez Medina  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Dominican Republic  
Edificio Argentum – PB -1. 2nda. Transversal  
Entre 1ra. Avenida y Avenida Andrés Bello  
Los Palos Grandes, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 283-9279 / 9524  
E-mail: [pvasquez16@live.com](mailto:pvasquez16@live.com)

**SURINAME****DELEGATE:**

Pawiroredjo Elsjé  
Second Secretary  
Embassy of Suriname  
4ta. Avenida de Altamira  
Entre 7ma. y 8va. Transversal  
Quinta N° 41  
Urbanización Altamira, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 263-1554 / 261-2724  
Fax: (58-212) 263-9006  
Cell phone: (0412) 910-3659  
E-mail: [embsur1@hotmail.com](mailto:embsur1@hotmail.com)

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Anthony David Edghill  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago  
3ª Av. entre 6ta. y 7ma. Transversal  
Quinta Poshika, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 261-3748/5796  
Fax: (58-212) 261-9801  
E-mail: [anthony\\_edghill@hotmail.com](mailto:anthony_edghill@hotmail.com)

**DELEGATE:**

Jenelle Pariag  
Second Secretary  
Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago  
3ª Av. entre 6ta. y 7ma. Transversal  
Quinta Poshika, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 261-3748/5796  
Fax: (58-212) 261-9801  
E-mail: [jenellepariag@gmail.com](mailto:jenellepariag@gmail.com)



**URUGUAY****HEAD OF DELEGATION:**

Pamela Vivas  
Chargé d’Affaires, a.i.  
Embassy of Uruguay  
4ta. Avenida de Los Palos Grandes  
Torre SQ (antigua Torre Seguros Altamira)  
Piso 4, Oficinas D y E  
Urbanización Los Palos Grandes, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 285-1648 / 285-3549  
Fax: (58-212) 286-0638  
E-mail: [uruvenezuela@mrree.gob.uy](mailto:uruvenezuela@mrree.gob.uy)

**DELEGATE:**

Juan Wallace  
Counsellor  
Embassy of Uruguay  
4ta. Avenida de Los Palos Grandes  
Torre SQ (antigua Torre Seguros Altamira)  
Piso 4, Oficinas D y E  
Urbanización Los Palos Grandes, Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 285-1648 / 285-3549  
Fax: (58-212) 286-0638  
E-mail: [juanpwallace@gmail.com](mailto:juanpwallace@gmail.com)

**VENEZUELA****DELEGATES:**

Solka Agudelo  
Coordinator of Regional and Multilateral Affairs  
Vice-Ministry for Latin America and the Caribbean  
People’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela  
Avenida Universidad, Esquina San Francisco  
Edificio Mercantil, Piso 4  
Caracas  
Telephone: (58-212) 482-3701  
E-mail: [solkagudelo@gmail.com](mailto:solkagudelo@gmail.com)

Viranny Idrogo  
Official in charge of the Bureau of Economic Affairs  
Vice-Ministry for Latin America and the Caribbean  
People’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela  
Avenida Universidad, Esquina San Francisco  
Edificio Mercantil, Caracas  
Cell phone: 0424-572-7588  
E-mail: [vaimmiav1618@gmail.com](mailto:vaimmiav1618@gmail.com)

**II. OBSERVERS****BOLIVARIAN ALLIANCE FOR THE PEOPLES  
OF OUR AMERICA – PEOPLE'S TRADE  
AGREEMENT (ALBA-TCP)**

Alfonso Zabaleta  
Coordinator  
ALBA-TCP Executive Secretariat  
Av. Francisco Solano, Esq. Calle San Gerónimo, Edif. Los  
Llanos, Piso 8. Sabana Grande, Parroquia El Recreo.  
Caracas, Venezuela  
Telephones: (58 212) 905 9384 / 9308 / 9306 / 9357 / 9368  
Fax: (58 -212) 761 13 64  
E-mail: [secretaria@alba-tcp.org](mailto:secretaria@alba-tcp.org)

Wendy Viteri P.  
Coordinator  
ALBA-TCP Executive Secretariat  
Av. Francisco Solano, Esq. Calle San Gerónimo, Edif. Los  
Llanos, Piso 8. Sabana Grande, Parroquia El Recreo.  
Caracas, Venezuela  
Telephones: (58- 212) 905 9384 / 9308 / 9306 / 9357 / 9368  
Fax: (58 -212) 761 13 64  
E-mail: [wviteri@gmail.com](mailto:wviteri@gmail.com)

David Mariño  
ALBA-TCP Executive Secretariat  
Dirección: Av. Francisco Solano, Esq. Calle San Gerónimo,  
Edif. Los Llanos, Piso 8. Sabana Grande, Parroquia El Recreo.  
Caracas, Venezuela  
Telephones: 0414-220-9247 (58-212) 905 9384 / 9308 /  
9306 / 9357 / 9368  
Fax: (58 212) 761 13 64  
E-mail: [davidmb.alba@gmail.com](mailto:davidmb.alba@gmail.com)

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)**

Marcelo Resende  
Av. Libertador entre Calle Elice y José Félix Sosa  
Edificio Nuevo Centro, Piso 3  
Frente al Centro Comercial Sambil  
Telephones: (58-212) 201 9900/ 01  
Fax: (58-212) 201.9908  
E-mail: [fao-ve@fao.org](mailto:fao-ve@fao.org)

### III. SPEAKERS AT THE FORUM

Tomás Mancha Navarro  
PH.D Professor of Applied Economics  
and Director of the University Institute  
of Economic and Social Analysis (IAES)  
at Universidad de Alcalá de Henares  
Madrid, Spain  
E-mail: [tomas.mancha@uah.es](mailto:tomas.mancha@uah.es)

Jaime Estay  
SELA's Consultant  
9 Poniente 506, Barrio de San Miguel  
San Francisco Totimehuacán  
Puebla, Mexico  
Telephone: (52) 222.2812245  
Cell phone: (52-1) 222.2176641  
E-mail: [jaimeestay@hotmail.com](mailto:jaimeestay@hotmail.com)

### IV. PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

Roberto Guarnieri  
Permanent Secretary  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7100 / 955-7101  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 951-6901  
E-mail: [sela@sela.org](mailto:sela@sela.org)

Juan Acuña  
Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7115  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [jacuna@sela.org](mailto:jacuna@sela.org)

Gloria Cañas  
Director of the Information and Knowledge Network  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7110  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [gcanas@sela.org](mailto:gcanas@sela.org)

Telasco Pulgar  
Coordinator of Relations with Regional  
and Extra-Regional Organizations  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7153  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [tpulgar@sela.org](mailto:tpulgar@sela.org)

Antonio Leone  
Consultant of the SELA-SMEs Programme  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7108  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [aleone@sela.org](mailto:aleone@sela.org)

Zulay Angarita  
Manager of Administration, Personnel and General Services  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7116  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [zangarita@sela.org](mailto:zangarita@sela.org)

Silvia Hernández  
Head of the Office of the Permanent Secretary  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7123  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [shernandez@sela.org](mailto:shernandez@sela.org)

Daniel Stagno  
Specialist of Studies and Proposals a.i.  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7114  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [dstagno@sela.org](mailto:dstagno@sela.org)

Javier Gordon  
Analyst of Relations  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7137  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [jgordon@sela.org](mailto:jgordon@sela.org)

Fernando Guglielmelli  
Analyst of Relations  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-71-37  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [fguglielmelli@sela.org](mailto:fguglielmelli@sela.org)

Germán Caires  
Analyst of Relations  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7146  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [gcaires@sela.org](mailto:gcaires@sela.org)

José Gabriel Villegas  
Analyst of Relations  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7112  
Fax: (58-212) 0951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [jvillegas@sela.org](mailto:jvillegas@sela.org)

Milagros Cruz  
Analista de Relaciones  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-71-17  
Fax: (58-212) 0951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [mcruz@sela.org](mailto:mcruz@sela.org)

Eduardo Piña  
Analyst of Studies and Proposals  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-71-39  
Fax: (58-212) 0951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [epina@sela.org](mailto:epina@sela.org)

Ciro Castillo  
Official of Accounting  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7129  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [ccastillo@sela.org](mailto:ccastillo@sela.org)

Lisette Carrillo  
Official of Informatics and Technology  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7125  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [lcarrillo@sela.org](mailto:lcarrillo@sela.org)

Carlos Ortuño  
Official of the Information Centre and Database  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7149  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [cortuno@sela.org](mailto:cortuno@sela.org)

Antonio Peña  
Translation Official  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7118  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [apmarcial@sela.org](mailto:apmarcial@sela.org)

Rosanna Di Gregorio  
Translation Official  
Telephone: (58-212) 955-7127  
Fax: (58-212) 951-5292 / 6901  
E-mail: [rdigregorio@sela.org](mailto:rdigregorio@sela.org)

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

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**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

**Work Documents:**

- DT 1 Draft agenda
- DT 2 Draft annotated agenda and organization of works
- DT 3 Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Permanent Secretariat
- DT 4 Draft Work Programme for the year 2015
- DT 5 Draft Administrative Budget of the Permanent Secretariat for the year 2015
- DT 6 Audit Report on the Financial Statements of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2013
- DT 7 Audit Proposal for the year 2014
- DT 8 Election of a Member of the Administrative Tribunal of SELA

**Informative Documents:**

- Di 1 Final Report on the Regional Meeting: "The United States economic relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. Status and prospects"
- Di 2 Follow-up Report on the on the application of the Helms Burton Law, 2013-2014
- Di 3 Final Report on the Regional Meeting on Latin American and Caribbean economic relations with emerging countries (BRICS)
- Di 4 Report on the Regional Integration Process, 2013-2014
- Di 5 Final Report on the Meeting of experts on the debt burden in the Caribbean region
- Di 6 Evolution of the Andean Community (CAN)
- Di 7 Evolution of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- Di 8 Evolution of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)
- Di 9 Evolution of the Central American Integration System (SICA)
- Di 10 Evolution of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP)
- Di 11 Evolution of the Pacific Alliance
- Di 12 Opportunities and challenges for coordination and convergence of subregional integration mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean

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- Di 13 An analysis of trade flows between SICA and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. Policy recommendations for their promotion, stabilization and diversification
- Di 14 An analysis of trade flows between CARICOM and Latin America. Policy recommendations for their promotion, stabilization and diversification
- Di 15 Final Report on the IV Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Di 16 Public procurement as a tool for development in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Di 17 Comparative study for the identification of best practices in managing international trade procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Di 18 Final Report on the XXV Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean. Cooperation and migrants' remittances: Impact on savings, investment and development
- Di 19 Final Report on the III Regional Seminar "partnerships between the public and private sectors for disaster risk management: continuity of government and continuity of operations during disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Achievement and experiences from the perspective of local governments and enterprises"
- Di 20 Public policies to support MSMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Di 21 Final Report on the Regional Workshop on public policies to promote SMEs (Bolivia)
- Di 22 Final Report on the Regional Workshop on public policies to promote SMEs (Honduras)
- Di 23 Final Report on the Regional Workshop on public policies to promote SMEs (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Di 24 Final Report on the Seminar-Workshop on productive coordination in Latin America
- Di 25 Final Report on the Meeting of export consortiums for the Caribbean
- Di 26 Final Report on the II Regional Workshop on development of SMEs in the area of handicrafts
- Di 27 Final Report on the Seminar-Workshop on Credit Guarantee Systems in the Caribbean
- Di 28 Final Report on the Seminar on promotion of innovation to improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Di 29 Final Report on the Seminar on the apparel industry and economic development in the Caribbean: Efficient Planning and Allocation of Resources
- Di 30 Final Report on the Meeting on institutional strengthening of SMEs business associations



- Di 31 Economic and cooperation relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and United States
  - Di 32 Final Report on the Regional Meeting to monitor and analyze the economic situation of the European Union and its impact on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean
  - Di 33 Final Report on the Regional Meeting on the economic, trade and cooperation relations of Latin America and the Caribbean with the People's Republic of China
  - Di 34 Final Report on the Regional Meeting on the economic and trade relations of Latin America and the Caribbean with nations of the Pacific, India and Africa
  - Di 35 Legal, social, and environmental effects of the operations of transnational companies in Latin America and the Caribbean
  - Di 36 Conclusions and recommendations of documents and meetings of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA in 2014
  - Di 37 Directory of intergovernmental organizations, institutions and agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean
- SELA Antenna in the United States
  - Bulletin on Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean
  - "Avances" Electronic Bulletin