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Système Economique  
Latinoaméricain et Caribéen

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# **Conclusions and Recommendations of the II Regional Meeting on Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean**

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Printed in the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, Caracas, Venezuela.

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## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. Participants in the II Regional Meeting on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, held within the framework of SELA (Caracas, 18 July 2008), took note with interest of the document prepared by the Permanent Secretariat, titled "Social Dimension of Integration: Guidelines for an Action Plan in the areas of health, education, housing and employment" (SP/SRC-DSIALC/DT No. 1 – 08), which served as the basis for the discussions among the representatives of the Member States.
2. In addition to recognizing the usefulness of the study prepared by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and its proposals, the delegates underscored the relevance of the analysis on Regional Social Policies made by the representative of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA).
3. Similarly, the delegates made emphasis on the crucial importance of the elements contained in the Conclusions and Recommendations stemming from the Regional Seminar for Consultation on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in the headquarters of SELA on 16 and 17 July 2008, with the participation of various representatives of Latin American and Caribbean social organizations.
4. The delegates thanked for the presentations made by the representatives of SISCA, MERCOSUR, the Andean Community, CARICOM, the Pro-Tempore Secretariat of UNASUR and the Coordination of ALBA, which allowed for sharing and analyzing the various views existing at the subregional level of the social dimension of integration, while identifying some of the key elements for creating a Regional Cooperation Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration.
5. Following are some of the most relevant issues discussed by the delegates of the Member States of SELA:
  - a) The need to overcome the essentially commercialist approach to the integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, which requires strengthening the political dimension, the productive dimension, the social dimension and the cultural dimension of regional integration.
  - b) The debate on trade within the framework of Latin American and Caribbean integration must not deal only with the issue of tariffs, but it also has to take account of other elements in order to underpin trade and cooperation relations among our countries.
  - c) Some delegates mentioned the direct relationship between the discussion on the social dimension of development and integration with the prevailing economic policy model, and particularly with the neo-liberal notions that have dominated in our region; in view of this, it is necessary to adopt a model which considers human being as the axis for development.
  - d) Mention was made of the importance of considering the issue of migration and its implications for development with equity.
  - e) Some delegates emphasized that it is necessary to transversalize the analysis and treatment of the social dimension of development and integration, particularly by incorporating the issues related to gender, minorities and indigenous groups, among others.

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- f) They also stressed that many of our countries are facing a dilemma; on the one hand, it is necessary to deal with the social demands for improving the living conditions of our peoples, and on the other hand, our governments are under the pressure of the requirements of multilateral financial institutions. For this reason, it is crucial to strengthen the regional mechanisms for financing development and, particularly social programmes.
- g) The accumulated social problems must be confronted and solved as soon as possible. In this connection, participants pointed out that our region faces three different challenges: i) how to move ahead in a transition within our countries that gives priority to social matters; ii) how to make progress with a vision of Latin American and Caribbean integration so that our region as a whole can face the challenges of development with social inclusion; and iii) how to strengthen regional mechanisms that allow for undertaking effective projects for social development.
- h) Reference was made to the issue of the emphasis on social policies that allow for providing basic social services to the downtrodden, optimizing the use of resources. For this reason, some delegates recommended to focus the regional cooperation programme on social dimension of integration within the framework of SELA on the ways to meet the needs of the most vulnerable sectors through integral actions in order to create economic and social opportunities and to ensure empowerment and security for those sectors.
- i) Delegates recognized that it is necessary to build citizenship in any process to design, implement and evaluate programmes for social inclusion. In this connection, it is convenient to make efforts in order to identify, train and promote the strengthening of social networks that actively participate in social policy making for development and integration.
- j) Delegates stressed that poverty and social exclusion have important implications for the consolidation of democracy in the region. Therefore, it is necessary to focus the analyses and proposals of SELA on common elements such as democracy, integration and development with equity. As part of this, priority must be given to building social protection systems that ensure respect for the fundamental rights of the population.
- k) Participants in the debates also pointed out that the concepts or areas to be dealt with in any discussions or proposals on the social dimension of development must also include those related to the dichotomy between social costs and social investment, between public education and private education, and between the scope and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the institutional framework to enforce compliance with the norms related to CSR.
- l) Emphasis was made on fact that inequality generates more poverty and constrains development, which reveals how intimately related these three concepts are: inequality, poverty and development. This issue must be at the centre of the discussions and proposals, such as the ones being carried out by SELA. Inequality generates violence and has a definitive impact on the increase of criminality in the region.
- m) Similarly, there was an exchange of opinions as regards the importance of considering the issue of the arms race and particularly the military costs – which reduce the amount of available resources that, otherwise, could be invested in social projects – in the analyses on the social dimension of development and integration.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.- The delegates recognized the need for the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to take into consideration the discussions that took place in the Regional Seminar for Consultation on the Social Dimension of Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean and in this Regional Meeting, in preparing the proposal for a Regional Cooperation Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration within the framework of SELA.
- 2.- In order to outline the proposal for a Regional Cooperation Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration, the Permanent Secretariat shall work in collaboration with the United Nations agencies, the subregional integration organizations, the social organizations in LAC, and other cooperation bodies at the regional and international levels.
- 3.- The delegations suggested that, in its proposal for a Regional Cooperation Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA should take into consideration specific actions to which priority must be given in each one of its stages or phases, so as to obtain the best possible results with the highest possible efficiency and rationality.
- 4.- The objectives, structure and contents of said Regional Cooperation Programme will be submitted by the Permanent Secretariat – prior coordination with regional and international organizations – to the next Latin American Council of SELA for approval by the Member States.
- 5.- The delegates underscored the importance for the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to continue with these analytical and coordination efforts, with a view to maintaining a fluent exchange among the Member States of SELA, the relevant international organizations, the UN System agencies, and the representatives of social organizations in the region, in order to move ahead with the social dimension of development and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 6.- The Permanent Secretariat of SELA was recommended to encourage, in its work on regional integration, an exchange of views with the active participation of representatives of the subregional integration organizations (SICA, CARICOM, MERCOSUR and CAN) and of the most innovative initiatives of UNASUR and ALBA, on the integration modalities, particularly as regards the commitments or disciplines related to the "liberalization" and "protection" that should coexist within integration efforts. This stands in direct relation with the issue of social development of our peoples.
- 7.- In the search for financing to prepare and implement the Regional Cooperation Programme on the Social Dimension of Integration in LAC, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA should address to those bodies in the European Union which have available cooperation funds for social development programmes, as well as regional financial institutions such as CAF, IDB, the ALBA Bank and the Bank of the South, which give priority to projects for development with social inclusion in our region.
- 8.- Participants congratulated the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for its work to conduct this important meeting.