



Final Report

Economic Recovery

Roundtable of chairs and secretariats of regional integration mechanisms

Lima, Peru

12 June 2025

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C O N T E N T S

A. INTRODUCTION	1
B. BACKGROUND	1
C. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEETING	2
D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
E. LINES OF ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP	13
F. OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING	14
G. CLOSING REMARKS	14
ANNEX I. AGENDA	17
ANNEX IV. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	20

A. INTRODUCTION

Regional convergence has gained renewed relevance as a way to strengthen cooperation among the various integration schemes in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to achieve a more efficient integration, avoid duplication of efforts and optimise available resources. In this context, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, together with the regional integration mechanisms, has promoted an inter-secretariat work agenda that has been consolidated through regional technical forums and, more recently, through the *“Roundtable of chairs and secretariats of regional integration mechanisms,”* held in Lima, Peru. This meeting, held on 12 June 2025 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Andean Community (SGCAN), brought together the secretariats and representatives of integration organisations to present and validate the Regional Convergence Matrix, a tool designed to facilitate inter-institutional articulation around priority issues for the region.

B. BACKGROUND

Regional convergence emerges as a key strategy to strengthen cooperation among the various integration schemes in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the ultimate goal of achieving a more efficient integration, avoiding duplications and optimising resources to respond to the challenges that characterise the region. The Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) has promoted an inter-secretariat work agenda, consolidating efforts through a strategic forum that facilitated the alignment of policies and effective cooperation, held on 16 December 2022 entitled *“Responding to the challenges of integration for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean,”* organised with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), under the presidency pro tempore of Argentina. This forum marked a turning point in regional cooperation by laying the foundations for an inter-secretariat work agenda structured in five technical working groups:

1. **Food security:** Seminar held on 20 April 2023 in San Salvador, organised by SELA and SG-SICA.
2. **Regional energy integration:** Seminar held on 21 April 2023, with the participation of SELA, ACS, CAN, ALADI, OLADE, SICA and MERCOSUR.
3. **Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation:** Seminar held on 9 May 2023 in Antigua, Guatemala, organised by the ACS and SELA.
4. **Production chains:** Seminar held on 27 July 2023 in Montevideo, at the headquarters of ALADI, organised with SELA.
5. **Cross-border cooperation and infrastructure:** Seminar held on 15 August 2024 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Andean Community (SGCAN), organised with SELA.

These meetings made it possible to strengthen inter-institutional dialogue and to make progress in the creation of a Regional Convergence Matrix Proposal, designed to identify areas of common interest among the various integration schemes in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its ultimate goal is to facilitate coordination and cooperation among these schemes, optimising resources and avoiding duplication of integration efforts. By identifying common and non-common points in the issues that each organisation works on, the matrix allows for the establishment of a joint roadmap in strategic areas of shared interest, promoting a more efficient and cohesive regional integration.

Furthermore, the Inter-Secretariat Matrix is a key tool for monitoring progress and identifying opportunities that not only optimise resources and avoid redundancies in integration efforts, but

2

also highlights the importance of developing a common regulatory framework that harmonises policies, reduces trade barriers and promotes the adoption of regional standards based on the joint work of the Pacific Alliance (PA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Andean Community (CAN), the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP) and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA).

The implementation of this joint roadmap aims to establish a long-term strategic vision to strengthen economic and social cohesion in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional convergence, therefore, is emerging as a fundamental pillar to boost sustainable development and economic resilience in the region.

C. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEETING

The event was held in a hybrid format, with both face-to-face and virtual interventions. The opening session was delivered by Ambassador Milton Rengifo, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Chairman of the Bureau of the Latin American Council of SELA; Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Secretary-General of the Andean Community; and Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA, who underscored the importance of moving towards greater regional coordination without the need to create new structures.

1. Opening session

Remarks by the moderator Jean Paul Guevara

The session was opened by Jean Paul Guevara, who welcomed the participants, both in person and online. Guevara contextualised the roundtable by pointing out that the main objective of the session was to review and reflect on the report entitled *"Integration in integration: new paths for synergy in the region."* He explained that this document is a systematisation of the work developed on the Regional Convergence Matrix over the last two years regarding integration among regional mechanisms and organisations.

In his remarks, he stressed that this effort responds to a shared need to move towards greater convergence among the existing integration organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional integration is a process under permanent construction, which requires sustained action and continuous coordination.

Afterwards, he expressed his gratitude for the presence of high-level authorities and representatives of regional integration mechanisms, among them: Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Secretary-General of the Andean Community; Ambassador Clarems Endara Vera, Permanent Secretary of SELA; Ambassador Milton Rengifo, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Venezuela and Chairman of the Bureau of SELA; Minister Plenipotentiary Leonardo Enrique Correa Godoy, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia; the Honourable Fernando Arnoldo Colocho, Coordinator of Strategic Analysis of the Direction for Strategic Analysis and Communication of the Central American Integration System (SICA); the Honourable Alejandro Bonilla, Head of the Department of Agreements and Negotiations of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); the Honourable Natasha George, Legal Adviser of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); and the

Honourable Pablo Rabczuk, Senior Programme Officer and Chief of Staff of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Finally, he gave the floor to Ambassador Milton Rengifo to start the high-level segment of interventions.

Remarks by Ambassador Milton Rengifo, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Venezuela

The Ambassador of Colombia in Venezuela and Chairman of the Bureau of the Latin American Council of SELA, Milton Rengifo, began his speech by expressing his gratitude for the presence of the authorities and participants, and acknowledging the crucial moment the region is going through, which requires not only reflection, but also coordinated and effective action.

He stressed that the meeting responded to the need to move towards a more solid and effective regional institutional convergence aligned with current challenges. In this connection, he said that for SELA, regional integration is not an option, but a structural necessity in the face of shared problems such as inequality, productive fragmentation, climate vulnerability and technological backwardness.

He pointed out that coordination among the regional secretariats has become a strategic obligation, with the Inter-Secretariat Matrix being a key instrument that synthesises coincidences among the different integration schemes. He explained that this matrix represents a concrete roadmap for joint action, built through technical seminars, political dialogues and collaborative actions with contributions from organisations such as ALADI, SICA, MERCOSUR, CARICOM and CAN.

Ambassador Rengifo reaffirmed Colombia's commitment to this process, highlighting the importance of building institutional bridges, harmonising rules, fostering productive linkages and designing public policies that promote the well-being and resilience of the region. He gave as an example the progress made in cross-border cooperation, food security and sustainable infrastructure projects, which demonstrate the ability to translate political will into tangible results.

He concluded by stressing that the Matrix not only promotes administrative efficiency, but also social cohesion, productive inclusion and regional sustainability. He reiterated the commitment of SELA and the Government of Colombia to the strengthening of regional multilateralism, pointing out that in order to achieve a more integrated, fair and competitive Latin America and the Caribbean, it is essential to listen to each other, coordinate and act jointly.

Remarks by Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA

Ambassador Clarems Endara expressed his gratitude for the hospitality of Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez, Secretary General of the Andean Community, in hosting the session at the headquarters of the organisation, which he defined as a "house of Andean integration" that is now expanding towards the Caribbean and Central America.

He extended greetings to the authorities present, highlighting the representation of Ambassador Milton Rengifo, Chairman of the Bureau of the Latin American Council of SELA; Ambassador Leonardo Enrique Correa Godoy, representing CELAC; and the delegates of SICA, ALADI, ACS and

4

FAO, as well as the technical teams of SELA and CAN, for making this space for regional coordination possible.

In his speech, Endara explained that since 2022, a space for dialogue among regional integration mechanisms has been promoted as a “productive provocation,” which aims to go beyond the horizons mandated by the member countries. He stressed that the initiative arose in the context of Argentina's Presidency Pro Tempore of CELAC, with the aim of aligning agendas between the secretariats and mechanisms without distorting the legal frameworks or the mandate of the States, and with the aim of ensuring that projects of national or subregional scope can have a regional projection.

He pointed out that this articulation has made it possible to verify a broad coincidence between the integration mechanisms on key issues such as post-pandemic economic recovery, food security, energy transition and the strengthening of productive linkages. As a result, it has been possible to document specific advances and structure public policy proposals with a regional vocation, which, in his opinion, contributes directly to decision-making in political spaces such as CELAC and in the work of its Pro Tempore Presidencies.

Endara stressed that the document presented at this session represents a collective deliverable that can be scaled up, deepened and expanded with new issues of interest to the mechanisms. The final purpose is to reinforce regional public policies where gaps or insufficiencies are still identified.

Before concluding, he regretted the absence of representatives of the General Secretariat of ALBA-TCP due to the transition process they are going through but assured that this organisation has expressed its willingness to continue participating and supporting these initiatives. Finally, he expressed his gratitude once again for the welcome and expressed his hope that the day's work would be productive for all participants.

Remarks of Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinol, Secretary General of the Andean Community

Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinol, Secretary General of the Andean Community, welcomed the participants, expressing his gratitude for the presence of the regional authorities and highlighting the importance of the General Secretariat as a space for dialogue and expression of shared will to advance towards a more effective, articulated and strategic regional integration.

Gutiérrez contextualised his speech by pointing out that the region is going through a complex scenario, marked by common challenges that affect Latin American and Caribbean societies across the board. Among these, he mentioned geopolitical tensions, persistent inequalities, the effects of climate change and, with special emphasis, the growing threat of transnational organised crime, a phenomenon that not only compromises security but also the democratic stability of the countries in the region.

He underscored the progress made within the framework of inter-secretariat cooperation, describing it as a model of coordinated work and recognizing the key role played by SELA and its Permanent Secretary, Clarems Endara. He stressed that this inter-institutional dynamic has materialized through the Strategic Forum on the challenges of integration for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean, in which five technical roundtables were established to deal with strategic issues such as food security, energy integration, disaster risk reduction, productive linkages, and cross-border cooperation and infrastructure.

The Ambassador stressed that these roundtables, held over the last two years with broad participation of mechanisms such as SICA, ACS, ALADI, MERCOSUR and the CAN itself, have strengthened regional dialogue and allowed progress to be made in identifying common areas of work. As a result of this process, he particularly valued the construction of the Regional Convergence Matrix, which he considered a key tool for identifying programmatic coincidences, optimising resources and designing coordinated public policies based on shared priorities.

He emphasised that this stage of work should focus on deepening the articulation between mechanisms and moving from diagnoses to concrete action, generating tangible results for the benefit of citizens. In this context, he proposed incorporating the fight against transnational organised crime as a new thematic axis, based on the experience accumulated by the Andean Community through seven meetings of the high-level group on the subject. He warned that this phenomenon is no longer just a security threat but has become a real risk to the region's democratic systems and therefore called for it to be considered within the joint agenda of the integration mechanisms.

Finally, he reiterated the commitment of the General Secretariat of the Andean Community to this process of regional coordination, stressing the importance that collaborative work between mechanisms should translate into real opportunities for development, cohesion and well-being for the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. He expressed hope that the day would be fruitful and useful in identifying challenges, assessing achievements and, above all, outlining concrete actions for the future.

2. Presentation of the Regional Convergence Matrix

Afterwards, the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Clarems Endara, presented the base document "*Integration in Integration: new paths for regional synergy*." This session focused on the systematization of the Regional Convergence Matrix, the central document of the meeting, and on explaining the structure and objectives of the instrument, highlighting its value as a tool for joint planning and monitoring.

At the beginning of his presentation, he stressed that the document constitutes a tangible product of a collaborative process sustained for more than two years among the integration mechanisms of Latin America and the Caribbean. In a preliminary version, it was drafted to be validated by the representatives present, and its purpose is to build a useful, scalable tool based on technical consensus among the organisations.

During his intervention, Endara emphasised that the initiative arose as a response to the fragmentation and duplicity observed in recent political declarations, especially those of CELAC, and proposed moving forward from where consensus and shared technical mandates already exist. In this sense, the document seeks to systematise areas of thematic coincidence between mechanisms and project them at a regional level without contradicting the legal or political frameworks of the Member States.

The methodological process began by identifying the institutional mandates of each agency, analysing their scope and determining which could be scaled up regionally. This gave rise to the Inter-Secretariat Convergence Matrix, a tool that brings together the priorities, regulations, initiatives and projects underway, organised into five strategic axes. During the roundtables, progress was discussed for each of the five thematic areas:

6

- Food security: The matrix highlighted the coincidence between mechanisms such as CAN, SELA, MERCOSUR, SICA and ACTO. The SANCELAC Plan, led by FAO, was adopted as an articulating axis. Endara gave the example of the food security index developed by SELA for the Caribbean and Central America, and how, in coordination with FAO, efforts were integrated within the framework of the regional plan.
- Disaster risk reduction and climate change: All mechanisms have specialised institutions in the field. Endara stressed that there is sufficient technical accumulation and shared experiences to move towards a regional plan, taking advantage of the existing basis in the Sendai Framework and specific proposals such as coordination among CAPRADE, RENDEGIR, CEPREDENAC, among others.
- Production linkages and value chains: He noted that this axis has a cross-cutting mandate in most of the mechanisms. Through technical exercises, strategic products, processing capacities and needs for harmonisation of standards have been identified, with potential for development in sectors such as coffee, cocoa, processed food and manufacturing.
- Energy integration: The experience of SICA and the Andean Community in regulating electricity trade and energy interconnection was highlighted. Endara stressed the coordination with OLADE and the progress made in electromobility, although he acknowledged that common regulations are still lacking. Interconnectivity among countries was identified as key to expanding capacities and taking advantage of surpluses.
- Cross-border cooperation and infrastructure: Participants highlighted the work carried out by SELA on digital ports, with more than 28 registered logistics communities, and the need to integrate the private sector in the debates on port logistics. The experience of the CAN with the INTERCOM project was also valued, highlighting its technological interoperability as a replicable model at the regional level.

The Ambassador also addressed the challenges encountered, such as regulatory differences, the disparity of technical and budgetary capacities among the mechanisms, the reduction of international cooperation (particularly from the EU), and the difficulty of sustaining joint projects without specific funding and the need to seek financial support from organisations such as CAF and IDB for initiatives already structured with a diagnosis and project.

In terms of lessons learned, he highlighted the usefulness of building shared agendas, the need to deepen the participation of national actors, the importance of networks of focal points, and institutional flexibility to adapt to new realities.

Finally, Ambassador Endara proposed institutionalising inter-secretariat work with periodic thematic meetings and an annual face-to-face meeting, as well as setting up working groups led by the mechanisms themselves. He reiterated that comments on the distributed document are expected before its publication, and that this first stage has fulfilled its purpose: to consolidate a useful, scalable tool aligned with regional priorities, capable of guiding concrete actions with a direct impact on the development and well-being of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. Contributions from regional integration mechanisms

a) Contributions to the Regional Convergence Matrix

In a second stage, the space was opened for the formulation of contributions and recommendations on the convergence matrix, both in terms of the prioritised themes and the incorporation of new emerging issues.

Leonardo Correa Godoy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia

Mr. Correa Godoy expressed Colombia's support for the inter-secretariat work process and the RCM, noting that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already conducted a first review of the draft and is currently fine-tuning lines of work in coordination with other national institutions. He also highlighted the methodological approach used to identify the five thematic axes of the matrix, which reflect areas of high coincidence between the integration mechanisms under analysis.

Furthermore, making use of the preliminary version of the document, the Minister proposed the inclusion of a new strategic theme: sanitary self-sufficiency. He pointed out that this issue has been a priority for Colombia's Presidency Pro Tempore of CELAC and is a concern shared by several countries in the region. He stressed that health self-sufficiency seeks to reduce dependence on large international pharmaceutical companies, promote technology transfer, and allow States to take ownership of productive processes related to public health, with the aim of mitigating the structural vulnerabilities revealed during the pandemic. He also pointed out that the inclusion of the thematic axis of health self-sufficiency responds to an initiative promoted by Colombia as part of its regional leadership within the framework of CELAC, and that this topic reflects a strategic need widely shared by the countries of the region.

It should be noted that at the end of the working session, Mr. Godoy made an additional contribution aimed at enriching the regional convergence matrix, based on his participation in recent meetings of the Andean Community mechanism on disaster risk management, underlining the importance of incorporating the data management component for evidence-based decision making, pointing it out as an emerging cross-cutting issue that should be integrated into the inter-secretariat work. This line of action, he stressed, is key to guiding effective responses from regional cooperation.

In line with the above, he also proposed strengthening the approach to what he called the "triple transition:" energy, environment and digital. He considered that these dimensions are related to urgent structural transformations for the region and require more ambitious and articulated approaches, since many social problems derive from unsustainable models in these three areas.

He took the opportunity to suggest that, in future versions, the participation of the Pacific Alliance should also be incorporated, recognising its sui generis character as a mechanism without a permanent secretariat, which could have made its initial inclusion difficult. He stressed that there are areas, such as productive linkages, where the Alliance has developed substantive work, and therefore considered it appropriate to include its contributions in the matrix.

Finally, Mr. Correa reflected on the diversity of administrative models that countries use to assume their commitments to regional integration mechanisms, which, in his opinion, generates thematic and operational imbalances. In this context, he suggested that future discussions could consider the participation of the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), an organisation specialised in public management issues, which has developed comparative studies on state

8

administrative structures and could contribute to identifying best practices in institutional articulation.

Mr. Correa concluded by reiterating Colombia's commitment to the inter-secretariat process, its full willingness to continue working actively in this space, and its interest in taking the inputs from this meeting to CELAC's work areas.

Alejandro Bonilla, Head of the Department of Agreements and Negotiations of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI)

Mr. Alejandro Bonilla joined in recognising the relevance of the collective effort reflected in the convergence matrix and noted that in Latin America, the tendency to institutionalise excessively can lead to structures that are not very functional. In a region with so many similarities, small differences tend to polarise, while in other regions differences tend to unite. This observation served as a basis for highlighting the complexity faced by regional integration, due to variables such as the different functions performed by each organisation, the diversity of issues addressed, the heterogeneity of memberships (13, 24, 32 countries, depending on the mechanism), and the different historical moments that countries are going through.

In this regard, trying to fully resolve each of these variables could lead to an endless stalemate, and when consensus is finally reached, the political scenarios will have already changed. For this reason, he defended the approach proposed at the conference: to move forward by means of concrete agreements, based on the practical and operational aspects, with a focus on results that demonstrate the benefits of convergence and inter-institutional cooperation.

Furthermore, it was not a matter of denying mandates or requests from the countries, but rather of seeking ways to provide effective responses, without duplication and making the most of resources. In this context, he valued the inter-secretariat matrix as a functional tool, which can facilitate the identification of specific projects, convene the bodies involved and guide coordinated responses to common demands.

In this context, he contrasted that many of the representatives who attend various regional forums are the same, and that they transfer requests without necessarily knowing the thematic, budgetary or competence limits of each body. This generates overlapping, parallel efforts and waste of resources, which could be avoided through better technical and institutional coordination.

Mr. Bonilla concluded that the key is to establish practical, immediate and results-oriented coordination, starting from the specific and moving towards the structural. This strategy, in his opinion, will allow progress to be made in the consolidation of the convergence matrix, generating visible impacts for governments and, above all, for the citizens of the region.

Natasha George, Legal Advisor of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

Natasha George intervened to express her appreciation and support for the inter-secretariat initiative presented during the day. She underlined the importance of continuing to promote cooperation, coordination and consultation among regional integration mechanisms, stressing that the document presented contains essential elements to strengthen these dimensions.

In her intervention, she emphasised the need to identify synergies among regional organisations, which she considered fundamental to achieve a greater impact in working together. She highlighted disaster risk reduction and climate change as examples, pointing out that these are challenges shared by all the countries in the region, although they manifest themselves differently in each one, given their geographical, institutional and capacity diversity.

She also recalled that the ACS groups 35 Member States, which implies great complexity in the management of consensus and actions, which is why she valued even more the proposal for inter-institutional articulation put forward within the framework of this conference. She concluded by reiterating her appreciation for the work presented and expressed the ACS' continued commitment to support this initiative, as it represents a concrete opportunity to advance towards a more effective and coordinated integration for the benefit of the region.

Fernando Arnoldo Colucho, Strategic Analysis Coordinator of SICA General Secretariat (virtual)

During the day, Fernando Arnoldo Colucho made a virtual intervention, highlighting that the Central American Integration System (SICA) has participated in the efforts of inter-institutional articulation between regional mechanisms, especially during the years 2022 and 2023, under the leadership of the then Secretary General Werner Vargas. SICA hosted one of the technical meetings dedicated to the issue of food and nutrition security, which was considered an important milestone in contributing to the regional convergence process.

The proposal of the Regional Convergence Matrix was positively valued, considering it a valuable input, and mentioned that SICA is currently developing similar exercises of thematic alignment and articulation with other schemes, such as the Mesoamerica Project. He explained that these processes seek to identify common areas, avoid duplication, optimise resources and make regional action more effective. Colucho stressed that, as established in the 2022-2026 Work Plan approved by the SICA Heads of State and Government, this type of inter-institutional dialogue is a priority shared by the Central American countries.

He also explained that the SICA General Secretariat is currently under interim management by the Executive Directorate, pending the appointment of a new Secretary General. However, he assured that all institutional efforts, including those related to the Convergence Matrix, would continue to be followed up.

Colucho indicated that SICA will gather all the information shared during the day and that, after a process of internal technical analysis, observations and feedback will be provided in order to strengthen and enrich the content of the document. He reiterated the willingness of the Central American system to collaborate actively and reaffirmed that these exercises allow for a broader collective understanding of regional synergies in key areas such as energy, trade, food security and technical cooperation.

He concluded by expressing his gratitude for the inclusion of SICA in this dialogue, valuing this space as a constructive example of cooperation, and by assuring the commitment to transmit the advances and contents of this day to the highest authorities of the system for their due consideration.

Pablo Rabczuk, Senior Programme Officer and Chief of Staff to the FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean

As an observer, Pablo Rabczuk briefly took the floor to express his gratitude for the invitation extended by the Secretary-General of the Andean Community and the Permanent Secretary of SELA, stressing the importance that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) attaches to regional integration spaces.

In addition to the bilateral work that FAO maintains with each country in Latin America and the Caribbean, there are strategic agendas that are more efficiently articulated through regional integration mechanisms. In this regard, he shared some concrete examples of active cooperation with different regional bodies:

- With SICA, SIECA and CCAD, in initiatives linked to the Central American Dry Corridor and access to GEF green funds.
- With CARICOM, through key projects in the Caribbean.
- With ACTO, in programmes focused on the Amazon.
- With the Andean Community, with which a cooperation agreement was recently renewed for sanitary and phytosanitary issues, addressing problems such as fusarium and the locust plague, among others.

These initiatives were framed in the context of an adverse international scenario. The global situation, marked by conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, trade tensions among major powers, and a significant reduction in resources from donor countries, has directly affected the operating budgets of UN system agencies, including FAO.

In this context, joint work with regional integration mechanisms becomes even more strategic and essential, as it allows for broadening the scope of technical cooperation, optimising resources and giving continuity to actions despite budgetary adjustments.

Finally, Rabczuk expressed FAO's interest in using the Regional Convergence Matrix presented during the conference as a tool to identify new areas of collaboration and joint actions, reiterating its willingness to strengthen the articulated work with the regional integration secretariats.

Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinol, Secretary General of the Andean Community

In his intervention, Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinol shared his views on the usefulness of the document *"Integration in Integration,"* generally highlighting the value of its visual elements to facilitate the understanding of the work of the organisations and the possible synergies among them. He also pointed out that, as it is still a draft, there is room for further enrichment.

In order to strengthen this aspect of the report, the Ambassador shared significant experiences currently being developed by the Andean Community, which could be incorporated to enrich the panorama represented, mentioning two concrete examples:

1. The course on intellectual property, promoted by the Andean Community, aims to strengthen the commercial and innovation capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through the strategic use of instruments such as collective trademarks, designations of origin

- and geographical indications. He noted that this training has been in high demand, recently exceeding 1,000 registrations, which demonstrates its relevance and scope.
2. Subregional business meetings, which are organised annually with an emphasis on the participation of MSMEs. These events facilitate trade exchanges between buyers and sellers from both the subregion and other countries. He announced that, under the Presidency Pro Tempore of Colombia, the next meeting is already scheduled to be held in Montería in August.

Ambassador Gutiérrez proposed that these types of activities, clearly aligned with the objectives of regional integration, be integrated into the charts of the report, so that the document more accurately represents the concrete work carried out by the mechanisms. Accordingly, he urged all participating organisations to review the graphic annex and propose updates to reflect more accurately their active initiatives and areas of work.

In addition, Ambassador Gutiérrez put forward the proposal to incorporate the fight against transnational organised crime as a new thematic axis of the RCM, based on the experience accumulated by the Andean Community, which has held seven meetings of the high-level group specialised in the matter. He reiterated that this phenomenon has ceased to be merely a security threat and has become a structural risk for the democratic systems of the region, which fully justifies its incorporation into the joint agenda of the integration mechanisms. Therefore, including this thematic line would strengthen the strategic focus of the report and allow progress to be made towards more effective coordination in the regional response to complex and shared challenges.

Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA

Likewise, Ambassador Clarems Endara had already anticipated the need to broaden the thematic scope of the convergence matrix, proposing to incorporate the axis of migration and consular cooperation, in view of the best practices recently identified in regional meetings.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the day, Ambassador Clarems Endara presented a set of concrete lines of action, with the aim of translating the progress made in this first phase of inter-secretariat work into a coordinated operational agenda. The proposals were formulated as input for the programming of the second phase of the regional convergence process. He stressed that the Regional Convergence Matrix, which is currently structured around five major axes, as mentioned above, now requires a technical closure stage, in order to consolidate the inputs provided and pave the way for an expansion with new themes.

In this regard, he asked the participating mechanisms to send final comments within ten days from the date of the meeting, in order to complement the document in thematic, technical and graphic aspects. This revision will allow progress to be made in its final editing, layout and printing, as well as in the planning of the next thematic forums that will accompany the development of the inter-secretariat work.

Ambassador Endara outlined several proposals for operational follow-up:

1. Strengthening cross-border cooperation through the INTERCOM project

12

A proposal is made to organise an inter-institutional technical workshop on the Andean Community's INTERCOM project, with the objective of explaining its operational structure, functioning and potential for interoperability in the exchange of customs and sanitary data. The workshop should identify opportunities for scaling up this model at the regional level, including bilateral agreements such as that of Colombia and Venezuela, and assess its application in Central America. The format could be virtual to facilitate access.

2. Disseminating OIRSA's sanitary model as a replicable experience

A proposal is made to hold an explanatory workshop on OIRSA's sanitary management model, aimed at learning about its functioning, operational efficiency and replicability in other regional contexts. This intergovernmental experience has proven to be self-sustainable and effective, and its dissemination will allow analysing the feasibility of adopting similar schemes in other subregions, including its articulation with SELA and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN).

3. Articulating business meetings and promoting a regional network of buyers

A regional schedule of business events promoted by the integration mechanisms (such as Expo ALADI, the Andean Business Meeting, among others), accompanied by a regional database of businessmen and strategic buyers, is proposed to be consolidated. This tool will facilitate better planning and guarantee the effective participation of buyers, a key condition for the sustainability of these regional trade spaces.

4. Scaling up the regional study on public policies for SMEs

It is proposed to expand the scope of the SELA-CAF-OECD study on public policies for SMEs to Central American countries and other subregions. This study, which has already been applied in 10 countries of the Southern Cone, offers an accurate x-ray on access to financing, procedures, exports, technology, gender and environment. It is suggested that a regional workshop be organised to invite new countries to join and use the results to design strategies for institutional strengthening.

5. Promoting border facilitation and harmonisation of transport regulations

A proposal is being made to organise a technical workshop with SICA to learn about its experience in facilitating transit and reducing logistics times. It is proposed to move towards the harmonisation of land transport regulations through the eventual extension of the ATIT Agreement, so as to consolidate a single regional commercial transit regulation from the Southern Cone to Mexico.

6. Promoting regulatory convergence in energy integration

It is proposed to develop a space for technical dialogue on regional energy integration, focusing on the analysis of experiences such as SIEPAC (Central America) and CANREL (Andean Community). With the support of OLADE, the aim is to promote regulatory convergence and the mapping of electricity flows, in order to explore interconnectivity and energy commercialisation schemes between subregions.

7. Creating a regional training and integration culture network

A proposal is made to create a consolidated catalogue of training courses offered by regional integration mechanisms, with a view to strengthening the technical training of officials and promoting a civic culture of integration. In addition, inter-institutional coordination is suggested in order to share content and broaden access, including programmes on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and cyber-diplomacy, such as those already implemented by SELA.

Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel underlined the value of training as a tool for citizen integration. He stressed that the Andean Community has an agreement with the Telefónica Foundation that allows free access to more than 20 courses for any Andean citizen, on topics ranging from soft skills (such as preparing CVs or managing small projects) to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and the Internet of Things. He suggested that these types of training offers should be integrated into a regional network of open training, which would allow the scope of these resources to be expanded through a shared platform.

Ambassador Clarems Endara, taking up this proposal, called for a consolidated inventory of all training courses offered by the integration mechanisms, and the development of direct links between institutional Web sites. This simple action, he said, would significantly increase both the supply and participation in technical training spaces, especially in priority areas such as digital governance, trade and sustainability.

8. Boosting a coordinated regional strategy on disaster risk management

In addition, it was proposed to initiate a regional strategy on disaster risk reduction, taking as a starting point a diagnosis already elaborated by the *Red de Desastres (RED)*, an organisation of consultants with a presence in Central and South America. It affirms that a technical space should be convened with specialised mechanisms (such as CAPRADE, RENDEGIR and SEDEMA), with the objective of building a common regional response protocol, overcoming the current limitations in the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the face of extreme climate events. This proposal should be considered by the Association of Caribbean States within the framework of its work plan, given its accumulated experience and territorial vulnerability.

9. Articulating regional efforts for the compliance with the SAN-CELAC Plan

As regards food security, the central role of FAO and its leadership in the SAN-CELAC Plan was recognised, but it was proposed to move towards a more coordinated approach, suggesting working together with FAO to assess how integration mechanisms can contribute specific capacities, strengthen institutions and contribute to the monitoring of goals, especially in areas such as agricultural health, traceability and technical cooperation. It was recommended that the role of OIRSA be explored as a complementary actor in this area.

E. LINES OF ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP

In the final stage of the day, emphasis was placed on the need to move towards a second phase of the inter-secretariat process by holding technical workshops on topics that have already been prioritised and with consolidated diagnoses. The importance of clearly defining the projects to be scaled up before seeking funding was underlined, identifying initiatives underway or to be formulated, and assessing their viability according to realistic and sustainable criteria.

Likewise, it was proposed to distribute thematic responsibilities among the integration mechanisms, highlighting that the prioritised issues meet conditions of necessity, scalability and institutional

14

maturity, and that a rigorous follow-up would allow for their projection towards high-level political decision-making bodies, such as the CELAC Council of Ministers.

The potential role of CAF in financing these initiatives was also discussed; the regional convergence matrix is already a technical platform, which serves as a basis for identifying eligible projects. In this regard, it was proposed to formally incorporate CAF into the process and take advantage of its regional strategy in key areas such as food security.

Finally, it was reaffirmed the need to have an operational document that consolidates the proposed projects and workshops, identifying thematic responsibilities and specific contributions by the organisations. This stage was considered the starting point for translating the shared diagnoses into concrete actions with visible and sustainable impacts.

Validation of the institutional press release

During the working day, the representatives of the regional integration mechanisms promoted and validated a preliminary press release summarising the main agreements and progress achieved within the framework of the inter-secretariat process. This document, distributed for review and comments, was subsequently approved as a joint expression of the commitments undertaken by the participating entities.

The note refers to the results obtained during the first phase of the inter-secretariat work (2022-2025), including the development of tools such as the Regional Convergence Matrix (RCM) and the technical reports, as well as the preparation of the book "Integration in integration: New paths for synergy in the region." Emphasis is placed on the articulation of agendas in key areas such as food security, production chains, disaster risk management, energy and electricity integration, cross-border cooperation, and it is suggested that new issues such as migration and human mobility, health self-sufficiency and the fight against organised transnational crime be incorporated.

The representatives reaffirmed the commitment of the organisations to give continuity to the work through a new calendar of technical meetings and the search for sources of funding to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives. This institutional declaration was valued as a strategic input for future planning and as a clear sign of the political will to consolidate a common agenda in favour of regional development.

F. OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING

Three key documents emerged from this meeting:

1. The revised version of the document "*Integration in integration*," which will receive comments in the next ten days following the meeting, until 26 June 2025, for its subsequent official publication.
2. A public press statement, as an expression of political commitment.
3. The rapporteur's report of the meeting, which will include the prioritised issues, the list of thematic proposals and workshops, which will allow each mechanism to identify which actions it could lead, convene or support in the next stage.

G. CLOSING REMARKS

Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Secretary General of the Andean Community

Ambassador Gutiérrez said that this space for dialogue demonstrated, once again, the strategic value of cooperation among regional integration mechanisms. He underlined the importance of building joint mechanisms to respond to the common challenges faced by Latin America and the Caribbean, and stressed that, beyond institutional particularities, they share a vision of integration aimed at sustainable development, inclusion and citizen welfare.

He particularly acknowledged the technical and political value of the regional convergence matrix, considering that the observations and contributions made during the meeting will serve to improve a document that is already very solid. He underscored the systematization and projection work carried out by SELA and, in particular, by Ambassador Clarems Endara, who has made it possible to identify viable projects and concrete areas for work. He reiterated the commitment of the General Secretariat of the Andean Community with this process and offered the necessary institutional support to give continuity to the proposed initiatives, while recognizing that the Presidency Pro Tempore of Colombia has played a key role, which will soon be assumed by Ecuador with the same energy.

Ambassador Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA

Ambassador Endara, for his part, appreciated the fact that the objective set for the day had been fully achieved, surpassing even the initial expectations for a task that, at the beginning, seemed highly complex. He stressed that now there is a tangible instrument, the matrix, which can be presented to potential partners and funders, which represents a significant step forward.

He stressed that this meeting marks the end of the first stage of the inter-secretariat process, the main achievement of which has been to build a convergence matrix agreed among various mechanisms, which required time, institutional trust and technical commitment. He affirmed that this effort demonstrates that, beyond political ups and downs, the secretariats and regional bodies are capable of giving continuity to a real and cooperative integration agenda.

Endara expressed his special gratitude to Ambassador Gutiérrez for his hospitality at the headquarters of the Andean Community, as well as to the technical teams of SELA and CAN for their dedication in preparing the event. He announced that the final press release would be distributed on the same day in digital format, and that the report would be circulated accordingly. Finally, he recalled that the ten-day deadline for submitting comments on the technical document was still valid and that all contributions would be integrated into the final version of the instrument.

This formally concluded the working session, opening the way to the second stage of implementation and coordination of concerted regional actions.

A N N E X I

AGENDA

**ROUNDTABLE OF CHAIRS AND SECRETARIATS
OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION MECHANISMS**

Venue: Andean Community, Lima, Peru

Date: 12 June 2025
(face-to-face - virtual)

AGENDA

Day 1 – 12 June	
08:30 – 09:00	Welcome and registration
09:00 – 09:15	<p>Opening session and welcoming remarks Moderator: <u>Jean Paul Guevara</u>, SELA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milton Rengifo, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Venezuela • Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA • Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Secretary General of the Andean Community
Official photo	
09:15 – 09:45	<p>Session I: Presentation of the book Inter-Secretariat Matrix: structure and objectives Moderator: <u>Jean Paul Guevara</u>, SELA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA
09:45 – 10:15	<p>Session II: Contributions of secretariats of integration mechanisms Moderator: <u>Jean Paul Guevara</u>, SELA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security • Regional energy integration • Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation
10:15 – 10:30	Question and answer session
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 11:30	<p>Working group: Dissemination of the matrix Moderator: <u>Jean Paul Guevara</u>, SELA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production chains • Cross-border cooperation and infrastructure
11:30 – 12:00	Concluding remarks and conclusions
12:00 – 12:15	<p>Closing session Moderator: <u>Jean Paul Guevara</u>, SELA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Secretary General of CAN • Clarems Endara, Permanent Secretary of SELA

A N N E X I I

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