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Thirtieth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Council
for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute
for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES)

Santiago, 27 and 28 November 2024

**REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE REGULAR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FINANCING
FOR THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL PLANNING (ILPES)**

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
A. BACKGROUND: ESTABLISHMENT OF ILPES AND THE EARLY YEARS.....	3
B. REGULAR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FINANCING (RSGF).....	4
C. CURRENT OVERVIEW OF ILPES RESOURCES	6
1. ECLAC regular budget.....	6
2. Contributions from member States of the Regional Council for Planning (through RSGF)	7
3. Training and technical cooperation agreements.....	7

This report has been prepared to be presented to the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), at the thirtieth meeting of its Presiding Officers, to be held in Santiago on 27 and 28 November 2024. The aim is to provide background information and other useful inputs for the discussion on the financial resources available to ILPES for carrying out its work in the region.

A. BACKGROUND: ESTABLISHMENT OF ILPES AND THE EARLY YEARS

ILPES was established by the governments of Latin American countries in 1962, under the auspices of what was then the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). At that time, it was financed by the United Nations Special Fund (the precursor of United Nations Development Programme, UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Government of Chile. At the ninth session of ECLA, held in 1961, governments expressed confidence “that the institute established under the auspices of ECLA with the support of the United Nations Special Fund will in time become an agency directed and maintained by the Latin American Governments” (ECLA resolution 199(IX)).¹ Since its inception, the Institute has received voluntary contributions from member States and ad hoc third-party financing for specific activities.

At the end of the 1960s, the idea that the Institute was to be a permanent body, with an adequate financial resource base, was reaffirmed. Consequently, in 1969 at the thirteenth session of ECLA, resolution 286(XIII) was adopted, urging that “the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme should provide the necessary support in order to convert the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning into a permanent body and to ensure its financing over the long term, and also requesting the Governments to continue to support it”.²

In 1974, ILPES was established as a permanent institution of ECLA, with a technical committee acting as senior guiding body for the Institute, reporting to the Commission. The Technical Committee held its first meeting in 1975 and was made up of the representatives of the planning ministries of the countries of the region. Starting in the biennium 1976–1977, ILPES was responsible for executing part of the programme of work of ECLA, in replacement of a small Public Administration Unit that had existed in the 1950s. Accordingly, as of 1976, several of the Institute’s professional posts were financed from the regular budget of the Commission.

The changes also meant that responsibility for mobilizing the Institute’s resources was transferred to the Executive Secretary of ECLA. Thus, pursuant to resolution 340(AC.66) of the Committee of the Whole of ECLA, “the Executive Secretary of ECLA, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, shall be authorized to accept such contributions to the financing of the Institute’s activities from governments, international agencies, foundations and public and private institutions as may help to finance the Institute’s activities in accordance with its aims and purposes and with the guidelines laid down for it by the Governments”.³ At the same time, the Committee of the Whole recommended “that the member countries should increase their voluntary contributions to the Institute”.

¹ Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) resolution 199(IX) of 13 May 1961, on the establishment of an institute for planning economic development.

² Resolution 286(XIII) of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) “Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES)”, 19 April 1969.

³ Resolution 340(AC.66) of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) of 25 January 1974.

In 1977, ILPES, together with ECLA and the Government of Venezuela, convened the first Conference of Ministers and Heads of Planning of Latin America. On that occasion, the governments agreed to convene an annual conference of ministers of planning, and that the annual meetings of the Technical Committee of ILPES would be held in the framework of that Conference. The Conference requested UNDP to renew its financial contribution to ILPES and asked the member countries of the Institute to make good the voluntary contributions offered.

B. REGULAR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FINANCING (RSGF)

At its fifth meeting, in Buenos Aires in 1983, the Technical Committee created the Regular System of Government Financing (RSGF) to promote fulfilment of pledges of voluntary contributions to ILPES, in accordance with the statement of intent made by the governments in the early years of the Institute. Between 1983 and 1985, many governments freely and voluntarily indicated the amounts of their contributions. The Committee set a total amount of US\$ 1.5 million for the operation of the Institute, which has varied little since then.⁴

In 1984, by virtue of resolution 467(XX), adopted at the twentieth session of the Commission, ECLA “noted with approval the establishment and the implementation of the new regular system of financing of ILPES” and expressed its satisfaction at the decision taken by the countries to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with ILPES to that effect.

In 1988, the Technical Committee became the Regional Council for Planning, a ministerial conference, made up of all the countries of the region and Spain. The Council reports as a subsidiary body to the session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, as it has been known since 1984) and to this day governs the work of the Institute. Management oversight, accountability and political guidelines are governed by the Regional Council for Planning and pass through the regular channels of ECLAC and the United Nations.

Resolution 493(XXII), adopted by the Commission in 1988, agreed with the main lines of the New Institutional Project for the period 1987–1990, which included: (a) tripartite financing from the United Nations, the governments of Regional Council for Planning member States (through RSGF) and extrabudgetary resources attracted by the Institute; and (b) recognition that the direct contributions to the Institute by the governments of Regional Council for Planning member States should constitute the regular financing of its multilateral activities and that it is important that member governments should maintain the amounts of the contributions committed and should regularize their timely payment.

Meetings of the Regional Council for Planning and its Presiding Officers were held on a less frequent basis from 1994 onward, following the decision taken that year to reduce their frequency to one every four years. The reduction in the number of meetings, especially between 2007 and 2013, led to a fall in voluntary contributions by member States during that period.

With its fourteenth meeting, held in Brasilia in 2013, the Regional Council for Planning was revitalized. On that occasion, the representatives of 22 member countries of the Institute welcomed the proposal of structural change for development with equality presented by the Executive Secretary of

⁴ The current figure is US\$ 1,575,000, after the admission of Spain and several minor modifications, including the elimination of minimum contributions for the small Caribbean economies.

ECLAC, drew attention to the resurgence of development planning in the region, and were apprised of the ILPES medium-term strategic proposal. The countries elected Guatemala and Ecuador to co-chair the Presiding Officers of the Regional Council for Planning over the 2013–2017 period. Since then, regular meetings have been held by both the Presiding Officers—in Antigua (Guatemala) in 2014, in Santiago in 2016, in Santo Domingo in 2018, online in 2020 and in Santiago in early 2023—and by the Regional Council for Planning itself—in Yachay (Ecuador) in 2015, in Lima in 2017, in Montevideo in 2019, an online meeting in 2021 and in Santo Domingo in 2023. On this last occasion, the Dominican Republic was elected to chair the Presiding Officers for the 2023–2025 period.

At present, requests for voluntary contributions by member States are addressed annually to national planning authorities or ministries, or ministries of foreign affairs, in accordance with the practices that have evolved over the years. Table 1 lists the institutions in each country that presently receive requests for contributions. This list has been amended over time, in keeping with changes in governance structures and the reassignment of ministerial responsibilities. The final column includes the amount of the contribution agreed upon in the 1980s which, as noted earlier, has not changed since.

Table 1
Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES): government bodies providing voluntary contributions and agreed annual amounts, by country
(Dollars)

Country	Origin of voluntary contributions	Agreed amount
Argentina	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship	150 000
Barbados	Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment	15 000
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Ministry of Development Planning	40 000
Brazil	Ministry of Planning and Budgeting	240 000
Chile	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	100 000
Colombia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (with the support of the National Planning Department)	80 000
Costa Rica	Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy	40 000
Cuba	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning	35 000
Ecuador	National Secretariat of Planning (formerly National Secretariat of Planning and Development (SENPLADES))	35 000
El Salvador	Technical Secretariat of the Office of the President	15 000
Spain	Ministry of Finance and Public Administration	200 000
Guatemala	Secretariat for Planning and Programming of the Office of the President (SEGEPLAN)	30 000
Haiti	Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation	5 000
Honduras	Secretariat for Strategic Planning	15 000
Jamaica	Ministry of Finance and Planning	30 000
Mexico	Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit	180 000
Nicaragua	Ministry of Finance and Public Credit	15 000
Panama	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance	15 000

Country	Origin of voluntary contributions	Agreed amount
Paraguay	Technical Secretariat for Economic and Social Development Planning (STP)	20 000
Peru	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	50 000
Dominican Republic	Ministry of Economic Affairs, Planning and Development	35 000
Trinidad and Tobago	Ministry of Finance	40 000
Uruguay	Office of Planning and the Budget	40 000
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ministry of People's Power for Planning	150 000

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), on the basis of ECLAC resolution 467(XX) of 6 April 1984 “New programme of work and support for the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES)”.

C. CURRENT OVERVIEW OF ILPES RESOURCES

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015 by 193 countries at the United Nations General Assembly, will frame the work of the Organization for the coming years. ECLAC has positioned planning as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and part of ILPES activities have been directed towards supporting the countries in the alignment of their planning and public management tools with this global Agenda and adaptation of implementation of the Agenda to territorial realities. This has been done through training, technical assistance, applied research and expert meetings, using resources such as the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development, PlanBarometer, expert networks such as the Network of Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean of ILPES, and communities of practice.

The regular budget of the Institute (based on funds received periodically and permanently) comes from two different sources: the regular budget of the United Nations Secretariat and contributions from member countries via RSGF. The financial resources from both RSGF and other sources are crucial in keeping ILPES operational, effective and efficient. A portion of the expense of human resources, as well as infrastructure, logistics, office equipment and administration costs are funded from the regular budget of ECLAC. The costs of meetings, publications, technical assistance and training are mostly covered by resources provided under agreements or other specific arrangements. The Institute also mobilizes resources by recovering costs for training and technical assistance services. Each of these income sources is described below.

1. ECLAC regular budget

The allocation to ILPES from the United Nations regular budget is associated with the programme of work implemented by ECLAC as instructed by the General Assembly. Since 2020, programming has been annual and the plan of work for the current year was adopted at the thirty-seventh session of the ECLAC Committee of the Whole, held in October 2023.⁵ ILPES resources from the regular budget of the United Nations finance the cost of four international and eight local staff members, plus a small budget for missions and for consultancy and temporary assistance work.

⁵ In resolution 72/266, the United Nations General Assembly approved the change from a biennial to an annual budget period on a trial basis, beginning with the programme budget for 2020.

2. Contributions from member States of the Regional Council for Planning (through RSGF)

The resources provided under RSGF are the second the second main pillar for the financing of the work of ILPES. The pattern of contributions over the past decade has been very changeable, with regular contributions of under US\$ 500,000 on average for the period. This average would have been lower were it not for the extraordinary contributions made in 2013, 2016, and more recently in 2022, when a handful of member countries paid contributions accrued over several years. Over the 2019–2023 period, contributions to RSGF averaged around US\$ 507,000 per year. These average contributions are insufficient to finance the increasing requests from countries for in-person and in situ training activities.

3. Training and technical cooperation agreements

The amounts of training and technical cooperation resources are set forth in specific agreements signed by ECLAC with organizations in member States, cooperation agencies and multilateral organizations, chiefly to meet emerging demands for training, consultancy services and applied research. Over the past four years, ILPES has received annual average resources of US\$ 925,000 through technical cooperation agreements (75% of the total) and income from course registration fees (25%). The Institute uses these resources to cover specific costs related to the provision of training and technical assistance services (see table 2). The Institute does not charge fees for services provided to countries, nor is its work with countries in any way conditional upon the payment of government contributions. In the case of training, these resources go entirely to recover costs incurred in the provision of face-to-face and distance-learning courses. In the case of technical cooperation agreements, resources are earmarked for specific activities identified in the agreements. Therefore, they cannot be considered a source of regular financing for the Institute.

Table 2
Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES): overview of resources, annual averages, 2019-2023

Item	Amount (Thousands of dollars)	Resources (Percentages of total)
A. Regular income and expenditure		
1. Regular income		
ECLAC regular budget	1 293	72
Contributions by member States of the Regional Council for Planning (RSGF)	507	28
Total regular income	1 800	100
2. Operating expenses		
Staff	1 593	95
Consultants, missions, workshops, seminars, etc.	85	5
Total operating expenses	1 678	100
B. Extrabudgetary resources (agreements and courses)		
1. Training	217	25
2. Technical cooperation agreements	634	75
Total extrabudgetary resources	851	100

Item	Amount (Thousands of dollars)	Resources (Percentages of total)
C. Substantive guidance and infrastructure, logistics and administrative costs ^a		
1. Participation of ECLAC officials in training and advisory services		
2. Offices, lecture and meeting rooms, auditoriums, office equipment and computers		
3. Editorial services, conferences, telecommunications, information and communications technologies, library and public information		
4. General services and security		

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), on the basis of financial statements and official estimates.

^a Contribution in kind by ECLAC or expenses covered by regular budget of ECLAC.

Table 3 shows voluntary contributions from member States between 2013 and 31 August 2024. The figures show a general downward trend mitigated by the one-off contributions received in 2013, 2016 and 2022, when some member States paid contributions from several prior years. Excluding those payments, average contributions have been below US\$ 500,000, far short of the planned annual contributions, reflected in an average gap of more than US\$ 900,000 per year.⁶ In 2020 and part of 2021, the reduction in the available cash balance, which reached a record low at the end of 2019, was partially and temporarily covered through the readjustment expenditures, extraordinary financing of staff from the regular budget of the United Nations and extrabudgetary resources. This situation testifies to the critical financial situation of ILPES, as was made clear in preceding financial reports. There has been no change in the situation to date and the Institute will have difficulty in covering its operating expenses from 2023 onward if the downward trend in voluntary contributions continues. With no change in the current trend, the Institute will have to continue to adapt its staffing levels and operational capacity to available resources, which will limit its capacity to respond to the requirements of the countries of the region.

Table 3
Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES): voluntary contributions planned for and received from member States, shortfall and cash balance, 2012–2023^a
(Thousands of dollars)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1. Received government contributions	1 101	422	512	1 420	568	386	367	466	319	1 130	253	280
2. Planned government contributions	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575	1 575
3. Shortfall (1-2)	-473	-1 152	-1 062	-154	-1 006	-1 188	-1 207	-1 108	-1 255	-444	-1 322	-1 285
4. Cash balance	1 508	890	842	1 651	1 204	733	442	746	712	1 458	1 321	1 287

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES).

^a Information updated at 31 August 2024.

⁶ The shortfall shown in table 3 is the difference between total expected contributions and the contributions actually received.

Although the situation in terms of the availability of resources has improved for ILPES in recent years as a result of extraordinary contributions and expenditure adjustments, the financial outlook will remain complex unless the countries regularly make the agreed contributions. Given the challenges faced in recent years —accentuated in particular by the crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in 2021 (the year of the lowest contribution in the past decade), combined with uncertainty over the world outlook owing to inflationary pressures and the regional and global repercussions of the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine— the Regional Council for Planning must enter into a discussion of the long-term financial sustainability of the Institute. This could reduce uncertainty arising from the irregularity of contributions to RSGF, allowing ILPES to continue to fulfil its mandate from the Regional Council for Planning and ECLAC to improve planning and public management in the region.

In the light of the critical contribution levels and the inability to predict the amounts contributed and when they will be received, and the potential cuts in the Institute's posts and activities, ECLAC has made provisions to supplement financing, including for some ILPES donor-funded technical cooperation agreements. Meanwhile, some of the countries that have requested technical cooperation have financed it with their own resources. However, although these measures have helped, they are still insufficient for the proper functioning of the Institute.

One of the steps that can contribute to some clarity on the outlook for the Institution is, as a matter of urgency, for each country to review its commitment to ILPES, first by verifying whether the government body responsible for processing payments is correctly identified in table 1, and by undertaking to make efforts to ensure payments are processed. It is essential that countries resume payment of their contributions to maintain the operation of ILPES and ensure its sustainability, and thus achieve greater coherence and alignment with the mandate of ECLAC and the objectives of the Regional Council for Planning.