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Mexico City, 19-23 January 1987



REPORT OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE OF HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT EXPERTS (CEGAN)
(Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1-3 December 1986)



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I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place, date and prose of the peting

- 1. The twelfth session of the Committee of High-Level Government Experts (CEGAN) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 1 to 3 December 1986. CEGAN, which was established by ECLAC resolution 310(XIV), is made up of the developing member countries of ECLAC.
- 2. At the request of several member countries of the Commission, this twelfth session of CEGAN was convened by the Chairman of ECLAC in Order to prepare for the Special Conference of ECLAC to be held in Mexico City from 19 to 23 January 1987. In accordance with resolution 487(XXI) of the Commission, the main substantive issue on the agenda of that Conference concerns national and international strategies and policies for turthering the recovery and development of the countries of the region.

Attendance

- 3. The meeting was attended by government experts from 16 member States of the Committee: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.
- 4. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations were also present: Latin American Economic System (SELA), Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) and the permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA).

Election of Officers

5. The following Officers were elected by the participants:

Chairman: Bernardo Grinspun (Argentina)

First Vice-Chairman: Luis Eduardo Meléndez Flores

(El Salvador)

Second Vice-Chairman: Ramiro León Torras (Cuba)
Third Vice-Chairman: María Luisa Cadenas Gauchen

(Venezuela)

Rapporteur: Carlos Pérez del Castillo (Uruguay)

Agenia

- 6. The following penda was adopted:
 - 1. Election of Officers
 - Adoption of the agenda
 National and international strategies and policies for furthering the recovery and development of the countries

of Latin America and the Caribbean

4. Consideration of the report of the Meeting.

Documentation

7. The Accretariat submitted the following document for the consideration of the Committee: "Latin American and Caribbean development: obstacles, requirements and options" (LC/G.1440(Conf.79/3)).

Organization of work

8. The Committee held two plenary meetings, at which delegations considered the subjects mentioned in the summary of the debates. It also established an open-ended working group to prepare a draft declaration for presentation at the Special Conference in Mexico. The text of this declaration is given in Chapter III of this report.

Opening meeting

- 9. At the opening meeting, statements were made by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, the Head of the delegation of Mexico, who spoke on behalf of the participating countries, and the Minister of Planning of the Argentine Republic.
- 10. After having thanked the Argentine Government for its collaboration in organizing the meeting, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Mr. Norberto González, noted that this session of the Committee of High-Level Government Experts, preparatory to the forthcoming Special Conference of ECLAC, was being held after a painstaking process of preparation on the part of the Secretariat. In this respect, he mentioned four seminars, attended by senior government officials or academics, which had been convened in order to analyse the issues to be set before the Special Conference, and he also referred to two other meetings, one on policies to offset the social consequences of the crisis, and the other on stabilization policies in countries affected by a high rate of inflation. He stated that all these meetings had provided the Secretariat with extremely worthwhile ideas and appreciations for the preparation of the Special Conference.

- He recalled that when the President of Mexico, Mr. Miquel de la Madrid had originally proposed the Special Meeting, he had called for a renewed conceptual framework for designing and implementing economic policies and strategies for economic and social development. In that respect, he had put forward four topics, which were: the compatibility of stabilization and adjustment policies with reactivation and development; the changes taking place in the productive structure of the developed and their impact on the multilateral negotiations, in respect of the comparative advantages of Latin the and the Caribbean; external debt and international financial system, and finally, the issue regional co-operation. Those topics were closely linked with three other topics which would be of particular importance in the coming years: capital formation (saving and investment), the social impact of the crisis, and the most efficient manner of linking public-sector action with that of the private sector.
- 12. Finally, the Executive Secretary stated that the present meeting of CEGAN provided the Latin American and Caribbean member governments of the Commission with an opportunity to put forward their own ideas regarding the steps they wished to take both domestically and in the regional sphere and in respect of international co-operation for the region's development, and he said that their deliberations would probably prove decisive for the outcome of the forthcoming Special Conference.
- 13. On behalf of the delegations present, the representative of Mexico reiterated the thanks expressed to the host government and stated that the participants would work hard to ensure that the meeting would constitute an effective preparation for the forthcoming Special Conference and for the possible formulation of a declaration as to the objectives which the countries of the region proposed to achieve. He concluded by recalling the contribution made by Dr. Raúl Prebisch to the work of the Commission, and extended an advance welcome to the delegations taking part in the forthcoming Special Conference.
- 14. In declaring the twelfth session of CEGAN open, the Minister of Planning of the Argentine Republic, Mr. Bernardo Grinspun, underscored the significance of the Special Conference of ECLAC due to be held in Mexico and briefly summed up the topics which the President of Mexico, Mr. Miguel de la Madrid, had suggested for that Conference. He referred to the present international economic circumstances, which were marked by a high degree of uncertainty and by the great difficulties facing the debtor countries, and declared that in such a context it was essential to deepen the analysis and to seek solutions in accordance with the ever-increasing and pressing economic and social needs of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. He therefore highlighted the importance of the present meeting as part of the effort to examine national and international strategies and

policies for furthering the recovery and development of the countries of the region.

Closing meeting

- 15. At the closing meeting, statements were made by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, the Head of the Department of International Economic Organizations of the State Committee for Economic Co-operation of Cuba, and the Minister of Planning of the Argentine Republic, in his capacity as Chairman of the twelfth session of CEGAN.
- 16. The Executive Secretary praised the excellent work done, which had resulted in a draft declaration bringing out the links between short-term objectives and policies and those of medium and long term. He added that the draft declaration represented an important forward step which consolidated the efforts previously made to establish policies and strategies for solving the problem of the adjustment and indebtedness.
- 17. On behalf of the participating delegations, the Head of the Department of International Economic Organizations of the State Committee for Economic Co-operation of Cuba thanked the delegations and the Secretariat for their valuable collaboration. He also noted that the formulation of the draft declaration reflected the climate of unity prevailing in the region, which would place the developed countries under the obligation to give a concrete answer to the demands contained in it.
- 18. The Chairman of the twelfth session of CEGAN said that the draft declaration was a serious, carefully prepared and clearly framed document which would serve as the basis for the discussions at the Special Conference of ECLAC to be held in Mexico City from 19 to 23 January 1987.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

- 19. The representative of the Secretariat described the main lines of document LC/G.1440(Conf.79/3), noting in the first place that the document dealt with the four topics mentioned by President Miguel de la Madrid in his statement at the twenty-first session of ECLAC and was based on his appeal for an up-to-date conceptual framework that is appropriate to the problems of the region.
- 20. The document represented an attempt to clarify those circumstances which had helped to produce a situation qualitatively different from that of past decades and which included, in particular: i) the fact that the region had still not overcome the effects of the profound and prolonged recession

experienced by the great majority of its countries since 1981, although some of them had shown some signs of recovery in 1986; ii) a sudden change in the way in which the international economy operated, due to the technological revolution affecting production processes, the impact of the prevailing monetary and financial order on trade flows, the effect of the tension among the leading developed economies on the developing economies, and the fact that the region had become a net exporter of financial resources; iii) the gradual loss of dynamism of intra-regional trade and, in general, the erosion of the degree of fulfilment of commitments made in respect of integration and, iv) (on the positive side of the account) the trend towards increasingly participative and democratic political systems.

- That set of changing circumstances suggested the following agenda of activities, which seemed relevant for all the countries of the region: i) to advance towards an expansionary adjustment and stabilization; ii) to increase domestic savings and direct them towards productive investments; iii) to transform structures of production; iv) to strive for greater capacity to adapt to the changes occurring in the international economy and v) to promote development within the framework of increasing equity. Those fields of activity were intimately related and were reflected in certain commitments which originated basically in governments of the region, acting individually collectively, as well as in other commitments on the part of the international community, especially in the fields of financing (a matter basically revolving today about the problem of the external debt) and trade.
- The representative of the Secretariat explained that the document contained suggestions and guidelines on each of these areas of activity and attempted to show how they tied in with each other. Some of the salient characteristics of the document were as follows: i) its emphasis on the integral nature of development, with regard to the need to fulfil multiple objectives; ii) explicit recognition of the need to take a pluralistic approach to economic and social development, even all the countries shared certain traits; iii) incorporation into the argument of variables not related to economics, because it was felt that development was not the sole or even the main concern of the discipline of economics; iv) a growing concern for equity, especially within the framework of participative and democratic processes; v) recognition that it was essential to adapt the structure of production to the new domestic, regional circumstances prevailing at the levels; vi) the need for greater equilibrium international between short- and medium-term economic policy; vii) stress on the crucial role which intra-regional co-operation would have to play in any alternative development option; and viii) recognition of the need to redefine international co-operation in terms of

the responsibilities to be borne by the countries of the region and those to be borne by the international community.

- 23. The representative of the Secretariat concluded his remarks by saying that he felt that the topics dealt with in the document provided the bases for a contemporary strategy for the development of the countries of the region, although those bases would have to be adjusted to fit the circumstances prevailing in each individual country.
- 24. The representative of Chile said, in the first place, that generally speaking the length of time that economic policies remained in force was significant in terms of results. His own country's development strategy was based on private enterprise, the use of the market mechanism to allocate resources, openness to international trade and the subsidiary role of the State.
- 25. Addressing another matter, he noted that a country's capacity to grow and to transform its economy depended first and foremost on its own efforts, although the great responsibility borne by conditions in the international economic setting could not be overlooked.
- The representative of Mexico said that the governments of the region would have to make an appreciable effort if the suggestions made in the document produced by the Secretariat were to find their expression in concrete policies. The fact that the document postulated the idea that the processes of stabilization and adjustment were closely linked to economic growth and the equitable distribution of income represented a significant advance. He laid special emphasis on the need for Latin America to act in a concerted manner with regard to the most important problems encountered in its and financial relations. He also noted the importance of establishing a link between short- and medium-term measures in seeking to emerge from the difficulties of the present economic situation.
- 27. He took a positive view of the fact that the intra-Latin American debt had been dealt with as part of the topic of regional co-operation, but found it regrettable that more emphasis had not been placed on the need for co-operation with the smaller countries with regard both to the debt and to investment and trade.
- 28. As for the question of the region's place in the world economy, he noted that the document did not cover certain very recent events which made the outlook for the region darker than it had been. In that respect, he said that the negotiations in the Uruguay Round would probably not actually get under way until 1989 and the next two years might therefore bring increasing difficulties to the region.

- 29. In conclusion, he said that it was important that the declaration emanating from the meeting should include considerations in respect of the region's institutional apparatus and of the responsibilities of governments and existing institutions in the renewal of Latin American thought, the fulfilment of commitments to further solidarity and regional cooperation, and close attention to the place of Latin America in the world economic scene.
- The representative of Peru commended the Secretariat because the document showed that the arguments put forward in the past by ECLAC still held true. He felt that another positive aspect was the consideration given to the plurality of national policies, while at the same time pointing out that the document was not "neutral" in its attitude but made an appraisal of the past experience in the region, especially with regard to overcoming ideological differences and recognizing the role of the State, the frustrating nature of the region's international insertion in the absence of deliberate national and regional policies, and the importance of the democratic context. In the current conditions, the most important thing, in terms of the Latin American position, was to seek areas of consensus among the various countries. On the subject of the debt, he stressed the countries' obligation to take care of their development and that of their people first, and to service their debt afterwards. In that connection, he mentioned his country's decision to limit debt servicing to 10% of its export earnings. In that connection, as well as referring to the policy applied by his own country, he cited Mexico's renegotiation of its debt and the proposal made by Argentina to link the servicing of the debt to factors dependent on the international market, such as the prices of certain export commodities.
- The representative of Cuba said that Latin American thinking had grown more profound and more closely related to current issues in the course of 1986. At the eleventh session of CEGAN held in Bogotá in March 1986, positions had been adopted in respect of important questions, and they had subsequently been supplemented and completed in a number of encounters Outstanding declarations during the year. among declarations was the one adopted by the Latin American Council of SELA in October and that which had emerged from the seventeenth Ministerial Meeting of OLADE, held in Buenos Aires in November. The present meeting of CEGAN should sum up and consolidate that progress, thereby bringing out the need to strengthen Latin American unity.
- 32. He also noted that the document submitted by the Secretariat espoused the concept of integral development. It had by now been fully proved that growth by itself did not lead to development and that unemployment and hunger continued to exist in Latin America, while marginal sectors were growing. It had now been 15

years since the governments, meeting within CEPAL itself, had drawn attention to the concept of integral development, and there was every indication that it would serve a useful and necessary purpose to invoke that concept again today.

- 33. The economic integration of Latin America should be an important objective of the current meeting, in view of the political will repeatedly expressed by Heads of State and Ministers. Those expressions of will, together with the positions so far maintained by the region in respect of external indebtedness, trade and finance, reflected the fundamental interests of the position to be adopted by Latin America for the Special Conference of ECLAC to be held in Mexico in January 1987 and were the expression of the region's will and solidarity.
- 34. Several delegations suggested that the Secretariat should be entrusted with the task of executing follow-up activities that would facilitate the continuation of the exercise in collective reflection to be carried out at the Special Conference in Mexico.
- With regard to the draft declaration adopted at the final plenary meeting (see Chapter III of this report), representative of Peru said his delegation joined in the consensus. He noted, however, that in his view the declaration did not make a sufficiently clear distinction between the concepts of concerted action, co-operation and integration and pointed out that, as an objective, economic integration could not be taken in the narrow sense of the partial agreements which had been reached in the Caribbean and in the Atlantic subregion of South America; to define it only within that frame would be to run the risk of consolidating a new stratification within the which would accentuate, rather than correct, the region heterogeneity prevailing among the countries of the region as regards their levels of production and development.

III. CONCLUSIONS

36. The meeting adopted by consensus the draft "Declaration of Mexico" signed by the Latin American and Caribbean governments listed below.

DRAFT DECLARATION OF MEXICO SIGNED BY THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

- 1. Firmly resolved to promote economic and social development, basing ourselves on the obligation to strengthen democratic processes in a climate of liberty, justice and social equity and drawing our inspiration from the principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, we hereby affirm that democracy, peace, development and solidarity constitute the principles on which the strategies for the economic and social transformation of Latin America and the Caribbean must be based in order to tackle the grave crisis we are facing.
- This crisis, whose duration, depth and extent give it a structural character, is the severest, longest and most widespread of the past 50 years. The setbacks suffered in our development processes have caused a drop in the per capita gross domestic product, the deepening of social problems, and severe structural imbalances, both internal and external. Its origin lies basically in external factors, which have given rise to grave balance-of-payments problems as a result of high nominal and real interest rates and the fact that for the first time in our history we have become net exporters of financial resources; the continuous and ever more acute deterioration in the terms of trade, basically attributable to the steady drop in the prices of the basic commodities we export, including the recent collapse in oil prices, and the proliferation of protectionist barriers in the industrialized countries. All this involves a cost which, after years of economic and social sacrifices, means that the burden on our societies is becoming intolerable.
- 3. The concepts underlying the adjustment policies recommended have led to short- and countries conditionalities which have adversely affected our recovery and development, because those concepts were based on assumptions concerning the behaviour of the international economy and the economic agents which later turned out to be region's unrealistic. Neither was due consideration given to dissimilar situations existing in our countries or to the nature of their development strategies.
- 4. At a high political and social cost, we have a made a major effort to adjust our economies. However, even this sacrifice has not allowed us to simultaneously service the debt and achieve the aims of development. Should this difficult situation continue, recessive conditions will prevail and our possibilities of recovery will remain precarious. The adjustment processes, which were originally supposed to be only of a temporary nature, until such time as growth of the international economy got under way again and progress was made towards domestic structural change,

have persisted and threaten to become a chronic feature of the way our economies operate.

- 5. Consequently, checking the still-prevailing recessive trends and making possible development constitutes the greatest challenge which we must face in the coming years. It is therefore desirable that the current crisis be tackled in a pragmatic and innovative manner, seeking to bring about recovery and establish links tying-in development with social equity and rooted in the particular features of each nation.
- 6. The definition of a new development policy, as well as its contents and scope, is indissolubly linked with the everbroadening process of democratization. Our governments and civil societies have shown our capacity to assume responsibilities —as witness the disproportionate costs and sacrifices demanded by the adjustment— and we reaffirm here our commitment to policies marked by:
- a) Innovative approaches to stabilization and adjustment which encourage growth and development and protect our economies against the negative impact of external factors, and which, in addition to considering macroeconomic equilibria, also promote the recovery of employment and defend the interests of the least protected groups, while giving rise to efficient and expansionary programmes which facilitate fundamental changes, diminish the sacrifices made by our populations and achieve lasting solutions.
- b) Systematic and sustained efforts designed to expand and transform the productive structures, so as to improve efficiency, strengthen inter- and intra-sectoral links, make full use of the potential offered by technological change, bring about a qualitative change in the position occupied by our countries in international trade flows, and lay the foundations for sustained growth and development.
- c) Encouragement of domestic saving and its orientation towards productive investment which contributes towards the process of economic recovery and development, to which end patterns of consumption will have to be made compatible with patterns of accumulation, public-sector finances will have to be strengthened and policies to stimulate institutional, social and personal saving must be implemented.
- d) A fairer sharing out of the costs and benefits of material progress, within the framework of a process of participation which is indispensable for the implementation of strategies leading to the desired economic and social development.
- 7. With a view to facilitating the execution of these policies and making them more consistent, we hereby reiterate our will to

strengthen concerted action and regional integration and cooperation programmes. At the same time we express our conviction that integration is a suitable means for lightening the burden of the present crisis and facilitating the region's production, transformation and distribution processes. We are agreed that the creation of a common economic space opens broader prospects for joint growth and for the well-being of our peoples, provides new impetus for the consolidation of peace and development, and makes it easier to tackle shared problems by taking joint co-ordinated action in various fields. We affirm that the region must organize itself with the objective of exercising joint bargaining power at the international level so as to be better able to defend its own vital interests. This conviction has provided the inspiration for the recent bilateral integration agreements signed in Latin America and the Caribbean, which include measures operation in sectors capable of disseminating technological progress and which are further evidence of our political will to continue carrying out joint activities to further economic recovery and development, as well as the economic complementarity and convergence measures taken within the framework of ALADI.

We consider that in spite of the enormous efforts which we have made, the possibilities for recovery have so far failed to materialize, primarily because of the extraordinary deterioration in the realm of international trade and finance caused by the policies unilaterally applied by the most powerful industrialized countries. In order to cope with this situation, which is causing a crisis in respect of international co-operation, and in view of the trends towards bilateralism in international relations, where the exercise of power predominates, it is essential to strengthen multilateralism as a suitable mechanism for solving many of the problems besetting us. The coherent and carefully deliberated action we are adopting at the national and regional level will prove insufficient unless there is international co-operation in the financial, monetary, commercial and technological areas and higher priority is given to our problems on the agenda of negotiations at the world level. We are faced with the challenge of establishing conditions which favour the development of our economies in line with a criterion of equity and justice in their economic links with the exterior. We reject the application of coercive economic and financial measures for political or other ends. In this respect, we deem it necessary to indicate some approaches which will make it possible to reduce the external vulnerability of the regional economy and, in particular, to advance in the efforts towards the establishment of the New International Economic Order. These approaches are the following:

a) Solution of the problem of the external debt

The Latin American and Caribbean countries are faced with an external debt of close to US\$ 400 billion, which is the most serious manifestation of the economic crisis besetting us. Most

of our countries devote over one third of the foreign exchange they generate and a quarter of their domestic saving to making their interest payments each year, so that it will be very hard for us to recover our import capacity and to accumulate the capital we need to grow and build new structures of production. This is why we assert that the external debt cannot be paid as things now stand and in the absence of sustained economic development. The only way to reach a global and permanent solution to the external debt problem is to initiate an urgent political dialogue between creditors and debtors, based primarily principle of co-responsibility and the on right development. In order to do this, it is necessary -- in addition to establishing other mechanisms and measures -- to adjust the servicing of the debt to each country's real capacity to pay, to limit this servicing on the basis of export earnings or the performance of other economic variables, to reverse the net transfer of funds which affects us and to treat the current debt differently from future debt. In order to cope with the problem of the external debt, immediate and simultaneous action must also be taken at the monetary, financial and commercial level.

b) Reform of the international monetary and financial system

international disequilibria in the economic system have a direct impact on our development financial prospects. The overcoming of these disequilibria requires greater macroeconomic discipline in the leading developed countries and mechanisms for keeping watch over the measures adopted by those countries, in particular with regard to the effect they have on exchange rates, interest rates and international liquidity. Moreover, cross conditionalities, which are applied primarily in spheres of trade and finance, reduces our countries' potential for development and autonomy, and hence the complex and burdensome demands associated with external financing should be brought into line with the conditions, economic objectives and development policies of each country. It is essential to increase the resources of the international finance agencies and to reorient their activities to enable them to play a role in keeping with our development needs. In addition, the severity of the balance-of-payments problems affecting the Latin American and Caribbean countries calls for the immediate expansion of the Compensatory Financing Facility in order to respond to the negative impact of factors such as the drop in commodity prices, high real interest rates and natural disasters. Consequently, we maintain that a thorough review of the present international monetary and financial system through multilateral negotiations can no longer be postponed.

c) Reform of the system of international trade

We express our deep concern with the slump --unprecedented in the postwar period -- in commodity prices; with the acute deterioration in the terms of trade; with the ever-intensifying tariff and non-tariff protectionist measures adopted by the countries industrialized (including special taxes hydrocarbons) which hinder access by our exports, and with the increasing tendency of those countries to resort to export subsidies and other unfair practices which displace us from our traditional markets and depress international prices further. We call for a multilateral system of international trade that ensures high rates of expansion of world trade, together with increasing participation on the part of developing countries. We consider that the launching of the Uruguay Round constitutes a positive step in the search for solutions to some of the problems of international trade. However, we hereby declare that if this Round is to achieve satisfactory results it essential that governments should immediately apply the Standstill and Rollback commitments assumed by them in the Declaration of Punta del Este; that as far as the issue of safeguards is concerned, a satisfactory solution, based on the most-favoured-nation clause and taking full account of the interests of developing countries should be found; agriculture should be given fundamental and priority attention and all the barriers restricting trade in agricultural products should be subject to the discipline of GATT; and finally, that international trade should be liberalized and expanded in a manner which considerably improves the conditions of access for goods from the developing countries to markets in the developed countries. We stress the importance of an improvement in the trade environment, especially in relation to the capacity of the debtor countries to meet their financial commitments. We also emphasize the fact that such improvements, accompanied by a significant reduction in debt servicing and a marked increase in towards developing countries, the financial flows contribute to the recovery of our growth and consequently also to a rapid expansion of our imports, leading to a renewed period of high growth rates of world trade which would be to the benefit of the entire international economy.

9. It is our view that, unless a set of measures such as those proposed in this declaration is adopted, we will find ourselves in an extremely serious situation which will force us to limit our net transfers of resources substantially in order to avoid still greater social and political instability which would endanger the processes of consolidation of democracy.

10. We reiterate that we are not shirking our responsibilities but have so far unilaterally borne the weight of the trade crisis and the burden of the financial crisis. We do not expect our problems to be solved exclusively from outside, but we do demand a reply from the developed countries, as we are convinced that co-operation among nations is important for promoting long-term development.

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