



## *Ambassadorial Roundtable on ALBA & CELAC*

*Proceedings Report*

*University of South Africa, 18 November 2015*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) associated with the University of South Africa (UNISA) held its first of a series of roundtable dialogues on Latin America and the Caribbean on 18 November 2015, branded as: “The IGD Ambassadorial Roundtable on ALBA and CELAC”. Significantly, this roundtable also brought together not only members from the diplomatic community of Latin America and the Caribbean but also representatives from academia, non-governmental sector and the government, particularly in the form of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation.

CELAC emerged out of a decision taken in February 23, 2010 at a unity summit of the Rio Group and the summit mechanism of Latin America and the Caribbean, in Riviera Maya, México, and formally launched on December 3, 2011 in Caracas, Venezuela. The launching of CELAC under the Bolivarian Presidency of the late Hugo Chavez also brought into focus the interregional and sub-regional integrating mechanisms already in place aimed at giving impetus to Latin American and Caribbean economic integration. ALBA, CARICOM, MERCOSUR, the Andean Community, SICA, UNASUR and other such integration efforts anticipated CELAC and served as reference for the creation of CELAC as the first region-wide mechanism.

For the first time in its history, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean inaugurated one sole organization, involving, without exception, all of its 33 sovereign states, reaffirming its character as a region, its quest for unity and integration, and its respect for diversity. Thus, the latter half of the first decade of the 21st century marked the emergence of a new multilateralism in Latin America and the Caribbean, accentuating the reversal of regional isolation between its components.

As part of IGD’s UNISA mandate to revive the Centre for Latin American Studies and progressively transform it into a Centre for Global South Studies within IGD, this roundtable series intended to introduce the local and international community in Tshwane and beyond to the dynamic multi-regional continental political, economic and cultural landscape of the Americas. As such this first roundtable highlighted major discussions: (1) the new generation multilateralism in the western hemisphere of the global south, represented in the emergence of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the specific approach of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) to the creation and strengthening of CELAC, and (2) competing region-building models. Other aspects that were also briefly discussed include: the linkages between Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean; a new status-quo and implications of Cuba-US relations; and aspects of the CELAC secretariat.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

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ALADI	Association for Latin American Integration
ALBA	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America
ASA	Africa-South America
AU	African Union
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
EU	European Union
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
HE	Her/His Excellency
IGD	Institute for Global Dialogue
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the South
OAS	Organisation of American States
OAU	Organisation of the African Union
SELA	Latin American and Caribbean Economic System
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America

# INTRODUCTION

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On November 18, 2015 a roundtable for heads of diplomatic missions from Latin America and Caribbean was hosted by the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) on the main campus of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria. It was devoted to unpacking the new generation multilateralism in Latin America and the Caribbean represented by the emergence of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the specific approach of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) to the creation and strengthening of CELAC.

The Roundtable was chaired by Francis A. Kornegay, (Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Global Dialogue associated with UNISA) that saw a panel consisting of the UNISA Vice Chancellor Professor Mondli S. Makhanya and the following Ambassadors: HE Fernandez de Cossio (Cuba); HE Carlos Parker (Chile); HE Marin Moreno-Merida (Venezuela); and HE Maria Soledad-Cordova as well as Prof Steve Ellner, introduced by Ambassador Moreno-Merida and F. Kornegay. The roundtable was keynoted by Cuban Ambassador de Cossio.

This Ambassadorial Roundtable was the first in what will be a number of roundtables that are planned. It is foreseen that these will delve further into the dynamics of the different regions of Latin America and the Caribbean and their engagements with each other, and Africa.

The objectives of this roundtable were:

- To gather and share information on the formation and functions of CELAC
- To gather and share information on the history of CELAC's formation that includes the role of Cuba, Venezuela and ALBA.

# WELCOME ADDRESS

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**By Prof MS Makhanya ,Vice-Chancellor and Principal: University of South Africa**

Your excellencies,  
Members of the diplomatic core,  
Students,  
Government representatives,  
Distinguished audience,

Good morning, Buenos Dias

It gives me a great pleasure to once more welcome you to the University of South Africa (UNISA), for the Ambassadorial Roundtable, focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean regional developments. I am delighted that the idea of re-establishing the once flourishing Latin American Studies, now also including the Caribbean region, is now taking its concrete steps through this roundtable and engagement. I also commend the IGD, under the leadership of Dr. Siphamandla Zondi, who spearheaded the conceptualisation and realisation of this noble goal.

Our partnership with the IGD is a vibrant and impactful partnership that is yielding concrete results and also living up to its name of creating a platform for global dialogue. A tender observer may wonder and ask, why does it matter to have the Latin American and Caribbean regions as the focal point of UNISA-IGD partnership. Yes indeed I am the first one to admit, that the facts that reinforce this logic are not readily available to an average person and yet there are compelling reasons for this relationship. Some of these will be amplified in the dialogues and public forums of this nature.

Through the painful history of slavery, Africa has historical and cultural links with the Caribbean islands as most of the slaves were brought from Africa. It is for this reason that the African Union (AU) has declared the African Diaspora as one of its regions, with the aim of promoting political, socio-cultural and economic ties for mutual development. On the other hand, Cuba and many Latin American nations have had similar colonial experiences and struggles for post-colonial reconstruction, as in Africa. Moreover they were at the forefront in supporting our struggle against apartheid as part of the international solidarity.

Even more compelling is the current geopolitical reconfiguration of global politics and economies, which necessitate great solidarity and cooperation among the nations of the global south. The multilateral fora of Latin America and the Caribbean is therefore of great strategic importance, hence it features prominently in what will soon emerge as the Centre for Global South Studies which would be located in our partner the IGD. I also just want to mention that Cuba is a very interesting country for us as South Africans. If you consider the size and power that we have witnessed and enjoyed as a Country during the liberation struggle. They participated in liberating our country, not only with arms but also with Cubans themselves, who fought side by side with our own liberation fighters to free this country. This is something that will go down in history that every generation would have to recognise.

We all know Cuba's support for this country did not just end there. Small as it is in terms of its size, it has continued to sustain our medical profession. Not only by sending qualified medical practitioners to support this country, both at the centre and the hinterland in ensuring that we provide the medical facilities and support to our own people who are indigent in many instances, but also providing the training for our own medical practitioners like in Cuba.

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I also want to mention something that must not escape us and that is to congratulate you, your Excellency. We know the work that has been going on for an extended period of time, to end the sanctions against Cuba from the USA. We need to recognise this because that embargo had devastating effects, while the people of Cuba stood firm on their convictions for letting no-one dictate terms about their own destinies. This time we need to say thank you so much for that sustained effort, which you managed to do with vigour to protect the integrity of Cuba, and now we are enjoying that particular free relationship with the rest of the world and with the USA in this particular case.

Ambassadors of these regions, we need to realise you are a great resource in conceptualising and realising the mandate of the IGD, and it is the IGD that takes the leadership in placing the centre and its activities. Also your critical role in this roundtable will establish a foothold for this long-term journey. We therefore look forward to the engagement of this roundtable and wish you well in the deliberations and want you to consider yourselves as strategic partners to the IGD and UNISA.

Thank you

## OPENING ADDRESS

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**By Mr Francis A. Kornegay, Jr., Senior Research Associate: Institute for Global Dialogue associated with UNISA**

At a time when the Global South is increasingly important in international equations, the importance of this revival is that Latin America and the Caribbean will be the point of departure for what will eventually be a Global South studies focus. So, we will be looking at tricontinentalism in the Global South. Through IGD we are already focused on Africa, and through this we will end up with a focus on Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America.

### **The Centre's Mission**

One of the items that you will see is the outline of the LASR which we are beginning to restore to its mission, as the outreach communication of our centre, and that is very related to what we are doing. What we plan to do is to have a series of roundtable which will focus on the different regional grouping in Latin America and the Caribbean. We plan to have a roundtable on CARICOM, early 2016, and also in the coming years we will look at MERCOSUR and the cluster of related formations such as UNASUR, the UNASUR Defence Council, and also groupings such as the Pacific Alliance. We aim to roll-out an outreach that is regionally focused and inclusive of the entire Southern part of the western hemisphere. This outline therefore gives an introductory survey of how we will be rolling this out. An important element linking the roundtables and the Latin American Studies Report is that proceedings and dialogue from the sessions will be part of the content of the Latin American Studies Report. These roundtables will not just be talk-shops but form part of the revival programme. What we are looking at is a revival that will bring forth a number of activities including visiting lecturers, scholarships, and student exchanges. Thus what we are looking at is developing a centre of excellence within the IGD-UNISA partnership that focuses on the Global South with Latin America and the Caribbean as its point of departure.

It is fitting that we do this today, starting off with ALBA and CELAC, given the intimate linkage in terms of the two relating to the overall Southern Hemispheric consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean. On a personal note, as a member of the African Diaspora coming from the Northern part of the Hemisphere I was very much honoured to be able to organise the very first meeting that took place between the Cuban interest section in Washington D.C. and the Congressional Black Caucus, when I was working with the founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, Charles Diggs. That was one of the best attended meetings that the Black Caucus had had with representatives from other countries.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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**By H.E. Ambassador Fernandez De Cossio: Embassy of Cuba, Pretoria**

Thanks UNISA and IGD for the efforts exerted to increase relations and cooperation among Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, with South Africa in particular.

It was the approach of ALBA related to CELAC. CELAC was the product of contribution of several sub-regional organisations, and his address provided a general umbrella discussion of the formation of CELAC and what it is and means for the region. This organisation refers to the whole region of Latin America and the Caribbean, and it is a common mistake in Europe, Asia and Africa to refer to the region as South America, as this technically refers to 12 countries. CELAC is an organisation which is geographically placed between the Rio Bravo border between Mexico and USA in the north down to Chile and Argentina in the South. It is a region whose landmass has an area of about 19 million square kilometres, roughly two-third of the landmass of Africa, as well as one of the richest regions in the world in terms of natural wealth, natural resources and like Africa it spans both sides of the Equator. CELAC is home for inhabitants of diverse backgrounds: aboriginals, Europeans, Africans and Asians. In comparison to Africa that has over 1 billion inhabitants, CELAC has over 600 million inhabitants, just over half of Africa's population. It is also a continent with a colonial and a neo-colonial past, and a continent that has a traumatic history in its constant quest and struggle for "true independence".

As an organisation, CELAC has 33 member states which is diverse. This includes a country the size of Brazil that has 8.5 million square kilometres and over 119 million inhabitants, and at the same time a country like Saint Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean, comprised of two small islands whose total area is no more than 261 square kilometres and no more than 50 000 inhabitants. It is also a region that has 15 countries that can be considered as islands or SIDS and also two landlocked countries without access to the ocean. This displays the diversity and disparities present within CELAC, some nations are very rich in natural resources and others lack these natural resources.

The organisation was launched in December of 2011 in Caracas, after a lengthy process that took several years to conclude. It was not and is not the first attempt in Latin America and the Caribbean to integrate and to have multilateral mechanisms for the region. It is the first organisation however that has the participation of all the sovereign states of Latin America and the Caribbean as members, and the participation of no extra-regional states. Since the end of the 1950s and the beginning 1960s the region has attempted to integrate at the sub-regional level. For example the Central American Integration System, CARICOM, the Andean Community, ALADI (more of an institutional organisation), SELA aimed at cooperation not economic or trade integration, the Pacific Alliance, MERCOSUR and ALBA. All these have been attempts to try to find a better standing internationally by integrating and by grouping with other countries, and all of these initiatives have had successes and all have had a certain level of limitation in their scope as they were focused on a specific subject or scope.

For most part of the history, Latin America and the Caribbean has been divided; there has been little intra-regional trade, scarce communications and a lack of infrastructure to promote that communication. At times there has been a poor sense of solidarity amongst the regional members. At times Latin American and Caribbean has had great extra-regional influence and has experienced this also particularly during the Cold War.

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Therefore history has demonstrated that Latin American and Caribbean has found it difficult to consider its own proper organisation, even though from the beginning of independence, in the early 19th century; the aim, the dream of an integrated continent, of a common homeland, was part of the thinking, policies and ideologies that has been repeated in most of the revolutionary and independence processes in this region. The truth is that for many years, integration and coordination amongst Latin American and Caribbean states in one organisation, has been elusive. This started to significantly change in the first half of the 21st century with important political developments that started to occur in the region, which asserted regional members' independence and that committed the governments to a greater and clearer sense of being part of the region. This also confirmed the need to look inwards and that helped in the process of rediscovering each other, and their difficulties and potential strengths in uniting and identifying as a region.

The Ambassador conveyed his own subjective experiences of the processes and events that lead to creation of CELAC in particular and in general, reflecting on his personal involvement in this process. He noted that 2008 is a significant year, in which a group of events and circumstances coalesced in which several governments of the region had an important role, which was either a result of coincidence or elements of historic accumulation. During 2008, the Government of Brazil (Lula) began consulting with the governments of region with the idea of convening by the end of 2008, the first ever meeting of all the Latin American and Caribbean governments, without the participation of any other country from outside of the region.

For Africans, that have been united for a long time in the OAU and then the AU it would seem strange that this is the case. Never before 2008 had the governments of Latin American and Caribbean ever met in their totality and on their own at any level. Not at summit level, not at ministerial, senior official or technical levels. There have been meetings with parts of the region, or meetings with all the nations within the region but also with the presence of other countries from outside of the region. Thus Brazil assumed the task of convening for the first time at the Summit level, a meeting with the presence of all the nations of the region.

That same year, Mexico as a result of rotation, took the responsibility of being the pro-tempore secretary of the Rio group and on taking that responsibility the government of Mexico announced that it wanted the Rio group to be more inclusive and more representative of the region. The Rio Group was an important political group in the region (it does not exist anymore), but it was not representative of the whole region, as the majority of CARICOM countries were not members of this group, some Central American countries were not member, nor Cuba was not a member. Coinciding with Mexico's call for increased inclusivity and representivity, the President of Ecuador Rafael Correa, addressed the heads of states and governments of most countries of the region suggesting the idea that it was time for Latin America and the Caribbean to have their own organisation, without the presence of countries from outside of the region. This had never before happened.

Also in 2008, some members of CARICOM started to approach the region, with an understanding that CARICOM regardless of its relevance had reached a point where it needed to jump further toward integration, and it had a neighbourhood geographically close, which is the region of Latin America. Latin America is closer and more pertinent to the interests of CARICOM, and its contact with the EU, that in itself was increasingly looking inward and therefore the countries of CARICOM made the step to greater engagement with the rest of Latin America. During that year, Hugo Chavez started putting emphasis on the idea that Latin America needed to go beyond integration towards unity as a common programme for the region.

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Also in 2008, UNASUR was formally launched with the adoption of its constitutive document, becoming the most comprehensive and at the time the most ambitious integrating mechanism and organisation in the region, even though it was for the countries of South America. Finally, Cuba became a full member of the Rio Group in 2008. This combination of events had an impact in the willingness of the region to move towards having its own organisation. Finally, the Summit convened by Brazil, took place in December which ended up as a group of summits where Brazil, Rio Group, MERCOSUR and ALADI all had summits back to back.

Several decisions came out of the group of meetings, these were: to convene more summits of this type, particularly in Cancun in 2010; to have a ministerial meeting in Jamaica before the summit in Cancun; and an agreement to work towards the creation of a new regional organisation. This is not something that has been mentioned clearly, nor has it had the support of the entire region ever before. This led to the summit in Cancun Mexico in 2010, where a declaration was adopted which proposed that the governments of the regions have decided to constitute a community of Latin American and Caribbean States as a regional space encompassing all of Latin America and the Caribbean states. This may seem simple today, but within the regions historical context this has been a heavily contested process. This took time to put together, and in December 2011 in Caracas a declaration was adopted that established the procedures of how this organisation would work, and that confirmed the very strong political principles of unity and integration as they have been repeated and developed since the beginning of the 19th century. This meant that for the first time Latin America and the Caribbean had the possibility of engaging with the international community with one voice that represented the whole region as one entity with shared goals, history and values, and with a commitment towards integration.

These documents set the principles on which CELAC are based. One of them is “unity in our diversity”. This ratifies the aim for unity within the region, but also recognizes the diversity of CELAC, whether it is landmass, economic size and performance, natural wealth, ideologically. The other principle is ensuring favourable treatment for small and vulnerable economies, which is a notion that is very common within the UN but not as common within South-South Cooperation (SSC) as we all feel we have vulnerable economies. Yet in CELAC this has been adopted, recognizing the disparities within the region.

### **Structural Features**

The structural features of this organisation that will be discussed will commence with membership. In the case of CELAC, every country of the region is automatically a member of CELAC by virtue of their geographical or natural location. There is no procedure or rules to becoming a member, nor are there any rules for expulsion from the organisation, in other words there is no room for exclusion.

The second feature, is that the organisation has no permanent secretariat therefore there is no permanent staff who earn a salary, and there are no contributions from member states. It is the country or government that takes rotating responsibility who ends up taking full responsibility for logistics for resources of the period for when it is present within that state. In this the ministries of foreign affairs have important functions.

CELAC has no secretariat, permanent structure or a headquarters, as the headquarters are also temporary and reliant on the assignment of countries for the period that it is present within that country. The president of CELAC is aided by three partners: the predecessor, the successor, and a member of CARICOM. There is however no awareness of what decision will be taken the day a CARICOM member occupies CELAC presidency. For example, currently the president of CELAC is Ecuador, and is aided in that responsibility by Costa Rica (predecessor) and by Dominican Republic (successor), and also Barbados which is the current president of CARICOM.

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The reason for the specific inclusion of CARICOM is that it has 14 countries of the 33, close to half of CELAC, are the smallest, weakest, the least endowed with natural resources in the region and the ones with the least diplomatic presence and therefore as part of solidarity in sealing this organisation there is a belief that as part of the group that aids the President (CELAC) there should be a member of CARICOM.

CELAC has established consulting mechanisms with the European Union. This one was inherited from the relationship that formed between the EU and the Rio Group. CELAC has a consulting mechanism with China, Russia and India, and hope to have one with the African Union one day. These mechanisms serve as a way of engaging the views, values and interests that are shared by the whole region with other regions or large countries of the world.

Another feature of CELAC is that it recognizes the role, importance and benefits of the sub-regional mechanisms that already existed when CELAC was created. There was an important understanding that the formation of CELAC was not to replace the existing organisations such as MERCOSUR, ALADI or ALBA. Rather the aim was to benefit from those organisations. For example when there have been sectoral meetings of a ministerial character in trade it was agreed that ALADI would organise it; regarding social cooperation, SELA would organise it; and meetings have been convened by MERCOSUR. It is an experience that strengthens the regional cooperation and integration by not questioning the existence of sub-regional organisations.

### **Scope**

A common question is what is the scope or area of attention of CELAC. Many say it is basically a political organisation for coordination and that it has no role or capacity in economic or social integration. Yet if one looks at both the documents coming out of Mexico and Venezuela, one could say that nothing under heaven is alien to CELAC. It is an organisation for regional integration, political coordination, interlocutor for other regions, building infrastructure and more. Practice in the four years since its creation, has shown CELAC is more competent and greater capacity to work in political integration, but this depends on the willingness of the member states. There is no limitation in the way the organisation was conceived for it to look into other areas. It would be dependent on what the governments of region wanted to do. CELAC has had achievements and have been able to follow its seven agendas, and has continued to enrich a set of shared values that the region has repeated. This is significant as six or seven years ago this would not have been possible. Compared to establishment and significance of the OAU existing since 1963, and the AU since 1999, a similar dream for Latin America and the Caribbean integration was still in the pipeline and far from being achieved.

We have been able to modify some of the procedures, for example: in Santiago the decision was taken to have a specific member of CARICOM; in Havana January 2014, a proclamation was adopted noting Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, perhaps the only region in the world that has been able to take that decision, committing governments of the region to strive to peace and not to allow our territory to be used for military engagements or war. The region has not been able to coordinate the positions of regional members in international organisations particularly at the UN in Geneva, before the establishment of CELAC. This is in relation to issues of an international character and issues relating to the region and gives us the authority to speak of our own problems. Looking at the history of our continent, this has been an important achievement.

We wouldn't have put in place programmes of action for social development. We have adopted programmes in CELAC some of the programmes that we have in ALBA in terms of social aid and solidarity in health, education, and eradicating poverty; and other programmes in the region for example in UNASUR.

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## Limitations

In spite of these achievements and being a young organisation also has difficulties, which are many. It is still the organisation in one of the most unequal regions in the world. Inequality is a major problem within our countries and within our region. It has countries that still suffers intense crime and transnational crime; trade and investment between our countries are relatively small; we have an Insufficient use of both the scientific and the professional capacity that exists in the region for common good; we lack integrated schemes for example for development of infrastructure for communications, for transportation. We speak about it, we take decisions regarding that, but still we are far from achieving those elements that are crucial for the integration of our region.

We still have limitations in our economic ambitions and social integration. What can we do for better development in terms of social integration between the countries and peoples of our region? Taking all of this into account what is the perspective of CELAC for the future? As every international organisation, CELAC is no more than an expression of the will of its member states. It can do no more than what the government of the region are ready, willing and capable to do. It is not just the institution we have to judge the approach and attitudes of the governments of the countries that are members of the institution. It has huge challenges to overcome. Sometimes we have one-sided (sure-sided) views, instead of looking at issues as region we look at it as individual countries. Rivalries continue to pop-up every now and then in our region, sometimes lack of trust, and ideological contradictions that exist and will continue to exist, and other discrepancies in our region. Therefore to enhance this organisation, we need to enhance the capacity of the region to work as a whole. We will need to enhance also our sense of belonging, our political will power; it will take a lot of generosity and humility, and it will take an immense sense of solidarity between the peoples and governments of the region.

With this said, I am of the firm belief that never before has the Latin America and the Caribbean been in a better position to succeed as a region, to benefit collectively from its tremendous natural wealth and to take advantage of its huge cultural heritage. It has never enjoyed better conditions to advance in the quest for full independence, for peace, for unity and in the quest to achieve justice for the people of our whole continent. CELAC is not a solution for that but I assure you that CELAC is today as a region the best instrument we have to work collectively for these objectives.

Thank you very much

## AMBASSADORIAL ADDRESS

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### **By H.E. Ambassador Carlos Parker: Embassy of Chile, Pretoria**

I don't know what the experience of my colleagues is, but most of the time when I introduce myself as the Ambassador of Chile. Normally, the person says where your country is, and normally I reply that my country is in South America and if I see it is not enough I explain that it is near Argentina or Brazil. Then, as usual, I receive in response the name of Alexis Sanchez or Arturo Vidal, some of our soccer stars. Some alludes about the rescue of the miners or the Copa America that we won, or earthquakes or some sort of natural disaster.

As will be understood, it is not easy for an Ambassador to take in such comments. That in any case, I think, they are a kind of [humble bath]. With the sole exceptions of Brazil, Argentina or Cuba for very different reasons, it seems that for South Africans and African in general, Latin America is a geographic space with fuzzy edges and above all unknown. A reality, which should, for simplicity, be conceived under the same concept.

Incidentally, the vision that prevails in Latin America for South Africa and Africa in general it is roughly the same. Well I must say that for South Africa is believed to be not a country but a part of the continent, and with regard to other countries, there is no difference between Senegal, Ethiopia, Burundi, Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Sudan, etc. For Latin America, Africa is unique and diverse, and seen as a continent in permanent conflict. There is no doubt that Latin America has unique element of identity. For example, that Latin Americans speaks Spanish, from Mexico to Patagonia, therefore as people move from North to South they only need to speak one language, which contributes to the reluctance of learning other languages. A Latin American can travel from Chile to the north, passing through Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama and the rest of Central America only needing Spanish.

But this is not true that all Latin Americans speak the same language. We have an English-speaking Caribbean. In Barbados, Belize, Granada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago the speak English. In Haiti they speak French and Creole, and of course in Brazil they speak Portuguese. As Spanish-speaking Latin Americans we do not want to learn Portuguese and Brazilians do not want to learn Spanish. We have invented a language called portuñol, which we use to communicate when necessary, which is Portuguese and Spanish.

Latin America, like Africa, is truly a diverse reality, a mosaic of nations with its ethnic peculiarities. There are countries where the indigenous population is predominant. This is the case of Mexico, the majority of Central America, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. In other countries it has predominantly European influence as is the case of Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. There are others where the population of African origin is well-established, such as the Caribbean, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and especially some parts in Brazil. In Argentina, Uruguay and Chile there is virtually no population of African origin.

Africa and Latin America needs to increase the links and the conversation. First, get to know each other in order to remove mutual prejudices. Then cooperate for the pursuit of an integral development. In this regard, we have a delay of decades. Understanding, helping and approaching each other must be a priority; we cannot postpone it any longer.

## ACADEMIC RESPONSE

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### By Professor Steve Ellner, Professor: Universidad de Oriente, Venezuela

Her Excellency Mairin Moreno-Merida, the Ambassador of Venezuela introduced Professor Steve Ellner to the Audience and stated:

*I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about Latin America and the Caribbean and how the process of integration has unfolded in our countries. In the case of Venezuela we have a lot to say, especially about the role played by Hugo Chavez in consolidation of the countries. Among the many qualities that Hugo Chavez showed in his political and military careers was fundamentally focused on regional integration.*

*Venezuela is a member of ALBA (theatre for the cooperation of people), UNASUR, Petrocaribe, the accession of Venezuela to MERCOSUR, as well as CELAC. Our project is to serve our vision and mission of the in the cooperation, complementing the solidarity of the people in the Latin America and the Caribbean, basing our policies on the principles of independence of Latin American heroes such as Simon Bolivar, Francisco de Miranda, Jose Marti and many others.*

*To speak to this topic, I want to take the opportunity to introduce Professor Steve Ellner who is a renowned historian of Latin American history, professor of the Universidad de Oriente in Venezuela, author of several books and publications on political processes of diversion, and who is constantly taking his knowledge to various universities and academic centres of the world.*

*Amb. Mairin Moreno-Merida*

I appreciate this opportunity to talk about the role of Venezuelan in particular and Latin American integration in general, and I think it's important topic firstly because the experiences of the Latin America and the African nations overlap in many ways as Ambassador Fernandez de Cossio pointed out. And also because I think there is room for cooperation in many areas on all fronts from student exchange programs to commercial relations.

The focus of his address was focused on the debate in the hemisphere with regard to the Different Models, and the diversity that is present. He commenced by saying that "When President Chavez came to power in 1999, there was already a beginning of a discussion about what type of integration should take place", not only in Latin America but the whole hemisphere including North America. Even before 1999, going back to the early 1990s there was a proposal, to establish a free trade association known as the FTAA, the Free Trade Area of the Americas. That was a proposal that was actually launched in 1994, on a more limited scale, in the form of NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement which took in the countries of Canada, the USA and Mexico. So that by 1999 there was already a model that was established, and a proposal that would have extended that model to the rest of the hemisphere in the form of the FTAA.

During April 2001, the Summit of the Americas, in Quebec City Canada, the proposal for FTAA was discussed and accepted by all the Latin American countries but with certain reservations. One set of reservations was expressed by former Brazilian President, Fernando Cardoso, stating that the FTAA was a feasible proposal but that Latin America needed time in order to develop its economy, because otherwise, given the disparities that existed, this would mean for unequal relationships that would disadvantage all states.

At that meeting, President Chavez also proposed that the FTAA be ratified in the form of the referendum that was to gain the acceptance of the people, not just the governments. That idea of the referendum had been incorporated in the constitution of Venezuela, and that was approved by a referendum in December 15 1999. In the Venezuelan constitution there was this idea that different proposals and legislation could be submitted to a referendum for the confirmation on the part of the voters in Venezuela.

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During his first days in office or perhaps even before, Chavez began speaking about a multipolar world, that concept is very important. It is based on the idea that countries should organise in blocs. It was really a corrective for the opposite, the monopolar world, a world dominated by one country, and that country “is, was, is” the USA. Chavez’s corrective to that situation of hegemony, was that the different regions and countries in the world should organise themselves in blocs to promote their specific interests. For example OPEC, UNASUR, CELAC, and the AU are examples of blocs of countries and of Chavez’s idea of a multipolar world.

This defeats the notion that was common, that Chavez was “a dinosaur”. The term was used to imply that the idea of state intervention in the economy is something of the past. The neo-liberals that promote the idea of the world based on neo-liberal formulas, calls anyone that proposes state intervention into the economy a dinosaur. Nevertheless, Chavez was very much aware of the imperatives of globalisation, that globalisation required nations to come together to integrate. So he basically had a go it alone approach, based on the old idea of import-substitution which is development from within. The idea is to promote production for internal consumption, and exports are a secondary concern.

At the same time, Chavez began to assume positions that questioned the US role in Latin America. Not because he came to power as a revolutionary or a Marxist, but rather as a result of his radicalisation after the US intervention in Venezuela, although radicalisation is not the ideal term. At the time of the coup that overthrew him, he was kidnapped and out of power for two days in April 2002 and then there was a general strike. The US position was in support of those attempts to overthrow the democratically elected government of Hugo Chavez. Ari Fleischer the former White House Secretary of the President justified the coup the day after, and this resulted in Chavez becoming more critical of the role of the USA and the proposal for the FTAA.

In 2005, the FTAA proposal was buried at the Summit of the Americas at Mari del Plata in Argentina, with the presence of George Bush, Chavez and Vicente Forbes (Mexico), the consensus that was reached was that the FTAA proposal would no longer be on the table. Since then other proposals have emerged but it is really a debate about two models.

One model is within the Pacific Rim, namely the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which has been discussed behind closed doors contrary to the idea of open debate. There was also an idea also that once the agreement was reached, that in the case of the USA that the TPP will be fast-tracked in order for its ratification, whereby congress are not allowed to modify anything and just given a yes or no decision in a very short time span. Thus, there are a lot of questions exist around this model, and Joseph Stiglitz questioned the idea within the TPP that corporations will be compensated for losses based on projected profits. That means that a country that passed legislation that limits the profits of a given corporation, that corporation could go to the World Tribunal an international court and place a demand, place litigation that would oblige that country to pay the corporation on the basis of calculated profits that the corporation lost. In addition, this proposal limits national autonomy for two reasons. Firstly, if the legislation is passed, the country loses its rights when a corporation considers its legislation detrimental to its interests. Secondly, it establishes a world court or international tribunal that settles these matters, in other words the issue doesn’t go to the national court system but to the international arbitration system. This also limits national sovereignty.

This complex and composite dynamics present within bilateral relations, bloc formations and inter-regional interactions, sets the context for the emergence of different groups in Latin America specifically UNASUR and CELAC, because really what is at stake is two different models. One of the emerging models, have been incorporated in the documents of ALBA, which is a smaller organisation that takes in a few states, and this essentially promotes the idea of international solidarity as a response to or a corrective to the cut-throat competition in the context of globalisation.

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It promotes the idea that the smaller entities, the farmers for instance who lose out as a result of some international agreement will be compensated or given the opportunities to survive the competition in the case of any kind of international agreement. The ideas of the new currency in the form of the SUCRE and the idea of barter, which has been implemented in the form of agreements between Venezuela and Caribbean and Central American nations in the form of Petrocaribe. Petrocaribe is an org in which Venezuela sells oil to other countries and provides credit facilities, whereby 40% of that oil can be paid off over 24 years at very low interest rates. In addition, within the framework of Petrocaribe oil can be paid for services instead of money or currency, for example the agreements between Venezuela and Cuba, regarding the exchanges of oil for Doctors, teachers. So that is a contrary model to the US promoted model of the TPP

There is also a debate with regard to organisations that represent the countries of the Americas, because the OAS goes back to the World War 1 period going back to the Pan-American Union. These organisations have been considered by some as being US dominated, and in a sense CELAC and UNASUR serve as a response to that kind of hegemony. There is a feeling that both the OAS and CELAC can co-exist, however it is a question of waiting and seeing whether the OAS takes on a position based on international solidarity and moves away from this history of US dominance. It goes back in time, for instance in 1954 it promoted a resolution in Caracas that paved the way for US intervention and support that overthrew the government of Guatemala of the then President Arbenz.

UNASUR has in a sense displaced the OAS in the area of Conflict resolution for instance, when President Morales assumed the presidency of Bolivia in 2006 there was a dispute over the nationalisation of the Hydrocarbon industry which involved Argentina as a major purchaser of natural gas from Bolivia and Brazil which is a major investor in that industry. In a really good example of international solidarity, former Presidents Lula Da Silva and Néstor Kirchner reached an agreement with Bolivia in the framework of UNASUR and the conflict was resolved while OAS was excluded. Similarly, several years later with threats of a coup d'état emanating from Bolivia's eastern departments, UNASUR made a statement that it would not tolerate a military coup under any circumstances in Bolivia, and thanks to that resolution the conflict was resolved. This was the same for a coup attempt against the Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa. UNASUR is thus displacing the OAS, and the most recent example is with the upcoming elections in Venezuela, the secretary general of the OAS, Luis Almagro, who took the position that coincided with the accusation of the opposition in Venezuela, and this cannot occur as the OAS should not be taking positions in such a dispute. So much so that UNASUR has responded by sending a delegation to Venezuela, headed by the ex-president of the Dominican Republic, and this decision demonstrates a sense of international solidarity, as this was backed up by the support given by the governments of Peru and Chile and a number of other countries.

This demonstrates a situation of contestation between two models, and the debate is going on, and it's interesting and necessary. It is important for people in South Africa to follow that debate, as it sheds light on types of issues that countries are facing throughout the world in the efforts of countries who are trying to achieve international solidarity and integration.

## DISCUSSION SYNTHESIS

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The discussion session touched on various issues, and these will be briefly summarised next under the themes: CELAC, ASA Summits, regionalisms, and implications of thaw in Cuba-US relations.

### **The Community of Latin American and Caribbean Nations (CELAC)**

During the discussion session it was noted regarding propositions concerning CELAC, where it could learn from the experiences of the AU, was in not supporting regime change. CELAC does not have a clearly articulated position relating to regime change according to that term. However, within CELAC's organisational documents adopted in Cancun and Caracas there is a clear commitment from the region with to the principles of international law, the UN Charter, non-interference, and respect for sovereign state processes. Therefore, the region and CELAC reject the notion of regime change, as it is "alien to the region" and counter to the character of the region.

A significant concern infusing the character of CELAC and its organisational and founding documents were the efforts made to consider and incorporate indigenous Amerindian concerns, value-systems and proposals for development and governance of relations. The consideration given to indigenous dynamics (traditions, experiences and heritage) were thus a fundamental component of CELAC's formation. They form an integral part of Latin American and Caribbean societal fabrics and history. Another significant component is that the founding documents of CELAC were drafted by a commission that included Chavez and Pinera. They could have been classified as leftist and rightist respectively.

In addition, there are two important elements to consider as influential in keeping the fabric of organisations like CELAC or the AU together. These are: integration and coordination. Some challenges cited as inhibiting the integration and coordination of CELAC: (1) the lack of a capacitated Secretariat, (2) the existence of multiple regional organisations, and (3) funding for objectives.

There was a deliberate decision against a CELAC secretariat. Reasons given:

- There are divisions among members regarding the permanency of a secretariat and headquarters.
- No one wanted an international official speaking on behalf of the region. For example in the OAS an official may talk in his personal opinion, but the international community assumes or views it as such. That is why they have a president pro tempore, where a president of CELAC has to consult with its members, and only then can make a statement. This is put down due to distrust that does exist in the region.
- If agreements take place at the top level, without the presence of a secretariat, it can result in faster movement of integration activities.
- To put in place a secretariat, you need to finance it; to finance it there will be two sources: obligatory contributions by member states, and parliaments and respected financial bodies of member states will have to be available and capacitated, as state budgets are being committed to it.
- A lack of ability or political will to contribute financially, as the establishment of a secretariat will require long-lasting commitment from states to fund the secretariat.
- A secretariat is hoped eventually to be formed out of the experiences of integration in the region, as opposed to putting it in place a priori, thereby enforcing certain preconceived and perhaps unnecessary or inefficient processes, hierarchies and instruments of integration that may not correspond to addressing the region's needs.
- The desire to keep extra-regional actors from having an influential stake in the organisation.

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## **A New Status-Quo and Implications of Cuba-US Relations**

The change of approach by the USA towards Cuba can be put down to two main factors. These have to do with the increasing Latin American migration to the US (demographic driver), and multilateral and multi-actor pressure applied on the USA from states from the Global South, especially throughout the hemisphere. This “thaw” in the relationship has resulted in the proliferation of more spaces of cooperation and lines of communication between the states, for example in: environment, law enforcement and development. It should be noted that this thaw will not result in Cuba abandoning its principled socialist stance. It does mean that formal and civil channels of engagement are available through which bilateral relations can be conducted in a manner that maintains the peace, stability and development in the region and in the Americas.

### **Regionalisms**

In general two perspectives were raised on regionalisms. The first refers to the challenges of integration and coordination within the region. It was suggested that integration may be more difficult to achieve than coordination due to the diversity of states and societies. Part of this process of region-building, and overcoming these challenges should be geared towards identifying and addressing practical, technical and political concerns

The second perspective refers to convergences and divergences of the multiple regional organisations existing in the region. In this regard, the displacement of the Organisation of American States (OAS) by CELAC and UNASUR was cited. This was seen as demonstrating a shift in legitimacy between authorities in the region seeking to deal with tensions between states. In other words, these shifts may represent competing regionalisms. An example of this displacement can be seen in the current (2015) electoral disputes in Venezuela, where the opposition approached the OAS while UNASUR also moved in to manage this dispute. Furthermore, the marginalisation within the OAS and the USA embargo on Cuba, the Falklands-Malvinas territorial dispute, are common issues around which Latin American and Caribbean states have recently rallied and unified around. The approach to these issues had different expressions and positioning of solidarity during the 1950s and 1960s. However it is clear that as a region, there has been steady movement towards consolidating regional autonomy in resolving challenges present within the region.

Further consideration should be given to the prominent two models of region-building in Latin America and the Caribbean as one focuses more on aspects political integration and coordination, whereas the other focuses more on addressing economic interdependencies.

### **Bilateral Relations**

A former DIRCO ambassador who served in South America for 4 years (2004-2008) as South Africa’s head of mission in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Panama reflected on his experience. He worked very closely with President Evo Morales in 2006, and assisted with the writing of the Constitution.

South African advice was sought and given to Peru, in how to deal with the issues raised by Afro-Peruvians. This was of particular necessity due to the splintering of this community into more than 30 groups. A close working relationship was established with Martha Moyano who became the vice-president of Peruvian congress.

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The sense that was given of the bilateral-multilateral divide was the prioritisation of bilateral relationships that have seen more resourcing, dynamism and coordination amongst African and Latin American states than at multilateral platforms.

### **African-Latin American and Caribbean Linkages**

Due to era of slavery, people of African-descent are currently citizens of various countries across Latin America and the Caribbean. In each country there are varied experiences of these African Diaspora-communities are faring. Examples that were made during this discussion sessions were Panama and Peru in particular but other countries were also identified as having important populations of African descent.

With reference to Panama, the Ambassador of Panama noted that it has citizens of African descent dating back to the 3500 slaves who arrived in Panama in 1512-1530. Panama also had continental Latin America's first president of African descent, Carlos Mendoza, who was leading Panama in 1910 (though this may be disputed as Mexican revolutionary leader Vicente Guerrero of mulatto-Amerindian descent was one of Mexico's early presidents in the 1830s) . These are linkages that require extensively in-depth research and analysis as relevant to relations between Africa and the Americas. On a concluding note, the Ecuadorean ambassador, Maria Soledad-Cordova, noted that the next 4th ASA Summit will be held in Ecuador, in Quito in 2016. Ecuador is currently holding the presidency of CELAC. It is foreseen that a proposal will be put forward for an agenda culminating in 2020.



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### PROGRAMME

#### THE IGD AMBASSADORIAL ROUNDTABLE ON ALBA AND CELAC

Date: Wednesday, 18 November 2015

Venue: Protea Restaurant, OR Tambo Building, University of South Africa

A roundtable for heads of diplomatic missions from Latin America, with addresses by the Ambassadors of Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela (with the presence of Prof. Steve Ellner), devoted to unpacking the new generation multilateralism in Latin America represented by the emergence of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on the specific approach of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) to the creation and strengthening of CELAC.

Ambassadorial Roundtable	09:00 for 09:30 to 12:00
09:00 for 09:30	Registration and Tea/ Coffee
Chair	Mr. Francis A. Kornegay, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Global Dialogue associated with Unisa
Welcome (09:35 - 09:50)	Prof. MS Makhanya, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of South Africa
Opening (09:50 - 10:05)	Mr. Francis A. Kornegay, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Global Dialogue associated with Unisa
Ambassadorial Roundtable (10:05 - 11:00)	H.E. Fernandez De Cossio (Cuba), H.E. Parker (Chile), H.E. Moreno-Merida (Venezuela)
11:00 - 11:10	Tea Break
11:10 - 11:55	Question and Answer
11:55 - 12:00	Vote of thanks

# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL DIALOGUE ASSOCIATED WITH UNISA

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The IGD is an independent foreign policy and diplomacy think tank dedicated to the analysis of and dialogue on global dynamics that have a bearing on South Africa in Africa. It advances a balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of South Africa's role in international relations and diplomacy.

The IGD's research agenda has three broad programmatic focus areas: foreign policy analysis with special reference to the making and management of foreign policy and diplomatic tools like economic, developmental, and public diplomacy; African studies focusing on the role of regional and continental integration in African politics and development as well as the study of peace diplomacy; and international diplomacy, analysing dynamics in international diplomacy that have a bearing on African peace and prosperity.

In 2010, following a strategic review the institute entered into its strategic partnership with the University of South Africa, the biggest university in the southern hemisphere to pursue through research, publications and community engagement the shared vision of a prosperous and peaceful Africa in a progressive global order through.

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