

Promoting peace, security, access to justice and governance in the post 2015 development agenda

A regional declaration

Latin America and the Caribbean are at a crossroads. Notwithstanding positive political, social and economic progress across the region, many countries and cities register epidemic rates of violence. The region has 8 per cent of the world's population, but 36 per cent of its homicidal violence. At least 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries exhibit the highest rates of femicide in the world. More than 40 of the world's 50 most dangerous cities are located there. It is also one of the only parts of the world where lethal violence and victimization is accelerating. Although not all states are affected equally, insecurity, impunity and corruption are concerns to all governments and civil societies.

There are real opportunities for improving safety, access to justice and governance in Latin America and the Caribbean. Many leaders across the region are already investing in policies and programs that are diminishing real and perceived insecurity. These include measures targeting hot spots, strategies focusing on at risk-groups, education and employment interventions, and social development policies that address the drivers of crime and violence. The innovations tested out in Latin America and the Caribbean offer a hopeful model for other countries and cities in the region and other parts of the world that are confronting many of the same challenges.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a valuable tool to encourage governments to take action and set minimum standards for measuring progress. Nevertheless, they omitted key issues related to peace, security, justice and governance, which are central to realizing people's basic human rights, including the right to live in a safe environment. International and nationally-led research shows that Latin American and Caribbean development is compromised and even reversed by insecurity and injustice. Meanwhile, evidence-based investments in preventing violence and improving access to justice is empirically associated with positive development dividends, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable segments of society.

As United Nations, member states deliberate on the content of a new generation of Sustainable Development Goals for the next 15 years, Latin American and Caribbean governments have an opportunity to double down on peace, security, justice and governance. The costs of inaction will be severe. Not only are personal and household insecurity statistically correlated with reduced living standards, they impact directly on sustainable development. If the region is to achieve truly inclusive, fair and safe societies, then the drivers and symptoms of violence, impunity and corruption must be comprehensively addressed. Societal progress is not only measured by economic advances but also by the overall quality of life, including access to justice and the right to live free of fear.

Latin America and the Caribbean have a major stake in the future Sustainable Development Goals. While representing diverse views and interests, countries across the region share at least three common priorities that must be reflected in the post-2015 agenda. First, increasing rates of violence and insecurity are undermining the region's growth trajectories. Second, public confidence in state institutions is being eroded by their inability to address these challenges. Third, access to justice and good governance is still more an aspiration than a reality, with organized and interpersonal crime, including violence against women and girls, undermining fundamental freedoms and rights.

Governments and civil society groups across Latin America and the Caribbean region are committed to an effective and efficient multilateral order that guarantees inclusive and sustainable development for all. To be successfully implemented, the Sustainable Development Goals must unite countries in global cooperation for a common agenda. At a minimum, they should guarantee access to safety and justice for the world's 7.1 billion women, men, youth, girls and boys (and 9.6 billion by 2050). Besides ensuring that poorest and most vulnerable populations are assured of their basic rights and entitlements. Violence, injustice and impunity are not unique to the region: they are problems that affect upper-, middle- and lower-income countries alike.

The undersigned Latin American and Caribbean civil society organizations endorse a Sustainable Development Goal that puts peace, security, access to justice, and governance at the center of development.

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