

SCIENCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LATIN AMERICA

Science plays a key role in post-pandemic recovery, and collaboration between Latin American countries is crucial for the region to develop again. This is what the participants of the virtual panel “How to Intensify Scientific Partnerships in Latin America” pointed out, held during the 74th Annual Meeting of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC).

Coordinated by Ana Tereza Ribeiro de Vasconcelos, researcher at the National Laboratory for Scientific Computing (LNCC/MCT), and member of the SBPC Board of Directors, the panel included the participation of Augusto Sánchez Valle, president of the Federation of organizations for the advancement of science in the Americas (Interciencia), Marcos Regis, Executive Director of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI), Ernesto Fernandez Polcuch, Director of Science at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Regional Office, Paulo Eduardo Artaxo Netto, professor at the Institute of Physics at the University of São Paulo (USP) and vice-president of the SBPC, and Carolina Vera, professor at the Department of Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA).

Participants defended a more active and systemic role for innovation and knowledge in Latin America's economic, productive, social and environmental development policies. Although there have been significant advances in the region, science, technology and innovation still do not play a significantly active role in economic, productive, and social development policies. “We must seek greater participation in activities, especially interscience, greater participation in establishing associations or taking advantage of existing ones for science, technology, innovation and knowledge”, pointed out Valle. “I hope that Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Colombia can somehow join forces to carry out this alliance that we are seeking through the SBPC”, he concluded.

For Regis, Latin America and the Caribbean can overcome challenges, build opportunities for multinational collaboration, and strengthen links to global structures to leverage extramural funding for regional priorities in the Americas. The researcher also emphasized the importance of working together on inclusion, equity and diversity policies. “We need to have more collaboration between countries for groups that are not traditionally represented throughout the science and technology process.”

Polcuch highlighted the importance of integration and regional cooperation to combat existing asymmetries, especially in relation to health, income concentration, and climate responsibilities. The researcher emphasized the need to intensify scientific partnerships in Latin America, pointing out that science must be the engine of understanding between countries in the region, in what he called “scientific diplomacy”. “We cannot think that any country can become a global player without regional cooperation. The pandemic has taught us that we cannot solve problems in a separate way,” he said.

But the region still faces many challenges in the search for this union. “The needs Latin America has in education, culture and science are so great that we would effectively have to develop strategic areas”. Artaxo pointed. According to the researcher, the union between researchers trying to understand the best strategies to follow a more solid and stable democratization would be highly strategic. Artaxo also pointed out that Amazon could be a great model for Latin American integration. “The Amazon has enormous potential in science, climate change, and so on. Why not join forces?”

For Vera, Latin America shares an agenda of urgent issues which must be worked on jointly. But the researcher points out that we must go beyond scientific cooperation and seek engagement with other sectors. “There is an urgency, a need to link the academic-scientific community more with State agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations and other actors to solve these problems”, she highlighted. “We need a greater commitment from Latin American states to advance scientific alliances and collaborations”.

Participants pointed out that there are still many barriers between the scientific-academic systems of different Latin American countries. But it is necessary to continue working to build alliances to recover and develop the region. “We really need to work together and create this path. Cooperation is essential for this leap to be made, and it will only be made if we have a collaborative State scientific policy in each of your countries. This is a challenge, but it is a challenge that we have to overcome.

CHRIS BUENO— Jornal da Ciência
Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência