



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

Economic and Technical Cooperation

*VIII Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition of Latin America and the Caribbean (WGTC)
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Honourable Alexandre Barreto de Souza, President of the Administrative Council for Economic Defense (CADE) of the Federative Republic of Brazil;

Honourable Torquato Jardim, Minister of Justice of the Federative Republic of Brazil;

Honourable Vital do Rego Filho, Minister of the Federal Court of Accounts of the Federative Republic of Brazil;

Honourable Teresa Moreira, Head of the Department of Competition and Consumer Policies of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD;

Senior officials and distinguished representatives in charge of trade and competition in Latin America and the Caribbean;

Distinguished participants and guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), I wish to thank you all for participating in this VIII Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Trade and Competition of Latin America and the Caribbean, which we organized in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Administrative Council for Economic Defense (CADE) of Brazil.

In addition, I would like to highlight your commitment reflected in the constancy and continuity of this Working Group, which was created to analyze topics of interest for the enrichment of the structural fabric, harmonization and coherence of policies on trade and competition in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Working Group on Trade and Competition (WGTC) curiously originated in the debates and recommendations arising from the "II Regional Seminar on Trade and Competition: Prospects and future challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean", held in 2010 in the same city, Brasilia, with the support of CADE and UNCTAD.

On this occasion, the same institutions have joined efforts to convene you with the purpose of analyzing a subject of special importance, which is the impact of shipping, infrastructure and port services on trade and competition in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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The maritime and port industry is undoubtedly one of the most strategic and important ones, in view of its considerable impact on growth of foreign trade and optimization of international supply chains.

In this connection, technological innovation has played a fundamental role in the development of this market, promoting factors related to the evolution of the seaport market structure, transport services, cost determination processes, and infrastructure, efficiency and quality standards.

In addition, the full management of the operation of this market is not conceived without free competition. Thus, the regulatory framework for this commercial area is widely recognized and applied, allowing the smooth implementation of the conditions of supply and demand and thus the reduction of trade barriers.

On the issue we are addressing, it is appropriate to bring up the existence of the Network of Digital and Collaborative Ports, an initiative by SELA that has been carried out since 2014 with the technical and financial support of CAF. Its objective is to develop technical standards, instruments and reference models that support the development of logistic-port communities in the region, ensuring the highest levels of productivity and competitiveness.

Finally, I wish you the greatest success during the debates, which will certainly be very useful for all of us.

Thank you very much.