

Remarks by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) at the ceremony marking the full membership of the Kingdom of Norway in the Commission

ECLAC headquarters, Santiago

4 October 2015

Dear Tone Skogen, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Norway,

Dearest friend, Hege Araldsen, Ambassador of Norway to Chile,

Members of the official delegation of Norway,

Members of the diplomatic corps,

Colleagues of the United Nations system,

Colleagues of ECLAC,

Friends,

Receive our warmest welcome on this very special occasion, on which we officially welcome the Kingdom of Norway as a full member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Norway is a founding member of the United Nations and has always strived for the strengthening of multilateralism and for developing the normative framework on the basis of the three pillars of the Charter of the United Nations: human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development.

Norway has been a progressive country, which has adopted visionary legislation and policies to support human rights, and most especially women's rights and minority rights.

Allow me to start by congratulating Norway on its commitment to peace. Recently, we were proud to see the conclusion of a crucial agreement on transitional justice –a key step in the peace process between Colombia and FARC. Norway has been the guarantor of this process from the beginning, together with Cuba and alongside Chile and the Bolivarian Republic Venezuela.

We share common values.

There are many other reasons why Norway and the Latin American and Caribbean region have very close ties and need to strengthen their mutual understanding and collaboration even

further. Despite the geographical distance between us and the distinct yet equally rich paths that we have traced culturally and historically, there are opportunities for convergence as we look towards the future of our societies.

For us, this is an important step in our relationship —one that has grown stronger in a short but intense span of time.

It was the Spring of 2012, when Ambassador Haraldsen contacted us to discuss themes of common interest linked to poverty alleviation and equality. We shared experiences in the areas of structural reform, universal social protection, gender mainstreaming and governance of natural resources.

We started a promising partnership through our joint project between Norway and ECLAC on promoting equality in Latin America.

The project's aim was to promote policy dialogue with Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders in Latin America and the Caribbean by identifying and promoting innovative, pro-equality public policies, strengthening institutional capacity and fostering public-private partnerships and coordination.

We were able to advance on the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean and organize seminars with the private and public sectors on governance of natural resources. All of this resulted in publications that have been widely disseminated.

We feel very proud that this ceremony is taking place one week after the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which Norway has been so involved together with the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The fact that world leaders have now reached agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new Sustainable Development Goals is a major step forward.

This Agenda is universal and integrates the three pillars of development —the economic, the social and the environmental— together with the intertwined agendas of justice, equality, dignity and solidarity that should be the foundation of our shared vision for society.

This occasion also marks the starting point of a new initiative aimed at strengthening the links between vocational education and training and employment. The main purpose is to demonstrate the importance of education as a main pillar for achieving equality through decent work and for positioning these themes on the Latin American and Caribbean regional agenda by advocating for political dialogue to foster fiscal, social and labour compacts.

The project will document best practices, generate evidence, build capacity and provide technical assistance on how to strengthen vocational education and training systems and programmes to achieve greater equality; and on how to finance these public policy instruments.

The project will focus on the perspective of the Latin America and the Caribbean, including comparative analysis and identification of lessons learned in the region and beyond. As you see, we have a fertile common path ahead.

Norway has been an important partner in development, State-building and, more recently, in fostering the public-private alliance that should be in place to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

From the perspective of our regional development goals, your country springs to mind as an inevitable reference. Norway has combined economic growth with wider welfare concerns, and has done so in a highly egalitarian way.

Your role has also been key in ensuring civil society participation in United Nations processes and in your own national process.

Norway, in our view, is successful because it has developed a long-standing social compact that seeks productivity and employment by means of dynamic adaptation of industry and service sectors through trade and cooperation.

We are convinced that the particular ways in which the Norwegians manage their natural resources can to a certain extent be applied elsewhere. Today, you join ECLAC and we thank you, as this testifies to your interest and commitment to the future of our region, as you bring with you an example of an achievable path towards dignity, prosperity and equality.

We welcome you today in our headquarters with the wish to exchange experiences and learn from the “northern way”.

Please convey our warmest regards to your Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, and to Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you.