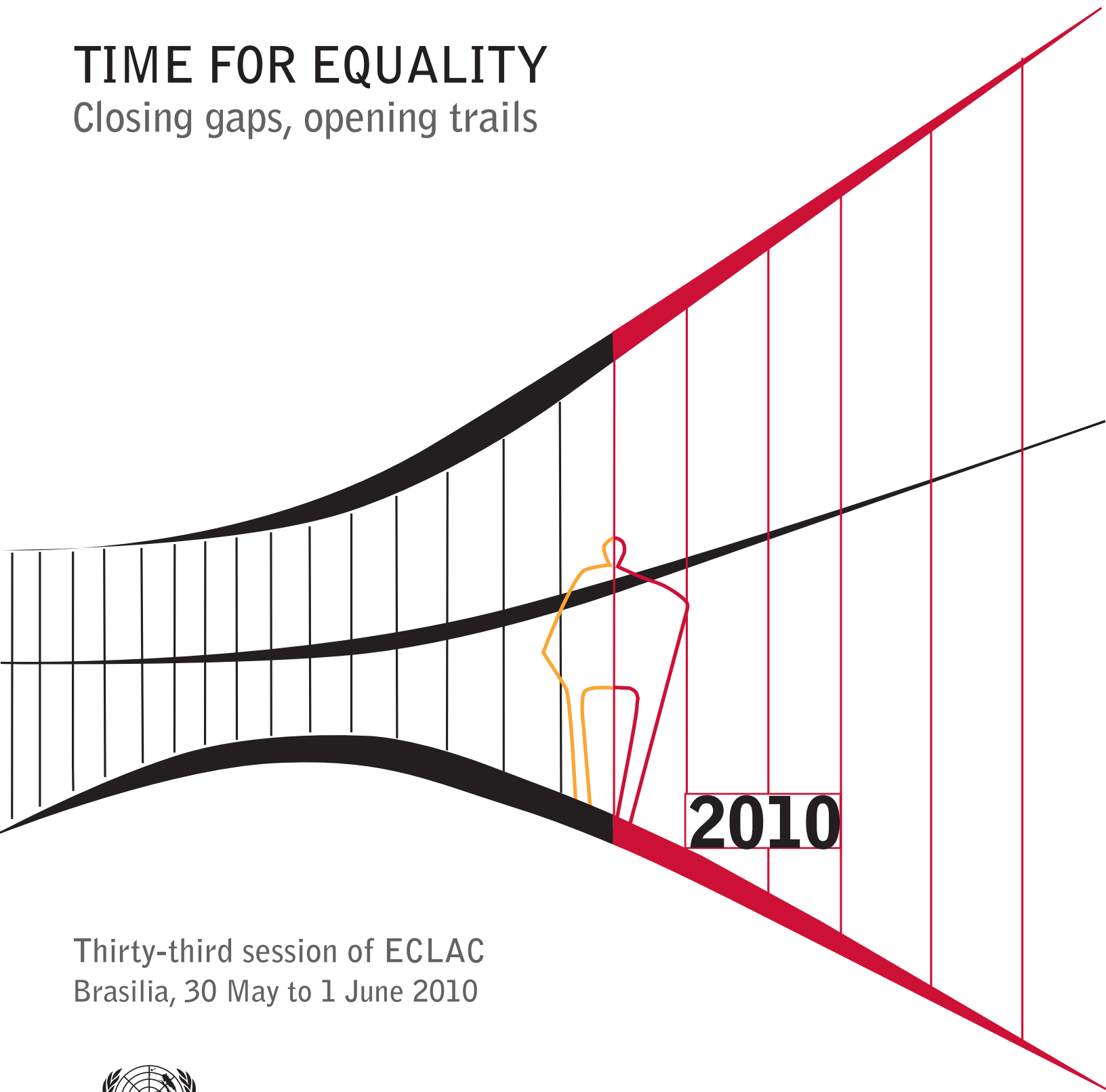


TIME FOR EQUALITY

Closing gaps, opening trails



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Alicia Bárcena
Executive Secretary

Antonio Prado
Deputy Executive Secretary

The preparation of this document was coordinated by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, in collaboration with Antonio Prado, Deputy Executive Secretary, and Martín Hopenhayn, Chief of the Social Development Division.

Various substantive divisions of ECLAC, as well as the Commission's subregional headquarters and national offices, participated actively in the preparation of the document.

Valuable contributions and comments were provided by the following ECLAC staff members: Hugo Altomonte, Luis Beccaria, Simone Cecchini, Oscar Cetrángolo, Mario Cimoli, Nelson Correa, Filipa Correia, Luis Mauricio Cuervo, Ernesto Espíndola, Juan Carlos Feres, Fernando Filgueira, Daniela González, Ivonne González, Sergio González, Ricardo Infante, Dirk Jaspers_Faijer, Juan Pablo Jiménez, Luis Felipe Jiménez, Maren Jiménez, Ricardo Jordán, Osvaldo Kacef, Sandra Manuelito, Rodrigo Martínez, Ricardo Martner, Graciela Moguillansky, Sonia Montaña, Esteban Pérez Caldentey, Neil Pierre, Ramón Pineda, Juan Carlos Ramírez, Luis E. Riffo, Diego Rivas, Jorge Rodríguez, Osvaldo Rosales, Joseluis Samaniego, Iván Silva, Giovanni Stumpo, Osvaldo Sunkel, Daniel Titelman, Cecilia Vera, Carlos Vergara, Jürgen Weller and Luis F. Yáñez.

A variety of valuable contributions were also made by: Armando Di Filippo, Rómulo Escalante, Rodrigo Espina, Ricardo Ffrench-Davis, Manuel Antonio Garretón, Rodrigo Heresi, José Antonio Ocampo, Ernesto Ottone, Gabriel Porcile and Andras Uthoff.

Explanatory notes

The following symbols are used in tables in this publication:

Three dots (...) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

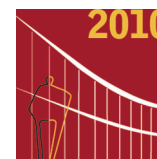
A minus sign (-) indicates a deficit or decrease, unless otherwise indicated.

A full stop (.) is used to indicate decimals.

Use of a hyphen (-) between years (e.g., 2001-2003) indicates reference to the complete period considered, including the beginning and end years.

The term "dollars" refers to United States dollars, unless otherwise specified.

Figures and percentages in tables may not necessarily add up to the corresponding totals due to rounding.



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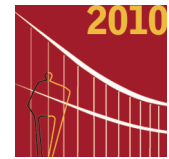
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Foreword

The deepening of democracy as a collective order and as a shared global imaginary calls for greater equality of opportunities and rights. This means extending public participation and decision-making to broad sectors of society that have been marginalized for centuries while also enhancing the effective ownership of economic, social and cultural rights. Equality of rights goes beyond the structuring of opportunities on the basis of merit. It means that citizenship, as an irreducible value, fully endows people with the right, by the mere fact of their being part of society and regardless of individual achievements and monetary resources, to access certain minimum levels of social welfare and recognition.

Deepening democracy also means moving towards greater equality in access, especially in fields such as education, health, employment, housing, basic services, environmental quality and social security. When translated into minimum (and incremental) thresholds for welfare and benefits, equal rights indirectly impose limits on inequality in access, especially when this inequality, at some point, means that part of society is deprived of the access legally provided for under an entitlement-based approach to rights.

The concept of equal rights provides the framework and basis for regulating social covenants that generate greater opportunities for those who have less. A fiscal covenant that envisages tax structures and tax burdens with a greater redistributive effect, while strengthening the role of Government and public policy so as to ensure the welfare threshold is respected, is part of the equality agenda, as is the creation of labour institutions that protect worker safety.

A democratic order in which the course of development reflects the will of the majority and enables all stakeholders to participate also reflects the value of equality. A set of economic policies that are implemented with a long-term vision of production, labour, social development and territorial development and seek not only equal opportunities, but also concrete achievements in terms of narrowing existing gaps is the cornerstone of the equality agenda.

Ensuring equal rights neither erodes meritocracy nor discourages individual efforts. On the contrary, it promotes a sense of belonging that motivates people to contribute to the common

good and economic progress, as it results in more effective rights and stronger protection for all. The process calls for the involvement of a wider range of actors and their contribution to the common good. The complementary interfaces of equality, social protection, organized solidarity and the good will of all stakeholders is precisely what the most advanced welfare States of the world have achieved. This does not mean that the benefits of the market are denied; it means that the market becomes a more inclusive institution in which healthier interactions take place. More solid public-private partnerships, more advanced democracies and more shared visions of long-term development arise in more equal societies where the State plays a more active role and acts within the framework of a strategic vision to achieve well-being and progress for all. This is thus a progressive and far-reaching political agenda.

In this regard, the analysis presented in this document wholly adheres to the idea that social equality and the kind of economic dynamism that transform production patterns are not at odds with each other and that the challenge is to find synergies between the two. The proposal made here is headed in this direction and leads to the next point: when we speak of equality we do so in the awareness that we must grow to equalize and equalize to grow. At no point, therefore, do we suggest that we should sacrifice the value of dynamic economic and productive growth on the altar of equality. In strategic terms and in the long term, equality, economic growth and environmental sustainability must go hand in hand, mutually supporting and reinforcing one another in a virtuous dialectic.

We therefore propose growth with less structural heterogeneity and more productive development, and the pursuit of equality through the enhancement of human capacities and the mobilization of State energies. We want to reverse the huge disparities in the region by building more cohesive societies around productive dynamics, constructing positive social and territorial synergies, and strengthening the protection of individuals through improvements in labor markets, stronger financial capacities and better public administration. Just as the idea of equality entails addressing social vulnerabilities, we believe that a macroeconomic framework that protects people against external volatility will play a key role. This goal will not be reached automatically and requires effective policies on several fronts as well as more and better markets. If you have to level the playing field, it must be done by raising average and aggregate productivity and income.

Lastly, in considering the value of equality and how it combines with growth, we cannot ignore climate change, a phenomenon which will have an enormous impact on the future of humankind. In this context, equality means solidarity with future generations, whose situation will be marked by greater uncertainty and by a greater scarcity of natural resources. It also means calling for international agreements to mitigate the impact of climate change that adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities so as to ensure that it is not the poor or poor countries who end up bearing the brunt of the costs of climate change. It means rethinking the development paradigm on the basis of more compassionate and benevolent relationships among all peoples and of a more environmentally friendly relationship with nature.

In short, equality transforms the dignity and well-being of people into an irreducible value, makes democratic life inseparable from social justice, links access and opportunities with effective citizenship and thereby strengthens the sense of belonging; it becomes the ethical and political basis for pursuing universal coverage of benefits, not only in terms of access but also in terms of narrowing gaps in the quality and trajectories; it provides the regulatory framework for the fiscal covenant and the social covenant, from which emerges the binding force of the rights that have

been ratified and their implications for progressiveness and redistribution; it demands a larger and better role for the State in regulation, transparency, oversight and redistribution of resources and requires a deep respect for global security in order to ensure environmental sustainability.

In the proposal now being submitted by ECLAC for consideration by the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, development is conceived in the terms outlined above. In the light of the current challenges, it recreates the technical expertise acquired by the Commission over six decades of intensive study and puts forward a desirable future for the region, one that is more egalitarian as regards opportunities and rights, more dynamic and less vulnerable in terms of its economy, and in which the vicious circle of underdevelopment is transformed into a virtuous circle of development. This proposal upholds the core values to which we adhere unreservedly with the technical rigor that is part of the Commission's heritage.

Why do we endorse equality as a value? The answer is that we are transmitting what we perceive to be a historical claim that has long been voiced and systematically deferred in Latin American and Caribbean societies. This claim has given rise, with greater or lesser success, to revolutions and reforms, different models of government and policy, popular movements, agreements between groups and demands from the wide array of stakeholders. But, just as equality, as a positive value, has been acclaimed throughout the collective history of the region, it has also been systematically denied by that very history. Inequality has permeated five centuries of racial, ethnic and gender-based discrimination in the region, in societies where people are divided into first- and second-class citizens. It has permeated a modernization process built on the back of the worst income distribution in the world. It has permeated recent decades in the region's history, the worsening of the structural heterogeneity of productive opportunities, the deterioration of labour conditions and the segmentation of access to social protection, with inequalities developing on all sides. It permeates the asymmetries that abound in the face of globalization.

Yet the more prevalent the inequality, the more profound the desire for equality, especially when the course of history is suddenly interrupted by a worldwide crisis which the future demands be converted into a turning point. In this way, the crisis that broke out in 2008 on a global scale is a point at which equality appears once again as an intrinsic value of the development that we are pursuing. In attempting to narrow these gaps, society moves from an individual to a collective approach and seeks to stitch up the wounds of inequality with the threads of social cohesion.

Under the financial model that dominated the world for decades up until recently, inequalities became more acute than ever and evoked widespread indignation in the wake of the crisis when the model was completely discredited. It might be possible to mitigate the financial repercussions, but the global awareness acquired over the past year regarding the arbitrary nature of the model will not be easily erased, nor will the indignation caused by its inequities.

This is why we wanted, and not without a certain degree of boldness, to give this document the title "Time for equality". We are not talking about any kind of equality, however: the lessons of history stand us in good stead once again. When we speak of equality we refer to another great value that has also had to be fought for and needs to be built on constantly: democracy. Equality without democracy is equality without basic rights and without the rule of law, in other words, a contradiction in terms. It should be noted, however, that a low-quality democracy with little involvement of the broadest range of agents in decision-making processes will make it difficult to forge the political will needed to move towards greater equality.

This is our proposal. In the pages that follow, we closely examine the signs of development (and underdevelopment) in recent decades and the vicissitudes and consequences of the recent crisis. We also look to a future in which the State and political action harmonize democracy with equality, promote leaps in productivity and environmental sustainability, inclusive markets and active citizenship, and generate the necessary social covenants in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region in which there are gaps to close and trails to open.

Alicia Bárcena
Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for
Latin America and the Caribbean