

WELCOME STATEMENT

**ALICIA BÁRCENA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**TENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
UNITED NATIONS AND RELATED INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
(UNARIO)**

19 JANUARY 2012

Dr. **John Barkat**, Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations
Ombudsman and Head of Ombudsman and Mediation Services,
Mr. Jose Martínez-Aragón, distinguished participants,

it is my pleasure to welcome you to this, the tenth annual meeting of
the United Nations and Related International Organizations (UNARIO),
which brings together Ombudsmen and Mediators from the United

Nations and related international organizations to share best practices, engage in professional development, and network with colleagues.

As you must know, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. It was founded in 1948 for the purpose of contributing to the social and economic development of the region, coordinating actions directed towards this end, and reinforcing economic ties between countries and with other nations of the world.

The main thrust of our activities is to provide policy proposals in a wide range of areas in the economic, social and sustainable development fields for the Governments of our 44 member States and 8 Associate Members. We also work with them to bring a regional perspective to global problems and forums and introduce global concerns at the regional and subregional levels.

One of our characteristics, of which we feel very proud, is the sense of ownership that Latin American and Caribbean countries have with respect to our work.

At the ninth annual meeting of the United Nations and Related International Organizations (UNARIO) Dr. Barkat reminded us that the quest for justice in society sometimes leads to the establishment of rules that inadvertently create conflict between people.

Indeed, however refined the rules may be, people are complex and face complex situations, especially in the workplace, and this is how grey areas arise such as trust in conflict resolution. Accordingly, systemic problems that are often the root causes of institutional problems need to be tackled while also addressing individual conflict situations.

Ombudsmen and mediators should therefore identify the systemic problems that encourage certain negative behavioural patterns and engender situations of conflict in the Organization. They should also

help to create an enabling working environment by contributing to the design and implementation of policies and procedures that do not condone or perpetuate reprehensible behaviour in the workplace.

I would like to take this opportunity to recall the importance of the new system of administration of justice applicable in the Organization. Between 2006 and 2008, I assisted the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, in reviewing, studying and implementing a new mechanism for ensuring justice in disputes between staff and management within the Organization.

The Member States adopted a General Assembly resolution requesting the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth review of the existing system through a panel of experts called the “Redesign Panel on the United Nations System of Administration of Justice

The outcome of that review was a highly critical assessment of the existing justice system, which it qualified as outdated, dysfunctional,

ineffective and unable to meet the dispute settlement expectations of either staff or management. The review found that the existing system was failing in most of its functions.

Accordingly, the Member States decided that a thoroughgoing change was needed: it was more a matter of creating a new system than of strengthening the old one.

Member States instructed us to create an independent, transparent, professionalized, decentralized and adequately funded system and to ensure that it would be operational by January 2009.

The proposal that was adopted called for identification of possible alternatives for resolution at the early stages of a conflict, and for the design of formal and informal means of dispute settlement. The new system therefore has three basic pillars:

- The informal dispute resolution system, in which the existing role of the Ombudsman in the Secretariat was strengthened and extended to the various regions where the Organization serves. In Santiago, we gained, with the establishment of an Ombudsman's office here;
- New risk assessment capacities within the system; and
- A system of two jurisdictional mechanisms, the United Nations Dispute Tribunal as a court of first instance, and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal as a court of appeal.

The new justice system, which is now practically fully operational, represents significant progress towards better administration of justice within the Organization and the avoidance of unnecessary litigation.

The presence of a Regional Ombudsman in Santiago is of enormous benefit for us, offering direct, expeditious support. José Martínez-

Aragón performs his duties diligently and meticulously and we deeply appreciate the warmth and human qualities he brings to the job. As Ombudsman and an important element of the system's informal pillar, he has provided valuable support in resolution efforts and has come up with creative solutions that have helped to untangle complicated situations.

José's own particular hallmark is the solicitous treatment reserved for those who visit his office, who find not just an understanding listener, but someone who brings a professional approach to finding a solution.

A sympathetic ear or help in exploring the available options are sometimes enough. In other cases, mediation or coaching is needed, or valuable information based on a thorough knowledge of the United Nations system.

I wish you every success in your deliberations at this, your tenth annual UNUARIO meeting.