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THE NEW CHALLENGES
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES
REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The article's purpose is to identify new challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter – LAC) countries regarding the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter – SDGs). The scientific novelty consists in highlighting the main trends, factors, and signs in the development of LAC countries in the third decade of the 21st century and ways to overcome new challenges of their sustainable development goals. *Methods and materials.* The messages from news agencies in the USA and Latin American countries were used as materials for the study. *Analysis.* An analysis of the formal approaches of the United Nations to the process of creating sustainable development was carried out on the basis of foreign sources and literature, including the conditions and possibilities for the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, and 8 by the LAC countries; conceptual differences in the approaches of the United Nations and LAC to the implementation of the SDGs in the context of contemporary turbulence in regional and global politics; and the emergence of new conditions for their cooperation with the leading world powers were identified. *Results.* The author's article succeeded in clarifying the possible results from the UN approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of SDG-2030 in his article. It has been established that LAC countries are unable to fulfill them either on their own or with the help of international organizations. The main goals of SDGs 1, 2, and 8 remain unattainable, both due to the expected decline in economic growth in the period 2026–2029 and the social situation of the population in LAC countries. Past problems of cross-border crime, drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping are causing new internal displacement of millions of people. Despite the growing number of prisoners in LAC countries, the problem of crime remains one of the main concerns of Latin American governments. The problem of migration exodus is being resolved very slowly, and its negative impact remains almost at the same level, and in some countries, such as Haiti, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, and El Salvador, this problem is growing. In addition, new negative factors have been added, hindering the implementation of the UN SDGs. These are negative environmental and climatic factors in Latin America, the American policy of mass deportations of Latin Americans from the USA, which creates additional pressure among the most vulnerable segments of the population, and the American tariff policy in the Latin American region. At the same time, a “window of opportunity” is opening for LAC countries to enter the world stage to expand their cooperation with countries from other continents in Africa and Eurasia, both directly and within the framework of BRICS and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals, Latin America and the Caribbean, BRICS, USA, UN.

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НОВЫЕ ВЫЗОВЫ В СТРАНАХ ЛАТИНСКОЙ АМЕРИКИ И КАРИБСКОГО БАССЕЙНА В ВОПРОСАХ ВЫПОЛНЕНИЯ ЦЕЛЕЙ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ ООН

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Цель статьи заключается в определении новых вызовов в странах Латинской Америки и Карибского бассейна (далее – ЛАК) в вопросах выполнения целей устойчивого развития (далее – ЦУР) ООН. Научная новизна состоит в выделении основных тенденций, факторов и признаков в развитии стран ЛАК в третьем десятилетии XXI в. и путей преодоления новых проблем своих ЦУР. *Методы и материалы.* В качестве материалов в работе были задействованы сообщения новостных издательств США и стран Латинской Америки. *Анализ.* На основе использования зарубежных источников и литературы был проведен анализ формальных подходов ООН к процессу создания устойчивого развития, в том числе условий и возможности выполнения ЦУР 1, 2, и 8 ООН странами ЛАК, выявлены концептуальные отличия в подходах ООН и ЛАК к реализации ЦУР в условиях современной турбулентности в региональной и мировой политике, а также появления новых условий их взаимодействия с ведущими мировыми державами. *Результаты.* В статье удалось уточнить возможные результаты подходов ООН к ЦУР-2030. Установлено, что страны ЛАК не способны их выполнить ни собственными силами, ни с помощью международных организаций. Главные ЦУР 1, 2 и 8 остаются недостижимыми как по причине ожидаемого снижения темпов экономического роста в период 2026–2029 гг., так и социального положения населения в странах ЛАК. Нерешенные проблемы трансграничной преступности, наркотрафика, вымогательства и похищения людей вызывают новые внутренние перемещения миллионов людей. Несмотря на рост числа заключенных в странах ЛАК, преступность остается одной из главных забот латиноамериканских правительств. Проблема миграционного исхода разрешается очень медленно, и ее отрицательное влияние остается практически на том же уровне, а в некоторых странах, таких как Гаити, Куба, Колумбия, Венесуэла, Сальвадор, – растет. К тому же добавились новые негативные факторы, тормозящие выполнение ЦУР ООН. Это – экологические и климатические условия в Латинской Америке, американская политика массовых депортаций латиноамериканцев из США, создающая дополнительное давление в среде наиболее уязвимых слоев населения, американская тарифная политика в латиноамериканском регионе. Вместе с тем для стран ЛАК открывается «окно возможностей» выхода на мировую арену для расширения своего сотрудничества со странами других континентов в Африке и Евразии как напрямую, так в рамках БРИКС и китайской инициативы «Один пояс, один путь».

Ключевые слова: цели устойчивого развития, Латинская Америка и Карибский бассейн, БРИКС, США, ООН.

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Introduction. The article's author tries to show the UN's approaches to building sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and he argues that the UN SDG targets cannot be met by 2030 for a number of objective reasons.

In August 2015, 17 interrelated sustainable development goals were identified and agreed upon at the UN conference. 193 states signed the final document – “Transforming Our World:

Sustainable Development Agenda 2030” [32]. At the same time, 169 tasks were identified that should be independently solved by states at the national level in order to fulfill these goals [23].

More than half the term has passed, and already now we can state that these goals, for the most part, will not be fulfilled [4, pp. 475–498]. The question is why? There are several reasons here. Firstly, this is due to the erroneous

premise that states will be able to implement SDGs within their competencies and at their national level. Weak developing countries do not have the financial resources to address SDG 1 (poverty eradication) and SDG 2 (hunger eradication), which, according to the World Bank, required \$3.0 trillion in 2016 prices [14].

Secondly, the international community has not developed special investment measures for the poor and poorest countries by international financial organizations, private funds, and businesses to achieve the objectives of the UN SDGs, although many proposals have been put forward [8]. In October 2024, in the United States, at the last summit of donor countries and creditors' finance ministers of the IMF and the World Bank, the debt burden figure of the poorest developing countries to international financial institutions was presented. This figure was \$100 trillion, and only a smaller share of these countries has enough funds to service international debt (interest on loans).

Thirdly, attention was not focused on the implementation, at least for SDG 1 and SDG 2. According to the UN report "Report on Sustainable Development Goals 2024," by the end of 2024, 1.4 billion children in the world are in extreme poverty; "in 75 most vulnerable countries every fourth person lives on less than \$2.15 per day. One in three in these countries is now poorer on average than before the pandemic" [31].

Fourth, not only did the UN conference in 2015 accept the goals unsecured by financial calculations, but after almost half the SDGs, each chapter of the 2024 Report justifies the past COVID-19 pandemic as the main reason that did not allow achieving the goals.

Fifth, the UN Report did not say a word about sabotaging the implementation of the SDGs by the United States and its satellites, which imposed economic and financial sanctions against developing countries during the period 2015–2024.

Sixth, with the arrival of the newly elected president of the United States, D. Trump, hopes for the implementation of the SDGs are "melting away before our eyes," because, having not yet taken office, he publicly announced not only the introduction of trade duties for developing countries.

Methods and materials. The presented study used the scientific principle of objectivity,

the scientific systematic historical approach, and a special political and cultural research method, which made it possible to identify existing trends and signs of evolutionary changes in the socio-political and cultural development of this world region in the issues of sustainable development of the LAC countries, as well as to find out the main factors contributing to (or hindering) the implementation of the UN SDGs.

The use of a systemic historical approach made it possible to argue that LAC countries in contemporary life, as in historical retrospect by the United States and its satellites, are still considered the "backyard of America," and therefore the methods of interaction with them remain the same (vassal).

The use of a special political and cultural research method made it possible to establish the national elites' inability of the LAC countries to achieve the UN sustainable development goals and independent and confident socio-cultural development in the near future, taking into account national specifics and cultural identity.

In addition, the lack of unity of the regional community [33, pp. 31–65], a "pendulum" change in political regimes [7], and the continued confidence of individual countries in the help of a rich northern neighbor (the USA) make difficult the transition to equal international relations and sustainable development of the region [5].

Meanwhile, it must be admitted that a "window of opportunity" has been opened for the LAC countries both for wider international interaction at the BRICS platform and for the use of alternative relations with the PRC by participating in its "Belt and Road" initiative.

There are messages, opinions, editorial and expert assessments from central news agencies, and research articles from scientific journals from the USA and Latin American countries were used as materials in the scientific paper.

Analysis. *Old challenges and new opportunities for LAC countries to implement the SDGs.* LAC countries, overcoming past landmarks in the United States, successfully enter the world stage. Brazil became the founder of BRICS in 2009. Currently Venezuela, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Colombia are striving for this international organization, while Cuba and Bolivia are accepted into its composition in 2024 [31]. In addition, it is possible that Argentina's entry into

the BRICS, which was denounced by President Javier Milei, will remain on the agenda of this country.

What are the perspectives for regional development in LAC? Having a labor force of more than 300 million people. The region's countries may show more significant growth than the leading countries of the European Union. Thus, according to the IMF, for the next five years (2024–2029), the growth of the leading EU economy – Germany – is expected to be 1.7%, while the growth of the leading LAC economies – Brazil – is 2%, and Mexico is 1.7% [15]. And yet, this LAC economic growth is insufficient to meet the sustainable development goals. One of the drivers of regional development is nearshoring, which includes the spread of business in its various forms – foreign trade, cross-border investments, technology transfer, outsourcing, value chain formation, etc. – mainly to neighboring and nearby countries [22].

The strategy of “nearshoring” allows strengthening intra-regional cooperation as much as possible and making it a generator of accelerated economic growth. Although some countries in the region are still of the opinion that we must wait for help from the United States [17]. Nearshoring gives Latin America, especially Mexico, a chance to become a new manufacturing center by entering the lucrative North American market. This shift is not just about increasing production; we are talking about creating jobs, stimulating the local economy, and deeper integration into global trading networks [20].

As for the fulfillment by the LAC countries of the UN goals – SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 8 that determine the possibilities for solving the above problems – the Latin American elites of some countries are waiting for help from the United States [17].

A prominent representative of these elites is Ivan Duque, the former president of Colombia. He advocates a bipartisan and bicameral approach to creating long-term policies that promote regional stability and prosperity. Duque stresses the need for more trade and investment agreements and faster “friend exchanges.” He calls for strategic U.S. involvement in infrastructure projects, particularly those related to the energy transition, the development of 5G networks and critical technologies such as AI, cybersecurity, blockchain, and cloud computing.

What can be said about this? Of course, the United States could participate in LAC's economic growth more effectively. But if they didn't do it within the OAS, will they do it within the LAC, which they are not part of?

Opportunities for SDG 1 (poverty eradication) and SDG 2 (hunger eradication). More than 10 trillion US dollars is required to eliminate poverty and hunger in LAC countries. It is clear that neither international financial institutions nor the LAC countries themselves can afford such a volume of finance. Therefore, it should be assumed that the SDG 1 and SDG 2 goals will not be met by 2030. There are at least two paradoxes in the implementation of these Latin American SDGs:

- the first is that the volume of food exports by LAC countries to the world market (wheat, meat, fruits, etc.) practically solves the problem of hunger and 50% solves the problem of poverty in the region;

- the second paradox is that LAC countries have a specific problem called by experts the Double Burden of Malnutrition (DBM) [26].

The coexistence of two approaches to food consumption – malnutrition and overeating within the same populations – creates a new challenge in the implementation of SDGs. Almost 8.5% of households experience this form of DBM in Peru, Brazil, and Mexico. In most cases, overweight adults and stunted children coexist in the same household [21].

The public health of LAC countries should deal with these paradoxes in promoting culture in the field of nutrition and health.

SDG 8 (Economic growth). LAC countries are on track to achieve only 22% of the level of the SDG 8 Sustainable Development Goal, which prompted the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter – ECLAC) at its meeting in Santiago to call for accelerated policy implementation to meet the 2030 Agenda [9].

These figures were cited by José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, ECLAC Executive Secretary. He said, “Unfortunately, it is estimated that only 22% of these goals are either met or on track, leaving more than three-quarters of the goals that deviate from the intended path” [9].

Meanwhile, the ECLAC report looked at concrete progress on five SDGs: Ending Poverty, Zero

Hunger, Tackling Climate Change, “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,” and “Partnership to Achieve These Goals.” ECLAC predicts the region’s GDP growth of 1.9% in 2024 (which is already doubtful), while in 2023 this growth was 1.4% [29].

The message of the latest ECLAC meeting is clear: the region should significantly accelerate its efforts. It is a call for urgent action and a reminder that while the goals are ambitious, they are also critical to the future well-being and sustainability of the region. The time for gradual progress has passed; now comes the moment of transformational change.

This message was realized in the first summit of the World Federation of the Chambers of America, which was attended by more than 800 companies and key world trade leaders to discuss opportunities and digital transformation. The World Federation of Chambers, a non-governmental and apolitical forum of the International Chamber of Commerce (hereinafter – ICC), allows more than 12,000 chambers around the world to exchange information. ICC itself is the world’s largest business organization, representing more than 45 million companies in more than 100 countries. Its main goal is to promote international trade and investment.

On May 16–17, 2024, more than 800 national and international companies, at least 40 heads of chambers of commerce, and representatives of such well-known institutions as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Latin America and Caribbean Development Bank (CAF), and the United Nations gathered at the Bogota Chamber of Commerce and Industry (hereinafter – CCB). Guests of honour included John W.H. Denton, Secretary-General of the ICC; Rifat Hisarcikloğlu, President of the World Federation of Chambers; and Ron Busby, president of Black Chambers, Inc. Their participation highlighted the diverse and inclusive nature of the summit aimed at addressing the critical challenges facing global and regional trade today.

Ovidio Claros, president of CCB, in his speech pointed to the dual focus of the summit – academic discourse and practical business results. “We aim not only to bring together 1,500 members representing 12,000 chambers worldwide, but also to facilitate substantial business transactions through our first ever session to establish business connections,” Claros explained.

The launch during the Women’s Chambers of Commerce Council summit is an initiative highlighting the summit’s commitment to inclusivity and empowerment in the business world. It aligns with the broader goals of the World Chambers of Commerce (WCF) to improve the access of the government platform for entrepreneurs to global markets, improve business sustainability and combat climate change, and promote the inclusion and empowerment of women.

It should be recognized, as global dynamics change, LAC becomes a key player in strengthening global supply chains. Overcoming trade tensions, the countries in the region are using their agricultural and manufacturing sectors to secure a greater role in the global market [18].

Of course, innovative people from LAC countries play a major role in achieving sustainable development goals. Annually, the Horse Strategy Consultancy (H.O.R.S.E.) assesses the performance of the region’s senior executives based on their public contributions and impact on public issues.

In 2024, the list of 100 most innovative business leaders in LAC was headed by Argentinean Marcos Galperín, founder and CEO of MercadoLibre; David Vélez of Nubank; and Martín Migoya of Globant [16].

SDG 8 includes not only economic growth but also the concept of “decent work.” For LAC to talk about decent work for the majority of the working-age population is premature when in the region informal unemployment is more than 50%. Meanwhile, according to a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), unemployment in the LAC tends to decline: from 52.3% in 2022 to 51.8% in 2023 and to 51.7% in 2024 [27]. In absolute terms, this will mean that from 188.6 million unemployed in 2023, it has grown to 190.8 million people in 2024 and 192.7 million people in 2025 [27]. From the above figures, it follows that demographic shifts should be taken into account as determining factors in the implementation of the sustainable development goals for the LAC region.

The LAC countries are now home to 652 million people, and the labor force is 331 million people, which is 50.8% of the region’s population. By 2050, this figure will increase sharply and reach 54.6%, or 402.7 million people. This forecast was formulated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) [28].

Therefore, targeted strategies at both the regional and national levels are required to increase workforce engagement, reduce poverty, and combat inequality (including gender). The growing labor force, combined with the diversification of its composition, provides an unprecedented opportunity to change the labor market in Latin America and the Caribbean. Policies that address the unique needs and concerns of women and older workers are useful and necessary for the economic viability and social cohesion of the region. Promoting, at the regional level, labor integration and gender equality is not just an option but an imperative for Latin America.

As a result, we can say that for the LAC countries, the conditions and opportunities for sustainable development lie in closer regional economic integration and the expansion of “friendshoring,” in solving security problems on an intraregional basis, and in more active interaction on the world stage with leading developing countries.

New challenges facing LAC countries in implementing the UN SDGs. The conviction of non-compliance with the UN SDGs by 2030 by the LAC countries increases given the new negative factors for the implementation of the sustainable development goals, which arose both due to internal changes in these countries and due to external influence on the countries of the region.

The new threats have emerged related to environmental and climate changes, which are additional factors in the implementation of the UN SDGs.

So in Brazil there is a sharp reduction in protected areas, which undermines the conservation of biodiversity and mitigation of climate change. The preservation of these areas is crucial for Brazil in fulfilling its COP 15 commitment to achieve zero deforestation by 2030. Despite the efforts of the current president to restore environmental protection, the Rural Front’s control over the National Congress continues to threaten protected areas. Cristalino II State Park, located in the southern Amazon region of Mato Grosso State, is in danger of liquidation due to fraudulent land claims.

Over the past three years, the number of internally displaced persons has increased in LAC countries. The problem stems from both the rise of military and criminal pressure, especially in

Colombia [6] and Haiti [13], and the rise of the anthropogenic factor associated with climate change and natural disasters. According to the Global Report on Internal Displacement (hereinafter – GRID) of the Center for Monitoring Internal Displacement (hereinafter – IDMC) in the LAC countries, at the end of 2024 [12], the number of internal displacements of persons doubled in six years [1].

The report emphasizes that Brazil recorded the largest number of internally displaced people – 1.1 million people related to climate factors. Most of these cases are due to floods in Rio Grande do Sul, where unusual precipitation flooded an area approximately the size of the United Kingdom [1].

Internal displacement related to conflict and violence in Latin America has more than doubled to 1.5 million people. More than 60% of these movements originated in Haiti, where gang violence continues to fuel the exodus of people from the capital, Port-au-Prince. According to the GRID IDMC Report for 2024, the increase in criminal violence in Haiti has tripled compared to 2023. Ecuador, for the first time, reported that conflict and violence caused about 101,000 movements in 2024. Quito authorities are fighting the spread of criminal networks that operate near the capital and along the coast, which prompted President Guillermo Lasso to declare the presence of an armed conflict and use the army.

In the most economically prosperous Mexico, almost seven million of its citizens are victims of extortion every year: more than 18,000 a day, 780 an hour, and 13 a minute [11].

In general, across all LAC countries, the narrative is growing pressure on vulnerable populations, whether it’s rural families swept away by floods, urban residents caught in the path of a hurricane, or poor neighborhoods gripped by armed gangs.

The fight against crime in the LAC led to unexpected side results. According to “The Lancet Public Health,” if the incidence of tuberculosis in the world has decreased by 8.7% over the past five years, the number of cases in Latin America has increased by 19%. Researchers attribute this increase to the region’s rapid increase in prison population. In six countries – Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, and El Salvador – the prison population is growing exponentially.

These countries now account for almost 80% of tuberculosis cases in Latin America and more than 82% of prisoners [19].

External factors that exacerbate the struggle of Latin American governments with domestic and transregional crime should include the D. Trump administration's mass deportation policy [25]. According to the decision of the US president, illegal immigrants classified as criminal gangs are sent not only to El Salvador prisons [10] and to prison at the Guantanamo Bay military base, but also they are returned to the countries of origin – Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and other countries – which creates additional complexity in the implementation of the SDGs [3]. When Colombian President Gustavo Petro denied U.S. military aircraft carrying deported Colombians, the White House responded with immediate economic retaliation by imposing duties and potential sanctions [5].

All foreigners, including Hispanics living in the United States without permission, are subject to deportation. This applies to both persons who secretly crossed the border and foreigners who entered legally but overstayed the visa or violated its conditions. Also, non-citizens can be deported if they commit a crime or are found to pose a threat to public safety, even if their immigration status is valid.

This is how foreigners in the United States on student visas and even green cards, which give the right to live in the country “constantly,” got into Trump's networks. Some of them participated in pro-Palestinian activities. In January 2025, President D. Trump issued an executive order promising to deport foreigners who sympathize with the Palestinian group Hamas, which launched a new war with Israel in October 2023. The United States classifies Hamas as a terrorist organization [2].

Failing to appear at an immigration court hearing could result in the deportation of a large number of illegal border crossings that have been allowed to remain in the USA in recent years, at least temporarily, to qualify for asylum, which proves they have legitimate grounds to fear persecution. D. Trump effectively banned migrants from seeking asylum at the border.

The attitude towards Cuban immigrants has changed in the United States. If earlier they had a special status, and the American immigration

authorities looked at their semi-legal position through their fingers, then with the advent of the administration of President D. Trump, the situation fundamentally changed. Now Cuban immigrants who have lived in the United States for decades, as well as those who decide to leave Cuba, are forced to seek their refuge instead of Miami in Curitiba, Brazil's agricultural region [24].

The new and critical factor in the sustainable and stable development of the LAC countries must include the US trade policy of 2025, with imposed trade duties on the part of President D. Trump. The United States imposed new duties – a 10% levy on most Latin American imports that went into effect on April 5, 2025, and even higher rates – 15% for Venezuela and 18% for Nicaragua from April 9, 2025 – causing concern and caution across the region [30].

Especially in Brazil, which delivered about \$40 billion to the United States in 2024 as an export – oil, aircraft, and coffee. The tariffs did not affect Mexico until the conclusion of a new trade agreement, the deadline of which expires on July 9, 2025. Therefore, Mexico's reaction was calm and balanced; its business elite know that such a shift in US policy rarely remains within the same borders. Any tension on regional trade could indirectly hit Mexico's export-oriented economy, especially if Latin American partners become less competitive and regional integration efforts begin to fall apart [30].

It should be pointed out that the LAC countries are in no hurry to conclude new trade agreements with the United States with a revision of trade duties, prudently believing that these decisions should be made first by their leading partners.

Meanwhile, the uncertainty that has arisen in world trade due to President D. Trump's actions forces both large and especially small exporters to look for alternative American markets, without waiting for the date of July 9.

Results. As a result of the study, it was possible to clarify the possible outcomes of the UN approaches to the implementation of the SDG 2030. It has been established that LAC countries are unable to fulfill them either on their own or with the help of international organizations. The main goals of SDG 1, 2, and 8 remain unattainable, both due to the expected decline in economic growth during the period 2026–2029 and the social situation of the population in the LAC countries.

Past problems of cross-border crime, drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping have caused new internal movements of millions of people. Despite the increase in the number of prisoners in LAC countries, the problem of crime remains one of the main concerns of Latin American governments.

The problem of the migration exodus is resolved very slowly, and its influence remains at almost the same level, and in some countries (Haiti, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, El Salvador) it is growing.

In addition, new negative factors have been added that hinder the implementation of the UN SDGs. These are environmental and climate factors in Latin America, the American policy of mass deportations of Hispanics from the United States, creating additional pressure among the most vulnerable segments of the population, and American tariff policy in the Latin American region.

At the same time, a “window of opportunity” opens for the LAC countries to enter the world stage to expand their cooperation with countries of other continents in Africa and Eurasia, both directly and within the BRICS and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

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