

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO THE UNITY SUMMIT OF LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN
Cancun, 21 February 2010**

*Delivered by Ms. Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary,
UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*

I am pleased to send greetings to the Heads of State and Government gathered for the “Unity Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean,” hosted by the government of Mexico.

Allow me to commend all of you for your extraordinary support to the people of Haiti during this critical time. The governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have responded swiftly and generously in so many ways, including by providing troops, police, and other vital support. The United Nations will continue working closely with the government of Haiti and with all of you to respond to immediate humanitarian needs, even as we lay the foundation for early recovery and reconstruction and building back better.

A commitment to building for the future unites your entire region. Over the past few decades, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have made significant progress in strengthening regional cooperation and pursuing greater economic and social integration.

The establishment in 1986 of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action -- the Rio Group -- marked a milestone for political cooperation. Indeed, a common commitment to work together is an essential ingredient in addressing our world’s many inter-connected challenges.

The global economic downturn, for example, continues to have a serious impact on families and communities everywhere. Economic growth may be on the rise in many countries, but times remain hard for far too many people. Our efforts must remain focused on promoting sustainable growth, social justice, and the generation of decent work for all. You have shown leadership in addressing these challenges and the world has much to learn from your many examples of success in economic recovery and protection for the vulnerable.

Now is the time to mobilize further action. That is why we will convene a special summit focused on the Millennium Development Goals alongside the opening of the General Assembly this September in New York. I invite you to personally participate in this important event.

Climate change remains another major inter-connected challenge. The Copenhagen conference marked a significant step forward, despite the many challenges it presented. As we all know, climate change remains a clear and present danger. I will continue to urge all Parties to remain engaged, to increase the level of ambition and to focus on implementation while negotiations continue under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I would like to express my full support for Mexico, the host of this year's "Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change," as we work to maintain momentum towards reaching a global climate agreement.

In all of these efforts, I am honoured to reaffirm my commitment, and that of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, to working closely with you to strengthen our partnership for the people of the entire region. Please accept my best wishes for a productive Unity Summit.

BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations