

**STATEMENT MADE BY MR. JOSÉ LUIS MACHINEA TO THE STAFF OF ECLAC
UPON ASSUMING HIS POST AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION**

Santiago, Chile, 15 December 2003

Thank you for your presence here this morning. This first meeting will allow me to share with you my vision of ECLAC and its future work and to invite you to become actively engaged in this new stage in the life of the institution.

I am fully conscious and embrace the wealth of economic, social and political thought that is such a central part of the intellectual legacy forged by ECLAC over the years. When the Commission embarked upon its work in the late 1940s, with great dynamism, we know that it drew its strength from some of Latin America's most visionary leaders. Raúl Prebisch and Celso Furtado, for whom our two main conference rooms are named, are the most conspicuous examples, but there are also many others. The intellectual contribution of these leaders is well known, but today I would like to focus on another aspect of their seminal work, and that is their commitment to the region and their ability to mobilize the efforts of a vast number of men and women around the world in order to shape a series of *idées-forces* for Latin America and the Caribbean.

ECLAC has been much more than an influential centre of analysis and exchange of ideas, which, by virtue of its stature, is able to bring together public authorities as well as private, social and academic leaders. Its close relationship with the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean has encouraged many Governments to seek its assistance in undertaking action to resolve specific problems. This has been done by developing regional consensus in the context of global trends and priorities. It has also been accomplished by providing technical cooperation designed to shape public policy, by helping to build institutions and by training government officials and experts. With the adjustments which may be required, this is essentially our mission for the future, a mission which will require the support of all of you.

ECLAC has assigned its top priority to defending values cherished by the United Nations. As the Secretary-General often reminds us, the struggle for peace involves much more than the vital task performed by the Security Council. The struggle for peace and the well-being of the world's peoples also entails respect for human, civil and political rights, respect for economic, social and cultural rights, harmonious coexistence within a democratic framework, environmental protection, waging a war on hunger and poverty, and the struggle against all forms of discrimination. All of these dimensions are interrelated and, although the challenge may be difficult, this is the form in which we will endeavour to address our day-to-day work at ECLAC. In order to do so, I will need the active collaboration of each of you, bringing to bear different professional backgrounds, perspectives and experience.

ECLAC's initial contribution to Latin American and Caribbean thinking has been followed by many other intellectual contributions drawn up under the leadership of my predecessors in this post and whose work in the international arena is well known. In fact, three

of the last four Executive Secretaries of ECLAC now hold very important positions at the international level: Enrique Iglesias, President of the Inter-American Development Bank; Gert Rosenthal, President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations; and José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

In particular, let me emphasize the significant role of my immediate predecessor. The outstanding contribution made by José Antonio Ocampo to the intellectual endeavours of ECLAC during his nearly six years here, is clearly reflected in the major publications of the institution. He also played a decisive role in positioning ECLAC as an influential voice in the high level dialogue taking place within international organizations, academia and in regional Presidential summits. On behalf of the Commission, I would like to thank José Antonio for his efforts and achievements in guiding this institution. Fortunately, José Antonio Ocampo has not left us. He will be collaborating with us from his new position in the United Nations. That is our aspiration, and his as well.

Turning once again to our institution, I feel it is essential that we give due recognition to the value of the Commission's intellectual heritage. Based on this legacy, we must be prepared to pursue our work in a whole new world. From this perspective, ECLAC's heritage is a vibrant intellectual tool for understanding the present and future issues of relevance to our region and its relationship to the world. In short, I am convinced that, just as an institution that disregards its own history is an institution with no identity, one that can only cling to its past will inevitably deteriorate and languish.

The Latin American and Caribbean region is now at a turning point in its development. After a decade of light and shadow, a feeling of frustration pervades the region, at least with respect to the meager results of the economic reforms much vaunted by some analysts and policy makers. Highly complex problems are to be found no matter where we look; social and political upheavals have occurred in the recent past, and turmoil seems to lie latent in a number of countries. Growth with equity and sustainability is in deficit, above all growth that includes everyone, without discrimination.

Fortunately, however, democracy continues strong in the region, although setbacks are at times experienced. Democratic systems must also face the challenges of how to deepen the process. We are also fortunate to find ourselves in an intellectual and political setting that is much more open and tolerant than in the past. This offers us an opportunity: an opportunity to delve more deeply into the many different dimensions of the region's development and to grasp the fact that growth is not a linear process governed by universally applicable rules but is instead a process based on each country's particular features and institutions. It is an opportunity to achieve greater equity through the use of public policy, not only through Government's social policies but also through their economic policies. It must be recognized that different growth models are associated with different patterns in terms of the use of production resources and, hence, of income distribution, all of which has major implications for social mobility and cohesion. This is also an opportunity to revamp the region's relationship to the world economy based on the Commission's concept of open regionalism so that we can engage in international negotiations on an equitable footing and use active policies to deal with the structural misalignments generated by the increasing level of regional and global integration.

As we face these challenges, I issue a warm invitation to each one of you to join me in forging proposals for a region that demands new ideas, hard work and creativity. The time is right, and I firmly believe that now, as in the past, ECLAC will rise to the task. I would like to be very clear about what this means to me. Simply stated, it means that, once our course has been plotted out, each and every one of you should fully assume your responsibilities.

The Substantive Division Directors, whether titular or acting, and the Directors of Subregional Headquarters and Country Offices, should commit themselves actively to this task. These units must consider themselves part of a team working directly with the Executive Secretariat. Interdivisional work, based on selected priorities, should be the rule rather than the exception.

Support divisions should fulfil the role for which they have been created: to facilitate the work of the organization as a whole.

In sum, the ideas that we are advancing will require continuing interaction between organizational units, as priority issues will require a multidimensional approach.

As regards our methods of work: I will always give preference to institutional channels; this means that established rules must be followed. Nevertheless, I know from experience that there are various approaches that the administration of an organization may take in dealing with its day-to-day problems. I hope that the prevailing approach here will be to seek creative solutions to our problems by making use of the flexibility that always exists in the rules and procedures of any administration. I fervently hope that you will help me to foster such an approach in the management of our human and financial resources. I am convinced that support in this respect is crucial for our substantive work to progress and for our institution to prosper.

Fortunately, in Alicia Bárcena I have an ideal companion with whom to jointly undertake the tasks that I have set myself. I would also like to extend a special thanks to her for the effort and ability she has displayed during this transition.

The time has come for me to tell you about my own background. For many years I was a career officer in my country's Central Bank, which, in due course, awarded me a fellowship to study for my doctorate abroad. Since the return to democracy in 1983, I have held senior political posts involving the conduction of Argentina's economic policy during periods full of hope, but also when we faced serious difficulties. I have always felt a strong calling to public service, with a view to improving the well-being of my fellow citizens. My past professional experience has left me with conflicting sentiments, great joy intermingled with deep sadness.

I come to ECLAC from the IDB, where I worked for the last two years. At IDB my work focused on the analysis of macroeconomic issues relating to integration schemes. My tenure in that position has helped strengthen my regional vision of Latin America and the Caribbean and to appreciate the value of the various facets of integration that are a subject of public policy debate today.

Some of you must surely have thought and said that my presence here would not be a good thing for ECLAC, especially after having read some of the comments reported in the Argentine press. I imagine that you are worried about the institution. Let me assure you that I stand behind my public record with its successes and setbacks.

I will endeavour to do my very best, and will demand the best from you, so that this new stage in our professional development, which will probably be the culmination of my career, will be a success. For this objective, I have been assured of the support of the Secretary-General and his entire team.

ECLAC is not a stepping stone for me, and my commitment to this institution is complete. I am embarking upon this new stage with great enthusiasm, and for this reason call upon you to join me in meeting the challenges ahead. I am convinced that with the technical and professional knowledge and good will of all of you, we can uphold and further enhance the role that ECLAC has played during its more than five decades of existence.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you and your families a joyful season and a new year full of personal and professional achievement.

Thank you very much.