

Speech by Ambassador Javier Paulinich, Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA)

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Honourable Mr Eduardo Ramírez, Vice-Minister of Economic Articulation of the People's Ministry for Economy and Finances of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Honourable Mr Félix Plasencia, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the People's Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Your Excellency, Mr Sebastián Michel Hoffman, Ambassador of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Chairman of the Latin American Council;

Honourable Mr Roberto Araos Sánchez, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Chile and First Vice-Chairman of the Latin American Council;

Honourable Mr Juan Manuel Nungaray, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the United States of Mexico and Second Vice-Chairman of the Latin American Council;

Yppur Excellencies Ambassadors and Chargés d'Affaires of the Member States of SELA;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Representatives of International Organizations accredited to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Officials of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to warmly welcome you all to the XLIV Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council of SELA.

During this last year, the first of my tenure as Permanent Secretary of SELA, we have endeavoured to comply with the Work Programme approved by the Latin American Council the previous year. The activities we have carried out were completed focusing on current and relevant matters related to the sustained growth and social development of the Member States of the organization, which are directly linked to the relentless and rewarding mission of contributing to strengthening the integration process of Latin America and the Caribbean.

All the activities developed were aimed at analyzing the production structures and the economic growth of the region; at encouraging productive integration, regional and global value chains, cooperation and public-private partnerships and, fundamentally, at fostering the development and dynamism of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through the strengthening of the public and private entities supporting them.

I believe that promoting multilateral cooperation opportunities that facilitate convergence among the different regional and international schemes and organizations, through cooperative and synergistic work, is a top priority and highly beneficial for the integration process in the region, especially in a context of global trade disputes that have an impact on the economic growth of all countries, particularly that of developing countries.

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Accordingly, since SELA has a number of specific structural characteristics, including its role as a regional body for economic and social consultancy, coordination, cooperation and promotion, as well as its unique regional composition – which have turned SELA into a highly appreciated strategic partner – we have continued to cement several inter-institutional cooperation agreements, as described below:

1. A Cooperation Agreement was signed with the General Secretariat of the Andean Community for sustainable and inclusive economic development in the countries of the region, especially in the areas of migration flows, labour market and integration.
2. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) to promote inter-institutional cooperation, focusing on the exchange of experiences and good practices in trade, investment and tourism.
3. A Framework Agreement was signed with the Trade Promotion Agency of Andalusia (EXTENDA) to conduct joint actions aimed at promoting extra-regional cooperation, development and internationalization of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).
4. A Technical Cooperation Agreement was signed with CAF-Development Bank of Latin America to implement a productive articulation programme aimed at the strengthening and development of SMEs in the region.
5. A Work Plan for 2019-2020 was agreed with the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) aimed at promoting activities of mutual interest and knowledge exchange on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), specifically the Public Policy Index adapted for Central America, which will be developed together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
6. A Cooperation Agreement was signed with the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS) to promote knowledge regarding economic and social development.
7. A Cooperation Agreement was signed with the Latin American Center for Development Administration (CLAD) aimed at strengthening economic and social development with emphasis on actions associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is going to be signed right here today.

These agreements are in addition to those signed during the first months of my tenure with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI).

The next step now is the timely implementation of the agreements signed in the framework of a permanent inter-institutional cooperation work for the benefit of the Member States.

Additionally, it is important to note that the Permanent Secretariat has made progress in complying with a mandate from this high instance in the area of Results-based Management of the Work Programme and Budget, as a number of professional officials recently completed at the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) a training course in the application of this innovative methodology of work for SELA, which will allow for greater transparency in our activities.

Therefore, next year I will have the privilege of presenting before this Latin American Council the Work Programme and the Budget of the Permanent Secretariat for year 2020, incorporating this useful tool that will include management and monitoring indicators for each of the activities to be developed, with the purpose of assessing the impact of SELA's work on the region in real terms.

I would also like to mention that most of the activities we have developed to date, but also the subsequent ones, are closely linked to the 2030 Agenda, bearing in mind the advisability of connecting our activities with the Sustainable Development Goals.

With regard to the Work Programme for 2019, which will be fulfilled by the Permanent Secretariat with the approval of the present Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, both productive articulation and SMEs have been prioritized as cross-cutting topics.

Always bearing in mind the importance of the analysis of intra-regional and extra-regional relations and economic and technical cooperation, as the subject areas of SELA, we intend to carry out actions aimed at promoting them in the economic and social spheres.

In the economic sphere, we will continue to stimulate the development of value chains, encouraging electronic commerce, the digital economy, the creative and cultural industries, and inclusive labour markets, with special attention to the continuity of the projects that are carried out in support of decision makers in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, based on a multidimensional approach concerning the formalization, entrepreneurship, internationalization, and assessment of impacts, and public policy design and implementation.

As far as the social sphere is concerned, matters related to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), food security, poverty reduction, and migration challenges will be addressed.

It is essential to address the economic and social issues jointly, as both are closely linked.

In conclusion, the Work Programme for next year is designed to reinforce the role of SELA as a regional integration mechanism, which promotes and strengthens the important role of governmental cooperation in the interest of economic growth and social development for the benefit of their peoples.

Thank you for your attention.