



Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

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Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

Intra-Regional Relations

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F O R E W O R D

This report on the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is drafted in compliance with Activity 1.1.1. of the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for 2015, entitled "Follow-up report on the integration agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean: Andean Community (CAN), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Central American Integration System (SICA), Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA-TCP), PETROCARIBE, Pacific Alliance (PA) and UNASUR".

The Permanent Secretariat conveys its recognition and appreciation to Dr. Jaime Estay for his valuable support and dedication in preparing this document.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is to create in a participatory and consensual manner an open space for integration and unity in the cultural, social, economic, and political affairs among its participant States. It grants priority to political dialogue, social policies, education, energy, infrastructure, financing, and the environment among others, with a view to eliminating socioeconomic inequality, achieving social inclusion and citizen participation, strengthening democracy, and reducing asymmetries in the strengthening of each Member State sovereignty and independence.

The UNASUR goes along with the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - People's Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP) in 2004, Alliance of the Pacific (AP) in 2012, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2011). Hence, the regional integration outlook has completely changed so far this century, given these new mechanisms that, along with previously established ones, such as the Andean Community (CAN), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Central American Integration System (SICA), and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), represent the consolidation, modernization, and deepening of integration of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

In this regard, most of the new mechanisms have defined a wider range of objectives focused on integration efforts. These objectives, in addition to implying progress beyond the business aspect in the economic sphere – including monetary and financial coordination, moving forward towards new credit institutions, and defining common stances to tackle problems in the international economic order – have included other aspects other than the economic ones, such as concerns and actions related to political agreements, community identity, energy cooperation, negotiations with third parties, environment problems, preservation of democracy, and particularly, issues pertaining food, fighting poverty, health, education, and employment.

Consequently, efforts to overcome fragmented integration and reduce the former emphasis on business that had gone together with integration for a long time through the inclusion of other aspects in the economic agenda as well as non-economic matters, are the most relevant elements of the new profile of integration efforts in the region, and UNASUR shall be included in that profile.

Notably, the institutions created within UNASUR upon definition of its different functions, and most of all, the role assigned to each of its sectoral councils – which, following its creation and the definition of its relevant statutes, have formulated multi-annual work plans and monitored compliance – show the different fields of actions UNASUR covers to achieve South American integration through concrete and effective progress.

Thus, current potentials of the Union are expected to be developed in the upcoming years, along with UNASUR contributions to the consolidation of a new profile of Latin American and Caribbean integration.

Therefore, even though this report focuses on the institutional evolution of this Union, it also presents the development of the 12 Sectoral Councils that have been created to date, their basic operation criteria, their main activities, and some of the results that have been achieved. The report also takes into account, on the one hand, the matter of reduction of asymmetries among the member countries, and, on the other hand, the position of the Union vis-à-vis Latin American and Caribbean integration.

INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the institutional evolution of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) from its creation, identifying its main elements, mainly the definition and performance of its political decision making bodies, organizational and administrative instruments, and main components of action, such as Sectoral Councils.

For this purpose, the first sections describe the objectives and the members of the Union; the following sections deal with its institutional structure at different political levels: the Council of Heads of State and Government; Pro Tempore Presidency and the General Secretariat, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; the Council of Delegates; and at operative levels, including the 12 Sectoral Councils that have been created to date, identifying their basic operation criteria, their main activities, and some of the results that have been achieved.

The final sections take into account, on the one hand, the matter of reduction of asymmetries among the member countries, and, on the other hand, the position of the Union vis-à-vis Latin American and Caribbean integration. Finally, some conclusions are presented.

I. CREATION PROCESS AND OBJECTIVES OF UNASUR

The creation of UNASUR was preceded by several meetings of South American countries – the First Summit was held in 2000 – and the South American Community of Nations (CSN), which was created in December 2004 with the signing of the *Cuzco Declaration*, followed by several Summit Meetings of member countries of the Community (Brasilia Summit in September 2005, Cochabamba Summit in December 2006, Margarita Summit in December 2007); in the latter, it was agreed to change the name from CSN to Union of South American Nations.

On this basis, in May 2008, the UNASUR Constitutive Treaty was signed, and it entered into force on 11 March 2011, when it was ratified by nine out of 12 Congresses of the member countries. The Treaty [the UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2008] provides in Article 2 that:

"The objective of the South American Union of Nations is to build, in a participatory and consensual manner, an integration and union among its peoples in the cultural, social, economic and political fields, prioritizing political dialogue, social policies, education, energy, infrastructure, financing and the environment, among others, with a view to eliminating socioeconomic inequality, in order to achieve social inclusion and participation of civil society, to strengthen democracy and reduce asymmetries within the framework of strengthening the sovereignty and independence of the States."

Then, in the next article, the 21 specific objectives of UNASUR are defined:

- a) The strengthening of the political dialogue among Member States to guarantee a space for consultation in order to reinforce South American integration and the participation of UNASUR in the international arena;
- b) Inclusive and equitable social and human development in order to eradicate poverty and overcome inequalities in the region;
- c) Eradication of illiteracy, the universal access to quality education and the regional recognition of courses and titles;
- d) Energy integration for the integral and sustainable use of the resources of the region, in a spirit of solidarity;
- e) The development of an infrastructure for the interconnection of the region and among our peoples, based on sustainable social and economic development criteria;
- f) Financial integration through the adoption of mechanisms compatible with the economic and fiscal policies of Member States;
- g) The protection of biodiversity, water resources and ecosystems, as well as cooperation in the prevention of catastrophes and in combating the causes and effects of climate change;
- h) The development of concrete and effective mechanisms to overcome asymmetries, thus achieving an equitable integration;
- i) The consolidation of a South American identity through the progressive recognition of the rights of nationals of a Member State resident in any of the other Member States, with the aim of attaining a South American citizenship;
- j) Universal access to social security and health services;
- k) Cooperation on issues of migration with a holistic approach, based on an unrestricted respect for human and labour rights, for migratory regularisation and harmonisation of policies;
- l) Economic and commercial cooperation to achieve progress and consolidation of an innovative, dynamic, transparent, equitable and balanced process focused on an effective access, promoting economic growth and development to overcome asymmetries by means

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of the complementarities of the economies of the countries of South America, as well as the promotion of the wellbeing of all sectors of the population and the reduction of poverty;

- m) Industrial and productive integration, focusing especially on the important role that small and medium size enterprises, cooperatives, networks and other forms of productive organisation may play;
- n) The definition and implementation of common or complementary policies and projects of research, innovation, technological transfer and technological production, aimed at enhancing the region's own capacity, sustainability and technological development;
- o) The promotion of cultural diversity and the expression of the traditions and knowledge of the peoples of the region, in order to strengthen their sense of identity;
- p) Citizen participation through mechanisms for interaction and dialogue between UNASUR and the various social actors in the formulation of South American integration policies;
- q) Coordination among specialised bodies of the Member States, taking into account international norms, in order to strengthen the fight against corruption, the global drug problem, trafficking in persons, trafficking in small and light weapons, terrorism, transnational organised crime and other threats as well as for disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, and elimination of landmines;
- r) The promotion of cooperation among the judicial authorities of the Member States of UNASUR.
- s) The exchange of information and experiences in matters of defence;
- t) Cooperation for the strengthening of citizen security;
- u) Sectoral cooperation as a mechanism to deepen South American integration, through the exchange of information, experiences and capacity building.

II. UNASUR MEMBER STATES

As in the previous CSN, UNASUR consists of 12 States, the 12 independent South American countries. The countries and the date when they ratified the Constitutive Treaty are presented in the following table.

UNASUR Member States

Country	Date of ratification of the Constitutive Treaty
Argentina	2 August 2010
Bolivia	11 March 2009
Brazil	14 July 2011
Chile	22 November 2010
Colombia	28 January 2011
Ecuador	15 July 2009
Guyana	12 February 2010

Country	Date of ratification of the Constitutive Treaty
Paraguay	9 June 2011
Peru	11 May 2010
Suriname	5 November 2010
Uruguay	30 November 2010
Venezuela	13 March 2010

Pursuant to the Constitutive Treaty, the remaining LAC countries can participate in the Union as "Associate States" and, after the fifth year of the entry into force of the Treaty, Associate States that have held such a status for four years can access UNASUR as Members States. In addition, Mexico and Panama participate as Observer States of the Union.

III. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Article 4 of the Constitutive Treaty provides that the bodies of UNASUR are: the Council of Heads of State and Government; the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; the Council of Delegates; and the General Secretariat.

Moreover, Article 5 of the Treaty, concerning "Institutional Development", provides that "Sectoral Ministerial Meetings, and meetings of the Councils at Ministerial level, Working Groups and other institutional levels may be convened as required on a permanent or temporary basis, in order to fulfil the mandates and recommendations of the competent bodies."¹ Also, Article 7 establishes the Pro Tempore Presidency of the Union, which "will be held successively by each of the Member States, in alphabetical order, for periods of one year."

1. Council of Heads of State and Government

Placed at a strategic or decisive level, the Council of Heads of State and Government is the highest organ of UNASUR, and its responsibilities are (UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2008):

- a) To establish policy guidelines, plans of action, programmes and projects of the South American integration process and to decide on the priorities to be implemented.
- b) To summon Sectoral Ministerial Meetings and to create Councils at Ministerial level.
- c) To decide on the proposals presented by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

¹ In addition to the Sectoral Ministerial Councils that will be described in the following pages, and the Working Groups created within these Council, it should be also taken into account that the Council of Heads of State and Government and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs have decided to create the following groups: "Working Group on Investment Dispute Settlement," created pursuant to a Resolution of the Council of Ministers held in Cartagena on 27 January 2008; "Working Group on South American Citizenship," which was created by the Council of Heads of State and Government in the VI Summit held in Lima on 30 November 2012, and had its first meeting from 13 to 15 August, 2014 in Cochabamba; "High Level Group for the Cooperation and Coordination of Human Rights Affairs," created by the Council of Heads of State and Government in the VII Summit held in Suriname on 30 August 2013; and "High-Level Working Group for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management," created by the Council of Heads of State and Government in the VII Summit held in Suriname on 30 August 2013.

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- d) To adopt the political guidelines for relation with third parties.

As the highest decision making body of UNASUR, the Council of Heads of State and Government has held eight ordinary meetings since the signing of the Constitutive Treaty. Said meetings were held in the following dates and places:

- First Summit, on September 15, 2008 in Santiago, Chile.
- Second Summit, on August 10, 2009 in Quito, Ecuador.
- Third Summit, on August 28, 2009 in Bariloche, Argentina.
- Forth Summit, on November 26, 2010 in Georgetown, Guyana.
- Fifth Summit, on October 29, 2011 in Asuncion, Paraguay.
- Sixth Summit, on November 30, 2012 in Lima, Peru.
- Seventh Summit, on August 30, 2013 in Paramaribo, Suriname.
- Eighth Summit, on December 4, 2014 in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

In addition to the regular meetings the Council of Heads of State and Government has held the following Special Meetings:

- Special Meeting in Santiago de Chile on September 15, 2008, to analyse the situation in the Republic of Bolivia, which resulted in the *Declaration of La Moneda*, where the leaders expressed their decided support for the Constitutional Government of President Evo Morales and decided to create a commission of support and assistance to the government of Bolivia. (UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2008)
- Special Meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government held on December 16, 2008 in Costa do Sauipe, Brazil, where the Council of South American Defence and the South American Health Council were established.
- Special Summit of UNASUR Heads of State and Government held on August 28, 2009 in Bariloche, Argentina; where it was agreed to strengthen South America as a peace zone, affirming the commitment to establish a mechanism in the field of defence and security. It was also reaffirmed that the presence of foreign military forces cannot jeopardize the sovereignty and integrity of any South American nation, and thus, the region's peace and security. (UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2009)
- Special Meeting of the UNASUR Council of Heads of State and Government on the situation in Haiti, held on February 9, 2010 in Quito, Ecuador, where the "Quito Decision: UNASUR solidarity with Haiti" was approved.
- Special Meeting of Heads of State and Government held on May 4, 2010 in Los Cardales, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, in which Dr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner was designated Secretary General of UNASUR; the commitment of peaceful settlement of controversies and the determination of contributing to the strengthening of South America as a peace zone were reaffirmed. In addition, the willingness to promptly implement the Action Plan, proposed by the Government of Haiti, during the visit of the UNASUR Technical Mission, was confirmed.
- Special Meeting of Heads of State and Government held on 30 September 2010 in the San Martin Palace in Buenos Aires, to make a statement against the coup d'état attempt against the President of Ecuador Rafael Correa.
- Special Meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), held on July 26, 2011 in Lima, Peru, in which the *Brief Report on the Presidency of Guyana* was presented, as well as the Declaration called "*UNASUR commitment against inequality*." (UNASUR Heads of State and Government)

- Special Meeting of the UNASUR Council of Heads of State and Government held in Caracas on December 3, 2011 against the backdrop of the installation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), where the CELAC was welcomed as an advance towards integration of Latin American and Caribbean nations.
- Special Meeting of the UNASUR Council of Heads of State and Government held on June 29, 2012 in Mendoza, Argentina, to address the political situation in Paraguay which resulting in the removal of President Fernando Lugo. In the Meeting, the Decision No. 26/2012 was presented, in which the Council suspended Paraguay from participating in the Union's bodies and mechanisms, put an end to Paraguay's Pro Tempore Presidency of UNASUR, and designated the Republic of Peru as holder of the UNASUR Pro Tempore Presidency for a year.
- Special Meeting of the Council of Heads of State held on April 18, 2013 in Lima, Peru, to assess the situation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela after the presidential election in that country.
- Special Meeting of Heads of State and Government held on July 4, 2013 in Cochabamba, Bolivia, convened over the diplomatic conflict resulting from the forced stop in Vienna, Austria of the plane in which Bolivian President Evo Morales was flying.
- Special Meeting of Heads of State and Government held on December 4-5, 2014 in the cities of Guayaquil and Quito, Ecuador on the occasion of the transfer of the Pro Tempore Presidency from Suriname to Uruguay, and the inauguration of the new headquarters of UNASUR (UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2014)

2. Pro Tempore Presidency and General Secretariat

As provided for in the Constitutive Treaty, the responsibilities of the Pro Tempore Presidency of the Union are: a) To prepare, convene and preside over the meetings of the bodies of UNASUR; b) To present to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and to the Council of Delegates the annual programme of activities of UNASUR in coordination with the General Secretariat; c) To represent UNASUR in international events, with the prior authorization of the Member States; and d) To undertake commitments and to sign Declarations with third parties, with prior consent of the appropriate bodies of UNASUR.

In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty, since the signing of the Treaty, the Pro Tempore Presidency has been held successively by each of the Member States, in alphabetical order. Hence, to date, seven countries have held the presidency, in the periods shown in the following Table.

UNASUR Pro Tempore Presidencies and Secretaries General			
Pro Tempore Presidencies		Secretaries-General	
Chile	May 2008 - August 2009	Néstor Kirchner	May-October 2010
Ecuador	August 2009 - November 2010	María Emma Mejía	May 2011 - June 2012
Guyana	November 2010 - October 2011	Alí Rodríguez	June 2012 - August 2014
Paraguay	October 2011 - June 2012	Ernesto Samper	August 2014 -
Peru	June 2012 - August 2013		
Suriname	August 2013 - December 2014		
Uruguay	December 2014		

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The Table also shows the four Secretaries-General who have headed the UNASUR General Secretariat since May 2010. Pursuant to the Treaty (UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2008), the Secretary General has the following responsibilities:

- a) To support the Council of Heads of States and Government, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Council of Delegates and the Pro Tempore Presidency in the fulfilment of their duties.
- b) To propose initiatives and to oversee the implementation of the directives of the organs of UNASUR.
- c) To participate with the right to speak and to perform the role of secretary in the meetings of the organs of UNASUR.
- d) To prepare and submit the Annual Report and the respective reports to the corresponding organs of UNASUR.
- e) To serve as depository of the Agreements in the framework of UNASUR and to arrange for their respective publication.
- f) To prepare the draft Annual Budget for the consideration of the Council of Delegates and to adopt the necessary measures for its proper management and execution.
- g) To prepare the draft Regulations for the functioning of the General Secretariat and to submit them for the consideration and approval of the corresponding organs.
- h) To coordinate with other integration and cooperation entities of Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to developing those activities requested by the bodies of UNASUR.
- i) To execute, according to the regulations, all the legal acts necessary for the proper administration and management of the General Secretariat.

Moreover, the General Secretariat is headquartered in Quito, Ecuador, and since December 2014, it has a building specifically built for that purpose, located in the Middle of the World, in northern Quito.

3. Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs

At the coordination level, below the UNASUR Council of Heads of State and Government, is the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which, pursuant to Article 8 of the Constitutive Treaty of the Union, has the following functions (UNASUR Heads of State and Government, 2008):

- a) To adopt Resolutions in order to implement the Decisions of the Council of Heads of State and Government.
- b) To propose draft Decisions and prepare the meetings of the Council of Heads of State and Government.
- c) To coordinate positions on central themes of South American integration.
- d) To develop and promote political dialogue and coordination on themes of regional and international interest.
- e) To oversee and evaluate the integration process as a whole.
- f) To approve the annual Programme of activities and the annual working budget of UNASUR.
- g) To approve the financing of the common initiatives of UNASUR.
- h) To implement the policy guidelines for relations with third parties.
- i) To approve resolutions and regulations of an institutional nature or on other themes falling within its jurisdiction.
- j) To create Working Groups based on the priorities established by the Council of Heads of State and Government.

The regular meetings of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs will be held every semester, and special meetings may be convened by the Pro Tempore Presidency at the request of half of the Member States.

Most recent meetings include the Special Meeting of the UNASUR Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held on 4 December in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in which the Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed by consensus a set of Resolutions: a resolution ratifying the creation of the South American School of Defence, as well as and its Statutes and Rules; a resolution creating the Technical Unit of Electoral Coordination, approved by the UNASUR Electoral Council in its First Regular Meeting; a resolution approving the *Conceptual Report on South American Citizenship* drafted by the Working Group created by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 30 August 2013; in addition to the approval of the draft Declaration that would be presented to the UNASUR Council of Heads of State and Government, to be held on 5 December 2014 in Quito, Ecuador.

Later, on 14 March 2015, another Special Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held in the headquarters of UNASUR in Quito, Ecuador to analyse both the results of the visit the reduced Commission of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the UNASUR Secretary General made to Caracas on 6 March 2015, as well as the Executive Order issued by the Government of the United States declaring Venezuela a threat to national security and foreign policy of that country.

As a result of that meeting, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs issued two communiqués: one calling on the government of the United States and ratifying their commitment to the full force of international law, the peaceful settlement of controversies, and the principle of non-intervention; plus another communiqué referring to the continuation of political dialogue in Venezuela. UNASUR Member States voiced their willingness to continue accompanying political dialogue with all democratic political forces, fully respecting institutional order, human rights and the rule of law.

4. Council of Delegates

At the functional operative level of the institutional structure of UNASUR, the Council of Delegates comprises a representative credited by each Member State. It holds meetings preferably on a bimonthly basis in the territory of the State holding the Pro Tempore Presidency, and it has the following functions:

- a) To implement the Decisions of the Council of Heads of State and Government, and the Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, with the support of the Pro Tempore Presidency and the General Secretariat.
- b) To prepare the meetings of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.
- c) To prepare draft Decisions, Resolutions and Regulations for the consideration of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.
- d) To ensure the compatibility and to coordinate the initiatives of UNASUR with other existing regional and subregional integration processes in order to promote the complementarity of efforts.
- e) To establish, coordinate and oversee the Working Groups.
- f) To oversee the political dialogue and consultation and coordination on issues of regional and international interest.
- g) To encourage the opportunities for dialogue so as to facilitate citizen participation in the South American integration process.
- h) To propose to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, for its consideration and approval, the draft annual working budget.

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Most recent meetings of this institutional body include the ILVII Regular Meeting of the Council of Delegates, held on 27 and 28 May 2015 in Montevideo, in which the UNASUR Secretary-General highlighted the need to continue working on the inclusion and mainstreaming of three important matters: gender equality, environment, and human rights, which must be included in the three agendas comprising the strategic vision of the Union: social, economic, and political.

In the Meeting, the Pro Tempore Presidency of Uruguay briefed the Council of Delegates on the progress recorded by the Technical Committee on Budget-related Matters; it also made a presentation on the Electoral Missions conducted by the UNASUR Electoral Council in 2015; it presented a summary of the Citizen Participation Forum (FPC) held in Bolivia; it presented for consideration the progress of the Working Group on South American Citizenship, specifically in the drafting of the conceptual report and the guidelines for the development of the South American Citizenship. In addition, the Pro Tempore Presidency of Uruguay noted the work made by the High-Level Group on Human Rights Cooperation and Coordination and the High-Level Working Group for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management; and addressed aspects referring to the Global Management Model, the New Financial Architecture; Investment Dispute Settlement; and the necessary coordination for the positioning of UNASUR in multi-lateral forums and relations with third parties (Council of Delegates, 2015).

5. Sectoral Ministerial Councils

Since the signing of the UNASUR Constitutive Treaty, various Councils concerning specific areas² have been created comprising mainly ministers from the relevant areas of the member countries in such a way that, to date, the Union operates 12 Councils, whose characteristics and development are described below.

South American Defence Council (CDS)

On December 16, 2008, within the framework of the meeting held in Salvador de Bahia, the South American Defence Council was created by the Heads of State and Government, as an organization responsible for consultation, cooperation and coordination of South American countries on defence policies, whose objectives are to consolidate South America as a zone of peace; shape a South American identity on defence matters that takes into account the sub-regional and national characteristics and contributes to the strengthening of the Latin America and the Caribbean unity; and, generate consensus to strengthen regional cooperation in defence-related matters [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2008a].

Its principles include respect for territorial sovereignty, integrity and inviolability of other States; non-intervention in internal affairs and self-determination of peoples; promoting peace and peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as preservation and strengthening of South America as a zone free of nuclear weapons and mass destruction [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2008], the South American Defence Council, comprising the Ministers of Defence, or their equivalent, has been making progress in shaping a common vision on regional defence, promoting the exchange of information on processes for modernization of the Ministries of Defence and the Armed Forces, as well as the joint review of the regional situation and the identification of potential factors that could threaten regional peace.

² Also, even one of the Councils, the Energy Council, was established in April 2007 and, therefore, almost a year before the signing of the Constitutive Treaty of UNASUR.

Based on the Declaration of Santiago de Chile, the South American Defence Council has been promoting their efforts on the basis of the following four topics or guidelines: 1) Defence Policies 2) Military cooperation, humanitarian action and peace operations 3) Defence Industry and technology and 4) Education and training [Defence Ministers of UNASUR, 2009].

As part of the recent outstanding activities within the South American Defence Council, mention should be made of the inauguration of the South American School of Defence (ESUDE) held on 17 April 2015 in Quito, in the framework of UNASUR's eighth anniversary commemoration. With ESUDE, it seeks to instruct on defence and security issues, both at civil and military level, following the principles of a regional strategic vision.

The creation of the South American School of Defence complied with the resolution of IX Executive Meeting of the South American Defence Council held in Paramaribo, Suriname, on 20 February 2015, at which the creation of ESUDE was approved, among whose first activities is designing mechanisms to strengthen cyber defence, in a global context, characterized by cyber espionage and sophistication of cyber-surveillance in all its forms. With the inauguration of ESUDE, the first meeting of its Superior Council was also held, with the participation of Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Defence of South America with the objective of preserving the region as a zone of peace.

The creation of the ESUDE strengthens the activities encouraged within the framework of the Defence Council, one of whose previous measures of greater importance was the creation of the Centre for Strategic Defence Studies (SADC), which began operations in May 2011 in Casa Patria Grande "President Nestor C. Kirchner" in Buenos Aires, with the aim of coordinating and harmonizing regional defence and security policies in South America through joint strategic thinking.

The Centre for Strategic Defence Studies has been generating knowledge to support the creation of South American strategic thinking and, in this regard, in November 2001 it released a preliminary report on the terms of reference for concepts of security and defence in the region [Centre for Strategic Defence Studies, 2011], expressing the need for progress in the systematization and analysis of data provided by the countries in the region to shape up a database of strategic information, and also to develop a set of conceptual instruments that allow for the harmonization of strategic visions and objectives in the region. Also in February 2012, the CEED released the report on transnational organized crime and other new threats to regional security, where the possibility of developing "an inventory of national and regional capacities for joint action in areas of investigation, intelligence, police and judicial action, for interagency cooperation by sectors, based on interagency cooperation and interoperability among national structures" [Centre for Strategic Defence Studies, 2012].

More recently, in May 2015, as part of the commemoration of the V Anniversary of the appointment of Nestor Kirchner as the first Secretary General of UNASUR, the former Secretary General of the organization, Dr. Alí Rodríguez Araque, gave a lecture at the Centre for Strategic Defence Studies on "the importance of sovereignty over South America's natural resources", which highlighted both the need to develop common approaches to natural resources available to the region and their use, as well as the importance of exercising sovereignty of these resources, which would result in the strengthening of the sovereignty of the region against a scenario of growing dispute over access and control of natural resources globally.

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South American Council of Health (CSS)

The South American Council of Health, made up by the Ministers of Health from UNASUR, is the consultation and consensus body on this subject by the member countries of the Union, aimed at consolidating South America as a space of health integration that contributes to Health for All and development, incorporating and integrating the efforts and improvements from other existing mechanisms of regional integration, and promoting common policies and coordinated activities among countries in health issues [Heads of State and Government of the UNASUR, 2008b].

Created by the decision taken by the Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, the Council of Health considers, among its principles, the recognition of Health as an essential right of human beings and as a vital component and part of development; the need to promote the reduction of asymmetries between health systems of the member countries of the Union; develop and promote citizen participation on health issues, in all things public which benefit society at large; and solidarity, complementarity and respect for diversity and inter-culturalism in promoting cooperation initiatives in the field of health.

The South American Council of Health has a Five-year Plan that has been leading the set of programmes and action plans to be developed based on five work areas [South American Council of Health of UNASUR, 2010]:

1. South American Health Surveillance and Response Network
2. Development of Universal Health Systems
3. Universal Access to Medication
4. Health Promotion and Action on Health Determinants
5. Development and Management of Human Resources in Health

The first work area, the South American Network for Health Surveillance and Response, has the strategic objective of establishing a network of Epidemiological Surveillance and Control of Transmissible Diseases, Chronic Non-transmissible Diseases and Public Health Events in the region, for which it is also developing a series of activities including the definition of indicators of risk factors, the development of a unified list of priority illnesses for the region, the creation of systems for monitoring and evaluating the surveillance network, the creation of strategies for mitigating dengue in the South American region, promotion of a South American Immunization Program and the design of strategies for the prevention and control of chronic non transmissible diseases.

Regarding the Development of Universal Health Systems, this area has as its strategic objective the formation of universal health systems in member countries, recognizing the right to health with an inclusive approach. To do this, it promotes actions to improve equity in accessing universal and integral health systems; it aims to create a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating universal health systems; and it intends to guarantee the democratization of health systems, promoting the active participation of citizens in decision-making spaces.

With regard to the area of Universal Access to Medication, the objective is to develop strategies and work plans to improve access to medication. To achieve this, among other activities promoted, to seek to determine the need for medicines and other supplies for health, aimed at the morbidity-mortality profile of each country; Reduce entry barriers that originate from the existence of intellectual property rights; formulate a political price proposal that favours access to medicines; promote the rational use of safe, effective and quality medicines; and, promote the production and use of generic medicines among the population.

In the area of Health Promotion and Action on Health Determinants, the objective is to strengthen the promotion of healthcare and action over the social determinants in order to reduce inequalities by generating information and community participation in public health policies. To fulfil this goal, seek to establish indicators covering equity in healthcare, evaluation criteria for policies for reduction of inequities; train the population in terms of promotion of healthcare and social determinants; create information mechanisms that guarantee access to information on health promotion and social determinants; and define strategies to promote dialogue and analysis of the impact on healthcare of the policies of the different councils of UNASUR.

Finally, in the area of Development and Management of Human Resources in Health, the objective is to strengthen the direction, formulation and management of the human resources in healthcare in general and, specifically, in the areas that make up the Health Agenda of UNASUR. To fulfil this objective, strengthen in each country the process of formation and training of human resources in health; reduce the migration of personnel and its impact on the healthcare systems in the region; and, promote permanent training in the institutions and in the priority areas of the Health Agenda of UNASUR.

Among the most notable achievements in the various areas comprising the Five-year Plan 2010-2015 of the South American Defence Council, it is worth mentioning the creation of the South American Government Institute of Health, which is an inter-governmental organization of a public nature that promotes the dissemination of knowledge in health and high-level human resources training.

Located in Rio de Janeiro, the South American Government Institute of Health was founded July 25, 2011 and, among its activities, outstanding are workshops, conferences, seminars and courses, in addition to the publication of books, among which mention should be of *Health Systems in South America: challenges for universality, completeness and equity (2012)*, *Health Surveillance in South America: epidemiological, health and environmental (2013)*, *Answers to catastrophic illnesses (2014)*, as well as the text *Primary Health Care in South America* published in 2015.

Added to the above, it should be noted that, in December 2014, as part of the celebrations marking the eighth anniversary of UNASUR, the Secretary General of the Union announced the inauguration of a permanent liaison office of the South American Government Institute of Health in the building Nestor Kirchner, headquarters of UNASUR in Quito, Ecuador.

Electoral Council of UNASUR (CEU)

Having as a background the conduction of four Meetings of Electoral Organizations and Authorities of the Member States of UNASUR, on 30 November 2012, at the VI Regular Meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government, the South American leaders decided to incorporate the Electoral Council to the institutional framework of UNASUR, approving both the *Statute of the Electoral Council* and the *Criteria and Standards for Electoral Missions of UNASUR*.

The Electoral Council of UNASUR is an instance for consultation, cooperation, coordination, exchange of experiences, observation and accompaniment in electoral matters, promotion of citizen participation and democracy in the framework of the Constitutive Treaty of UNASUR. The principles of this Council is full respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples, as well as solidarity, cooperation, democracy, citizen participation, peace, transparency, pluralism and respect for universal human rights.

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According to its statute, the Electoral Council's general objective is to build a space for integration, exchange of experiences, cooperation, research and promotion of citizen participation, civic education and democracy. Furthermore, the Statute establishes the following specific objectives [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2012]:

1. To promote the exchange and transfer of knowledge, experiences and technical assistance of the organizations, authorities and electoral technicians.
2. Facilitate the creation, use and application of non-dependent technologies for developing voting systems through the transfer of technological innovation and modernization, as well as good practices in the electoral process systems.
3. To organize, at the request of one Member State, the observation and accompaniment in an Electoral Mission of UNASUR.

One of the most important results of the operation of the Electoral Council of UNASUR has been the organization of *observation and accompaniment missions*, which are formed at the request of the Member State organizing the electoral process with the agreement of its electoral authority. The electoral authorities of the requesting State will do everything related to the scope, integration and coverage of the observation mission, obliging itself at all times to guarantee conditions of security, information, coordination and movement, concluding the activity of the mission with the presentation of a Report to the electoral authorities of the requesting State as well as the Institutions of UNASUR. [Council of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2012a]

With the obligation to deploy their activity on the principles of impartiality, objectivity, independence, legality, non-interference and transparency, the Observation and Accompaniment Missions of the Electoral Council of UNASUR have generated an increasing recognition of their work in the region for their high technical level and respect for the sovereignty of the countries in which they have participated. The missions organized by the Electoral Council are as follows:

- Electoral Mission of UNASUR in the general elections held in the Republic of Suriname on 25 May 2015.
- Technical Electoral Mission of UNASUR in the primary elections of the Democratic Alliance Roundtable held in Venezuela on 17 May 2015.
- Electoral Mission of UNASUR in the presidential elections held on 11 May 2015 in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
- Electoral Mission of UNASUR in the departmental, regional and municipal elections held on 29 March 2015 in Bolivia.
- Electoral Observation and Accompaniment Mission in the presidential and parliamentary elections held in Bolivia on 12 October 2014.
- Electoral Mission of UNASUR in the Congressional and Andean Parliament elections held on 9 March 2014 in Colombia.
- Electoral Mission of UNASUR in the presidential elections held on 25 May 2014 in Colombia.
- Electoral Observation Mission of UNASUR in the second round of presidential elections held in Colombia on 15 June 2014.
- Electoral Mission for the sectional and municipal elections held on 23 February 2014 in Ecuador.
- Electoral Accompaniment Mission of UNASUR in the municipal elections held on 8 December 2013 in Venezuela.
- Electoral Monitoring Mission for the general elections held on 21 April 2013 in the Republic of Paraguay.

- Electoral Mission of UNASUR for the presidential elections held on 14 April 2013 in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
- Electoral Observation and Accompaniment Mission for the general elections held on 17 February 2013 in the Republic of Ecuador.
- Electoral Accompaniment Mission of UNASUR in the presidential elections held on 7 October 2012 in Venezuela.

Recent activities of the Electoral Council of UNASUR highlights the Extraordinary Meeting held on 16 April 2015 in Quito, in which electoral representatives from the twelve member countries of the Union proposed the need to strengthen the Election Coordination Technical Unit of UNASUR and pointed out the importance of creating a South American Electoral Observatory, which addresses issues related to the difficulties of access and of citizen participation in the elections, in order to eliminate the asymmetries in this regard that exist among the member countries of UNASUR.

Among the tasks to be performed by the Electoral Council of UNASUR, as part of its Biennial Action Plan 2013-2015, it is important to mention [Electoral Council of UNASUR, 2013]:

- The systematization of the constitutional, legal, regulatory and jurisprudential norms of the member countries, to be placed in the corresponding Web site of the Electoral Council.
- The preparation of a document that quantitatively and qualitatively identifies the mechanisms used in each State for voter registration, identification, voting system and transmission of preliminary results.
- Diagnose on the part of each electoral organization the needs of knowledge and training on voter registration, identification, voting system and transmission of provisional results, implementing a technical assistance plan in necessary issues.
- Evaluate the experience Electoral Missions of UNASUR based on the Final Reports and the participation of the General Electoral Coordinators.
- Develop methodologies to consolidate and record previous information provided by the electoral organization of the requesting State, to prepare methodological guidelines and schedule interviews with the political and electoral actors.
- Define the application procedures and acceptance criteria of electoral missions with the participation of the Electoral Council of UNASUR.

Finally, it should be noted that the *Electoral Observation and Accompaniment Mission* to be organized by the Electoral Council of UNASUR in Venezuela, based on the request of the Electoral Council of that country for the parliamentary elections to be held in that country on 6 December 2015.

South American Energy Council (CES)

Having as a background the First Meeting of Ministers of Energy from the South American Community of Nations, on 26 September 2005 and the Presidential Declaration on South American Energy Integration on 9 December 2006, the South American Energy Council was created on 17 April 2007 during the First South American Energy Summit on Margarita Island, Venezuela, by the Heads of State and Government of the South American Community of Nations.

The South American Energy Council's main objective is to promote the development of energy infrastructure for countries in the region to support the sustainability of South American integration. The *Declaration of Margarita* outlines that energy integration should be used as an instrument to promote economic and social development, and the eradication of poverty,

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highlighting universal access to energy as a civil right and emphasizing the need to conduct a systematization and assessment of the South American energy balance in order to design a regional energy matrix. At that meeting, it also mandated the newly created Council to submit a proposal for guidelines for the South American Energy Strategy, the Action Plan and the South American Energy Treaty [Heads of State and Government of the South American Community of Nations, 2007].

The Energy Council, with the participation of the ministers of energy, oil and related sectors from the South American countries, has met on four occasions: the first meeting was held on 8 May 2008 in Caracas, Venezuela; the second meeting was held on 25 March 2010 in Quito, Ecuador; the third meeting was held on 18 May 2012 in Caracas and the fourth meeting was held on 19 May 2015 in Quito, Ecuador.

With mixed results in achieving the proposed objectives, progress has been made in some areas within the Council such as, in compliance with the mandate established in the *Declaration of Margarita*, the development of the *Guidelines of the South American Energy Strategy*, the *Guidelines for the Action Plan for Regional Energy Integration* as well as the *Structure of the South American Energy Treaty*, documents which were approved at the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of Government of UNASUR held in May 2010 in the Cardales Province in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the mandate was reiterated to the Group of Experts on energy matters to advance negotiations in order to start preparing the South American Energy Treaty in an estimated period of one year [Heads of State of the Union of South American Nations, 2010].

Given the obvious impasse existing in the Energy Council regarding progress and completion of recommended proposals, and where the case of the South American Energy Treaty is one of the most visible points, on 19 May 2015 the Fourth Meeting of the Council was held at the headquarters of UNASUR in Quito, Ecuador, which was a kind of relaunching of that Council. In this context, the Secretary General of UNASUR stressed the need to strengthen energy integration by setting out a navigation route before the end of 2015.

At the meeting, at which the president of the South American Energy Council recognized that “there has been very little progress on energy matters and an urgent need to move forward with South American vision and without fear”, a 2015-2016 work plan was established, presenting the need to promote regional networks for interconnection of energy and gas, and stressed the need to reach agreements that benefit the region in energy matters (Official Web site of UNASUR <http://www.unasursg.org/es/node/251>).

South American Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (COSUCTI)

The South American Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (COSUCTI) was established at the Sixth Regular Meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR held on 30 November 2012 in Lima, Peru. According to its statute, the Council is a permanent instance for dialogue, consultation, exchange of information and experiences, coordination of policies and coordination of projects in member countries of UNASUR in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation.

It requires, among its principles, that the goal of policies in matters of science, technology and innovation should be sustainable economic and social development; that scientific and technological progress should contribute to strengthening social inclusion, promotion of equality and respect for plurality; that the scientific and technological knowledge should have free access;

and that policies in this area should be based on dialogue and respect for incorporating the knowledge and wisdom of indigenous and other people, COSUCTI finances its activities with resources assigned for that purpose by the Organizations of UNASUR in its regular budget, by the Common Initiative Fund and by voluntary contributions from Member States [Ministers and High Representatives of the South American Council of Science, Technology and Innovation, 2013].

According to its statutes, the objective of COSUCTI is to promote and strengthen scientific, technological and innovation cooperation and integration in the region; promote and support programs, projects and networks on areas of common regional interest in matters of science, technology and innovation; promote the mobility of human resources, processes and products in this area; intensify cooperation among institutions of higher education, research centres, development and innovation, public and private companies to generate and share scientific and technological knowledge; promote science education and dissemination of scientific knowledge; and promote development, access, transfer and use of technologies and innovations to benefit the most needy sectors (Ministers and High Representatives of the South American Council of Science, Technology and Innovation, 2013).

Having among its responsibilities the design of policies, programmes and projects in the areas of its competence, as well as the development of the Action Plan, the schedule of meetings and its internal operational structure, the Council of Science, Technology and Innovation of UNASUR has conducted a series of meetings, among which are:

- The Meeting of Ministers and High Representatives of the Working Group Specialized in Science, Technology and Innovation (GTECTI), held in Lima on 8 and 9 November 2012, where the Framework Programme for Science, Technology and Innovation 2013-2017 for UNASUR was approved as well as the Action Plan 2013-2014.
- The Meeting of Ministers and High Representatives from COSUCTI held in Urubamba, Peru, from 15 to 17 May 2013, in which the status of COSUCTI was approved, the 2013-2014 Action Plan was updated, the use of the "Common Initiatives Fund of UNASUR" was approved for projects presented by the member countries of UNASUR, and the *Declaration of Urubamba* was released, in which the purpose of implementing the construction of the South American Space of Science, Technology and Innovation was ratified, to foster the consolidation of sustainable scientific and technological development in the region.
- The Special Meeting of Ministers and High Representatives from COSUCTI, held on 18 June 2013, in Rio de Janeiro, in which the selected projects were approved for submission to the Common Initiatives Fund of UNASUR, and the establishment and operation of the Working Groups for Evaluation and Management of Knowledge and Financing was approved.
- The Third Meeting of Ministers and High Representatives from COSUCTI, held from 23 to 25 July 2014 in Urcuqui, Ecuador, where the Action Plan 2014-2015 of the Council was approved; the High Representatives from COSUCTI were instructed to jointly prepare with the General Secretariat the proposed agreement for scientific cooperation with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN); and it was decided to establish a working group to design the proposal of the Regional Plan of Science, Technology and Innovation that allows the articulation of the different mechanisms for regional integration in this area.

In that same Third Meeting of Ministers of COSUCTI, the proposal was approved to create a UNASUR recognition program of "Scientific Merit"; Ecuador's proposal was accepted to make available "YACHAY city of Knowledge" as a regional laboratory to generate knowledge, new technologies and innovation of UNASUR; it was decided to create a working group to identify the

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regulations for science and technology related to biodiversity, in order to advance the process of building a regulatory convergence in the region; and released the *Declaration of Urcuqui*. [Ministers and High Representatives of the South American Council of Science, Technology and Innovation of UNASUR, 2014]

South American Council of Culture (CSC)

Having as an immediate background the South American Council of Education, Culture, Science, Technology and Innovation (COSECCTI), which was created on August 10, 2009 at the Third Regular Meeting of Council of Heads of State and Government of the UNASUR, on November 30, 2012, at the Sixth Ordinary Meeting of Council of Heads of State and Government of the Union, held in Lima, Peru, approval was given to derogate the Decision created by COSECCTI and, instead, create three independent councils, one for each area of knowledge: the South American Council of Culture (CSC); the South American Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (CSCTI); and the South American Council of Education (CSE).

The South American Council of Culture (CSC) is a permanent instance for consultation, dialogue, reflection and intergovernmental policy coordination and cooperation in matters of culture within the regional bloc, which has among its objectives the strengthening of cultural cooperation in the South American region; the recognition and promotion of culture as a basis for development and overcoming poverty and inequality; the generation of actions to promote the reduction of regional and subregional asymmetries in matters on universal promotion and access to culture; as well as the development and promotion of cultural expressions in all its varied manifestations.

Article 2 of the *Statute* of the CSC states that the Council begins by recognizing that creation and access to culture are fundamental rights of the individual and society, and should therefore promote dialogue, cooperation and exchange of expertise, experiences and knowledge on cultural issues; protect respect for plurality and cultural diversity in democratic societies; promote equity and preferential treatment for the socially excluded sectors; support and promote multiculturalism, coexistence and constructive dialogue and the promotion of cultural rights; seek and generate free access to knowledge and its timely dissemination; encourage the participation and cooperation of all stakeholders [South American Council of Culture, 2013].

Comprised of the Ministers of Culture of the Member States of UNASUR, or their equivalents, on 27 June 2013 in Lima, Peru, the First Meeting of the CSC was held, in which the Action Plan 2013-2014 was approved based on five pillars: Interculturalism; Cultural industries and creative economy; Defence and preservation of cultural heritage; Communication and Culture; and Arts. Recognizing that culture is a vital aspect of regional integration given that it is an everyday expression in all citizens of the region, highlighting the creation of projects as *Expreso Sur*, to meet and share the festivities carried out in South America from the viewpoint of children, as well as the *Bank of Audiovisual Content* to have an updated database with information on matters of all that has been occurring in each of the countries in the region.

Also, on 13 June 2014, in Paramaribo, Suriname, the Second Meeting of the South American Council for Culture was held, in which the cultural related activities that would be carried out during the period 2014-2015 were defined; the project "Art UNASUR" was launched along with its corresponding electronic platform showing artistic expressions in the region; highlighted was the accomplishment of the first edition of the Cultural Industries Market of the South (MICSUR), which was held in May 2014 in Mar del Plata Argentina; and Colombia was appointed to host the next

event of MICSUR scheduled for 2016, when the incorporation therein of Guyana and Suriname will be effected [Executive Instance of CSC, 2014].

South American Council of Social Development (CSDS)

As outlined by the *Presidential Declaration of Quito*, the South American Council of Social Development was created on 10 August 2009 during the III Regular Meeting of Council of Heads of State and Government, held in that city. [Heads and Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2009].

According to its Statute, the Council Social Development of UNASUR is an instance for dialogue, reflection, coordination and cooperation on integral social and human development which aims to contribute to the creation of more just, participative, supportive and democratic societies, promoting cooperation mechanisms in matters of social policy aimed at reducing asymmetries and strengthen the South American integration process.

Among the principles upon which the CSDS is based are those related to the development of regional social policies aimed at eradicating poverty and social vulnerability, to encourage equitable inclusion and sustainable development with respect to nature, to promote citizen participation within a framework of respect for universal human rights, as well as linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity, promoting gender equality and solidarity between peoples, with respect for their sovereignty and contributing to building a South American identity and citizenship [South American Council of Social Development, 2009].

By emphasizing the step taken in UNASUR to move *from strategic vision to the strategic agenda*, the document entitled *From Vision to Action*, prepared by the General Secretariat of UNASUR [2015], stated that to achieve the proposed objectives and accomplish the missionary vision of the organization, the development of three agendas was proposed: a social agenda based on social inclusion; an economic agenda based on competitiveness; and a political agenda, focused on strengthening democracy and citizen security.

In the same document, which served as one of the pillars for the relaunching of UNASUR, inequality is pointed out as the most serious social problem in the region, resulting in the existence of profound differences and asymmetries showing a panorama of inequality that should become the central purpose of the agenda of UNASUR, and also counteracting the reproductive mechanisms of this inequality, meaning more equitable distribution of income and providing more opportunities in education, health and housing to the population.

Based on that logic, and having as a background the First Meeting of Ministers of the South American Council of Social Development, held in Quito on 11 December 2009, at which the Biennial Action Plan 2009- 2011 was approved, the Schedule of that plan and the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Matrix, until mid-2015, a total of seven meetings of the CSDS have been held, with the latest being the VII Meeting of Ministers held in Montevideo on 28 and 29 May 2015.

The Plan of Action 2015-2017 of the South American Council of Social Development [2015], having as inputs the 2009-2011 and 2012-2014 Plans, defined five major Thematic Pillars with a Working Group (WG) corresponding to each of them.

- Development with inclusion

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- Food security and the fight against hunger and malnutrition
- Social economy, solidarity and/or community with productive inclusion
- Social participation
- Regional cooperation in social policies

The pillar of *Social Development with Inclusion* comprises as a first priority the strategies for reducing poverty and eradicating extreme poverty, focusing its action on the sector of the population that is in a situation of exclusion.

In the Pillar on Food Security and the Fight against Hunger and Malnutrition, Nutritional Security is a main aspect which depends on three factors: food security, prevention and control of sicknesses and proper care in the nutrition practices. In turn, it is essential to guarantee the right of every nation to define appropriate agricultural and nutrition policies according to their specific circumstances in order to produce sufficient food for its population.

The Pillar of Social, Solidarity and/or Community-based Economy with Productive Inclusion highlights that inequality is expressed not only in income differences, but largely depends on the functional distribution of wealth. Therefore, it seeks to create a vision where the economy and its forms become functional to the needs of the people, hence the search for an alternative way to produce, distribute, consume and/or trade and where the experiences and contributions from the region in matters of social, supportive, popular or communal economy form a starting point.

In the Pillar of Social Participation, the Working Group of CSDS should support the development of instruments to strengthen the organization and social participation, identifying the problems that arise from their own territory, seeking to establish a direct relationship of the citizens with the destinations of public policies.

The Pillar of Regional Cooperation in Social Policies seeks to consolidate relations among the countries, availing the complementarities and experiences in matters of development in order to reduce the gaps and asymmetries both among the countries as well as inside them.

As part of the most recent actions to be supported on the part of the CSDS is the proposal of the Secretary General of UNASUR to the said Council, to build positive discrimination laws in the South American countries that recognize the rights and allow for transformation of the situation of Afro-descendants.

South American Council of Economy and Finance (CSEF)

The South American Council of Economy and Finance was established at the Fourth Ordinary Meeting of Council of Heads of State and Government on 26 November 2010, and its installation meeting was held in Buenos Aires in August 2011.

At that first meeting of CSEF, said Council agreed to create three working groups which, to date, are maintained, and which were incorporated as part of the Working Group on Financial Integration (GTIF), created in 2007 in the framework of the South American Community of Nations [CSEF, 2011]: Group No. 1, "International Reserves"; Group No. 2, "Agreement on Reciprocal Payments and Credits ALADI, SML and SUCRE"; and Group No. 3, "Development of Intra-Regional Trade among the Countries of UNASUR". At the Plenary Meeting of GTIF held in Buenos Aires in February 2012, for each of these three Groups, the general and specific objectives and the

administrative aspects of operation were defined, as well as the activities and expected results for the next six months [GTIF, 2012].

Likewise, in its first meeting, CSEF defined its Statute, which was subsequently approved by the Council of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR. In the Statute it defines that the Council "is an instance for dialogue, reflection, consultation and cooperation in matters on economy and finance in the framework of the Constitutive Treaty of UNASUR", and establishes both the general objectives and the specific objectives to be achieved by the Council.

With regard to the general objectives, they are: "a) Social and human development with equity and inclusion to eradicate poverty and overcome inequalities in the region; b) Construction of an economic system with equity and social justice in harmony with nature for sustainable development; c) The growth and economic development to overcome asymmetries through concrete and effective mechanisms of economic complementarity; d) Financial integration through the adoption of mechanisms compatible with the economic and fiscal policies of Member States; e) Economic and trade cooperation to achieve progress and consolidation of an innovative, dynamic, transparent, equitable and balanced process; f) Sectoral cooperation as a mechanism to strengthen South American integration through the exchange of information, experiences and training; g) Other lines of work established by the Council, as well as the tasks entrusted by the Council of Heads of State and Government" [CSEF, 2011a].

As for the specific objectives, the Statute identifies a total of 14, among which the following are highlighted: encourage the use of local and regional currencies for intra-regional trade; periodically assess the multilateral payment and credit systems; generate a regional mechanism for guarantees, that facilitate access to different forms of financing in the area; strengthen coordination measures of the Central Banks, with regard to the management of international reserves; coordination of available financial funds in order to meet the demands of development and integration projects; foster the development of a South American financial and capital market; explore the development of policies and joint monitoring mechanisms to capital flows, and of cooperation and mutual assistance in case of balance of payments crisis; evaluate schemes that preserve the region from the effects of volatility of international markets; strengthen financial integration of UNASUR; promote mechanisms for coordination of macroeconomic policies; develop proposals aimed towards small and medium-sized production units and to initiatives for local development; explore and promote new forms of cooperation with other regional blocs; and, explore appropriate mechanisms of supervision, regulation and transparency [CSEF, 2011a].

With these defined objectives, and in accordance with the provisions of the Statute of CSEF, this Council has been conducting regular meetings: the Second Meeting in Buenos Aires in November 2011, the Third Meeting in Lima in November 2012 and the Fourth Meeting in Buenos Aires in July 2014. At these meetings, in addition to ruling on the international economic situation, the present <deterioration in the international financial area and its impacts on South America, and regarding specific issues such as the dispute between Argentina and the speculative investment funds³, CSEF has been reviewing the progress of the three working groups that report to the GTIF and charging

³ In this regard, in relation to the dispute between that government and the investment fund NML Capital, the Declaration of CSEF, derived from its Fourth Meeting, proposes "The precedent of this dispute encourages predatory behavior by bondholders who refuse to participate in orderly processes of debt restructuring to take legal action and thereby obtain a privileged treatment. It is imperative, therefore, that the regional and international financial community react in a firm manner emphasizing the inherent link between financing and development, and between sustainable growth and debt sustainability with the actual repayment capacity of the countries, and maintaining equal treatment among creditors" [CSEF, 2014].

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them with new tasks, referring mainly to the development of diagnostic studies and search for alternatives regarding the topics assigned to each group.

Also, an issue closely related to the priority that the CSEF has given to the monetary and financial cooperation among the countries of the UNASUR, and which is referred to in most of the final declarations of the sessions of the Council, is that referring to the Banco del Sur, in which seven of the member countries of the Union are participating: Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela.⁴

The Foundational Act of the Bank was signed in December 2007 and its Constitutive Agreement in September 2009, this Agreement entering into force in April 2012 -- upon deposit of the ratifications of five of the seven participating countries, ratifications from Brazil and Paraguay still pending – and, even in August 2013, the First Council of Ministers from the Bank was held and its Administrative Council held a first meeting in July 2014, despite which, to date, the South Bank has not yet started operations, which are expected to begin in the near future.

South American Council for Education (CSE)

With the South American Council for Education, Culture, Science and Innovation (COSECCTI) as its background, and already mentioned in this work, the South American Council for Education was created as an independent body on 30 November 2012, on the 6th Ordinary Meeting of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR.

In its *Statute*, approved on 31 May 2013 on the First Meeting of the CSE, and ratified by the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers of UNASUR, gathered in Paramaribo on 29 August 2013, it is established that the CSE is an instance for the concertation of policies, consultation, dialogue, reflection, intergovernmental cooperation, and construction of educational programs and projects to promote and guarantee the right to education in all its levels and modalities [South American Council for Education, 2013].

The objectives of the Council for Education are to strengthen integration in the regional educational context, in order to guarantee everyone's right to education; arrange the implementation of policies to improve equality, quality, appropriateness, and access to all levels and modalities of education; promote the reduction of regional and sub-regional asymmetries in the context of education, for the full exercise of human rights; promote an inclusive education that develops capabilities, competences and values that prepare for a better social and labour insertion, free from illiteracy; drive regional and sub-regional policies that encourage the construction of knowledge, research, innovation and the use of technologies in education; and, facilitate the dialogue and cooperation with other regional and sub-regional integration processes, as well as with international bodies, considering their achievements [South American Council for Education, 2013].

Taking into account that during the phase in which it was part of the COSECCTI, both the First Meeting of Ministers and the II Meeting of Ministers of Education of COSECCTI, held on 12 September 2010, had already been held, in its new phase as an independent council the CSE has carried out important meetings in the context of the redesign of UNASUR's institutionality.

⁴ While the creation of the South Bank (Banco del Sur) is clearly associated with the formal implementation of UNASUR, the Bank is not part of the Union given that, in order to be incorporated as part of UNASUR, at least eight of its member countries should participate.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the First Meeting of the CSE, held on 31 May 2013 in Lima, Peru, as well as the Meeting of High Level Delegates and Technical Teams of the Council, which took place on 13 March 2014, also in Lima, Peru, country in charge of the Presidency of the South American Council for Education during the period 2013-2014.

Among the results of such meetings stands out the approval of the Statute of the Council, the approval of the Five-Year Operation Plan, which gives priority to education matters relevant at a regional level; the advances made in the formulation of a common stance on global debates on development and education post 2015; the acknowledgement of the growing importance of the use and access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), reviewing of the advances of the regional projects to be funded by the Fund for Common Initiatives of the Council; as well as the acknowledgement of the common difficulties that need to be faced in order to overcome the existing educational challenges with quality and equality, so as to contribute to reduce the asymmetries and the existing social gaps.

South American Council for Infrastructure and Planning (COSIPLAN)

The South American Council for Infrastructure and Planning was created on 10 August 2009, during the III Regular Meeting of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, and in the first meeting of the COSIPLAN, held in December of that same year in Buenos Aires, the Statute and the Regulations of this Council were approved.

In the Statutes it is defined that the Council "is a stage for political and strategic discussion through consultation, evaluation, cooperation, planning, and coordination of efforts and articulation of programmes and projects, so as to implement the integration of the regional infrastructure of UNASUR Member countries", and the following are defined as its principles: a) completeness and complementarity of policies, programs and projects for regional infrastructure that tend to the territorial balance and cohesion, as well as to the sustainable development in harmony with nature; b) citizens participation and pluralism in the initiatives for regional integration in infrastructure, recognizing and respecting the rights of all peoples and their cultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual diversity; c) gradualness and flexibility in the application of the actions identified, acknowledging the different national realities; d) Solidarity and cooperation in the evaluation and prioritizing of integration projects [COSIPLAN, 2009].

In such Statutes, the following objectives of COSIPLAN are defined:

- As general objectives: a) Developing an infrastructure for regional integration, acknowledging and continuing with the achievements and advances of The Initiative for the Integration of the South American Regional Infrastructure (IIRSA), incorporating them into their work framework; b) Promoting regional cooperation in planning and infrastructure, through strategic alliances between UNASUR Member States; c) Fostering the compatibility of the existing normative frameworks in UNASUR Member States, that regulate the development and operation of the infrastructure in the Region; d) Identifying and driving the execution of priority projects for the integration, and evaluating alternatives for their funding.
- As specific objectives: a) Promoting the connectivity of the region based on the construction of networks of infrastructure for its physical integration, following principles of sustainable social and economic development, preserving the environment and the balance of the ecosystems; b) Increasing the capabilities and potentialities of the local and regional

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population through the development of the infrastructure, in order to improve their life's quality and expectancy; c) Designing regional planning strategies for the development of infrastructure; d) Consolidating the Portfolio of Projects for the Integration of the South American Regional Infrastructure; e) Fostering the intensive use of information and communication technologies, so as to overcome geographic and operational obstacles in the region; f) Driving the application of methodologies, the development of sector processes, and complementary actions to make design, execution and operation of physical integration projects viable.

Also, the attributions and working of the Council are defined in the Statutes, as well as its Structure, which contemplate three support instances:

- The Coordinating Committee, "comprised by ministry delegates of the member States" [COSIPLAN, 2009]. In COSIPLAN's regulations, the Coordinating Committee is defined as "the executive stage of the Council," and among others, the following functions are assigned to it: to create and update the Action Plan, to create the Annual Work Plan and to monitor, evaluate and report on its execution; to prepare the agendas and documents of the meetings of the Council; to coordinate instances of dialogue with other Councils of UNASUR; and to propose and execute actions that would bring it closer to other similar forums, that would allow to establish approach mechanisms, and exchange of experiences [COSIPLAN, 2009a].

The first meeting of the Coordinating Committee was held in Rio de Janeiro, in April 2011, and the most recent was its 11th Meeting, held in Montevideo in April 2015. During April's meeting, this year, as in previous meetings, the agenda included both the revision of the calendar of activities, and the progress of the actions contemplated in the current Work Plan, as well as the presentation of reports of the different Work Groups, to which, during this meeting, the analysis of the Document *From Vision to Action*, already mentioned, was added as the initial item, particularly the part of the document that refers to the possible "election of a subset of projects to be given priority above the projects that were already given priority to and included in the Agenda of Priority Integration Projects (API), as well as define new forms to manage and/or follow them, focusing on the acceleration of their completeness or significant progress in the short term" [COSIPLAN, 2015].

- The "Working Groups that are agreed to create in the subject areas of its competence" [COSIPLAN, 2009], to which COSIPLAN's Regulations assign the following functions: "1.- Those specifically established by the Council; 2.- Present the reports of activities, in accordance with the mandate of creation; 3.- To keep a permanent exchange of information and collaboration with the other support stages" [COSIPLAN, 2009a].

During the meeting of COSIPLAN that took place in Brasilia in November 2011, the Council agreed to create the "Work Group for Financing and Guarantees Mechanisms" – whose most recent meeting, its second, was held on 21 May 2014 – and the "Working Group for Telecommunications" – whose most recent meeting, its fourth, was held on 14 April 2015 –, and in another Meeting of the Council held in Santiago in November 2013 was created "The Work Group for Geographic Information System (SIG) and the Web Page of COSIPLAN", which has met twice, in May and in October 2014, and then carried out a videoconference of the Group in April 2015.

- “The IIRSA Initiative as a technical Forum for matters related to planning of South American regional physical integration” [2009].

In terms of this initiative, it is worth mentioning that it was created in August 2000, during the first South American Summit, which issued the *Statement of Brasilia* [Presidents of South America, 2000]. One of its five sections was “Infrastructure of Integration”, which proposed, among other things, that “integration and development of the physical infrastructure are two lines of action that complement each other”, and that those who sign it consider “a priority the identification of works of bilateral and sub-regional interest,” adding to said Statement the *Action Plan for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure in South America*, drafted by the Ministers for Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, whose final version was agreed to by them in December of that same year. In that Action Plan, a series of Basic Actions was defined, as well as Mechanisms for the Implementation and Follow-Up of the Plan, and 13 “Axes for integration and development” were identified [Ministers of Transport, Telecommunications and Energy of South America, 2000], all this with a timeline of 10 years, during which the Plan was finished.⁵

Thus, from the first meeting of COSIPLAN, the IIRSA was henceforth incorporated to such Council, defining for it the following functions in COSIPLAN’s Regulations: “1.- Prepare the planning for the regional physical integration of South America; 2.- Update, evaluate and monitor the execution of the Portfolio of Infrastructure Projects for the regional physical integration; 3.- Develop and apply methodologies to enrich the portfolio of projects, following criteria for sustainable social and economic development, preservation of the environment, and balance of ecosystems; 4.- Update, reformulate, and follow the implementation agreed; 5.- Keep a permanent exchange of information and collaboration with the Coordinating Committee; 6.- Present before the Coordinating Committee its contributions to the Action Plan and to the Annual Work Plan; 7.- Present to the Council the corresponding report of activities performed; 8.- The other functions necessary to complete its objectives and those additionally assigned to it by the Council” [COSIPLAN, 2009a].

Since the beginning of its first meeting in December 2009, in compliance with its Regulations, COSIPLAN has been holding Annual Regular Ordinary Meetings: the First Meeting in Quito, Ecuador, in June 2010; the II Meeting in Brasilia, Brazil, in November 2011; the III Meeting in Lima, Peru, in November 2012; the IV Meeting in Santiago, Chile, in November 2013; and the V Meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay, in December 2014.

During the second of those meetings, three Working Groups were created: on “South American Railroad Integration,” “Telecommunications in South America,” and “Financing and Guarantees Mechanisms”; and the *Strategic Action Plan 2012-2022* and the *Agenda of Priority Projects* were agreed upon; all of which was ratified by the Presidents of UNASUR in November 2012, thus complying with those two documents, the main objective of the plans and annual reports of the Council and of the agenda of its Regular Meetings.

In terms of the *Strategic Action Plan 2012-2022*, in which a series of actions are identified for each of the six specific objectives of the COSIPLAN, mentioned in previous paragraphs, indicating for each action “the product(s) expected, and the estimated time or frequency of execution”, as well as the “Instruments for the Application of the Actions and the Undertakings”, the “Mechanisms for

⁵ According to the text “IIRSA 10 YEARS LATER: Achievements and challenges”, in the balance of 10 years of operation of the initiative, among the tangible results “the Portfolio of IIRSA Projects to 2010” stands out, comprised by 524 projects for an estimated investment of US\$ 96.119 billion, distributed in 47 groups belonging to 9 Axes of Integration” [IIRSA, 2011].

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Monitoring and Evaluation of Actions," and the concentrated Schedule to perform the different actions [COSIPLAN, 2011].

In reference to the *Agenda of Priority Projects*, according to what is established in its "Presentation", "it consists of a set of 31 projects for an estimated investment amount of US\$ 13,652.7 million, strategic in nature and of high impact for the physical integration and the regional socioeconomic development. Its objective is the promotion of the connectivity of the region based on the construction and efficient operation of the infrastructure, following criteria of sustainable social and economic development, preservation of the environment and balance of the ecosystems". Such amount "is equal to 11.8% of the total Portfolio of COSIPLAN up to 2011, which is US\$116,120.6 million" [COSIPLAN, 2011a].

Finishing the matters related to COSIPLAN, the following Table presents the information delivered at the V Regular Meeting of the Council in December 2014, referred to the Portfolio of Projects, indicating the number of projects and investments assigned to each of the nine Axis of Integration and Development (EID)⁶ identified in said information.

COSIPLAN PORTFOLIO OF PROJECTS (at September 2014)				
AXIS	N° of Projects		Estimated investment	
	N°	% of Total	Mio US\$	% of Total
Amazons Axis	82	14.2	25070.2	15.3
Andean Axis	64	11.1	9962.1	6.1
Capricorn Axis	83	14.3	17929.5	11.0
Guyanese Shield Axis	20	3.5	4581.3	2.8
Paraguay-Parana Waterway Axis	95	16.4	7574.4	4.6
Central Interoceanic Axis	61	10.5	8907.6	5.5
MERCOSUR-Chile Axis	123	21.2	54608.3	33.4
Peru-Brazil-Bolivia Axis	25	4.3	32131.9	19.7
Axis of the South	28	4.8	2744.6	1.7
TOTAL*	579	100.3	163324.5	100.1

* There are two "articulating" projects that form part of two Axes. Therefore, the totals for the number of projects and estimated investment do not match the arithmetic addition of the corresponding columns.

Source: Based on COSIPLAN [2014: 32].

Based on the Table, out of the total of 579 projects and 16 thousand 324 million estimated investment, the higher percentages correspond to the MERCOSUR-Chile Axis, with 21.2% and 33.4% respectively, followed – in terms of the amounts of estimated investment – by the Peru-Brazil-Bolivia Axis and the Amazons Axis, which concentrate 19.7% and 15.3% respectively, of the total estimated investment.

Other information from the same source can be added to the figures of the Table, referred to the degree of progress, the composition by sector, and the type of funding of the 579 projects comprising the Portfolio in 2014 [COSIPLAN, 2014: 10-11]:

⁶ According to the source of the Table, "An EID is a multinational strip of territory that includes a certain endowment of natural resources, urban settlements, productive areas, and logistics services. This territory is articulated by infrastructure for transport, energy and communications that facilitates the flows of goods and services, of people and information, both inside the territory and towards and from the rest of the world.

- “Progress of the Projects in 2014: Out of the 579 projects in the Portfolio, 179 projects for an estimated investment amount of US\$ 72,990.7 million (44.7%) are in the execution phase; 137 projects are in the phase of profiling for an estimated amount of US\$ 19,234.3 million (11.8% of the Portfolio); 157 projects are in the pre-execution phase for an amount estimated in US\$ 50,744.7 million (31.1%); and 106 projects are concluded for amount of US\$ 20,354.8 million (12.4% of the Portfolio). When analysing the year of entering the Portfolio of the projects that are in the profiling phase, it is observed that 83.3% were included before 2012”.
- “Composition by sector of the Portfolio of Projects: 89.1% of the projects and 66.5% of the investments of this Portfolio correspond to projects of the sector of transport; while energy projects account for 9.3% and 33.5%, respectively. Ground transportation projects take precedence in the Portfolio with almost half of the initiatives, and over 50% of the investment of the sector, followed by the projects of railroad, marine and fluvial transportation, in order of importance. The portfolio for the sector of communications represents less than 2% of the number of projects, and its investment amount is estimated at US\$ 41.6 million”.
- “Type of financing of the Portfolio of Projects: In terms of the financing of the projects, the main source is the public sector (79.1%). Private presence and public/private associations represent 12.8% and 8.1%, respectively”.

South American World Drug Problem Council (CSPMD)

The CSPMD was created during the III Regular Meeting of the Council of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, in August 2009, and its official name was South American Council for Fighting Drug Trafficking.

In April 2010, the CSPMD defined its Statute, which establishes that the Council, “is a permanent body of UNASUR, for consultation, cooperation and coordination to face the global drug problem,” and 10 principles are defined for the operation of the CSPMD, among which are the following: unrestricted respect for sovereignty, self-determination, integrity and territorial inviolability and equality among the States; respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms; non-intervention in the internal affairs of the States; respect for the legislation in force in each country, and exercising of non-discrimination of drug-dependents in the framework of the social insertion policies; all the aspects for the reduction of demand, reduction of supply, and the international cooperation shall be tackled in a balanced manner and in full compliance with the principles and purposes set forth in the International and regional Treaties in force on the matter; the action against the global drug problem is a common and shared responsibility that requires an efficient and growing international operation, and demands a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and balanced approach of the strategies for the reduction of the supply and the demand of drugs; the tackling of the global drug problem shall be coordinated in all its links of the productive chain; and, multilateral evaluation through mechanisms that would allow for mutual support and cooperation to face the global drug problem, so as to overcome arbitrary control methods and unilateral certifications [CSPMD, 2010].

The Statute defines a series of four general Objectives and ten Specific Objectives.

- Among the general objectives are: “Propose strategies, plans and coordination and cooperation mechanisms between Member States to influence in a comprehensive fashion all the areas of the problem [...]; build a South American identity to face the global drug

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problem [...]; promote the articulation of consensus stances in multilateral forums in the matter of drugs [...]"

- Among the specific objectives are: "foster means to identify harmonization possibilities of criminal, civil and administrative rules, as well as public policies, in relation to the global drug problem [...]; contribute to the strengthening of the institutional capabilities of all bodies with competence to face the global drug problem; promote the exchange of experiences and good practices of the governing and executing bodies of the national policies to face the global drug problem [...]; promote the alternative, comprehensive, sustainable and, as the case may be, alternative pre-emptive development as a tool to face the global drug problem; strengthen the actions in the matter of reduction of the demand of drugs [...]; promote an effective judicial, police and financial intelligence units cooperation, in order to increase and expedite the response capability to crimes related to the global drug problem [...]; promotion of scientific research on all the dimensions of the global drug problem, thus facilitating an exchange with the academic and scientific community."

In the remaining parts of the Statute, the structure and operation of the Council are defined, establishing, among other points: that "the Council will have an executive instance integrated by high-level representatives of each Member State, delegates of the institutions responsible for the policies to face the global drug problem," and that "The Council can establish work groups of openly comprised, specialized in several aspects covered in the Action Plan" [CSPMD, 2010].

In October 2010, the CSPMD defined its Action Plan, identifying five "lines of action by area of competence," from which, to a great extent, stem out the abovementioned specific objectives of the Council and, as will be mentioned later, correspond to most of the Work Groups that were later created. These "lines of action", for each of which a series of objectives was defined on the Action Plan, are the following: "Reduction of demand," with five objectives; "Alternative, comprehensive and Sustainable Development, including Prevention," with five objectives; "Reduction of Supply," with seven objectives; "Control Measures," with six objectives; "Laundering of Assets," with four objectives [CSPMD, 2010a].

After the definition of its Statute and Action Plan, the CSPMD has held four regular meetings: the First Meeting on 17 and 18 November 2011 in La Paz, Bolivia; the II Meeting on 22 and 23 March 2012, in Asuncion, Paraguay; the III Meeting in Lima, Peru, on 5 December 2012; and the IV Meeting on 21 and 22 July 2014, in Catia La Mar, Venezuela.

In the first of those meetings – and according to the Minutes of that Meeting, "once the priority lines of action of the areas of competence of the Action Plan of this Council were identified" – it was agreed to create six Work Groups, assigning to each of them a "Priority of action," associated with specific inserts of the "Lines" defined in the Action Plan, as well as, in some cases, specific objectives defined in the Statute of the Council. Such Groups are: Group 1, Reduction of Demand; Group 2, Alternative, Comprehensive and Sustainable Development, including Prevention; Group 3, Reduction of Supply; Group 4, Control Measures; Group 5, Laundering of Assets; and Group 6, Institutional Strengthening and Legislative Harmonization [CSPMD, 2011].

After that meeting, the different work groups have been advancing in the incorporation of national representatives, as well as in the definition of their schedules and programs of activities, and in the following meetings of the Council, besides the supervision of the progress of each group, renew their mandates and evaluate the progress of the Action Plan, among other items, different

initiatives have been discussed and agreed. In that connection, in the IV Meeting of the CSPMD, held in July 2014, the creation of the South American Centre for Training in the Matter of Drugs was agreed, the Project for the Network of Drug Observatories⁷ was approved, the Work Group for "Institutional Strengthening and Legislative Harmonization" was mandated "the drafting of a proposal for the creation of a South American Observatory of Drugs", and an *ad hoc* working group was created to deliver a proposal referred to the creation of a "South American System of Exchange of Information in the Matter of Drugs" [CSPMD, 2014].

South American Council for Citizen Safety, Justice and Coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime (DOT)

The South American Council for Citizen Safety, Justice and Coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime was created by decision of the Council of Heads of State of UNASUR on 30 November 2012, which as immediate background has the *Declaration of Cartagena*, issued in that Colombian city in May of that same year, after a meeting of the General Secretariat of UNASUR, with Ministers of Defence, Justice, Domestic and Foreign Affairs of the Group. In the Declaration, the Ministers recommended the Council of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR "the creation of a Council with the purpose of strengthening cooperation in the matter of Citizen Safety, Justice and coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime, trying to avoid the duplication of functions with other already existing instances in UNASUR," as well as "the creation of a Work Group that prepares, with the support of the General Secretariat of UNASUR, the Statute and the Action Plan of said Council" [Ministers of Defence, Justice, Internal and Foreign Affairs of UNASUR, 2012b].

In the same decision by which the Council was created, the Statute was approved, which defines that the Council "is a permanent stage of UNASUR for consultation, coordination and cooperation between Member States in the matter of citizen safety, justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime, in the framework of UNASUR's Founding Treaty," and identifies its "fundamental principles", among which are: the "Unrestricted respect for sovereignty, self-determination, integrity and territorial inviolability, equality among States, pacific resolution of controversies and non-intervention in internal affairs"; "Unrestricted respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and guarantees of the citizens, in a framework of complete validity of the democratic institutions"; "Promotion of social inclusion, citizens' participation, and gender equality, taking into account the right of the citizens to safety and the obligation of the States to provide it"; and "Respect for the sovereign right of every member State to identify its priorities in the matter of citizen safety, justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as to define proper policies and measures to face these challenges, in accordance with their body of laws and complying with the international law" [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2012c].

Among the general objectives defined by the Statute for the Council are: "Strengthening citizen safety, justice and coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime in all its manifestations [...]"; "Propose strategies, action plans and coordination, cooperation and technical assistance mechanisms among member States to influence in a comprehensive fashion all areas of citizen safety, justice and coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime" [...]; "Promote the articulation of agreed stances in the matters of the international agenda related to citizen safety, justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime [...]; "Foster the

⁷ With respect to this Project, on 10 February 2015, a Chart of Undertaking was signed for the execution of the UNASUR Project "Network of Observatories of Drugs of UNASUR Member States" between the General Secretariat of UNASUR and the national Board of Drugs of Uruguay, by which this Board will be in charge of said execution, with financing from the "Common Initiatives Fund" of UNASUR.

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articulation and complementarity of the Council with the existing mechanisms at a sub-regional and regional level [...]; "Promote the participation of social and citizen actors in the creation of citizen safety plans and policies of member States, in accordance with the provisions of its internal legislations"; and, "Promote the strengthening of the government institutions in charge of citizen safety, justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime" [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2012c].

As specific objectives of the Council, the Statute defines eight, among which are the following: "Contribute to the generation and strengthening of the national capabilities of UNASUR member States in the matter of citizen safety, justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime"; "Promote the exchange of experiences and good practices of the governing and executing bodies in charge of national policies to strengthen citizen safety, justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime"; "Promote a judicial, police and intelligence agencies cooperation, in order to increase and accelerate the response capability to the different forms and manifestations of Transnational Organized Crime [...]"; "Formulate guidelines in the matter of prevention, law enforcement, rehabilitation and social reinsertion [...]"; and "Promote the adoption of procedures and measures to accelerate and strengthen judicial and investigative cooperation, as well as the use of direct communication channels , and permanent contact between the corresponding central authorities" [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2012c].

After its creation, the South American Council for Citizen Safety, Justice and actions against Transnational Organized Crime has held two regular meetings, the first on 18 and 19 August 2013, in Lima, and the second on 27 June 2014, in Montevideo.

- In the first one, and after several meetings of the executive stage of the Council held in February and May 2013, the *Action Plan 2013-2017* was defined, which put forward for that five-year period a total of 30 strategic challenges, and 137 lines of action/objectives, distributed in 11 subject axes and three greater areas – for each of which a Work Group was created –, namely:
- Citizen safety, with four thematic axes: Strengthening of the institutional capabilities, strategies and policies for citizen safety, with four strategic challenges and 20 lines/objectives; Strengthening of citizen participation, with one strategic challenge and four lines/objectives; Citizen safety with perspective of Human Rights, with three strategic challenges and 15 lines/objectives; and, Management of citizen safety of populations and border areas, with one strategic challenge and five lines/objectives.
- Justice, with four thematic axes: Strengthening of the Justice Systems, with four strategic challenges and 18 lines/objectives; Strengthening of access to Justice, with two strategic challenges and nine lines/objectives; Formulation and implementation of policies of justice with perspective of Human Rights, with five strategic challenges and 17 lines/objectives; and Strengthening of penitentiary policies of Member States, with three strategic challenges and 18 lines/objectives.
- Coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime (DOT), with three thematic axes: Strengthening of institutional capabilities, strategies and policies against DOT, with six strategic challenges and 24 lines/objectives; Strengthening of the policies of border and transnational cooperation for actions against Transnational Organized Crime, with two strategic challenges and three lines/objectives; and, Strengthening of citizen participation, with one strategic challenge and four lines/objectives [South American Council in the matter of Citizen Safety, Justice and Coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime, 2013].

In the second meeting of the Council, in June 2014, all items related to these subjects were reviewed through the reports delivered by the corresponding Work Groups, added to the fact that seven months before, in October 2013, the Ministers and top competent authorities in the matter of laundering of assets and financing of terrorism from eight UNASUR countries – Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela – signed the *Commitment of Buenos Aires*, in which they identify a list of organizations of those countries, which would have to establish links with each other to develop different actions, namely the exchange of information and experiences, promotion of studies and analysis, creation of a “database and a manual on good practices against laundering of assets, available for the different national authorities of the region [...]”; organization of “training programmes and internships for officials in the fight against Laundering of Assets, in order to contribute to their updating and experience in the matter” [Ministers of eight countries, 2013].

Besides the aforementioned, it is worth considering that since the very creation of the South American Council for Citizen Safety, Justice and Coordination of actions against Transnational Organized Crime, the Heads of State [2012b] defined that it will “combine its tasks with the South American Council on the Global Drug Problem, in view of the existence of common subject areas between both Councils,” a task that is being tackled in the different meetings by both Councils involved, which yielded as a first result the meeting of the Pro Tempore Chairmanships of both Councils, held in July 2014 in Caracas, and generated the “Coordination Mechanism Proposal,” referred to “coincident thematic areas set forth in the specific objectives of its corresponding Statutes,” for which the Proposal identifies the specific objectives of the Councils in which there is a coincidence of subjects, and establishes the procedures to be followed when either of the two Councils decides to perform actions registered in such objectives [Pro Tempore Chairmanships of the CSPMD and the DOT, 2014].

IV. UNASUR AND THE REDUCTION OF ASYMMETRIES AMONG SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES

One particularly relevant issue in South America is the question of asymmetries among the countries in the region, which has been present for some time as a source of concern of various integration mechanisms.

In this regard, there are references in Chapter VIII – “Measures in favour of relatively less developed countries” – of the LAFTA Treaty of 1960, and in the Additional Protocol to the treaty, which stated that Bolivia and Paraguay could invoke the treatment defined for that category of countries; the ALADI Treaty of 1980, which dealt with the issue in Chapter III – “Support System for the relatively less developed countries” –, and one of the accompanying resolutions of that Treaty, in addition to the aforementioned category, included “intermediate developed countries” and “other member countries”; the Cartagena Agreement establishing the Andean Pact, which included the chapter “Special Regime for Bolivia and Ecuador,” that set forth preferential treatment for those countries regarding policy harmonisation commitments, Industrial Development Programmes, Trade Policy, adoption of the Common External Tariff, and Financial Cooperation and Technical Assistance.

Such concern about the issue of asymmetries decreased markedly in the 1980s and 1990s, but reappeared later with a different force in the aforementioned mechanisms and in MERCOSUR, which created the Structural Convergence Fund (FOCEM). In December 2003 – i.e. twelve years after the signing of the Treaty of Asuncion – the Common Market Council [2003] proposed to “promote, in the year 2004, studies to establish Structural Funds in MERCOSUR, aiming to increase

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competitiveness of the smaller partners and less developed regions” and the creation of FOCEM, established in December 2004, defining that the Fund would “aim to finance programmes to promote structural convergence, increase competitiveness and promote social cohesion, particularly in the smaller economies and less developed regions; support the functioning of the institutional structure and strengthening the integration process.” [Council of the Common Market, 2004], FOCEM started to operate in 2007 and currently manages, with the entry of Venezuela into MERCOSUR, an annual amount of US\$ 127 million.⁸

Additionally, the issue of asymmetries was also clearly present since the creation of the South American Community of Nations: In the Cuzco Declaration of December 2004 announcing the creation of the South American Community of Nations, the recognition of asymmetries is part of strategies that transcend the mere pursuit of economic growth; in the *Presidential Declaration* and *Priority Agenda* of the Meeting in Brasilia in September 2005, which proposed reducing imbalances as one of the purposes of the Community in the economic field; this reduction is identified as one of eight areas of the Priority Agenda; the Declaration of Cochabamba, derived from the presidential meeting in December 2006 in that city, placed the reduction of asymmetries as part of the first of six “guiding principles” of South American integration, and identified “Overcoming asymmetries for an equitable integration: development of concrete and effective mechanisms that enable the resolution of the great inequalities between countries and regions of South America” as the first “integration goal”; and the Declaration of Margarita, of April 2007, proposes to leverage economic complementarities to reduce asymmetries.

In particular, during the existence of the SACN, the Forum “A New Treatment of Asymmetries in South American Integration” was held on 21 October 2005 in La Paz, organised by the government of Bolivia, for which different entities of the region prepared documents with analyses and balance on the issue: the General Secretariat of ALADI [2005], the MERCOSUR Secretariat [2005], the General Secretariat of the Andean Community [2006], the Division of International Trade and Integration of ECLAC [2005] and a joint document by those entities plus the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, the Permanent Secretariat of ACTO and CAF [Several Organisations, 2005].

If we take this experience into account, it is not surprising that the issue of asymmetries has taken a prominent role in the creation and development of UNASUR. In this connection, we can mention the following examples:

- In the Treaty establishing UNASUR the “reduction of asymmetries” is one of the guiding principles of the Union. As already cited above, in the Treaty the reduction of asymmetries is identified as a general and specific objective of the Union. The eighth specific objective states “developing concrete and effective mechanisms to overcome asymmetries, thus achieving an equitable integration”; and No. 12 foresees promoting “growth and economic development to overcome asymmetries through complementation of economies.” [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2008]
- The “UNASUR Commitment Against Inequality”, also mentioned above, signed by the Heads of State and Government at the Special Meeting held in Lima on 28 July 2011, among other things, assumes the urgency of establishing an Agenda of Priority Actions of the Union” [...] to help reduce asymmetries and structural gaps in our region and break the

⁸ In addition to the implementation of FOCEM, between end of 2006 and mid-2007, the Council of MERCOSUR defined the guidelines for the preparation of a “Strategic Plan for Overcoming Asymmetries in MERCOSUR” – regarding the objectives, instruments, schedule and result evaluation criteria – and created a High-Level Group in charge of such preparation, which was not materialised due to differences between countries.

- intergenerational transmission of inequality[...]" [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2011]
- The Declaration of Asuncion, derived from the Annual Meeting held in that city in October 2011, offered the Pro-Tempore Presidency "willingness and commitment" to "meet the challenges in South America keeps on cohesion and social inclusion, to strengthen the political unity and reduce asymmetries". [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2011a]
 - The Declaration of Paramaribo, stemming from the Seventh Meeting of Heads of State and Government held in August 2013, stated that one of the guidelines of the "strategic vision of UNASUR in the long term" is "the priority of UNASUR for promoting forms of cooperation that allow progress in the eradication of poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion and to overcome existing asymmetries". [Heads of State and Government of UNASUR, 2013]
 - The document "From Vision to Action," cited above, where the current General Secretariat of UNASUR [2015] defines the purposes of its actions – identifying the main contents of the social, economic and political agendas – makes references to asymmetries in different instances: the effective implementation of human rights, by – among other things – reducing asymmetries (p. 24); identifying inequality and social asymmetries as the most serious social problem in the region (p. 28); the need to design "financing funds to overcome structural asymmetries" (p. 39); the need to "take into account the deep regional, social and labour asymmetries in development structures, and to seek forms of compensation in the efforts towards convergence, that "level off" people and sectors through inclusive programs" (p. 45).; reducing asymmetries as one of the spaces of the "Agenda for Convergence" (52); and the "creation of inclusion funds to reduce asymmetries" as part of the programmes in said Agenda (p. 53).

Of course, the priority given to the reduction of asymmetries is consistent with the vast evidence that in South America, for a long time and to this day, asymmetries between countries are of great magnitude – more than in other regions, and the rest of the Americas – and affect the most diverse areas of the economic and social realms. Asymmetries are also present within countries, as a major problem for any national development or regional integration project.

In this respect, and only as a general expression of such magnitude in South America, the following table presents, for the 12 UNASUR countries, figures on the Human Development Index (HDI), adjusted for Inequality and Gross National Product (GNP) per capita. This table shows the sharp differences in these indicators between countries in the region. In the case of the HDI, we must add that these countries are included in three of the four categories of the source: two of them are in the "Very High Human Development" group, seven in the "High Human Development" group, and three in the "Medium Human Development" group. The table also shows a sharp decline as a result of adjusting the HDI for internal inequality in each country, accounting for a 22% reduction as a simple average in the 12 countries, and over 25% for Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia.

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HDI adjusted for inequality and per capita GNP of UNASUR countries						
	Human Development Index (HDI)				HDI adjusted for inequality	Per capita GNP*
	1990	2000	2013	2013 ranking	2013	2013
Argentina	0.694	0.753	0.808	49	0.680 (-15.8%)	17297
Bolivia	0.554	0.615	0.667	113	0.470 (-29.5%)	5552
Brazil	0.612	0.682	0.744	79	0.542 (-27.2%)	14275
Chile	0.704	0.753	0.822	41	0.661 (-19.2%)	20804
Colombia	0.596	0.655	0.711	98	0.521 (-26.7%)	11527
Ecuador	0.643	0.658	0.711	98	0.549 (-22.8%)	9998
Guyana	0.505	0.57	0.638	121	0.522 (-18.2%)	6341
Paraguay	0.581	0.625	0.676	111	0.513 (-24.1%)	7580
Peru	0.615	0.682	0.737	82	0.562 (-23.7%)	11280
Suriname	--	--	0.705	100	0.534 (-24.3%)	15113
Uruguay	0.691	0.74	0.79	50	0.662 (-16.2%)	18108
Venezuela	0.644	0.677	0.764	67	0.613 (-19.8%)	17067
Simple Average	0.622	0.674	0.731		0.569 (-22.2%)	12912
Greater/smaller/ (%)	139.4	132.5	128.8		140.6	374.7
* Purchasing Power Parity, in 2011 figures. (--) Not available.						
Source: Database, Human Development Index Report Web page, http://hdr.undp.org/es/data						

In addition to the deep asymmetries in South America, there is the fact that such asymmetries, both within and between countries, have remained and have even grown over time. In this regard, commitments and actions taken in the different integration mechanisms have not impeded this growth in the areas of asymmetry which these mechanisms have sought to influence. Besides, there is a growing recognition that these areas should be substantially expanded – to include not only special and differential treatment with respect to free trade commitments or customs unions – as a central part of strategies in order to achieve real progress and equitable distribution of results of integration efforts in the region.

In this connection, the documents produced by the various agencies in the region within the framework of the 2005 Forum on "Treatment of Asymmetries", cited above, agree on the need to expand the scope of such treatment, to comprise – as an objective of integrating processes – a range of asymmetries grouped in these documents as "structural asymmetries" and "policy asymmetries", based on a classification defined in the following terms by R. Bouzas [2003: 3]:⁹

⁹ Alternative classifications of asymmetries are included in two documents of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA. The first, from 2006, distinguishes between "power-dependence asymmetries between State parties" and "development asymmetries between national societies of said State Parties", identifying for each of these groups the environmental, economic, cultural,

"There are different types of asymmetries that are relevant for Regional Integration Agreements. A possible distinction is between those based on structural factors and those created by public sector policies or regulatory interventions. While structural asymmetries often require the implementation of agreed discrimination policies (i.e. the application of some form of preferential treatment), policy asymmetries tend to create pressures for deeper policy coordination, or even harmonisation. Structural asymmetries are determined by factors that shape the ability of economies to benefit from increased market integration. These include, among others, size of the economy, factor endowments, per capita income, the degree of flexibility of goods and factor markets and the level of economic development. These attributes only change slowly over time [...]

"Policy asymmetries, however, are based on the institutional preferences, options and characteristics. [...] The harmonisation of policy asymmetries may seem easier than dealing with structural asymmetries. However, the experience of MERCOSUR and other regional integration agreements shows that this is not the case. The harmonisation of policy asymmetries requires an inherently unstable compromise between legitimate differences in national preferences and the need for a 'levelled playing field'."

V. UNASUR AND THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

In addition to the process of creation and operation of UNASUR, as described in previous sections, in other areas of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in the whole region, there have been new and important integrative efforts in recent years. ALBA-TCP was created in 2004, the Pacific Alliance in 2012 and the CELAC in 2011, all of which have completely changed the regional integration outlook, not only with the emergence of these new mechanisms, but also with new features of these processes.

Overall, the new profiles of regional integration are based on a shared balance regarding the experience of this integration in the final decades of the 20th century, according to which it was far from meeting its objectives. These goals focused on commercial aspects, covering, at most, some other areas of economic relationship between the countries participating in each integration mechanisms. Thus, the development of these various mechanisms was far from becoming a lever for development and improvement of wellbeing, and were relegated to mere instruments of realisation of the opening to which the economies of the region were subjected.

In this regard, most new mechanisms have assumed a wider range of objectives to be covered in integration efforts which, in addition to involving progress beyond commercial aspects, as in the case of monetary and financial coordination, progress towards new lending institutions, and establishing common positions on issues in the international economic order, there has been a clear incorporation of areas beyond strictly economic issues, through concerns and actions related to political cooperation, community identity, energy cooperation, negotiations with third parties, environmental problems, the preservation of democracy, and especially, social aspects, incorporating topics such as nutrition, poverty alleviation, health, education and employment.

As a second component of the profiles present in most of the new integration mechanisms in the region, there is also a greater number of countries participating in these mechanisms, thus overcoming the fragmented nature of the integration that had prevailed since the 1990s, which was also accompanied by the proliferation of bilateral trade agreements of different scope and

and political dimensions, and, for each dimension, factual, structural y strategic asymmetries [SELA, 2006]. The second document, from 2011, distinguishes between structural, commercial, public policy and institutional asymmetries. [SELA, 2011]

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depth, creating a true “branching” that, far from facilitating progress towards creating an integrated space for the whole region, it actually hindered such progress, becoming extremely complex and with few results in their attempts to “multilateralise” to the various schemes and bilateral agreements.

The current membership of 12 countries in ALBA-TCP, 12 countries in UNASUR and especially the 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries in CELAC, is a clear sign that the region has overcome the previous fragmentation, and opens the way for a possible integration that actually covers a significant space in the region, or even all Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Thus, attempts to overcome the fragmented nature of integration, the reduction of the “emphasis on trade” that has long been part of it, incorporating other areas on the economic agenda and non-economic issues are the most significant components of this new profile in integration efforts in the region, and UNASUR should be based on this new profile.

In this regard, and based on the experience of the South American Community of Nations and the priority it assigned to the creation of the South American Free Trade Area (SAFTA), UNASUR, due to its membership, nature, principles and objectives, its modes of operation and actions undertaken thus far, is clearly consistent with this new profile.

In particular, the institutions created in the Union to define its different levels of operation, and especially the role assigned to different sectoral councils, which, after being created and defining their respective statutes, have devised multi-year work plans and monitored compliance, are proof of the diversity of fields of action that are considered necessary to tackle for an effective progress of South American integration.

The results of such institutions should become increasingly noticeable as basic definitions are complemented by specific undertakings at different levels of the Union. Additionally, there has been a recent decision to prioritise the advancement of social, economic and political agendas in the strategic vision proposed by the current General Secretariat of UNASUR. Thus, a new stage of substantial progress is expected in the various fields where the Union intends to influence with its actions.

Therefore, potentials that we see today in the Union are likely to be realised in the coming years, thus multiplying the contributions of UNASUR to the consolidation of the new profile of regional integration cited before.

In this regard, UNASUR is called upon to become an important input for integration of all Latin America and Caribbean countries, as well as for the future and scope to be achieved at CELAC, especially if we take into consideration the relative importance of the twelve South American countries in the 33 members of the Community.

In addition, to a large extent, UNASUR is a space with features and problems similar to those that characterise the whole of CELAC. Much of the asymmetries and diverse strategies and political projects that characterise the Community are also present – though probably to a smaller extent – in UNASUR. Therefore, the progress made by UNASUR in processing differences and heterogeneities of various kinds between its member countries will surely be an important reference for the future development of CELAC, although the opposite is also true: the difficulties and obstacles that arise in this process in the Union, will almost certainly be common in CELAC – in a wider scope – in the broader framework of attempts by CELAC to converge positions and actions among the 33 countries in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis in previous sections, we can conclude that UNASUR, seven years after the signing of the Treaty and four years after its entry into force, has progressed in many ways, including:

- The definition, implementation and consolidation of its physical and institutional structure. In addition to the opening of its permanent headquarters, its various bodies are fully functional: eight Regular Meetings – and twelve Special Meetings – of the Council of Heads of State and Government; biannual meetings of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; almost fifty meetings of the Council of Delegates and the General Secretariat with its various directorates and four secretaries-general thus far.
- The Sector Councils that have been created are operating regularly, growing from three Councils in 2008 – the Energy Council established in 2007, the Defence Council and the Health Council created in December 2008 – to the twelve current councils whose operation was reviewed in previous sections of this document.
- Such regular operation of the different areas of the institutional structure of UNASUR includes for each of them the definition and monitoring of activities and, in the case of Sector Councils, the design of Action Plans and the corresponding monitoring for compliance.
- The role played by UNASUR, as a forum for dialogue, political mediation and to define common positions in the region, in situations such as the separatist attempts in Bolivia; the earthquake in Haiti; the attempted coup in Ecuador; the parliamentary coup in Paraguay; conflicts in Venezuela; retention of Bolivian presidential plane in Vienna; the economic blockade of Cuba; the coup in Honduras; U.S. declaration of Venezuela as a threat to national security; and Argentina's claim of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands.

Of course, these advances have been accompanied by difficulties of various kinds, derived not only from inherent complications in the implementation of a relatively complex institutional structure, such as the structure defined for the Union, but also from divergent positions, lack of agreements or delays in the realisation of agreements already made, such as: almost three years passed between the signing and entry into force of the Treaty; the delay in defining the South American Energy Treaty; delays in the definition and approval of proposals by the three working groups that report to the GTIF of the South American Council of Economy and Finance; the slow progress in reaching agreements aimed at building a real South American citizenship; and the already long postponement of the start of operations of Bank of the South – clearly linked to the UNASUR member countries – despite the important role that the Bank is called upon to play in the regional financial architecture.

These and other situations are an expression of the difficulties experienced in the development of UNASUR, which will surely continue as a necessary consequence of – structural and cyclical, strategy and policy – differences between member countries of the Union, for which it will be difficult to reach unanimity of interests and opinions.

Far from seeking this unanimity, it appears that the way forward should be – as it has been so far – the identification of common objectives, based on which countries should define actions and shared goals, apart from processing contentious issues that allow a gradual convergence of positions and a potential establishment of minimum points of convergence on addressing these issues.

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To do this, of course, the mandatory requirement is still the existence of a clear and strong political will to guide governments in the consolidation of UNASUR and, ultimately, convincing not only governments, but diverse shareholders in the region, about the need to transform integration into a lever for economic and social development and a vehicle for improving the wellbeing of the peoples of South America.

This need is not new. It has been historically present as a basically unfulfilled demand throughout the independent life of the countries of the region. What is new is the context in which integration must play a role now: on the one hand, a global scenario that puts pressure for the regrouping of countries and regions and the construction of spaces that help address the serious problems and imbalances that are present today in the systemic functioning; and on the other hand, a South American scenario in full transformation, which so far this century provides new opportunities for real progress of integration efforts among the countries of the region.

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