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FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



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**REPORT OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

New York, 16 February 2005

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The twenty-third session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 16 February 2005.

Attendance

2. The session was attended by representatives of the following States members of ECLAC: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the Netherlands Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Uruguay.

3. The following associate member countries were also represented: Aruba, the British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands.

4. The meeting was also attended by a representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, a Member State of the United Nations which at the beginning of the meeting was not yet a member of the Commission.

B. AGENDA

5. Those present adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Economic and social overview of Latin America and the Caribbean
3. Inter-agency report on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean
4. Activities carried out by the ECLAC secretariat in conjunction with United Nations Headquarters entities, General Assembly committees and Economic and Social Council commissions
5. Consideration of the request submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany for admission as a State member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
6. Other matters

C. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Economic and social overview of Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 2)

6. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC made a presentation on the item and highlighted the regional economic growth rate of 5.5%, which had reduced poverty by 1% compared to the previous year. The current cycle, in contrast to the previous one, was driven by exports, while an increase in commodity prices had improved the terms of trade, which had resulted in a more equitable income distribution.

7. At the international level, the process of regional growth could be affected by various factors, including the emergence of imbalances in the United States, the increase in oil prices, a contraction in the economic growth of China and a new outbreak of protectionism. Structural changes would be needed to improve the linkages of the region with the global economy, by diversifying exports and enhancing competitiveness, increasing investments, and reducing poverty.

8. In response to consultations from various participants, the Executive Secretary explained that the Commission had planned various publications and meetings on poverty, employment and evaluation of the social programmes that were being implemented in the region. As examples of best practices in that area, he referred to the policies applied in Chile with very good results and the programmes implemented in various other countries, which basically consisted of the provision of specific short-term assistance for health and education services and the provision of drinking water. In all of these plans, the training of human resources was of vital importance, as was the creation of a new institutional architecture in the social area, which should be continuous and transparent, with, inter alia, intersectoral coordination, adequate standards, civil-society representation and decentralization.

9. Exports to China had been of particular benefit to South America and, although they might represent a challenge for the rest of the region, they also offered opportunities for diversifying exports and enhancing competitiveness. In fact, as the value of all external sales of the region was increasing, it would be advantageous to diversify them and increase their added value, so that this process would bring long-term positive effects. As for the relationship between the increase in exports and its impact within the countries, he said that it would be difficult to improve social indicators and increase productive development without increasing the tax burden.

10. Referring to comments about the competitiveness of Latin America and the Caribbean, he said that the region itself was to some degree responsible for its limited linkages with the world economy, because it had not adapted to the changes that had taken place at the global level. It was also true that the rules of the game for globalization had not been favourable to Latin America and the Caribbean, as they had stimulated the mobility of capital and the development of financial markets instead of encouraging the mobility of individuals and access to international markets. In this situation, one option for enhancing trade competitiveness would be to specialize in specific market niches, while establishing more links at all levels. In that context, production with high value added was also crucial for the region, which was able to compete in that area, while it could not have compete with low wages as occurred in other regions of the world.

11. The external debt situation had improved in general terms, although some countries were still highly indebted. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of the region had diminished, partly owing to the countercyclical policies adopted and the experience gained in the 1990s. Some countries were even taking advantage of their economic stability by saving for future needs.

12. In response to the commentary of one delegation in relation to the increasing incidence and severity of poverty, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the region had indeed recorded low growth and that, in many cases, the initial indicators were very low. The lack of growth and the low level of job creation had prevented them from improving, and more investment would therefore be needed in social programmes, which some Governments in the region had already begun.

13. He then informed the meeting that ECLAC had begun a study of the existing links between the phenomenon of emigration and remittances, as remittances could be used to increase productivity and create jobs in the countries themselves, so that it would not be necessary to emigrate. In some countries of the region, remittances represented a very high percentage of the gross domestic product, which had an impact on the production factor.

14. The Executive Secretary agreed with one of the delegates in recognizing the importance of presenting disaggregated information on the Caribbean. In view of the problems involved in data collection in that subregion, ECLAC was particularly interested in offering assistance to improve the process.

Inter-agency report on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 3)

15. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC made a presentation on the subject and commented that the Commission, together with other United Nations organizations, was preparing a report on progress towards the Goals, which would be the regional contribution to the five-year review in that area, scheduled for 2005.

16. In general terms, and as part of the exchange of opinions, he said that efforts were needed to find a balance in the region between the external situation and the need to achieve the Goals. The only way to have a “level playing field” where all participants were on equal terms would be to adopt certain measures at the national and regional level which would, among other impacts, give the region more influence at the global level.

17. On the subject of employment and the indicators that would be used to measure it, a chapter in the document under preparation would be devoted to the subject of employment and another to social programmes, which reflected the importance given to that topic by the United Nations system. ECLAC had requested the implementation of a number of regional studies on employment, in order to incorporate their conclusions into the document. In addition, the main topic of the fourth Summit of the Americas, which was to be held in Mar del Plata in November 2005, would be job creation in the region.

18. Referring to a question about the factors affecting labour costs and their relationship to informal employment, the Executive Secretary explained that in the countries which had reduced the cost of labour, inter alia by creating private pensions systems, the informal sector had increased compared to the beginning of the 1990s. That did not necessarily mean that the system was inefficient, but that informal employment was being analysed in a linear fashion, which was a simplistic approach that did not allow a complete understanding of the issue.

19. One of the most important legacies of the 1990s had been the demonstration that the reforms had not been all bad; in fact, contrary to what had been supposed, the reforms in themselves and the management of the macroeconomy could not automatically result in economic growth, which was a simplification of the development concept. Now the region ran a similar risk in relation to trade

agreements, which were not sufficient to gain access to markets. It was therefore important always to bear in mind the complexity of the development process, which was the only way to deal with it successfully.

20. One delegate commented that the information contained in “Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals”, known as the “Sachs Report”, could give the impression that the Millennium Development Goals had almost been achieved already, when in reality there were substantial differences between the countries of the region and there was still much to be done. In this sense, the challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean were how to present its specific situation and how to overcome the deep-rooted structural problems of the region.

21. The Executive Secretary explained that one limitation of the Sachs Report was that it focused mainly on Africa, giving the impression that it was the only region of the world with problems. In fact, the Latin American and Caribbean region also had a number of problems relating to development, which could be classified in two categories. Firstly, there were countries that were lagging quite far behind, and had striking differences with the other countries. Secondly, there were difficulties in the region in relation to the content of exports, the volatility of trade and financial flows, problems which also needed to be recognized as regional issues.

22. When countries achieved a certain degree of development, growth was no longer linked to external assistance. In fact, in the region there were countries which no longer met the requirements for receiving that kind of aid. That did not mean that it was discriminated against in terms of assistance, but the discrimination was undeniable in relation to trade in the international markets. One good example was the difference in the tariffs applied to commodities and those applied to products with value added. In view of the determining role of market access, any improvement in the trade situation depended on more favourable conditions, and the whole region should unite around that goal.

23. Although the economic dimension continued to be important and in some cases virtually absolute, solidarity remained an urgent issue and was currently manifesting in the idea of a kind of political alliance that would make it possible to adopt common positions in various forums. This solidarity could manifest in many areas: security, economic and social issues, institutions related to globalization, migration flows and the international financial system, in all of which Latin America and the Caribbean could adopt a common position.

24. In relation to solidarity with the least developed countries, ECLAC was devoting a lot of time to that subject and planned to hold a series of round tables, starting in March and continuing over a two-month period, in order to consider the situation of Haiti and to participate in the political dialogue. In the past year, ECLAC had sent a number of missions to that country, including one exclusively devoted to assessment of the damage caused by the hurricane which had ravaged the country in September 2004; an economic development programme, which had been specially requested from ECLAC, was also being prepared and should be ready at the end of 2005.

25. One of the delegations requested that all the economic development studies include information disaggregated by sex and was pleased to note that the economic studies of ECLAC gave special consideration to households headed by women. In his response, the Executive Secretary announced that ECLAC was also preparing a study on the Millennium Development Goals and their relationship to gender and ethnicity. Those crosscutting issues were analysed on many occasions throughout the report and were also linked to education.

26. In a general reflection on growth, and by way of a comment on the statement made by one delegation, the Executive Secretary agreed that institutions were important. As had been recognized in the 1990s, property rights, the public and private rules of the game in relation to markets and the rule of law were essential elements of the development process, but there were also other important institutions whose importance had not been fully recognized. They included effective methods for market regulation and mechanisms for considering cases in which competition did not exist.

27. Institutions were also needed to facilitate good macroeconomic functioning, to reduce the deficit and maintain inflation at a low level, to control volatility and to ensure social equity, all of which had complementary functions.

Activities carried out by the ECLAC secretariat in conjunction with United Nations Headquarters entities, General Assembly committees and Economic and Social Council commissions (agenda item 4)

28. In his presentation on the subject, the Executive Secretary said that ECLAC had strengthened its cooperation with United Nations departments, committees and commissions, especially with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Economic and Social Council. The new cooperation activities included a project to strengthen governance in the area of security in Latin America, which was led by the Department of Political Affairs of Headquarters and implemented by ECLAC, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme. In response to the comments of one delegation, he clarified that the Commission had been working for three years on a methodology to calculate defence expenditure. That topic was considered very important, as a reduction in such expenditure would make it possible to channel resources to meet other needs.

Consideration of the request submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany for admission as a State member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (agenda item 5)

29. After reading the note sent by the Government of Germany in which it requested admission as a State member of the Commission, the representative of Puerto Rico presented a draft resolution in which the Committee of the Whole recommended that the request be approved. Subsequently, the delegations of various countries made statements in which they expressed their explicit support for the request.

30. The resolution was adopted by acclamation (see annex 1, resolution 614(PLEN.23)).

31. The Ambassador of Germany to the United Nations expressed his appreciation to all those present for their positive response at the meeting. Germany was very interested in Latin America and the Caribbean and considered ECLAC to be one of the region's main engines of growth and economic development, and would therefore be pleased to contribute to enhanced regional development and greater collaboration between the member countries of the Commission.

32. Lastly, he expressed his hope that the admission to ECLAC as a State member would allow Germany to formalize the close links that it had already established with the Commission over many years of collaboration, especially in bilateral projects and cooperation, and to demonstrate its commitment to the region.

Annex 1

**RESOLUTION 614(PLEN.23) ADMISSION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
AS A MEMBER OF ECLAC**

The Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,

Bearing in mind that the Commission was set up by Economic and Social Council resolution 106(VI) of 25 February 1948, which states that membership of the Commission shall be open to Members of the United Nations in North, Central and South America and in the Caribbean area, and to France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom,

Bearing in mind also that the Commission was set up on the basis of the participation of all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, plus those which have had special relations of a historical, cultural, geographical or economic nature with the region,

Recalling that, in this spirit, the Commission subsequently admitted Spain in 1979, Portugal in 1984 and Italy in 1990,

Considering that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has communicated to the Commission, through the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, its desire that this country be admitted to membership of the Commission,¹

Taking into account the continuous historical, cultural and economic links that have existed between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Latin American and Caribbean countries throughout the history of the region and the important and growing contributions which German cooperation agencies have been making through ECLAC to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years,

1. Welcomes with satisfaction the request of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for the admission of that country as a member of the Commission;

2. Recommends to the Economic and Social Council that it approve the admission of the Federal Republic of Germany as a member of the Commission and to this effect authorizes the amendment of paragraph 3 (a) of the terms of reference of the Commission by the insertion of the words “the Federal Republic of Germany,” between the words “and to” and the word “France”.

¹ See Note by the secretariat LC/L.2254(PLEN.23/3).

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**A. Estados miembros de la Comisión
Member States of the Commission
États membres de la Commission****ARGENTINA**Representante/Representative:

- César Mayoral, Embajador, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Gustavo Ainchil, Consejero Asuntos Económicos, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
- Marcelo Suárez Salvia, Primer Secretario Asuntos Económicos, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
- Alberto D'Alotto, Ministro, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

BAHAMASRepresentante/Representative:

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Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Tishka Fraser, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Bahamas

BARBADOSRepresentante/Representative:

- Christopher Hackett, Ambassador, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Charles Burnett, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations
- Mohamed Degia, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Barbados

BELICE/BELIZERepresentante/Representative:

- René Nuñez, Minister Counselor, Permanent Mission of Belize

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- Erwin Ortiz, Embajador, Representante Permanente Alterno ante las Naciones Unidas

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- Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, Embajador, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- María Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Ministra Consejera de la Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
- Frederico Meyer, Ministro Consejero de la Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
- Rodrigo Estrela, Tercer Secretario, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

CANADÁ/CANADARepresentante/Representative:

- Heather Jeffrey, First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Emily McLaughlin, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

CHILERepresentante/Representative:

- Cristian Maquieira, Embajador, Representante Permanente Alterno ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Claudio Rojas, Consejero, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
- Andrés Landerretche, Segundo Secretario

COLOMBIARepresentante/Representative:

- Sra. María Angela Holguín, Embajadora, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Sr. Alvaro Sandoval, Ministro Consejero de la Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

COSTA RICARepresentante/Representative:

- María Elena Chassoul, Embajadora, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Antonio Alarcón, Ministro Consejero de la Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

CUBA

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- Orlando Requeijo G., Embajador, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Rodney López Clemente, Embajador, Representante Permanente Alterno ante las Naciones Unidas
- Ileana Núñez Mordoche, Primera Secretaria, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

DOMINICA

Representante/Representative:

- Crispin Gregoire, Ambassador, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

ECUADOR

Representante/Representative:

- Luis Gallegos Chiriboga, Embajador, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Marisol Nieto, Segunda Secretaria

EL SALVADOR

Representante/Representative:

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Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

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Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

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Representante/Representative:

- Richard W. Behrend, Director, Office of Economic Development Affairs, Department of State

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- Lucy Tamlyn, Permanent Mission to the United Nations
- Mariano Ceinos-Cox, Advisor, United States Mission to the United Nations
- Janet Shannon, ECLAC Officer, Office of Economic and Development Affairs, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Department of State

GRANADA/GRENADA

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- Ruth Elizabeth Rouse, Ambassador, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

GUATEMALA

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- Ana Cristina Rodríguez, Tercer Secretario

GUYANA

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- George Talbot, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations

HAITÍ/HAITI

Representante/Representative:

- Nicole Romulus, Représentant Permanent de la France auprès des Nations Unies

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Stephan Dejoie, Première Secrétaire

HONDURAS

Representante/Representative:

- Marcela del Mar Suazo, Ministra, Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (INAM)

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Dunia Tome

JAMAICA

Representante/Representative:

- Stafford Neil, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Diedre Mills, First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

MÉXICO/MEXICO

Representante/Representative:

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- Benito Jiménez Sauna, Tercer Secretario
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NICARAGUA

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- Eladio Loizaga, Embajador, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

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- José Antonio Doig, Funcionario de la Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

PORTUGAL

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- Vanessa Gomes, Asesora, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

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- Arturo Ortiz, Ministro Consejero de la Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

SAINT KITTS Y NEVIS/SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Representante/Representative:

- K. Alex Woodley, Counselor, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Joseph Christmas, Ambassador, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

SAN VICENTE Y LAS GRANADINAS/SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Representante/Representative:

- Daniel Lennox, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

SANTA LUCÍA/SAINT LUCIA

Representante/Representative:

- Michelle Joseph, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

SURINAME

Representante/Representative:

- Ewald Limon, Ambassador, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Miriam Mac Intosh, First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

TRINIDAD Y TABAGO/TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Representante/Representative:

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- Philip Sealy, Embajador, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

URUGUAY

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- Julia López, Segundo Secretario, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas
- Franklin Ransel, Primer Secretario, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

**B. Miembros asociados
Associate members
États membres associés**

ARUBA

Representante/Representative:

- Henry Baarh, Minister Plenipotentiary for Aruba

ISLAS VÍRGENES BRITÁNICAS/BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Representante/Representative:

- Dr. The Honourable D. Orlando Smith, Chief Minister

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Mrs. Marva Titley-Smith, Assistant Secretary for External Affairs
- Perla George, General Manager, North American Sales Operations

ISLAS VÍRGENES DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS/UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

Representante/Representative:

- Dr. Carlyle Corbin, Minister of State for External Affairs

PUERTO RICO

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- Marisara Pont Marchese, Secretaria de Estado del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico

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- Rafael A. Subero, Secretario Auxiliar de Estado para Relaciones Exteriores

C. Estados miembros de las Naciones Unidas que no lo son de la Comisión y participan con carácter consultivo
Member States of the United Nations not members of the Commission and participating in a consultative capacity
États membres des Nations Unies qui ne sont pas membres de la Commission et y participant à titre consultatif

ALEMANIA/GERMANY

Representante/Representative:

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Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Albrecht von der Heyden, Minister
- Herbert Quelle, Deputy Director, Latin America and the Caribbean
- Christina Decker, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Germany

D. Secretaría de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas
United Nations Secretariat
Secrétariat de l'Organisation des Nations Unies

Oficina de las Comisiones Regionales en Nueva York/Regional Commissions New York Office/Bureau des Commissions régionales à New York

- Sulafa Al-Bassam, Jefa/Chief

E. Secretaría
Secretariat
Secrétariat

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