

# Introduction

## Special issue commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and reflecting on the present and the future of the region

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs

Executive Secretary of ECLAC  
Guest editor

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary on 25 February 2023. This date is symbolic not only for the institution but also for the region in view of the undeniable influence ECLAC has had in the regional conversation on regional and global development patterns, the challenges of economic and social development and, more recently, sustainable development, over the past three quarters of a century.

To mark this anniversary, and shortly after taking office as Executive Secretary of ECLAC, I convened a series of commemorative events and commissioned a number of editorial products, one of which is this special issue of *CEPAL Review*, which we are pleased to make available to readers today.

These initiatives and this special issue were born of the desire to commemorate these 75 years not only by celebrating the contributions of the past but, more importantly, by looking to the future of the region and the institution, and in particular at the question of how to transform development models to move towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable future, as reflected in the slogan chosen for the anniversary.

Transforming development models is a matter of urgency, as the region finds itself in a development crisis formed by three mutually reinforcing traps: low growth; high inequality and low social mobility; and weak institutional and governance capacities.

The goal of moving towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable future requires realistic and flexible strategies for navigating geopolitical rivalry and uncertainty, adapting to and leveraging the new rules and realities of globalization, and harnessing the potential of technological revolutions and innovative resource mobilization and financing opportunities in a world marked by higher borrowing costs in international markets, among other trends.

To ensure that the region's development challenges can be fully understood, we have organized them into a decalogue of structural gaps, as follows: (i) low, volatile, exclusionary and unsustainable economic growth with low formal job creation; (ii) high inequality and low social mobility and cohesion; (iii) significant social protection gaps; (iv) weak education and vocational training systems; (v) high gender inequality; (vi) environmentally unsustainable development and climate change; (vii) the digital divide; (viii) increasing intra-regional migration flows in quantity and diversity; (ix) insufficient regional economic integration; and (x) limited fiscal space and high financing costs.

This decalogue is a valuable diagnostic tool for a disaggregated analysis of the fundamental structural gaps in development patterns, but it is also a useful means of approaching "what" must be done, in other words, the way in which the major transformations required for the region's development models must be conceived.

However, identifying the “what” is not enough if there are no clear strategies on “how” to do it. How can the necessary transformations be managed? This question raises the issues of governance and institutional capacities and social dialogue to manage the transformations.

With these premises and conceptual goals in mind, in collaboration with the editorial team of *CEPAL Review*, we convened a group of distinguished researchers from ECLAC and other institutions to analyse the 10 gaps in regional development and to consider the question of the “how”. The decalogue is, therefore, the principle around which this special issue is organized.

The issue begins with my article, “Rethinking, reimagining and transforming: the “whats” and the “hows” for moving towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model”, in which I present a comprehensive overview of the problems of development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a summary characterization of each of the areas of the structural gaps of the decalogue, as well as the guidelines proposed to bring about the major productive transformation needed to move towards the more productive, inclusive and sustainable growth that the region requires.

This article is followed by one based on the Raúl Prebisch Lecture, “Globalization disrupted: Prebisch, trade imbalances and the future of the global economy”, delivered by Rebeca Grynszpan at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago on 30 October 2023. The paper analyses the course of the global economy since the 2008 crisis, marked by a slowdown in economic growth and export dynamism relative to the hyperglobalization of the 1990s and 2000s, and also discusses —under the concept of “polyglobalization”— geoeconomic and geopolitical changes as well as the new modalities of regionalization of production processes and the resurgence of industrial policies.

The issue continues with the article “Towards transformation of the growth and development strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean: the role of productive development policies”, which I co-authored with Marco Llinás, and which proposes the need for a major productive transformation based on the expansion of productive development policies, with six concrete guidelines to that end.

In his article, “Macroeconomic policies for investment and sustained and sustainable development”, Daniel Titelman analyses the importance of strengthened capital formation processes in the region, particularly those related to the challenges ahead for the region in the face of climate change and environmental crises. In this context, the author highlights the complexities of these processes given the region’s historical investment deficits.

Luz María de la Mora, in her article “The perpetual pursuit of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean”, analyses the region’s progress and setbacks in economic and trade integration and proposes some measures to take advantage of nearshoring and pave the way for greater integration.

In their article “Environment and sustainable development: contemporary challenges for ECLAC and Latin America and the Caribbean”, Carlos de Miguel and Jeannette Sánchez present a set of stylized facts in relation to the state of the environment in the region and policy recommendations aimed at reconciling growth and environmental sustainability.

The article by Verónica Amarante, Nora Lustig and Andrea Vigorito, entitled “The challenge of income inequality in Latin America”, is the first of the series of articles in this issue devoted to analysis of the social dimension of development. It presents the stylized facts of distributional inequality in the region and the ECLAC approach to the issue over its 75 years of existence.

This special issue of the *CEPAL Review* also addresses gender equality and care systems in the article “Gender equality and the care society”, by Ana Gúezmes García, Nicole Bidegain Ponte and Lucía Scuro.

Continuing with the social dimension of development, the title of the article presented by Alberto Arenas de Mesa, “Universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and move towards inclusive social development”, gives a clear indication of the region’s shortcomings in the area of social protection systems and the policies to ensure their universality and sufficiency.

The issue closes with the articles “Improving education is crucial for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development”, by Daniela Trucco, and “International migration in Latin America and the Caribbean: a development and rights perspective” by Simone Cecchini and Jorge Martínez Pizarro.

We hope that the diverse range of works in these pages will provide our readers with a broader and more up-to-date view of the region’s challenges and how to overcome them in this new and difficult era of regional development and world history. This is in keeping with our commitment to contribute to reflection and action, consistent with the mission to serve Latin America and the Caribbean that ECLAC has embraced over the past 75 years.