



Sistema Económico
Latinoamericano y del Caribe

Latin American and Caribbean
Economic System

Sistema Económico
Latino-Americano e do Caribe

Système Economique
Latinoaméricain et Caribéen

Final Report of the X Special Meeting of the Latin American Council

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INTRODUCTION

1. The X Special Meeting of the Latin American Council was held on 26 and 30 October 2006, in Caracas, by virtue of a Note convening such urgent meeting at the request of the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

2. The Meeting had the same Members of the Bureau of the XXXI Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, namely: the chair in charge of the Republic of Costa Rica; the First Vice-Chair in charge of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; the Second Vice-Chair in charge of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana; and the Rapporteur in charge of the Republic of Cuba. The Meeting was presided over by the Ambassador of the Republic of Costa Rica in Venezuela, Walter Rubén Hernández Juárez.

3. Participants at the meeting included the following Member States: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela; the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri; and officials of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA. The list of participants is included in Annex N° III.

4. The meeting adopted the following Agenda:

SOLE ITEM: To adopt the necessary measures in view of the resignation of the Permanent Secretary.

5. In opening the meeting on Thursday 26 October, the Chairman of the Latin American Council, Mr. Walter Rubén Hernández, Ambassador of the Republic of Costa Rica in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, welcomed participants. After confirming the presence of two-thirds of the Member States – thus complying with the requirements set forth in Article 18 of the Regulations of the Latin American Council, he gave the floor to the Permanent Secretary, Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri.

6. Ambassador Guarnieri welcomed participants and read a letter addressed to the Presidents and Ministers of Foreign Affairs submitting his resignation. Upon his request the letter was included in Annex N° II of this report.

7. The representative of Venezuela reiterated that his country was interested in appointing a Venezuelan citizen to conclude the period for which Ambassador Guarnieri was elected, which concludes on 11 December 2007. In view that the Vice-Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was not able to attend the meeting due to unforeseen circumstances, the representative requested to adjourn the meeting and to reconvene it on Monday 30 October 2006.

8. Since there was no objection to such a proposal, the Chairman invited participants to continue with the meeting on Monday 30 October 2006 at 9:30 a.m.

9. Upon resuming the meeting on Monday 30 October, the Chairman welcomed participants as well as the Vice-Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Rodolfo Eduardo Sanz, and informed that Ambassador Carmen Gabriela Menéndez had been appointed Permanent Secretariat Ad Interim, since Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri had to travel

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abroad in order to take office of his new position as Executive Director of the IMF on 1 November 2006. Ambassador Menéndez delivered a speech concerning the agenda of the meeting, making special emphasis on the serious financial crisis faced by the organization.

10. The Vice-Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Rodolfo Eduardo Sanz, explained the criteria governing foreign policy of his country and, within such context, he stressed the need to re-launch SELA, offering the support and collaboration of his country in order to accomplish that goal.

The Vice-Minister reiterated that his country was interested in appointing a Venezuelan citizen to take over the position of Permanent Secretary so as to complete the four-year period for which Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri was elected, which concludes on 11 December 2007. For that purpose, he proposed to appoint Dr. Floria María Caricote Lovera to complete the period. In this connection, he pointed out that her resumé was previously distributed to Member States. The text of his speech is included in Annex N° II.

11. Afterwards, the delegations of Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guyana, Panama, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Haiti, Ecuador, Bolivia, Jamaica, Cuba and Paraguay took the floor to support the candidate. Several delegations agreed with the criteria underscored by Vice-Minister Rodolfo Eduardo Sanz as regards the need to relaunch SELA.

12. At the request of the delegation of Nicaragua, the Latin American Council proceeded to unanimously appoint Dr. Floria María Caricote Lovera as Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) so as to complete the mandate that should conclude on 11 December 2007, pursuant to Decision N° 479, which is included in Annex No. I.

13. Vice-Minister Rodolfo Eduardo Sanz thanked the delegations for their support to his government's request.

14. The Chairman thanked participants for their cooperation and closed the meeting.

DECISION N° 479

DECISION N° 479

**ELECTION OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF SELA FOR THE PERIOD
FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2006 TO 11 DECEMBER 2007**

THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,

HAVING SEEN:

- That Dr. Roberto Guarnieri, in official Note SP-06/0685 addressed to Member States, submitted his resignation, effective as of 1 November 2006, to his position as Permanent Secretary of SELA, to which he was elected for the period from 11 December 2003 to 11 December 2007.
- The proposal made by the distinguished government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela through Note I.DVMALC N° 588, addressed to the Member States of SELA.

DECIDES:

Sole Article: To appoint Dr. Floria María Caricote Lovera, as Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) in order to conclude the current period, from 1 November 2006 to 11 December 2007.

**Letter from Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri,
Permanent Secretary of SELA**

**Speech by Mr. Rodolfo Eduardo Sanz,
Vice-Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

**Letter from Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri,
Permanent Secretary of SELA**

Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA)
Permanent Secretariat



SP-06/0771-091

Caracas, 26 October 2006

Your Excellency:

I have the honour to address Your Excellency to make some considerations in the wake of my formal resignation to the position of Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), effective as of 1 November 2006, as informed to the Representatives of the Member States to the Latin American Council through a Note dated 20 September of this year.

Upon taking office as Permanent Secretary in November 2003, I declared my firm resolution to turn the Permanent Secretariat into an institution that will be recognized by its Member States for its excellent performance in considering and assessing economic and financial issues of priority for the region, within its areas of competence, and for its effective contribution to the definition of coordinated positions and policies among its Members – particularly with respect to Latin American and Caribbean cooperation and integration.

In the opinion of the Permanent Secretary, such an objective required a substantial strengthening of the Permanent Secretariat's professional cadres, particularly from the qualitative and vocational standpoints, which should be conducted in accordance with a comprehensive restructuring of the organization, so as to adjust its institutional mission to the challenges of the profound changes that have occurred in terms of the economic and financial conditions at the regional and global levels.

The proposal made by the Permanent Secretary to the Latin American Council in November 2004 envisaged the following basic elements for the new organization of the Permanent Secretariat: a highly specialized Digital information and Knowledge Centre and a Direction of Studies to conduct analyses of its own, which should be conceptually rigorous and very relevant for decision-making about the main issues on the economic agenda of our region.

To His Excellency
Mr.

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Bahamas	Costa Rica	Jamaica	Suriname
Barbados	Cuba	México	Trinidad y Tobago
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Bolivia	Guatemala	Panamá	Venezuela
Brasil	Guyana	Paraguay	
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In addition, a proposal was made to create a Direction of Relations for Integration and Cooperation, in order to maintain constant and fluent communication with the authorities of the Member States and with the relevant regional and international institutions, so as to make emphasis in the Secretariat's Work Programme on the priority issues in accordance with the interests of the Member States.

Obviously, compliance with this institutional project depended heavily on having an appropriate financial platform. The Permanent Secretary proposed Member States in arrears with SELA to pay at least 25% of their outstanding quotas, which by 31 December 2003 amounted to more than 10 million dollars.¹

Had the proposal been implemented, with such income – which should have been about two and a half million dollars – the Permanent Secretariat would have been able to cancel out all its debts, which amounted to slightly over one million dollars.² The remaining funds would have been used to establish a Special Investment Budget, mainly to update computer and telecommunications equipment, as well as a Special Budget Fund in order to support the Secretariat in planning medium-term activities, by ensuring future availability of resources in case of delays in the payment of annual budget quotas – which have historically characterized some Member States.

Both the project for financial consolidation and the proposal for restructuring were timely forwarded by the Permanent Secretary to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States, and later on were formally submitted and approved as issues on the agenda for the Regular Meeting held by the Latin American Council in November 2004. Unfortunately, the Council failed to make a decision in this regard. Both proposals were, in fact, postponed for further discussion.

In view of the fact that the Latin American Council failed to support the proposals made by the Permanent Secretary – which would have been crucial for the re-launching project of the Secretariat – most of the governments of the major debtor countries, which should have met their long outstanding debt with the Secretariat, did not respond to the numerous communications sent to them for that purpose.

In order to understand how critical the financial situation has been for the Permanent Secretariat, it should be borne in mind that while the Permanent Secretariat's budgets approved by the Latin American Council for the period 2004-2005 amounted to US\$ 4,400,000.00, effectively collected quotas added up to only US\$ 2,883,963.00 during that period – i.e. only 65% of the budgeted amounts. Similarly, the budget for this year is US\$2,200,000.00, but to date – as ten months of this year have elapsed – the Permanent Secretariat has collected only 50.04% of the amount agreed upon.

¹ The total overdue budget quotas that had not been paid at 31 December 2003 amounted to US\$ 10,031,915.00. Updated with the payments received up to 26 October 2006, this figure stood at 11,515,503.11.

² Outstanding obligations of the Permanent Secretariat at 31 December 2003 amounted to US\$ 1,115,145.00. At present, that figure stands at US\$. 1,173,597.00.

In its latest regular meeting in November 2005, the Latin American Council finally approved the restructuring project of the Permanent Secretariat. However, it was only a merely formal approval, because even though the Permanent Secretary had repeatedly urged countries to find a solution for the serious financial situation of the Permanent Secretariat, so as to allow it to implement its restructuring, the Latin American Council did not do so. Instead it entrusted an Ad Hoc Working Group with the task of considering once again the proposal made by the Permanent Secretariat, of which the Member States have been informed since March 2004.

It should be pointed out that the Ad Hoc Working Group concluded its deliberations on 11 May 2006, six months after it was created. Of the three elements of the proposal made by the Permanent Secretary, the Group recommended the Latin American Council to consider only the cancellation of outstanding quotas in a sufficient proportion to cancel out the debts of the Secretariat,³ leaving the issues of the establishment of a Special Fund and a Special Budget for further consideration.

This meant that even if this recommendation of the Ad Hoc Working Group were adopted by the Council, it would still be impossible to plan and execute the reorganization of the Permanent Secretariat in a rational and sustainable way, because, as all the Representatives to the Latin American Council know, such reorganization urgently requires hiring at least four international officials with a high academic and professional level, which is impossible to do without having the certainty that resources will be timely available in order to pay their salaries at least during the next three years and their corresponding repatriation costs.

Finally, the Latin American Council, gathered in a Special Meeting on 20 June of this year, adopted the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Working Group, but did not set any deadline for the payment of the percentage agreed upon, as had been requested by the Permanent Secretary. Instead, it decided that the payment should be made *“as soon as possible”*⁴ thus playing down the seriousness of the Secretariat's financial situation, which by then had already forced it to postpone several activities envisioned in the Work Programme for this year.

Paradoxically, in spite of all the efforts and initiatives undertaken in order to reasonably comply with the annual work programmes and to re-launch the organization amid particularly adverse circumstances, of which all the Representatives are fully aware, the Permanent Secretariat could be subject to criticisms involving negligence and poor performance – not only on the part of those who might possibly not be informed about the tremendous budgetary restrictions that have affected SELA's operation in the past three years, but also, and most sadly, on the part of sectors that could be interested in holding up the re-launching of SELA.

³ Said proportion is 11.31%, according to figures updated at 15 June 2006.

⁴ It should be noted that, to date, only one Member State, Barbados, has fully complied with the decision adopted by the Latin American Council. The remaining countries, in arrears, have not even confirmed receipt of the Notes that were individually addressed to each one of them, containing details about their outstanding quotas pursuant to the aforementioned decision.

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Within this context, the Permanent Secretary, as all the Representatives to the Latin American Council know, accepted the nomination made by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Central Bank to take over the "chair" of Executive Director of the IMF for the period 2006-2008 as representative of Central America, Mexico, Venezuela and Spain.

On 19 September, during its Annual Meeting, the International Monetary Fund held regular elections of Executive Directors, and I had the honour to be unanimously elected by all the countries that make up that Group: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Venezuela.

Thus, through the aforementioned Note dated 20 September 2006 and addressed to the Representatives to the Latin American Council, I formally submitted my resignation to the position of Permanent Secretary of SELA, to which I dedicated the best of my vocation for service with the intention to complete the period that concludes in December 2007.

Upon my resignation, I profoundly regret the present circumstances, in which fundamental decisions to encourage compliance with the approved budget have been repeatedly and inexplicably postponed. This has made it practically impossible for the Permanent Secretariat to operate as an excellent, prestigious and widely recognized institution – as it intends to – for the benefit of all its Member States. And I am convinced that such an objective would have been fully accomplished if the aforementioned proposals had been timely adopted.

In bidding you farewell as Permanent Secretary of SELA, Your Excellency, I consider it fair and necessary, in compliance with statutory attributions and based on my personal and professional responsibility, to reiterate – much to my regret – my conviction that if the Latin American Council does not take swift and determined action to definitely overcome the protracted financial crisis faced by SELA, this extraordinary organization for consolidation of cooperation and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean could, unfortunately, become increasingly irrelevant as regards its areas of competence and marginalized within the context of regional and international institutions.

I avail myself of the opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest and most distinguished consideration.

(Signature)
Roberto Guarnieri
Permanent Secretary

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Bahamas	Costa Rica	Jamaica	Suriname
Barbados	Cuba	México	Trinidad y Tobago
Belice	Ecuador	Nicaragua	Uruguay
Bolivia	Guatemala	Panamá	Venezuela
Brasil	Guyana	Paraguay	
Chile	Haití	Perú	

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**Speech by Mr. Rodolfo Eduardo Sanz,
Vice-Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ***

* Literal transcription prepared by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA.

Good morning, honourable Delegates to SELA:

First of all, we would like to thank the Informal Working Group for holding this meeting today in order to formally consider the proposal we are submitting for a candidate to take over from Ambassador Roberto Guarnieri as the head of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA.

As you all know, since President Chávez took power, we have strived to develop a foreign policy on the basis of four principles.

First of all is the conviction that it is necessary to move towards the construction of a multipolar world, because we believe that the unipolar world that some tried to build after the collapse of the Soviet Union by no means is a viable world. In this context, we deem it necessary to advance towards the constitution of regional and subregional power blocks as a mechanism for a process of reconfiguration of global relations. For this reason, we have insisted on promoting a process of change in the system of the United Nations. Sometimes some people wonder why Venezuela is eagerly seeking to form part of the UN Security Council. In principle, it is matter of honour. It is a matter of global and geopolitical strategy, which is perfectly in tune with the vision we have to reshape the world, and for that purpose, in our opinion, the democratization process in the United Nations is essential in this context.

That has also implied redimensioning the presence of Venezuela in international organizations. We have become active and effective members of MERCOSUR and we intend to consolidate these relations which, in our opinion, go beyond a simple interchange of goods, beyond the vision that we have about trade and focuses political, social and economic integration. Our presence at SELA – of which I will talk later on – is based on this first principle.

The second principle is the respect for the countries' sovereignty. We think that reconfiguring the world requires each country to have full sovereignty on its political economic and social decisions.

We respect each nation's decisions and, for this reason, we do not accept any type of imposition or interference in Venezuela's internal affairs; neither do we accept monitoring by any nation of the world, by no superpower in the world, and in this regard, I believe, we have sufficiently proved that we prefer to assume risks instead of remaining subject to an old policy of submission to any foreign power.

The third principle is integration with cooperation. It is a type of integration that hinges on economic complementarity. It is clear for us that it is not an integration in which some countries win and others lose, but of an integration in which everybody wins, an integration in which what the economists technically call "economic asymmetries" are not reaffirmed but overcome, with a view to enabling our nations to share their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. Such economic asymmetries are nothing more than historical differences among nations in terms of access to sources of raw materials, due to the lack of scientific and technological development – factors which have not occurred in the world by chance but have been the result of the way in which the world has been organized, at least during the past two-hundred years.

The fourth principle is cooperation in the form of humanitarian assistance programmes for the poorest countries, and in this connection I believe that we are also giving an example

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to the world. I recently made a tour in the Caribbean in an effort to strengthen our cooperation programmes with our brothers of the Caribbean. I avail myself of the opportunity to greet the Representative of Jamaica, as well as our brothers of Haiti and Guyana, because we think that we, the countries with a little higher degree of development, have the moral commitment to help those less developed countries, and to those who say that President Chávez is using oil as an instrument to gain geopolitical strength, we respond that each country has the right to use its comparative advantages. Some countries use missiles, airplanes and aircraft carriers; we used oil to help the peoples in order to contribute to their development, in order to try to reshape the geopolitical map of the world. The issue is how each country uses the resources it has. That is the question. What is the impact on the world that produces the use of the resources that country has? That is the question. Using technological advances and raw materials for war and death is quite different from using them for life and peace. Hence the substantial difference between the way we use our energy and way other use their technology.

These are the principles guiding our foreign policy and they lead us to consider the need to strengthen an organization such as SELA, which is not precisely in the best of situations. I was telling some friends that we are not discussing about a "lost cause", we are here to become fully aware that this organization binds us together. We have been at the helm of the Permanent Secretariat, but perhaps we have not been diligent enough or perhaps we have not made all the things we should have done to strengthen this organization and its position in the context of integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, I am also speaking in a self-critical way in view of the responsibility that we all have with this organization.

But we think that we must relaunch this organization. Each nation must comply with its responsibility – including ourselves, of course – because we cannot let SELA die. We cannot let SELA starve to death, because of inertia, because we simply don't do what we have to do about an organization and that leads it to a permanent crisis when it comes down to cancelling its monthly payroll. And tough as it is, we have to make emphasis on this issue, which has already been raised by the Permanent Secretary. Why is this integration organization – to which we are all committed – no even able to cover its employees' salaries? Can anybody think that it is possible for an organization facing such a situation to generate debates that can encourage competition when it comes down to deciding who is going to take the reins of the organization? We are very frank in this regard; and perhaps it is one of the characteristics of the diplomacy being put in practise by President Chávez, because we do not like embellished diplomatic rhetoric. That would not make sense. How come we are debating whether we can conclude a mandate in an organization that is not even able to cancel its operating payroll? God Almighty! Does it make any sense? Does any one here it does? Well, I don't think so.

So now we are facing the task of rearranging and relaunching this organization, to instil new life into it and assume the firm commitment to comply with all of our responsibilities. Our presidents must talk, and those officials who are more actively working in the area of foreign policy must contribute to hold talks with those officials with the responsibility of preventing this organization from dying, because sometimes the excessive importance we place on diplomatic relations does not let us say things with greater clarity and that lead to the death of integration organizations. In this case, we prefer to make very clear statements because otherwise the only option we have left is to retire ourselves.

Nobody and absolutely nothing can force us to remain members of any organization in the world; only our convictions, our integration policies and sense of brotherhood can maintain us active in all the organizations. But certainly, we who are here, representing our countries, must be essentially concerned about the daily anguish suffered by those

who are now working in this organization. And in this regard, we have to assume the commitment of saving this organization from an eventual death. That's our commitment.

With regard to the subject under discussion, for us, the issue of who will take over from Ambassador Guarneri as Permanent Secretary is not a legal issue, but a political issue. Gaps or loopholes in this type of conventions – or its regulations – can be solved through political agreements. Since Venezuela is SELA's host country, and we are playing a very active political role as regards foreign affairs with a commitment to integrations processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, we consider it convenient for Venezuela to remain at the helm of this organization, so as to conclude the mandate – one year plus two months. That's the point.

Based on Article 28, and in view of the absence of a Permanent Secretary because of a resignation or any other reason, it is clear that a representative of the same country must be elected to conclude the mandate. That is the most logical thing to do, because, in my opinion, such appointment does not personally correspond to an individual, but to the country that was represented by that person who was officially elected for the position. As we say in legal terms, whoever can do something in the best of situations, can also do something in the worst of situations. If a country holds a Permanent Secretariat for a four-year term and, by a sovereign act, it decides to change its representative so that may take a position in another international organization, logically, it is recommendable for that country to appoint another official in order to conclude the period of the official who was originally elected but had to resign. Thus, Venezuela's request to continue at the helm of this organization until December 2007 is absolutely valid, and for this reason we have nominated Dr. Floria María Caricote Lovera to take over from Dr. Roberto Guarneri.

Ms. Caricote's resumé has already been sent to the Permanent Secretariat via e-mail. Dr. Floria María Caricote graduated as a lawyer at the *Universidad Central de Venezuela*. She has worked as a legal adviser at the Ministries of Finance and Labour, at the Venezuelan Social Security Institute, the Attorney General's Office, and the Presidency of the Republic. She has also worked as an external consultant for the Inter-American Development Bank's Office for Social Security Reform Projects. She has earned the affection and confidence of President Chávez and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, she has the necessary intellectual capacity to successfully conclude the mandate given to Venezuela at the helm of this organization and carry out the tasks entrusted to it, which depend on the relaunching of the organization, so that it may accomplish its objectives – as it has done it so far – and gain greater relevance within the context of Latin American integration. Thus, since Dr. Floria María Caricote is a woman with the necessary intellectual, political and diplomatic capacity to conclude the current mandate at SELA, I request your consensus to approve her nomination to take over from Dr. Roberto Guarneri and to name her Permanent Secretary.

Thank you very much.

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26 and 30 October 2006

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