

**STATEMENT BY ALICIA BÁRCENA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ECLAC AT THE
PRESENTATION BY CELSO AMORIM, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
BRAZIL**

Thirty-third session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Distinguished delegates,

For ECLAC, it is a great honour to welcome Celso Amorim, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, to the thirty-third session of the Commission.

First, let me say, once again, how grateful we are to your Government, and in particular to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the generous and unconditional support extended to our secretariat in organizing this session.

You will no doubt agree with me, Mr. Minister, that it would be difficult to write an economic history of Latin America and the Caribbean without mentioning ECLAC and its constant, tireless efforts to develop its own thinking. As Prebisch used to say: "The reflective knowledge of external matters must not be confused with mental subjection to alien ideas". Along this path, for just over sixty years, we constructed a genuinely regional thinking, but above all a vigorous and critical thinking and one that has been able to challenge itself and reopen the debate. At the same time, it is equally true that we could not write a history of ECLAC without recognizing the invaluable contribution made by Brazilian intellectuals at different times.

In 1953 and 1988, the scene was Rio de Janeiro; in 2002 and today, it is Brasilia: on these occasions, Raul Prebisch, Gert Rosenthal, Jose Antonio Ocampo and myself have been the Executive Secretaries who on Brazilian soil have put forward proposals to Latin America and the Caribbean. Today we have presented the document "Time for equality, closing gaps, opening trails".

Yet, histories are forged not only by institutions, they are also forged by individuals, those who are able to understand their time, to grasp the responsibility that they carry on their shoulders and to take decisions that are at times difficult; individuals who, amid a sea of information, stimuli, pressures and anxieties, are able to chart a course and steer their ship successfully: you, honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, are just such a person.

As far back as 1993-1994, you had already held the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs. From 1999-2001, you were Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations and other international agencies with headquarters in Geneva, and from 1995 to 1999, you served as Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations in New York. In 2000, you chaired the Conference on Disarmament and in 2001 you served as Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO). You have worked with the Organization of American States at the Hague, and represented your country as Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

Indeed, Celso Amorim has held numerous posts and a host a responsibilities in the foreign service of Brazil, and there would be no point in listing them all. He is a man of international stature, a citizen of the world, a diplomat par excellence. Suffice it to say that in 2009, just last year, he was described by the United States journal *Foreign Policy* as “the world’s best foreign minister”. But this citizen of the world, the world’s best foreign minister, has his heart in Brazil, in South America, in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the emerging peoples who are struggling to forge a decent and effective path to development and well-being.

Mr. Minister,

Until a couple of decades ago, multilateralism was the dimension of international relations which offered small countries protection against the interests of the major powers. At that time, a network of international agreements on rights and duties appeared to be indispensable for achieving legal and political certainties through which to shore up the international status of our countries. Their objective was none other than the gradual construction of a more just and more balanced international order.

In pursuit of this objective, the United Nations deployed enormous efforts, and representatives of member States have adopted rights and duties and are committed to applying them both nationally and internationally.

But today, multilateralism has taken on a new dimension. The future of humankind is inextricably linked with the changes wrought by globalization in recent times. Our societies have all flung their windows wide open and it would be impossible to close them again; through these openings flow frigid and warm air, good and bad news, opportunities and failures. As Zygmunt Bauman puts it, “a society that is 'open' is a society exposed to the blows of 'fate'”.

Countries are no longer in a position to solve their problems unilaterally, not even, in many cases, when those problems are local. We need each other, whether it be for maintaining the value of our currencies, tackling organized crime, controlling migration, meeting our energy needs or caring for the environment. In fact, we have daily evidence of this mutual need.

Today, multilateralism is, at the same time, approach and principle, the means and the end for safeguarding the civilizing gains and advances and for facing up to the challenges of the future. Brazil is, indisputably, a leading actor in this new multilateralism and we value its commitment to this cause.

Celso,

We are extremely grateful and deeply honoured that you have made time in your demanding agenda to be with us this afternoon.