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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 49/6 of 21 October 1994 concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA), which was adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

2. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

"1. Takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General" (A/49/382);

"2. Urges the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to continue broadening and deepening its coordination and mutual support activities with the Latin American Economic System;

"3. Urges the United Nations Development Programme to strengthen and expand its support to the programmes that the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System is carrying out, aimed at complementing the technical assistance activities conducted by the Latin American Economic System;

"4. Urges the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to continue and intensify their support for, and cooperation in the activities of, the Latin American Economic System;

* A/50/150.

"5. Requests both the Secretary-General [of the United Nations] and the Permanent Secretary of the Latin American Economic System to assess, at the appropriate time, the implementation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution."

3. For the preparation of the present report, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) wrote to the following organizations of the United Nations system requesting an update of their activities with the Latin American Economic System, to be included in the Secretary-General's report: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Fourteen of the organizations sent updated information on their cooperation with SELA. Seven noted that they did not currently carry out any activities with SELA, although some of them expressed a desire to do so in the future. The following summary was based on all of the above information.

II. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

4. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session (A/49/382), since the establishment in October 1975 of the Latin American Economic System, considerable cooperation has taken place between United Nations organizations, agencies and programmes, especially ECLAC and SELA.

5. As the above-mentioned report shows, this cooperation has intensified over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas of cooperation and the organizations concerned.

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6. Cooperation between ECLAC and SELA has consisted, inter alia, of the participation of representatives of ECLAC and SELA in different meetings of the two institutions, and in the preparation by ECLAC of specialized documents in different spheres in support of SELA activities. Some examples of this cooperation are mentioned below.

7. In the social sphere ECLAC has continued to cooperate with SELA within the framework of inter-agency activities relating to integrated social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

8. There is a joint SELA/Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD)/ECLAC project on "Coordination of economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean", which has given rise to the preparation of several documents, among which are the following: "La experiencia del ajuste durante la década de los ochenta en Latinoamérica, sus consecuencias distributivas y el diseño de políticas sociales" (LC/R.1463); "Políticas sociales y económicas integradas: esbozo para una socioeconomía política"; and "Estado, sociedad y pobreza en América Latina: hacia una nueva articulación de la política económica y social". In addition, two meetings of experts were held to discuss these documents. The first meeting was held at Caracas in November 1994, and the second one was held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 21 to 23 June 1995. The documents presented and an edited version of statements made at the seminars will be published shortly.

9. The authorities of the three agencies decided to continue this research because it is very much in keeping with the possibilities for inter-agency relations and is closely linked to the agencies' respective work programmes. A meeting was expected to be held by September for the purpose of coordinating future project activities. In the subsequent phases of the project, UNESCO and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation will also participate.

10. In the demographic sphere, ECLAC, through the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), has continued to cooperate with SELA through the Latin American Population Documentation System (DOCPAL) in the Network of Networks project, which is part of the activities for the "Status of regional cooperation" (PESICRE) project, assigned by the Permanent Secretariat of SELA.

11. During the period under review, the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (CLADES) has carried out training activities in information management in San José, Costa Rica, São Paulo, Brazil, and Lima, Peru, in which experts and officials belonging to both SELA and its PESICRE Network participated. There have also been frequent exchanges of information and experience in the area of information management, and continuity in these areas of work is expected during the forthcoming period.

12. As regards international trade, from October 1994 onward, a working mechanism has been established between SELA, the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) and ECLAC, with the participation of the various secretariats involved in subregional integration processes, for the holding of an annual Meeting of Trade Policy Officials of Latin America and the Caribbean. The first meeting was held at Quito on 10 and 11 October 1994.

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13. The organization and follow-up of such meetings are part of an effort to analyse and define various options and actions designed to strengthen, expand and diversify trade relations in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially those ongoing in the region. Another purpose of these working arrangements is to study the possibilities for harmonizing and coordinating the various approaches to Latin American and Caribbean integration with a view to gradually fusing and linking them.

14. In the sphere of industrial policy, ECLAC participated in the first session of the Meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, held at San José on 27 and 28 October 1994. At that meeting, ECLAC presented a paper entitled "El desafío de la competitividad: cuatro tesis y una propuesta", which was published by SELA in Políticas y desarrollo tecnológico en América Latina y el Caribe, Capítulos series, No. 41, October-December 1994.

15. Within the framework of ECLAC/UNDP regional project RLA/88/039, entitled "Design of policies to strengthen the capacity for technological innovation and enhance international competitiveness in the Latin American entrepreneurial environment", ECLAC and SELA officials held meetings to analyse the possibilities for cooperation in identifying and describing the current status of industrial policy in various countries in the region. On the basis of these meetings, ECLAC drew up a project for cooperation with SELA in pursuing this analysis during the first meeting of the Coordination Committee for Industrialization, held on 8 and 9 May 1995.

16. FAO has maintained close collaboration with SELA in the past, in particular through reciprocal attendance at meetings and support for the work carried out by the various action committees established under the umbrella of SELA, such as the action committees on Marine and Freshwater Products; on Fertilizers; for the Economic and Social Development of Central America (CADESCA); and on Latin American Cooperation and Consultation on Plant Genetic Resources (CARFIT).

17. FAO was represented at the tenth session of the Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation and the eleventh meeting of the Coordination Mechanism for Regional Bodies and Forums Engaged in TCDC Activities (Montevideo, 15-17 May 1995), and at the twenty-first session of the Ministerial Meeting of the Latin American Council (San Salvador, 12 and 13 July 1995).

18. There is also an ongoing exchange of information between FAO and SELA for the purpose of establishing a framework for cooperation which would cover mainly the Regional Programme on Vegetal Germplasm and the Project on Biotechnology and Food Security.

19. IFAD stated that it had no ongoing activities with SELA. However, IFAD has transmitted to SELA a draft cooperation agreement that could be signed in the near future.

20. Within the framework of the SELA/ILO cooperation programme, the ILO Office in San José participated as an observer in the first meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, which took place on 27 and 28 October 1994.

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21. ILO also participated in the Dialogue of high-level government officials on "New orientations for international macroeconomic coordination: implications for Latin America and the Caribbean", held at Santa Fe de Bogotá on 23 and 24 May 1995. As a contribution to the meeting, a document on "Growth, employment and competitiveness" was prepared and presented to the participants as a basis for debate on the topic of employment policies.

22. A lecture was also given on labour-market issues and changing production patterns from the 1980s to 1994 and on competitiveness concepts and labour costs. Lastly, a dissertation was presented on transformation of the labour market and the challenges of globalization in such areas as generation of productive employment, investment in human resources and labour protection.

23. In addition, in November 1994 ILO participated in the Regional Meeting of Experts for Social Development, organized by SELA and UNESCO in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in March 1995. ILO also attended, as an observer, the Regional Meeting on Challenges of Urban Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by SELA and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which was held at Caracas on 12 and 13 June 1995.

24. IMO has provided technical assistance in the field of shipping to the Latin American countries under the overall umbrella of the socio-economic priorities and objectives established by IMO for the maritime subsector throughout the region. However, IMO has had no direct arrangement with SELA.

25. UNESCO has continued to cooperate with SELA, mainly through the 1994-1995 Participation Programme. As part of that programme, a Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting of Experts for the World Summit for Social Development was held from 16 to 18 November 1994 in order to work out common positions to be put forward by the SELA member countries at the World Summit. In addition, UNESCO participated in the Regional Meeting on Challenges of Urban Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was organized by SELA and IDB, and held at Caracas on 12 and 13 June 1995, as well as in the high-level meeting of experts on integrated economic and social policies, which was organized by SELA, CLAD and ECLAC and held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 21 to 23 June 1995.

26. Furthermore, UNESCO has continued to cooperate with SELA in the area of intellectual property, within the framework of the Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Intellectual Property Policies, which has functioned within SELA since 1990. Mention should be made here of the support which UNESCO provided for the preparation of the studies entitled "Tendencias legislativas latinoamericanas en derecho de autor y derechos conexos y su adecuación a las modernas tecnologías" and "Interpretación del Acuerdo TRIPS e identificación de acciones necesarias para su aplicación en América Latina y el Caribe".

27. Furthermore, a number of activities were carried out in fulfilment of the UNESCO-SELA Agreement entitled "Comunicación para la integración", including the initiation on 11 August in Santa Fe de Bogotá of the Network of Latin American Economic Dailies.

28. Mention should also be made of the links between UNESCO and the project "Cuyagua as an alternative to international development", presented by Venezuela through the Latin American and Caribbean Programme for the Promotion of the Handicraft Industry (PLACART), which is under the umbrella of SELA, and other initiatives for the development of the regional handicraft industry.

29. UNIDO has undertaken several activities in cooperation with SELA. The first meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean was organized jointly with SELA in San José in October 1994. The meeting was instrumental in providing a substantive framework for the exchange of expertise among the actors involved in industrial development, such as government officials, industry and labour organizations, entrepreneurs, etc. The meeting highlighted the formulation and implementation of sectoral policies and strategies for enhancing the sustainability of the Latin American industrial sector vis-à-vis the necessary competition and national and international markets. UNIDO activities in the region were presented. The results of the meeting were discussed with representatives of the Group of Latin American Countries (GRULAC) in Vienna in December 1994.

30. In order to brief the GRULAC member countries on the outcome of the Regional Forum mentioned above, a senior official of the SELA Secretariat paid a visit to UNIDO headquarters. In the context of the recommendations and conclusions of the Regional Forum, a general framework for cooperation in the field of industrialization was discussed, especially the role to be played by UNIDO in the different events organized by SELA, as well as the general arrangements for the setting up of the Coordination Committee for Industrialization in Latin America and the Caribbean.

31. The Coordination Committee was established on the recommendation of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Committee revised the proposed work programme for the biennium 1995-1996 and reviewed the programmes, meetings and projects implemented or planned by the different institutions participating in the Committee.

32. UNIDO participated in the meeting of high-level officials engaged in privatization processes in Latin America and the Caribbean (30 and 31 March 1995), presenting a paper on "Achieving entrepreneurial competitiveness: restructuring, privatization and management of production quality". As a follow-up, a meeting on privatization processes in Latin America is being organized jointly by UNIDO and SELA to be held in September 1995.

33. UNIDO has participated in several meetings organized by SELA, such as the Dialogue on international macroeconomic coordination (Santa Fe de Bogotá, May 1995), at which it presented a paper on "New technologies and new industrial policies". UNIDO also attended the inter-agency meeting on investment promotion and technological innovation (San Salvador, July 1995) and the regional meeting on human-resources training in support of processes to modernize production and competitiveness (San Salvador, July 1995). At the latter meeting, UNIDO provided an overview of the activities carried out in the area of human-resources development for industry, one of the five development objectives of the Organization.

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34. The Executive Secretary of PLACART and UNIDO agreed to undertake certain activities to promote the development of the handicraft sector in the region, namely: (a) promotion of handicraft ceramics in Haiti - a diagnostic analysis will be financed by UNIDO; (b) preparation of a reference guide on regional institutions involved in promoting the handicraft industry; and (c) execution of a project on upgrading of the handicraft sector through the formation of micro-enterprises as a way to generate and promote new sources of employment; in an initial stage the project will cover six countries.

35. During the period under review the World Bank participated in expert meetings held at SELA headquarters. SELA is preparing a new initiative on privatization with support from the World Bank.

36. The work of the Pan American Health Organization/Regional Office of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) with SELA has been limited to collaborative activities under the Convergence project. These have been mainly in the area of planning and preparatory meetings to foster joint collaborative efforts by the public and private sectors and thereby influence economic development. To date, this initiative has not had any major successes and the continuation of these activities is being evaluated in the light of current financial constraints.

37. WIPO has continued to cooperate with SELA within the framework of the studies planned by the SELA Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Intellectual Property Policies. In particular, WIPO has organized several international seminars at SELA headquarters for participants from Latin American and Caribbean countries and has contributed specialized papers and documents and enabled its own officials to participate in various SELA activities.

38. UNDP has continued its collaboration with SELA through its Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC). This cooperation is described briefly below.

39. Project RLA/92/008, "Support to SELA", began in 1993 for the purpose of identifying and improving mechanisms to facilitate economic links and industrial modernization among the SELA member countries. A series of studies and meetings has been carried out on trade and the environment, industrialization and technological development, and integration and regional cooperation. The studies and final reports of the meetings are available through the SELA Secretariat. The project will probably extend beyond 1995.

40. At the same time, UNDP, through project RLA/92/030, "Governance and human development", funded the participation of several individuals from the region in the SELA-organized Meeting on Challenges of Urban Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean.

41. Cooperation between the UNDP Special Unit for TCDC and SELA is embodied in the Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation, organized by SELA with funding from TCDC resources. The most recent Meeting was held at Montevideo in May 1995 and included, as an outcome, the Declaration of Montevideo. The Declaration outlined the consensus on the vision for the future with regard to TCDC.

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42. UNCTAD and SELA are continuing their cooperation in the execution of the project on "International trade and trade relations for Latin America and the Caribbean" (LATINTRADE), the objective of which is to enhance and strengthen the negotiating capacity of the Latin American and Caribbean countries so as to enable them to participate more effectively in trade agreements. UNCTAD and SELA collaborated in the following areas: general dissemination of the results of the Uruguay Round and identification of new business opportunities; modernization and updating of legislative and regulatory frameworks; institution-building/national administration and coordination mechanisms; information management; and human-resources development and training.

43. In the framework of LATINTRADE, UNCTAD and SELA have requested the Inter-American Development Bank to fund training activities which are expected to become operational in the autumn of 1995. During 1994-1995, the project's activities have included organizing a number of seminars to promote a better understanding of the Uruguay Round agreements at the national public-opinion level in various countries and, in some cases, a more precise identification of new trading opportunities for the private sector.

44. UNICEF has continued its cooperation with SELA; on 18 and 19 August 1994, UNICEF participated in a Regional Meeting of Experts on the Effectiveness of Social Expenditure, held at Caracas.

45. While INSTRAW did not implement any activities in cooperation with SELA, it expressed interest in exploring possible avenues of cooperation in the future.

46. The Latin American and Caribbean Section of UNIFEM is not currently carrying out any activities with SELA, but has expressed a desire to do so.

47. UNCHS (Habitat) has not implemented any specific cooperation projects with SELA during the reporting period, but is seeking opportunities for the establishment of collaborative activities with SELA. UNCHS (Habitat) programmes in the area of human settlements are giving increasing attention to social and economic issues related to the profound changes experienced by the region in recent years. Urban poverty, the privatization of public services and the promotion of urban economy and productivity are some of the issues that could best be approached by applying the joint expertise of SELA and UNCHS (Habitat). UNCHS (Habitat) intends to develop initiatives for cooperation with SELA in the above areas.

48. UNCHS (Habitat) would also like to collaborate with SELA in the regional preparatory activities for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 14 June 1996. The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting Preparatory to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which is scheduled to be held at Santiago, in November 1995, will provide an opportunity for establishing cooperation agreements in the areas of human settlements and social and economic development.

III. CONCLUSION

49. It is important to emphasize that cooperation between SELA and the programmes, organizations and agencies of the United Nations is growing and diversifying, and that inter-agency cooperation has been established in many areas in which optimal use is being made of existing resources for the benefit of the countries of the region.
