



# **Final Report**

## **XVII Special Meeting of the Latin American Council**

*XVII Special Meeting of the Latin American Council  
Caracas, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela  
16 May 2023  
SP/CL/XVII.E/IR-23*

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## INTRODUCTION

The [XVII Special Meeting of the Latin American Council](#) was held on 16 May 2023 in the "Andrés Bello" Conference Room at the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat. The meeting began at 11:40 a.m. and was conducted in a face-to-face and virtual modality, through the digital platform Zoom.

The Bureau was made up of His Excellency Óscar Laborde, Ambassador of Argentina in Venezuela and Chairman of the Latin American Council; His Excellency Lesly David, Ambassador of Haiti in Venezuela and First Vice-Chairman of the Latin American Council; Her Excellency Scarleth Romero, Ambassador of Honduras in Venezuela and Second Vice-Chairman of the Latin American Council; His Excellency Dagoberto Rodríguez, Ambassador of Cuba in Venezuela and Rapporteur of the Latin American Council; and His Excellency Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA.

The delegations of the following Member States of the organization participated in the event: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. [The list of participants](#) is available in Annex I.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEETING

The Chairman expressed his greetings and gratitude to all participating delegations for their presence. Afterwards, he made some brief remarks about Latin America and the Caribbean, saying that much is needed from each of its member countries and integration organisations, and that SELA, thanks to its flexibility, plays a fundamental articulating role in achieving the convergent work required to promote regional development. Referring to the GRULAC Meeting that preceded the XVII Special Meeting of the Latin American Council, in which the Permanent Secretary analysed the regional situation, the Chairman said that the economic and trade situation "should worry us" because it is extremely difficult, that we have to strengthen our integrationist vocation and that SELA can add tools to promote this vocation. Afterwards, he submitted for consideration of the audience the *Annotated agenda and themes for work* (SP/CL/XVII.E/DT N° 2-23), which included the following items:

- I. Progress report on the Permanent Secretariat's multi-year Work Programme
- II. Status of the restructuring process of the Permanent Secretariat (calls for Coordinator positions)

In the absence of any comments on the agenda, he declared it approved and then asked the Permanent Secretary to proceed with the first item on the agenda.

The Permanent Secretary, after greeting and welcoming the audience, summarised and commented on the activities implemented in the period November 2022 - April 2023. He reiterated that the *Work Programme for 2022-2026* is aimed at responding to the needs of the membership by strengthening convergence for integration, in order to achieve the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations. He then provided details of the implementation of activities by thematic area (Economic Recovery, Digitalisation and Infrastructure and Social Development), highlighting those conducted, those under development and those planned for the period May-November 2023.

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In his presentation, the Permanent Secretary made special emphasis on the activities aimed at promoting joint and convergent inter-secretariat work in the region among the various integration mechanisms and secretariats, with the participation of the main regional organisations linked to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to define coordination areas of work that facilitate the convergence of regional agendas and allow for addressing the challenges faced by the region. He informed that, to that end, the integration mechanisms agreed to strengthen strategic alliances that will allow them to advance and contribute to the construction of an agenda that responds with concrete actions to the needs of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Finally, he commented on the various agreements entered into by the Permanent Secretariat with regional and extra-regional entities with the purpose of building a shared regional agenda to promote the strategies and actions required to leverage the growth and development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Chairman expressed his gratitude and congratulations to the Permanent Secretary for the presentation and, as there were no comments from delegations, asked him to proceed with the second item on the agenda.

The Permanent Secretary recalled that in November 2021, the XLVII Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council approved [Decision 589 Restructuring of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA](#), authorizing the Permanent Secretariat to design an organisational restructuring programme to update the organisation's positions and evaluate the performance of its staff members. He then summarized the three main instruments derived from the restructuring process, namely: the *Performance evaluation programme*, the *New Organisation Chart*, the *description of positions*, and the *Personnel Manual*. He then highlighted, valued, and acknowledged the participation of the staff of the Permanent Secretariat in the job description process, with the support of a consultancy firm specialising in the field. Finally, he commented on the calls for the two vacant area coordinator positions: Digitalisation and Infrastructure, and Social Development.

The Chairman gave the floor to the delegations.

The Bolivian delegate referred to what he called the logic of functional management of the organisation. He said that SELA should not concentrate too much on conducting seminars. He congratulated the organisation for its repositioning strategy, which is reflected, he said, in its recognition by intergovernmental and cooperation organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, he stressed the need for and importance of maintaining the flexibility of the Work Programme so that SELA can adapt to the requirements of the region and the new challenges the world is facing.

The Chairman expressed that the Bolivian delegation's position reflected a concern that should be taken into account, because what he called "the inbred temptation of international organisations" is a constant and, he suggested, it is necessary to be attentive to what the Bolivian delegation said.

The delegate of Peru, after greeting the audience, expressed her surprise that the Council meeting did not start at the scheduled time and that the delegations attending virtually were not notified. She shared the opinion of the delegation of Bolivia with respect to the inclusion of seminars in SELA's Work Programme. She congratulated the Permanent Secretariat for the restructuring process of the organisation and asked if there would be another request to extend the deadline for this process. She recommended that the objectivity of the manuals prepared and their concordance with the stipulations of the labour legislation of Venezuela, as the host country,

should be ensured in order to avoid possible legal action. She asked whether, in the context of the restructuring, any officials had been dismissed and whether there were any complaints and, if so, how they had been resolved. Finally, she asked whether, in addition to the usual financial audit, an audit of results was planned, whether the objectives had been achieved and whether the budget allocated was correct.

The Chairman apologised for the late start of the meeting and the lack of notification, due to the fact that a previous GRULAC meeting had been held at the same venue, where most of the confirmed participants for the Council meeting were present. Then, he gave the floor to the Permanent Secretary.

With regard to the request to extend the deadline for the completion of the restructuring process, the Permanent Secretary informed that this had been done in order to complete the development of the envisaged manuals and evaluation mechanisms, still pending by the end of November 2022. He added that for the preparation of the manuals, two external support services had been provided, one for the design of the new organisational structure and the other for the legal review of the manuals in order to ensure that they were in line with the *Panama Convention Establishing the Latin American Economic System (SELA)*, the *Headquarters Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Venezuela and the Latin American Economic System (SELA)*, and the labour legislation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

He recalled that the restructuring was foreseen in two areas: a thematic one, which began immediately after its approval and provides for the three thematic areas in which the current multi-year Work Programme is organized, whose flexibility is determined by the mandates and requests from the Member States. For this reason, he said, an update of the *Work Programme for 2022-2026* was made at the Latin American Council Meeting in November 2022.

He added that some policy guidelines, the institutional strengthening of governments through training actions, technical assistance and some specific studies conducted by the Permanent Secretariat also respond to specific requests from the Member States. As an example of the aforementioned studies, he cited the [Mapping of potential productive niches in Paraguay: presentation of results](#).

He went on to explain that the second area of internal restructuring referred to the internal coordination mechanisms and the redefinition of the personnel structure, without affecting the rights of current officials, whose manuals, job descriptions and evaluation mechanisms, non-existent in SELA so far, have already been completed and were referred to in this report. Therefore, this process has been concluded in accordance with the mandate of Decision 589, and it is now necessary to rely on this new structure in order to efficiently comply with the mandates of the Work Programme.

With respect to complaints about this matter, he informed that SELA has not received any official notification in this regard. He pointed out that such a notification should be received from the People's Ministry of Foreign Affairs pursuant to the aforementioned Headquarters Agreement signed by SELA with that Ministry.

The delegate of Panama suggested that a technical meeting be held prior to each meeting of the Latin American Council.

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In response to the suggestion made by the delegation of Panama, the Permanent Secretary pointed out that no technical meetings are foreseen prior to the meetings of the Latin American Council, but that they could be held if requested by the Member States.

As there were no other matters to be discussed, the Chairman closed the XVII Special Meeting of the Latin American Council.



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