



Summit of the Americas 1994-2009

Selected Indicators

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FOREWORD

The present document was prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for consideration by the Heads of State and Government at the fifth Summit of the Americas. It provides an overview, in figures, of the most important development trends, issues and challenges facing the countries that are part of the Summit process. The differences between countries are so marked in practically every area that the Americas do not, by any means, constitute a single homogeneous reality and, clearly, it would be futile and ill-advised to attempt to treat them as such.

This Summit is being held at a crucial time in our history. On the one hand, the worst financial and economic crisis in the past 70 years has just broken out, and its impact is being felt in varying degrees in every country of the world. On the other, new calls for freedom, cooperation and solidarity with the most vulnerable are echoing through the countries taking part in this Summit. This is an opportunity to lay the foundations for a new era in which all of us by working together decisively and building on the experience we have acquired, can strive to secure a more balanced pattern of development in this hemisphere.

It was not by chance that the past 15 years were chosen as the time frame for the analysis; indeed, they cover the period since the first Summit of the Americas was held in 1994 in Miami (United States). Throughout this period, the Heads of State and Government have renewed their commitment to move forward to combat poverty, hunger and exclusion and foster equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth;¹ they have also reaffirmed their support for the principal international instruments for protecting and promoting basic economic, social, cultural, civil and environmental rights.²

This document, which comprises 11 sections, describes the demographic, economic and social trends observed in the member countries of the Summit of the Americas and illustrates graphically the scope, distribution and development of the main problems and challenges to development, the basic messages and key ideas for analysis and their possible implications for public policies, within the pursuit of an increasingly fruitful cooperation among countries. Statistical information, notwithstanding constraints in terms of availability, is an indispensable input for understanding reality and for monitoring and assessing the impact of public policies; hence the need to redouble our efforts to increase the production of timely, quality data and indicators.

Section I of the document examines the demographic situation in the hemisphere. Since the mid-1990s, the rate of population growth in the Americas has been similar to the global rate; now, although the regional rate has been diminishing, the population is still expected to increase significantly in many countries over the next few years. One of the characteristic features of the continent, however, is the intensity of migration flows, with the destination of choice for Latin American migrants being the United States, although a greater degree of diversification has been observed in recent years. As a result of migration, remittances have become immensely important; indeed, for some countries, they are one of the principal sources of foreign exchange.

¹ See the Declaration of Mar del Plata, "Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance", 2005 [online] <http://www.summit-americas.org/Eng-2004/previous-summits.htm>.

² These include the outcomes of the following meetings: the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); the Millennium Summit (New York, 2000); the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, 2002); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), and the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (New York, 2005).

As indicated in the section on production and international trade, the countries of the Americas account for one third of world GDP, although there are huge gaps between countries, since some are major economies with per capita GDP levels among the highest in the world, while the majority are situated in the mid-to-low range, and others still have very low per capita values. Between 1994 and 2007, the rate of GDP growth in the hemisphere matched that of the rest of the world, although with wide variations between subperiods. In the second half of the decade, however, the acceleration of this growth was brought to a halt by the international financial crisis that broke out in mid-2008. Moreover, the degree of trade openness in this continent is lower on average than in the rest of the world, and the volume of intraregional trade is very significant.

The section dealing with energy underscores the shift in the composition of the primary energy supply: the relative reduction in the use of oil, the setback during the present decade in advances with hydroelectricity and the fact that use of renewable energy remains limited. Little progress has been made in reducing energy intensity in the Americas, and much remains to be achieved in terms of improving efficiency in this area.

The section on poverty and income distribution discusses the reduction in poverty rates—one of the Millennium Development Goals—recorded especially in the present decade. Nevertheless, there are still significant segments of the population that are unable to meet their basic needs, and inequity in income distribution remains high, which places many countries of the Americas among the most inequitable in the world.

The section on employment highlights the challenges arising from high levels of informality, the lack of employment protection, wide gaps in wages and the levels of unemployment which characterize the labour markets of many countries in the Americas, despite the significant improvements generated in those areas by the economic growth which took place from the early 2000s until 2008.

The section on education focuses on progress towards universal primary education and progress in secondary-school and preschool attendance, although in these cases the shortfall is still considerable. The worst indicators in terms of attendance and performance are seen among children and young people from the least favoured social groups, including a number of indigenous groups. A similar situation prevails in relation to the quality of education.

Improvements in access to basic sanitation services and mother-and-child health care, and certain changes in the behaviour of the population, have led to reductions in child mortality. The section on health and nutrition contains data on this improvement but also draws attention to the persistence of unsatisfactory levels in some countries and areas. The nutrition situation has also improved in the Americas, but in some countries significant sectors of the population are still experiencing difficulties in that regard.

The indicators in the section on gender equity reflect persistent gender gaps in terms of labour-market access, the incidence of poverty and participation in decision-making. Nonetheless, the Americas have seen advances in the past 15 years in respect of some of the indicators analysed.

The information in the section on indigenous peoples shows that they make up a considerable proportion of the population in some countries in the Americas, exceeding 60% in some cases. It also underlines the profound disadvantages facing the indigenous population as revealed by the quality-of-life indicators.

The section on the knowledge economy notes that, on average, the countries under consideration spend a smaller proportion of GDP than the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on research and development, but this figure conceals wide gaps between the nations of the Americas; the figures for Canada and the United States are similar to those for other developed countries, but levels are much lower in the rest of the region. Expansion of fixed-line telephone services in the Americas slowed from 2004 onwards, while mobile-telephone use increased, but at varying rates depending on the country. Between 2000 and 2007, Internet penetration grew significantly, again at different rates in different countries, although the gaps have tended to narrow recently.

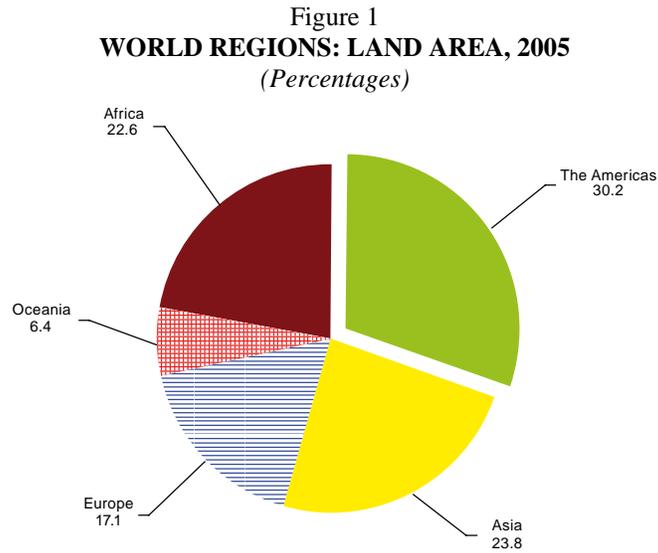
The section on the environment states that the main problems in North America are water and air pollution, the uncontrolled urban sprawl and high levels of consumption of energy from fossil fuels. It reports that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the loss of forests and of biodiversity is becoming increasingly evident, as is the over-exploitation of natural resources beyond their capacity to replenish themselves, which has caused land degradation and the depletion of fish stocks. It also points out that fast and disorganized urbanization and the persistence of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption are intensifying problems such as the growing generation of waste and rising air pollution in cities. For the whole continent, the picture has been worsened by the effects of climate change and the rising frequency and intensity of hurricanes, floods and landslides.

ECLAC submits this document to the Summit of the Americas in the hope that it will provide an overview of the main trends and challenges regarding development in the countries of the Americas. We trust that this work, prepared with assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank, will promote dialogue and cooperation between countries and serve to identify areas where cooperation is needed, thereby contributing to the design of improved public policies and the achievement of more balanced development.

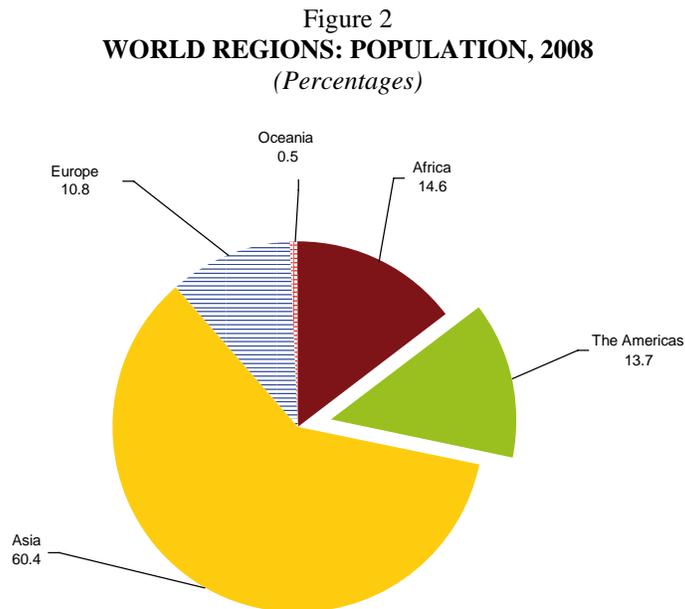
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I. AREA AND POPULATION

Overall, the Americas make up 30% of the world's land area, and are home to 14% of its population.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FAO Statistical Databases (FAOSTAT) [online].



Source: Population Division of the United Nations and Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) - Population Division of ECLAC.

The Americas comprise countries of different sizes, from the viewpoint of both geographical area and population. The following table shows that some countries in the Americas are among the world's largest in both area and population terms.

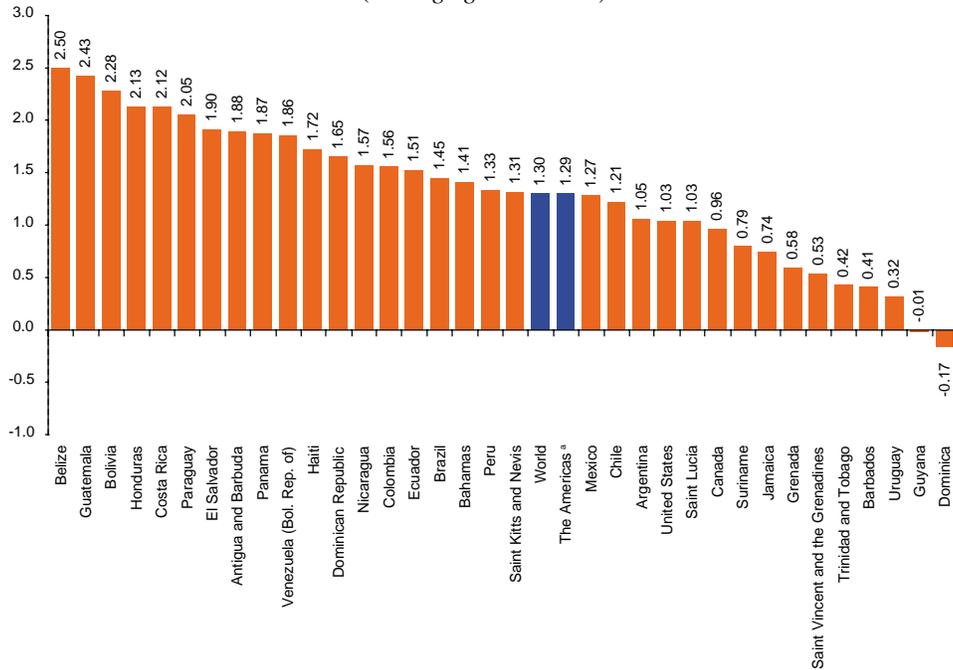
Table 1
THE AMERICAS: POPULATION, 2008, AND AREA, 2005
(Thousands of inhabitants and square kilometres)

Population 2008	Thousands of inhabitants	Area 2005	Square kilometres
Antigua and Barbuda	86	Antigua and Barbuda	440
Argentina	39 746	Argentina	2 780 400
Bahamas	335	Bahamas	13 880
Barbados	295	Barbados	430
Belize	294	Belize	22 970
Bolivia	10 028	Bolivia	1 098 580
Brazil	195 138	Brazil	8 514 880
Canada	33 259	Canada	9 984 670
Chile	16 770	Chile	756 630
Colombia	46 702	Colombia	1 141 750
Costa Rica	4 550	Costa Rica	51 100
Dominica	67	Dominica	750
Ecuador	13 801	Ecuador	283 560
El Salvador	7 224	El Salvador	21 040
United States	311 666	United States	9 632 030
Grenada	106	Grenada	340
Guatemala	13 677	Guatemala	108 890
Guyana	736	Guyana	214 970
Haiti	9 762	Haiti	27 750
Honduras	7 322	Honduras	112 090
Jamaica	2 728	Jamaica	10 990
Mexico	107 677	Mexico	1 964 380
Nicaragua	5 677	Nicaragua	130 000
Panama	3 391	Panama	75 520
Paraguay	6 230	Paraguay	406 750
Peru	28 214	Peru	1 285 220
Dominican Republic	9 890	Dominican Republic	48 730
Saint Kitts and Nevis	51	Saint Kitts and Nevis	260
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	121	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	390
Saint Lucia	167	Saint Lucia	620
Suriname	461	Suriname	163 270
Trinidad and Tobago	1 338	Trinidad and Tobago	5 130
Uruguay	3 342	Uruguay	176 220
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	27 912	Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of)	912 050
The Americas	908 763.0	The Americas	39 946 680

Source: Population: Latin American countries: Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) - Population Division of ECLAC; Caribbean and North American countries: Population Division of the United Nations; land area: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FAO Statistical Databases (FAOSTAT) [online].

Since the first Summit of the Americas, which was held in the mid-1990s, the rate of the region's population growth has matched the world growth rate; but once again, there are differences among subregions and countries.

Figure 3
THE AMERICAS: POPULATION, 1994-2008
(Average growth rates)



Source: Latin America: Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) - Population Division of ECLAC; Canada, the United States and the rest of the world: Population Division of the United Nations.

^a 34 countries.

The downward trend in population growth has continued recently, particularly in those countries which have relatively high growth rates; in many of them, however, significant population growth can be

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