

TRANSLATION BY THE SECRETARIAT

They want to leave us behind. And we will not allow it.

Declaration by civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean

We, the individuals representing the organizations, trade unions, associations, federations, networks, coalitions, coordination bodies, collectives and social movements participating in this forum, express our outrage at the lack of progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in our region.

We do not feel represented by the Intergovernmental Declaration adopted in this Forum; nevertheless, we will continue to work for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We condemn the continuing attacks on democracy in the region.

The reality is that our region is bleeding from the continued killings of social leaders and stakeholders, our rights defenders, for raising their voices against social, environmental and economic injustice, for challenging the status quo and privileges. The lack of trust in public institutions is therefore no surprise.

The role of civil society organizations is one of co-responsibility in the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at the local, national, regional and international levels, but this has not been respected by governments.

We demand an enabling environment for our work, sustainability and adequate budgets for the effective participation of civil society. We demand to be part of the definition of regional and national indicators, and that our reports be recognized as official documents of the bodies engaged in follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.

We demand guaranteed access to information as a human right; a participatory, inclusive and democratic agenda, in which everyone is empowered and benefits from economic and social opportunities, in an informed and committed manner.

We also urge the countries to ratify the Principle 10 Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Urgent action is needed to ensure peace with social justice in the region and address the political and economic violence that continues to claim lives, driving migration, forced displacement and loss of fundamental rights. None of this is reflected in the Intergovernmental Declaration which in no way speaks of the regional reality. We draw attention to the inability to address the profound humanitarian crises that affect us.

It is a serious matter that, although the Latin American and Caribbean countries have ratified international treaties and conventions that form the basis for achieving social, environmental and economic justice, these are not being implemented properly or efficiently, leading to economic and social inequality, high levels of violence and human rights violations in all areas, particularly affecting first peoples, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, women, children, adolescents, young people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, persons with disabilities, older

persons, persons with HIV, persons with AIDS, persons with tuberculosis, street children, prisoners, migrants, refugees, sex workers, domestic workers and those living in rural areas.¹

Corruption is an outrage perpetrated upon the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean that structurally corrodes our societies and democratic institutions. But it enjoys impunity, illicitly diverts resources that should be at the service of ending poverty and the severe inequalities and asymmetries that violate the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural rights of millions of people.

We denounce the reduction in the last fiscal year of budgets for education, health and culture in a number of countries in the region, and the increasing privatization of these strategic areas for development.

We denounce the deterioration of public education systems and call for universal, free, secular, inclusive, good-quality public education throughout life. We demand a secular State and denounce the influence of religious fundamentalism in school curricula, which prevents comprehensive sex education and the guarantee of gender equality.

We demand access to good-quality, accessible public services, free of stigma and discrimination, in addition to attention for environmental, social and cultural determinants, in order to respond to chronic and degenerative diseases, non-communicable diseases and vector-borne diseases, as well as tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV, and those that pose new challenges.

We denounce discrimination, violence and killings based on sexual orientation and gender identity, including the increase of femicides, and the low level of investment in policies aimed at promoting gender equality and preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls. We call for policies to empower women in their diversity and throughout the life cycle.

It is a contradiction that the Intergovernmental Declaration speaks of the importance of social protection systems (para. 9), while the countries are in fact reducing budgets for health systems, social security and social assistance; limiting the rights of individuals, deepening poverty and worsening inequality, without investing enough in food security. In addition, we warn about the precarious conditions and systematic reduction of the rights of workers. We call for decent work: access to employment, social dialogue, right to work, decent wages and social protection.

¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; international conventions and compacts such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, ILO recommendations, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, the Ibero-American Action Plan for the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, and other human rights instruments.

We point to complicity between governments and companies in adopting extractivist policies and monopolizing and overexploiting our natural commons, our land, forest, agriculture, environment refuges, water, wildlife, energy and livelihood systems.

We demand respect for ILO Convention 169 and adequate investment in sustainable water and sanitation, conservation and restoration of priority natural areas. We demand that indigenous peoples be guaranteed integrity of life, their livelihood systems and territorial rights, returning their ancestral lands to them.

The Paris Agreement is not being fulfilled. Governments have not taken decisive action to reduce emissions levels to the levels committed, they are not implementing adaptation strategies and they have not changed production and consumption models to ensure a fair transition based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. We demand the implementation of climate change and sustainable development policies, guaranteeing the human rights of populations that are particularly affected.

We express our repudiation of the economic model that continues to prevail in the region and is supported by the Intergovernmental Declaration. Latin America and the Caribbean remains the world's most unequal region, with an economy based on primary products, without significant advances in technological development and innovation, while remaining subject to the interests of the main markets of the United States, Europe and China, and the signing of free trade agreements that do not serve the interests of the majority of the population. We demand investment in the development of other models, such as the solidarity-based economy and family farming.

Without economic democracy in the region, we note that poverty is increasing once again, which is affecting women and girls the most. This will not change unless our peoples participate in decisions on national budgets and as long as governments keep closing spaces for civil society participation, while opening the door to national and transnational corporations, promoting unfettered privatization and public-private partnerships of little public interest, poor service quality and no transparency. We demand accountability by firms and mandatory due diligence, with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights used as a minimum floor.

We condemn the fact that signatory governments to the Intergovernmental Declaration continue to opt for austerity policies and public debt without acknowledging or resolving systemic problems, such as the growth of external and domestic debt, inequality and fiscal regressiveness. The current gaps result from a lack of effective regulation of markets and financial systems. For that reason, we demand justice and tools to combat tax evasion and avoidance.

It is worrying that official development assistance is being used by donor countries, for example, to deal with the migration crisis generated by their own policies, while reducing cooperation funds for the countries that need them most. It is also necessary to recognize the internal inequalities of middle-income countries and the different levels of climate vulnerability.

It is a matter of concern that governments have not committed to innovative financing mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda, and now defend "innovative financing instruments (para. 23) without considering the vulnerability created by tools such as collateralized debt obligations or credit default swaps.

Governments have also failed to make progress in aligning their public banks to the SDGs and continue to fund projects and initiatives that harm the three dimensions of the agenda, with low returns on investment.

We reject the current regional scenario of radicalization of conservative and anti-democratic agendas, with economic and political programmes whose impacts affect the majorities in the social and popular sectors. At the same time, we recognize and applaud the social mobilization and tireless work of activists. We remind governments that their job is to safeguard the interests of all their people, especially those left most vulnerable.