

# THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA: 4 AXES FOR REFLECTION

At the end of the first two decades of the millennium, it is evident that, despite experiencing a period of global economic growth, poverty and inequality have increased worldwide. Thus, for developing countries, and particularly for Latin America (LA) and the Caribbean, the situation in recent decades has been disastrous. This can be attributed to a combined effect of external debt and environmental deterioration over time, as well as the decline in the prices of many export commodities, unfavorable trends in international trade, and the lack of success in implementing economic policies in several countries.

It can be asked, then, how losing opportunities for economic growth affects the history of a people. The trajectory of peoples does not seem predetermined; rather, it is shaped and reshaped as visionary directives emerge, capable of proposing successful solutions to the challenges that arise. This includes mobilizing the population to consider the opportunities offered by the international context, alongside the restrictions.

To this end, it is essential to build a solid vision of what should be understood as sustainable development for the region. This is only possible through the formulation of its own strategy, on which the writer reflects, outlining some important ideas or axes for consideration in its development. Namely:

1. In a general context, the meaning of "sustainable development" or "sustainability" is complex and must be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, as it is linked to other universal concepts of great relevance. Despite this complexity, the uncertainty, resistance, and difficulties in implementation, sustainable development has remained at the forefront of the global and regional political agenda for the past thirty-seven years, demanding the involvement of civil society and, above all, the private sector, which is connected to the notion of corporate or business social responsibility.

2. Immense and irreparable damage to the environment can be caused by ignorance or indifference, which threatens human life and well-being. Conversely, with deeper knowledge and more prudent action, better living conditions can be achieved for all and for posterity in an environment that aligns with human needs and aspirations. To attain true freedom within nature, humanity must apply its knowledge to create a better environment in harmony with it. As Gabriel García

Márquez famously said, we have no other planet to move to.

However, in our opinion, there is still a lack of visionary leadership or political will to embark on the path of sustainable development. The present generation must face this challenge... It could be our last chance.

3. The environment must be considered as something more than a mere concept within any area of human knowledge. The environment encompasses everything where life unfolds; it is, therefore, an integral part of life and daily existence.

Internally, the struggle for the environment can never be exclusive to an isolated initiative or a single government entity; rather, it must result from the union of national efforts across all political-territorial expressions. It requires joint and multilateral work that brings together the public sector (national, federated states or provincial, and municipal) with the national community, represented both by individual citizens and by the private sector, as well as all non-governmental organizations with a direct or indirect interest in the environment.

Thus, the environment is the richest, but also the most sensitive, heritage of all Latin Americans and inhabitants of planet Earth. Consequently, the responsibility for its care and conservation falls on the conscience of every citizen in this region and the world, beyond bureaucratic formalities or collective interests.

4. In this context, resuming the responsible leadership that corresponds to the matter, Latin America and the international community have, as a fundamental corollary in the struggle for environmental improvement, the development of innovative schemes that establish the foundations for the new environmental management of the 21st century.

This premise encourages us to adapt (state, businesspeople, and community) to the new requirements imposed by the dynamic economies of the region, in order to preserve the environment in a modern world that presents scientific and technological resources aimed at enhancing the interaction between humanity and the environment. Let us begin, then, to take on and conclude this urgent task!

JOSÉ G. SALVUCHI-SALGADO  
Universidad Católica Andrés Bello  
Venezuela