



Epilogue

Era of change, change of era

The foregoing chapters have proposed possible routes for development in Latin America and the Caribbean. There are no one-size-fits-all formulas for the countries of the region. The challenge for each Government, State and nation is how to order priorities and objectives, as well as the instruments they will use to pursue them. What this document presents is a vision of development and an array of policies and policy criteria, which are offered as points of reference for the countries as they weigh the options for moving forward.

This document is clear in its proposals. It emphasizes the need for the State to play a strong role and stresses the importance of sound policymaking as countries revitalize and recreate democracies against a backdrop of globalization. In this vision, the State is the fulcrum for reconciling policies for stability with those for economic growth, production development with convergence, harmonization across territorial areas, the promotion of quality employment and greater social equality. It is also suggested that continuous, better quality and more lasting democracy creates the conditions for a better State because it allows the development of better systems of accountability and transparency that avoid bureaucratism and corruption and enables the State to regulate and support the market. Political action is emphasized as the sphere in which Governments and citizens can forge badly-needed links in order to work towards cohesion and craft the covenants that, in democracy, necessarily underpin the development of a rights-based agenda and the construction of an efficient State with a vocation for equality and a quality democracy with a vocation for inclusion.

The task of development today is pitted against challenges and changes in circumstances born out of the crisis, as discussed at the start of chapter I. The crisis has implications in the long term that require decisions to be made and measures to be taken in the present. Furthermore, the structural trends that are in evidence today add up to a genuine change of era. Four of them are commented on below.

First is climate change, as mentioned in chapter I, which is closely bound up with a long history of industrialization and production patterns that are highly intensive in carbon dioxide emissions and fossil fuel consumption and, moreover, with a specific type of relationship in which humankind depends on nature for its collective reproduction. The effects of climate change are deep, systemic and, in the absence of decisive changes and global accords, catastrophic. Multilateralism is a basic principle for framing those agreements: as well as the will of States, a new “global justice” is necessary if the efforts made and agreements reached are not to condemn the developing world to permanent underdevelopment.

Climate change imposes limits and forces a shift in production paradigms and consumption patterns. It places intergenerational solidarity firmly at the heart of the equality agenda and even calls into question our way of relating to the world. Under the threat of climate change, the future of every individual is inextricably linked with the future of all. Now, facing global warming, the destruction of the environment and the crisis in energy sources, the world is more interdependent than it has ever been before. Against this backdrop, the present document has pointed to the region’s alternatives and limitations for moving towards lower-emissions less fossil-fuel-intensive economies.

The second trend is technological change and what is known as the network, information or knowledge society. This is not about technical progress simply as a requirement for global competitiveness. For three decades now, innovations in information and communications technologies (ICT) have been creating a very different society that is bringing about changes in economic and production patterns, modes of work and organization, communications systems, learning and information processes, social linkages, forms of government and ways of exercising democracy and controlling society.

The “techno-social” paradigm also underlies the current crisis, discussed in chapter I, and has led to a review of the State-market equation. The network system leans towards deregulation and self-regulation, but this creates a problem when projected onto areas of global life in which deregulation, as the world has seen, can be harmful and dangerous, such as finance, arms trafficking, labour organization and environmental management. For that reason, the network itself should provide the means to strengthen regulation in areas of global life which, precisely because of their lack of oversight, are liable to unleash global crises, be they economic, production-related, environmental or world security crises. Chapter II sets forth proposals for increasing capacity for regulation in one of these areas, finance, with a view to enabling the network system to grow in a way that is compatible with the principle of development with stability. Chapter V offers proposals for adjusting the regulation of the labour market and labour institutions in order to avoid the heavy costs in terms of employment security and quality that the new production paradigm can impose unless it is applied with a view to equality and social cohesion.

The information society is here to stay. The key socio-economic activities in this society are the capture, storage, transmission and processing of data. Nations may develop at different rates and in different directions depending on how societies and States position themselves within this paradigm and how they disseminate it. There is no intrinsic good in technology itself; only uses of it that are more or less virtuous, more or less synergetic, more or less democratic, more or less egalitarian, more or less productive —in short, more or less successful. For that reason, this document has dwelt on public policies that can combine the production development of our economies with greater social inclusion. Chapter III looks in particular at pathways in which

development is centred on technological changes and human capacity to latch onto and promote them. It looks at ways of locking into the opportunities inherent in the information and knowledge society and the new technologies. The proposal is to move more successfully, in the medium term, towards more productive systems that spread innovation and technical progress more widely and in a more environmentally sustainable manner.

The third structural trend discussed here is demographic change, which has two distinct components. The first is the growth of the human population, which has reached magnitudes in the twenty-first century that were unthought-of in the nineteenth and has shifted the relative weight of the global population towards the undeveloped world. Added to the tremendous global inequality and the occurrence of conflicts and natural disasters, population changes have generated unprecedented flows of migration, with attendant problems whose solution requires international agreements of ever greater scope.

The second component of demographic change is the demographic transition. This involves the region more directly, since the relative weight of the different age groups in the population will change in the coming decades. Albeit with differences from one country to another, Latin America and the Caribbean is now in the midst of a demographic dividend in which the smaller child population and still incipient population ageing process mean that the region today has a larger proportion of working-age people in relation to the dependent population. The countries must take advantage of this dividend in the next few decades, in order to prepare for the time when the greater weight of the older population will shift the balance between the productive and dependent populations, when society will need to be highly productive if it is to generate the resources needed to cover health and social security needs.

Lastly, the demographic transition shifts the equation of State, market and family as regards meeting well-being and capacity-building needs. The way these three agents interact to provide services, monetary outlays and support networks must be reassessed as the proportional structure of the different age groups in society changes. The transfers discussed in chapter VI are of strategic importance in this framework. Supporting the care economy today means promoting greater participation by women in the labour market, thereby broadening the productive population base in preparation for the future challenges of the demographic transition. This support also means ensuring that children progress through the education system from early childhood to at least the end of the secondary cycle and investing in the production capacities of the next working generation, who need to start preparing now to be more productive, given that their burden will grow heavier as the dependent older population increases. Hence the call for progress in developing a solidarity-based pillar within social security: public transfers in the form of non-contributory pensions will become increasingly important in sustaining an older population much of which has not been able to participate continuously in contributory or individual capitalization systems.

The fourth structural trend emphasized in the document is cultural change. Greater global interconnections create greater awareness of the diversity of tastes, values and beliefs, but they also generate instances of deep cultural and religious intolerance, some of which crystallize into virulent forms that threaten global security. After the fall of the Berlin wall, the collective notion of democracy as part of global cultural heritage spread, but ethnic conflicts revived the ghosts of collective violence. The worldwide growth of consumption and financing give the market a pivotal role in defining meanings, identities and symbols. For many, the globalization of communications and information, together with the mass use of ICT, has shifted references in

space and time as well as portrayals and visions of the world, at the same time as it raises questions about the pace and depth of changes in preferences, life plans and norms of coexistence. The consolidation of religious identities is progressing side by side with the secularization typical of modernity. The foundations of ethnocentrism and patriarchy are increasingly being shaken by indigenous and women's movements. The threat of climate change is forcing humanity to rethink the way it relates to nature and to the planet on which we all live.

So deep has the cultural change been that it also, undoubtedly, leads to questioning of society's form of organization. The foregoing pages do not attempt to address this topic, but we are very aware that cultural change has a powerful influence on the global order, multilateral agreements, styles of politics and policymaking in the countries, and the demands made by citizens, whether symbolic or material. Policies cannot be made for young people, for example, without taking into account the radical cultural changes that they are experiencing. Gender and cultural components are increasingly part of the mainstream of pro-equality policies, as discussed in chapter I, and call for a difficult balance to be struck between equality of opportunities and respect for differences. Equality of rights —the central value proposed in this document— is the cornerstone of policymaking because it enshrines a universalist vocation capable of absorbing and reconciling these rapid cultural changes.

The world has never been so crisscrossed by acts of communication on a planetary scale as it is today. Never has humanity been so aware of its own diversity, so divergent in lifestyles yet so convergent in global imaginaries (from political democracy to multiculturalism). Never has there been such a global proliferation of options for consumption and knowledge that mark out life directions and individuation choices. At no time before has there been as much reflexivity —awareness of injustice and arbitrariness— or greater possibilities for lobbying and visibility. Never has humanity been so clear about the unsustainability and fragility of a paradigm that is destructive towards nature.

The new development paradigm must be made to do everything possible to build a model of globalization that breeds greater collective awareness of global public goods; awakens democracy across the planet by affording a voice to the most diverse range of actors in the open concert of global governance; and provides excluded sectors with the tools needed to close gaps in capacity, citizens' rights and access to well-being. The new model of globalization must develop policies with a long-term vision —but start work on them as a matter of urgency— in order to remain one step ahead of the climate, technological, demographic and cultural scenarios that current trends are now projecting.

It is as a contribution to this more global and strategic approach that the proposal set out in this document is offered.