THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER: AN OBSTACLE FOR DEVELOPMENT

THE MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA

PROLOGUE
MIGUEL DÍAZ-CANEL BERMÚDEZ

COLLECTIVE OF AUTHORS

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The valuable contribution of specialists, experts and researchers from various Cuban institutions has been decisive and is acknowledged in the preparation of this volume. Among those institutions are the Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Mundial; the Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Internacional; the Centro de Investigaciones de Política Internacional and; the Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales Raúl Roa García. Outstanding have been the contributions of the Academy of Sciences of Cuba and of researchers and specialists of the Ministry of Sciences, Technology and Environment; of Cuban institution BIOCUBAFARMA; and officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with their comprehensive experience in international issues. Likewise significant have been the input of experts from various countries who sent their contributions either directly or through the Progressive International, and whose views helped in the presentation of ideas and concepts.

CONTENT

PROLOGUE

This book has been the result of the contributions from several experts and scholars in Cuba and other countries, as well as other specialists highly experienced in foreign affairs in Cuba, especially experts in multilateral affairs, in international economics and development, and other topics. Furthermore, other colleagues experienced in government issues related to the economy, science, innovation and development have provided their expertise. The book includes various analytical perspectives about the complex problems in international economic relations and the challenges or development, though with the common approach on the need to build an international economic order different from the current one, as this is unfair and unsustainable.

The focus of the book is, therefore, the international economic order, its characteristics, the way in which it has benefitted the interests of developed countries and their ruling classes at the expense of underdevelopment and stagnation of countries in the South. The point of departure was the certainty of the fact that, from the very beginning, the Group of 77 aimed at representing the interests of developing countries from an irrational and unbalanced order, against which the Group drafted, decades ago, specific proposals approved by the United Nations and its organs, but that have never been implemented.

The text draws from Cuba's action within the Group practically since its foundation, but in particular from the experience attained during the months when Cuba occupied the Presidency of the Group of 77 and China, from January 2023 to January 2024. Such unique work of coordinating efforts, uniting wills, smoothing out differences and finding one common voice among the governments that represent the overwhelming majority of the planet's population aims at defending their stand in many forums and international negotiations, while providing the Government which presides over the Group an extraordinary perspective which Cuba has sought to record and present to the countries of the so-called Global South and the future presidencies of the Group. The experience has meant a wealth derived from the proactive exchange with partners in developed countries, high-ranking leaders in United Nations agencies, as well as organizations from the civil society to promote, establish and put up the interests of the Group of 77 and China.

The book is also marked by the experience suffered during the pandemics of COVID 19, which nature, outreach and consequences laid bare the unfair and unequal characteristics of the world in which we live. As the disease spread around the world, creativity and solidarity became evident, but also crude selfishness and disregard for the fate of the population in many developing countries fighting against the virus. Many are the examples of this unfair scenario, all associated with and result of the social impact of the current international economic order. Such negative impact can be perceived in the sectors of health, education, food, labor, housing, access to drinking water, the risks in the face of environmental and climate change, civil and social rights and especially the ri of the Group or to speak on behalf of itght to a dignified life.

The criteria included in this volume and the recommendations submitted reflect the stand of the Cuban government, shared most probably by the majority of the members of the Group of 77 and China, as well as by many organizations, activists and experts who are concerned by the issues of development. However, this material does not intend to present a unanimous stand of the Group, or speak on behalf of it. Nor can it be viewed a platform of consensual criteria of the members of the Group of 77 and China. As a contribution of Cuba, it rather intends to become a substantial reference for the future work of the Group.

Though the time frame for the preparation of the book was very short, it was possible to make exchanges beyond Cuban borders and include contributions and opinions from many sources, perhaps not as thorough as we would have liked, but nevertheless as the vehicle to promote an indispensable dialogue and to call for more contributions and debate. It was necessary to group academic specialized information, organize such information and compare them and contrast them with the political stand of the Cuban government and the governments of other countries stands of the Group of 77. Efforts were made to consult many of the arguments and positions formulated in recent years in multilateral spaces. Much contemporary literature was consulted on the most complex aspects of the international economic and political relations in the convulse world of today, as well as the theory on political economy and international relations.

This book is not intended to provide an assessment of the international economy in its current conditions, nor of the crisis that has been affecting it for decades, though there are more than enough references and arguments that analyze the topic. Neither do we intend to use out the work schedule of the Group of 77 and China, or its comprehensive agenda at the United Nations.

The book is divided into nine chapters in which specific problems, by sectors, are discussed to show the inability of the current international economic order to meet the development problems faced by countries in the South. Concrete action proposals are presented to face those problems while noting how the global economic crisis occurs in each sector. The final chapter approaches a group of proposals for action not as pending tasks of the Group or as commitments subject to negotiation, but rather as recommendations that could be a reference in the objective of attaining more just and sustainable conditions in the aspirations for the development the countries in the South deserve.

The Governments of the member countries of the Group of 77 and China every day face huge and innumerable challenges to their stability, sustainability and progress of their respective economies and the wellbeing of their populations. They face many diverse scenarios, various threats and priorities. Their respective political perspectives differ when coping with the problems in the current world. Each country can, with all reason, say that the major political challenges they face are unique. However, they all are in the same position of disadvantage imposed by the international economic order and, therefore, they all have the same responsibility to overcome such extraordinary limitation. Such extraordinary reality id the central topic of this book, which aims at contributing to a debate that is as just as it is urgent.

Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez

I

THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA IN THE FACE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER

What we have in common is that we are all, in relation to the developed world, dependent, not interdependent nations. Each of our economies has developed as a by-product and a subsidiary of development in the industrialised North, and is externally oriented. We are not the prime movers of our own destiny. We are ashamed to admit it; but economically we are dependencies –semi-colonies at best– not sovereign states.

[…] For the object is to complete the liberation of the Third World countries from external domination.

JULIUS K. NYERERE, February 1979

The Group of 77 is composed by 133 nations, with the addition of the People's Republic of China, for a total of 134. Hence its name: Group of 77 and China. Their territories are inhabited by 6.3 thousand million people, equivalent to 79.06 per cent of the world population. Not all of its members are countries described by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as «developing countries,» which are 152. But it does gather the majority of them. As underdeveloped or developing countries, they are part of what has been described, from the geographic viewpoint as the «South» or «Global South,» that in the past has also been identified as the «Third World.»

The Group is heterogeneous, and there are great differences between its members: their respective territorial extension, the size of their populations, their natural resources, the access to energy sources, their respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the lack of access to the sea of several member countries, the insular condition of others, or the conditions of those whose territories are mostly deserts or semi-deserts, the diversity of political systems, the multicultural traditions and plural ideological trends are some of the differences. They share, however, together with the rest of the so-called «developing» countries, the characteristic of being almost all heirs to a past as colonial territories of European metropolis, of having been subject to the exploitation and plunder of their natural —and human— resources to benefit the former colonial powers, and also being today, or having been all victims of neocolonialism.

Since these countries obtained their political independence, they have all suffered he disadvantages imposed by an economic and political order designed by the former colonial metropolis: a predatory system which secures the current developed countries privileged conditions in the creation and enjoyment of wealth; an order that also perpetuates and worsens the current world social and economic crisis and its inevitable political consequences. It is well known that the transcendental decolonization process occurred in the second half of the 20th century also gave way to strategies designed mostly by the former colonialist metropolis and the United States to retain their control over the wealth and the results of the work of the former colonies. Achieving political independence did not mean attaining economic independence, and consequently full sovereignty.

The majority of the member countries of the Group of 77 and China and of the so-called «developing countries» are the victims of the current economic and multidimensional crisis in the world; of the cyclic disarrange of international commerce and finances; of the abusive and unequal exchange; of the growing scientific, technological and knowledge gap; of the perils of progressive destruction and exhaustion of natural resources on which the life of our planet depends, and which has worsened as a result of the unsustainable production and consumption patterns promoted by capitalism, especially in developed countries. The peoples of those countries are the ones that suffer poverty, hunger, and death by treatable diseases, illiteracy, human displacements and other consequences of underdevelopment.

The Group of 77 has been united for more than half a century in the necessary, unavoidable and determining challenge of transforming the regulations that currently rule the international political and economic system and in the struggle for attaining and implementing a more just and balanced international economic order which can free humankind of the great and dangerous hardships that threaten it, and that can offer underdeveloped nations real opportunities to develop and ensure their populations life conditions that are fair, dignified and sustainable. This order, as opposed to the current order, will prevent a powerful country, like the United States, from having the capability and freedom to arbitrarily implement economic coercive measures with political objectives to any country, especially against developing countries, in detriment of whole populations.

In 1974, when the United Nations General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, the text of the instrument included the following description:

> [...] The benefits of technical progress are not shared equitably by all members of the international community. The developing countries, which constitute 70 per cent of the world's population, account for only 30 per cent of the world's income. It has proved impossible to achieve an even and balanced development of the international community under the existing international economic order. The gap between the developed and the developing countries continues to widen in a system that was established at a time when most of the developing countries did not even exist as independent States and which perpetuates inequalities.

It is evident that such reality described almost fifty years ago has become even worse in the midst of the situation developing countries face today. It could be even stated that the conditions of inequality and exploitation described then, far from being mitigated, have sharpened. The New International Economic Order (NIEO) approved then was never implemented, because the then developed countries did everything in their power to mutilate the capacity of the United Nations and prevent the implementation of the measures presented in the Program of Action so that they could ensure the continuation and protection of the unequal international economic order which favor them.

Truth must be said. The governments of developed countries denied then and continue to deny today their responsibility in the causes and conditions, both historic and present that originated in the past and perpetuate now such unfair deformation, in spite of the fact that they conquered and looted whole continents during centuries. Those countries established colonialism, reinstated slavery and created modern imperialism. The colonial system of plunder implemented in an explosive manner since the 15th century is the original source of the huge inequality existing today between the nations that conventionally and disregarding geographic specificities associate politically in the so-called North and those that get together in the so-called South. Their mode of functioning has changed throughout history, but the exploiting essence forged since then continues to be a fundamental and valid characteristic of the system, in spite of the important political, economic and social transformations occurred in the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century.

Instead of implementing the actions proposed in the NIEO, neoliberal policies were pushed to give way to a world or a hyper-globalized international order with the promise that supporting private business, expanding supply chains and strengthening competition, among other practices, would promote trade and investment and would revive economic growth, especially in developing countries.

However, the reality has been quite different, with an ostensible concentration of the market and wealth. Corporative profits have increased, mostly those of the great transnationals, while inequalities of income have sharpened, and as a rule, there has been a contraction of domestic markets. All these issues have limited or damaged the possibilities of economic growth and expansion, especially in developing countries.

Far from being reduced, the gap has widened. To secure the convertible currencies developing economies require, most developing countries have entered a vicious circle: they become even more dependent on the need to attract volatile and uncontrolled capital flows, on exports of basic commodities, on manufactured productions of low complexity and little added value and on remittances from abroad.

Consequently, the rules that govern international economic relations, with the various adaptations in recent decades, have continued to ensure the condition of underdevelopment of almost two thirds of the world population. In fact, since the 1980s, the momentum of neoliberal capitalist trends has stressed the economic dependence of developing countries –with few exceptions–, and contributed to erode the true exercise of these countries sovereignty. The validity of the international economic order that has prevailed since the past century and the strengthening of neoliberal policies imposed under the leadership and pressure of the government of the United States constitute a denial of the Right to Development that the United Nations Organization has recognized as an inalienable human right.

It is important to recall that in 1986 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128). The records of the session register the solitary vote against the United States of America, country that since the n has been denying the universal, indivisible, and interdependent nature of the right to development as a human right. The declaration presupposes that, for the full realization of the right to development, all peoples should be entitled to exercise self-determination, which, by virtue of Article 1.2 «…the exercise to their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources.»

At the midpoint to 2030, the General Secretary of the United Nations in his report «Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet» (A/78/80-E/2023/64), states that only 12 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track. According to the Report, under current trends, in 2030, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty and in the area of education, some 84 million children will be out of school and 300 million children or young people who attend school will leave unable to read and write.

The current conditions in which the international economy functions prevents the available resources to provide their maximum potential so that developing countries can advance in a sustainable manner. The design created supports the interests of an excluding capitalism that assigns communities and nations specific positions in the in the chains of value, devised in such ways that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. Steps must be taken towards a more just and balanced new international economic order that favors the realization of the right to development, or the goals proposed will be far out of fulfillment.

An effective democratization of the international economic relations would increase the participation of the Global South in the adoption of decisions in the international arena. In the economic, commercial and financial sectors, the search for equity, nondiscrimination, transparency and international cooperation are indispensable to make effective the right to development.

Discrimination against certain countries for political reasons or other non-economic considerations prevents the access of peoples to development. The use and proliferation on the part of some States of unilateral coercive measures contrary to international law mean, in all its effects, a death blow to the exercise of the right to development by the peoples and communities of the States that suffer its impact.

Usually, such unilateral and arbitrary measures are presented by the States that apply them as sanctions, trying to legitimate such measures by virtue of an alleged illicit action previously taken by those States against which the measures are directed. Furthermore, the measures are announced as being designed in such a way that they only punish the subjects –natural or juridical– who have been signaled as objectives, a fallacy of devastating consequences for all sectors in the country affected and become a flagrant violation of the human rights of the persons that suffer the effects of such measures. The economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba is a clear example of this.

In general, developed countries apply such measures and developing countries, many of them members of the Group of 77 and China, are the target. Mostly, the alleged actions such measures intend to punish are nothing but the efforts of independent governments to exercise their right to self-determination and to recover the sovereignty over their natural resources and the national economy as acknowledged by international law.

Humankind has achieved a scientific-technical potential that was beyond belief just a few decades ago, with an extraordinary capacity for generating wealth and wellbeing, which in conditions of greater equality and justice could ensure higher living standards, with more dignity, comfort, healthier and sustainable for almost all the inhabitants of the planet.

However, in spite of decades of efforts, conferences, meetings, commitments, and of resolutions, declarations and programs adopted, the reality described in 1974 continues to put stress on the life of the majority of the planet's population. The pandemic of COVID 19 the world suffered from 2019, with remnants still present in 2023, and its socio-economic consequences, laid bare the obvious unfair disadvantages of developing countries and their societies, unprepared to cope with an onslaught in the midst of an international order that pushed them to the background and limits their access to medical drugs, technology, resources and essential medical services to treat their population.

It is estimated that the pandemic pushed some 70 million people to a situation of extreme poverty in 2020, the highest number in a year since the register and follow-up of these figures began in 1990.

In 2022, between 75 million and 95 million more people could have been living in extreme poverty, as compared with the projections previous to COVID 19. If current trends persist, by the year 2030 approximately 575 million people will be living in extreme poverty. All this, of course, had a more harmful impact for developing countries and their populations.

But such an unequal situation was not created by the pandemic. Nor is it the result of the biological harmful activity of an aggressive virus, no matter how effective it may be. This situation is the result of an international order created by man and strongly defended by those who profit from it. The virus, its unequal impact, and the also unequal capacity of the countries to cope with it, showed simply and in a more explicit and visible manner, the conditions of inequality that have existed for many years and of which the world has been warned. The numbers are highly illustrative, even if such a devastating pandemic had not occurred.

Poverty and extreme multidimensional poverty continue to harm millions of adults, children and elders around the world. The world Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in 2023 uses the most recent comparable data for 110 countries: 22 low-income countries; 85 middle-level income countries and 3 high income countries. Approximately 92 percent of the population of developing regions lives in those countries. Between 824 million and 991 million out of the 1 100 million poor people do not have access to sanitary facilities, housing or fuel. More than 600 million poor persons live with one person with malnutrition in their homes.

In sharp contrast, the so-called super rich countries have accumulated during the past decade 50 per cent of the new wealth generated at global level. The fortune of the «milmillionaires», or people whose personal fortune surpasses a thousand million US dollars (from now on USD), is growing at a disconcerting rate of 2 700 million USD per day, while 1 700 workers live in countries where inflation is above salaries.

The richest one percent has accumulated almost two thirds of the new wealth generated since 2020 globally (estimated in 42 billion USD), almost double than the other 99 per cent of humankind. Since 2020, during the COVID 19 pandemic and the living cost crisis, the richest one per cent accumulated 26 billion USD (63 per cent of the new wealth generated), while the rest of the world population only had 16 billion USD, or 37 per cent. For each dollar of new wealth received by a person of the 99 percent poorer, a mil-millionaire pockets 1.7 million USD. This is added to a decade of historic earnings in which the number of mil-millionaires and their riches doubled.

The extraordinary growth of commercial earnings in sectors such as energy and food, has again triggered the wealth of the richer. According to a report published in 2023 by OXFAM, 95 great companies in the sectors of energy and food more than doubled their profits in 2022 compared to the previous year, with extraordinary earnings amounting to a total of 306 thousand million USD, of which 257 thousand million (84 per cent) were used to remunerate their shareholders of millions of people suffer chronic hunger and still do not have access to energy sources for their most basic needs.

The Walton family dynasty, for example, owner of 50 per cent of the Walmart multinational, received 8 500 million USD in dividends during 2022. In Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom these huge corporative profits have contributed at least to 50 per cent of inflation growth.

The wealth of the six richest people in the world was 822 thousand millions USD in 2022, while it is estimated that the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), fourteen independent countries and two non-autonomous Caribbean territories, with a total population of 18.9 million, estimated in 2021 that the total amount of their GDP was 82 thousand million USD, or one tenth of the fortune of only six people.

It is not surprising then that, with such an absurd distribution and enjoyment of wealth and the creation of wealth, more than 820 million people in the whole world suffer hunger, or the equivalent to approximately one out of every ten people. Nor can it be surprising that millions of children suffer malnutrition, retarded growth, low weight in relation to their height, lack of micronutrients mostly in developing countries and regions.

These numbers only show consequences in a summarized manner, but don not detail the causes of the problem, or show the most evident impact of the international economic order. Neither they explain the diverse ways in which the economic order is associated with the economic crisis, or describe the unfair practices of international trade and how these function as a system of looting which damages developing countries. They do not explain the «funding for development» as a way to increase dependency and limit sovereignty prerogatives in dozens of countries. Or analyze thoroughly the issue of the foreign debt, which currently is a modern form of slavery. Or go deeper into the specific situation of food and agriculture; or of the access, use and commercialization of energy and its sources; nor they comprehensively explain the scope and impact on the environment. Or illustrate the growing gap between developed and developing countries in the areas of knowledge, scientific advances and the role of technology and innovation; or their significant role in managing the leap towards development, if instead of remaining as exclusive privilege of rich countries, conditions would be created for poorer countries to enjoy and take advantage of them.

Numbers do not illustrate clearly enough the significant and destructive role of transnational companies in the current, unfair and unsustainable international economic relations. Or show the privileges which –promoted almost by force, and mainly by the United States government since the 1980s– have facilitated these huge conglomerates to expand their predating actions in developing countries. Neoliberal policies do not give details on how union rights have been breached, how the protection to workers and environmental rules have been obliterated and how the sovereign rights of nations to use and enjoy their natural resources have been wiped out, or about how the prerogatives of national governments to foster their own genuine industrialization policies have been also wiped out.

When in 1974 the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, the following was defined among its principles:

> Regulation and supervision of the activities of transnational corporations by taking measures in the interest of the national economies of the countries where such transnational corporations operate on the basis of the full sovereignty of those countries.

The Program of Action adopted for the New International Economic Order was clear and direct:

All efforts should be made to formulate, adopt and implement an international code of conduct for transnational corporations:

a) To prevent interference in the internal affairs of the countries where they operate and their collaboration with con racist regimes and colonial administrations;
b) To regulate their activities in host countries to eliminate restrictive business practices and to conform to the national development plans and objectives of developing countries, and in this context, facilitate, as necessary, the review and revision of previously concluded arrangements;
c) To bring about assistance, transfer of technology and management skills to developing countries on equitable and favorable terms;

d) To regulate the repatriation of profits accruing from their operations, taking into account the legitimate interests of all parties concerned;
e) To promote reinvestment of their profits in developing countries.

Instead of being ruled and supervised; instead of respecting the will of governments and legislations; instead of eliminating restrictive commercial practices; instead of providing technical assistance and transferring technology and knowledge; instead of promoting the investment of utilities in destination countries, transnational companies have had in the past fifty years a freedom of action that was not thought of in the 1970s.

For years and with the prominence of the Group of 77 and China, work was done at the United Nations in order to achieve a code of conduct that would govern the behavior of these corporations, and ensure the rights and protection of developing countries, their citizens and their own economic actors. The effort was abandoned, unfortunately, at the beginning of the 1990s, with the so-called end of the Cold War, the advance towards a unipolar world and the hegemonic consolidation of the United States to impose its neoliberal economic policies for the benefit of itself and its citizens, allies in the so-called North.

Thus, the effort to achieve an instrument whose purpose was to provide a minimum of justice and opportunity for the economies of developing countries and their societies was renounced, in the context of the progressive expansion of abundant capital from developed economies in search of new markets and scenarios where productive use can be ensured.

The abandonment of this process was in no way a fortuitous result of the geopolitical transformations in the world arena, but rather that these transformations were accompanied by a well-elaborated strategy, aimed at dismantling all the mechanisms and structures that were intended to contribute to establishing a more just and equitable international order. Thus, the reform process of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors that began in the early years of the 1990s, which, among others, put an end to the effort to develop a Code of Conduct for transnational companies and the United Nations Commission on Transnational Corporations (subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council), was part of that Western strategy aimed at suppressing multilateral processes contrary to its policy interests.

Already since the end of the Second World War, the allied capitalist powers, led by the United States, had established the pillars of defense, protection and impunity for the behavior of large transnational corporations. A branch of the World Bank was even created whose *raison d'etre* has been to invest in private companies and, more importantly, the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) was created. The Bank has also been a promoter of international investment treaties, which guarantee the protection of capital owners, that is, transnational corporations against the laws and justice system of the countries where they invest, and above the sovereign prerogatives of those countries.

This is what is known as the legal system of dispute resolution between the investor and the State, through which corporations can sue in international courts or in any country against a government that, in compliance with its sovereign obligations, adopts environmental policies, social justice policies, economic policies or any kind that the foreign investor considers detrimental to its commercial interests.

History records with sufficient eloquence how, when a government refuses to comply with that system, it becomes a target of the hostility of the imperialist powers, of coups d'état or attempts thereof, and of open campaigns of political subversion.

Another facet of the perversity of the legal mechanism for the settlement of disputes between the investor and the State was duly documented in Report A/78/168 submitted to the United Nations General Assembly by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. David Boyd, on human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a healthy, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It shows that this mechanism has become a serious obstacle to the actions required to confront the current environmental and human rights crisis on a global scale. In this Report the Special Rapporteur also exemplifies how transnational companies in the mining and oil industries have made profits in excess of US$100 billion as a result of decisions reached through these largely secret legal processes. It illustrates how they have deprived targeted governments of significant financial resources that could otherwise have been invested in combating climate change or implementing environmental and development policies in line with their national priorities.

The conflict of development, underdevelopment and imperialist domination inherited from colonialism is largely based on the question of who are or should be the legitimate owners of a country's natural resources and the wealth generated therein, including their national monetary reserves. This explains the dark history suffered by certain governments of developing countries starting in the 1930s, which set the goal of implementing national industrialization processes, with import substitution strategies and greater control over the natural resources that were the heritage of the respective countries. All were subject to destabilizing policies promoted by imperialism, in some cases with unquestionable criminal characteristics and in all of them violating international law. Thus, with the active role of the intelligence services of the United States and other powers, coups d'état, strong destabilization campaigns or even assassinations were orchestrated against the governments of Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico, Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina, Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Mohammad Mosaddegh in Iran, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Patrice Lumumba in Congo, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Sukarno (Kusno Sosrodihardjo) in Indonesia and Salvador Allende in Chile. All of them, and they are not the only ones, committed the alleged sin of trying to promote independent national development, on the basis of the right tacitly conferred on them by the condition of sovereign States.

It is a behavior that explains the obsessively hostile policy of the United States against Cuba since 1959. It is the essential reason for the armed aggressions, the assassination attempts on Cuban political leaders, the terrorist acts and the subversion programs that the United States government has carried out and is carrying out against Cuba. It is the cause of the economic, commercial and financial blockade whose end the international community demands, almost unanimously.

Various United Nations resolutions confirm the full permanent sovereignty of States over the natural resources and economic activities of their respective countries. Resolution 3201 of the VI special session of the UN General Assembly, which in 1974 established the Declaration on a New International Economic Order, proposes among the principles to be fully respected the following:

> Full permanent sovereignty of every State over its natural resources and all economic activities. In order to safeguard these resources, each State is entitled to exercise effective control over them and their exploitation with means suitable to its own situation, including the right to nationalization or transfer of ownership to its nationals, this right being an expression of the full sovereignty of the State. No State may be subjected to economic, political or any type of coercion to prevent the free and full exercise of this inalienable right.

The Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, passed by a UN General Assembly Resolution also in 1974 after several years of debates and deliberations, was more precise and categorical with regards to the prerogatives of States in their exercise of their rights over the national wealth of their countries. In its Article 2, the Charter states the following:

1. Every State has and shall freely exercise full permanent sovereignty, including possession, use and disposal, over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activities.

2. Each State has the right:

   (a) To regulate and exercise authority over foreign investment within its national jurisdiction in accordance with its laws and regulations and in conformity with its national objectives and priorities. No State shall be compelled to grant preferential treatment to foreign investment;

   (b) To regulate and supervise the activities of transnational corporations within its national jurisdiction and take measures to ensure that such activities comply with its laws, rules and regulations and conform with its economic and social policies […];

   (c) To nationalize, expropriate or transfer ownership of foreign property, in which case appropriate compensation should be paid by the State adopting such measures, taking into account its relevant laws and regulations and all circumstances that the State considers pertinent. In any case when the question of compensation gives rise to a controversy, it shall be settled under the domestic law of the nationalizing State and its tribunals, unless it is freely and mutually agreed by all States concerned that other peaceful means be sought on the basis of the sovereign equality of States and in accordance with the principle of free choice of means.

No UN resolution denies or has proposed to deny these principles and rights, but they are challenged in practical terms by the legal system of investor-state dispute settlement to which developing countries are forced to submit. It is a system that is not protected by any decision of the United Nations, despite which it has become a sine qua non that developing countries must accept in their aspiration to attract foreign investment.

Under this system, legal disputes due to discrepancies regarding events that occurred in the country receiving the investment are settled in settings outside the judicial system where the economic event occurs and where the activity of the transnational company is legally registered, whether in its own capacity or through a local subsidiary. As a rule and contrary to what the cited resolutions establish, they are settled in tribunals or arbitration courts generally located in Europe or North America, almost always made up of judges from developed countries and with extensive experience in transnational business activity. Many of these disputes concern the possession and processing of natural resources, mining exploitation, the extractive industry, workers' rights and the use of diverse lands and landscapes. They also concern national measures or policies for the protection of communities and the environment, or social development programs, in which the State and the Government, as representatives of national sovereignty, appear as accused and defendants.

It is evident that in this way the right that the UN declares to have conferred on the State to exercise sovereignty over the natural resources and economy of its country is nullified.

It is a reality supported by a strong ideological and conceptual component, which places the interest and rights of a transnational corporation above those of the people, and of course, above national governments. International lawsuits abound, the results of which end up forcing governments to change or undo entirely sovereign policies and even pay million or multi-million dollar compensation to a transnational company for the alleged damage to its commercial interest, even if the government's action responded to a political or social cause absolutely legitimate and justified.

It has been largely on the basis of these practices and this philosophy that the system of capitalist accumulation promoted since the 1970s has been imposed, developed and protected.

The so-called neoliberal globalization, presented since the end of the 20th century as a supposedly natural and inevitable phenomenon of the social, political and economic evolution of the human race, has in reality been a cold and carefully calculated policy of transformation of the system of capitalist accumulation and exploitation. Its purpose has been to respond to the exhaustion of the economic policies prevailing since the Second World War that provided relative stability to capitalist development and reproduction. The goal has also been to overcome the limitations posed to the international dominance of imperialism in the last decades of the last century and to develop new forms of overexploitation of the economies of underdeveloped countries for the benefit of big capital, and prosperity and citizen peace in the developed countries, particularly their privileged elites.

As can be gathered from John Smith's book Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century, the set of financial imbalances that began to be experienced in Europe and the United States in August 2007 as the first signs of the global economic crisis of 2008, were the result of the secondary effects of two corrective processes adopted by the capitalist economies developed since the 1970s, to avoid the consequences of the exhaustion of the Keynesian policies established since the so-called post-war period. These corrective processes consisted, basically, of the expansion of debt and the large-scale transfer of the production processes of large transnational companies to countries with lower salaries and incomes.

Together, these two therapeutic formulas helped provide the global capitalist system with several additional decades of expansion and apparent stability. However, the disproportionate accumulation of debt has caused unmanageable financial imbalances and the transfer of production processes to low-income regions, in addition to increasing the exploitation of underdeveloped countries, has caused greater imbalances in international trade, has contributed to increasing the debt, helped to depress real wages in developed countries, while it has increased environmental pollution and consolidated the subaltern and servitude condition of the nations that make up the so-called South.

It is evident that the current international economic order prevents the development of most nations. The attempt to create a new one, as decided by the UN General Assembly in 1974, was sabotaged since it was defined and approved. Subsequent attempts, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the 2030 Agenda, have been nothing more than palliative formulas that do not aim to attack the causes of the development problem, nor solve it. They are not intended to alter structural deformations. They simply promote recommendations without evidence of success and lead nowhere.

Thus, in the current scenario in international economic relations and with the formulas that are used today in the United Nations, there is no way to guarantee the minimum conditions of equality that make universally recognized solutions possible to promote the development of the countries of the South. For this group of countries, free competition does not truly exist, nor is there access to the technologies that developed countries monopolize as a result of the talent that they themselves cultivate, but also as a result of which they steal from developing countries without paying a cent to compensate for the expenditure spent by the latter's governments on developing their own human resources.

The international financial institutions that exert so much influence on the global economy and even on the economic policies of many countries are not in the hands of developing nations. Nor are the large surplus funds in the banks of these nations, nor the reserves of dozens of countries. The money that dictators and henchmen imposed or supported by imperialism in dozens of developing countries have stolen for decades has not ended up in their banks. The money that various corrupt rulers have drained from their own countries, some of them in Latin America, whose wealth tends to be stored, cleaned and protected in the banking and financial institutions of the United States, has not gone to refuge or laundered in their economies.

The history of the last fifty years shows examples of developing countries that, for various reasons, often temporary, achieve significant rates of economic growth during specific periods, sometimes even sustained, but with very rare exceptions, these opportunities never translate into true growth, nor greater real economic independence. The international order conspires against them.

In political terms, the current IEO entails a significant impediment to the exercise of democracy as a political system, in any of its forms. If the will of a State, in the exercise of power and government decisions on behalf of the people, can be questioned by the ambitions of transnational corporations, international banking, international financial organizations and even select courts in any jurisdiction of the world, then it is not possible to speak of democratic power, nor of democracy, nor of course of sovereign equality between States.

It is estimated that more than 670 billion dollars are spent in advertising each year in the world. In the 2020 United States presidential election alone, the absurd and gargantuan figure of $14.4 billion was spent on campaigns. It is estimated that, in 2022, total military spending worldwide will reach US $2.2 trillion, of which 40 percent, US $887 billion, will correspond to the United States. These are insulting figures of waste if one considers the amount of resources required to ensure minimally decent conditions of food, housing, education, and access to health and drinking water.

All of the above must be studied and understood if the responsibility that corresponds to the Group of 77 and China to represent the interests of developing countries in multilateral organizations is assumed. It is based on the chapters contained in this book with the aim of helping to highlight those areas that deserve the attention and joint effort of the Group. They are realities that are exposed selectively, with the idea that they require understanding to become aware of the great problem facing everyone and the dangers that threaten the human race.

The great political challenge for the Group of 77 and China, and for developing countries in general, is to bring together and coordinate the political will of the governments they represent, in order to decide on forms of action and take concrete steps for the benefit of their respective peoples, with a sense of justice, alerted that the world demands sustainable formulas for human development and that achieving it is possible. A powerful sense of unity is required, even within the framework of the wide diversity that characterizes the Group.

This is more important today when the United Nations organization is engaged in a process of reforms that aim to be even more profound and transcendental, which could change the face of the organization that we have known until now and where the role of the member states could be decimated in favor of other non-state actors that respond, as a rule, to large transnational corporations, to the governments of the developed countries that represent them, and to the old effort to break the power and representativeness of the majority in the more universal international organization.

Before them is not only the challenge of development and of modifying the structures and the system that denies it for their people, as was seen with clarity and political commitment in the 1970s. Now the world also has more information and has achieved awareness growing concern about the dangers of destruction of the natural conditions on which life on the planet depends. It increasingly understands that the patterns of production and consumption on which today's developed countries prospered and became rich are progressively eroding the environment, sometimes irrecoverably. These are unsustainable, inimitable and unacceptable patterns. The formulas of colonial and neocolonial accumulation and exploitation, and the historical conditions that facilitated economic progress and the average standard of living of many countries in Europe and North America are also not applicable, nor will the conditions to apply them ever exist.

The international economic order, therefore, is not only deeply unjust. It is also clearly unsustainable. It promotes an ideal life model, fictitious and unattainable for the vast majority of those who live on the planet. If this model were imitated by current developing countries, in the attempt to ensure that their people have the right to equally enjoy these unsustainable privileges, the exploitation of existing natural resources, soil erosion, pollution of the seas, lakes and rivers, the poisoning of the atmosphere, the degradation of the ozone layer, the decrease in the ice sheet at both poles, the disappearance of marine species and wildlife in general, the destruction of the biodiversity, global warming and the depletion of energy sources, both renewable and non-renewable.

The perpetuation of such unsustainable privileges for the benefit of a few and the condemnation of the vast majority to poverty cannot be passively allowed. In such conditions, it would make no sense to talk about peace, international cooperation, much less the promotion of human rights.

A new paradigm is required, without discarding the conceptions and demands for which developing countries have fought since the second half of the last century. To achieve this, these countries have the track record and capacity for political action of the Group of 77 and China. It is necessary to mobilize this capacity for action.

II

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND OBSTACLES FOR DEVELOPMENT

The contemporary structure of the international trade system

The current structure of international trade consists of a complex network of multilateral, bilateral and regional trade agreements between developed and developing countries. It arises from the deliberations initiated in the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations launched in 1986 and concluded in 1994, which led to a radical change in the rules that govern international trade. The result of this exercise meant the abandonment of the norms and rules that developing countries, through the Group of 77 and China and other regional groupings, had been proposing within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and which were succinctly approved by the United Nations General Assembly in the resolutions that established the New International Economic Order. It also meant a blow to the role of the UN, in particular the General Assembly and UNCTAD, as arenas for deliberation and the formation of a more just and rational international economic order.

The Round created the International Trade Organization (WTO), which replaced the old General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). The WTO deepened its commitments to reduce tariffs, but also introduced new issues on the international trade agenda, such as investment, intellectual property and services, while imposing new mechanisms to penalize non-compliance with these new issues. In the case of intellectual property, it gave rise to the agreement on TRIPS (Commercial Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), which extended the duration of patents, expanded the areas subject to patenting and limited the number of exceptions. In the case of investments, it gave rise to the TRIMS (Trade Related Investment Measures) agreement, which implied regulations on the issue of investments that implied the possibility of suing in court those who adopted government measures favorable to development that contravene the interests of investments and investors.

In parallel, developed countries began promoting bilateral and regional free trade agreements with developing countries, whose most common characteristic was the deepening and solidification of the rules already established by the WTO. For example, in these agreements, the rules related to intellectual property became, as a rule, stricter than those provided for TRIPS in the WTO. Rules on investments were also imposed that were stricter than those of the TRIMS, and mechanisms of the legal system of dispute settlement between the investor and the State (ISDS), already mentioned in chapter 1, were included in these agreements, as well as restrictions referring to national financial regulatory measures, such as exchange controls and capital controls.

The goal, as a whole, was to immunize, protect and free the market, that is, large transnational capital, from the possible interference of the governments of developing countries and the restrictions that they could impose on the free movement of capital, goods, investments and services. It was the global establishment of Neoliberalism, with an international institutional structure capable of guaranteeing free trade on the basis of restrictions imposed on governments, whose capacity to dictate economic policies, and regulate the market and corporate development within their respective jurisdictions policies, was seriously mutilated.

Despite promises of economic growth and new opportunities for all, the truth is that the international trading system is in crisis. It never worked in favor of the interests of developing countries, and today it does not serve even the requirements and ambitions of the most developed powers.

The economic trade war unleashed by the United States against China is an example that the system that the US government itself promoted no longer responds to its interests. The growing relative decline of the leading economic power so far in the 21st century, together with the stagnation of several other developed capitalist economies, in the face of the rise of China and other emerging economies, have put the structure that emerged from the Uruguay Round under question and its doctrinal postulates. The imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum on the Asian country in 2018, an exception that was justified under the pretext of «national security» requirements of the United States, marked a departure from the behavior that the US government itself imposed on the international trade system.

It must be remembered that the pillar on which the fundamental authority of the WTO has rested has been the Appellate Body, in which seven judges settle trade disputes. As most of the lawsuits and pending cases were directed against the United States, for violations of the rules that they themselves promoted, the government of that country began to block the appointment of new judges. It was the first country to do so, in 2016, it is a practice that has continued and has made such an important mechanism inoperative. Meanwhile, it has continued to impose new tariffs against China and other countries, sometimes for purely commercial reasons and many others for political reasons, as coercive formulas.

But the US attack on the trade system also includes «strategic subsidies» and new mechanisms for evaluating foreign direct investment that are contrary to the philosophy of the WTO. The European Union, for its part and based on the priority achieved by the fight against climate change, has established a so-called green agenda that raises the sustainability requirements for exports from Third World countries, based on the development patterns of the most advanced countries, along with new penalties against countries that do not comply with these requirements, using to achieve this, in particular, the trade agreements imposed on those countries.

Perhaps more important than the above, as a sign of the erosion and crisis of the international trading system, is the fact that the neoliberal and trade liberalization policies promoted since the end of the 20th century have deepened the disadvantages and imbalances suffered by developing countries. The radical demands of free trade, the limitations imposed on national governments to establish economic policies and the restrictions they have suffered to control and dispose of banking, capital flows and even their intangible assets, have resulted in destructive processes of deindustrialization, in the decline of productive structures, in the return in many cases to primary industries and exports, the increase in inequalities in their respective societies, the overexploitation of their natural resources and the abusive erosion of their environmental heritage. The financiarization of the economy, discussed later in this book, is another consequence. So is the disadvantage caused by the expansion of global value chains governed by the monopolistic control of transnational companies over intellectual property and intangible assets, which further delays the possibilities of the economies of the South to join the path of development, finding that the use of capital and the technologies they require for their progress are tied to commercial agreements from which they cannot be separated.

It is therefore especially macabre that, after having pushed the countries of the South for several decades to liberalize their economies and abandon development policies, the countries of the North are now beginning to reconsider their own recipe book and rediscover the usefulness of the tools whose abandonment they demanded from the developing countries for being contrary to free trade and unfair to that dogma. Starting with the economy of the United States, its leaders have once again valued active industrialization policies, large-scale subsidies and the promotion of indigenous industries. These new practices are accompanied by protectionist approaches, and become additional disadvantages for the countries of the South, which under intense pressure dismantled their nascent industrial capacity and, on top of that, are now tied to bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements, and international trade rules that emasculate its competitive capacity.

The Doha Round and development promises

As has already been indicated, the multilateral trading system, metamorphosed into the WTO, far from favoring fair and equitable international trade capable of promoting development, has established itself as another instrument of plunder and exploitation for developing countries, mostly with weak negotiating skills and a disadvantageous individual position.

Heir to the GATT, which operated between 1948 and 1994, the WTO began its journey on January 1, 1995, under the hegemony of the main capitalist countries, which managed to prioritize their interests over the developing world.

The Doha Round, the first and so far only round of WTO multilateral trade negotiations, was launched shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States and responded in part to the recognition of the need to reform the policies that had caused serious problems of exclusion in the world. In an attempt to show the strength of the international community, the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference, in Doha, sought to stimulate international trade, placing emphasis on development. The negotiating agenda, called the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), included an ambitious work program across twenty-one areas, with a mandate to reform the rules on a broad spectrum of issues, from agriculture to regional trade agreements, passing through all the others.

By virtue of the massive commitments made in the previous Uruguay Round of the GATT, developing countries had been reluctant to launch a new one. The implementation of these commitments, which included tariff concessions, services liberalization commitments and rules on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS), posed significant challenges, ranging from adaptation costs to loss of political space to implement national development plans. At the same time, agricultural trade rules remained tilted in favor of the interests of developed countries.

The clash between the interests of developed and developing countries was immediate. The debate essentially revolved around a market access round or a development round. Unlike developed countries that advocated a sector-specific agenda that would reinforce the liberalization of developing country markets, the latter insisted that, due to the heavy burden they had borne in implementing the Uruguay Round, only they would accept an agenda focused on development and not on negotiations on trade and market access. In order to persuade developing countries, a «Development Round» was proposed and several commitments were made, summarized in Box 1.

Box 1

Commitments made at the launch of the DDA to address the needs of developing countries

- The needs of developing countries are at the center of the entire negotiating agenda.
- The needs of developing countries are at the center of the entire negotiating agenda:
  - Substantially reduce access to trade-distorting domestic aid;
  - Substantially improve market access;
  - Phase out all export subsidies;
  - Include the SDT for developing countries in all elements of the negotiation.
- Market access is improved for industrial products with «less full reciprocity» in tariff reduction commitments: a concept that would allow some level of tariff protection to be maintained in developing countries.
- The liberalization of services would be progressive; Developed countries would open markets for services of export interest to developing countries and especially less advanced countries

Source: OXFAM (2009).

By reviewing and implementing «special and differential treatment» (SDT) in all possible areas, the Doha Round was not only going to restore decades of unfair rules in agriculture, but It would also correct the errors of the Uruguay Round commitments.

Developing countries relied on rich countries to deliver on their promises, which meant restoring balance after decades of unfair agricultural rules and repairing the damage of previous trade rounds through effective «special and differential treatment» in all areas of trade. negotiation; a substantial reform of the agricultural policies of rich countries to end dumping and trade-distorting subsidies; preserving developing countries the policy space necessary to protect their vulnerable agricultural producers and to promote new industries and services; and, finally, better access for farmers and industries in developing countries to markets in rich countries.

After more than two decades, developed countries have forgotten their commitments to development and the Doha Round has become a market access round in which every area of negotiation, from access to agricultural and non-agricultural markets to services, intellectual property and others, has been carefully directed towards the interests of developed countries. The negotiation process itself is even more exclusive than before, with small deliberation sessions, non-democratic in nature and mostly dominated by developed countries, having become the *modus operandi*.

In reality, at the culmination of the Uruguay Round of the GATT and the creation of the WTO, the hegemony of the main capitalist countries was imposed, which managed to privilege their interests over the developing world. Rich countries promoted liberalization in strategic sectors linked to the technological domain, in which they enjoyed enormous advantages that the unregulated market was responsible for increasing. These are the classic cases of services, information technology, biotechnology and telecommunications, while sectors such as agriculture and textiles, of great importance for developing countries, did not even manage to eliminate the restrictions already agreed during the Uruguay Round because they do not correspond to the interests of developed countries.

In particular, the United States achieved practically everything it wanted with the agreements that gave rise to the «new» multilateral organization, and especially with the General Agreement on Services, an old dream, as well as with the General Agreement on Trade Rights. Intellectual Property Related to Commerce, an aspect in which it exercises a privileged domain thanks to its technological development and the systematic theft of the best intelligence in the world. It has also achieved other agreements of great benefit to this country.

In its current format, Doha has betrayed its promise of development. Initial promises to end market-distorting agricultural subsidies have been relegated to the sidelines and carefully crafted proposals have been put forward to maintain the status quo and even, in some cases, deepen it. The latest texts proposed in the negotiation allow rich countries to take advantage of existing legal loopholes and modify the name of the same subsidies to maintain their current spending levels.

At the same time, rich countries have turned around «special and differential treatment» and enjoy the flexibility they want while denying developing countries the safeguards they need to protect themselves from dumping and increased imports. The ability of developing countries to exclude certain products from tariff reductions in order to protect their food security and rural livelihoods has also been weakened.

In negotiations on industrial products, the commitment to offer developing countries «less than full reciprocity» has been reversed. The negotiated texts require developing countries to make deep cuts in their tariffs, even reaching applied levels, and in some cases, eliminate tariffs altogether. However, at the same time, developed countries are trying to rescue their strategic industrial sectors through subsidy programs included in economic stimulus packages, which reinforce their own commercial advantage.

The Doha Development Round was supposed to restore balance after decades of unfair trade rules in agriculture and address the needs of developing countries. Instead, the Round has become a market access negotiation in which developing countries are expected to give a lot and receive little more than the old promise about the benefits of liberalization.

Between 2013 and 2014, the WTO promoted the signing of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. It sought to rationalize government international trade procedures and thus favor the incorporation of developing countries into foreign markets. Although it could be considered an achievement to have reached this pact, it has only been sanctioned by two thirds of the member countries of the WTO. Had it been implemented efficiently and with global reach, it would have helped developing countries recover better from the shock caused by the pandemic.

At the same time, as already explained, developed countries have directed their efforts to negotiate bilaterally and regionally free trade agreements that represent, particularly those signed between two very unequal parties, a serious threat to multilateralism and to the apparently central values of the WTO. These agreements include rules that far exceed what could be agreed within the WTO and ultimately undermine the multilateral trading system. These types of agreements weaken the determination of governments to reach a multilateral agreement and offer a false illusion that a country's trade agenda is advancing despite the paralysis of negotiations in the WTO. In reality, most of the gains are illusory and actually undermine the collective bargaining power of developing countries. Furthermore, these agreements impose rules that go beyond what could be agreed at the

WTO, imposing severe restrictions on the policies that developing countries truly need to fight poverty and inequality. At the beginning of 2020 there were 303 Regional Trade Agreements (RTA)[1] in force, which corresponded to 483 notifications from WTO members, counting goods, services and accessions separately. The agreements in force and most of the new negotiations are bilateral in nature; although a recent modality is the negotiation of RTAs between several members of the WTO. The so-called «new generation agreements The so-called "new generation agreements" or mega-RTAs stand out or mega-ACRs stand out,[2] such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the United States and the European Union (TTIP).[3]

Both due to the contents and the negotiation modalities, these agreements allow developed countries to select or exclude and obtain concessions from developing countries with greater relative dependence and less negotiating power. Many of the new agreements are considered by their content as WTO-plus, because they are more demanding in terms of trade liberalization than what is prescribed in multilateral rules; and WTO-extra, for covering topics that are not part of the scope of the WTO agreements.

In this context, the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference took place,[4] in June 2022, with results that, although they exceeded the expectations of most experts, were modest at best and do not respond to the key issues for developing countries (See Box 2). The main result was the fact that the 164 member states of the WTO were able to reach an agreement, barely saving the organization from the impending irrelevance. MC_{12} adopted a multilateral agreement on fisheries subsidies, the first multilateral agreement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. The Conference also brought with it a temporary extension of the e-commerce moratorium (no tariffs on digital trade) and a provisional agreement on food exports, as well as a «waiver» of patent rights for vaccines: confirmed the principles that members should follow for these purposes. But no new content was incorporated nor the rights and obligations of members were modified; Furthermore, it arrived two years late –the goal was 2020– and its importance cannot be overstated.

[1] In the WTO, RTA is understood as any reciprocal trade agreement between two or more parties, which do not have to belong to the same region. As of June 2016, all WTO Members had at least one RTA in force.

[2] These agreements not only cover the largest proportion of world trade, but also represent a profound liberalization that borders on national regulation of trade and includes issues such as production standards or labor rights, as opposed to agreements that aim primarily at reducing tariffs.

[3] These initiatives that promise unprecedented trade liberalization have suffered a series of visible setbacks.

[4] This ministerial meeting was postponed twice, and was conditioned by the critical situation of the international economy and, in particular, trade relations; with the incidence of transcendental extra-economic phenomena, such as the COVID 19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine.

Box 2. Main results of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference

- The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference was held in Geneva from June 12 to 17, 2022 after four and a half years of not taking place. This was due to the fact that after CM_{11}, held in Buenos Aires in December 2017, CM_{12} had to be postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The period between both Ministerial Conferences was marked by trade tensions between the United States and China that arose from 2018; the termination of the functions of the WTO Appellate Body in December 2019; the early resignation of then WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo in May 2020, and the adoption of numerous trade restrictive measures in the wake of the pandemic. All these events have eroded the centrality of the WTO in global trade governance.
- After arduous negotiations, at the end of CM_{12} the members of WTO adopted a series of agreements called «Geneva Package». Among the most relevant are the following:
- The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: this is the first multilateral agreement reached within the framework of the WTO since the Agreement on Trade Facilitation in 2013. This Agreement prohibits subsidies on fishing linked to overexploited stocks, as well as those that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) in accordance with target 14.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals. This Agreement, concluded after more than 20 years of negotiations, is the first in the WTO that focuses specifically on the conservation of a natural resource. The scope of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement is more limited than many WTO members wanted, mainly because India opposed including stricter provisions. For this reason, it was agreed to continue negotiations and that if they did not lead to the adoption of complete measures after four years from the entry into force of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, it would be terminated immediately (unless WTO members decide otherwise).
- The five-year limitation on patents provided for in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for COVID 19 vaccines in developing countries, with the aim of accelerating their production in said countries. This decision is the result of almost two years of negotiations, following the presentation of a related proposal by India and South Africa in October 2020. Unlike what was proposed by both countries, the decision does not apply to the media, diagnosis and treatment against COVID 19. It was agreed that WTO members would decide on the eventual extension to these products no later than six months after the date of adoption of the original decision.
- The decision that WTO members will not impose prohibitions or restrictions on the export of food products purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme.
- The decision to extend until CM_{13} the moratorium on the application of customs duties to electronic transmissions (that is, to trade in so-called digital products).
- The decision to formally start talks on the WTO reform process, which is expected to cover all functions of the organization.
- The commitment to overcome the current impasse regarding the Appellate Body, with a view to having a fully operational, properly functioning dispute resolution system accessible to all members by 2024.

Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), based on data from the World Trade Organization (WTO).

These agreements are just the beginning. Ongoing negotiations on the details are likely to cause friction between WTO member states: there is no work program for agricultural trade, an issue of great importance for developing and emerging countries. At the same time, there are no answers to current global problems: How to facilitate trade in health products? How to promote digital trade through global trade rules? How to combat climate change through trade? There are no signs of multilateral or plurilateral agreements on these issues. On the other hand, it is most likely that greater liberalization will be favored and the opening of new issues and sectors will be included, which would aggravate the situation of developing countries.[5]

In reality, the Doha Round is dead. His death began at the very beginning of the negotiations and was consolidated throughout his career. There is deep uncertainty about the future of the global trading system and its central institution: the WTO. The growing questioning of the hegemony of the United States raises serious doubts about the survival of the rules-based multilateral liberal trade order. There is a growing consensus that the liberal international order is in question, since the country that created and led it for decades now has neither the capacity nor the will to do so. And it is important to highlight that the liberal order is not the neoliberal globalization of the Post-Cold War, but the set of institutions and norms conceived after the Second World War, that is, the American hegemonic order.

It is evident that the United States government does nothing other than apply nationalism to solve its internal problems, using the privilege of the dollar and cornering others on the ropes. It would not be an exaggeration to affirm that this behavior, already faced with the reciprocity of others, and in the context of a long aggravated economic crisis, can explode the system of rules and institutions that was born in the postwar, promising never to repeat a trade war.

The problem is that, today, world trade is increasingly viewed from a geoeconomic and security perspective, a terrain of struggle for global hegemony. The negotiations within the framework of the WTO express the capitalist reaction to the crisis and the struggle between transnationalized sectors of the dominant classes, interested in a more transnationalized and open economy, and internal monopolistic sectors based on the internal markets of the developed countries. In this intricate and complex struggle, what is ultimately decided is who will produce what in the future with all its derivatives or in other words the control of the markets of the current decade and even beyond.

In this struggle, the dominance of the markets and supply sources of developing countries occupies an important place. Far from advancing the cause of development and developing countries in general, ensuring that their voices are heard appropriately, the WTO has functioned as an instrument in the service of developed countries to open the internal markets of developing countries, at the same time as paving the way for deeper liberalization in strategic sectors linked to the technological domain, in which they enjoy enormous advantages that the unregulated market is responsible for increasing.

A profound reform of the current trade order is crucial, which not only hinders and blocks development, but also tends to perpetuate the precarious position of developing countries, as it reflects the profound inequities of the current system of international relations. This commercial order is very far from the expectations and needs of our countries, and is reaffirmed as one of the mechanisms of exploitation that widely reproduces the distances between the opulent North and the increasingly impoverished South.

[5] There are two issues of great concern. The issue of further deepening the liberalization of trade in services, and –the aspiration that developed countries have had for a long time– covering basic services: health, water, education. The other issue is liberalizing electronic commerce, especially because of the risks that this implies regarding the commercial use of personal data by large companies, although all of this is masked with the idea that it will be given priority (it is said) to small and medium-sized companies, to SMEs. But everything indicates that neither now nor before has this been the case, and therefore on these types of issues, if agreements are actually reached at the next ministerial meeting, they will surely be deeply harmful agreements not only in terms of economic costs. but also in terms of costs such as loss of capacity to define policies on the part of governments.

Basic commodities and unequal exchange

Most developing countries are still over-reliant on commodity exports, which constitute a large percentage of national production and are therefore an important source of income and an opportunity to access growing markets without affecting local markets.[6] Recent statistics indicate that 64 percent of developing countries depend on commodity exports, while 45 percent depend on commodity imports.

Most worrying is the increase in the number of commodity-dependent countries in recent decades: in the periods from 1998 to 2002 and from 2013 to 2018-2020, the number of commodity-dependent UNCTAD members increased from 92 at 101: more than half of the world's countries, 54 percent, and two-thirds of the 135 developing countries. In many of these countries the situation is complicated because their export earnings come from a very narrow range of basic products or even from just one.[7] In addition, commodities represent between 50 and 60 percent of the exports of fourteen other countries.

Africa is, perhaps, the region of the world whose exports are least diversified. Commodities account for an average of 80 percent of all its merchandise exports. In 2018-2020, 83 percent of African countries (45 out of 54) were commodity dependent: all countries in Central and West Africa belonged to that category.

Furthermore, commodities accounted for an average of 60 percent of all merchandise exports from Asia and Oceania. In the same period, 58 percent of Asia and Oceania countries (33 out of 57) were commodity dependent: all Central Asian countries belonged to that category.

In Latin America, one of the most industrialized regions in the developing world, 52 percent of countries (17 out of 33) were commodity dependent in 2018-2020: all South American countries belonged to that category. These products represented on average 60 percent of all merchandise exports from Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in hydrocarbon-exporting countries.[8]

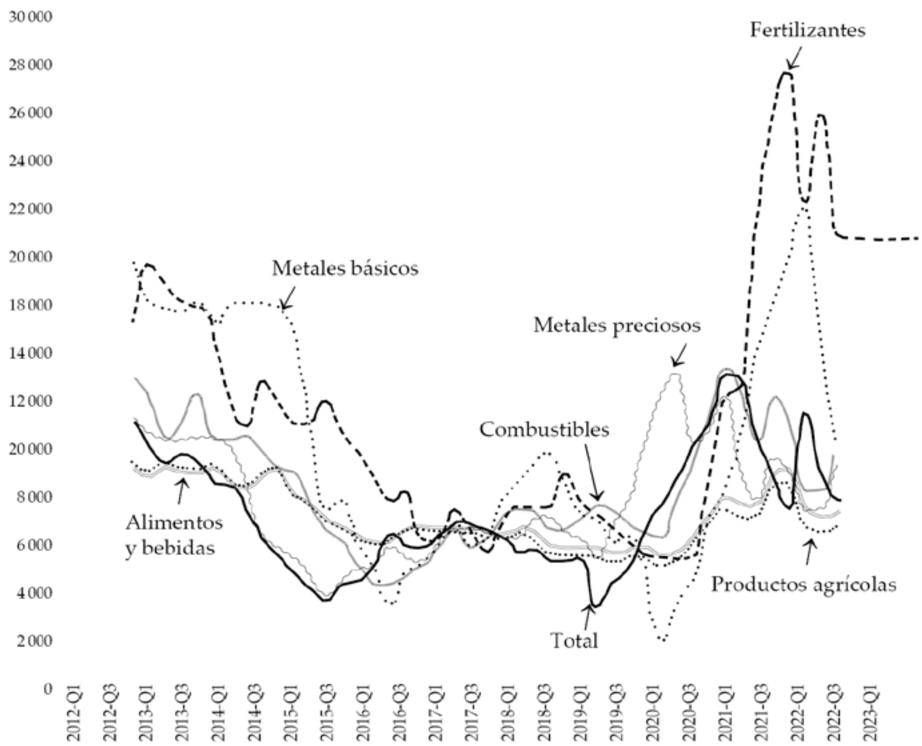
It is easy to notice the disadvantageous position of commodities in world trade, which is reflected in their negative price trends in the long term, a permanent threat to developing economies (See Charts 1, 2 and 3).

6 An economy is said to be commodity-dependent when at least 60 percent of its revenue from merchandise exports comes from primary products, such as food, agricultural raw materials, base metals and crude oil. When this figure exceeds 80 percent, the country is considered «very dependent on commodity exports»; In 2014-2015, this was the case for 7 out of 10 developing countries. While the number of countries specializing in the export of agricultural products fell from 50 to 37, the number of countries that export mainly minerals increased from 14 to 33, and those that mainly export energy increased from 28 to 32.

7 In 2020, for example, copper, crude oil and gold accounted for 74 percent, 79 percent and 81 percent respectively of the total merchandise export earnings of Zambia, Iraq and Suriname, respectively.

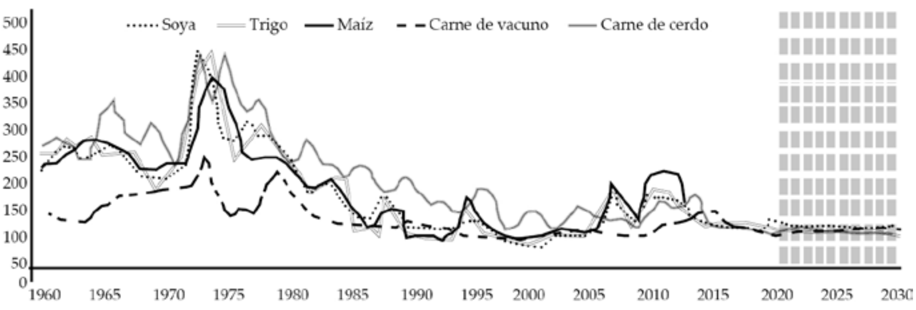
8 The Latin American and Caribbean region is a net exporter of agricultural products, with exports that exceeded imports by 2.6 times in 2020.

Chart 1. International commodity price index
(Expressed in real terms. Base 2017 = 100, quarterly average)



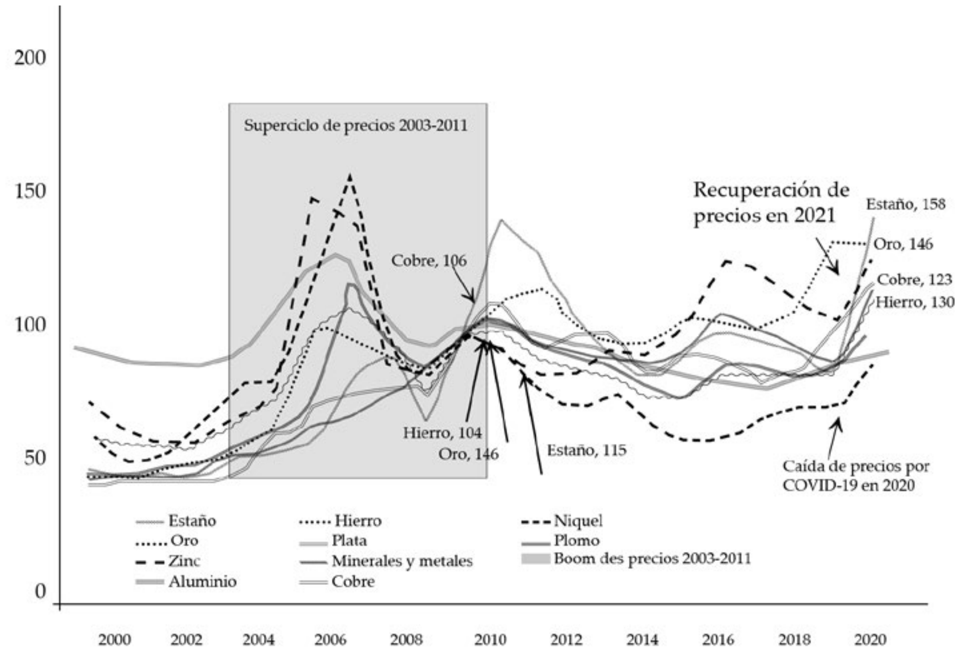
Source: General Secretariat of ALADI (2023).
Trends of International Trade of Goods (January-March, 2023).

Chart 2. Long-term evolution of basic commodities prices in real terms.



Source: OCDE/FAO (2021).

Chart 3. Evolution of price indexes of minerals and metals, 2000-2021.
(Base index 2010 = 100, based on real prices in USD in 2010)



Source: CEPAL, (2022).

The fall in prices of basic products until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century would be especially revealing of the fate of the export income of the vast majority of developing countries (See Charts 1, 2 and 3). At their lowest point, between 1992 and 2001, real commodity prices fell 37 percent (and in specific years, more than 40 percent) below the average level of the 1970s, which was in fact slightly lower than the average of 1945-1980.

It is important to highlight the case of oil, with a drop of 41 percent in the period 1970-2003, while in non-oil products the price variation was -21 percent: tropical agriculture experienced the most pronounced decrease, of - 35 percent, compared to -20 percent for non-tropical agricultural products. Long-term trends have also shown the weakness of minerals and metals as basic products, in both cases the negative variation in prices was -17 percent in the aforementioned period.

The revival of international demand, driven especially by strong Chinese demand, contributed to the rise in commodity prices in 2003-2011. Their prices increased 44.8 percent between 2002 and 2005, in current dollars, excluding oil. In the period 2003-2015, prices of tropical agricultural products increased 22 percent (between 2002 and 2005 coffee, cocoa and tea grew 42 percent; rice 50 percent; soybeans 29 percent, rubber 96 percent compared to 15 percent for non-tropical agricultural products. A similar trend was seen in minerals and metals, with prices growing more than 25 percent in 2003-2015. In that period, the crude oil increased by 114 percent. This evident improvement, although it led to an increase in export earnings, did not translate into high economic growth rates or proportional to the expansion of the international commodity market for many developing countries.[9]

At the end of the bullish situation, the trend towards the deterioration of the terms of trade of the economies dependent on the exports of basic products continued, whose prices fell until they sank by more than 50 percent on average in the 2017-2018 period with respect to 2008; In particular, on that date fuel prices were 33 percent lower (See Charts 1, 2 and 3).

The immediate situation constitutes an eloquent example of the extreme instability, volatility and uncertainty that accompanies the evolution of the commodity market, which prevents developing countries from carrying out even elementary planning for export earnings. The combination of two extraordinary elements, the COVID 19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, has caused the worst commodity price crisis known since the 1970s: the largest increase in energy prices since the rise of oil prices in 1973. For food and fertilizers, the price increase in 2022 was the third largest (after 1974 and 2008).[10] And the price of agricultural products was at the highest level in the last ten years in February 2022.[11]

However, now back in the vicious circle that traditionally surrounds the international commodity market, from the end of 2022 developing countries face the sad reality of the reversal of much of the fleeting increase in the prices of oil, cereals, oilseeds and fertilizers, as global supplies have normalized. Also notable are the declines in the prices of several of the main minerals and metals exported by developing countries due to the slowdown in the world economy and, particularly, the marked slowdown in the Chinese economy. In fact, it is estimated that the price of metals and minerals reached slightly negative growth rates by the end of 2022.

All of the above demonstrates the sustained long-term trend of declining real prices of basic products, simultaneous with great economic instability, which confirms the intense process of commercial asphyxiation of developing countries in their relations with developed countries. This causes a spasmodic behavior of the economies that causes fleeting moments of less poverty to abruptly fall into ruin and debt.

The catastrophic thing is that the downward trend in the prices of basic products, and in some periods their sharp decline, are combined with the violent reduction in the purchasing power of the exports of these products, due to the increase in prices of imported manufactures, which forms one of the most diabolical expressions of the imposed system of economic relations: the phenomenon of unequal exchange,[12] expressed in its concrete

9 Measured by the maximum price reached, the commodity boom (2003-2013) was stronger for oil and metals than for agricultural products, and stronger for tropical than for non-tropical agricultural products. Incidentally, only in 2011 did real tropical agriculture prices reach a level close to that of the 1970s. The price boom was interrupted during the worst phase of the Great Recession –the months following the collapse of the investment bank Lehman Brothers in September 2008– but quickly resumed. Strong Chinese demand was essential in both the boom and the rapid recovery after the crisis. The peak levels of pre- and post-crisis oil and metal prices were quite similar, while for the two groups of agricultural products they were stronger during the second phase of the boom.

10 At the beginning of 2023, despite the decline in global inflation, food prices were still high, representing between 25 percent and 62 percent of the overall figure.

11 In the period between January and August 2022, the price index of the main commodities exported by developing countries experienced an increase of 29.8 percent compared to the same period in 2021, which was mainly due to the increase of 68.1 percent in the price index of energy products. Unlike both product groups, the mineral and metal price index remained practically unchanged in year-on-year terms in the first eight months of 2022.

12 The prices and income of exports of commodity-dependent countries fell 41 percent and 35 percent respectively, between the peak (early 2014) and the lowest point (early 2016), which affected the purchasing capacity for goods and services of most economies in Latin America, Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Western Asia.

manifestation as a deterioration in the terms of trade with its destructive effect on developing countries. But in truth it constitutes a systematic looting of the fruits of the sweat and riches of the developing world.

Box 3

- The examples set out below constitute a clear illustration of the phenomenon of growing and unfair unequal exchange between developed and developing countries:
- In 1960, the sale of one ton of coffee could buy 37.3 tons of fertilizers. In 1982, one ton of coffee only produced 15.8 tons of fertilizer. In 2023, a ton of coffee would barely be equivalent to 4 tons of fertilizers.
- In 1976, it was possible to buy 16 tons of wheat with one ton of cocoa. In 1982, only 9 tons could be purchased. Current prices only allow the purchase of 4.7 tons of wheat with one ton of cocoa.
- In 1959, with the income obtained from the sale of 24 tons of sugar, a 60 horsepower tractor could be purchased. At the end of 1982, 115 tons of sugar were needed to purchase the same tractor. In 2018, the average investment to buy a new 60 horsepower tractor was around 151 tons of sugar. The figure increases when it comes to the normal four-wheel drive tractor.
- In 1959, the income obtained from the sale of 6 tons of jute fiber could buy a 7-8 ton truck. At the end of 1982, 26 tons of jute were needed to acquire the aforementioned truck. In 2022, at least 40 tons of jute were needed, depending on the type of truck.

Sources: FAO, (2023); agroinformacion.com, (2021); investing.com, (2023).

Due to unequal exchange, during the 1960s the South lost about US$38 billion annually, more than 1 percent of its combined GDP. And starting in 2005, this drain of resources from developing countries increased to almost three trillion dollars annually, equivalent to 9 percent of their combined GDP.

World Bank estimates show that between 1970 and 1997, deteriorating terms of trade cost non-oil-exporting African countries the equivalent of 119 percent of their combined annual GDP in lost revenue.

In sum, since 1960, developing countries have been robbed of more than USD 62 trillion (in constant 2011 dollars) through unequal exchange, which is equivalent to 97 percent of their combined GDP in 2017 (See Chart 4). In that year, this systematic theft of the fruits of the sweat and resources of its people amounted to 2.2 trillion USD. A tiny part of that figure would be enough to eliminate extreme poverty in developing countries.

Chart 4. Flight from Global South, USD constants in 2011 (1960-2017)

Source: Sullivan, (2022).

The other side of this intense process of commercial asphyxiation of developing countries in their relations with developed capitalist countries are the great benefits received by the centers of global power. For example, in 2017 the United States earned $2,634 per person from unequal exchange, while in Australia the average Australian citizen received $3,116 from the South. Since 1990, the North's annual gains from unequal exchange have averaged 5.2 percent of its GDP, which is considerably higher than its annual economic growth rates. That is to say, the extraordinary levels of consumption and well-being of the countries of the North are based, to a large extent, on the exploitation and poverty of the countries of the South.

In other words, international trade continues to be a factor in accentuating and perpetuating inequalities and inequities, to the extent that «unequal exchange»[13] continues to act as a key determinant of global inequality.

Furthermore, as the World Bank study entitled «Commodity Markets: Evolution, Challenges, and Policies»[14] acknowledges, commodity price increases do not materially boost economic growth over a long period in developing countries. And on the contrary, price decreases tend to reduce growth significantly, and for several years.

Paradoxically, the main beneficiaries are the transnational companies that almost completely dominate the international trade of basic products exported by developing countries and have the decision-making power over marketing and pricing.

In a context of increased concentration of international commodity production in global value chains, commodity-dependent developing countries tend to be locked into demand-driven chains, which are controlled by retailers and global buyers. In general, the increasing concentration of trade and the vertical integration of large companies is detrimental to local producers. The ability of international trade to act as an engine of poverty reduction is being compromised by the way global value chains are organized. For example, four transnational

13 To the downward trend in the prices of basic products, and in some periods a sharp decline in these, is added the violent reduction in the purchasing power of the exports of these products, due to the increase in the prices of manufactured goods that are matter, which, in the words of Commander Fidel Castro, makes up that perverse phenomenon called unequal exchange, that intense process of commercial asphyxiation of our countries in their relations with the developed capitalist countries, «one of the most diabolical expressions of the system of international relations imposed.»

14 The study contains the first comprehensive analysis (covering all major commodities) of the evolution of these markets over the past hundred years and the direction they are likely to take over the next 30 years.

companies control more than 60 percent of the world coffee market; this situation reduces the participation of coffee producers in price determination processes and hinders sustainable production and economic diversification in coffee exporting countries. A similar situation is also observed in the cocoa sector, where the three largest processing companies controlled approximately 50 percent to 60 percent of the marketing of global cocoa production in 2013. Four transnational companies control more than 60 percent of global cocoa grinding processing.

A handful of five incredibly powerful companies, controlling the supply chain, linking commodity production, specific trading companies and consumer markets, concentrate between 50 and 70 percent of global trade in agricultural commodities, such as soybeans, beef and palm oil, responsible for deforestation in Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Indonesia, according to the *Trase 2020 Yearbook*.[15]

The document reveals that, in the case of soybeans, the companies called «ABCD» (ADM, Bunge, Cargill and Louis Dreyfus) and the Chinese state-owned COFCO are the top five soybean exporters in Brazil and responsible for more than half of the trade of this product from Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay combined in 2018.

Regarding Paraguay, the authors point out that in 2018 about 90 percent of beef exports were handled by five firms: Minerva, Frigorífico Concepción and the Mennonite Cooperatives of Fernheim, Chortitzer and Neuland.

Seed and pesticide companies such as Bayer/Monsanto (Germany), Syngenta/ChemChina (China), Corteva (Dow, Dupont-USA merger) and Basf (Germany) have doubled their profits in the last five years. In the early 1980s, seed companies were mostly family-owned and did not dominate even 1 percent of the world market. With control of intellectual property over seeds and pesticides and their takeover by the chemical industry, four corporations control half of the world's commercial seeds and 62 percent of the world's pesticide market as of 2020. Fertilizer companies, such as Yara and Nutrien, and seed and pesticide companies, such as Bayer and Basf, achieved more profits in July 2022 than in all of 2021.

Cargill, the world's largest grain trader, achieved its highest profit in 156 years, five billion USD. Apart from this, the few that buy, process and transport grain (such as the Chinese Cofco, the American ADM and Bunge, and the French Dreyfus), even with higher operating costs, increased their global sales by 15 percent between 2017 and 2020. By controlling purchases of industrial grain production, they obtain a triple benefit: they lower prices to producers, they sell merchandise in USD at an overvalued exchange rate and due to the rise in international prices.

If we add to the above that export prices include transportation costs and other local costs, then the share received by developing countries is minimal. It is not possible to forget that transnational consortia from developed countries control more than 70 percent of the world fleet, including the so-called open-registration fleet; a much smaller share is held by developing countries.

Before the current crisis began, supply chains were already going through difficult times, due to the increase in the costs of logistics services and materials and supplies, as well as the non-availability of labor and transportation. The International Fresh Produce

[15] The *Trase 2020 Yearbook*, prepared by the Trase think tank, a Swedish entity, in association with the British entity Global Canopy, determines, through data analysis, the sustainability of agricultural supply chains and their impact on deforestation, to help companies and governments improve their practices.

Association, in its 2021 report entitled «*Supply chain disruptions*,» predicted that the cost of ocean freight services would increase between 100 percent and 500 percent, adding to this situation port congestion, which would reduce travel and overall capacity between 12 and 15 percent.

Currently, the closed airspace for civil flights and airlines and the closure of ports in Ukraine, as well as economic measures against Russia, are impacting logistics and supply chains, creating bottlenecks in the transportation of goods and raw materials and negatively influencing loading capacity and freight costs, as carriers are forced to take alternative routes and pay higher amounts, due to increases in the cost of fuel. Consequently, air freight prices have been increasing: compared to 2021 prices, in February 2022 they increased by 21 percent and in April 2022, by 28 percent.

The rise in oil prices is said to have caused a 70 percent increase in shipping costs. In the specific cases of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, freight costs have increased by 400 percent, due to the extension of distances and the increasing price of maritime transport, as well as the absence of policies to facilitate cross-border transit. In the Black Sea region, obstacles to such transportation are largely due to disruptions in regional logistics, the paralysis of port operations in Ukraine, the destruction of important infrastructure, trade restrictions, increased shipping costs, insurance and, of course, the increase in fuel prices. Likewise, the conflict and trade restrictions have also affected global container shipping networks.

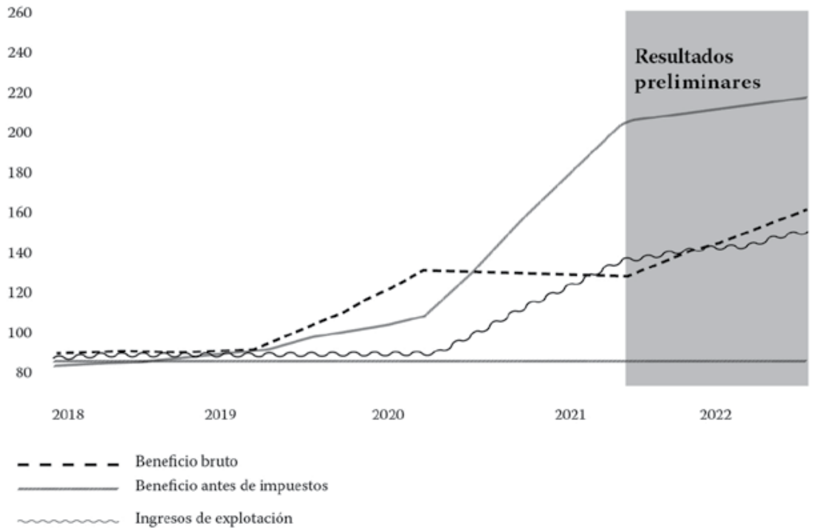
This increase in the cost of international maritime transport freight has been transmitted to several agro-food and other types of products; For example, UNCTAD estimates that, during the pandemic, this increase raised global consumer prices by 1.5 percent, with relatively greater effects on vulnerable economies, such as those of the least developed countries, and predicts that the high costs freight rates will lead to an additional 1.6 percent rise in consumer prices worldwide. In addition, it warns that global import prices will increase on average 11.9 percent.

At the same time, the financiarization of commodity trading has become the dominant trend in the profitability of food traders.[16] Unlike previous stages and in the search for greater profits, big capital has discovered in basic products or commodities a new niche for speculation, not used before and that, when the traditional financial market, the bond market, derivatives, exchange rates and others, moved there a figure that in the ten years counted until 2011, a period of boom in commodity prices, reached 5 trillion USD, suddenly leading to upward speculation (in the future), which contributed to the increase in the prices of soybeans, copper, coffee, wood pulp, sugar, in short, a varied sample of foods and raw materials.

Economic uncertainty and market volatility have resulted in record profits for agricultural commodity traders over the past four years (See Chart 4). Exceptionally large profit margins have driven higher prices, highlighting the concentration of market power in key industries.

[16] That is, the conversion into financial instruments of any product of work or service.

Chart 5. Profit growth for food traders
(Median profits of food merchants, 2019 = 100)



Source: UNCTAD (2023).

Because industrial production, processing and distribution are controlled by a few corporations and investors, and the cost of production is increased by a pandemic, war or climate chaos, the price quickly affects entire countries, both producers and consumers. And the higher the international price of agricultural raw materials and food, the greater the investment in land and the industrial agro-food chain. In these years of crisis, there is a massive purchase of land in developing nations and the control of these natural resources is associated with the obtaining of agro fuels. This vicious circle feeds back into speculation, increasingly decoupling food prices from real production and supply, while putting upward pressure on the price of land and other factors of production.

As stated previously, the General Price Index, according to data provided by the FAO, has risen notably in recent years to reach record levels, which demonstrates the failure of the transnationalized, neoliberal, concentrated and financiarized agriculture model. It is estimated that between 20 percent and 30 percent of the increase in prices is due to the speculative factor, but what it is about is speculating on hunger, since the rise in prices is not directly proportional to obtaining good crops, to better ways of agricultural work or to the reduction of global food demand.

The Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC), created in 1984 with the mission of advocating for global issues such as the conservation of agricultural biodiversity and food security, as well as denouncing the impact of new technologies on people and communities in rural areas, revealed that in 2020, three of the largest asset management companies in the world (the US State Street, Vanguard and BlackRock) together controlled more than 25 percent of the shares of some of the largest agro-food companies in each phase of production.[17] The financial gamble is to capture large tracts of land and increase production of the short list of agricultural commodities that support impoverished industrial

[17] ETC Group, Food Barons 2022: profit from crises, digitalization and new corporate power, September, 2022. The report reveals who controls each stage of the global food industrial chain, from seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, agricultural machinery to grain, food and beverage processors, and the retail market.

food systems, at very high economic, social and ecological cost. The global industrial agro-food chain is one of the epicenters of multiple crises.

It is this model that marks a different form of agricultural production imposed by the large agro consortia of transnational companies, whose policies have unleashed a food crisis unprecedented in history. A phenomenon that, as part of the global economic crisis, is due not only to climate change or technological factors, among others, but to a large extent responds to the regime of socioeconomic exploitation that weights the benefit of a few at the expense of many others.

Furthermore, as financiarization has amplified the intrinsic volatility of the commodity market, developing countries are finding it increasingly difficult to carry out the long-term investment plans necessary to boost education, health and other development priorities. To cope with fluctuations in commodity prices, some developing countries have been forced to develop instruments such as sovereign wealth funds, which allow them to save during periods of high prices and use those savings when prices fall. In most countries that use these instruments, reality has shown that their effectiveness is hampered by the fact that successive declines in commodity prices tend to be much longer than increases in those prices. Hence many sovereign wealth funds have collapsed. Commodity-dependent developing countries effectively bear a disproportionate share of the total adjustment costs of commodity market volatility. In turn, this situation hinders the efforts made by these countries to reduce their vulnerability to external crises through structural economic transformation and to implement long-term development strategies that could contribute to reducing dependence on basic products.

Likewise, commodity-dependent developing countries suffer from "Dutch syndrome": during episodes of high prices, commodity-dependent developing countries experience an influx of foreign exchange, which increases demand for the domestic currency and contributes to its overvaluation. This situation reduces the competitiveness of these countries in export markets, which in turn encourages imports of consumer goods. Over the past four decades, many developing countries have not only been combating the effects of instability in their export earnings due to volatile commodity prices, but have also had to confront the consequences of the erosion of its international competitiveness during periods of high prices for these products. Furthermore, in countries with fixed exchange rates, large inflows of foreign currency boost local demand and cause additional inflationary pressure, leading to macroeconomic instability. These two effects have a negative impact on investment and, therefore, on economic growth in the medium and long terms. It is also worth noting that in countries that depend on extractive industries, where companies are capital intensive, investment is concentrated in sectors that generate a limited number of domestic jobs.

Everything explained so far allows us to understand the limited capacity of the well-known indicators of the terms of trade, based on common trade statistics, to measure the real economic impact of the increase in the prices of basic products in developing countries; because the perverse intervention of transnational companies, which seek to implement their peculiar international economic order, while contributing to the erratic price trends of basic products, condemns the producing countries to receive a tiny proportion of the final price and to occupy a position increasingly depressed in each new bearish cycle of the international market.

TRADE IN SERVICES AND DIGITAL DIVIDE: NEW DIMENSION OF UNEQUAL EXCHANGE

Technological innovations associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution are transforming the nature of commerce and production and have given renewed impetus to the services sector.

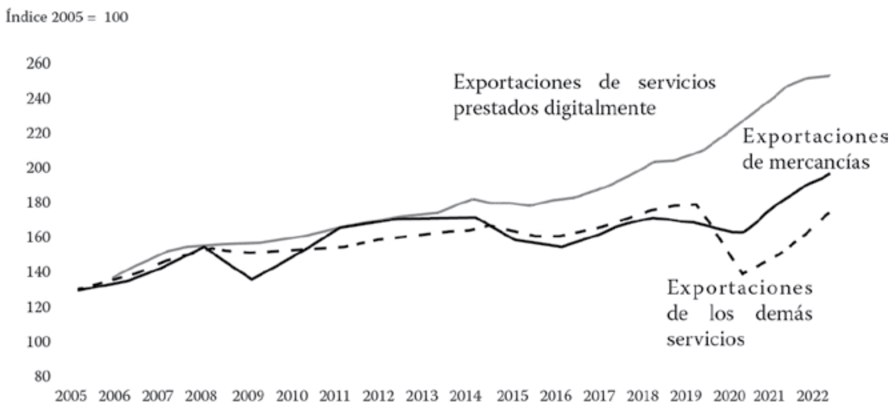
The emergence and spread of advanced digital production (ADP) technologies are radically altering manufacturing production, increasingly blurring the boundaries between physical and digital production systems. Advances in robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), additive manufacturing, digital platforms, the Internet and data analytics create significant opportunities to accelerate innovation and increase the value-added content of production in manufacturing industries. At the same time, these technological advances make it possible to produce, move and market products and services around the world with greater ease.

Under the influence of this transcendental technological transformation, the services sector has reaffirmed itself as the most dynamic component of international trade in recent times, from communications to transportation, finance, education, health, tourism and services related to the environment; mainly teleservices (See Chart 6). Since 2007, trade in services has grown 60 times faster than trade in goods and now represents the largest share of the world economy.

According to WTO estimates, the value of global exports of digitally provided services has almost quadrupled since 2005, and these have increased by 8.1 percent annually on average over the period 2005-2022, outpacing goods (5.6 percent) and to exports of other services (4.2 percent). Although tourism and other services that require cross-border mobility of people decreased in this period, exports of digitally provided services continued to increase, reaching USD 3.82 trillion in the United States in 2022, representing 54 percent of the total world exports of services. In the last decade, computer services have been the most dynamic service sector.

It is easy to notice the high concentration of trade in services in developed countries, which have the greatest FLW activity. The ten largest exporters of services concentrate 58 percent of total global sales; among them there are no members of the G77, except China, which occupies fourth place.

Chart 6. World exports of digital services



Source: WTO, (2023).

Although it has increased more than five percentage points in the last ten years, the participation of developing economies in world exports of services represents only a little more than 30 percent of the world total; while its proportion in imports reached 38.2 percent, increasing almost seven percentage points. There are marked differences within developing countries, although their exports are essentially concentrated in services with low technological and knowledge content.

Asia's services exports have grown at a faster rate than the rest of the world. In 2022, almost a quarter of digitally delivered services came from Asian economies, and 19 percent came from North America. Central and South America and the Caribbean, as well as the Middle East, saw growth accelerate in 2022. However, growth in Africa and the least developed countries continued to lag, and in 2022 the share of Africa in exports of digitally provided services was less than 1 percent.

Trade in services is scarce in Africa. Between 2005 and 2019 it represented around 17 percent of the region's total exports. Furthermore, traditional services, such as travel and transportation, dominate services trade, accounting for more than two-thirds of total services trade, suggesting that within the continent there is limited access to a range of competitive services that are critical inputs. Knowledge-intensive services are underrepresented in African services exports, making up only 20 percent of them.

The dizzying dynamics of the current technological revolution leave developing countries increasingly behind, by leaps and bounds. The differences are so enormous that current technological advances in PDA seem to once again divide the world between economies of the center and the periphery, in what could be considered a new dimension of unequal exchange. Developing countries remain trapped in exports of increasingly cheaper traditional services in relative terms; while industrialized economies monopolize and monopolize the most dynamic and profitable advanced services.

Indeed, when we want to characterize the process of creation and dissemination of PDA technologies, one of the most abbreviated and direct ways to do so is to refer to the extreme concentration, especially of the activity related to the creation of patents and export.
In 2019, UNIDO has referred to the above in these terms:

> ...current technological advances in PDA are again dividing the world between leading economies, second-tier economies and lagging economies. The 2020 Industrial Development Report concludes that ten leading economies are responsible for 90 percent of all global patents and 70 percent of all exports directly related to these technologies. Forty other economies, the second tier, actively participate in these technologies, although with a much lower intensity (8 percent of global patents). The rest of the world either shows very little activity (the late industrializing countries) or does not participate in the creation and global use of these technologies (the laggards). That is, overall, only fifty economies actively participate in the implementation of PDA technologies.

The large number of countries that have not yet entered the era of ongoing technological advances is worrying. In much of the world, especially in less developed and other low-income countries, PDA technologies are still far from being used on a large scale. The manufacturing sector of these countries is characterized by the existence of «technological islands,» in which few –if any– digital leaders coexist with a large majority of companies that use outdated technologies. Up to 70 percent of the manufacturing sector in «lagging economies» continues to use analog technologies in their manufacturing production.

The rapid growth and expansion of digitalization has exposed some major gaps in many developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries (LDCs):[18] from the limited information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, to the absence of regulatory frameworks, the affordability gap and the scarcity of digital skills. Despite the progress made, the conditions necessary for teleworking and participation in remote education activities are not distributed evenly between or within countries.[19]

The obvious conclusion to which the above information leads is that trade in modern or advanced services, for the vast majority of developing countries, is virtually non-existent or has barely begun in significant proportions. Overcoming the wide and growing digital divide represents a colossal historical task for our countries, while PDA technologies today constitute a key factor to take advantage of the new opportunities opened in the services sector and effective insertion in international trade.

GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS AND TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

One of the changes that have occurred in the global economy in recent decades is the tendency to structure production and trade around complex global value chains (GVC),[20] articulated by transnational companies; that is, by the cross-border exchange that takes place between its network of subsidiaries, partners and suppliers. More than half of global trade in goods and services is related to intermediate products that are fundamentally exchanged within GVCs, that is, global networks of production of goods and services.

The most recent figures indicate that around 80 percent of global trade takes place in value chains linked to transnational companies. It is not about the exchange of goods that change ownership when they are moved, but rather a system of captive trade within the chain of subsidiaries of large transnational corporations that buy and sell among themselves to evade taxes or transfer profits and that They appear in statistics as exports from developing countries, but, in essence, they have always been within the corporate chain and governed by its global strategy. It is a caricature of trade between subsidiaries of the same transnational, whose objective is not to equitably remunerate the work expended by national producers, but rather to serve as vehicles to transfer profits from one branch to another, to fulfill the purpose of maximizing profit at cluster level.

Closely associated with the above is the consolidation of the predominance of transnational corporations (TCs): the 500 largest transnational companies on the planet represent 25 percent of world GDP, two-thirds of world trade and 25 percent of world FDI. Sales of the 90 most powerful ETs in the world exceed the exports of most nation-states. Only 10 countries, almost all of them from developed economies (the United States, China, Germany, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, Holland and Belgium), exceed with their exports

[18] Less than 10 percent of the LDC population makes online purchases, and in Africa, Internet use for commercial purposes averages 7 percent, ranging from 20 percent in Senegal to 1 percent in Rwanda. Furthermore, computer ownership is low: more than 90 percent of businesses surveyed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP in Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda do not even have one).

[19] Despite advances in the development, inclusion and use of ICTs by companies, governments and citizens, there are barriers that stand between the poorest and most vulnerable populations, and the benefits of digital transformation, including barriers to access and digital skills; inseparable, the latter, from the gap in access to quality education.

[20] The GVCs explain the progressive interconnection of production processes between different countries, each one specializing in certain phases of the production of a product.

the sales of the 10 most important TNCs in world trade (Shell, Exxon, G.M., Toyota, Ford, Mitsubishi, Mitsui Iway, Sumimoto, Itoch, Maruben and Hitachi).

This deepens the subordinate and transnationalized insertion of developing countries in the international division of labor and the world political order, to the extent that through GVCs transnational companies usually develop only partial work processes in the periphery and The dissemination of the technologies used depends, fundamentally, on the existence of a local industrial network capable of providing them with goods and services and of adequately taking advantage of the experience and technical training gained in them by the most qualified personnel. The investments of transnational companies are concentrated in operations that are difficult to mechanize or in the manufacturing of goods that are in the downward phase of their cycle, making it more profitable for them to invest in the development of new products than to invest in the development of new techniques or in a reengineering of the product. Even in «successful» cases, the basic conception of the product, the essential technological inputs and the means of production, are mostly imported.

In other words, beyond some isolated and specific positive effects for the industrialization of developing countries or temporary economic growth, the expansion of global value chains constitutes a new form of dependency that, in the best of cases, It tends to turn them into exporters of simple manufactures, trapped in the networks of transnational production and marketing systems, while they continue to import the capital and equipment goods that decide the course of development. Thus, GVCs are nothing more than a phase of industrialization that some authors have called «branched» because they are based on branches or productive and commercial subsidiaries of transnational companies, which impose standards that are foreign to real national needs and take advantage of low salaries or other environmental and social facilities for their uncontrolled and highly profitable action.

By virtue of this, a small number of large transnational companies, mostly based in the Global North, have been able to consolidate growing shares of profits in a broader market. This consolidation is reinforced by technological dominance, strong protection of intellectual property rights, low trade barriers, and privileged access to low-cost capital and labor around the world.

In the context of GVCs, while capitalist centers produce and offer highly complex goods and services that generate important «backward linkages,» which stimulate their local productive sectors (which also become complex); The periphery seems to participate in international trade through the production and supply of goods and services that demand low economic complexity and/or generate limited backward linkages» in favor of their local economy. Thus, the role of the periphery within the chains of international complexity constitutes an expression of its technological dependence.

The iPhone value chain is an eloquent example that the distribution of value in a large global industry is very unequal and does not favor developing countries. Across virtually every new iPhone launch between 2010 and 2018, Apple earned 56 percent of the final retail price (on average) without actually producing or assembling any of the components; 1.5 percent of the final retail price went to the most labor-intensive part of the production stage, assembly, which took place primarily in China. This pressure on the value of labor also explains the appalling working conditions in the global electronics industry and most other global manufacturing industries, evidenced by wages below the social reproduction wage, excessive overtime and harmful health conditions.

The evidence for Latin America shows that, as a general rule, in the case of extra-regional value chains, the region has a biased position towards the last stage of the production process, finishing final goods with inputs from other areas outside it. This is particularly important in the case of Central American countries, which import inputs from the United States, and is less pronounced in the case of South America. Regarding regional chains, the most notable case is Mexico due to its relationship with NAFTA (since 2020 T-MEC), where a participation that is more biased towards the completion of final goods with inputs from its northern neighbors is also observed.

Up to this point, then, the evidence would seem to indicate that the periphery has not been able to «exit» that place that Arrighi spoke of in 1997; «the muscles and not the brains» of the «new international division of labor.» The countries that have come to occupy a central place in global exports of added value –both for final and intermediate consumption– seem to have done so based on their effective transformation into large global factories of different types of goods. That is, their participation in the world added value would be more related to the «quantity» of goods and services manufactured than to the part of added value incorporated in each one, which would indicate a low participation in the design and manufacture of the key components of industries.

On the other hand, commodity-dependent developing countries tend to be left behind in demand-driven global value chains, which are controlled by retailers and global buyers. In general, the increasing concentration of trade and the vertical integration of large companies is detrimental to local producers. The ability of international trade to act as an engine of poverty reduction is being compromised by the way global value chains are organized. For example, four transnational companies control more than 60 percent of the world coffee market. This situation reduces the participation of coffee producers in price determination processes and hinders sustainable production and economic diversification in coffee exporting countries. A similar situation is also observed in the cocoa sector, in which the three largest companies marketed approximately 50 percent to 60 percent of global cocoa production in 2013. Four transnational companies control more than 60 percent of global processing of cocoa grinds.

Recent changes tend to aggravate the situation. Faced with risks not previously identified or considered of minimal importance, some large companies globally, in certain sectors, have opted to introduce changes in their strategies, mainly in terms of the prioritized criteria for selecting the geographical location of the productive units.

In particular, the massive disruptions caused by the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have highlighted the low resilience of global supply networks. In response, some of the world's leading economies are undertaking industrial policy initiatives that could lead to a major reconfiguration of global value chains in the coming years.

This scenario is powerfully influenced by the decision of the United States government to identify China as a dangerous competitor in strategic terms, and the determination to mobilize American economic and political resources, both in the government and private sectors, in order to contain or slow down the economic and technological progress of the emerging Asian power. This effort has involved strong protectionist measures aimed at reducing Chinese imports and also the effort to encourage the corporate sector to withdraw or reduce investments in that country and relocate them to the United States, for which they make use of stimulus measures and, In addition, coercive methods.

The relocation of production to the country of origin, *reshoring*, is also observed for various reasons; but they have also resorted to locating close to the main sources of supplies and destination markets, *nearshoring*, a combination of localizations internally and in different countries, *multi-shoring*, and localization in countries considered «friends» and «allies» *friend-shoring* and *ally-shoring*.

These profound transformations in the geopolitics of world trade threaten the further marginalization of developing countries and require a coordinated strategy and united action to advance along a path different from the current dependent and transnationalized course regarding industrialization and the use of International trade as a strategically valid way to overcome underdevelopment and access modern technology.

In fact, in the last three years, the People's Republic of China and other countries have experienced not only a marked decrease in the inflow of foreign direct investment flows, but even processes of net disinvestment due to the closure and relocation to «other locations» of the subsidiaries or associated companies that decades ago had relocated to said territories. This process seems to favor some countries in the immediate neighborhood of the United States or considered its «friendly allies» such as, for example, Mexico, and in perspective perhaps some other Central Americans –Costa Rica, essentially.

The likely scenario of increasing regionalization of supply chains and their governance raises the risk of regulatory fragmentation of global trade. This situation poses significant risks for developing countries, especially in Africa and Latin America, which, unlike other regions, have not managed to generate a highly integrated regional space that allows them to reduce their exposure to changes in trade and industrial policies of its main partners.

It is not possible to forget that, in the last three decades, the predominant logic in the organization of global value chains focused on minimizing costs, has translated into a high geographic concentration of the global production of strategic goods, such as microprocessors, medical devices, active ingredients for medicines and fertilizers. The problems derived from this phenomenon began to manifest themselves as a result of certain extreme climate phenomena, such as the tsunami that devastated Japan in 2011 and the floods that affected Thailand that same year.

The result of all this is a capitalist international economic order, which reinforces persistent transnationalized central-peripheral trade chains where the influence of the periphery is minimized. Such chains condemn peripheral countries to become almost irrelevant and highly fragile, with a new-found dependence and unalterable substance within international trade; while the capitalist centers concentrate and increase their structural power. In any case, the alternative is not much or little insertion in the GVCs and the challenge remains to avoid those forms of international insertion that promote subordinate, impoverishing and exclusive growth.

PROTECTIONISM VS. FREE TRADE

As has been demonstrated over the last forty years, so-called free trade is more than ever before a fallacy and a decoy to cover up the true policy of domination and exploitation. In the globalized and transnationalized world economy, dominated by gigantic corporations and where developed countries practice a closed selective protectionism, free trade is fiction.

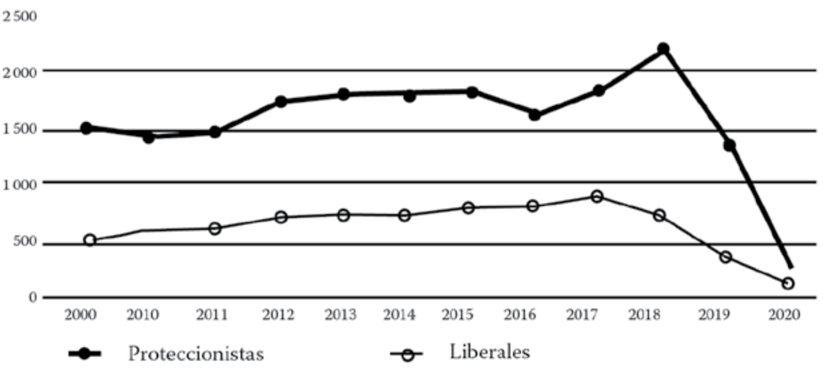
Developed countries do what they have always done throughout Economic History: they demand free trade for sectors where their competitive capacity is superior and they practice the protection of sectors where competition is not convenient for them. The notion that neoliberal thought attempts to present as an absolute dilemma is not true in any way, that is, the forced choice between pure and correct free trade, or erroneous and malevolent protectionism.

Developed countries tell developing countries that the only way to develop is through total liberalization, drastically lowering their tariffs, consolidating internal reforms and opening their markets quickly and irreversibly. This runs counter to the lessons of the past, which show how developed countries and emerging economies have used tariffs and subsidies to promote development and have only opened their markets when they have been prepared to do so. This vision also goes against the response of developed countries to the current economic crisis, which is including «national key» strategies in which the use of tariffs and subsidies is combined to stimulate their economies.

Strictly speaking, free trade is neither free now nor has it ever been free, nor is it even trade according to its classical concept, nor does its practice generate economic growth per se, nor does it reduce poverty, nor does it report «mutual benefits» between the trading parties.

According to information collected by *think tank* Global Trade Alert (GTA),[21] an initiative of the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) at the request of the G20, since 2008, 17,583 trade-damaging interventions have been carried out around the world, with 2019 being the year in which they were imposed the most (See Chart 7). These barriers to trade and cross-border investments implemented since then represent almost three times the liberalizing regulations approved in that same period. From the OECD, they attribute 25 percent of the trade slowdown in recent years to both elements (protectionist movement and brake on the liberalization process).

Chart 7. Number of annual interventions since 2008



Source: G20 (2020). Global Trade Alert.

Trade liberalization has essentially consisted of a unilateral elimination of protection instruments by the South, without developed countries doing the same to allow exports from

21 Of the protectionist regulations, 16.2 percent are tariffs on the import of products, 15.2 percent on the financial industry, 12.5 percent against dumping and 6.8 percent consist of subsidies. The United States, with 1,435 regulations, was the country that approved the most protectionist regulations, followed by Germany (854), India (797) and Russia (597). It is relevant to mention how difficult it is to quantify the number of protectionist measures, since to avoid WTO scrutiny they are often hidden under the umbrella of other policies. Thus, the series prepared by the GTA differs substantially from that prepared by the WTO, since the former attempts to capture these more opaque measures. In particular, the GTA estimates that the discriminatory measures counted by the WTO underestimate reality by more than 50 percent. In this sense, and despite the fact that the two Focus graphs show an increase in protectionism, the second (which reflects the stock) cannot be prepared from the first (which reflects the flows) because it comes from different sources.

developing countries to enter their markets. Following the preaching of the G7, developing countries have carried out tariff disarmament and, in general, a faster and deeper trade opening than those carried out by the fathers of the proposal themselves, often at the sacrifice of the defense of nascent industrial production and the employment associated with it.

In contrast, the absurd reality is that the main capitalist powers have been the promoters and tend to increase protectionist measures that harm the interests of developing countries, on every occasion they have deemed appropriate, at the same time that they do not stop declaring fervent supporters and defenders of trade liberalization and say they are concerned about the possibility of a protectionist escalation that alters the supposedly free functioning mechanisms of the markets. More than 80 percent of the aforementioned discriminatory and protectionist measures approved in the period 2009-2021 originated in developed countries. The state index of interventions by year reveals that between 2009 and 2021, the United States implemented 399 liberalized interventions, but 2,647 restrictive interventions. This pattern is replicated in general; Germany carried out 1,993 restrictive interventions; Italy 891, among others.

Despite the commitment made by the G20 countries at the London summit in April 2009 not to repeat the mistakes that were historically made with protectionism in the past, in that same year the World Bank reported that seventeen of the twenty most The world's developed countries had imposed trade restrictions until then. The largest economies leaned towards protectionist measures when the global economy began to suffer, thus creating damage to trade and distorting the exchange of merchandise from 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent, which translated into losses of 50 billion USD annually globally.

Ironically, the champions of free trade, the developed countries, have been the promoters of the protectionist wave, especially the United States. If during the government of President Barack Obama, between 2009 and 2016, 13 percent of the restrictive measures came from the United States, the figure rose to 21 percent of the total in 2017 with the government of Donald Trump, and in 2018 they constituted 44 percent of the total restrictive measures applied in the world. It is a simple count, without weighing the extent of its relative impact, but it is more than indicative of the challenge that the change in policy of the hegemonic country of the world economy represents for the insertion of developing countries in international trade.

These unilateral, selfish and unfair protectionist policies, which block access to markets or reduce the competitiveness of products exported by underdeveloped countries, slow down the development of the vast majority of people whose backwardness is the consequence of centuries of colonial and neocolonial exploitation, on which the opulence of a small group of nations was built that today forgets its protectionist past.

The perverse evolution of protectionism is visible. Thanks to the large number of countries that belong to the WTO, the use of the most common measures, such as increasing tariffs or import restrictions, has been limited, and many governments have chosen to progressively implement more difficult protectionist measures to detect, such as aid for business financing. The use of tariffs as an instrument of trade policy has lost relative importance, giving way to non-tariff measures. Sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) stand out as the most used NTMs currently in trade policies. In both cases they have a high impact on the agricultural sector, which is of great importance for the export performance of many developing countries. Thus, according to data collected by the GTA, which takes these less conventional measures into consideration, in 2015 the number of new discriminatory measures against foreign companies doubled compared to 2014, from 500 to a thousand, and everything indicates that it has remained the same the upward trend.

The pandemic was responsible for a once-in-a-lifetime milestone for global trade, as calls for national self-sufficiency were accompanied by aggressive trade controls. Open trade policies, already under pressure in key markets before the pandemic, quickly gave way to restrictive changes aimed at protecting their citizens and interests.

Box 4. Rebirth of protectionism

The number of trade restrictions imposed by countries increased from almost 2,300 in 2019 to 2,600 in 2022, peaking at 4,500 in 2020. Metals (iron and steel), cereals (wheat, corn, rice) and pharmaceuticals accounted for most trade restrictions.

The subsidy race

The United States is spending lavishly on subsidies to revive its manufacturing industry. In that sense, in 2022 it approved two laws to promote this sector:

- The first law, called «The CHIPS and Science Act,» aims to inject $53 billion to stimulate U.S. domestic semiconductor production and investments in research and development.
- The second law, «The Inflation Reduction Act» (IRA), allocates $370 billion in grants, loans and tax credits to reduce energy costs and accelerate private investment in clean energy solutions.
- The European Union is reviewing its state aid rules to facilitate national public investments in the bloc's transition plan.
- Japan increased its science and technology budget (10 thousand USD) for several years.
- According to the French Institute of Foreign Affairs, global support for the electronic chip industry could reach 721 billion USD.
- This new subsidy race could harm countries with less fiscal space and lead to unprofitable investments due to the complexity of semiconductor production.
- The massive investments being generated in the chip industry could lead to excess capacity, since demand for high-tech goods is cyclical, while supply cannot adapt quickly.

The increase of exports controls

The pandemic and geopolitical tensions have led to increased export controls. When the conflict broke out in Ukraine, countries imposed bans or limits on exports of food, fertilizers, metals and technologies, to protect their own domestic consumers from shortages.

- Food export bans covered up to 34 percent of traded wheat and 6 percent of traded corn.
- Western countries will tighten export controls in 2022 with 55 new export control measures for heavy machinery, 54 aimed at chemicals and 59 for cereals. These restrictions were intended to hinder Russia's war effort.
- The control of food and fertilizer exports contributed to food shortages and rising world prices. An example of this was wheat and corn, which they exposed as export prohibitions and which contribute to the short-term increase in world prices of the different economic subsectors that depend on these inputs.

Source: Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo de Comercio Exterior (Idexcam) (2023).

GLOBAL TRADE OUTLOOK AND TRENDS FOR 2023

The business response to the sudden existential threat of the COVID 19 pandemic took several forms. These included tariffs, regulation and «vaccine nationalism,» where, in the words of the International Trade Center, governments established «temporary trade measures intended to restrict exports of vital medical supplies.» Immediate restrictions were placed on basic components, medical ingredients, personal protective equipment and ventilators.

But the authorities' influence extended beyond imports and exports. Governments began to take a more hands-on role in protecting critical supply chains. With the pandemic, issues of economic security quickly became issues of national security, and the role of the State in the economy increased.

Even more concerning is the fact that the conflict in Ukraine has triggered an alarming global increase in government controls on food exports, exacerbating the worst food crisis in a decade.

Monitoring carried out by the World Bank and Global Trade Alert indicates that, in total, between the beginning of 2022 and the month of July of that year, 74 export restrictions, such as taxes or outright bans, were announced or imposed on fertilizers, wheat and other food products (98, counting those that had expired). Likewise, 61 import liberalization reforms were counted, such as tariff reductions (70 taking into account those that had expired). The G20 countries (80 percent of world trade) applied a growing number of restrictive measures on exports, between mid-May and mid-October 2022. The most affected items were food and fertilizers, which worsened the critical global situation and increased uncertainty in international trade. When you have the three largest economies in the three major trading blocs moving in that protectionist direction, it affects everyone else. And that suggests a longer-term perspective.

The South has suffered a slowdown in its trade growth that has led to its declining share of the global economy, while protectionist measures increase, something that may worsen as countries reconfigure their supply chains according to the new strategies guided by geopolitical and security issues.

As if all this were not enough, the unilateral imposition of coercive measures, another instrument of aggression and discrimination, used by developed countries for political purposes, has gained renewed momentum. These measures may take the form of economic and financial restrictions, trade embargoes, blockades or others. The disastrous consequences of these types of measures reached extreme drama in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Today, many countries are subject to multiple forms of economic coercion.[22] While some of them are sanctions decreed by the United Nations Security Council (arms embargoes, for example, for certain countries in armed conflict), the majority of these coercive measures are unilaterally imposed by the United States and supported by its closer allies, such as the European Union. Developed countries take advantage of their dominant position on the international scene to destabilize the economic apparatus of various countries.

The unilateral measures of the United States are so frequent and sustained over time – they have become true weapons of mass destruction, since they affect hundreds of millions of people around the planet– that their traces are in all latitudes.[23] There is no corner of the world where they do not make themselves felt, even if indirectly. To ignore the destructive

[22] These countries include: Belarus, Burundi, North Korea, Cuba, Iran, Libya, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

[23] According to research by Malaysian journalists Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Anis Chowdhury, during 1990-2005, the United States imposed one-third of sanctions regimes worldwide. These were inflicted on more than a thousand entities or individuals annually between 2016 and 2020, that is, almost 80 percent more than in the period 2008-2015. It was Donald Trump's administration that raised the US share of all global sanctions to almost half.

action of these unilateral reprisals would be to stick one's head in the sand with an ostrich philosophy.

Unilateral coercive measures, embargoes and blockades, «sold» as non-violent alternatives to war by military means, isolate and punish victim countries, supposedly to force them to «change their attitude» or even to provoke «regime changes.» However, most of these actions harm the vast majority.

Poverty levels in countries under the United States economic, financial and trade war scheme are 3.8 percent higher on average, compared to other countries where it has not been imposed. Studies show that such negative impacts increased with their duration, showing that Washington's unilateral actions are the most damaging with global implications.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba constitutes the main obstacle to the development of the Cuban economy. As is known, these measures cost the Cuban people countless sacrifices. Similar repercussions can be seen in other countries that are subject to coercive measures imposed by the United States, such as Venezuela, Iran and Syria.

The arbitrary and illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed against sovereign States violate the human rights of their people, International Law and the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principles of non-intervention, self-determination and independence of States. The organs of the United Nations –General Assembly[24] and Human Rights Council,[25] among others–, have repeatedly condemned such measures.

The protectionist wave, together with the arsenal of unilateral coercive measures applied by developed countries, hit our countries with redoubled intensity and undermine their ability to advance along a different path, in accordance with the right of people to decide their future, at the current catastrophic course in terms of commercial expansion and the use of trade as a development factor.

[24] See, among others, Resolution 74/200, adopted December 19, 2019

[25] See, among others, Resolution 40/3, adopted Marh 21, 2019.

III

THE PROBLEM OF THE MONETARY SYSTEM AND THE EXTERNAL DEBT

Dependence on the dollar standard

The international monetary system has relied for several decades on the currency of a single country, the United States, as the fundamental way of organizing commerce, carrying out financial transactions, and preserving values and wealth. This reality generates, by nature, economic imbalances and significant political tensions, both within that territory and at a global level. By definition, it confers disproportionate economic and political power on the US government and its financial institutions, while exposing international trade and finance to the fate of the USD and the capricious imbalances of that country's economy.

Unlike the gold standard in place in the past, the USD is not backed by promises of its convertibility to gold. In reality, it takes precedence over the rest of the currencies simply because of the dominance of the United States market over the international economy. This dominance particularly reflects the power of the State of the issuing country of that currency, which set out to strengthen its credibility and expression in bonds and certificates. It also reflects the commitment of US policymakers to financial liberalization and price stability, even at the expense of macroeconomic objectives, such as employment and income growth, and represents the development of highly liquid financial markets for sovereign debt instruments of very low risk.

Together, these factors helped create a strong global preference, on the part of investors and issuers of secure debt instruments, in favor of instruments denominated in USD, whether in currency or in various certificates backed by the Treasury of the States.

However, this monetary system generates imbalances and inequalities around the world. It gave rise to the disproportionate development of a growing international demand for assets denominated in USD and the accumulation of national reserves also denominated in that currency. That demand, as has been reported many times, has underpinned large and persistent U.S. trade deficits since the 1970s.

Cumulatively and as a result of that demand, the US economy has since appropriated tens of trillions of USD worth of goods and services from its trading partners. This demand has also fueled the growth of the financial sector in the United States and, thus, the political influence of this sector within the country and globally.

On the one hand, the dominance of the USD in international finance has exposed the world economy and especially that of developing countries to the vicissitudes of the monetary cycles of the United States. Since 1980, for example, the restrictive measures applied to the USD in the US economy have had an impact on international financing restrictions, which restricts capital flows to developing countries and that often gives rise to financial tensions, erosion of national reserves, monetary crises and other imbalances, regardless of the wisdom of the economic policies that the governments of those countries can implement. The position of the United States as provider of the international reserve currency means that global liquidity does not depend on concerted action by countries or even on mechanisms agreed upon by a group of countries, but on their internal decisions, according to their own realities and priorities, both political and economic, without taking into account the consequences for the rest of the nations.

On the other hand, informal dependence on the USD as an international monetary standard places extraordinary political power in the hands of the United States government. It has become an effective tool in the exercise of imperialist power, with the capacity to exert pressure and achieve the subordination of sovereign States, as well as to extract wealth and political concessions from other nations. This context has made it easier for the United States government to impose unilateral coercive economic measures that prohibit the affected countries from using the USD, with dire consequences for the commercial and financial exchanges of said countries.

The practice of deploying its influence by determining which country obtains liquidity in dollars and under what conditions, has become a custom and usual instrument in the exercise of US foreign policy. This was most eloquently displayed during the Latin American debt crises of the 1980s and the Asian crisis of 1997, in which the governments of indebted countries were forced to make onerous concessions, both political and economic. Since the financial crisis of 2007 to 2009, the US Federal Reserve moved to reinforce the USD's status as the foundation of international finance by formalizing its role as an international liquidity provider of last resort through repurchase agreements with central banks of various countries.

Broad preferences for USD-denominated assets and reserves, the promotion of open capital accounts, and a liquidity supply system firmly focused on US institutions have created new biases in international monetary management preferences, especially against which the International Monetary Fund identifies as Developing Countries and Emerging Economies, which depend greatly on the arrival of capital flows.

Those in charge of conducting economic policy in these countries have had to act with one hand tied when formulating and implementing strategies for economic and social development. Any relatively ambitious initiative aimed at promoting development is severely limited, not only by the need to overcome the conditions of the colonial past and the neocolonial yoke, but also by the danger of irritating or disappointing the expectations of those who have in their hands control of international capital markets and have the ability to limit capital flows, cause capital flight and destabilize the volatility of exchange rates.

As happened with the gold standard, the system based on the USD often subordinates the socioeconomic interests of the vast majority to those of large foreign investors, as well as national ones. This contradiction is one of the most important of those faced by the governments of developing countries and the Group of 77 and China, especially in the battle for a more just and equitable international economic order.

To alleviate those pressures, many developing countries have accumulated huge dollar reserves over the past twenty years. While that has helped many of them avoid currency crises, such as those of the 1980s and 1990s, it is a recipe that came with great cost. According to estimates, the differentials between what national central banks earn on their assets in reserves and the interest paid by the Treasury of each country on liabilities, put the financial cost for a large group of countries in a proportion of 1 to 3 percent of its Gross Domestic Product. In this way, the dollar standard imposes a sui generis financial tax on the treasury of developing countries and the so-called emerging economies, in the form of a margin between what they earn on the instruments of the United States Treasury and what they pay to the holders of its liabilities, both national and foreign.

The prospect that the US government will continue to increasingly leverage the power of the USD as a global reserve currency for its national interests, both economic and political, is foreseeable and dangerous. It is a reality that has provoked frequent debates about the search for an alternative to the dollar standard and the possible emergence of a specific national currency or a set of them capable of offering other options, including regional ones.

At the moment, these are attractive ideas, but unlikely and would be complicated. Firstly, any effort to find a national currency that is an alternative to the USD as the basis of the international monetary system would entail a substantial reform of that system, which in practice implies major geopolitical changes. Secondly, the designation of another national currency or a selective group of them as an alternative universal reserve standard would imply the repetition of the same problem, but with another denomination.

Finding a solution is, therefore, a politically complicated task. Among other problems, a deep knowledge and mastery of the complexities of monetary and financial markets, their intricate network of interconnections, and their functioning at a global level is required. Knowledge about the details of such an important group is usually in the hands of specialized entities, most of which usually master fragmented aspects associated with their specific area of specialization, in the search for the greatest possible advantages, while at the same time either in the United States or in countries allied to Washington's policies. These entities and their experts will hardly find the courage and time to dedicate their knowledge to the search for alternatives in order to substantially modify the system on which the profits of them and the organizations for which they work depend.

Having said the above, there is no doubt that the need to undertake a substantial reform of the international monetary and financial system is urgent and that this transformation must contemplate the abandonment of dependence on a national currency as an international reserve. Finding how to achieve this and defining what sacrifices will be necessary to achieve that goal is something that requires an international environment favorable to cooperation. It must be part of a real commitment in favor of a more just and rational international economic order, and would demand from developing countries and the Group of 77 and China, specifically, a greater degree of unity and a determination to demand justice with greater emphasis than that which this group of countries has had in recent decades.

Main trends

The current trends in international finance have been progressively strengthened since the 1970s when profound changes took place in capitalist relations of production. When the Bretton Woods system collapsed, a new stage of floating exchange rates determined by supply and demand in the exchange markets was entered. The extreme volatility that was generated as a result of the absolute lack of control of these markets, often subject to the influence of various short-term events, caused large and constant movements in exchange rates. This high volatility characterized the markets, a phenomenon contrary to that predicted by the economists of the time, who trusted that the establishment of floating exchange rates determined by the free action of the market would tend to stabilize the oscillations in their values.

During those years, a new accumulation scheme began to take shape worldwide, whose essential characteristics are: notable increase in the rate of exploitation based on the increase in working hours and intensity of work; increase in productivity and decrease in real wages; reorientation of the surplus towards speculative investment; higher level of internationalization and financial innovation; productive reorganization around new information technologies; notable increase in the presence of transnational companies and geographical relocation of capital.

This scheme had its expression in the neoliberal policies that were generally applied during the eighties and nineties in developed countries and also in underdeveloped economies under the precepts of the so-called «Washington Consensus.» Their most representative features were: external openness to facilitate the free mobility of goods, services and capital; economic deregulation through the liberalization of prices and tariffs; privatization of public assets; deregulation of the labor market and open preference for the interests of financial capital.

At that stage of the development of capitalism, there was a greater subordination of the State to financial capital and the deregulation of markets was openly favored, thus encouraging the enrichment of the financial elites in developed countries. Since then, the transformations that took place in the main financial centers and in the actions of their agents revolutionized the nature of finance and reinforced its leading role in international economic relations beyond the expansion experienced by the world economy and trade.

Thus, one of the most notable features of the contemporary world economy is the spectacular growth of international monetary and financial relations reflected in the greater financial dimension of the economies, the proliferation of investment agents and financing schemes on a global scale, the profound innovation in financial products and services and the liberalization of the international movement of capital.

At the same time, the internationalization and integration of capital markets is confirmed as one of the most significant trends in finance, which essentially responds to the permanent need for expansion and valorization of capital. Already in the 1970s and 1980s, the trend towards closer links between markets can be seen due to the processes of liberalization of financial systems in many industrialized countries, the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of fixed parities and the advances of computing and telecommunications, but the integrationist vocation of finance was consolidated in the 1990s as an essential part of the process of globalization of economic activity.[26]

The greater integration and deregulation of financial markets are attributed with effects of great connotation for the world economy. Although capital flows more freely to countries with greater investment opportunities, they are also exposed to greater risk given the instability that characterizes interest rates, exchange rates and capital flows, practically free of controls. On the other hand, the power of States to decide fiscal and monetary policies decreases because the reaction of international markets, that is, of the political forces that govern the interests of big capital, can make them extremely costly or totally unviable economically and politically.

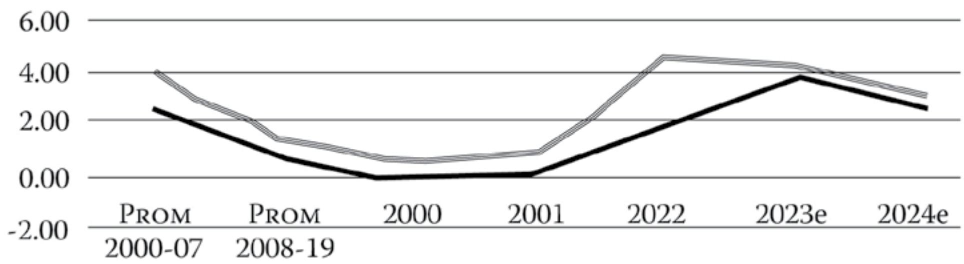
With regard to the monetary policies of developed nations, the expansive nature that predominated as a result of the 2008 crisis and that was reinforced by the pandemic, generated a market dynamic that was very dangerous for the stability of the international monetary and financial system. In this sense, the search for profitability in a context of low interest rates encouraged financial excesses in market agents, causing erratic movements in

[26] Expression of financial integration are the greater facilities to access and exchange financial instruments, the transformation of currency markets into 24-hour markets, the increase in rivalry between agents to achieve market leadership and the strong contagion that occurs between the different financial centers in the face of the changes that take place in any of them.

the prices of assets and credit, frequent alterations in the prices of the main currencies and sudden changes in the international movement of capital.

After the prolonged period of low interest rates, the central banks of developed economies have begun an upward correction movement (See Chart 1), in an attempt to combat the inflation that currently affects them. This represents a new obstacle in financial matters, as it generates problems for the sustainability of debts in nations, both developed and underdeveloped, that have high public and private debt.

Chart 1. Interest rates in financial markets 2000-2024 (percentages)

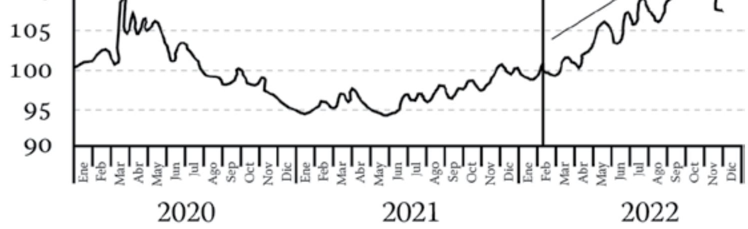


e: estimate

Source: Based on data from Caixa Bank.

Another element that constitutes a source of important instability in the current financial panorama is the high volatility of exchange rates, especially the most recent behavior of the USD. As already noted, the performance of the US economy and the policies of the Federal Reserve support the strength of the USD against the rest of the currencies of advanced countries and especially emerging countries (See Chart 2), which still threatens more against the ability to pay the debts contracted and, therefore, against the financial stability of the public and corporate sector of those economies.

Chart 2. Type of dollar exchange rate with regards to the other main currencies in the world (From January 2020 to November 2022, index)



Source: UNECLAC, (2022).

The current dynamics of international finance are particularly disruptive for the macroeconomic stability, growth aspirations and social well-being of less developed nations. These are more vulnerable than advanced economies to the volatility that characterizes interest rates, stock market indices and exchange rates, and the extreme mobility of capital on a global scale.

The economic stagnation and social deterioration generated by the serious external debt crisis that broke out in 1982, together with the strong pressures from creditors to pay the debt service, led to the implementation of fundamental changes in the economic policies of underdeveloped countries. The new policies, with a neoliberal conception, were essentially aimed at liberalization, external opening and privatization. The aim was for economies to become independent from state control, as if this were the problem, and operate according to the rules of the market, with the promise of thus achieving a fuller insertion into the international economy.

The reforms in the financial area were compatible with the deregulatory and integrationist trends that were already emerging in the international financial and monetary markets. They took shape mainly within the framework of the negotiations that highly indebted countries entered into with their private and official creditors during the decade to organize the state of their external finances and access fresh financing. Its main promoters and evaluators were the IMF and the World Bank.

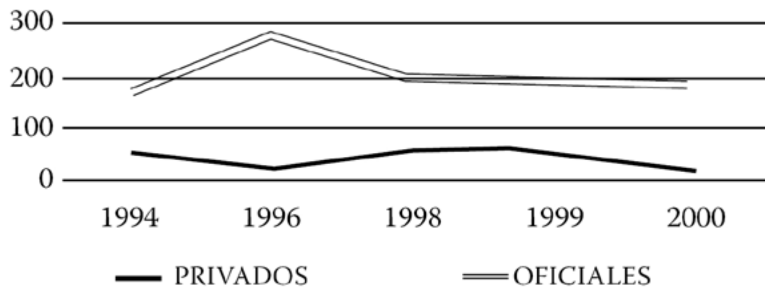
Neoliberal rhetoric emphasized that liberalization was a sine qua non condition for entering the international market for goods, services and capital, and taking full advantage of the globalization of the world economy. He insisted on the need to open up, but without adequate evaluation of the prerequisites for the process to be truly effective in economic terms, and not exclusive from a social point of view.

The negative results that the financial reforms brought were not fortuitous nor the fact that the success promised by their promoters was not achieved and that, paradoxically, underdeveloped countries were left in an even more vulnerable situation to the fluctuations of the international financial market during the next decade.

Greater financial insertion had contradictory effects on developing nations. On the one hand, it led to greater access to financing from private sources, which represented opportunities for these countries after the strong credit restriction in the 1980s.[27] On the other hand, it entailed great challenges, since an important feature of private flows is their unstable behavior that is manifested in frequent boom and bust cycles, which are generally unpredictable.[28]

Therefore, in the second half of the nineties, greater integration into international financial markets based on indiscriminate opening to foreign capital also translated into acute tensions and an abundant drain of financial resources towards developed countries when occurred the reversal of the international flow of capital that a considerable amount had entered emerging economies since the beginning of the decade (See Chart 3).

Chart 3. Net financial flows to underdeveloped countries 1994-2000 (In millions USD)



27 Greater access to private financial sources altered the composition of the sources of external financing of developing countries. The dominant official flows in the 1980s (more than 50 percent) showed a clear tendency toward decline and barely represented around 20 percent in the 1990s as they were displaced by private flows.

28 The behavior of private capital is the result of a complex interaction between the economic and political situation of the recipient countries, the action of governments and private agents (investors and banks), and international factors, which in the case of underdeveloped countries are the dominant.

Source: Based on information from World Bank (2005).

Especially acute were the tensions in the so-called emerging markets, which could not prevent the development, deepening and contagion of crises during that period. Latin American, Asian and European nations, which had been favored with abundant capital flows, found themselves immersed in a situation of scarcity and increased financing costs with severe effects on the real economy and the financial sector, and inevitably had to suspend their loan payments for external debt and resort to international financial assistance.29

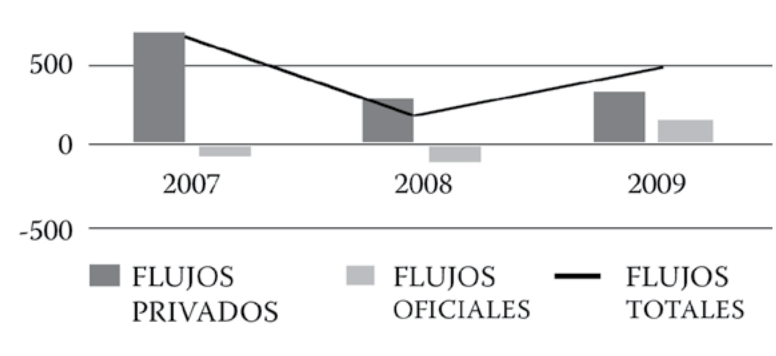
The crises that took place in the 1990s demonstrated the failure of the neoliberal attempt carried out to overcome the external debt crisis during 1980. The greater vulnerability of underdeveloped nations in the financial sphere as a result was reflected in the high amount of transfers abroad due to the capital return bill, a growing weight of short-term external debt, the rising amount of domestic public debt service in the state budget and the greater growth rate of portfolio investment flows in the structure of external financing.

The current millennium has also witnessed episodes of strong financial instability in the majority of underdeveloped countries when the financial crisis that occurred in the United States and that hit industrialized economies hard moved towards them through various commercial, monetary and financial channels. The most negative effects associated with the financial crisis were:

- Sharp reduction in demand for exports of goods and services, and decline in prices of primary products.
- Decrease in income from international tourism and family remittances.
- Fall in capital inflows and marked increase in the cost of external financing.

The complications in external financing were obvious since the worsening of the crisis and the collapse of important transnational banks during 2008 limited and made the credit supply worldwide more expensive for companies and governments. Many underdeveloped economies were victims of risk aversion on the part of international lenders and investors and saw total financial flows fall (See Chart 4) while they were punished with higher premiums on their debt issues.

Chart 4. Net financial flows to underdeveloped countries 2007-2009
(In millions USD)



[29] Among the most notable cases are the crises in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and Turkiye.

Source: IMF (2013).

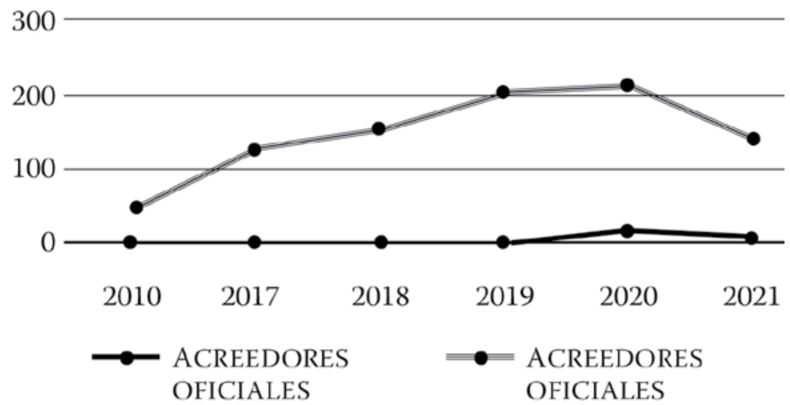
The damage in terms of external finance was not limited to the traditionally most volatile capital (loans and portfolio investment). Also a priority flow for underdeveloped economies such as foreign direct investment reduced its growth rate and the same thing happened in the case of official flows, by reducing the amount of official development assistance (ODA) allocated to less developed nations.

Starting in 2010, the financial flows that entered underdeveloped countries, particularly the so-called emerging ones, recovered the growth trend shown before the outbreak of the 2008 crisis, although at lower rates than in previous years and in a more unstable manner, in accordance with the prevailing conditions of uncertainty on a global scale, fundamentally in relation to the monetary policies of the central banks of industrialized economies.

But as a result of COVID 19, the external finances of this group of nations suffered a severe blow. For developing economies, the pandemic led to a massive capital flight unprecedented in many years, an increase in risk premiums at levels not seen since 2009, and a strong depreciation of their currencies in contrast to the strengthening of the USD. Additionally, they had million-dollar losses in export income given the collapse in commodity prices. All this in a context of high debt and restricted response capacity of governments and public health systems to address the health emergency that, in many countries, translated into a human tragedy.

Since then, instability and the downward trend in net capital flows to underdeveloped economies have prevailed (See Chart 5).

Chart 5. Net financial flows to underdeveloped countries 2010-2021
(In millions USD).



Source: Based on information from World Bank (2022).

Since 2021, the increase in inflation rates globally and the persistence of high prices for raw materials stimulated many central banks in developed countries to tighten their monetary policies (increase in interest rates), which resulted in an increase of financial tensions, both internal and external, in underdeveloped economies that are highly dependent on foreign capital from the industrialized world.

At the same time, the financial stability of the public and corporate sectors in emerging economies is much weaker due to the behavior of the quotes of their national currencies with respect to the USD. Its strength against the rest of the currencies and especially the emerging ones of Latin America further threatens the ability to pay the debts contracted by these nations.

Undoubtedly, with the tightening of US and European monetary policies, a process that will not reverse in the short term, underdeveloped countries will face a very uncertain outlook due to the real possibilities of capital flight, strong depreciations of their currencies and defaults on debts, a factor the latter representing a major problem for the vast majority of nations.

THE TRAP OF THE FOREIGN DEBT

It is now a custom to see the news about Southern countries that fall, one after another, into the foreign debt trap and face the impossibility of paying foreign loans. As a consequence, the people of these countries suffer the burden of an indirect tax, when their respective governments place on them the burden of generating the resources to pay international creditors of the outstanding debts and the corresponding interests, and at the same time reduce the government spending on subsidies for education, health and other essential services on which the vast majority, often oppressed, depend.

Thus, developing countries continue to face endless cycles of external debt crises. These restrict the national budget space to undertake the priorities of the respective countries. It forces them to accept punitive conditions to obtain loans, which ends up weakening the State, especially harming the most vulnerable sectors of society and condemning each country to a condition of greater dependence on external financing. Currently, the pressure on debt caused by the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, monetary depreciation and the increase in interest rates is added.

The so-called international financial architecture continues without offering financing for development and without providing a solution to the problem of external debt. Added to this is the fact that the crisis itself continues to create the conditions to individually isolate the debtor countries of the South, while the creditors of the North permanently coordinate their strategies and actions. The absence or inability to achieve common fronts among the countries of the South to face the serious problem of debt is one of the endemic characteristics of the international financial scenario.

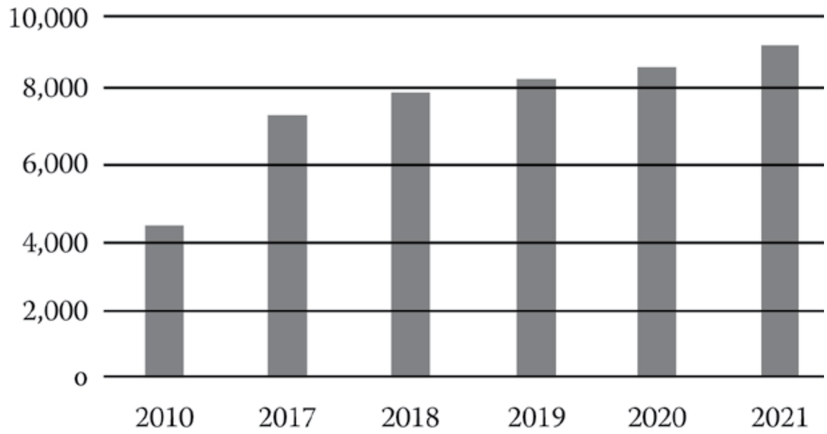
Multilateral spaces such as the Group of 77 and China could offer the conditions to promote dialogue, exchanges and the generation of common strategies among developing countries, even while respecting the undeniable differences in situations and approaches between them. These differences do not erase the great disadvantage that everyone suffers under the current international financial architecture, which is the result of the unjust and asymmetric economic order.

The collective action of nations is crucial, both to improve the conditions with which they must respond to the specific problem of external debt, and also to free and channel resources that can be allocated to investment in development and the creation of conditions that protect to indebted nations from the perennial traps of underdevelopment.

The cyclical crises of external debt are, to a large extent, symptoms of the deeper and structural problems imposed on developing countries, in most cases, since they abandoned the colonial condition, through institutional mechanisms, norms of conduct and international commitments conceived by the countries of the North, in spheres such as trade, finance, foreign investment, adjustment programs and other formulas that are an expression of continued neocolonial domination.

Debt accumulation has been a recurring feature of the global economy for the past fifty years, particularly in developing economies. Since the 1970s, four major waves of debt have been experienced: the first, between 1970-1989; the second, between 1990-2001; the third between 2002-2009 and; the current one that began in 2010 (See Chart 6).

Chart 6. Total foreign debt of Underdeveloped countries 2010-2021 (In millions USD).



Source: World Bank (2022).

They all have common features: 1. They were created during periods of low real interest rates, and were developed thanks to financial innovations or changes in the markets that fueled debt. 2. They were the breeding ground for later crises (external debt crisis of the 1980s financial crises of the 1990s in emerging economies and subprime crises). 3. They presented high rates of debt growth and strong concentration in regions and countries. 4. Creditors are not looking for solutions to the problem, only palliatives to avoid interruption of service payments and relief for poorer and highly indebted countries, which are the minority.

However, there are marked differences in terms of the composition, scope and impact of current debt compared to that which predominated in previous years. The current debt crisis is global and much higher than previous ones because the new obligations contracted in the context of financial liberalization and the predominance of accommodative monetary policies in advanced economies overlap with those accumulated over decades that have not been able to be met. It is as if on top of an already heavy burden, the old debt, another even heavier one was added, given that the new one that was agreed upon is much more difficult to restructure by its very nature.

The pandemic exacerbated debt overhang problems, particularly in highly indebted Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which have been forced to restructure their debts in the face of a sharp drop in their level of economic activity, low availability of foreign exchange and limited fiscal space to manage its public debt. All of this highlights once again the failures of the global financial architecture and the insufficiency of the multiple attempts at reform.

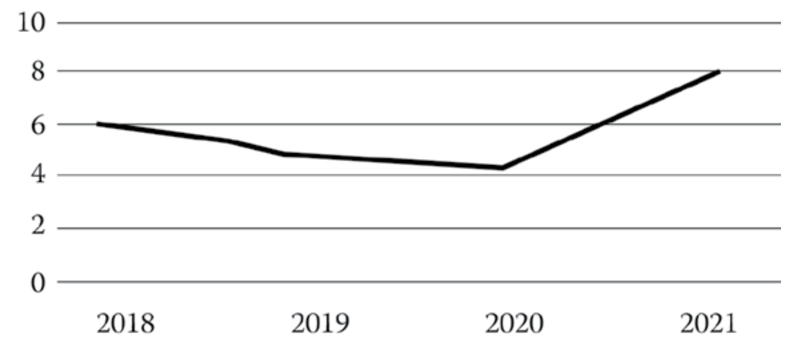
Although this group of countries is the most affected, developing economies in general do not escape possible risks of default.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT FOREIGN DEBT PROCESS OF UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

i) Fast growth of the debt and its service.

The external debt of underdeveloped countries has not stopped growing and continues to accumulate astronomical figures. Its average annual growth rate in the period 2008-2018 was 8.5 percent and from 2018 to 2021 it grew by 13 percent, reaching 9.3 trillion USD (See Chart 7).

Chart 7. Growth rate of the foreign debt of underdeveloped countries 2018-2021 (In percentages)



Source: World Bank (2022).

In relation to the behavior of external debt service in the context of the current wave of indebtedness, the statistics are eloquent of the seriousness of the situation. This indicator grew by 136 percent between 2010 and 2020 (See Table 1).

Table 1. Foreign debt service 2010-2021
(Thousand millions USD)

	2010	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*
Amortization of principal	362	711	786	883	886	921
Interests	99	188	210	230	203	222
TOTAL SD	*461*	*899*	*996*	*1113*	*1089*	*1143*

ii) Pronounced inclination towards higher risk profiles due to shorter maturities and shift of sovereign to private borrowers.

Short-term debt has grown faster than long-term debt in recent years. Between 2008-2021 it did so at an average annual rate of around 12 percent, representing nearly 30 percent of the accumulated total.[30] This pattern of behavior places underdeveloped economies in a situation of extreme vulnerability because these are normally credits to suppliers, with high interest rates and any delay in payments can have a domino effect on other creditors who may be tempted to temporarily close this financing channel so necessary to satisfy import needs.

Although the debt is essentially sovereign, the private debt grows at a much higher rate than the public debt, surpassing it in absolute terms in certain years (See Chart 8). By region, this behavior may vary, but in general this trend is reinforced, which is not favorable for debtors, since private debt is not susceptible to being renegotiated. There are only two options before it: pay or go bankrupt, unless the Central Bank, as lender of last resort, decides to carry out some rescue action.

iii) Changes in the composition and structure by creditors.

The proportion of sovereign debt with private creditors increases (See Chart 8) and that denominated in bonds.[31] With official creditors, the greatest weight continues to be the

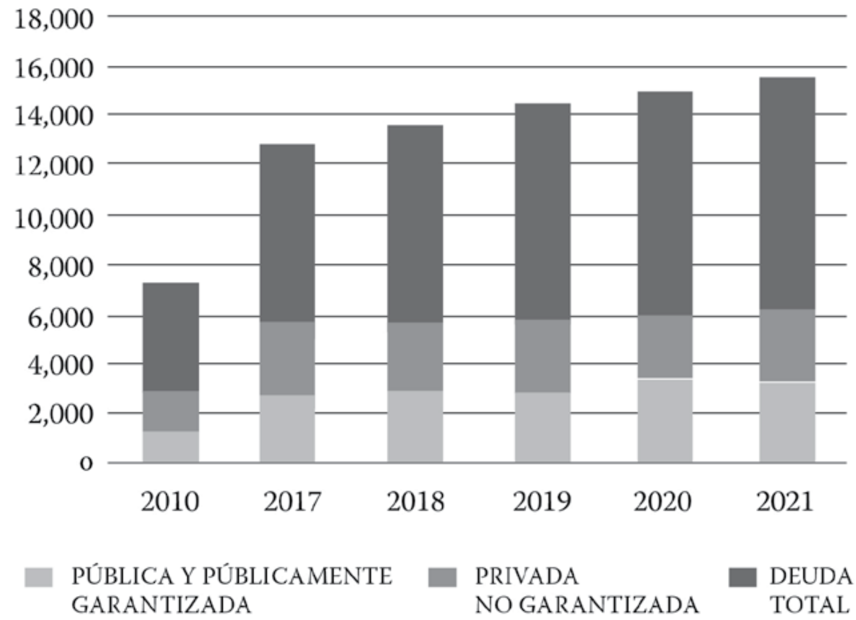
[30] Estimations based on information from World Bank, 2022.

[31] In 2021, private debt denominated in bonds grew almost 21 percent and that contracted with banks grew almost 3 percent.

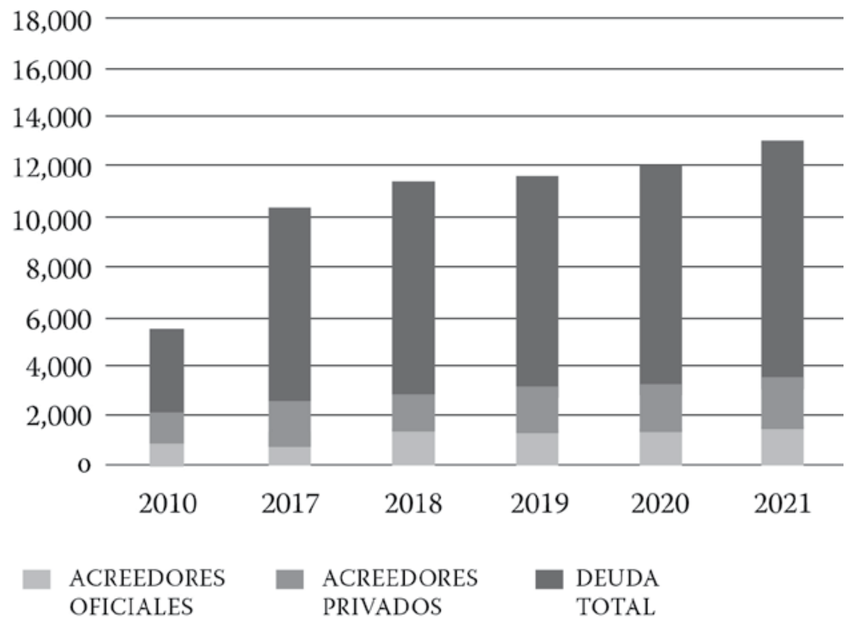
multilateral debt,[32] but among the bilateral ones, those that do not belong to the Paris Club are gaining prominence, such as China and India, although still far from the role played as creditors by the United States and other developed countries with a traditional history in that position.

Chart 8. Composition of the foreign debt (Thousand of millions USD)

By type of borrower



By type of creditor



Source: World Bank (2022).

32 It is estimated that around 50 percent of the multilateral debt is with the World Bank Group and approximately 20 percent with the IMF.

iv)High concentration by regions and countries.

The concentration of debt in certain regions and countries is not new, but it has worsened over time. Historically, a few countries have absorbed up to two-thirds of the debt of the region to which they belong, but now by simply excluding one country, the panorama can radically change.

China absorbs more than a quarter of the total global debt stock. If excluded, Latin America and the Caribbean once again becomes, as in the 1970s and 1980s, the developing region with the highest levels of debt, far surpassing Europe and Central Asia, which since the mid-2000s had anchored in first place.

v) Deterioration of debt ratios.

The decline in debt indicators was widespread and affected countries in all regions, reaffirming serious sustainability problems. In 2009, around 40 percent of underdeveloped countries had a debt-to-GDP ratio below 30 percent, however, in 2018 the number of borrowers in that percentile decreased to 25 percent. Additionally, the number of countries with a debt/GDP ratio greater than 60 percent increased significantly.

In relation to the debt/export ratio, in 2018 practically 45 percent of underdeveloped countries exceeded the sustainability threshold of 150 percent. In 2020, the ratio increased by 154 percent for all low- and middle-income nations, excluding China.

Regarding other characteristic indicators of financial fragility, the deterioration is also noticeable. This is the case of the Debt service/exports coefficient, which grew 89 percent between 2010 and 2020, and that of Reserves/external debt, which decreased by 40 percent in the same period.

The scenario described places debtors at a clear disadvantage because the terms and conditions of the debt arranged with private creditors are more onerous than that contracted with official creditors. Furthermore, having a significant part of the debt denominated in bonds means that it is spread among multiple anonymous creditors and is not very susceptible to being negotiated because it changes hands quickly, there is no international framework to renegotiate this type of debt and therefore, it is complex to deal with a non-payment situation. Under these conditions, financing without intermediation implies a greater danger of credit rationing.

Likewise, high levels of short-term debt and insufficient international monetary reserves to meet its maturity, constituted triggers for banking and financial crises in several countries in previous decades.

Finally, the rapid growth of private debt constitutes another source of vulnerability and generates a problem of moral hazard, since sometimes central banks are forced to assume part of these debts to avoid bankruptcies of entities that are too big to fail.

Management by creditors

In terms of debt relief, there are several initiatives that have been put into practice by different actors since the debt crisis broke out in the early 1980s, some with greater impact than others in terms of results, but ultimately none enough to solve the problem.

The proposals coming directly from the creditors have demonstrated a total inability to confront the issue of external debt and constitute political formulas that, in several cases, far from helping to resolve the dilemma, have led to greater financial dependence on developing countries. In them, strict conditionality in terms of economic policies, lengthy negotiation processes, limited late allocation of resources in most cases have prevailed, and their main purpose has been for debtors to continue paying.

Furthermore, the initiatives that have been debated at the multilateral level, although they could constitute a roadmap to guide countries in the complex process of facing debt, have not been free of significant limitations: they involve only part of the debt, are guilty of excessive optimism by betting on the will of private creditors who have no intention of cooperating and do not intend to solve the problem but rather postpone it in time. The renegotiation processes imply in some cases levels of debt forgiveness, which are necessary to oxygenate the economy, but not sufficient to guarantee growth and development.

Practice has shown that, if there are no substantial changes in the form of external insertion of the countries, if debt sustainability continues to be identified with the payment capacity and, if financing policies are not articulated in a strategy coherent financing for development, the problem will multiply over time because the debt grows again and so do defaults.

Since the approval of the strategies of the United Nations Development Decades, an important role was assigned to Official Development Assistance (ODA) from developed countries to developing nations for an amount, always unfulfilled, of 0.7 percent of the annual Gross National Product of developed countries.

The actual figures are representative of the meager amount, in absolute and relative terms, of ODA today. For example, the financing gap in underdeveloped countries that increased by USD 1.7 trillion (around 70 percent in 2020 due to global economic uncertainty and COVID 19, was more than twenty-five times the total ODA and more thirty-five times the ODA of the G7, but only represented 1.1 percent of global financial assets.

In 2022, ODA from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries amounted to USD 204 billion (around EUR 194 billion at 2022 exchange rates), an increase of 13.6 percent in real terms compared to 2021. However, this increase is largely due to the increase in refugee spending in donor countries, which reached USD 29 billion (up from USD 13 billion in 2021), or 14.4 percent of total ODA of DAC member countries in 2022.

Excluding these expenditures, total ODA increased only 4.6 percent in real terms compared to 2021 and decreased in twelve countries. That amount represented 0.36 percent of the combined gross national income of the DAC countries in 2022. Although this proportion had not been reached since 1982, it is still well below the target of 0.7 percent adopted in 1970 by the industrialized countries.

All of the above demonstrates the inconsistency of the capitalist system and the deepening of economic, financial and social imbalances, exacerbated to the same extent that the system has demonstrated its inability to address the exponential increase in financial liberalization and its uncontrolled impacts.

It is a fact that the existing architecture does not allow us to resolve the inequalities, gaps and inefficiencies that slow down development in underdeveloped countries, nor can it promote the mobilization of financing necessary to combat the climate crisis and achieve Sustainable Development. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the proposals for the Reform of the International Financial Architecture that are currently being debated internationally, as well as to rescue those that have been handled by progressive personalities, institutions and forces with a critical vision of international finance as a tool of imperialist exploitation and plunder.

This task highlights the importance of the activities that the Group of 77 and China can undertake.

IV

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

The inequity and unsustainability of the prevailing international economic order are clearly observed in the state of agricultural production and food production and distribution. The figures that describe the situation of those who suffer the greatest disadvantages in that equation are morally unacceptable.

In the opening session of the XVI regional conference for Latin America of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), held in Havana in 1980, Fidel Castro Ruz warned that hunger persisted with «...a more systematic and subtle, which insistently hits hundreds of millions of men and women» while pointing out that hunger and food insecurity is a structural feature of the current international economic and political order, with poverty as a determinant.

The most widespread estimates of the number of hungry people in 2021 range between 702 and 828 million, 150 million more than before the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic. Since 2016, four years before the pandemic, the number had been growing of hungry people, after decades of relative decline.

The elimination of hunger and food insecurity through agreements and action plans of the 1996 World Food Summit, as well as the targets and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), beyond good intentions, do not modify the current status quo and will continue to be just that: goals.

It will only be possible to eradicate hunger and food insecurity by radically modifying the current capitalist international economic and political order, because if not, the main determinants of hunger in the world will continue to be present, typified by injustices in the conditions of land tenure, its use for agribusiness and greater profits, the degradation of agricultural land, pollution and overuse of water, the growing power of transnational companies, financial speculation with land and agricultural and food products, thus accentuating inequality in food production, distribution and consumption.

Agriculture

The area of cropland per capita decreased in all regions between 2000 and 2019, as population increased faster than cropland: the global average decreased by 17 percent, or to 0.20 hectares per capita in that last year, especially in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia.

Now, the fundamental thing is that in the distribution of the size of agricultural lands, latitudinal farms linked to agribusiness predominate, a trend that will be accentuated in the long term, along with 84 percent of small plots, especially in the South, with an area of less than 2 hectares[33] and worked mainly by small producers, they are marginalized by poor

[33] The definition of «small holdings» or «small farms» based on the size of two hectares is controversial, and following the publication of an FAO report in 2021, which contradicted its 2018 decision to reject a universal

access to inputs such as land and good quality seeds, irrigation, credit and financing, as well as the necessary technical means.

Another element of utmost importance is the existence and use of water. Agriculture currently accounts for 72 percent of all surface and groundwater withdrawals globally, primarily for irrigation purposes. From 1980 to date, most of the water extracted was used for agriculture. By 2050, estimates suggest that the majority will correspond to use in industry.

It should be considered that 1.2 billion people currently live in areas where severe conditions of water deficit and scarcity affect agriculture, and where droughts are very frequent in rain fed croplands and grazing or highly water-stressed areas[34] in irrigated areas. While Europe has a low level of water stress (8.3 percent), levels in East Asia and West Asia are between 45 percent and 70 percent; in central and southern Asia they exceed 70 percent and in northern Africa they exceed 100 percent.

Per capita water availability decreased by 40 percent over the past decade in sub-Saharan Africa, with agricultural area increasing from 0.80 hectares to 0.64 hectares per capita between 2000 and 2017. Northern, southern and western Africa have of less than 100 cubic meters per capita each, a dangerous level of capacity to meet the water demand of the food sector and other sectors.

In a considerable majority of developing countries, generally due to scarcity of water resources, socioeconomic conditions that prevent them from using them rationally or for both reasons, the alternative is rain fed agriculture and the use of rainwater.[35] About 77 percent of small-scale farms in low- and middle-income developing countries are in water-scarce regions, and less than a third have access to irrigation. The largest irrigation disparities between small and large farms are found in Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

A particularly distinctive example of the differences between developed and developing countries regarding water use is that of Coca Cola. In 2015, this transnational company made public its water management in processes, and declared the use of 300 billion liters, roughly equivalent to the annual consumption of fresh water in Ghana, a country with a population of 26 million people.

Likewise, the differences between developed countries and the vast majority of developing countries are significant in the use of fertilizers, essential for increasing agricultural productivity, in line with the pattern of use of chemical fertilizers (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium),[36] especially from the so-called Green Revolution, which enhances its production and consumption.

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threshold for the land area in terms of defining agriculture in small terms, in favor of more sensitive definitions, specific for each country, based on the relationship between different variables, prestigious institutions with great experience in work on food and agricultural issues strongly disagreed.

34 Indicator 6.4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined as the ratio between the total freshwater extracted by the main sectors (agricultural, industrial and municipal) and the total renewable freshwater resources, after having considered the needs of environmental flow. A ratio less than or equal to 25 percent indicates no stress; between 25 percent and 50 percent indicates low stress; when the proportion goes from 50 percent to 75 percent, water stress is medium; between 75 percent and 100 percent indicates that stress is high; and if the proportion exceeds 100 percent, water stress is critical.

35 Within these, the differences between dryland and irrigated lands and their implications are significant. In India, a World Bank study determined that 69 percent of the population in rain fed districts was poor, while in irrigated districts they represented only 20.26 percent of the population.

36 They increase the productivity of agriculture, but not the quality of the soil. Its excessive use to maintain and increase agricultural production acidifies soils in many parts of the world and contaminates groundwater, lakes and rivers.

Despite the increase in the use of chemical fertilizers between 2000 and 2019, Africa continues to be the region with the lowest use of fertilizers per crop area, going from only 17.4 kilograms per hectare in 2000 to 26 kilograms per hectare in 2019,[37] which contrasts with the 80 kilograms per hectare used in Europe.

The use of tractors is another example of the disparities in mechanization between developed countries and most countries in the South, an even wider disparity in the case of other equipment with greater performance. Even with the biases of the lack of distinction in the size of this equipment, its technical evolution and the greater concentration of agricultural holdings –which makes possible the greatest number of hectares served with a single machine– and the territorial extension, population and arable area, the figures show the gap between developed and developing countries, in many cases extreme.

A recent World Bank study (2022) found that the proportion of agricultural households with access to four-wheel tractors was, on average, around 0.4 percent in Burkina Faso in 2014; in Ethiopia 0.2 percent in 2019; in Malawi 0.15 in 2017; in Mali 3.9 percent in 2017; in Niger 0.3 percent in 2014 and in Tanzania 2.7 percent in 2019.

More recently, a profound technological change is taking place in agriculture at an increasingly rapid pace, tending to use technologies based on the electronic market for health care in developed countries and in a minority of developing countries, such as milking robots and poultry feeding systems, as well as the increasing automation and guidance of the global satellite navigation system, which enable crop production, through the use of automatic guidance for tractors, fertilizer distributors and pesticide sprayers. Likewise, drones gather information for the management and application of inputs to crops, optimizing the use of resources and the use of artificial intelligence is increasing. Furthermore, new technologies and the digitalization of agriculture make it easier for transnationals to consolidate their power, and it is symptomatic that the American transnational Deere & Company, the largest agricultural machinery company in the world, now employs more computer engineers than mechanic engineers.

If the price or rental of tractors still puts them out of reach of the majority of farmers in developing countries, these much more expensive technological advances, which increase productivity, are produced and will do so in the future in a very uneven manner, with the predominance of transnational companies from developed countries and those from a minority of developing countries, applied to large agricultural areas and promoting agribusiness, with foreseeable super profits in line with the predominant capitalist relations in the world and the neoliberal model still valid.

Intensively, the greater use of fertilizers, agricultural mechanization, the appearance of new varieties of seeds, the improvements in cultivation techniques, more than the increase in the labor force, have led to the growth of agricultural productivity at the level global during the last decades and the increase in food production, materialized in processes of valorization of capital that enhance inequality.

Such modernization of agriculture will not eliminate the structural nature of inequalities, with their corollary of poverty and hunger, which will only be possible with the change of current economic and social structures and power relations.

[37] In that last year, Gambia used 4.2 kilograms per hectare; Congo 3.62 kilograms per hectare; Togo 2.52 kilograms per hectare, the same as Uganda; Republic of Congo 1.42 kilograms per hectare; Niger 0.72 kilograms per hectare and Central African Republic 0.22 kilograms per hectare.

The materialization of inequalities is reflected in concrete examples: 10 percent of the richest countries produce 70 times more agricultural value added per worker than the 10 percent of countries that occupy the bottom positions in the distribution of income. In the United States, agricultural value added per worker in 2019 was $100,062 (measured in 2015 prices), compared to an average of $944 in sub-Saharan African countries.

The reconfiguration of agriculture

In the current century, there is a trend to reconfigure the role of agriculture based on the production of agricultural raw materials as inputs for the production of agro fuels, through the use of cropland, deforested soils and the displacement of other productions or segments of family farming oriented to local markets. This reconfiguration, in response to the increase in the prices of fossil fuels –basically oil– and their depletion, in addition to legitimate environmental concerns and geopolitical reasons, combined the growth of intentionally called flexible crops[38] and the concentration, foreignization and monopolization of land.

Although the existence of technologies for obtaining energy from various biomass sources is true, the predominant fuels used for industrial use and transportation are ethanol and biodiesel, called «first generation,» and derived from flexible crops, while «second generation,» produced from biomass of a woody or fibrous nature –which can also be liquefied– have more expensive technologies and production and a minor global use.

The production, trade and consumption of agro fuels has enthroned a process of hoarding, control and ownership of land. The global production of liquid agro fuels (mostly ethanol over biodiesel) is increasing, which between 2011 and 2020 showed an accumulated growth of 36 percent and a clear upward trend in production: it increased to 163 million cubic meters in 2019, led by the United States (41 percent), Brazil (26 percent), Indonesia (5 percent), China (3 percent) and Germany (3 percent).

A regularity in the production of liquid agro fuels is that, in countries such as the United States and the European Union, it is not economically viable without subsidies. Public policies to help transport, distribution and use are common; tariffs applied to agro fuels to protect agriculture and local industries from them; supporting local prices of agro fuels and incentives for national production, as well as tax exemptions to stimulate demand.

Ethanol in the United States is produced mostly from corn and 40 percent of grain production is used for that fuel. That country is the leading producer and exporter of grain and ethanol produced from said crop (one of the most consumed staple foods in the world by countless millions of people, as well as for animal consumption). Any variation in its production and price directly influences global production, prices and consumption. In the European Union, biodiesel has a greater weight, so community policies gave rise to an increasingly globalized market for this liquid and its original raw materials, in which developing countries in Latin America and Asia have an important fee.

The growing practice of allocating crops to the production of agro fuels or allocating arable land for the same purpose has as its first direct effect the decrease in the availability of food for human consumption and feed for livestock, which causes an increase in prices, with effects on food consumption, which mainly affects the poor.

[38] Agricultural and food products such as palm oil, soybeans, corn and sugar cane, above all, used for various purposes and as raw materials for other industries and to produce fuels. Its global crop area has grown significantly, as discussed above.

It is no coincidence that in the years of the recent so-called "food crises", the production of agro fuels increased and high price increases occurred, with the consequent effects on developing countries that are net food importers. The comparison of average food prices in the period between 2002 and 2004 shows that the prices of cereals, oils and fats traded globally have been on average between 2 and 2.5 times higher in 2008 and 2011. 2012, and sugar became more expensive, on average, between 80 and 340 percent per year compared to 2000-2004.

Agriculture and climate change

Current agricultural patterns, including fishing and forestry activities, are far from sustainable, given current economic structures and their influence on climate change. It is manifested in land degradation processes due to increases in the intensity of rainfall, floods, the frequency and severity of droughts and thermal overload, among other factors. Furthermore, current coastal erosion is intensifying and affecting more regions with rising sea levels, another pressure on land use in some regions.

An estimated 23 percent of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions between 2007 and 2016 came from agriculture, forestry and other land uses. These global emissions in 2019 were 54 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, of which 17 billion tons (31 percent) originated in agro-food systems, which generated 21 percent of emissions, carbon dioxide, 53 percent of methane emissions and 78 percent of nitrous oxide emissions.

Climate change has slowed global agricultural productivity growth by 21 percent since 1961, and by up to 34 percent in Africa and Latin America, according to IPES-Food (2023) citing a group of IPCC experts who estimated these figures.

In the period from 1961 to 2013, the annual extent of arid areas in drought increased, on average, by just over 1 percent per year, with great interannual variability, and in 2015, around 500 million people lived in affected areas due to desertification. Desertification amplifies global warming through the release of carbon dioxide linked to the decrease in vegetation cover.

Human-caused land degradation (soil erosion, nutrient depletion and increased salinity) affects 34 percent of agricultural soils.

On the other hand, the number of extreme events (extreme heat, droughts, floods and storms) enhanced by climate change has doubled since the early 1990s, with an annual average of 213 events between 1990 and 2016.

Floods and severe storms are the extreme weather events that cause the most disasters. In the twenty-five years to 2016, flood disasters showed the highest increase (65 percent in terms of incidence, the frequency of storms is not increasing as much as that of floods). Asia is the region with the highest incidence of disasters related to both floods and storms (an average of between 20 and 30 events per year in the latter). A study of 33 deltas around the world showed that 85 percent had experienced severe flooding in the last decade, affecting an area of 260,000 square kilometers.

The presence of a severe drought between 2005 and 2016 led to an increase in hunger in 36 percent of the countries that suffered it, the majority (19) in Africa, (4) in Asia (3), in Latin America and the Caribbean and one in Eastern Europe.

Irrational deforestation causes very harmful effects on the environment and influences soil degradation, to the point that 33 percent of soils worldwide suffer moderate to severe degradation. Erosion washes away between 20 and 37 billion tons of topsoil each year, reducing crop yields and the soil's ability to store carbon, nutrients and water, as well as carry out its cycles.

Intensive livestock production, with rapid growth to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for meat, basically in developed countries, puts pressure on in situ water and soil aquifer resources for the intensive production of feed and forage. The expansion of agricultural frontiers based on agribusiness for livestock raising and the production of soybeans and palm oil, with constant global demand, was responsible for 40 percent of tropical deforestation between 2000 and 2010. Of the 11 percent increase of greenhouse gas emissions between 2000 and 2019, around 55 percent are related to livestock farming.

Stress caused by heat and water scarcity generates significant global variability in year-on-year yields in wheat and maize, to the extent that approximately 32 percent to 39 percent of the yield variability in maize, rice, wheat and soybeans are due to climatic factors.

The current pattern of agricultural production within the framework of the prevailing international order is unsustainable and enhances climate change and the extreme events derived from it, and it is foreseeable that its consequences will expand much further for developing countries, particularly for the least developed ones. (WFP).

Transnational corporations, agriculture and food

Transnational companies are the main agents of the globalization process, and their influence on the current world economic and political order is decisive, including global agriculture and food. As is known, its purpose is to obtain monopolistic super profits.[39] To obtain them, they dominate the conditions of production and impose production costs, the purchase and sale prices of agricultural and food products, guide their consumption patterns and exert political influence on governments, especially in developing countries, considerable, especially when they encounter weak and constantly subverted supervisory standards and very weakened antitrust regulations.

A 2009 UNCTAD report on investments in the world, especially dedicated to transnational companies and agricultural production and development, revealed that transnational companies that produce processed foods, retailers, traders and suppliers of inputs, are more than agricultural ones. He exemplified with Nestlé (Switzerland), the largest food and beverage transnational in the world, with control of assets abroad on that date worth 66 billion USD, and with Walmart (United States), the world's largest retailer, controlling assets of $63 billion.

That report considered that the participation of transnational companies, in the form of foreign direct investments and contract farming, could transfer technologies, methods and techniques and facilitate access to credit and markets, but noted that only a limited number of countries could benefit from the transfer of technologies, recognizing at the same time the particularity that the research plus development and innovation of the largest transnational

[39] In 2022, even with the consequences of COVID 19, the war between Russia and Ukraine has already begun with all its effects, with a «food crisis» and food prices above general inflation in 90 percent of the 161 countries in For which the World Bank had information, the German transnational Bayer reported profits in 2022 that were 542.4 percent higher than the previous year, according to Forbes. Cargill's 2021 Annual Report reflects that, even with the scourge of COVID 19, increased world hunger, and supply chain stagnation, the challenges of the pandemic year were «unprecedented, historic, and unforgettable.» and «nothing less than extraordinary,» however, this transnational recorded the highest profits in its 156-year history, 64 percent more than in its previous fiscal year.

companies «...are not oriented towards the basic foodstuffs produced by many developing countries.»

The concentration of transnational companies is leading to fewer and fewer companies controlling each step of the entire agricultural chain, from production (including the production of genetically modified seeds, fertilizers and chemical pesticides) and distribution to sales in supermarkets, to the point that they function as oligopolies.

If only three decades ago there were more than seven thousand seed companies and none reached 1 percent of the world market, in 2000 the ten largest controlled 37 percent of the market, but in 2020 only two companies control 40.6 percent of the market. The six largest GM seed companies –for crops sold through the market, primarily patented vegetable and field crop seeds– and GM crop traits control 58 percent of the global seed market. It is a fact that the greater tolerance to agrochemicals of most transgenic crops links both sectors, often in the same transnational company, which forces farmers to make greater purchases of agrochemicals and forcing dependence on these.

The industrial genetics and livestock breeding sector also has such a level of concentration. Only three transnational companies provide breeding stock for 100 percent of commercial poultry farming in the world. The Americans Zoetis and Merck & Co; Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health from Germany and Elanco from the United States plus Bayer Animal Health from the United Kingdom are, by sales, the four largest animal pharmaceutical transnationals: they reached 60.5 percent of the global market share in 2020.

Particularly in these sectors, patents play a decisive role with the manipulation and genetic modification of living beings –they have extended to all recognized fields of technology. The intellectual property system legitimizes the exclusive control by transnational corporations over biological resources and biological products and processes, to the detriment of developing countries, especially based on TRIPS, one of the main ones of the WTO,[40] which came into force in 1995.

With that agreement, the United States became the major producer of globally enforced intellectual property standards, influencing the pace of industrial and technological progress in rival developed and developing countries. From that date on, the latter were obliged to establish standardized patent procedures and copyright protection, with extraterritorial protection of intellectual property rights and gradual integration into the body of international economic law.

For neoliberal common sense, new intellectual property rules would compensate developing countries with increased innovations, since property rights encourage investment and innovation. However, the evidence does not confirm that the protection granted by the possession of a patent necessarily means an increase in research and development and, therefore, innovations. It is a myth to take for granted the contribution of patents to the stimulation of creativity and inventiveness, and that their absence leads to a lack of creativity and ingenuity, since knowledge is not isolated in time and space, without any connection with the social fabric and the contributions of the past.

In the case of transnational companies of machinery for industrial agriculture, the sales of the four largest (Deere & Company of the United States, Kubota of Japan; CNH Industrial of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and AGCO, also American) accounted for 44 percent of the total of that market in 2020.

[40] Non-existent in its predecessor, the GATT of 1948, its inclusion was catalyzed by American and European transnationals.

Agricultural raw materials marketers are diversified companies, participating in all phases of production and trade, financial instrumentation, risk management and distribution. In 2020, the ten largest, led by the American Cargill, occupy at least 40 percent of the world market, although their market share, if only the main cereal and feed crops were taken into account, would be much higher. The sales of the four main transnational grocery retail companies in that same year were 60.5 percent of the market, and only the first two, Walmart (United States) and Schwarz Group (Germany), had a share of 40.9 percent.

In recent years, there has been a trend towards the «financiarization» of the industrial food chain, with emphasis on speculation with venture capital in food and agricultural assets around the world, in addition to land grabbing. In parallel, the regulations applied to excessive financial speculation have been increasingly relaxed.

The influx of speculative capital into the commodity sector in a highly interrelated global market led to a relationship between rising global prices and the volatility of the financial, mortgage and real estate markets following the collapse of subprime mortgages in 2008.

Between 2006 and early 2010, speculative financial investments in agricultural products almost doubled, from $65 billion to $126 billion. In that logic, in 2015 corn futures trading exceeded the harvest of that grain in the United States 30 times and 11 times the world harvest, according to production data for the 2015-2016 agricultural year from the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT).

In the same «financiarization» logic, at the end of 2020 the private equity «industry» managed more than $7.5 trillion, with growing influence over corporate power in food and agriculture. The three largest asset management firms (State Street, Vanguard and Blackrock) were that year among the three largest shareholders of the transnational food and beverage processors PepsiCo and Tyson and fifth in ADM; fifth among the largest shareholders of Deere & Company; among the top three of the agrochemical and seed transnational Corteva; among the first four shareholders of the fertilizer transnational Mosaic and among the first three of the grocery retailer Walmart and fourth of Kroger.

TRADE IN AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS

Global transactions of agricultural and food products, and the processes, goods and services associated with them, are dominated by transnational companies, which is reflected in the predominance of developed countries in exports, especially the European Union, the United States, Canada and Australia.

Developing countries dependent on the exports of a few agricultural products (45 of a single export product), use the income from these for the purchase of other agricultural and food products, fertilizers and fuels (in addition to the purchase of industrial goods and services), which makes them very vulnerable to the fluctuations and distortions of international markets. Added to this situation are the damages caused by competition from the same merchandise also exported by developed countries.

Since the 1980s, the stabilization and adjustment policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank led developing countries (among other measures) to withdraw subsidies for basic products and services, including to food products and agricultural inputs, and also to trade liberalization, at the same time that many of them specialized in cash crops, generally to the detriment of the diversified crops traditionally consumed by local populations, a phenomenon that has increased in the present.

Today, subsidies are allowed without trade-distorting effects or effects on production or to a minimal degree, such as public expenditures on general services (research, pest and disease control, marketing and promotion services), government expenditures on public stockpiling for food security purposes and in national food aid, and direct payments to producers (decoupled income support, payments under environmental programs and regional aid programmes), including agro fuel subsidies in the United States and the EU, which in many cases «disguise» those that are not permitted.

The high tariffs imposed by developed countries and their high levels of subsidies, which affect the agricultural trade of developing countries, were one of their motivations to achieve consensus around the start of the Doha Round, agreed at the end of 2001 in Qatar, to be completed at the beginning of 2005. However, multiple reasons have led to its crisis, including among the main ones the aggravated and unresolved dispute between developed and developing countries over the preservation by the former of high subsidies and high agricultural tariffs.

Subsidies from developed countries are concentrated above all on agricultural production that constitutes essential foods. In general, they subsidize basic products from temperate zones that they also produce, such as sugar, rice, cotton and meat of various types, while at the same time they limit access to their markets with high tariffs, competing unfairly and maintaining dominance of those markets. Cotton, for example, was supported by the US government between 2001 and 2002 with 3.9 billion dollars to 25 thousand national producers, a figure greater than the entire GDP of Burkina Faso, where more than 2 million people depended on cotton for their subsistence.[41] The EU, for its part, supported its sugar (beet) production with 2.3 billion dollars in 2002 (it had become the second largest sugar exporter in the world), despite the fact that its production costs were more than double that of that of many developing countries.

In 2002 itself, direct subsidies to producers reached $235 billion (most of it used to subsidize the production of surplus commodities on which many developing countries depend), equivalent to almost 30 times the amount of the aid provided for agricultural development in the countries of the South.

Tariffs on agricultural and food products remain considerably higher than those on manufactured goods, typically very low or zero.

A few examples are enough: the maximum tariffs applied by Canada were 405 percent on animal products; 314 percent to dairy products and 484 percent to other agricultural products. Taxes by the United States were 118 percent on dairy products; 132 percent to fruits, legumes and other plants; 350 percent to beverages and tobacco and 164 percent to oilseeds, fats and oils. Japan applied tariffs of 546 percent on dairy products; 736 percent to cereals and other preparations and 373 percent to oilseeds, fats and oils. Switzerland imposed tariffs of 851 percent on dairy products; 996 percent on fruits, legumes and other plants and 368 percent on beverages and tobacco, and the EU with tariffs of 189 percent on dairy products; 181 percent to fruits, legumes and plants, 116 percent to animal products and 116 percent to oilseeds, fats and oils.

Additionally, trade-distorting non-tariff measures or barriers are much more frequent in agriculture than in industry, both from the point of view of the total value and the number of products traded. Almost 100 percent of food and agricultural imports are subject to these, compared to an average of 40 percent in other sectors. On average, a food product is subject to eight different non-tariff measures, compared to just under two for products from other sectors.

Today, developed countries continue to be primarily responsible for the trade distortions that so affect the developing world. Its support for agriculture and food between 2013

[41] Cotton producers in that country and other West African countries could produce cotton for $0.47 per kilogram, well below the $1.61 it cost to produce the same amount in the United States.

and 2018 reached almost USD 630 billion a year, with the majority of this amount going to individual farmers, through trade and market policies and tax subsidies closely linked to the production or unrestricted use of variable production inputs.

In summary, trade in agricultural and food products is concentrated, with greater weight, in developed countries, with a determining influence of transnational companies.

Hunger and its prevalence

Hunger[42] and food insecurity[43] They are structural features of the globalized capitalist economic and political order, aggravated by neoliberalism, which give a resounding denial, as demonstrated in this book, to the analyzes of those publications of international institutions and of some specialists, who in recent years argue that Extreme climatic events and war conflicts are, in one case or another, the determining factor, although it is true that they aggravate the pre-existing situation.

The sanctions imposed on Russia by the largest Western countries and Japan hindered trade flows and made it necessary to search for new transportation and trade alternatives for agricultural and food products, leading to increases in their prices and boosting financial speculation around such products. Russia contributes significantly to the production and trade of fuels and, together with Ukraine, to the production and trade of fertilizers and some essential food products: they export 25 percent of the world's wheat, 15 percent of corn and more than 60 percent of sunflower oil from around the world.

The price of fuel and agricultural and food products rose sharply after the start of the war. In September 2022, energy prices had increased 47 percent year-on-year and 125 percent compared to January 2021, but moderated at the end of the year, while the price of fertilizers registered a year-on-year growth of 75 percent in the month of September, with a notable impact on the decrease in crop yields, while world cereal prices reached an interannual increase of 21 percent in September 2022: particularly wheat prices increased by 24 percent.[44]

Rising prices in 2022 caused 77 net food-importing underdeveloped countries to incur additional expenditures of US$21.7 billion, with import volumes only slightly higher.

Now, it is necessary to point out that the increase in hunger and its most recent prevalence (percentage of the population suffering from hunger) precede the COVID 19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the current «food crisis.»

In fact, the gaps between developed and developing countries have another manifestation in hunger and its prevalence, as shown in Table 1. Precisely in 2016, as also observed, the number of people suffering from hunger increased to 815 million (compared to 777 million the previous year), but a figure lower than the 900 million hungry people in 2000. As of 2015, the number of hungry people had fallen by 216 million since 1990-1992, despite the increase in world population by 1.9 billion inhabitants.

[42] Hunger, as defined by the FAO, is a physical sensation of discomfort or pain caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. The term is used as a synonym for chronic undernourishment, and is measured by the prevalence of undernourishment.

[43] FAO considers a person to be food insecure when they lack regular access to sufficient safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and to lead an active and healthy life, which may be due to the lack of availability of food and/or the lack of resources to obtain them.

[44] More than 30 countries depend on at least 30 percent of wheat imported from Russia and Ukraine, and more than 50 percent of wheat imported from at least 20 other states comes from the same origin, hence price increases and shortages. of supplies seriously affects them. Nearly 40 percent of all wheat imports into Africa come from Russia and Ukraine.

Table 1. Hunger (Millions of people) and its prevalence in the world (percentages)

	1990-1992		*2000-2002*		*2005*		*2010*		*2015*		*2019*		*2020*		*2021*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	%
World	1 014,5	18,7	929,9	14,9	805,5	12,3	601,3	8,6	588,6	8	618,4	8	721,7	9,3	767,9	9,8
Developed countries	20,4	<5	21,1	<5	n.n	<2,5	n.n	<2,5	n.n	<2,5	n.n	<2,5	n.n	<2,5	n.n	<2,5
Africa	182,1	27,7	209	25,2	189,9	20,7	171	16,5	187,4	15,8	227,5	17,4	262,8	19,6	278	20,2
Latin America and the Carib-bean	68,5	15,3	61	11,5	51,7	9,3	39,1	6,6	35,9	5,8	43,3	6,7	52,3	8	56,5	8,6
Asia	742,6	23,7	637,5	17,6	552,5	13,9	381,5	9,1	356,4	8	339,9	7,4	398,2	8,6	424,5	9,1
Oceania	1	15,7	1,3	16,5	2,3	6,8	2,3	6,2	2,3	5,7	2,3	5,6	2,3	5,4	2,5	5,8

Source: Based on information from FAO (several years).
n.n. = non notified (prevalence is lower than 2.5 %).

For the sake of temporal consistency by country grouping, although they are added together in the total, the number of hungry people in Western Asia and Northern Africa since the mid-2000s was not included in the Table. In 2005, the number of hungry people in the countries of this group was 31.7 million; 26.6 million in 2010; 36.4 million in 2015; 40.6 million in 2019, 42.9 million in 2020, and 45.8 million in 2021.

Estimates on the number of hungry people in 2021 range between 702 and 828 million, which means an increase of 150 million people since the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic (103 million more people between 2019 and 2020 and 46 million of more people in 2021), considering the midpoint of the estimated range (the figure that appears in Table 1).

In 2021, food insecurity –moderate[45] or severe[46]– affected 2.3 billion people in the world (almost 30 percent of the world's population), an increase of 350 million people compared to the pre-pandemic year. The prevalence of severe food insecurity increased from 9.3 percent in 2019 to 11.7 percent in 2021, equivalent to 207 million more people in two years.

In that same year, Africa saw the largest increase in moderate or severe food insecurity, and was also the region with the highest prevalence of both levels of severity. In Latin America and the Caribbean, food security continued to worsen, but at a slower rate than in 2020. In Asia, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity decreased slightly between 2020 and 2021, however, there was a small increase in severe food insecurity.

It is paradoxical that, while hunger and its prevalence increase worldwide, around 14 percent of the planet's food production (valued at 400 billion USD annually) continues to be lost[47] after being collected and before reaching the stores. For its part, the report on the Food Waste Index of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) shows that 17 percent of food ends up being wasted[48] in retail and by consumers, especially in households in the developed world.

According to FAO estimates, food lost and wasted could feed 1.26 billion hungry people each year.

General considerations

The prospects for hunger reduction and food security projected by the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 will not be met.

Without fundamental changes to the current world economic and political order in the short and medium term:

- the predominance of large estates linked to agribusiness will expand.
- the reconfiguration of agriculture will be deepened based on the production of agricultural raw materials as inputs for the production of agro fuels.

[45] FAO defines moderate food insecurity as the level of food insegurity in which people face uncertainty with regards to their capacity to obtain food, and are forced at certain times of the year, to reduce the quantity or quality of the food they take due to lack f money or other resources.

[46] According to FAO, severe food insecurity is a situation in which people probably have ran out of food and suffer hunger, and in extreme cases do note eat for several days, placing their health and welfare in high risk.

[47] FAO defines food loss as a decrease in the quantity or quality of food as a consequence of the decisions and actions of food suppliers in the chain, excluding retail, food service providers and consumers.

[48] According to the FAO, food waste is the decrease in the quantity or quality of food as a result of the decisions and actions of retailers, food services and consumers.

- the process of hoarding, control and ownership of land and the «financiarization» of the global food chain will expand
- the greater provision of inputs for agricultural production in developed countries will lead to increases in productivity and the existence of more agricultural and food products, but the unequal global distribution of these will continue.
- there will be greater pressures on arable land and water for irrigation.
- in general terms, the current technological change and the gaps between developed and developing countries will deepen.
- extreme weather events will increase, with greater cumulative impacts on agricultural yields in most developing countries.
- the process of concentration of transnational companies throughout the agricultural chain will be deepened.
- disparities in global agricultural trade will continue, with greater conflicts between developed and developing countries due to protectionism in the sector.

Given the above, the Group of 77 and China could work to:

- The search for consensus to carry out agrarian reforms consistent with the specific regional and national conditions.
- The search for consensus to establish national and international regulations that prevent the use of land to produce agro fuels with harm to food security and anti-hunger policies.
- Promote South-South cooperation to produce second-generation biofuels from woody or fibrous biomass and waste, which do not imply a change in the use of land to produce food.
- Resume the consensus for the reduction of agricultural subsidies and the high tariff protection that prevents access to the markets of developed countries, now under conditions of WTO reform.
- Propose and adopt agreements that limit financial speculation in a sector essential for the life of this and future generations.

V

ACCESS AND USE OF ENERGY

Oil and conflicts in the North-South axis

Energy consumption is an essential requirement of human life, in one way or another and even in less developed countries. Access to energy sources is a determining condition for survival, well-being, economic growth and development. In the case of hydrocarbons, it has been an indispensable resource since the 20th century. The economic conditions of countries at a global level and for many decades, as well as their relative position with respect to development potential, are closely associated with access to these natural resources, their possession in their territory, the ability to extract and produce, and participation in the marketing, transportation and industrialization process. For developing countries, there is a big difference between those that have important oil or gas deposits, and are capable of generating financial resources through their production and marketing, and those that are net importers. However, as a rule, even the countries of the South that possess these valuable resources face the disadvantages of the current international economic order, with the norms, practices and instruments of exploitation that reserve a privileged position for the economies of the countries of the North.

The history of oil has largely been a history of conflicts in the North-South axis, that is, between the main oil exporters, grouped in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) plus other developing countries, the main consumers from the highly industrialized area and the large oil companies. The increase in prices decreed by OPEC at the beginning of the 1970s and the nationalizations of oil industries by developing countries during those years, allowed these governments to recover part of the profits from oil sales, which until then were monopolized by the large oil transnationals.

In the last forty years, under the conditions of an international economic order shaped by the rise of neoliberal globalization, there have been important changes in the correlation of forces between the main agents operating in the oil market. On the side of producers and exporters in the developing world, national oil companies have in many cases been strengthened;[49] and more recently, new alliances have been woven, for example, the OPEC+ agreements, which include other large producers such as Russia. However, this process has faced serious obstacles. The pressures of Ronald Reagan's government in the early 1980s in the United States, with the aim of bringing OPEC to its knees, have since been joined by a sequence of new conflicts, invasions and aggressions led by the United States and other powers, with the purpose of recovering, at least in part, control of oil resources in important producing areas such as the Middle East, North Africa and South America (particularly Venezuela). The coming to power of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, at the end of the

[49] Among the large oil companies, some from developing countries such as Saudi Arabian Oil Co. (Saudi Aramco) are in prominent positions; China Petroleum & Chemical Corp. (SNPMF), also known as Sinopec; and PetroChina Co. Ltd. (PCCYF). Others with significant weight on an international scale are the National Iranian Oil Company, PDVSA (Venezuela), Petrobras (Brazil) and Petronas (Malaysia), among others.

1990s, meant the recovery of sovereign control of that country's oil industry and represented a new breath for OPEC.

A fact worth highlighting in the framework of global oil supply in the last four decades has been the rise of unconventional hydrocarbons (gas and oil) in the United States since the 1990s, based on the combination of technological developments such as horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking). The increase, in this way, in the global oil supply has generated strong downward pressure on prices; and has conditioned a significant change in the energy profile of the United States, which in recent years (since 2020) has become a net exporter of oil, when the trade in crude oil is combined with derived products.

Although new countries, such as China, have joined the list of major oil consumers and importers, developed countries continue to show the highest levels of oil and energy consumption per capita, and consequently the highest pollution rates per inhabitant, from its emissions of CO_2.

Changes have also been recorded in the transnational business of large oil companies based in developed countries, heirs of the Seven Sisters cartel that exercised tight control over the global oil industry throughout the 20th century.

During the period of relatively low oil prices between the mid-1980s and the early years of this century, the major oil companies in the developed world, also known as Big Oil, consolidated their positions through an accelerated process of mergers and acquisitions, where less solid companies were forced to sell their assets at fire sale prices, and the concentration of production and capital of the transnational oil industry was reinforced. The privatizations carried out in this industry, especially since the 1990s in regions such as Latin America, also contributed to strengthening the business of large transnationals.

As a result of these processes, companies such as EXXON Mobil, Shell, Total Energies, Chevron and British Petroleum have a high degree of diversification of operations and vertical integration that allows them to overcome crisis situations due to the price volatility of the oil market. In general, this group of firms is characterized by its great economic-financial power, its political influence (inside and outside the countries of origin) and a marked oil bias.

These Big Oil companies have received heavy criticism for the lack of correspondence between the intensity of their «environmental» messages, on the one hand, and the limited degree of real commitment to climate action in terms of investments in low-carbon technologies, on the other hand. Although most of these companies have diversified their energy businesses and expanded their investments in renewable sources, their main focus is hydrocarbons.

Consequently, the profit rates of these companies in 2022 reached record levels, due to the increase in global demand for oil and gas, and the impact of the war in Ukraine. Indeed, during 2022, the profits of major oil companies based in developed countries more than doubled to reach USD 219 billion,[50] allowing them to significantly reduce their debts and increase spending on hydrocarbon exploration and development, in tune with the new priorities of energy security in the developed world, which tends to further delay climate action.

According to estimates from the International Energy Agency, oil companies will invest about USD 500 billion in hydrocarbon exploration and development in 2023. Although Big Oil

[50] This number includes the combined profits obtained by British Petroleum, Chevron, Equinor (Norway), EXXON Mobil, Shell and TotalEnergies.

companies only produce about 15 percent of the oil and gas that is extracted globally, they retain great influence regarding industry practices and technological development.

The oil market as a thermometer of an asymmetric world economy

Oil as a strategic product: price volatility and proven reserves

Oil, with its main reserves located in the developing world, remains the most traded product internationally, both in terms of volume and in terms of value; That is, it is a key strategic product for global economic functioning. It is the main component of the world's commercial energy balance (31 percent), followed by mineral coal (27 percent) and natural gas (24 percent). (See Table 1).

Table 1. Global balance of commercial energy 2008-2021 (percentage of the total)

SOURCES	**2008**	**2016**	**2021**
Oil	35	34	31
Coal	30	28	27
Natural gas	23	24	24
Nuclear energy	5	4	4
Hydroelectricity	6	7	7
Other renewable	1	3	7
TOTAL	**100**	**100**	**100**

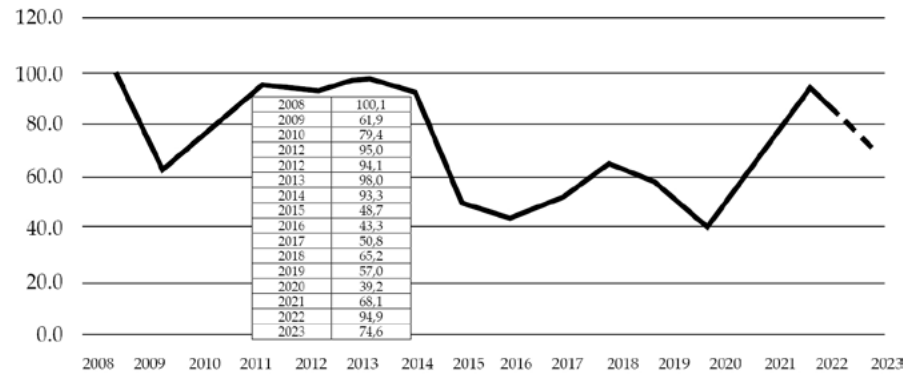
Source: BP (2022).

The trends of the oil industry in the last forty years bear the imprint of the current international economic order, and reflect the impact of major economic and sociopolitical events that occurred in those years with significant implications around the North-South axis. The evolution of the energy markets, in general, and the oil market, in particular, has become especially turbulent in the most recent period, due largely to the proliferation of geopolitical and military conflicts with their epicenter in hydrocarbon-producing regions and countries. Many of these conflicts are generated and fueled by the great capitalist powers, particularly the United States, with the purpose of ensuring increasing control of the main global energy reserves, the trade routes for these products, or of gaining more influence in global decision making.

Additionally, the effects of financial and stock market speculation that characterizes neoliberal globalization have been felt with notable force in the oil market, such that this market, like other strategic markets, such as food and gold, tend to function as «refuges» for those financial investors who, in crisis situations, see their profitability in other activities threatened. In situations of high oil prices, these speculative bubbles tend to artificially inflate prices, and in situations of low prices the fall tends to be reinforced. Consequently, great volatility persists in international energy prices, especially in the case of hydrocarbons and in particular oil.

The uncertainty, instability and volatility of these markets essentially affects developing countries that are net importers of oil, the vast majority of which have limited maneuvering capacity to react to sudden changes in the oil situation, particularly to sudden increases in hydrocarbon prices. The smaller economies within this group of countries (for example, small island developing States) are additionally affected by the actions of international companies that act as intermediaries and tend to make the energy products they sell more expensive.

Chart 1. WTI prices for crude oil 2008-2023 (dollars per barrel)



** WTI = West Texas Intermediate (marker of crude oil prices in the Western hemisphere).*
Source: Information from BP (2022) and US-EIA (06/2023).

In terms of reserves, oil continues to be a product in high demand, located preferably in Southern countries and highly coveted by the great capitalist powers. More than three quarters of the world's oil reserves (77 percent are located in developing regions), where the Middle East stands out (with more than 48 percent of the total), which has high quality crude oil, and has relatively lower production costs than in other producing regions. Saudi Arabia is the best positioned country in terms of its endowment of proven oil reserves in the Middle East. Another region that stands out for the size of its reserves is South America, where Venezuela is located with the largest certified oil reserves in the world. In general, it is estimated that, if world oil extraction were maintained at the rates of the most recent years, the total proven reserves would last for about 53 years (See Table 2).

Table 2: Oil reserves per region, 2020

Regions	**% of Total**	**Best regional record**	**Estimated duration (years)**
Developing countries	**77.1**	**Venezuela: 17.5 %**	**78.3**
Middle East	48.3	Saudi Arabia: 17.2 %	82.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	19.1	Venezuela: 17.5 %	129.2
África	7.2	Libya: 2.8 %	49.8

Asia-Pacífico (en desarrollo)	2,5	China: 1.5 %	16.6
Developed countries	**14.7**	**Canada: 9.7 %**	**32.3**
North America	13,7	Canada: 9.7 %	36.1
Europe	0,9	Noruega : 0.5 %	10,4
Asia-Pacific (developed)	0,1	Australia: 0.1 %	13.9
Community of Independent States	**8.4**	**Russia: 6.2 %**	**29.6**
TOTAL	**100**	**Venezuela: 17.5 %**	**53.5**
- OPEC	70,1	Venezuela: 17.5 %	108.3
- OPEC+[1*]	79,6	Venezuela: 17,5 %	83,1

** Includes the OPEC countries plus Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Mexico, Bahrain, Brunei, Oman, Sudan and South Sudan.*

Source: Information from BP (2022).

On the map of proven oil reserves, OPEC countries concentrate 70 percent of the total, enough for more than 108 years; and the countries of the OPEC+ alliance concentrate almost 80 percent of the world's reserves, with an estimated duration of more than eighty-three years at 2020 extraction rates.

PRODUCTION OF OIL

Despite the changes that have occurred in oil supply over the last forty years, in general the current geography of global oil production continues to concentrate on fuel extracted in the developing world. At the end of 2021, 55.8 percent of the oil produced was extracted in developing countries. OPEC contributed 35.3 percent, and other Southern producers contributed the remaining 20.5 percent. In the developed countries, 28.8 percent of the oil was extracted that year (the United States alone, 18.5 percent), and in the Commonwealth of Independent States, 15.4 percent (Russia alone, 12.2 percent).

Seen by country, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Russia top the list of large oil producers, according to 2021 data, so that 42.9 percent of the world's production of this hydrocarbon is extracted in these three countries (See Table 3).

Table 3. World production of oil, 2021 (MBD)

Regions and countries	Total production (MBD) *	% of total	Production of crude (MBD)	% of total
Developing countries	**50.1**	**55.8**	**45.1**	**58.1**
• *Latin Americ and the Caribbean*	*7,8*	*8,7*	*7,3*	*9,5*
• *Middle East*	*28,2*	*31,3*	*24,6*	*31,6*
- Saudi Arabia	*11,0*	*12,2*	*9,4*	*12,1*
• *Africa*	*7,2*	*8,1*	*6,8*	*8,7*
• *Asia developing*	*6,9*	*7,7*	*6,4*	*8,3*
Developed countries	**25,9**	**28,8**	**19,4**	**24,9**
- USA	*16,6*	*18,5*	*11,2*	*14,4*
Community of Independent States	**13,8**	**15,4**	**13,3**	**17,1**
- Russia	*10,9*	*12,2*	*10,5*	*13,4*
WORLD TOTAL	**89,9**	**100**	**77,8**	**100**
OPEC	31,7	35,3	28,2	36,3
OPEC+ **	49,0	54,5	44,7	57,5
OCDE	28,4	31,6	21,7	27,9

* *Includes crude oil, shale oil, tar sands, natural gas liquid condensates.*

** Includes the OPEC countries plus Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Mexico, Bahrain, Brunei, Oman, Sudan and South Sudan.

Source: Information from BP (2022).

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), created in 1960, continues to be a pillar of the world oil market, despite the efforts and pressures of the developed world to subdue or neutralize it. The members of this Organization contributed 34.2 percent of the world's supply of liquid fuels[51] in 2022, according to United States energy statistics. According to this source, OPEC crude oil production totaled 28.7 MBD in 2022; and could increase to about 28.9 MBD in 2023. Saudi Arabia, with about 10.4 MBD, contributed 36.4 percent of the crude oil produced by OPEC in 2022 (See Table 4).

[51] Includes crude oil, biofuels, liquid natural gas and other liquid components.

Table 4. Production of crude oil in OPEC countries 2022 (in MBD)

No.	Countries	Production of crude oil (MBD)
1	Algeria	1.00
2	Angola	1.15
3	Congo (Brazzaville)	028
4	Equatorial Guinea	0.09
5	Gabon	0.20
6	Iran	2,54
7	Iraq	4,45
8	Kuwait	2,71
9	Libya	0,98
10	Nigeria	1,10
11	Saudi Arabia	10,44
12	United Arab Emirates	3,06
13	Venezuela	0,69
	Total	28,68

Source: US-EIA (01/2023).

Since 2017, the OPEC+ Agreement has been maintained, with some interruptions and divergences, which includes the members of that Organization and other producers such as Russia,[52] with the purpose of counteracting sudden fluctuations in this important market. As indicated before, the countries of the OPEC+ alliance contribute 58 percent of the world's crude oil production and concentrate almost 80 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, which reveals the strengths of this group of countries against the positions of the developed world.

Of the OPEC countries, Libya, Iran and Venezuela are not subject to the group's production quotas; and Iran and Venezuela continue to be affected by the coercive measures imposed by the United States and other powers in the developed world.[53] The use of these coercive measures against oil-exporting countries that defy the pressures of capitalist powers and large oil companies reveal that oil continues to be used as a political weapon against sovereign governments of the South that refuse to abide by the dictates of the United States and its allies.

Another example of the use of oil as a political weapon against developing countries is the intensification of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba, reinforced by the government of Donald Trump, which has implied, among other negative effects, leading to unprecedented levels of prohibitions and restrictions on suppliers and transporters to prevent fuel supplies to the Caribbean country.

[52] Includes OPEC countries and Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Malasia, Mexico, Bahrein, Brunei, Oman, Sudan, and South Sudan.

[53] In the case of Venezuela, in November 2022, general license 41 (GL41) of the United States Department of the Treasury was approved, by virtue of which the Chevron company can resume its operations in that country for export purposes to the United States.

The gas and oil strategy of the United States in recent decades has also incorporated as one of its pillars the development of domestic production capacities, especially from unconventional fuels, such as shale gas and unconventional oil. Since the last decade of the last century, the combined use of horizontal drilling technologies and hydraulic fracturing, *fracking*, served as the basis for the productive boom in this oil area that since the 1970s was considered a mature basin.

The results of this strategy, highly questioned due to its high costs and environmental impacts, have allowed the United States and the main oil companies based in this country to strengthen their positions in global energy markets, increase their energy self-sufficiency and, in Consequently, reduce the adverse impacts of external shocks on oil prices, as well as strengthen its decision-making power vis-à-vis allies in the developed world.

United States crude oil production reached 12.2 MBD in 2019; then it fell to 11.3 MBD in 2020 and 11.2 MBD in 2021, in the years of the pandemic; and managed to recover to 11.9 MBD in 2022. Indeed, the collapse in prices reinforced by the pandemic, tested the oil production capacity through fracking in the United States, where many wells were no longer profitable. A new rebound is expected for 2023 (up to 12.6 MBD), which could be reinforced in 2024 (12.8 MBD).

Regarding the international oil trade of the United States, in the heat of the boom in the production of unconventional hydrocarbons, a drop in net imports of oil (crude oil and derivatives) of this country was recorded from 3.77 MBD in 2017 to 0 .67 MBD in 2019. Since 2020, annual net exports of hydrocarbons have been recorded that reached 1.3 MBD in 2022 and could reach 1.4 MBD in 2023 (See Table 5).

Table 5. Recent evolution of crude oil production and oil imports (crude + derivatives) of the United States (in MBD)

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Production	9,4	11,0	12,2	11,3	11,2	11,9
Crude imports	6,81	5,72	3,82	2,7	3,13	2,67
Imports of derivatives	-3,04	-3,38	-3,15	-3,35	-3,29	-3,93
Total imports	3,77	2,34	0,67	-0,65	-0,16	-1,26

Source: US-EIA (12/2018, 12/2019, 12/2020, 06/2022 and 06/2023).

The war in Ukraine has added new tensions to global energy markets, particularly for oil and natural gas markets, as this conflict involves Russia which is a large producer and exporter of oil and gas, and Ukraine which has traditionally been an important transit country in the hydrocarbon trade. The United States and the large oil companies of the developed world are among the major beneficiaries of this energy dispute. On the one hand, the United States has covered, at much higher prices, part of the gas supplies to Europe that were previously provided by Russia; and oil companies have seen profits soar with high hydrocarbon prices.

OIL CONSUMPTION AND COMMERCE

Under the conditions of the current international economic order, most developing countries continue to occupy a relegated position in terms of energy consumption, and in particular oil. Although oil consumption in these countries has increased almost four times in the last forty years, especially in the Asian region, and particularly in countries like China; It is this group of nations where around 80 percent of the world's population is concentrated and absorbs just over half (51 percent) of global oil consumption. If China is excluded, the rest of the developing countries, with 61 percent of the world's population, only capture 35 percent of oil consumption. Seen by country, the largest consumers of oil are the United States (19.9 percent with only 4.3 percent of the world's population), China (16.4 percent, with 18.1 percent of the global population) and India (5.2 percent with 18.3 percent of the planet's inhabitants), according to 2021 data (See Table 6).

In recent decades, developing Asia has become the most dynamic area in the world in terms of oil consumption, although per capita consumption levels are still far from those of developed countries. In the period 2011-2021, Asian oil consumption increased by 25.5 percent, while the global increase was 7.6 percent in that period; for China the increase was 60.4 percent and for India it was 40.4 percent.

Table 6. World consumption of oil, 2021 (MBD)

Regions and countries	**Oil consumption (MBD) ***	**% of total**
Developed countries	**41,7**	**44,3**
• USA	18,7	19,9
• European Union	10,4	11,1
• Japan	3,3	3,6
• Others	9,3	9,7
Developing countries	**48,1**	**51,2**
• Latin America and the Caribbean	7,0	7,4
• Middle East	8,6	9,2
• Africa	3,9	4,2
• Asia in developing	28,6	30,4
- China	15,4	16,4
- India	4,9	5,2
Community of Independent States	**4,3**	**4,6**
• Russia	3,4	3,6
WORLD TOTAL	**94,1**	**100**

Source: Information from BP (2022).

Among the large oil-importing countries and regions in the developed area, in terms of volume, are Europe (20.2 percent of global purchases), the United States (12.7 percent) and Japan (5 percent). , according to 2021 data. Unlike Europe and Japan, which have a markedly importing profile in their oil balance, the United States is also an important exporter, especially of oil products. Of the oil imported by the United States, 72.2 percent is crude and the rest is derived products.

The main importers of oil from the developing area, in terms of volume, are China (19 percent of global purchases) and India (8 percent). However, it must be taken into account that the majority of developing countries are net importers of oil, in many cases with serious financial restrictions to cover external purchases of fuel, especially in times of high hydrocarbon prices in international markets.

Among the main oil exporting countries and regions are the Middle East, which contributes 32.5 percent of global sales (with 11.5 percent corresponding to Saudi Arabia), Russia (12.3 percent) and the United States. United (11.8 percent). Unlike the Middle East and Russia, which preferentially export crude oil, 64.7 percent of the oil exported by the United States is petroleum products. In general sense, as indicated before, since the rise of unconventional hydrocarbon production in the United States, since the 1990s, there has been a significant change in the energy and oil profile of this country, which favors its energy self-sufficiency and places it at a strategic advantage over other power centers.

Table 7. Contrast between the structure of oil trade in exporting regions of the developing world and in the United States (% of total traded)

Regions and countries	**Oil trade(*) (thousands BD)**	**Imported crude %**	**Exported crude %**	**Imported products %**	**Exported products %**	**Total %**
United States	16 370	**37,4**	17	14,4	**31,2**	100
Developing countries						
Latin America and Caribbean	8 103	5,4	**43,9**	**42,5**	8,2	100
Mexico	2 467	0	**43,1**	**50**	7	100
Middle East and Northern Africa	27 311	2,3	**67,4**	8,2	**22,1**	100
Sub-Saharan Africa	6 175	4,2	**62,5**	**29,5**	3,8	100

(*) Incudes exports and imprts of crude and derivatives.
Source: Based on information from BP (2022).

In Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, the largest proportions in the structure of oil trade correspond to the export of crude oil (43.9 and 62.5 percent, respectively) and the import of products (42.5 percent and 29.5 percent, respectively). percent, that is, trade patterns typical of Southern countries; which contrasts with the pattern of the United States, with a powerful oil industry, where the import of crude oil predominates (34.7 percent and the export of derivatives, 31.2 percent) (See Table 7).

Among the factors that multiply the uncertainty in relation to the course of the oil market in the near future, it is worth highlighting the evolution of the world economy; the impact on the hydrocarbon market of the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions against Russia; the behavior of production cut agreements between OPEC and other producers (OPEC+); and the dynamics of unconventional fuels, especially in the United States.

In relation to the potential of developing countries in terms of reserves of non-renewable energy resources, it is worth noting that this group of countries concentrated 77 percent of the proven oil reserves at the end of 2020 (only the Middle East had the 48.3 percent; 52.1 percent of natural gas reserves (Middle East alone, 40.3 percent); and 31 percent of coal reserves, located almost entirely in Asia (29 .5 percent). Achieving greater control of these resources, especially in the case of hydrocarbons, continues to be one of the great priorities of the capitalist powers, and to achieve that objective they maintain a menu of options that includes old and new. practices of domination and plunder.

In the productive order, in 2021 the developing world contributed 55.8 percent of oil production (the Middle East alone, 31.3 percent); 41.5 percent of natural gas extraction (Middle East, 17.7 percent); and developing Asia, 12.9 percent; and 74.7 percent of coal produced (almost entirely in developing Asia, at 69.9 percent).

Correspondingly with the above, in 2021 this group of countries controlled 58.4 percent of total oil exports (64.4 percent of crude oil sales and 48.4 percent of oil derivatives sales); 51.9 percent of liquefied gas exports (25.1 percent from the Middle East); 18.4 percent of gas sales through gas pipelines; and 39.7 percent of coal exports. Despite these potentials, it is worth remembering that most developing countries are net importers of energy, in general, and hydrocarbons, in particular.

In contrast to the level of participation of developing countries in the production and marketing of oil, natural gas and mineral coal. This group of countries only generated 18.9 percent of electricity of nuclear origin; and of that proportion China contributed 14.6 percent in 2021. Although these countries produced 60.7 percent of hydroelectricity generation, only China concentrated half of that proportion (30.4 percent, followed by Brazil (8.5 percent and India (3.8 percent, in 2021. This group of countries accounted for 48.4 percent of electricity generation with other renewable sources (wind, solar and others such as geothermal and bioelectricity) in 2021, but of that proportion only China contributed 31.5 percent, India 4.7 percent and Brazil 3.9 percent, which reveals the limited presence of most developing countries in the introduction of energy technologies modern alternatives to fossil fuels.

ENERGY CRISIS AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The energy crisis affecting most developing countries predates the most recent geopolitical conflicts (including the war in Ukraine), and especially affects the poorest segments of the world's population. This energy crisis is an expression of the great asymmetries that characterize the current international economic order and is manifested in different ways, including the lack of access to electricity, modern technologies for cooking food, restrictions to cover refrigeration needs. of food, very limited access to sustainable mobility, among other deprivations. Lack of financing is considered the main obstacle to universal access to energy.

Tabla 8. Consumo per cápita de energía comercial en países y regiones seleccionados, 2021

Selected regions and countries	*per cápita* energy consumption (Gigajoules)	World average = 1,00
Developed countries		
Canada	364,4	4,82
United States	279,9	3,70
Japan	140,8	1,86
European Union	135	1,79
Developing countries		

Middle East	143	1,89
China	109,1	1,44
Central and South America	53,7	0,71
Mexico	52,1	0,69
India	25,4	0,34
Africa	14,6	0,19
Community of Independent States	163	2,16
Russia	214,5	2,84
WORLD AVERAGE	**75,6**	1,00
OCDE	167,9	2,22
No-OCDE	56,2	0,74

Source: Based on information from BP (2022).

Indeed, North-South socioeconomic asymmetries have very evident and concrete manifestations in the energy sector, especially from the perspective of access to basic energy services. Thus, for example, while an average inhabitant of the United States consumes the equivalent of 3.7 times the world's average demand for commercial energy; An average inhabitant of Africa barely consumes the equivalent of 0.19 percent of the world average. In other words, the average American consumes 19.2 times what the average African does, in terms of commercial energy. Overall, the average per capita commercial energy consumption of developing countries falls below the world average by about 26 percent,[54] while the average of OECD members (where developed economies predominate) is equivalent to 2.2 times the world average. In Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico, Central America and South America) average commercial energy consumption falls below the world average by around 30 percent (See Table 8).

Despite the efforts made around Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 7: Affordable and clean energy, limited access to basic energy services persists in developing countries, which particularly affects the regions, poorer countries and communities, hit by energy poverty. According to 2021 figures, around 770 million people, especially in rural areas, still lack access to electricity (a technological achievement of the late 19th century) and of that total around 570 million reside in Africa. In most regions electrification rates exceed 94 percent, but Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the lowest level of electricity coverage at 46 percent in 2019.

[54] Based on the consumption of non-OECD member countries, which are generally developing countries (See table 8).

Tabla 9. Consumo per cápita de electricidad en 2019

Regions	**Electricity consumption *per cápita* (Kwh)**	**World average consumption of electricity = 1,00**
OCDE	7 773	2,38
United States	12 744	3,90
Middle East	4 359	1,34
Europe and Eurasia no-OCDE	4 706	1,44
China	5 125	1,57
Asia no-OCDE (excludes China)	1 142	0,35
-India	987	0,30
Americas no-OCDE	2 121	0,65
Africa	560	0,17
WORLD TOTAL	**3 265**	1,00

Source: Based on information from AIE (2021).

According to data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), in 2019 Africa's average per capita electricity consumption was equivalent to 17 percent of the world average; while the per capita level of the United States represented 3.9 times the world average.

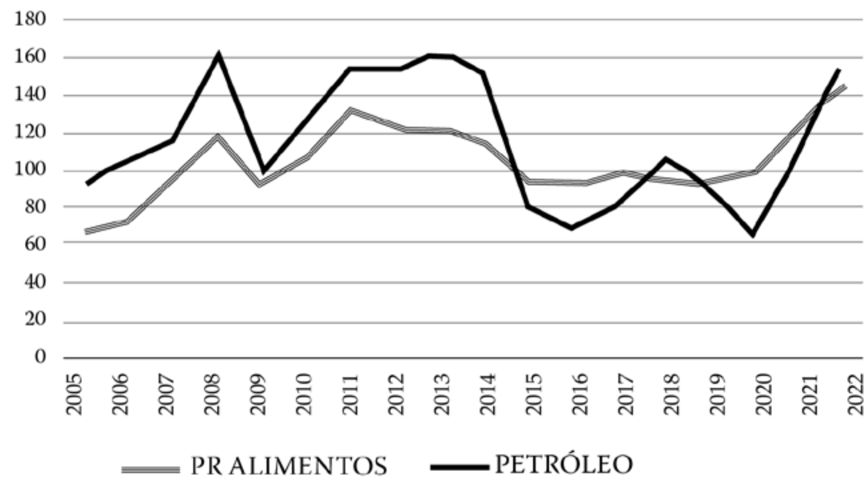
Furthermore, 2.6 billion people (about a third of the world's population) do not have access to modern (cleaner) technologies for cooking their food; and in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of inhabitants with this deprivation amounts to 920 million, which represents an increase of almost 23 percent in relation to the 750 million people affected by this deficiency in 2010. It is estimated that the goal of achieving access universal sustainable cooking by 2030 could be breached by at least 30 percent.

The most widespread energy statistics, referring to commercial energy consumption, do not include the traditional use of biomass, which represents a significant portion of the energy used in the poorest countries for cooking and heating homes. Thus, for example, although it is estimated that bioenergy is the main renewable source used for heating homes and represents 21 percent of global heat needs, two thirds of that proportion corresponds to traditional biomass sources. (firewood, plant and animal waste, and others) in poor populations. The inefficient use of traditional biomass fuels has a significant impact on indoor air pollution, which in turn generates some 3.6 million premature deaths per year, in addition to other adverse social and environmental impacts.

The lack of refrigeration affects 1.1 billion people, and this deprivation translates into great losses as around 40 percent of food deteriorates. Likewise, some 450 million people in Africa, including more than 70 percent of the continent's rural population, lack access to sustainable mobility, given limitations with transportation infrastructure.

In times of high oil and energy prices in general, food prices also tend to rise (given the weight of energy in food production chains), which especially affects developing countries that are importers. net energy and food, particularly the poorest segments of the population in these countries. Based on the 2014-2016 period, in 2022 the price of oil (WTI) would register an increase of 53.6 percent; and the FAO food price index had increased by 44.7 percent (See Chart 2).

Chart 2. Price rates of oil (WTI) and food (FAO), 2014-2016 =100



Source: Based on information from BP (2022), US-EIA (06/2023) and FAO (2023).

According to estimates published by the IMF, for every 1 percent increase in the price of oil, the price of food increases by 0.2 percent. Additionally, each 1 percent increase in the price of fertilizers, which is usually very sensitive to the behavior of natural gas prices, increases the price of food by 0.45 percent.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES AND DECARBONIZATION UNDER THE CURRENT WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER

One of the great imbalances in global energy systems is the persistent predominance of fossil fuels, which are, moreover, non-renewable, in the global energy balance and by region. Even considering the rapid expansion of electricity generation from renewable energy sources (RES), the proportion of these sources in the commercial energy balance remains limited (14 percent in 2021).

Table 10. Balance of energy trade in development countries, 2021

Regions and countries	Oil	Natural Gas	Coal	Nuclear	Hydro-electricity	Other renewable	Total
World	31	24,4	26,9	4,3	6,8	6,7	100
United States	38	32	11,4	8	2,6	8	100
European Union	35,5	23,8	11,2	11	5,4	13,2	100
Japan	37,3	21	27	3,1	4,1	7,4	100
OCDE	36,4	28,1	12,9	7,5	5,9	9,2	100

Source: BP (2022).

Developed countries, with a 77 percent dependence on fossil fuels in their commercial energy balance, show a presence of renewable sources (15 percent slightly higher than the world average). However, the European Union stands out with a greater relative participation of renewable sources (18.6 percent) (See Table 10).

The high participation of fossil fuels in the commercial energy balances of developed countries is far from the leadership that these countries should have in global response strategies against environmental pollution and climate change. The slowness of the energy transition in these countries, and particularly in the United States, responds largely to the priorities and interests of the large oil companies of Big Oil, and the close ties of these companies with the circles of economic power and political in those countries.

Table 11: Balance of traded energy in developing countries (PED), 2021

Regions and countries	Oil	Natural Gas	Coal	Nuclear	Hydro-electricity	Other renewable	Total
World	31,0	24,4	26,9	4,3	6,8	6,7	100
LAC	39,4	25,7	4,8	1,0	18,6	10,6	100
Middle East	43,1	54,8	0,9	0,3	0,5	0,5	100
Africa	39,3	29,6	21,0	0,5	7,2	2,3	100
Asia in development	22,7	10,6	51,2	1,9	7,2	6,4	100
--China	19,4	8,6	54,7	2,3	7,8	7,2	100
--India	26,5	6,3	56,7	1,1	4,3	5,0	100
Total PED	28	18,7	38,3	1,5	7,6	5,9	100
Total PED except China	36,3	28,4	22,4	0,7	7,5	4,7	100

PED = Developing countries.
Source: Information from BP (2022).

The commercial energy balance of developing countries shows a dependence of 85 percent on fossil fuels and a share of 13.5 percent on renewable sources. Mineral coal stands out as the main source of commercial energy in the developing world, which responds largely to the weight of this energy carrier in China and the weight of that country in global energy consumption. However, when China is excluded, the dependence of developing countries on fossil fuels rises to 87 percent (especially oil, with 36.3 percent), and the share of renewable sources drops slightly to 12.2 percent (See Table 11).

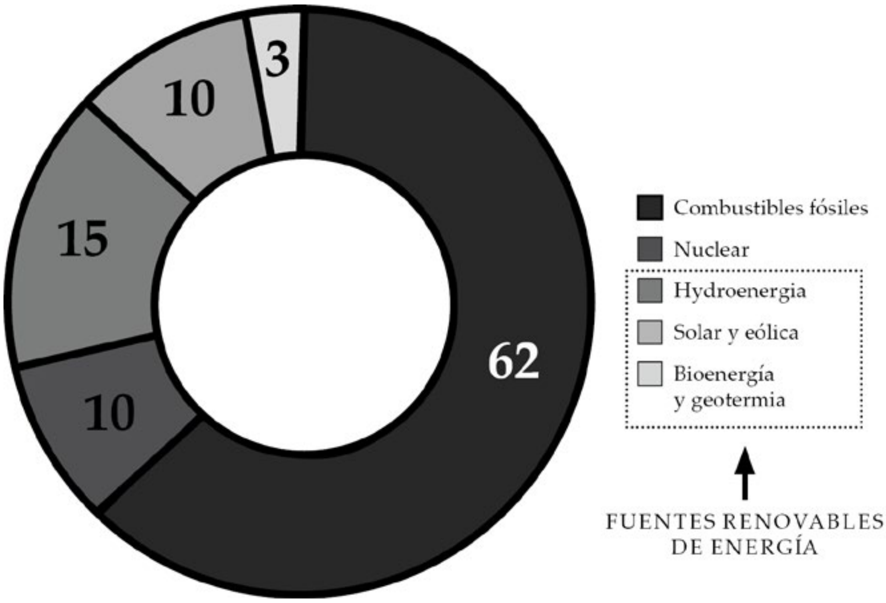
The high relative participation of fossil fuels in the commercial energy balances of developing countries, as a group of countries, is closely related to the limited technological and financial capacity of the majority of these countries to develop and implement, with a innovative approach, modern energy technologies alternative to non-renewable sources. The energy patterns of the developed world continue to be exported to developing countries, and incorporated into various production and consumption technologies. It should also be remembered that these statistics on commercial energy sources do not include, as indicated above, the extensive use of traditional biomass fuels (firewood, plant and animal waste, and others) in the poorest countries and communities.

Climate change mitigation strategies include the promotion of renewable energy sources (RES) and energy efficiency as key factors of the decarbonization process underway. Energy security is also a basic component of long-term decarbonization strategies. Most of the financing for climate change mitigation in 2019-2020 (57 percent was invested in RES, especially in solar PV and wind).

Modern RES employed about 12 million people and accounted for 12.6 percent of final energy consumption in 2020: heat generation from biomass, geothermal and solar contributed 4.8; hydropower 3.9; biofuel for transport 1; and other FRE (biomass, geothermal, ocean, solar and wind) 2.8. In 2019, RES represented 28 percent of electricity generation, 11.2 percent in the provision of heat and air conditioning, and 3.2 percent in the transportation sector.

New investments in RES grew for the fourth consecutive year in 2021 and reached USD 366 billion; and of this total, 56 percent corresponded to solar PV and 40 percent to wind power. In general, new investments in RES have shown a high degree of resilience in the face of adversities such as the pandemic. Among the countries and regions with the highest contributions in 2021 to new global investments in RES, China (37 percent), Europe (22 percent), Asia and Oceania, excluding China and India (16 percent), and the United States (13 percent). Since 2011, two thirds of these new investments have been concentrated in China, Europe and the United States. The vast majority of developing countries, especially many of the poorest ones, are marginalized from modern RES markets.

Chart 3



Source: REN21 (2022).

Overall, the rapid expansion of electricity generation from RES continues; particularly solar PV and wind, which for the first time contributed more than 10 percent of total electricity in 2021. In that year, new electrical capacities from FRE increased by 17, reaching an additional 314 GW (43 percent contributed by China); and a total capacity of 3,146 GW. In 2021, China became the first country to have a total installed capacity of one Tera watt (TW) from FRE; and concentrated 48 percent of the world's electric car stock, followed by Europe (33 percent), the United States (12 percent) and the rest of the world (7 percent).

On a global scale, RES contributed 28.3 percent of the electricity generated in 2021, compared to 20.4 percent in 2011 and 28.5 percent in 2020; and the participation of the RES in the new net capacities reached 84 percent in 2021. However, the progress made in this field is still limited since to be on the path of carbon neutrality (zero net emissions) the new capacities electricity from FRE would have to triple.

Currently, factors that slow the expansion of RES persist, such as fossil fuel subsidies that reached US$5.9 trillion in 2020, equivalent to seven percent of global GDP. For many developing countries, technological and financial constraints constitute serious obstacles to the large-scale implementation of RES.

Much of the expansion of RES on a global scale is offset by efforts to promote and implement policies aimed at energy sustainability and decarbonization. At the end of 2021, some 135 countries (with 88 percent of global emissions) had some carbon neutrality goal (net zero emissions) in force; and also in that year some 169 countries had some goal to promote RES.

Global plans to achieve "net zero emissions" goals, in line with efforts to mitigate climate change, involve large flows of investments, which are largely linked to the use and control of the raw materials necessary to advance in those processes, such as the four most in-demand metals (nickel, cobalt, lithium and copper) and the seventeen metals considered "rare earths."

The control of the technologies and access to the raw materials necessary in this energy transition will increasingly influence the correlation of forces between the main powers and, therefore, the national security mechanisms, as the world transitions from a society based on the consumption of fossil fuels to energy systems based on renewable energy sources. China has been strengthening its positions in these investments and markets, inside and outside its borders; and this is a key line of investment in the Chinese Belt and Road initiative.

Under the current world economic order, the unbridled race for control of the strategic metals on which the new energy transition towards renewable energy sources is based largely responds to one of the modalities of the so-called "green capitalism", where among the supply-side options, that is, it seeks to maintain mostly high levels of energy consumption, although this moves away from fossil fuels. In general, this "green business" acts to the detriment of demand-side options, which seek to preferably increase energy efficiency; and has been highly criticized, especially due to the high volumes required of the so-called rare metals, and the consequent environmental implications of these processes.

Given this accelerated decarbonization process that is underway, those nations that maintain a high dependence on oil, gas and coal consumption would be increasingly less competitive, which represents a serious challenge for many developing countries. Additionally, so-called "green protectionism" could proliferate, through which trade barriers are imposed on products with high carbon content; and the financing of investments based on fossil fuels is stopped. This will especially affect poor countries that, given their technological and financial limitations, advance more slowly in the decarbonization process.

In the last forty years, under the conditions of the current international economic order and neoliberal globalization, there have been important changes in the correlation of forces between the main agents that operate in global energy markets, especially in the oil market; but, in essence, this continues to be a scenario of conflicts, invasions and predatory wars especially around the North-South axis, that is, between the main oil exporters, grouped in OPEC plus other developing countries, of a side; and the main consumers of the highly industrialized area and the large oil companies, on the other side. Under these conditions, energy, and in particular oil, continue to be used as political weapons by big oil capital and related power circles in the governments of industrialized countries, particularly in the United States, against sovereign governments of the South that They refuse to abide by imperial dictates.

In these circumstances, for oil producers and exporters in the developing world, which contribute more than 58 percent of production and 64 percent of international crude oil sales, and concentrate more than 77 percent of oil reserves, The need to continue strengthening and modernizing its national oil companies is imposed, consolidating the unity of OPEC; and reinforce the new producer alliances created in recent years, for example the OPEC+ agreements, which include other large producers such as Russia. The consolidation of these new alliances of producers can contribute to increasing the negotiating power of OPEC and in general of the energy producers of the South vis-à-vis the developed world and the transnational business of the large oil companies. For hydrocarbon exporters in the South, it is also key to increase the proportion of derived products, with higher added value in final sales.

Although the developing world has great energy potential (both renewable and non-renewable), these are unevenly distributed, such that most developing countries are net importers of energy, in general, and of hydrocarbons, in particular. These net oil-importing developing countries suffer acutely from the uncertainty, instability and volatility of these markets; and the vast majority have limited maneuvering capacity to react to sudden changes in the oil situation, particularly to sudden price increases.

These contrasts within the developing world, in relation to the provision of energy resources, offer broad possibilities for South-South collaboration and complementarity in a strategic sector such as energy. Experiences such as Petrocaribe, launched by Venezuela at the beginning of this century, constitute valid references to strengthen and expand initiatives of this nature, where the main beneficiaries are small developing economies that import energy.

Likewise, both energy exporters and importers in the South must promote the development and application of modern energy technologies that are alternatives to fossil fuels. The promotion of science, technology and innovation, together with South-South collaboration and the transfer of North-South financing and technologies in these areas, can contribute in this direction. It must be taken into account that the accelerated global decarbonization process underway implies that those nations that maintain a high dependence on oil, gas and coal consumption would be increasingly less competitive, which represents a serious challenge for many developing countries. These countries could also be victims of so-called “green protectionism”, which involves the imposition of trade barriers on products with high carbon content; and obstacles or prohibitions on the financing of investments based on fossil fuels.

Furthermore, the rapid expansion of RES as part of global climate change mitigation efforts poses additional challenges for developing countries that have reserves of the raw materials necessary to advance these processes, such as the four most in-demand metals. (nickel, cobalt, lithium and copper) and the seventeen metals considered “rare earths”. Faced with the appetite of the great powers and transnational business in this direction, these countries must apply mechanisms that allow them to ensure sovereign control and the rational use of these resources based on development.

Last, but not least, the search for a fair and definitive solution to the energy crisis that affects large sectors of the poorest population on the planet, must continue to be a priority issue among the demands of the developing world in international negotiations. , which requires concrete contributions in terms of North-South transfer of financing and technologies for these purposes. It is unacceptable, for example, that around 770 million people still lack access to electricity, which is a technology from the late 19th century. More than evidence of the technological gap, this is an example of the enormous social debt accumulated under the conditions of the current world order.

VI

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT. THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental deterioration and depletion of natural resources

During the last forty years, under the conditions of the current international economic order and neoliberal globalization, global, regional and local environmental problems have been accentuated as a result of the predominance of unsustainable production and consumption patterns. The main historical culprits for the current ecological crisis are the industrialized countries and their transnational companies, which, especially since the English Industrial Revolution, in the last third of the 18th century, have caused the greatest environmental damage to the planet, in terms of environmental deterioration and depletion of natural resources.

The international debate on environment and development in recent years has revolved around the so-called triple planetary crisis, with reference to climate change, the loss of biodiversity and pollution. In this context, studies specialized in development issues are increasingly using the term Anthropocene, to define the era of humans as a period characterized by increasing interrelated planetary pressures of large scale, speed and scope.

Under these conditions, recent UNDP evaluations document that the impact of human activity on the planet is so marked that it is causing a very dangerous change, since these planetary pressures are destabilizing and are accompanied by growing social polarization. Recent UNEP reports, for their part, highlight that the dynamics or trends of human populations (particularly demographic pressure) and economic development have been the main drivers of environmental change.

According to the Living Planet Report 2022 from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the global ecological footprint[55] reveals that humanity is overexploiting the planet by at least 75 percent, which is equivalent to consuming the resources of 1.75 planets on Earth.

Under the current international economic order, the ecological footprint of industrialized countries far exceeds that of developing countries, as an environmental expression of the great socioeconomic asymmetries that persist today, which make up the unsustainable economic order that prevails today. If these trends continue, the development aspirations of the countries of the South will be further postponed; and in the coming years the delay in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, will be accentuated, beyond the adverse effects of the COVID 19 pandemic.

[55] The ecological footprint refers to the impact of human activity on the environment; therefore, it can be calculated for people, countries, regions or other units of analysis and on a global scale.

More than half of the top ten global risks for the next 10 years are environmental risks, as indicated by the most recent editions of the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report, although in others the environmental aspect is still having an effect. As is known, this Forum is a mechanism for debate, consultation and political lobbying of the main transnational corporations, created in 1971, which holds annual meetings and issues various publications, through which the neoliberal ideology has been promoted.

Table 1. Major global risks for the next 10 years

No	Risks	Type of risk
1	Failure of climate change mitigation	Environmental
2	Failure of adaptation to climate change.	Environmental
3	Natural disasters and extreme weather events	Environmental
4	Loss of biodiversity and collapse of ecosystems	Environmental
5	Large-scale involuntary migration.	Social
6	Natural resources crisis.	Environmental
7	Erosion of social cohesion and social polarization.	Social
8	Expansion of cybercrime and cyberinsecurity.	Technological
9	Geoeconomic confrontation	Geopolitical
10	Incidents with large scale environmental damage	Environmental

Source: WEF (2023).

Environmental and energy issues are two key axes of Cuban leader Fidel Castro's thinking on the world economy and international economic relations, when analyzing different moments of the world's economic and social crisis as a structural concept that goes beyond the cyclical movement of capitalism.

Fidel Castro's thinking about the link between environment and development was gaining strength since the 1970s and undoubtedly had a crowning moment at the Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, officially identified as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992). Both his speech at that Conference, remembered for its synthetic and forceful content, and the Message from Cuba at that event, had an amplified echo throughout the world and remain fully valid today.

Fidel Castro's speech at the Earth Summit (1992) summarizes in his brief text a deep knowledge of the results of science about the challenges associated with the link between environment and development. On that occasion he warned: "An important biological species is at risk of disappearing due to the rapid and progressive liquidation of its natural living conditions: man."

Key ideas in the thought of Comander in Chief Fidel Castro about the relation between environment and development:

- It is necessary to study the environment, geography, nature in its interaction with human activity, with development.
- The rational use of natural resources must be promoted without giving up the need for human activity to transform nature in its development process.
- The long-term effects of damage caused to nature must be taken into account.
- Unsustainable growth patterns are at the root of today's major environmental challenges.
- The education of new generations about global environmental challenges must be promoted, especially those that most affect underdeveloped countries.
- The threats to peace, development and the preservation of the environment must be analyzed in an interrelated manner, which can reach very dangerous thresholds, for example, in extreme situations such as the outbreak of a nuclear war...
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- The threats to peace, development and the preservation of the environment must be analyzed in an interrelated manner, which can reach very dangerous thresholds, for example, in extreme situations such as the outbreak of a nuclear war.
- The deterioration of the environment and the depletion of natural resources compromises human survival: «An important biological species is at risk of disappearing ...»
- Highly industrialized countries have an ecological debt with humanity, based on the irrational patterns of production and consumption that served as the basis for their development, to which is added the imposition of these wasteful patterns on underdeveloped countries.
- There is a vicious circle between underdevelopment, poverty and environmental deterioration, which, far from being broken, has been reinforced after the Rio de Janeiro Summit (1992). The link between environmental deterioration, population dynamics and food crisis is an expression of this vicious circle.
- The socioeconomic and environmental trends of recent decades confirm the unsustainability of neoliberal globalization.
- Climate change as a global challenge has its main causes in the irrational patterns of energy consumption in the world.
- Small island developing states constitute a special case in terms of the link between environment and development, based on their high degree of vulnerability to climate change and other global socioeconomic and environmental challenges.
- Multilateral negotiations on the environment and development have followed a very slow, fragmented and bumpy course since the Rio de Janeiro Summit (1992), which contrasts with the advance of environmental science, and particularly climate science in this period.

Sources: Castro (1983), CIEM (2019).

The ideas and proposals of Commander Fidel Castro regarding the link between environment and development were fully in line with the positions that the Group of 77 and China had been defending in the preparatory process for said Conference, many of which were included in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted there, and in Agenda 21, also adopted as a result of the Conference. All of them remain absolutely valid as a reference in the positioning of developing countries in debates about these issues, where environmental problems should not be analyzed separately from the problems of socioeconomic development; and where the solutions go through a combination of conditions related to the necessary international cooperation based on equity, the preservation of peace, respect for the right to development, guarantees of access to additional financing and the appropriate technologies required.

It should be noted, however, that since 1992, the outcome of subsequent conferences within the framework of the United Nations itself has led to an erosion, rather than a strengthening, of the commitments made, both in the Rio Declaration and in Agenda 21.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE BETWEEN UNDERDEVELOPMENT, POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DETERIORATION

The vicious circle between underdevelopment, poverty and environmental deterioration tends to be reinforced and reproduced under the conditions of the current international economic order. This is precisely what was intended to be avoided at the 1992 Earth Summit. Although a large part of the planet's natural resources (energy, other minerals, biodiversity, fresh water, tropical forests and soils, among others) are preferably located in In developing countries, the greatest benefits derived from the use and exploitation of these resources have been monopolized by developed capitalist countries. Historically, the control, exploitation, deterioration and/or depletion of many of these resources has characterized economic relations between the North and the South, to the detriment of the development priorities and interests of less advanced nations.

According to international statistics, 21.7 percent of the population of developing countries lives in conditions of multidimensional poverty, and 15.2 percent is vulnerable to this type of poverty. The situation becomes more worrying in the poorest regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where 53.4 percent of the population is affected by multidimensional poverty and 18.8 percent is vulnerable (See Table 2). In many cases, these poor populations have no other option than to deteriorate some components of the natural environment in order to barely survive. An estimated 1.3 billion people depend on degraded agricultural land.

Tabla 2. Proportion of population living in multidimensional poverty in underdeveloped regions (%)

Regions	**% of population in multidimensional poverty**	**% of population in severe multi-dimensional poverty**	**% of population in vulnerable multidi-mensional**	**% of population be-low the national pov-erty line**	**% of persons with less than 1,90 USD PP/PD**
Developing countries	21,7	9,5	15,2	20,2	14,8
Arab States	14,5	6,5	8,9	26,1	4,9
East Asia and Pacific	5,4	1,0	14,5	4,3	1,2
Europe and Central Asia	1,0	0,1	3,2	9,8	1,1
Latin America and Caribbean	6,9	1,8	7,3	36,9	4,2
South Asia	29,0	10,2	18,3	22,9	19,2
Sub-Saharan Africa	53,4	30,8	18,8	41,1	43,7

Source: UNDP (2022)

One of the most obvious manifestations of the vicious circle between underdevelopment, poverty and environmental deterioration is the high dependence of the poorest sectors of the population in developing countries on traditional biomass fuels to cover energy needs as basic as cooking. and heat the interior of their homes. The use of bioenergy by these populations for these purposes is very inefficient in terms of the use of biomass energy, and is estimated to reach about 25 exajoules (EJ), which is equivalent to about 8 percent of total consumption. of commercial energy of developing countries. This amount corresponds mainly to Africa (50 percent) and Asia (45 percent). It is estimated that this traditional use of biomass causes about 3.6 million premature deaths per year due to pollution inside homes. In addition, these practices also generate greenhouse gas emissions and have been identified as one of the main barriers to a more active incorporation of women from these communities into other socioeconomic activities.

The link between food, energy and water insecurity is another worrying aspect of the vicious circle between underdevelopment, poverty and environmental deterioration, where food insecurity is largely conditioned by gaps in energy and water security.

The intensification of climate change, for its part, tends to exacerbate extreme poverty through reduced agricultural yields, which generates upward pressure on food prices and worsens food and water insecurity. The poorest families, where food represents more than 50 percent of the family budget, are the most affected by the increase in energy and food prices.

This vicious circle especially affects the poor countries most dependent on exports of raw materials based on natural resources, such as agricultural products, minerals, fisheries, among other productions in the primary sector of the economy. According to IMF statistics, some sixty developing countries depend primarily on raw material exports for their economic functioning. Of them, twenty-four are oil exporters and thirty-six export other primary products. Most of these countries are located in Africa (twenty-five countries, of which 70 percent depend mainly on the export of raw materials other than oil), the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia (eighteen countries, of which 72 percent percent oil exporters) and Latin America and the Caribbean (ten countries, with 80 percent exporters of non-oil primary products) (See Table 3).

Table 3. Number of developing countries that depend on exports of raw materials (oil and other basic products) per region.

Regions	**Depend on exprts of raw materials in general**	**Depend on oil exports**	**Depend on exports of other raw materals**
Asia in development	7	2	5
Latin America and Caribbean	10	2	8
Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia	18	**13**	5
Sub-Saharan Africa	25	7	**18**
Total	**60**	**24**	**36**

Fuente: Elaborado a partir de: FMI (2023).

In these countries that basically depend on the exports of primary products, the environment and natural resources tend to be subject to great pressure in terms of deterioration or depletion of resources, conditioned by the socioeconomic restrictions that affect these countries. Thus, for example, the pressures to pay the service of the external debt tend to induce an increase in the volumes of natural resources that are exported, especially in conditions of falling prices of export products, when seeking to compensate for this reduction of prices with an increase in exported volume.

According to IMF statistics, the external debt service payments of the thirty-six developing countries that basically depend on non-oil primary products were equivalent to 42.4 percent of those countries' export earnings in 2022. The proportion of the twenty-four countries that depend primarily on oil exports was much lower, at 15.8 percent, given the role of oil in global markets and the relatively better economic situation of the exporters. of this strategic product.

THE ECOLOGICAL DEBT IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD

As already noted, the agreements of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992, remain in full force, in particular the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities", by virtue of which, although These are, in many cases, global environmental problems; not all countries have equal responsibility in generating and reinforcing these problems. Highly industrialized countries are mainly responsible for the global deterioration of the environment, especially if analyzed from a historical perspective. They are the ones that have had the greatest impact on the pollution of seas and rivers; in the senseless production of garbage and waste; in the corruption of the air we breathe; in soil erosion; in the destruction of biodiversity; in the destruction, contamination and poisoning of large pieces of territory for mining extraction and processing purposes. This not only happens and has happened in the territories of those countries and to the detriment of their own populations. The damage has been caused and is often caused in the territories of developing countries, whose populations are the fundamental victims of this destruction.

Countries and groups of people that have contributed the least and contribute the least to planetary pressures are estimated to bear the greatest burden of dangerous environmental change.

Under the conditions of the current international economic order, the ecological debt of the developed world, denounced on multiple occasions by Cuban leader Fidel Castro, remains in full force. In the Human Development Reports of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) since 2020, the complementary measurement of a Human Development Index (HDI) adjusted for planetary pressures has been incorporated. This adjustment takes into account both CO2 emissions per capita and material consumption per inhabitant of each country. According to this measurement, the United States, which occupies 21st place in terms of HDI, loses thirty-six positions; and Cuba, with 83rd place in the HDI, improves thirty positions with the adjustment made. The United States' per capita CO2 emissions are 47 times higher than the Least Developed Countries (LDC) average; and the per capita material consumption of the United States exceeds that of the LDCs almost ten times (See Table 4).

Table 4. Pressures used in the Index of Human Development of UNPD.

Regions	**CO2 per capita emissions (tons)**	**Per capita material consumption (tons)**
United States	14,2	29,7
OCDE countries	8,2	21,5
Less Advanced Countries	0,3	3,1
Sub-Saharan Africa	0,7	3,2
South of Asia	1,8	5,1

Source: UNDP (2022).

Prior to these recent UNDP calculations, Hickel had introduced the measurement of the Sustainable Development Index (SDI) in contrast to the results of the HDI and highlighted, among other things, that the countries that are located in the first positions in the HDI, Generally highly industrialized countries, they have contributed the most to climate change and the ecological crisis in per capita terms.

For example, the countries that are in the top ten positions in the HDI-2015 (Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Singapore, Iceland, the Netherlands and Denmark) exceed, on average, the planetary footprint sustainability limit. material per capita by 5.1 times, and exceed the planetary sustainability limit for per capita CO2 emissions by 7.9 times. According to Hickel:

> The HDI, due to its dependence on income, represents the countries of the global North as automatically superior to those of the South, erasing and even legitimizing the violence that the former have used to accumulate their surpluses, through, for example, colonization, slave trade, structural adjustment, land theft, labor exploitation, resource extraction and other methods used by the central countries of the world system to sabotage the efforts of the periphery in the search for their own development.

The seven most developed economies (United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and Japan), with 9.9 percent of the world's population, generate 30.5 percent of world exports and 30.4 percent of global GDP. Correspondingly with the above, these seven economic powers consume 26.9 percent of global commercial energy, and fossil fuels still represent 77.8 percent of the combined energy consumption of this select group of countries. The per capita commercial energy consumption of the Group of 7 (G7) is 2.7 times the world average, 14.3 times the African average, 8.2 times the level for India, and 1.9 times China's level.[56]

Tabla 5. Ecologic footprint of G7 countries

Countries	Per capita ecological footprint (global hectares)	Per capita ecological footprint / ecological biocapacity of the planet (1.6 global hectares)s)
United States	7,8	4,9
Canadá	7,9	4,9
France	4,8	3,0
Alemania	4,7	2,9
Italy	4,2	2,6
United Kingdom	3,9	2,4
Japan	4,2	2,6
World	2,6	1,6

Source: WWF and Footprint Network (2022).

The ecological footprint per capita of the G7 countries far exceeds, in all cases, the biocapacity of the planet per inhabitant, which is estimated at 1.6 global hectares. According to these statistics from WWF and Footprint Network, the average person in the United States or Canada is consuming natural resources equivalent to almost five planets. The per capita ecological footprint of the United States exceeds that of China by 2.2 times and that of India by 7.1 times (See Table 5).

It is not only that the progress and well-being of developed countries has been achieved largely at the expense of the exploitation of underdeveloped countries, their wealth and their people; but, despite being a minority, their living standards and consumption patterns have

[56] Calculated with information from BP (2022) and IMF (2023).

been achieved at the expense of the ecological sources on which the lives of everyone on the planet depend.

For all of the above, highly industrialized countries are indebted to humanity, since they have based their development on wasteful production and consumption patterns, and to a large extent they have also transferred these unsustainable patterns to the rest of the world. The current high levels of per capita consumption of energy and other materials in the developed world have a high environmental cost, and are an expression of the large socioeconomic gaps that persist at the present.

An analysis of this topic requires a historical approach since generally the great ecological challenges of the present are, by nature, long-term challenges that have their origin in previous historical periods.

Climate change is above all a global challenge for development, the analysis of which requires a perspective. The patterns of the current international economic order have favored the unprecedented strengthening of the climate crisis; and highly industrialized countries are historically primarily responsible for the intensification of climate change. Progress in the global confrontation with climate change is essential for progress in meeting the rest of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The progress of climate science in recent decades has been documented in the assessment reports of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which concluded its Sixth Cycle of Assessment in March 2023. Assessment.

The Synthesis Report of this latest IPCC assessment cycle recognizes the interdependence of climate, ecosystems and biodiversity, and human societies; the value of various forms of knowledge; the close links between climate change adaptation, mitigation, ecosystem health, human well-being and sustainable development; and reflects the growing diversity of actors involved in climate action. This report also states that, for any level of future warming, many climate-related risks are greater than those assessed in the IPCC's Fifth Cycle, concluded in 2014.

Messages of climate science in recent IPCC reports:

- Uman influence in global warming is undoubtable and the carbon footprint is more than half of the global ecological footprint.
- Advances in climate science tend to reduce uncertainty around these issues, to the extent that they allow a better understanding of the interrelationships between natural systems, human systems and climate change.
- Risks emerge from the combination of climate threats, vulnerability and exposure of human systems, ecosystems and their biodiversity. There are also risks associated with response strategies to climate change, which must be promptly identified and managed.
- The necessary urgency in action against climate change is evident; the importance of responses to climate change being immediate and equitable; and the increasing costs and risks associated with the delay or delay in response actions to this global challenge.
- With each increase in global warming, the changes in the regional average temperature, and the variations in precipitation, become greater; and the projected changes in extreme events are greater in frequency and intensity.
- With global warming of 1.5 °C (relative to the pre-industrial period) the world would face multiple and inevitable climate threats in the next two decades, and if that level of global warming is exceeded, even temporarily, additional severe impacts would occur, some of which would be irreversible

- Extreme climate and weather events are occurring simultaneously, causing cascading impacts that are increasingly difficult to manage; and expose millions of people to a situation of acute insecurity regarding the availability of food and water, especially in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, small islands and in the Arctic zone.
- In a warming world, crucial services offered by nature are at risk, such as: pollination, coastal protection, tourism, food security, health, availability of water (in quantity and quality), clean air and climate regulation. The loss of ecosystems and their services has cascading and long-term impacts on people globally, especially for indigenous peoples and local communities who directly depend on ecosystems to meet their basic needs.
- Vulnerability is exacerbated by inequity and marginalization linked to differences in gender, ethnicity, low income or a combination of these factors, especially for many indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Integrated, multi-sector solutions that address social inequalities and differentiate responses based on climate risk and local situation will improve food and nutrition security.
- Climate resilient development processes link scientific, indigenous, local, professional and other knowledge, and are more effective and sustainable because they are locally appropriate and lead to more legitimate, relevant and effective actions.
- In 2010-2019, annual greenhouse gas emissions were at the highest levels in human history. After the drop in emissions caused by the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020, emissions have recovered very quickly.
- Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would be out of reach unless there are immediate and significant reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- There are options available today, in all socioeconomic sectors (energy, industry, transportation, land use, residential, urban areas and demand for services) that can at least halve emissions by 2030.
- Available financial flows are 3-6 times lower than the levels needed to limit warming to below 1.5°C or 2°C by 2030. There is enough global capital and liquidity to close investment gaps, but those Resources have not been directed in these directions. The challenge of closing financial gaps is greater for developing countries, where response capacities are much more limited. Related to the above, the adoption of low-emission technologies is slower in most developing countries, particularly the poorest ones. Accelerated and equitable climate action is key to sustainable development.

Source: IPCC (2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2023).

The Synthesis Report of the Sixth Cycle of the IPCC highlights the concept of climate resilient development, as an approach that integrates adaptation and mitigation to advance sustainable development for all, and associates the possibility of achieving it with greater international cooperation, including improved access to adequate financial resources, particularly for vulnerable regions, sectors and groups, and inclusive governance and coordinated policies.

Among the adverse implications of climate change, the tendency for extreme events to register greater frequency and intensity stands out. The number of climate-related disasters, including the most extreme ones, rose from 3,656 in 1980-1999 to 6,681 in 2000-2019, that is, an increase of 83 percent; and caused 510,837 deaths in this last twenty-year period. Of these events, floods stand out for their highest records (44 percent of the total disasters, 41 percent of the people affected, 9 percent of the deaths and 22 percent of the economic losses); and storms (28 percent of total events, 18 percent of those affected, 16 percent of deaths and 47 percent of economic losses).

The poorest countries are the most affected by these events, with large losses in particularly sensitive sectors such as agriculture, which on a global scale depends 70 percent on rainfall. Disasters, especially climatic ones such as storms, have a significantly high impact on small island countries. Of the ten countries or territories with the largest economic losses as a percentage of GDP in 2000-2019, eight of the countries or territories are island nations, seven of which are in the Caribbean region (Dominica: 15 percent; Cayman Islands: 9.1 percent; Haiti: 8 percent; Grenada: 7.8 percent; Turks and Caicos Islands: 5.8 percent; Bahamas: 4.3 percent; Puerto Rico: 3.5 percent. The others three are Guyana: 3.6 percent; Belize: 3.4 percent; Samoa: 2.1 percent.

Both asymmetries and inequality have been accentuated in recent years. The results of the multilateral negotiations on climate change as a global challenge are insufficient and are not taking due account of the existing socioeconomic gaps, nor the development and equity priorities of the majority of humanity. The most vulnerable continue to face the greatest risks from climate change.

The multilateral negotiations around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement largely constitute spaces for North-South confrontation, where the interests of developed countries, on the one hand, and the priorities of developing countries, on the other hand. These divergences in the negotiating process are based on the global and regional socioeconomic gaps prevailing under the current world order.

There is international consensus that climate change is a global challenge; but the consensus breaks down when it comes to negotiating the responsibilities and commitments of each country to guarantee lasting solutions. Solutions to this problem require immediate actions, but with a long-term perspective and a historical approach. Actions must be equitable and consider multiple socioeconomic and environmental interrelationships evaluated by science. The application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, incorporated in the negotiations of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, must constitute the cornerstone of this negotiating process.

One of the pending issues is the necessary support for developing countries for a just transition towards a more sustainable economy. In this sense, climate financing must consider an adequate balance between adaptation and mitigation; and the need for developed countries to timely meet the goals and commitments of financial support to developing countries.

More than $1 trillion from public and private funding sources is required to ensure global carbon neutrality. However, developed countries have barely agreed to mobilize annual financing of USD 100 billion for climate policies to support developing countries, with promises that fade over time. The OECD estimates that climate financing in 2018 reached the figure of 78.9 billion USD, that is, lower than the aforementioned commitment of 100 billion USD.

Fulfilling the contributions of developing countries to confronting climate change demands additional financial resources, transfer of suitable technologies and capacity building, which developed countries must contribute, in accordance with their obligations established in the Framework Convention and the Agreement from Paris. Far from moving forward in these directions, the possibility of new forms of protectionism, based on the carbon content of the products and services that are marketed, tends to be reinforced in the future; trade wars; and new forms of colonization and commodification of nature, which especially affects the poorest countries.

Among the lessons of confronting climate change in times of the COVID 19 pandemic, neoliberalism's inability to face emergency situations of this nature has become evident; the role of science has been revalued; The importance of local development is highlighted, of developing response capacities at a local scale; as well as the need to enhance international cooperation, solidarity; and the requirement to decisively incorporate the environmental variable, to preserve the environment, as a precondition to avoid new pandemics.

THE LOSS OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:
SECOND COMPONENT OF THE CURRENT TRIPLE PLANETARY CRISIS

Biodiversity or biological diversity is the variety of life forms on the planet, including terrestrial and marine ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part, beyond the diversity within each species, between species and ecosystems. The main ecosystem services, associated with the different components of biodiversity, include many benefits to people in terms of the provision of food, water, energy, medicines, among others. Regarding this, the Global Report of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) sets out, among others, the following examples:

- More than 75 percent of global food crop types, including fruits and vegetables and some of the most important cash crops, such as coffee, cocoa and almonds, depend on animal pollination;
- It is estimated that 4 billion people depend mainly on natural medicines; and about 70 percent of the medicines used to fight cancer are natural or are synthetic products based on nature;
- more than 2 billion people depend on wood to meet their primary energy needs;
- Ecosystems also contribute to maintaining climate balance; Marine and terrestrial ecosystems are important sinks of anthropogenic carbon emissions, with a total sequestration of 5.6 giga-tonnes of carbon per year (the equivalent of approximately 60 percent of global anthropogenic emissions).

The production and consumption patterns that predominate under the current international economic order tend to accelerate the loss of biological diversity, with the consequent impact on the functions and services offered by ecosystems. Transnational companies have historically contributed to the accelerated loss of biological diversity with the expansion of their commercial activity in Southern countries, in sectors such as agriculture, mining, hydrocarbon extraction, fishing and tourism, among others.

Likewise, the systematic practice of "biopiracy" by numerous transnational companies and their agents has been one of the ways by which many countries in the South have been deprived of access to the economic benefits derived from biodiversity resources. , as is the case of raw materials for the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry. This practice is understood as the unauthorized, illegal and irregular access to and use of biological resources and their components or the traditional knowledge associated with them for their application in research and development processes of new products by, fundamentally, transnational companies, especially with the use of intellectual property, patents and other privileges that, among other practices, end up taking advantage of the collective knowledge of indigenous or peasant peoples to create products and services that are exploited commercially or industrially without the authorization of their creators or innovators, and without benefits for them.

According to estimates published by UNEP, the illicit trade in wild fauna and flora and in fishery and forestry products involves between 90 billion and 270 billion dollars a year.

One of the great current concerns about biodiversity is the loss and degradation of habitats, from various causes such as deforestation. In this sense, it is worth noting that 75 percent of the earth's surface is significantly altered, 66 percent of the ocean area experiences cumulative impacts, and more than 85 percent of the wetland area has been lost; The average abundance of native species in most major terrestrial biomes has declined by at least 20 percent, mostly since 1900, and may be accelerating; the global rate of species extinction is at least ten to hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years; Marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species, including 86 percent of sea turtles, 44 percent of seabirds and 43 percent of marine mammals.

Regarding the adverse socioeconomic impact of biodiversity erosion, it is estimated, for example, that crops valued between USD 235 billion and USD 575 billion annually are at risk as a result of the loss of pollinators. Among the direct causes of changes in biodiversity, the following stand out: changes in the use of land and sea; direct exploitation of organisms; climate change; pollution; and invasion of exotic species.

Among the indirect or underlying causes of changes in biodiversity, that is, those factors that condition the scope and incidence of the direct causes, include: production and consumption patterns, dynamics and trends of the human population, trade, technological innovations, and governance at different scales – from local to global. In relation to indirect causes, in the last fifty years the human population has doubled, the global economy has quadrupled and world trade has multiplied by 10, which has increased the demand for energy and materials; likewise, armed conflicts have an impact on ecosystems beyond the destabilizing effects on societies.

The WWF Living Planet Index (LPI), which tracks the abundance in populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians on the planet, shows in its 2022 edition an average decrease of 69 percent in animal populations wild between 1970 and 2018 (with a range of -63 to -75 percent. Latin America is identified as the region experiencing the greatest decline in terms of average population abundance (-94 percent; and, in general, populations of freshwater evaluated are those that register the greatest deterioration, with an average decrease of 83 percent since 1970 (in a range of -74 percent to -89 percent). A factor that limits the protection of biological diversity to global scale is the fact that only 10 percent of terrestrial protected areas are connected.

The Living Planet Report 2022 also highlights that between 1 percent and 2.5 percent of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish have already become extinct; and that one million plant and animal species are in danger of extinction. In relation to corals, which are particularly fragile ecosystems, this Report indicates that around 50 percent of warm water corals have already been lost; that a warming of 1.5 °C would cause the loss of between 80 percent and 90 percent of these corals; and that if warming increases to 2 °C the loss would exceed 99 percent. It is also highlighted that mangroves continue to suffer deforestation at a current rate of 0.13 percent per year.

Regarding the link between biodiversity and sustainable development, it is worth remembering the relevance of the negotiating process in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other related conventions; as well as some international goals and objectives contained in the Vision 2050 on biodiversity (2010), the Aichi Targets (2020), the Kunming-Montreal Global Framework (2022), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the SDG 14 and SDG 15. The IPBES Global Report (2019) highlights that biodiversity is essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an integrated and indivisible way; and that current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems tend to undermine progress on 80 percent (35 of 44) of the assessed targets for objectives related to poverty, hunger, health, water, cities, climate, oceans and land (SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 14 and 15).

Regarding response strategies, the 2019 IPBES Global Report identifies five levers for transformative change in the indirect causes of biodiversity loss, including: incentives and capacity building; intersectoral cooperation; preventive action; decision making in a context of resilience and uncertainty; environmental legislation and its application. The 2019 IPBES evaluation also refers to a set of key factors for transformations towards sustainability, among which are mentioned: attention to inequalities; justice and inclusion; technology, innovation and investment; education and generation and exchange of knowledge.

In general, global actions to contain and reverse the accelerated loss of biodiversity resources, which are located throughout the developing world, must take into account the priorities of the countries of the South aimed at eradicating poverty and achieving development. Also in this area, immediate actions are required with a long-term perspective, which consider the need to promote international cooperation based on equity, as well as guarantees of access to additional financing and the appropriate technologies required.

Pollution as the third component of the current triple planetary crisis: the case of plastics

Plastic began to be widely used after the Second World War, in a period of boom and consolidation of the current world economic order, during the capitalist expansion of the second post-war period. It is one of the icons of capitalist production of those years, the result of the takeoff of large-scale petrochemicals, based on the cheap oil that prevailed until the beginning of the 1970s. Its use, with great profits for the petrochemical industry transnational and a high environmental cost, expanded rapidly from the center to the periphery of the world economy; and at present, plastic pollution represents one of the most worrying symptoms of the triple planetary crisis, with adverse effects on human health and ecosystems.

It is estimated that the mass of all plastic produced so far is twice the combined biomass of all terrestrial and marine animals; and production has skyrocketed in the last two decades.

According to statistics published by UNEP, more than 400 million tons of plastic are produced in the world each year, of which half are designed for a single-use lifespan; and less than 10 percent is recycled. It is estimated that between 19 and 23 million tons of plastic waste end up in lakes, rivers and seas every year.

United Nations data reveal that some 7 billion of the 9.2 billion tons of accumulated plastic production between 1950 and 2017 became waste and three quarters of it was discarded, with adverse implications for human health and ecosystems –not just sailors–. Microplastics (plastic particles whose diameter is less than 5 mm), for example, are present in food, water and air; and can, therefore, penetrate the human body by inhalation and absorption through the skin and accumulate in the organs.

It is estimated that between 86 and 150 million metric tons of plastic have accumulated in the oceans, with an increasing trend; and single-use plastics account for between 60 percent and 95 percent of plastic pollution in the oceans.

Plastics are the largest, most harmful and most persistent fraction of marine debris, accounting for at least 85 percent of total marine debris, according to UNEP assessments. So, for example, a plastic water bottle can remain in nature for approximately 450 years.

Almost all groups of species in the ocean have had contact with plastic pollution and adverse effects have been recorded in almost 90 percent of the species evaluated; Furthermore, this type of pollution has entered the marine food chain and is significantly affecting the productivity of some of the most important marine ecosystems in the world, such as coral reefs and mangroves. Among the regions that have already exceeded the plastic pollution thresholds are the Mediterranean Sea, the Arctic Ocean and areas of East Asia.

Put in perspective, it is estimated that even if all sources of plastic pollution were stopped now, the amount of microplastics in the oceans would still double before 2050; and it is projected that in 2100 the level will be fifty times higher than today.

The effects of plastic on marine ecosystems should not be considered in isolation, as it is one of many threats generated by human activity, including overfishing, global warming, acidification, eutrophication and deoxygenation of the oceans. , underwater noise generated by boats, the presence of invasive species, the destruction and fragmentation of habitats and various types of chemical pollution.

As for possible solutions, recycling has contributed to solving the problem, but by itself it cannot put an end to plastic pollution. For their part, large-scale technologies to remove plastic pollution in the oceans, in addition to having high economic costs, alone would not solve the problem. Preventive, systemic and global solutions are required that prevent plastic waste from entering the environment, which also implies a significant reduction in the primary production of plastics.

A Resolution adopted in 2022 by the United Nations Environment Assembly called for the development of a legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution, particularly in the marine environment, with negotiations expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Consequently, a binding international treaty is currently being negotiated, which must include a clearly formulated vision to eliminate the direct and indirect entry of plastics into nature, based on the precautionary principle. A global, efficient and coordinated effort must be made to combat plastic pollution; that includes a comprehensive financial and technical agreement, as well as assistance in technology transfer, to support all parties, particularly developing countries, in the effective implementation of the treaty. According to UNEP sources, the legal instrument will be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the entire life cycle of plastic, that is, a circular economy of plastics.

Reflections on these indices

In the last forty years, the operating rules of the prevailing international economic order have accentuated to unprecedented levels the environmental crisis that affects the planet and compromises the future of humanity. This ecological crisis must be analyzed, therefore, in its close connection with the problems, gaps and imbalances of today's world in terms of socioeconomic development. Both issues have a very negative impact on the majority sectors of the world's population, who reside in developing countries and move in a vicious circle between underdevelopment, poverty and environmental deterioration.

Proposals for solutions regarding the environment and development to get out of the aforementioned vicious circle and respond to the planetary ecological crisis must take into account the priorities and interests of the countries of the South.

The analysis of these issues requires a historical approach, since generally the great ecological challenges of the present are, by nature, long-term challenges that have their origin in previous historical periods. Thus, the main historical culprits for the current ecological crisis are the industrialized countries and their transnational companies, which, especially since the English Industrial Revolution, have caused the greatest environmental damage to the planet, in terms of deterioration of the environment and depletion of natural resources. These countries and companies therefore have an ecological debt with humanity, which they must begin to pay off by leading global efforts to confront the accelerated environmental deterioration of the planet without compromising the right to development of the countries of the South.

From all of the above derives the important role that corresponds to the Group of 77 and China in this strategic topic and that, more than the development of particular and often cyclical positions, which tend to make difficult the defense of common interests, inevitably linked to In the fight for development, joint actions are required, both at the global level and through South-South cooperation, to address the challenges that the prevailing international order imposes on the environment.

VII

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Knowledge and development

...we must be aware of the fact that we cannot be commited intelligently in the socio-politicl battle and not reconstruct the world of knowledge as an essential element of the battle.

Immanuel Wallerstein

One of the main determinants of economic growth and sustainable and equitable development in today's world is access to knowledge, which includes not only the ability to understand and apply to the economy and society what is generated anywhere, but also the ability to generate new and own knowledge as a vehicle, among others, to boost the economy, strengthen public management, promote quality education, care for the environment and expand culture. It contributes decisively to scientific and technological research and to the further development of learning processes.

According to Lundvall, we live in an era in which knowledge has become a very important and unique resource: while other resources are depleted due to climate change, the disappearance of species, the depletion of natural assets, among other processes, Knowledge can be shared without losing its attributes or contributions, while its use value grows. It is a resource to which scientific and technological research contributes, and also very importantly, learning processes directly linked to practice (learning by using, by interacting, etc.).

It is clearly revealing of its importance that, as ECLAC pointed out in 2016, the position of each country in the international economy depends on its capacity to absorb knowledge and reduce the gap with the technological frontier. But, like all processes, it is intrinsically contradictory, because while it is key to explaining the economic growth of countries, it is also one of the main sources of social inequalities. In reality, the development/underdevelopment dilemmas; sovereignty/dependence; equity/inequity; sustainable/unsustainable; Social exclusion/inclusion, among others, increasingly depend on the application or not of knowledge and its corollaries, science, technology and innovation, to economic and social development and the well-being of the population.

Consequently, one of the main barriers to development is unequal access to knowledge, since this reproduces dependency, unequal exchange and inequality between countries, groups and societies. This is contributed to by the fact that the transformation of knowledge into capital –well protected by intellectual property rights by the technological giants– constitutes their most important source of intellectual income and profits, generally to the detriment of developing countries. At the same time, the extreme polarization of scientific and technological capabilities at a global level, associated with a rampant process of privatization of knowledge, contributes to widening the gap, thus limiting access to development.

Therefore, it is necessary to point out that the debate on science, technology and innovation (STI) is intrinsically linked to that taking place internationally on the right to development (RTD), to which we make extensive reference at the beginning of this work.

The limitations of foreign direct investment and technology transfer without knowledge transfer and capacity building are the most frequent, which contributes to developing countries being located in the lowest links of global value chains, and to that their research in health, food, environment and others is underfunded,[57] at the same time, the theft of talents increases, with its pernicious effects.

Under current conditions, it will not be possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to the end of poverty; zero hunger in the world; health and welfare; quality education; Gender equality; clean water and sanitation; on energy, work and economic growth; and industry and innovation, since all of them depend, in one way or another, on knowledge to generate science, technology and innovation. Therefore, knowledge and science should constitute a global public good at the service of sustainable and inclusive development.

As will be seen later, the experience acquired by confronting COVID 19 demonstrated the fragility of the technological capabilities of many countries in the face of pharmaceutical oligopolies. At the same time, it made visible the existence of potential that could be much better exploited, but this requires the deployment of truly creative STI policies, socially oriented and supported by science and innovation approaches appropriate to the needs of developing countries.

It will also be necessary to better articulate the innovation systems of developing countries, which implies strong participation by the State in science and technology.

> Humanity must unite in efforts according to available means to advance a global knowledge agenda and ensure the link to global public goods so that the gains of some are not a barrier to the well-being of all. The "right to development" (RTD) treaty should require a high commitment to global public goods, beyond the pandemic treaty planned for 2024, in scope and overriding market interests to ensure equitable access to vital vaccines, medicines and other means essential to the level of health and well-being practicable for all peoples (as established by the WHO constitution of 1947). The 2023 G77 leaders' summit in Havana was an opportunity to advance the global agenda towards a more just world where the ethical principle of sustainable equity, the right to development, including a global public goods framework, drives the translation of the collaborative scientific progress or equitable well-being within and between countries.
>
> JUAN GARAY AMORES
> Ministro consejero y jefe de Cooperación de la Unión Europea (UE) en Cuba,
> junio de 2023.

[57] According to OECD estimates (2022), annual investments of seven trillion dollars are needed until 2030, representing 7 to 10 percent of global GDP and 25 to 40 percent of annual global investment. However, currently only $1.4 trillion is invested annually to meet the SDGs, leaving a large investment gap. In developing countries, the investment gap has been estimated at around $2.5 trillion per year.

By virtue of the above, it is necessary to identify and eradicate those characteristics and trends of STI activities at a global level, closely related to the unjust international order and which, therefore, considerably hinder the progress of the countries of the South.

A clear example of the strong polarization of the international scientific and technological system can be seen in the fact that although global publishing production in 2019 was 21 percent higher than in 2015 and up to 33 percent in some disciplines, capitalist countries Developed countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, have monopolized the knowledge infrastructure (publishers, magazines, etc.), in such a way that research carried out in the South has been the victim of systematic devaluation. China is an exceptional case, in which scientific publications have become more visible in recent decades.

On the other hand, patent applications continued to increase, even amid the pandemic in 2020 (1.5 percent) and skyrocketed in 2021 (3.6 percent growth), particularly in health-related technologies, although Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania represented the lowest percentages of total patent applications. Something similar occurs with global spending on research and development (R&D), 93 percent of which is contributed by the G20 member countries.

While STI financing linked to social development is very limited in Southern countries, global military spending continued to grow in 2022 and reached a historical maximum of USD 2.2 trillion. The United States absorbed 39 percent of the world total, and military R&D spending is projected to rise to $130.1 billion by 2023 (16 percent more than a year earlier). It has been estimated that 9 percent of global military spending could finance adaptation to climate change in ten years and 7 percent would be enough to cover the cost of universal vaccination against the pandemic. According to 2022 data, global military expenditures are almost eleven times greater than Official Development Assistance (204 billion USD).

Consequently, the global distribution of cognitive, scientific and technological capabilities is highly asymmetric and highly concentrated in a small group of countries. A good part of these capabilities are owned by large transnational corporations and the military-industrial complex, their main investors. The orientation towards patenting everything, including ways of life, promoted by the WTO starting in 1995, increases the coffers of the most powerful companies and countries and makes the rest more fragile.

The World Health Organization and the organization Doctors Without Borders have denounced that, while projects that did not sufficiently pay the coffers of transnational corporations have been abandoned, the so-called 90/10 syndrome formulated by the WHO has been strengthened, according to which 90 percent of health research resources are dedicated to diseases that produce 10 percent of mortality and morbidity, while those that generate 90 percent of these only have 10 percent of the resources.

Consequently, it is estimated that each year, eight million people, mainly in developing countries, die prematurely from diseases and conditions that can be cured, which is also explained by the fact that the average health expenditure per capita in Western developed capitalist countries it is estimated at US$947, compared to US$20 per capita in low-income countries.

Another element that requires particular attention is the strong process of privatization of the international scientific and technological system. Knowledge, unfortunately, is mostly not a global public good. A basic problem is that of the appropriation of knowledge: who owns what is produced? Who does it serve? Capitalism has reacted to the transformation of knowledge into a means of production, creating mechanisms for the privatization of knowledge. Among these mechanisms are the strengthening of intellectual property rights, the displacement of financing/execution of research towards the private business sector, technical barriers, the selective flow of qualified personnel and also the privatization of education.

The truth is that the evolution of intellectual property law is much more than a technical problem. It is, above all, a political problem. TRIPS (trade-related intellectual property rights) is the main international treaty for determining intellectual property rights, including patents, copyrights and trademarks. There is a direct relationship between the globalization process and the control of knowledge. Knowledge is monopolized in favor of private profit and conditioned by the market of rich consumers, thanks to the construction of a global intellectual property system that allows what is patented in a certain place to be enforced throughout the world. Traditionally, intellectual property laws were based on the principle of national sovereignty. The "world system" eliminates that possibility.

Patents are today part of neoliberal theology: knowledge, like any other commodity, can be appropriated, bought and sold. It is apparently forgotten that while developing countries are pressured to introduce laws protecting the intellectual property rights of private corporations, many industrialized countries developed by pirating products and technology outside their geographical borders.

Furthermore, scientific research itself may be affected. There is evidence that privatization can increase the costs of research. If any knowledge or information that may be necessary to progress a scientific search must be paid for, this will end up limiting the research. The privatization of knowledge places limits on the circulation and recombination of knowledge.

Through genetic engineering and biotechnology, the process of commodification of life forms is also expanding. There is a clear relationship between living beings and capitalist markets: that is the basis of biotechnology research. More than 90 percent of research in genetic engineering and biotechnology is conducted in the United States, Europe and Japan, and two-thirds is conducted by private companies. Public laboratories frequently do basic research and feed private industry. A continuous privatization of knowledge is taking place, which implies the appropriation of collective knowledge by large companies.

It is obvious that we are witnessing an important change in ownership over the results of science. The trend favors private companies, especially transnational ones, the majority located in the triad of the United States, Europe and Japan. The logic that drives the behavior of these companies is profit and it is difficult to imagine that these benefits spontaneously extend to the human groups that neoliberal globalization marginalizes.

Another equally negative phenomenon for developing countries is that of "technical barriers", which is particularly evident in the field of the pharmaceutical industry and biotechnology, where the costs associated with bringing products and processes to current regulatory standards are huge. A similar phenomenon is already beginning to weigh on the food products industry. This is not about criticizing the regulatory standards necessary to obtain quality products and protect consumers, but when regulatory requirements leave the necessary quality requirements behind, they are artificially inflated and become non-tariff mechanisms of economic protectionism in favor of the big companies.

The knowledge necessary to confront technical barriers is left in fewer and fewer hands; and in part it is marketed – as knowledge – through hundreds of consulting agencies, training centers, teaching devices and contract research organizations (CRO), governed, above all, by the know-how of the large companies to manage the regulatory context.

Thus, this know-how adds value to the product and creates competitive advantages. But unlike the knowledge incorporated into the product through a scientific discovery or an innovation in the production process, the value created by mastering the regulatory context is, at least in part, speculative value; derived from knowledge useful to solve problems that have been artificially created, the net result of which is a large flow of money in exchange for little added value.

One mechanism of privatization and concentration of STI capabilities is the selective flow of qualified personnel. This is a massive drain, which means a notable financial contribution that developing countries make to the rich and that is much greater than "official development aid", based on a migratory flow that is devastating for underdeveloped countries. . Developing countries become, with the expenditure of their own resources, suppliers of talent and human capital for the progress and scientific-technical impulse of developed countries, which constitutes a new way of draining the wealth of those who need it most and increase that of those who already enjoy all the advantages.

Added to all of the above is the privatization of education, which has increased, especially in the last two decades, when the number of private sector educational entities that offer primary and secondary education services, and their geographical distribution, have grown. These transformations negatively impact educational systems worldwide, particularly fragile systems in developing countries. For example, in terms of university education, the Latin American region is currently one of the regions with the highest rates of privatization in the world, with 53.2 percent of its enrollment in the private sector, although with some exceptions. like Cuba, where one hundred percent of university students are enrolled in the public sector and where all education, including higher education, is free of charge for the student.

SOME IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

A relevant component of the technological changes underway is the transition towards an energy matrix based on renewable energy sources, whose most visible elements are the generation of electricity from solar, wind and biomass energy, electric transportation, energy storage, energy efficiency and intelligent energy systems.

This energy transition is essential, not only due to the foreseeable depletion of fossil fuels, but also due to the need to avoid the worst scenarios of global warming. A drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is required, through the decarbonization of electricity generation, transportation, industry and other activities.

However, the energy transition takes place in conditions of profound inequality, which aims to perpetuate itself.

On the one hand, the disproportion in energy consumption between developed countries (167.9 GJ per person per year) and developing countries (56.2 GJ per person per year) is a consequence of the existing economic and social gap and also cause this gap to continue growing. Per capita electricity consumption in OECD countries is 2.38 times higher than the world average. To reduce the socioeconomic gap, it is necessary to increase the participation of developing countries in global energy consumption, growth that must occur through the use of renewable energy technologies. It is also necessary to reduce the waste of energy generated by the irrational consumption patterns of rich countries.

On the other hand, developed countries dominate the financial resources and technologies necessary for the energy transition. They also seek control of the raw materials necessary for their implementation. From this position, they establish the rules of the game.

In this context, record investments are announced for the implementation of innovative technologies and systems, while "new generation" pressure measures are being generated, linked to the problem of climate change (carbon footprint, water footprint, performance standards, among other). These measures will affect investments, financial markets, trade and technology transfer. Some are general in nature and others are specific for different sectors (electricity generation, transportation, construction, etc.). This "green protectionism" increases the risks for those who finance projects or export products based on the inefficient use of fossil fuels.

After the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, OECD countries committed to a contribution of USD 100 billion annually to combat climate change in developing countries. But regardless of the OECD's permissive reporting, other studies, such as the one by OXFAM (2023) show that only between US$21 billion and US$23.4 billion meet the necessary requirements to be counted as part of that target. The rest essentially corresponds to loans on normal conditions, which increase the debt of recipient countries and extract funds from the budgets of stagnant official development assistance.

In summary, this new "green capitalism" aims to maintain the status quo in the energy sector and finance, at least partially, the transition towards renewable energy sources by increasing the external debt of developing countries.

Another relevant technological change is related to the digital divide.

On December 12, 2003, after three days of sessions in the Swiss city of Geneva, the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) ended with the adoption of its final documents by the heads of States and from Governments and high-level representatives from 175 countries.

After arduous discussions, representatives of the underdeveloped world achieved recognition of the so-called "digital divide" as a new dimension of the economic and social divisions that limit universal access to knowledge and information in our own languages.

The Summit allowed this issue to emerge from the technical debate at the expert level and become a political issue of interest to the international community.

In 2002 when governments first recognized the existence of the challenge of the digital divide, one billion people had access to the Internet while today, 5.3 billion people are digitally connected. However, the gap persists between regions, genders, incomes, languages and age groups. Data recently offered, precisely in May 2023, by the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, indicates that:

> 89 percent of the European population is connected, but only 21 percent of women in low-income countries use the Internet. Services that can be delivered digitally now account for almost two-thirds of global trade in services, but access to them is unaffordable in some parts of the world. The cost of a smartphone in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa exceeds 40 percent of average monthly income, and African users pay more than three times the global average for mobile data. Digital skills are monitored in less than half of the countries in the world, and existing data shows how large the gaps in digital learning are. Twenty years have passed since the World Summit on the Information Society and the digital divide remains abysmal.

Twenty years after the WSIS, it has been demonstrated, without a doubt, that Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in general and the Internet in particular constitute essential tools for the development of countries, but it has also been confirmed that this Beneficial impact of ICT and Internet is significantly lower in underdeveloped countries compared to developed countries. Far from closing the development gap, the advance towards new technologies is representing a widening of it and perpetuating an unjust and inequitable international economic order.

Added to the existing unjust international economic order is the inequity in payment for international Internet connection, which favors the developed countries where the Internet backbone networks are located, and which implies that underdeveloped countries must pay 100 percent of their traffic. Internet connection, although the information flows in both directions.

Furthermore, the main e-commerce sites are located in developed countries, resulting in the net financial flow on the Internet going from underdeveloped to developed countries.

> Data gaps are also growing. As it is collected and used in digital applications, data generates enormous commercial and social value. Although global monthly data traffic is expected to grow by more than 400 percent by 2026, activity is concentrated among a few global players. Many developing countries risk becoming mere providers of raw data, while having to pay for the services produced using their data.
>
> The innovation gap is even starker. Digital technologies have gone beyond the Internet and mobile devices and there are now autonomous intelligent systems and networks, generative artificial intelligence (AI), virtual and mixed reality, distributed ledger technologies (such as blockchains), digital currencies and technologies quantum. The wealth generated by these innovations is very unequal and is dominated by a few States and large platforms.
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> ANTÓNIO GUTERRES,
> Secretary General of the United Nations, May 2023.

This state of affairs was discussed at the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunisia, in 2005, where it was agreed that international Internet governance must be democratic and participatory, based on the UN Charter. , international law and multilateralism, in correspondence with the principle that all governments must have an equal role and responsibility for Internet governance and guarantee the stability, security and continuity of the Internet.

But this is not the only agreement of the World Summit on the Information Society whose non-compliance has negatively impacted underdeveloped countries.

Nor have financing mechanisms been established to address the difficulties posed by the use of ICT for development. And furthermore, the application of unilateral measures that violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations persists, which prevent the full achievement of the economic and social development of the population of the affected countries and undermine the well-being of their citizens.

The Group of 77 and China must lead the demand that these unfulfilled WSIS agreements and others, such as issues related to cybersecurity that concern underdeveloped countries, be widely discussed during the Global Digital Compact processes leading up to the Summit of the Future of 2024, and in the review process of the WSIS+20 of 2025.

There is a huge governance gap. New technologies lack basic protection systems; Nowadays it is more difficult to bring a stuffed toy to market than an AI chatbot. These digital technologies are developed by the private sector, leaving governments constantly behind in regulating them in the public interest. For decades, there was insufficient investment in state capacity and, as a result, public institutions in most countries are ill-equipped to assess and respond to digital challenges. Very few can compete with the private sector to harness talent and offer incentives for people with digital skills to work in the public sector. Public administrations are being emptied at a time when they are most needed to support a safe and equitable digital transformation.

It is urgent to find ways to take advantage of digital technologies for the benefit of all. We need national and international governance arrangements that prevent their misuse. We must guide innovation in a way that reflects universal human values and protects the planet. Unilateral regional, national or industrial actions are not enough: this cooperation must be global and multilateral to prevent digital inequalities from becoming irreversible global abysses.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES,
Secretary General of the United Nations, May 2023.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND COVID 19

The COVID 19 pandemic generated very important lessons regarding the need and possibility of creating knowledge, science, technology and innovation capabilities.

On the one hand, responses to the pandemic were characterized by rapid and effective cooperation between scientists around the world, which generated urgent solutions to numerous health problems, vaccines among them. However, in contrast to this collaborative effort, the hoarding of medicines, medical equipment and other items by developed countries was visible.

UNESCO has reported that, in the context of COVID 19 at a global level, "the pandemic energized knowledge systems", even "mission-oriented research" increased, aimed at solving relevant problems. Likewise, the visibility of local science increased considerably and had more space in the media. The recognition by citizens of the achievements of national science against COVID 19 opens possibilities to strengthen STI policies.

The greater exchange between actors that the pandemic fostered led to the temporary strengthening of innovation systems in several countries. Frugal innovation experiences (ability to innovate in conditions of scarcity) were developed, supported by advanced research, and the international knowledge available was taken advantage of through learning processes, which accentuated the need to generalize advanced education and consider it a necessary condition to address unsustainability and inequality.

When reviewing the Latin American experience of confronting COVID 19 with the support of science and innovation, very good examples are seen that illustrate the possibility of strengthening innovation systems connected to development processes.

The successful confrontation of the epidemic in Cuba contains lessons that could be extrapolated to other contexts and other health situations.

To control COVID-19, Cuba mobilized strengths that had been built in the preceding decades, such as the existence of a single health system with wide coverage, free and accessible that had already achieved successes in the health education of the population, the reduction in infant mortality, increase in life expectancy at birth and vaccination coverage; the abundance of human capital that is expressed among other indicators in the rate of doctors per elderly inhabitant of the world acting mainly at the primary level of medical care; and the existence of a national pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry, with a scientific basis, which guarantees more than 60 percent of the basic list of medicines and also generates innovative products that are exported to several countries. These capabilities existed prior to the pandemic, and allowed the implementation of a national action protocol, the reduction of transmission and lethality, and the development and production of three indigenous vaccines.

They were not created and developed as a result of having taken advantage of opportunities of the current international economic order, which are far from helping in any sense, nor thanks to the support received from international financial institutions. Rather, they are the fruit of an endogenous effort, with firm support and encouragement from the State, capable of taking early advantage of the most notable advances in various parts of the world in specific areas of medical and biological sciences.

It has been a tenacious effort with recognized results, despite the unfair conditions of the international order for every developing country, such as Cuba, and despite the fierce economic blockade of the United States, aimed at stopping the economic, technological and social development of the country.

On the other hand, despite the existing neoliberal preaching, the pandemic showed that the State has important roles to play in the production, dissemination and use of knowledge.

COVID 19 highlighted the global weaknesses of health systems, the need to strengthen an international preparation system for possible new pandemics, as well as attention to population aging and the expansion of chronic non-communicable diseases. Furthermore, it showed the insufficiency of the processes of collection, access, analysis and interpretation in real time of the large masses of data generated by health systems. This will pose new challenges to the structure and operation of health systems, seen at a global level, including the health impact on sectors of society beyond medical organizations, but it also poses a “demand for knowledge” appropriate to changes in the global picture of the sector and a review of the governance of the associated industries (pharmaceutical and others), which have proven especially incapable in this pandemic. This can be a priority field of joint actions for developing countries, particularly those of the G77 and China.

The ecological and social conditions have been created that can lead to other health emergencies of similar severity in the future. The lessons of COVID 19 suggest the need to prevent the aforementioned advances from being forgotten, specifically in the area of science and technology.

The analysis of the experiences drawn on the role of STI in controlling the pandemic is an opportunity to make visible and build consensus within the Group of 77 and China on the responsibilities and opportunities of STI for social development, particularly in health.

Confronting the pandemic left important lessons for the improvement of the health system, among which the following stand out:

- The irreplaceable role of national states in driving health strategies, which cannot be left in the hands of market forces and private industry.

- The consequences of the expansion of the elderly population segment, an expansion that is occurring not only in the industrialized North, but also in the countries of the Group of 77 and China.
- The importance of continuing to strengthen primary care systems and their resolution capacity, and with them the conscious mobilization of the population. Public Health is not only a biological science, but also and mainly a social science.
- The importance of having and reinforcing a reliable system for capturing and analyzing data in real time related to health/disease dynamics at a population scale.
- The role of national drug regulatory agencies, which can and should create a scientific basis for making sovereign decisions appropriate to the specific context of the bloc's countries.
- The need to continue strengthening national innovation systems, but also to transition to a scientific policy "guided by the demand for knowledge" to support health policies.

It is good to remember that, during the last decades, with neoliberal globalization as a background, the doctrine of minimal state intervention in favor of free markets had been hegemonic on a global scale. It is a formula that was strongly promoted by developed countries, especially the United States government, since the 1980s and accompanied by the organizations of the Bretton Woods system.

Competition among great powers and among technology giants to establish leadership in artificial intelligence is at the heart of current geopolitical conflicts, raising risks of war and undermining the ability to address global challenges such as climate change.

It is becoming evident that the global monopoly of technology giants in digital services based on artificial intelligence (AI) and new risky applications of AI require new forms of global governance. This constitutes a window of opportunity for an alliance of Southern countries to initiate regulation that combines reducing the harmful effects of AI and the abuse of market power with directing AI research towards the survival of the planet and the needs of developing countries.

The new facts pointed out confirm that the illusion of the passive State, traditionally defended by neoliberal ideology, lacks foundation and more energetic action is required by the States in terms of orienting STI towards the great needs of development, which includes a greater South-South collaboration.

> Competition between the great powers, the United States and China, and among technology giants to establish leadership in artificial intelligence is at the center of current geopolitical conflicts, raising risks of war and undermining the ability to address global challenges such as climate change. It is now generally known that the global natural monopoly of technology giants in AI-based digital services and risky new applications of AI require new forms of global governance. This constitutes a window of opportunity for an alliance of countries from the Global South to initiate regulation that combines reducing AI and the abuse of market power with directing AI research towards the survival of the planet and the needs of the Global South. The current situation where tech giants like Google and Amazon operate with R&D budgets larger than Africa's total R&D spending calls for taxing intellectual monopolies and using the revenue to establish AI research capacity in and for the South,
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> LUNDVALL, 2023

Transformaciones de las Políticas de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (PCTI) y fortalecimiento de los sistemas de innovación

As has been argued, knowledge and STI could function as drivers of sustainable and inclusive human development. However, the economic and political processes and power conflicts, typical of the current international order to which STI processes are integrated, are not contributing as necessary to alleviating development problems, such as poverty, hunger and inequalities, and to face the great environmental and health challenges, among others.

Under these conditions, it is necessary to strengthen the STI capacity-building process from the South. One way to achieve this is the transformation of public STI policies.

Unlike neoliberal preaching, the experiences of many countries with successful results show the role of the State and public policies. The events linked to the COVID 19 pandemic mentioned above show that the market alone can solve nothing and, without control, tends to aggravate the situation.

The extreme dependence on the IMF, the WTO, the World Bank, does little to help us take sovereign paths in terms of science, technology and innovation (STI).

As has been insisted, progress towards more sustainable, inclusive and equitable development models requires strengthening the role of STI in the search for creative solutions to problems that arise in the process of economic and social development.

Sustainable, inclusive and equitable human development must be supported by knowledge. The understanding of innovation, traditionally conceived as a resource for competitiveness and business profit, fundamentally private, must be better understood as a process oriented to solving problems; as a social learning process that places the human being and development as the main priority.

The STI that developing countries need must promote problem-solving styles appropriate to their own problems, not adequately addressed, in the research and innovation agendas of developed countries, particularly by large transnational corporations. A good example is the so-called “neglected diseases” discussed earlier.

New directions for STI, innovation systems and policies for their promotion: a vision of the South

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought us fundamental warnings to think about the future of humanity. There is a clear need to reimagine innovation systems, STI and the development process itself, as well as the policies to drive them. It is necessary to change the global priorities of the future of the industry to ensure the survival, sustainability and security of life on the planet. It is also necessary to critically evaluate the abstract and decontextualized knowledge disseminated by Northern countries. In the South, we must urgently think and implement new development models that put life, well-being and essential public services for the entire population at the center. Special emphasis should be given to “productive and innovative systems that lead the future”, focused on health and other essential public services, which, when energized, can realize their high potential and reinforce the principles of inclusion, sustainability, cohesion and health, social, economic, technological, digital and territorial sovereignty.

Helena M. M. Lastres and José E. Cassiolato- RedeSist coordinators

In the previous section, in relation to the pandemic, it was mentioned that several countries managed to develop alternative technological solutions. Technological trajectories from the South must frequently be built in conditions of scarcity. A personal, non-colonized cultural perspective allows us to creatively identify problems and how to address them; as well as extending the benefits of innovation to the entire population and, consequently, developing technologies that carry values other than the hegemonic ones.

> The Cuban experience in controlling the pandemic illustrates the importance of the CTI capabilities that allowed the development, production and massive application of three indigenous vaccines.

To build new STI policies, it is convenient to explore other models of scientific practices such as sustainability science (SS), which is presented as an approach that appeals to inter- and transdisciplinarity to address complex problems (food security, energy, housing , health, among others) of great relevance for sustainable, inclusive and equitable development. A clear example of SS is found in the technological research and development that allowed the creation of Cuban vaccines to face the COVID 19 pandemic.

As has been observed, a new generation of STI policies is demanded, which must distance themselves from foreign models and be guided by a systemic and contextualized perspective, based on the specificity and idiosyncrasy of the countries and taking into account their global and regional challenges. Such policies must be part of a comprehensive dynamic of development promotion, and interact in a positive and complementary way with other policies, such as those referring to social and sustainable development, education, health, and the environment; to sustainable economic, agricultural, industrial, tourism, financial development, as well as macroeconomic policies.

It is key to promoting well-being, productivity, social inclusion, equity and sustainability in developing countries, which is consistent with the SDGs, and must be based on an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development approach and be oriented both to the achievement of regional integration and development, as well as to the strengthening of the democratic institutions of developing countries. The new STI policies have to generate new opportunities for productive, social and environmentally sustainable insertion.

Education in general and higher education in particular must assume social relevance and pertinence as an essential dimension of the quality of the educational service they provide. However, the deployment of societies that take advantage of knowledge as a resource to confront poverty, hunger, exclusion, and inequality, faces the challenge of academic neoliberalism through which higher education policies and programs worldwide are influenced by privatization, deregulation and economic competitiveness.

For this reason, the creation in developing countries of technical and vocational training institutes linked to the sphere of production and services is also of enormous importance. Likewise, strengthening the demand for knowledge in the productive sector is key. It is important to design new instruments focused on eliminating our structural barriers to innovation. In particular, this can be achieved through instruments that stimulate learning, reverse engineering, assimilation and adaptation to gradually accumulate technological capabilities. SMEs, which occupy part of the productive fabric of our countries, demand a lot of attention from STI policies.

It is necessary to recognize that, together with the necessary strengthening of national innovation systems, it is necessary to articulate better to those of the remaining countries, in particular those of the South, which must contribute to fostering a non -existent world governance that allows progress in the transformation del sistema mundial de innovación.

In summary:

1. It is necessary to insist on the role of the renewal of STI public policy, since there is a lot of potentially useful knowledge that is not used, neither nationally nor internationally, for the benefit of developing countries. For this reason, it is necessary to accentuate the role of innovation in STI policy.

It would be useful for the member countries of the Group of 77 and China to collaborate in the design of good practices to strengthen the innovation systems approach, which can be a good starting point to guide STI public policy and promote cooperation in that field. Of course, it must be an innovation aimed at sustainable and inclusive development and not only at private profit; it should be understood as social, inclusive, transformative innovation or other similar formulations.

The role of learning and with it of educational and training systems in their different variants must be emphasized, promoting cooperation within the framework of the Group of 77 and China in matters of education, especially university and postgraduate education. Surely it is necessary to create specific incentives for innovation understood in this way.

2. Emphasis should be placed on capacity building, particularly to confront major risks on issues such as climate change, food security, health, in which the Group of 77 and China have defined important political positions within the framework of the institutions. relevant international We must emphasize the importance of the issue of technological autonomy in key issues for countries, which allow reducing dependence on developed capitalist countries or transnational companies.
3. STI policies and innovation systems, in addition to having national dimensions, must be projected in subnational, local, even community spaces, generating innovation processes in areas such as food production, health, housing, energy and others, aimed at satisfy the needs of the populations, while establishing exchanges of experiences in this regard with other member countries of the group of 77 and China.
4. It is necessary to deploy complex governance that exceeds the ministerial vision. In Cuba, as a result of the lessons learned from the pandemic, a National Innovation Council was created, under the direct leadership of the President of the Republic. In those cases where it is necessary, experiences could also be exchanged.
5. It is necessary to strengthen the influence of science on public policies, strengthening the role of expert knowledge in the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies. The topic of "science for policies" or also called scientific advice for policies grew in importance globally in the context of the pandemic, which can serve as a starting point for exchanging experiences on the subject.
6. It will be necessary to strengthen scientific activity and high-level training in universities, better linking their agendas to the needs of sustainable and inclusive development, also seeking existing experiences in other countries of the group and, as we noted above, promoting greater cooperation . To the same end, changes will have to be introduced in the evaluation of research, stimulating the contribution of academic science to society.
7. It is necessary to vigorously connect science to development, which requires moving towards more inter- and transdisciplinary models; better articulate scientific practices with public policies; transform the evaluation criteria, incorporating the economic, social,

and environmental consequences of scientific and technological developments, and improve communication with the population, encouraging the cultural projection of science. And adopting the experiences of the member countries of the Group of 77 and China that have achieved greater progress on the matter.

Recommendations

- The Group of 77 and China should accelerate the SDGs becoming an adequate argument in defense of the interests of developing countries and propose actions that contribute to their more effective fulfillment, as well as reinvigorate the fight for a just and fair international order.

- The Group of 77 and China should demand that the unfulfilled agreements of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and others, such as issues related to Cybersecurity that concern underdeveloped countries, be widely discussed during the processes of the Global Digital Compact towards the Future Summit, in 2024, and in the review process of the WSIS+20, in 2025.

- The Group of 77 and China could work on the creation of a multinational Regulatory Agency for the South with the purpose of addressing the issue of technical barriers to trade; or the promotion of multinational laboratories among several countries in the South, which also share the rights to use the patents that arise from them, and the creation of a permanent advisory body on issues of Science, Technology and Innovation, among others.

- Given the current situation where tech giants like Google and Amazon operate with R&D budgets larger than Africa's total R&D spending, the Group of 77 and China could be in a position to lead a proposal that require taxing intellectual monopolies and using the revenue to establish research capacity in and for the South.

VIII

INTEGRATION AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION. SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATIO

The global economy and the current international order are characterized by the concurrence of multiple crises, growing uncertainties, increased asymmetries, very high economic and social polarization, geopolitical conflicts that put world peace and stability at risk; and a marked erosion of multilateralism, in short, by an unjust and inequitable economic and social order that privileges the industrialized North and marginalizes the underdeveloped South. For these reasons, developing nations are obliged –like never before – to strengthen their reciprocal relations of cooperation and integration, as a fundamental element of any strategy to effectively face the challenges of achieving economic development with social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

This chapter analyzes the main trends in integration and economic cooperation relations between developing countries in recent years, assesses some elements to consider in their necessary renewal and/or updating, and discovers their insufficiencies, in such a way that They contribute to overcoming the growing obstacles to their growth and development.

First, various elements associated with the context of economic integration and cooperation between 1990 and the present are synthesized. In a second part, a critical assessment is made of what has happened in terms of integration between developing nations in these years; and the advantages or benefits that, despite a very negative general environment, such integrationist efforts have brought for the nations of the South are highlighted. In a third moment, South-South cooperation (including "triangular cooperation") is addressed, which in some cases has managed to enhance collective action and solidarity between our peoples and governments, and its effects on overcoming enormous obstacles. imposed by the international order described, although still very far from its real potential.

In this context, the large failed projects of previous decades cannot be discarded, such as the Action Program of the Non-Aligned Movement for Economic Cooperation, which, seen from today's perspective, identify lessons for the present and the difficulties that they face. were inherent, among them the excessive ambition with the approval of dozens of projects without the certainty that the conditions were created to undertake them, the lack of financial resources, the disconnection between groups of Southern countries due to diverse interests, the excessive theorization to the detriment of the practical measures that were required and the interest of some countries in using them for their own political benefit.

In these failures, of course, we cannot ignore the role of some developed capitalist countries that feared that their interests would be affected, which was particularly true with the impossibility of creating a Common Raw Materials Fund and the difficulties in establishing producers' associations and raw materials exporters, taking advantage of the success of OPEC after the Yom Kippur War, among other cases.

Given the prominence and effectiveness of Cuba in South-South cooperation actions and programs, the fourth section summarizes some of the milestones that have characterized our country's actions in terms of development cooperation.

Finally, at the end some ideas are summarized that could be useful for boosting economic integration and cooperation between the nations of the South.

I.- The context of the economic integration and cooperation

Economic integration and also the cooperative relations that occur between various countries and/or within the integration processes, have acquired relevance in the contemporary international economy, which is directly related to the processes of "globalization" "regionalization" of the world economy. These are two of the main trends that summarize the changes that have occurred in international economic relations in the last forty years that, although apparently contradictory to each other, demonstrate that there are elements that underpin a certain functionality between both, which explains the simultaneous manifestation of both processes.

In the last fifteen years, since the Great Recession of 2007/2008, criticism of the process of neoliberal globalization has deepened and been further substantiated, which was accentuated by the scenario dominated by the COVID 19 pandemic. The central elements of such debate are linked to theoretical conceptions about the general and irreversible nature of the globalizing process; the effectiveness and/or viability of the institutions that have configured its "governance", and the fundamental ways in which it has manifested itself until recent years.

The expansion of the production crisis following the emergence of COVID 19 revealed the vulnerabilities of interdependence at the level of countries and companies, and is already producing significant changes in the organization of production worldwide. According to ECLAC, there are trends that express a lower level of productive and commercial interdependence between the main world economies, which seems to point to a growing importance of the processes of regionalization of production. In this framework, regional integration and cooperation would be called upon to play a key role in the development strategies of the countries of the South.

The agreements or processes of economic integration presuppose -although partially-[58] the expansion of the size of the market and, therefore, contribute to the increase in economic efficiency, especially in economies with low levels of per capita income, small size and with inequitable profiles of income distribution, such as those that characterize the developing world. Likewise, integrating economies benefit from trade creation processes, by replacing inefficient production with more competitive products from a preferred trading partner.

In addition to other advantages, associated with the modification of the terms of trade, the equalization of prices, the transfer of financial resources and the coordination and gradual harmonization of economic policies between the members of such a scheme, integration constitutes an important factor negotiation with third parties. Under the current unequal international economic order, it is highly unlikely that an isolated underdeveloped nation will be able to make its voice heard and, more importantly, be able to press for changes in certain international norms and practices that are inimical to its objectives of progress and development. Therefore, the unitary positions that integration can entail are an essential condition for the advancement of the demands of developing countries for a more just, equitable and sustainable international order.

[58] While reciprocal trade liberalizes between countries member of the agreement or integration process.

Although integration and cooperation have an essential economic component – unfortunately often reduced to the liberalization of trade and integration of national markets – their social and political implications cannot be lost sight of.

Finally, it must be taken into account that since the advance of neoliberal concepts in the early 1990s, the "integration of national economies into global flows of trade and finance" has been privileged as a condition for accessing development, which has been reflected in the multiplicity of commitments and free trade agreements, and the simultaneous membership of Southern nations in different economic integration projects with industrialized nations, which has even caused an erosion of integrationist commitments among nations in development.

None of these schemes has meant progress for underdeveloped countries in terms of development, nor in terms of improving the living conditions of their people, mitigating inequalities or greater economic sustainability.

II.- THE EXPERIENCES OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION BETWEEN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In the mid-1970s, various economic integration processes emerged in Latin America and the Caribbean that still exist.[59] Until the end of the 1980s, the processes of economic integration at the subregional level, although with differences between them, showed certain advances in regulatory terms and in the construction of the institutional infrastructure of integration, but also setbacks in the objective they pursued of forming sustainably a dense network of reciprocal economic relations between its members, and create a common market in the long term, gradually and progressively.

In terms of regional cooperation, it is worth highlighting the constitution in 1975 through the Panama Agreement of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), as an organ of consultation and agreement for Latin America and the Caribbean, and a cooperation mechanism for the development and promotion to regional integration. SELA was one of the first intergovernmental organizations created in the region[60] that invited the Revolutionary Government of Cuba to be part of it, which demonstrated an unprecedented level of autonomy from the imperial and hegemonic dictates of the United States in the region.

Although in recent years the role of SELA has decreased and has been modified to become, essentially, an analysis organization with little real influence, during its first stage of existence it approved laudable initiatives, such as the constitution of Action that was later formed by two regional companies (NAMUCAR, Multinational Caribbean Shipping Company; and MULTIFER, Multinational Fertilizer Corporation), as well as the preparation and formation of consensus between the governments of the region for the definition of the conceptual and programmatic bases of technical cooperation between developing countries, approved at the multilateral level as the Buenos Aires Action Plan (PABA), and consultation and coordination work with a view to forging a bloc of Latin American and Caribbean debtors to demand a radical modification of the economic architecture and international finance in the first half of the 1980s.

[59] ALALC—Latin American Free Trade Association—succeeded by ALADI (Association Latin American Integration) in 1980 through the revision of the Treaty of Montevideo; he Central American Common Market (CACM) established through the "General Integration Treaty Central American Economic Commission", on December 13, 1960; the Andean Pact, through the Cartagena Agreement, signed on May 26, 1969 and coming into force in 1970; and the Community of the Caribbean (CARICOM) founded on July 4, 1973.

[60] Only preceded by the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE) the previous year.

With the emergence of the external debt crisis that most Latin American and Caribbean economies experienced starting in 1982, the governments of the region began to adopt common neoliberal approaches to stabilization and economic development, which broke with the previous dominant precepts, influenced by the thinking of Raúl Prebisch and other economists focused on achieving the development of what they called peripheral countries.

This change in orientation in the economic and political model in the Latin American and Caribbean nations had direct implications on regional integration and cooperation, while the so-called "external opening" now corresponded to the idea of eliminating all protectionist policies and lifting all existing restrictions on the entry and operation of foreign capital, as a "basic requirement" to achieve a supposedly broad and beneficial insertion in international trade, investment and capital flows. All of this had a direct effect on the essential emphases and purposes of the commitments and regional integration schemes institutionalized since 1990.

The ALADI becomes more "pragmatic", and shows wide flexibility from 1994, when the Interpretative Protocol of Article 44 of the Treaty of Montevideo of 1980 is approved, which allows those member countries that had granted preferences to third countries, not to apply the "most favored nation" clause and thus do not have to extend the preferences granted to the other members of ALADI. The transformed Andean Community (CAN) in March 1996 approved the "Trujillo Act" - Modifying Protocol to the Andean Subregional Integration Agreement - which establishes gradual objectives to constitute a free trade zone. On December 13, 1991, the Central American Integration System (SICA) was created - as a legal and institutional framework to renew commitments towards regional integration - through the "Tegucigalpa Protocol"; and the General Treaty is "modernized", for the establishment of a customs union within a spirit also of very broad flexibility. CARICOM, unlike what happened in other subregional integration efforts, assumes commitments towards greater convergence and unity, and proceeded to modify the Treaty of Chaguaramas –constituting CARICOM– in the year 2000; to incorporate from that moment on as an objective the creation of a Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

In this period, mention should be made of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which in 1973 replaced the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA), and which has been possibly the most complete and effective integration mechanism in all of Latin America. and Caribbean, with its objectives, among others, to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, ensure that the benefits of integration were distributed equitably, and even to coordinate foreign policy, an aspect that has become more important over the years.

In the 1990s, a new subregional economic integration scheme emerged, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), created on March 26, 1991, which generated very favorable expectations given the membership of two of the three main economies in the region.

In the middle of the said decade, a new milestone was marked in cooperation between Latin American and Caribbean countries, when the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was established in 1994 with the purpose of promoting consultation, cooperation and concerted action on trade, transportation, sustainable tourism and natural disasters, among all the countries of the Greater Caribbean. Now, from its origins it was clear that the achievement of its broad objectives implied serious political and institutional challenges, taking into account the enormous heterogeneity existing within the subregion, not always compatible with the necessary regional consensus, which became more complex as it does not have the necessary resources to carry out its key objectives, the development of subregional trade and tourism in such a way that it would benefit all the member countries of the organization.

The beginning of the 21st century marked a unique historical period for the majority of the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, starting with the emergence of a broad and diverse progressive movement in the region, which gradually took shape in the coming to power. of governments in several nations that promised to reverse the status quo, and advance agendas of economic transformation and social inclusion. It was the result of economic failure and, above all, the social and political consequences of the neoliberal recipes applied in the region under the influence and pressure of the United States government.

The above had a direct reflection on regional integration and cooperation. In this context, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), and in December 2011 the Community of Latin American States and Caribbean (CELAC) emerged, among others, who were trying to navigate new paths towards a new type of integration and cooperation for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Of particular significance was the breakdown of the negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) – a hemispheric integration project led by the United States – at the Mar del Plata Summit (Argentina), as an expression of this new political stage in Latin America. and the Caribbean.

Of the aforementioned schemes, the ALBA-TCP −created in December 2004−, meant the emergence of a different associative scheme, whose objectives were to achieve a balance between cooperation and economic benefits, enhance economic complementarity and grant preferential treatment to state capital, in line with the recognition of the leading role of the State in development. He also recognized the importance of social development and justice for people among the goals of the integration process, including erasing or mitigating the accumulated lags in social disadvantages for large groups of the population, which could not wait to be solved for the advent of economic growth or comprehensive development.

This integration scheme combined the participation of human, material and financial resources aimed at the materialization of policies with effective social impact in its member countries. It rested, among other factors, on the combination of high financial income as a result of high prices of raw materials, such as oil in the case of Venezuela, with the availability of highly developed human resources and social infrastructure, such as those available in Cuba. Its particular principles in terms of flexibility, treatment of asymmetries, the priority given to the human dimension of development and technical and financial cooperation among its members, provided it with a novel dynamism that should be studied for future experiences. The Petrocaribe scheme, associated with ALBA-TCP, meant important relief for most Caribbean countries in facing high bills for fuel imports and a way to promote development projects of subregional interest.

The ALBA-TCP recorded a balance, despite objective limitations and unmet expectations, with relevant results for an integration experience between nations that historically had not maintained significant economic exchange. In the social aspect, the results of cooperation in the areas of health, education, sports, culture, energy and in confronting the effects of climate change were notable.

Due to its emancipatory nature and other political factors, imperialism identified ALBA-TCP as an adversary scheme and it suffered as a result of the coercive economic measures applied by the United States and other nations against Venezuela, and the reinforcement of the economic blockade against Cuba.

The balance of regional economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean today is not positive. The chronic limitations exhibited by the integration process in the region are clearly related to the lack of effective productive integration between the countries of that region. According to CRIES, «…the two great deficits of Latin American regionalism are: the lack of complementary trade; and the lack of regional production chains. In Latin America and the Caribbean, no less than thirty-three Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) are in force, forming a mosaic of relatively small PTAs, each with its own set of rules of origin, which, in practice, suffocates reciprocal trade due to the complexity and inconsistencies between the different Agreements.

The ALADI faces long-standing difficulties in achieving the convergence of the more than seventy preferential trade agreements among its members; MERCOSUR continues to be burdened by important differences between its members and, in more recent times, by the interference of extra-regional actors; while the Andean Community (CAN), despite recent attempts to relaunch it, continues to show growing symptoms of institutional irrelevance. The Pacific Alliance, created with the encouragement of the United States and the right-leaning governments of the region, today faces almost an existential challenge, also dragging a persistently low significance in productive and commercial terms, given that the main trade partners of each of its members are extra-regional powers.

UNASUR is currently in the process of being rescued after a recent period in which eight of its twelve members left the entity. Similarly, CELAC, which since its creation in December 2011 was seen as the interlocutor par excellence of the entire region vis-à-vis its main extra-regional counterparts, especially with the signing of the Declaration on Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace at its second summit in Havana in 2014, shows symptoms of institutional recovery after acute political differences within its membership led to its near paralysis between 2017 and 2021.

The African experience of integration and cooperation has its roots in the decolonization process of that continent. This process filled with hope a local population marked by colonialism, by political, social and cultural oppression, and by the dispossession of its natural resources at the hands of European powers. Leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Amílcar Cabral, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba synthesized alternative political proposals against European neocolonial domination, which incorporated the need for integration and cooperation between African nations as a central element to confront the conditions of underdevelopment of the region.

Numerous integration efforts have been deployed among African nations (OUA, CIGAD, CEMAC or UMA), and as a result of them, free trade zones such as COMESA, ALDC or SADC have been created; although with certain limitations. The integration process has encountered many difficulties, linked to the structural problems of underdevelopment, the important differences between its various members in terms of economic dimension, levels of development and profiles of external insertion, among others; the lengthy and complex processes of negotiation and ratification of treaties and also the overlap of interregional agreements. Added to this is the permanent sabotage of integration by the former colonial metropolises, for which African countries essentially constitute reserves of exploitation and extraction of resources for the benefit of large transnational corporations.

During the 1990s, significant steps were taken that led to the negotiation and signing of the Treaty of Abuja, which established as a priority objective to form an economic and monetary union by 2028. In this sense, work has been done, not without difficulties, to formation of an African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA).

Beyond the promotion of intraregional trade, integration and cooperation processes in Africa have registered progress, although they still do not meet the expectations that were created regarding the problems linked to natural resources. Cross-border cooperation initiatives in relation to water and energy resources constitute a powerful tool not only to improve the security of countries in the region, but also to promote economic prosperity and greater cooperation. Likewise, agreements have been promoted within integration schemes in the region to promote the development of key sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure and digital technologies.

Priorities for African regional integration include the energy sectors, infrastructure development, and water resources. In 2020, 600 million people in Africa, or 43 percent of the continent's inhabitants, lacked access to electricity and around 900 million did not have access to "clean" cooking fuels (IEA, 2020). However, Africa's resource base and related investments could help address these challenges through the joint development of various energy sources. In this area, laudable efforts have been made to foster advanced dialogue, sustained technical work and political commitment to promote projects that generate positive social impacts, which could act as catalysts for economic growth and poverty reduction in the region.

Agriculture is one of the sectors that acquire priority in Africa's regional integration efforts. The continent has 60 percent of the arable land in the world and is key to ensuring food on the planet. One of the challenges for African farmers is precisely to have resources to expand and diversify their production levels and improve relations between them and food distribution chains at the national, regional and international levels.

Digitalization implies new opportunities for African integration and cooperation. Faced with the challenges derived from structural asymmetries in connectivity and communication due to enormous logistical costs, digital services open a range of possibilities and allow us to overcome obstacles and contribute to greater economic and cultural integration. In this regard, the African Digital Financial Inclusion Mechanism aims to ensure that the 332 million Africans who are not currently part of the financial system have access to it, are connected and are able to truly participate in a larger economic network.

Within the framework of the insufficient growth projections of African economies, regional integration and the implementation of a continental free trade area would have significant potential to drive economic transformation throughout Africa as an unavoidable condition for poverty reduction. However, the rules governing international trade, financial flows, the functioning of banking, legal practices for foreign investment, the monopoly of technologies, the transportation of goods and other determining factors of economic relations International agreements pose insurmountable obstacles for African governments, even if they manage to combine the political will to integrate their economies and jointly enjoy such powerful natural wealth.

The difficulties that the African continent still faces today for the integration that its integral development demands, despite its magnificent natural heritage, is reliable evidence of both the injustice and unsustainability that characterize the international economic order, and the lack of will to developed countries to take the transcendental steps that will create the conditions to lift the hundreds of millions of people who live there out of poverty.

The Asian region is characterized by a wide political-cultural diversity, which explains that – to a certain extent – the efforts and agreements of cooperation and integration between these nations have proceeded differently from those that emerged in the West. This heterogeneity of Asia has required a high dose of flexibility in the rules and agreements that regulate its cooperation and integration processes. However, there are "common" elements that differentiate it from other geographical areas in terms of economic integration, for example the notion of "open regionalism" as the articulating axis of integration dynamics from both a regional and global perspective.

Asian integration has been strongly promoted by both the State and the business sectors. In general, a low level of institutionality of the integration processes has been observed. Flexibility and, consequently, the absence of supranational entities and norms, has been an unavoidable requirement to advance regional integration between States with very notable differences in terms of the level of development and degree of external openness, which normally leads to perceptible differences in terms of interests and a very particular perspective regarding the external links of each nation with other countries and/or regions.

On the Asian continent, multiple regional, subregional and bilateral preferential trade agreements coexist, together with various regional integration processes such as the South Asian Regional Cooperation Organization (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In addition, there are various initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC); and the Shanghai Cooperation Forum. Even other economic cooperation proposals stand out whose geographical openness and extended membership denote the very broad external commercial projection of the region: the Trans-Pacific Agreement or TPP-11 (2016), which evolved two years later, to become in 2018 the Comprehensive Trans-Pacific Partnership (RCEP); ASEAN+3 (Japan, China and South Korea), among others. As in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, such proposals, which sometimes juxtapose commitments with extra-regional actors, can weaken efforts to consolidate effective economic integration among developing countries.

Although the advances regarding the integration and cooperation of the region occurred through ways in which trade stands out as one of the most important motivations in some subregions and East Asia, in particular, the key to the growth of the economies of The countries that make it up have been their integration focused essentially on the sphere of production. This has been the result of the formation of cross-border production networks, which connected companies in the region through inter- and intra-firm relationships through which all phases of their industrial activities were organized.

The Asian model favors the creation of a division of labor beyond national borders through specialization and regional production chains. Thus, trade and investments became the driving force of regional economic integration and cooperation with outstanding results that have shown notable benefits through a significant increase in intraregional trade relations, especially in Southeast Asia.

Although the organizations and initiatives that make up the geopolitical diagram of Eurasia stand out, such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Free Trade Agreement of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, among the most recent projects, especially in terms of regional cooperation, perhaps China's Belt and New Silk Road Initiative is the most emblematic and ambitious.

The Trade Finance Program of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is implemented in fourteen countries with the participation of two hundred banks. Its purpose is to address the lack of access to trade finance by providing loans and guarantees to partner commercial banks to support trade in the region. This has favored intraregional trade and the development of Asian SMEs.

These and other results have made it possible to close social gaps and promote the consolidation of the region as one of the main centers of production, accumulation and consumption worldwide. The scope of such effects has not only favored emerging countries in the region, but has also improved the conditions of landlocked developing nations and small and vulnerable economies, by taking into account the specific vulnerabilities of these groups of nations in the cooperation and integration projects and programs.

Despite some partial successes, the balance of economic integration between the countries of the South is not encouraging when some of the main indicators are taken into account to measure the scope and depth of integration in its economic dimension:

1. The level of intraregional trade in the existing integration processes between developing countries is still low, if the trade between East Asian countries is excluded. Limitations are observed in terms of "trade facilitation" among the economies of the Group of 77, with restrictions to reduce non-tariff costs and the time required for foreign trade operations.
2. The existence of a broad network of bilateral, subregional and/or interregional tariff liberalization agreements faces difficulties in achieving the convergence of said agreements, the deepening of trade links between its members, and the formation of a trade space. more integrated among the nations of the South.
3. Although the services sector has gained importance within international commercial transactions, and technological advances have facilitated it, the majority of economic integration processes between developing countries have community regulations that emphasize in the trade of goods over services, at the same time that these regulations suffer from the level of sophistication and innovation that has occurred in both the production and marketing of services.
4. There are legitimate questions from the smallest and most vulnerable countries – especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and also in Africa – about the asymmetries that prevail and the fact that the benefits of integration processes between developing economies are They have concentrated, fundamentally, on the dominant business sectors of the largest partners.
5. In recent years there have been interruptions in global production chains, which has revealed the vulnerability implied by the fragmentation of production for international trade. This situation has not been incorporated into the debates and actions within the economic integration processes among developing nations, which in many cases still continue to privilege "efficiency" over "resilience."
6. The differences in structures, interests and levels of development between the countries of the South have been taken advantage of by the nations of the North to fragment or obtain advantages in terms of access to domestic markets, the degrees of protection allowed and the reduction of levels of preference in reciprocal economic transactions.

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION. PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Historically, the development cooperation system was built around the concept of the gap between the modern and industrialized "North", heir mostly of the former colonial metropolises, and the backward and dependent "South", heir of colonialism. and neocolonialism.

Beyond the initial evolution of North-South Cooperation, its future has been determined by structural processes, which not only respond to economic factors. The multilaterally adopted and notoriously unfulfilled commitments for highly industrialized economies to support the development of the nations of the South respond, to a large extent, to the persistence of a deeply asymmetric, unjust and inequitable international economic system. In the current international division of labor, a "center-periphery" pattern persists, marked by deep technological gaps that reproduce asymmetries in economic, social, competitiveness and, logically, accumulation terms. This perpetuates vicious circles that affect the ability of Southern countries to finance not only development projects, but also those that guarantee access to the most basic goods and services to satisfy the requirements of their populations. Closely related to these dynamics, the institutions of most developing nations continue to face a very limited room for maneuver for the design and implementation of autonomous economic and social policies that contribute to development.

In addition to being chronically very limited, North-South cooperation has operated vertically and, generally, from a subordination of the needs of developing countries to the political and economic interests of the States that provide aid to the development. Consequently, this has been characterized by a recurring conditionality that has resulted in a framework of behavior in the beneficiary countries limited by pre-established policies, not necessarily in line with the agendas of underdeveloped economies. The above has greatly restricted the capacity of North-South cooperation to solve the problems of poverty, marginality, low rates of capital accumulation and effective responses to the consequences derived from climate change in developing nations. Therefore, it is required not only to meet the goals adopted since 1974 in the United Nations for North-South cooperation; but the deepening of it and a review and improvement of its implementation, in order to guarantee greater effectiveness and scope of said cooperation; not only in terms of channeling resources such as official development assistance (ODA) flows, but also in terms of technology transfers, closing the digital divide, food security, contribution to the mitigation and adaptation to climate change and support for transition of the energy matrix towards renewable energy sources (RES), among others.

Now, North-South Cooperation continues to be a key condition for the construction of a less unequal and unjust international economic order; and it also constitutes itself as a mechanism for repairing historical injustices. The contribution of developed countries in technological, commercial and financial matters, just to mention certain aspects, is basic for the structural transformation of the majority of the nations of the world, whose reality is marked by the secular effects of colonialism and neocolonialism.

South-South Cooperation (SSC) is, in essence, a complementary option that is neither exclusive nor a substitute for North-South Cooperation; and its principles and operational mechanisms differ from those that typify the latter. CSS involves the strengthening of spaces for dialogue between peers, or between countries with relatively homogeneous socioeconomic development, which has as its starting point solidarity, integration and alliances around common goals or objectives. Today the so-called architecture of international cooperation has been significantly modified, largely, but not solely, as a result of the increase in South-South cooperation (SSC) and triangular cooperation.

From the First Conference of the League against Imperialism that took place in Brussels in 1927, until the Bandung Conference of 1955, consensus was built around the solidarity of the colonized countries, the aversion to the policies of the former metropolises and the search for peace and global stability, as fundamental premises for development. This genesis of a conscious South was strengthened after the rise of the National Liberation Movements, and the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961, in which a discourse favorable to the democratization of international relations, socioeconomic development was articulated and the restructuring of the international system.

At the same time, the creation of the Group of 77 within the United Nations, with the subsequent incorporation of China, strengthened an agenda with a view to promoting greater development of this group of countries and achieving fairer conditions that would allow this objective. Both the NAM and the G77 consolidated themselves as the main promoters of what was then called Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries (TCDC) and Economic

Cooperation between Developing Countries (CEPD). Both gradually took on importance, but growing, as driving factors for the international insertion of developing economies.

In this context is the demand of the nations of the South for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), whose demand would reach its milestone with the Declaration and Program of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, approved by the General Assembly. Extraordinary United Nations of 1974. Within this plan, SSC and the demand from developing countries to developed countries are incorporated as fundamental requirements for achieving this new order.

It is important to remember that it has been common among developed countries to disqualify South-South cooperation, question its viability and accuse it of violating the logical comparative advantages derived from the economic relations of the countries of the South with those of the developed North. It is a trend that has been strengthened in recent decades, as specific cooperation projects between developing countries, both bilateral and multilateral, emerge and have successes, even if they are temporary, and especially in the face of concertation, cooperation and even partial integration efforts from the countries of the South, as an alternative to the mechanisms of economic domination formed since the end of the Second World War and their heirs.

It is common to find attacks or suspicious approaches against these legitimate formulas of cooperation and integration, and efforts to present them as models that seek self-sufficient development, divorced from the international economy. These are deliberate distortions and propaganda campaigns that respond to the objective of perpetuating the unjust regularities of the international economic order and its system of domination.

The fight against neocolonial dependence derived from old links with the old metropolises and against the patterns of trade, finance and technology transfer that govern the disadvantaged relations between the North and the South, justifies the effort to build more equitable links and complementary, without giving up the necessary ties with developed countries and active participation in international economic relations as a whole.

In the so-called Third World there is a significant part of the planet's natural wealth, including soils, forests, water supply, mineral deposits, hydrocarbons, marine resources, biodiversity, tropical vegetation, among others. The people who live in this largely underdeveloped world are not the beneficiaries of that wealth and a good part of them lack the infrastructure and professional capacity to enjoy it. Some have achieved a relative development of their human resources, even without being among the most favored by the respective natural wealth. An effort to complement the respective strengths with seriousness and solidarity would provide developing countries with very valuable opportunities in the effort to improve the standard of living of their people.

What is known today as CSS is closely linked to the Buenos Aires Action Plan as a result of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC). Said cooperation was defined as an instrument capable of promoting the exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences between countries that share close historical realities and similar challenges.

For its part, Cooperation between Developing Countries (CEPD) also arises as a result of the deliberations of the Group of 77 and China, and is linked to agreements adopted at the Third Ministerial Meeting of the G77 (Manila, January 26 to January 7 February 1976), and the Conference on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (Mexico, September 13 to 22, 1976). In the latter, specific provisions were adopted, as well as operating mechanisms for the implementation of the "Program for Economic Cooperation between Developing Countries", a much broader concept that includes, among others; trade and related measures,

measures to promote trade cooperation, measures in the production, infrastructure and services sectors and monetary and financial measures.

"South-South cooperation", as an updated name for cooperation between developing countries, is also a broad concept. According to the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the UNDP, this incorporates "the political, economic (including trade), social, cultural, environmental and technical spheres. Two or more developing countries may participate in South-South cooperation and involve exchange at the regional, intra-regional or inter-regional level. In this type of actions, those involved share knowledge, skills, experiences and resources that contribute to accelerating the achievement of development objectives.

It is also clearly defined that the CSS, and consequently the projects that derive from it, must be governed by a group of principles that can be summarized in:

a) respect for sovereignty, cultural diversity and local identity, as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of each of the participating countries;
b) the defense of a relationship of cooperation between equals, since it lacks nuances of cultural, political and economic hegemony;
c) the lack of conditionalities in this type of cooperation;
d) mutual benefit as a guiding idea;
e) the establishment of a biunivocal relationship, in which each participant is a donor and recipient of cooperation at the same time, and
f) the existence of developed capabilities, fundamentally of a technological and professional nature.

Although in recent decades there have been very successful SSC experiences, mainly between two countries or small groups of countries, this is far from covering all its potential and encompassing all the actors that could participate in it.

It was always considered that, among the milestones of the CSS and despite its very limited nature, was the creation of specific funds, such as the Pérez Guerrero Trust Fund established by the UN through resolution 28/201 of its General Assembly, of 20 December 1983, to finance cooperation projects between the G77 countries; and the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation created in 1995. Gradually, an agenda was formed that found a reference in the Millennium Development Goals (2000), although it continued to be limited, not only due to the restrictions inherent to said Objectives, but also because of its low ambition for actions and strategies in the field of development cooperation. With this guide, the South ratified its commitment at the Nairobi Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2009.

The Group of 77 and China were also instrumental in promoting South-South trade through the Global System of Trade Preferences between Developing Countries (GSTP) and the Southern Science, Technology and Innovation Consortium (COSTIS).

Among the regional experiences of the CSS, the creation of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development in 1971 stands out; the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), already mentioned, which despite its gradual conversion into a mechanism basically aimed at study and research, began as a focal point of regional cooperation between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean; and the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In the past, South-South cooperation and emerging triangular cooperation consisted mainly of providing technical assistance, knowledge, experience on specific issues and the provision of financial resources. Today, it has gradually moved towards the generation of learning that could be replicated and shared among the beneficiary countries, as well as the coordination of national and regional policies and other government actions.

Various SSC programs and projects have helped to energize public and private entities – national and regional – through the management of initiatives and mechanisms that promote development based on sustainable and innovative practices. These projects and programs do not necessarily reproduce the features that have typified the increasingly meager North-South cooperation. In this regard, it should be highlighted that, since its origins, the CSS incorporates as a basic principle the need for special and differential treatment (SDT) for the weakest, poorest and most vulnerable, which is included in the Algiers Charter (1967).

CSS is also relevant to overcome global problems associated with the international expansion of inequalities, the implications for developing economies of the unfinished modifications that have taken place in the physiognomy of the globalization process, the increase and diversification of the agents and institutions that influence the dynamics of economic growth and development, and the configuration of institutions and collective approaches to address the growing problems of a world in crisis.

Obviously, the world has experienced significant transformations that are conditioning cooperation strategies and policies among developing countries. Actors such as China, Brazil, India, and South Africa have increased their role in SSC, which has represented a valuable opportunity that benefits numerous low-income countries, which should be multiplied in the future through the expansion of BRICS.

The increasing weight of knowledge as a determinant of growth, productivity and competitiveness in the so-called information society is also evident. Both horizontal and triangular cooperation are crucial. The first contributes to the transfer of knowledge and technological resources between two or more developing countries; The second enhances the joint action of developing and developed nations, where a developing country with the know-how and a developed country that provides financial support, act in favor of a third developing country. Both cases constitute an opportunity for the training of a highly qualified workforce, the generation of production of goods and services with greater added value, and also for the absorption of technology.

Several examples confirm the relevance of CSS to address the challenges of the so-called "peripheral countries" of the international system, both through horizontal cooperation projects and triangular cooperation. Egypt, for example, has promoted successful experiences in terms of agricultural performance in several countries on the African continent, by contributing to the development of irrigation systems and the training of the agricultural workforce. These cooperation mechanisms, led by government authorities, have contributed to alleviating tense situations regarding food security.

An example of such efforts in the African case is the opening of the Senegambia Bridge, inaugurated in January 2019, which connects the two banks of the Gambia River and offers an important contribution to the promotion of trade and regional integration through a corridor between Dakar, Banjul, Bissau, Cotonou, Abidjan and Lagos.

Other areas provide results in terms of cooperation agreements in Africa on "human development". The joint "Boost Africa/E-Lab" initiative is focused on promoting the employment of young Africans. Through this project, entrepreneurship is encouraged, the participation of newly created companies is promoted through "incubators", and support is provided for young entrepreneurs to invest in new projects, create jobs with a high innovation component and contribute to the advancement of their productive sectors.

Beyond finance, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has promoted technical cooperation on trade policy. It focuses on strengthening the technical and analytical skills of officials in developing countries in Asia and the Pacific to formulate, negotiate and implement effective trade agreements.

Some particular cases, such as Singapore, stand out for their multilateral impact. The "Singapore Cooperation Programme" is an example of a multi-regional scheme focused on harnessing Singapore's experiences in trade and investment strategies to support human resource capacity building in other developing countries.

Another successful example is the Almaty-Bishkek Highway Repair Regional Cooperation Project in the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan. This initiative reveals that the improvement of customs facilities and road efficiency through structural repair, as well as the technical assistance provided, have contributed to improving physical connectivity. The project favored regional integration and has led to an increase in trade flows between the two countries.

In the area of energy, Petrocaribe stands out (known as the Petrocaribe Energy Cooperation Agreement), established on June 29, 2005 within the framework of the ALBA-TCP. One of the objectives of this agreement was to resolve asymmetries in access to energy resources, diversify the energy matrix of the member countries, eliminate the intermediation of transnational companies and minimize operating costs through a favorable, equitable and exchange scheme between the countries of the Greater Caribbean.

Under the agreement, countries had the possibility of acquiring Venezuelan oil by paying a percentage of the price in the first ninety days and the remainder in the next twenty-five years with low interest. In the event that a country does not have sufficient liquidity, payment could be agreed through the supply of goods or services.

As part of the mechanism, the Petrocaribe-Alba Solidarity Investment Fund was established to support the development of various projects for complementary energy sources, and other social and economic programs of its member countries. In addition to the supply of crude oil and related products to its beneficiaries, Petrocaribe conceived the creation of joint ventures between PDV Caribe, S.A. and state-owned companies from twelve member countries. Through these companies, the technological capabilities of the members were enhanced and progress was made in the development of projects for the efficient use and management of available energy resources. Likewise, a perceptible increase in refining capacity was achieved, distributed between Jamaica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Likewise, thermoelectric plants, wind farms and mini hydroelectric plants were installed in Nicaragua, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

It is estimated that the countries of the agreement designed and implemented almost eight hundred projects in the areas of food, electricity, education, environmental sanitation, public services, housing and health, which have contributed significantly to the reduction of poverty.

Over the past six years, the reduction in oil production in Venezuela, exacerbated by coercive economic measures imposed by the United States government and several Europeans, has limited supplies to Petrocaribe. In the current context of multiple crises, the negative impacts on the world economy of the war conflict in Europe and the global increase in energy and oil prices, the intention of the countries that are part of Petrocaribe to recover the capacity of this laudable instrument of cooperation, it is vital to alleviate and reduce the negative impacts in economic and social terms of the adverse scenario on its member states.

In addition to examples of cooperation like the previous ones, there are others in which multilateral bodies play a central role. This is the case of the project for the management of shared water resources in the Sahel region. In this initiative, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adds the dimension of groundwater to the understanding and management of shared water resources in that region. To this end, it collaborated in the training of scientists from thirteen countries (Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) on water sampling for isotope analysis. in order to carry out a detailed study of groundwater supplies.

The new information and communications technologies (ICT) open a new horizon for CSS activities. In Ibero-America, for example, actions that enable exchanges of a more punctual nature and that can be more easily executed under a virtual modality adopted a dynamic role in the nine hundred and fifteen SSC initiatives in the bilateral modality of the region, during the 2020 -2021 biennium. This favored the resilience of the CSS in a situation as complex as the crisis accentuated by the COVID 19 pandemic. The potential contained in the ICT sector in the field of training and training allows us to advance at a greater pace towards the qualification of professionals and the dissemination of knowledge. This has been confirmed by projects such as online training on food packaging and labeling activities, given to people in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. To materialize this initiative, there was decisive collaboration between the Center for South-South Technical Cooperation of the NAM and the Government of Indonesia.

These experiences and many others mark the way forward in CSS. Designing and implementing ICT-based platforms will make collaboration in various areas more efficient. In a world in which scientific-technical production and dissemination is concentrated in developed countries and transnational companies, it must be a priority to advance in the construction of capabilities of the countries of the South that guarantee their technological sovereignty.

In the Latin American context, the support of multilateral and integration schemes has been constant in the 113 SSC initiatives that were executed at a regional scale between 2020 and 2021. This support from international organizations has been crucial during the pandemic, when countries in development were immersed in scenarios of strong financial restrictions and in which the collaboration facilitation mechanisms were an incentive to scarcity within the economies and enhancers of technical cooperation.

For its part, within the framework of CELAC, regional cooperation programs of cardinal importance have been agreed, such as the Food and Nutrition Security Program (PSNA), approved at the Third Summit, in Belén, Costa Rica (2015). ; and the creation of a Latin American and Caribbean agency for the management of medicines (ALCMED), in the penultimate Summit, in Mexico (2021), although its efficiency has been limited by the difficulties that CELAC has faced in recent years.

The recent creation of the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean by ECLAC in December 2021 is also notable. This entity seeks to strengthen national South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms and their possible interactions with North-South and multilateral cooperation; and promote South-South and triangular cooperation between regional and extra-regional actors, including donor countries and international organizations. The final purpose is to facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge, as well as the achievement of joint activities in terms of cooperation.

Precisely, with regard to building capacities for long-term development, South-South Cooperation also has positive examples. One of them is the project promoted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), with the technical and financial support of the Government of China, for the promotion of sustainable industrial parks, through a South-South industrial triangular cooperation platform. . This initiative is an expression of several processes: China's increasing role in cooperation, and the positive results of joint work between international institutions.

However, CSS and triangular is not without difficulties in terms of design, implementation and evaluation. The challenges are mainly found in the coordination between multiple and heterogeneous actors, in the division of responsibilities and roles in the different programs and projects, in the identification of the best methodologies to evaluate the multidimensional impacts of the programs and projects, and in the accountability of accounts that should not only be the responsibility –essentially– of the institutions and agents that benefit from cooperation.

Cuba and South-South cooperation (Valoración 2)

Cuba has been constant in its commitment to strengthening cooperation between the nations of the South since the first years of the Revolution. The country began its activism in cooperation with other developing nations in the early 1960s, with the first medical mission to Algeria.

In 2016, the United Nations High-Level Commission for South-South Cooperation presented a document with the following normative principles for South-South and triangular cooperation: respect for sovereignty and national ownership; partnership between equals; non-interference in internal affairs, and mutual benefit. The Cuban trajectory in this field is an outstanding example of the implementation of these principles.

Among the most successful experiences of Cuba in cooperation with developing countries, considering its scope and impact, are those related to health, education, sports, coping with disaster situations, and assistance to vulnerable social groups in the region. Cuban medical collaboration in multiple cooperation projects has undoubted relevance. As part of Operation Miracle, for example, almost three million surgeries were performed on patients in thirty-four countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa to combat blindness and other ophthalmological conditions. Since this solidarity effort began in 1960 and until 2014, Cuban doctors and other health professionals had worked in one hundred and fifty-eight countries, a figure greater than the membership of the Group of 77 and China. In this universe of countries, they had provided 1.2 billion medical consultations, assisted in 2.2 billion births, performed more than 8 million surgeries, and immunized more than 12 million children and pregnant women.

Milestones in this Cuban internationalist medical cooperation were the care of 26,000 people affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster (1986), almost 22,000 of them children, who received free medical treatment and rehabilitation, accommodation, food and other facilities in Cuba, and the sending of Cuban medical brigades to confront – successfully – the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in three States of West-Central Africa.

Of particular relevance is Cuban medical cooperation in numerous countries, including some developed ones, to alleviate the adverse impacts of COVID 19 and the policy followed with the use by other developing countries of the vaccines developed by Cuba to confront the pandemic.

At the educational level, Cuba has cooperated with thirty countries using the Cuban method "Yes I Can", which contributed decisively to Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua declaring themselves countries free of illiteracy, according to UNESCO requirements. In addition, the "Mission Robinson" literacy plan was another successful initiative, in Angola, Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Uruguay, Venezuela, Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia.

Another dimension of the collaboration offered by Cuba has been the granting of scholarships for the training of human resources in sectors such as health, education and sports, thanks to which more than 74,000 foreign students have graduated as professionals from Cuban institutions in the country.

Cuba has not been indifferent to issues related to environmental challenges and has opted for South-South Cooperation as a way to confront them. With the support of the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the country has sent experts with recognized experience and has made available to several Caribbean States such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the response mechanisms developed in its civil defense system.

Likewise, the Caribbean Risk Management Initiative, created in 2004 by the UNDP Directorate of Crisis Prevention and Recovery, has facilitated cooperation and the transfer of knowledge to five other Caribbean territories (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic, British Virgin Islands and Guyana) to adapt and apply the Cuban model of the Management Center for Risk Reduction.

In the field of sports, Cuban specialists have contributed to raising the results and competitive level of more than one hundred countries.

Cuba's activism in multiple areas linked to development has confirmed that the articulation that emanates from South-South Cooperation can contribute to development with social inclusion and sustainability between our countries. Despite the limited resources available to Cuba and its economic vulnerability, aggravated by the blockade applied by the United States government, the country has demonstrated the advantages in terms of cooperation from the South for the construction of a better world.

According to the report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America for the year 2020, Cuba was the second most relevant country in the region – only surpassed by Brazil – in the role of "offerer" of development cooperation between the countries of the region. ; and at the same time, it was the country that received the lowest proportion of cooperation resources that year, with the exception of Brazil, among all Ibero-Americans.

As ECLAC observed: "Cuba has historically been recognized as one of the most prominent, if not the most prominent, country in Latin America and the Caribbean, when South-South technical cooperation contributions to other developing nations are examined. Cuba has shown how much can be done with few resources. "It is an example of sharing what you have and not what is left over."

It is important to emphasize that the international cooperation that Cuba has provided for more than sixty years, mainly in developing countries, is absolutely consistent with the parameters of CSS. In most cases and for many years, this cooperation has been provided without receiving any compensation or remuneration. In the cases of countries with larger economies or more advantageous economic conditions than those of Cuba, the assistance provided is compensated with financial or material remuneration, in line with the concept of complementarity between developing countries, according to their capabilities, potential and respective economic and social resources.

As an example of the challenges that the CSS faces from powerful interests that see this mode of cooperation as a dangerous and worrying way of advancing towards the economic independence of the countries of the South, is the systematic aggression of the United States government against the international medical cooperation that Cuba provides in dozens of countries. For years, the US government has maintained and continues a sordid campaign of discredit against the work of thousands of Cuban health professionals in Third World countries, professionals whom it describes as slaves and victims of human trafficking. . The campaign actively involves the diplomatic services of the United States, which make direct or indirect threats against the governments of independent countries due to the sovereign decisions they adopt in order to ensure quality health services for their respective populations through absolutely legitimate intergovernmental agreements.

By acting in this way, imperialism not only seeks to discredit a cooperation practice that has been endorsed and recognized internationally, but that is contrary to its interests. It also seeks to deprive Cuba of financial income obtained in a completely legitimate manner, as a result of the work of thousands of professionals and remuneration for quality health services, almost always provided to the most needy population groups. At the same time, when it is successful, imperialism manages to deprive tens or hundreds of thousands of people from exercising the human right of access to health services.

The imperative to energize and renew integration and cooperation strategies among developing countries

In the current complex international scenario, many developing countries face obstacles that could prevent the fulfillment of even limited sustainable development goals (SDGs). The multidimensional global crisis, in a context of growing fragmentation and economic stagnation, an eroded multilateral system, and a significant weakening of the hegemonic power of the United States and the West, is being reflected in considerable transformations in globalization. Likewise, the current serious uncertainty and the crisis of the multilateral trading system add to the reasons why we should move to a stage of decisive action to promote the agenda of economic integration and cooperation between the nations of the South. .

This perspective of strengthening economic integration among developing countries is more necessary than ever, when some industrialized economies seem to be moving towards strengthening protectionist and isolationist policies and perceptions, while blockade and sanctions policies persist. The effects of the creation of expanded regional markets and economic integration in Southern countries contribute to this objective. In an international scenario in which "global" external demand stagnates in the midst of exacerbated protectionism, the boost to internal demand among the countries of the South constitutes a valid expedient for economic growth, a necessary condition, although not sufficient for development. .

Furthermore, some analyzes of economic integration between countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia, show that the number of companies that export to the "regional market" is greater than those that sell in extra-regional markets and there are a greater presence of small and medium-sized companies in intraregional trade as opposed to exports directed to foreign markets, in which the participation of large companies is much greater. Likewise, there is a higher manufacturing content in intra-regional sales compared to extra-regional sales; and there is a greater presence of intra-industrial relations in trade between Latin American and Caribbean countries; and especially among Asians. On average, the manufacturing and services sectors have a greater presence in intraregional circuits than in extraregional exports.

Based on these advantages, the authorities and intergovernmental institutions of these countries must keep in mind that structural support and compensation mechanisms are essential, necessary today more than ever, for deeper economic integration and the essential development of cooperation between nations. Developing.

Digital globalization has transformed many aspects and coexists with the traditional economy. However, there is a wide digital divide between developed and developing countries, and therefore, the use of the opportunities offered by information and communications technologies (ICT) has generally been limited by the persistent scenario of digital exclusion.

This should become an area of special attention in any effort to renew initiatives and projects of integration and cooperation between the countries of the South.

Of course, regional integration agreements do not solve all the problems of growth and development, nor do they eliminate the adverse effects derived from the unjust international order, but the South can only gain with a stronger, more efficient "interregional internal market" and increasingly integrated.

The Group of 77 and China could play a significant role in the coordination of the different cooperation initiatives existing among its members, in correspondence with the strengthening and complementing the mandate of the multiple existing regional organizations. Additionally, the group should explore the establishment of platforms to connect the different agendas (political with technical), through the concertation of "dialogues on more integrated public policies [...], in a multidimensional framework of development"; just as ECLAC has proposed for the case of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This multidimensional development framework would require that the South-South cooperation agenda include among its priority topics productive development, technology transfer, the creation of global public goods, access to and production of vaccines, the digital agenda, the economy. creative or orange, the transversality of the gender approach and inequality, among others.

All cooperation aimed at the dissemination of knowledge, innovation and scientific-technological collaboration must become an essential component of development strategies. Therefore, the inclusion of these themes in the SSC agendas – and in the multidimensional framework of reference – is key to achieving sustainable growth rates that contribute to the improvement of social indicators and provide greater room for maneuver to the governments of the developing nations for the execution of public policies.

Likewise, the G77 and China should agree to the design and implementation of an International Cooperation Program among its members to promote education and training on emerging issues of the "new economy" such as the digital economy, cross-border electronic commerce and the "circular economy", which could translate into improvements in the competitiveness of companies, workers and societies in the South. This could also extend to the development of common standards and regulations, as well as the promotion of knowledge exchange and collaboration on joint projects.

Finally, it is essential to gradually promote a common foreign policy of the G77 and China in the face of the geopolitical and geoeconomic changes that are occurring worldwide, which is crucial to try to reduce the weakening of collective bargaining capacities, which It has sometimes forced us to agree on conditions that eventually imply the transfer of sovereignty in favor of transnational corporations, de facto accepting an increase in the "soft power" of the great powers over the economy and politics of many of the countries of the South.

IX

FINAL REMARKS AND PROPOSAL

Throughout its sixty years of struggle, the Group of 77 and China has dedicated itself to the task of defending the international political and economic framework necessary to promote development and achieve the minimum and fair conditions that allow the countries of the South achieve it. It has done so by trying to make use of the tools offered by international law and the United Nations System, convinced since it emerged as a spokesperson for developing countries that the international economic order inherited from the colonial period and formed after the Second World War responds to the interests of the former colonial powers and today developed countries and their transnational companies.

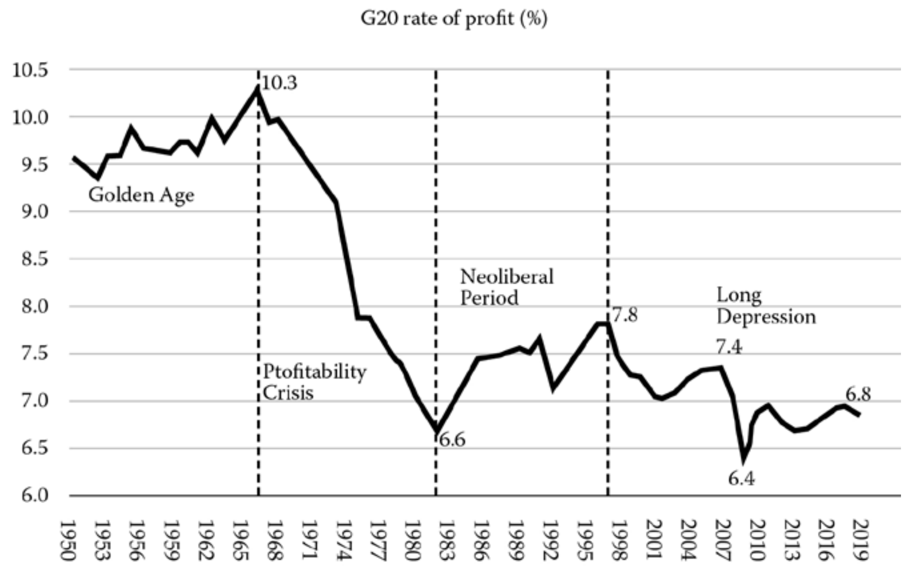
It is an order of neocolonial and imperialist domination, which by its nature and formation deprives the countries where the vast majority of the planet's population lives of the possibilities of progress, sustainable economic growth, decent living conditions and access to essential services such as health, education, employment and enjoyment of art and culture, as well as vital resources such as drinking water, fertile land and a healthy environment. It is an unjust and unsustainable order, whose permanence rests, among other factors, on the use of force, the violation of international law, contempt for the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, war, unilateral measures of economic coercion, the promotion of coups d'état and other forms of aggression and threats.

This effort, over the years, has become more complex and at the same time more urgent, given the crisis conditions suffered by the international economy, which affects the countries of the South with particular detriment, and the lack of a solution to the view for its great imbalances.

Four decades after the publication in 1983 of the book The Economic and Social Crisis of the World, by the then President of the Republic of Cuba, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, it is not surprising that most of the conditions that are denounced in it and The actions that the Non-Aligned Movement proposed in 1983 to confront the crisis remain in full force, given the negative evolution of the world economy in the last forty years.

The world today faces a particularly dangerous and complex situation. The evolution of the capitalist economy has been characterized since the 19th century by the presence of cyclical crises determined by the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private nature of the appropriation of what is produced. From the transition of the capitalist system to its higher phase, imperialism, its contradictions became more acute, which gave rise to deeper crises, which were revealed, no longer as cyclical crises, but as structural crises, in which It manifested the fall in profit rates and where attempts to stop this trend cause an increase in its negative effects and demonstrate the unsustainability of this system of exploitation.

Chart 1. Trend of the profit index of the G20



Source: Roberts (2022).

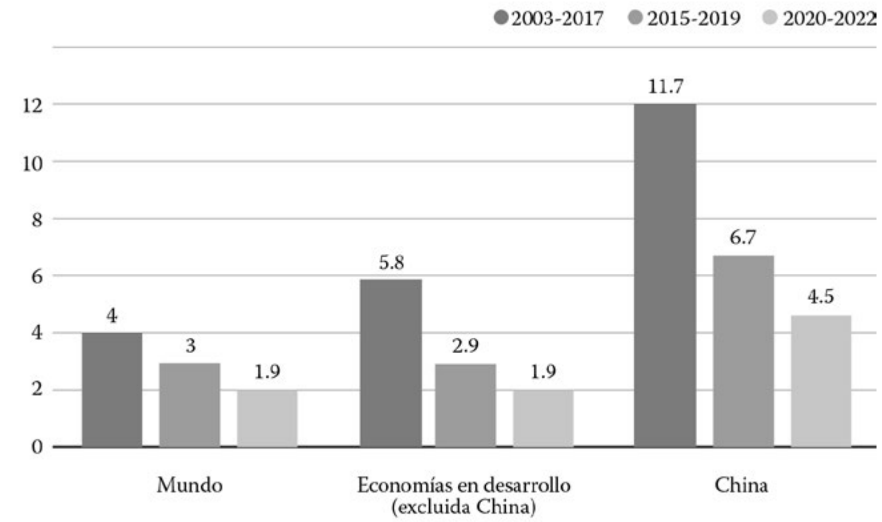
The search for a palliative for the fall in the rate of profitability in the capitalist economy has led to the application of measures that, although they may cause a short-term increase in income for their beneficiaries, have not been able to stop the tendency to the fall in the rate of profit.

The global impacts of the applied economic policies are manifested in the downward trend in the growth rates achieved in the last twenty years, which contrasts with the economic progress achieved by the socialist economy in China. Current forecasts consider global growth figures to be around only 3 percent in the coming years.

At this point it cannot be overlooked that, in fact, we are currently witnessing a process of radical change in the model of economic globalization that has prevailed since the 1970s, in the midst of a crisis in which the role of capital is accentuated. financial crisis and in which military spending, as a countercyclical factor, no longer plays the same role as in previous times. Nor can we ignore the use by developed capitalism of new information technologies, which has led to them becoming another contributing mechanism to the exploitation processes of developing countries.

The State has played a decisive role in mitigating the perverse effects of the crisis, which can be seen in the role that governments are playing in trying to make the anti-inflationary measures that are applied today compatible by raising interest rates, with the maintenance of the solvency of the banking system, avoiding its bankruptcy.

Chart 2. Growth rate of the world economy



Source: UNCTAD (2023).

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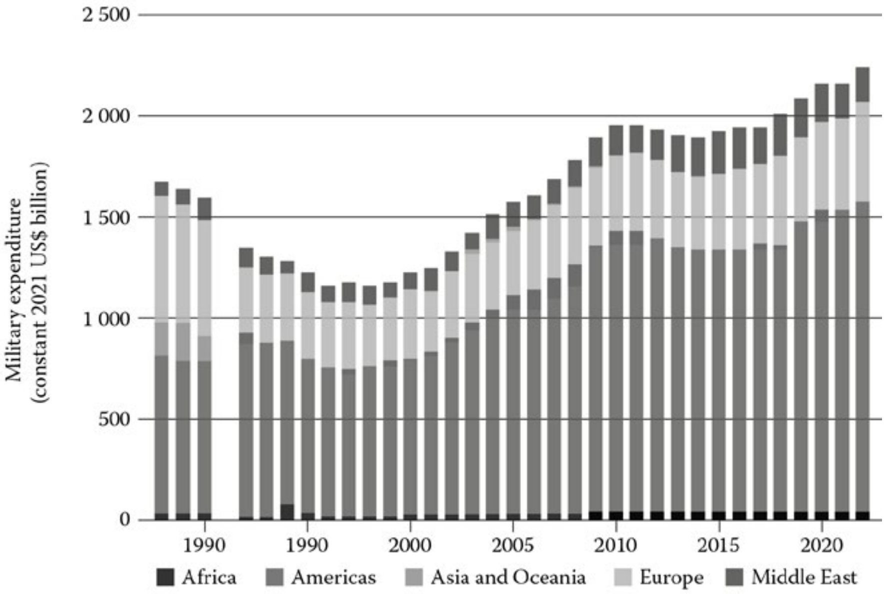
Chart 3. Military expenditures in the world 1990-2022



Source: SIPRI (2023).

In relation to the latent danger that is unleashed with this new arms race, it would be enough to take into account that, of the total world inventory of some 12,512 nuclear warheads in January 2023, around 9,576 were in military arsenals for potential use, 86 more than in January 2022. Of these, an estimated 3,844 warheads were deployed on missiles and aircraft, and about 2,000, almost all belonging to Russia or the United States, remained on high operational alert, which means that were installed on missiles or retained in air bases that housed nuclear bombers.

Among the most significant elements of the structural crisis of capitalism in the last thirty years, the financialization of the economy stands out, a phenomenon that is reflected in financial and stock market speculation, as a way of rapid, although very risky, enrichment in the face of the trend decreasing rate of profit of the system, which has been observed in recent years. Today the financial capital that circulates in stock markets around the world is significantly different from that which participates in the real economy. Proof of this is that, in 2020, speculative capital was estimated to reach around USD 1.2 billion, a figure approximately 20 times higher than the world's GDP.[61]

The banking crisis currently raging in the developed world is one of the most serious consequences of the increased risks posed by financialization, given that around half of US banks are potentially insolvent.

These realities aggravate the vulnerability of developing countries, especially the poorest, and constitute an additional example of the unsustainability of the current international economic order.

The crisis has a concrete expression, first of all, through international monetary-financial flows, which are controlled by financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, created to ensure the dominance of the dollar in the monetary system. international, to strengthen the domination of international economic relations based on the interests of the former colonial powers, and to guarantee the functioning of the economy through the

[61] According to IDB, speculative capital in operations at the end of 2022 reached 618 billion dollars.

granting of conditional credits, subject to compliance with the neoliberal policy imposed more than thirty years ago on through the so-called Washington Consensus. These credits give rise to high external debt, especially among developing countries, and the domination of their external finances by international financial organizations created by capitalism as a control mechanism.

Currently, although it is perceived that an abrupt de-dollarization in the world economy will not occur in the short term, when international reserves are still 59 percent covered in that currency, elements are observed that point to the logical need for a process that puts an end to the dominance of the dollar and that it accelerates in the near future.

External indebtedness and debt service payments have become significant brakes on development. In practice, they are mechanisms of slavery or servitude from which the majority of the economies of the South cannot free themselves. The rise of vulture funds, or investment funds that specialize in buying sovereign debt securities at a discount and then prosecute a country before a court accepted by the country issuing the debt, is a mechanism of extortion and a practice of banditry that should be outlawed in national jurisdictions and internationally.

According to data from the World Bank, the external debt of 121 low- and middle-income countries today reaches nine trillion 296 billion USD, 26 percent of Gross National Income, and grew 2.16 times between 2010 and 2021, a which is added that the payment of the service of that debt increased from 9 to 14 percent of the value of the exports of those countries.

Given these figures, the policy of developed countries with the so-called Debt Service Suspension Initiative of 2020 and 2021 only managed to benefit forty-eight countries with USD 8.9 billion, which, however, had to pay another 99 billion, which represented 4 percent of its Gross National Income.

The current indebtedness of developing countries is highlighted by the notable growth of short-term debt, with private creditors and denominated in bonds. At this moment, the so-called Global South is doomed to the outbreak of an external debt crisis, similar to what happened in the 1980s since, according to the IMF, today twenty-seven countries are at risk of suspending debt payments and Another 26 are under surveillance by the agency for this reason.

As a result of the crisis itself, to which is added the disruptive impact of COVID 19 and, more recently, the war in Ukraine, there has been a notable increase in the prices of food, raw materials and raw materials in international trade. and fuels. Most of the production and marketing of all these products is under the control of transnational companies, which impose monopoly prices due to the fall in supply and openly speculate in the market, thus contributing to the rise of the inflation rate. Worldwide. As a result of the crisis and the policy applied by developed countries, UNCTAD estimates that in 2022, eighty-one countries paid an additional USD 241 billion to be able to face debt payments and high prices for basic supplies. while in 2019-2021, sixty-two countries paid more for debt service than what they allocated to address the public health of the population.

For years now, international cooperation by developed countries has not fulfilled its commitments. In fact, of the agreement to dedicate 0.7 percent of GDP annually as ODA, it has never been possible to exceed 0.3 percent. On the other hand, South-South cooperation schemes have been weakened by the lack of resources and the lack of political will of many rulers. Exceptions in this case have been the ALBA-TCP and the Petrocaribe scheme in Latin America and the Caribbean, the cooperation programs carried out by Cuba in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, to mention some of them, as well as the Belt and Road initiative promoted by China. The first are expressions of South-South Cooperation, which strengthen the self-sustainability of developing countries without giving up their ties and necessary interaction with Northern countries.

To all of the above we must add the environmental crisis that continues to advance, without compliance with the international agreements adopted in this regard. In this way, the emission of greenhouse gases continues and 2023 is expected to be one of the eight hottest years in history, while the use of fossil fuels for electricity generation has increased. In 2021, generation with renewable sources of final energy reached only 17.7 percent.

The social impact of the economic crisis, together with the consequences of the pandemic, war conflicts and the impact of climate change on many countries, is expressed today in a setback of the limited progress achieved in previous years in multiple indicators. According to a 2022 United Nations report, 10 percent of the world's population suffers from hunger and 733 million people do not have electricity in their homes; extreme poverty affected between 657 and 676 million people; By mid-2022, 2.8 billion human beings had not received a single dose of the COVID 19 vaccine and the income of the poorest 20 percent of people only reached 2 percent of the total, while the top 1 percent rich, captured 22 percent.

Until today, the international economic order, far from being transformed in the sense proposed by developing countries in the Declaration and Program of Action of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), forty years ago, has been modified towards a more adverse and hostile to the economic and social conditions of the development of people. Exclusion, the disadvantages for developing countries, the concentration of wealth, unequal exchange, energy insecurity, the progressive deterioration of the terms of trade, enslaving debt and the encouragement of unsustainable production and consumption patterns in countries developed countries, far from being mitigated, have worsened.

The proposals presented below are not intended to constitute absolute recipes, nor do they reflect all the aspirations that for decades have emanated from pronouncements by the governments of developing countries, and from political and social forces and movements, both in countries of the South and of the North. Nor should they be assumed as parts of a single and comprehensive package in the style of what was attempted at the time with the Program of Action for a New International Economic Order. They are suggestions for action taken from various sources and without a conciliation process. To a certain extent, they are ambitious, but at the same time realistic, if the aim is to move towards a more just and sustainable economic order, if the will of the developed countries can be summoned, if the countries that make up the Group of 77 and China ensure the degree of unity and political determination required to advance them and whether the United Nations can be achieved in playing the role with which the Organization was conceived.

The possibility of moving forward with these proposals must recognize the specific interests and common objectives that the various countries within the G77 and China may share, and be consolidated in a climate of peace, which recognizes the independence and sovereignty of the countries, and which guarantees non-interference in their internal affairs, free from the pretensions of imposing economic, political and ideological systems as a condition for economic relations between nations.

The proposals are divided into two parts: those aimed at directly correcting elements of the international economic order; and those that focus specifically on the future activity of the Group of 77 and China.

THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER

1. Just like four decades ago, the possibility of overcoming the crisis and the capitalist policies that generate it must start from the preservation of peace, without which nothing will be possible. It is the way to make rational and sustainable use of the immense capacity that the human race has achieved to create wealth. It is essential to stop the new arms race that has been unleashed, especially in the last fifteen years, and denounce the enrichment of the military-industrial complex of the NATO member countries, the main beneficiaries of the current wars. The solution to conflicts between countries and within each country must be achieved through negotiation and not through the use of force.

2. The material and monetary resources that can be freed from the brakes of this absurd race in the war industry and the reduction of appalling expenditures on military inventory, could be easily enough to provide the necessary capital that developing countries require to boost their progress. , to eradicate the external debt crisis, to eliminate hunger, to ensure sustainable health systems, to guarantee a dynamic role for the development of science and technology as fundamental components of development, or to adopt mitigation and adaptation measures that are demanded for developing countries in the fight against climate change.

3. Create an independent commission to examine whether the WTO in its twenty-five years of existence has complied with the principles of the Marrakesh Agreement, by which it was created. In order to reduce the large technological, productive and income differences between the countries of the North and those of the South, a strategic insertion of the latter in international trade is necessary, based on infrastructure investment policies, strategic subsidies, financial regulations, technology transfer standards, a flexible patent system and active industrial policies that give priority to high value-added industries. To achieve this, it is necessary to overcome and radically transform the rules, restrictions and regulations promoted by the WTO and the various multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements that hinder the capacity for action and undermine the sovereign rights of developing countries. The right to development of countries cannot be constrained by the interests of foreign investors in those countries. It is necessary to pay attention again to the need for a code of conduct for transnational companies or foreign direct investment, which addresses the concerns identified in the 1970s and 1980s, and at the same time relies on the experience accumulated in the last thirty years. It is essential to generate mechanisms that allow us to confront policies based on the overexploitation of the workforce, discrimination and predation of natural resources, together with the destruction of the environment.

4. Greater coherence and genuine commitment must be required between special and differential treatment and the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which offers a starting point for understanding an approach of the trade-climate nexus that takes development into account.

5. It is necessary to test an alternative financial system that moves towards a process of de-dollarization in the international economy, with the use of national currencies of various countries or new currencies of their own, such as what is proposed today by BRICS. In this sense, digital globalization today allows us to advance more quickly in the search for options that rely on technological innovation.

6. More active participation must be guaranteed within the international financial organizations of developing countries that today play an important role as recipients and issuers of international financing; as well as promoting greater access for developing nations to multilateral financing without the current costs implied by strong conditionality in terms of economic policies. This involves, among other things, the review of the criteria for access to financing based on parameters linked to the income level practiced by international institutions. Likewise, a consensual strategy is proposed aimed at ensuring that developed

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8. Special attention must be given to the fight against the financialization of the economy based on stock market speculation, a factor that leads to the outbreak of crises, where State funds are then demanded to protect the irresponsible speculators who caused it - with public resources that generates the population–, as is often the case with the most recent banking crises. This latest trend in public spending is completely illegitimate and must be denounced.

9. An “international” lender of last resort must be created to address liquidity crises, while strengthening and expanding the global financial safety net with new provisions and mechanisms.

10. An “international” lender of last resort must be created to address liquidity crises, while strengthening and expanding the global financial safety net with new provisions and mechanisms.

11. The countries of the South must unite political will to establish a united front and achieve common strategies to effectively confront the problem of external debt. A country-by-country approach to multilateral lending is inadequate in a world where most of the financial challenges facing developing countries are the result of crisis processes. A coordinated and comprehensive approach is needed to address the current debt crisis; instead of short-term and limited actions, which favor partial moratoriums and emergency loans. A coordinated action could lead to the release and channeling of resources to overcome the structural traps that lock the countries of the South in a situation of underdevelopment and dependency.

12. Work must be done to establish a multilateral legal framework for debt restructuring that facilitates the timely and orderly resolution of debt crises with the participation of all official (bilateral and multilateral) and private creditors. The framework should allow for temporary stays, litigation suspensions, exchange and capital controls and non-performing loans to protect the ability of debtor countries to meet their economic and social obligations to their people during a debt crisis.

13. A multilateral political commitment should be promoted to outlaw investment funds that specialize in buying sovereign debt securities at a discount and then prosecute a country before a court accepted by the debt-issuing country, as a way to protect developing countries from this abusive practice and contrary to the sovereign rights of each country.

14. It will also be very useful to establish a publicly accessible registry of data on the debt of developing countries, following the UNCTAD Principles on Responsible Borrowing and Sovereign Borrowing.

15. Debt sustainability assessments should comprehensively integrate sustainable development, long-term financing needs and climate investments into each country’s assessment, including for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

16. Expert group initiatives should be supported to collectively analyze the debt situation of

Southern countries, such as the "Global Expert Review on Debt, Nature and Climate."

17. The creation of a fair, transparent, timely and binding multilateral framework for the resolution of debt crises must be demanded and promoted, which safeguards the interests of indebted countries and not only the interests of lenders.

18. Debt cancellation is the only reasonable response to the current debt crisis facing many Southern countries, also a way to prevent the Southern debt crisis from becoming a global crisis.

19. Increase public financing for development and adaptation to climate change. Promote development financing commitments. Increase the capitalization of multilateral development banks to provide development financing on concessional or at least favorable terms.

20. Increase public financing for development and adaptation to climate change. Promote development financing commitments. Increase the capitalization of multilateral development banks to provide development financing on concessional or at least favorable terms.

21. Reducing the number of people suffering from hunger must be addressed humanitarianally as a priority policy to be promoted internationally. In this sense, even today it is necessary to fight so that the land provides more food and ensures the livelihood of those who work it. To achieve this, it is essential to implement agrarian reforms that address unproductive large estates, together with technical assistance programs that increase the productivity of agricultural work and contribute to the preservation of the environment. The transfer of technology must be guaranteed and monopolistic practices in the production, certification, marketing and use of seeds must be broken.

22. Along with the fight to achieve an increase in food production, it is necessary to guarantee the access of developing countries to energy sources and renewable energy sources, ensuring control by the State of the natural resources of countries, and also guaranteeing the protection of the environment. For this purpose, international financing and the essential technologies must be facilitated to carry out the energy transition of developing countries.

23. To achieve development goals, developing countries need to rely on international cooperation, South-South cooperation and economic integration. In relation to international cooperation, it is necessary to resolve the historical non-compliance with Official Development Assistance commitments by the vast majority of developed countries, with binding and effective measures. It is necessary to demand that at least the commitment to contribute, as ODA, 0.7 percent of GDP is met, ensuring at the same time that the real and effective content of that aid is not mediated. Palliative programs such as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals 2030 should also be supported, even when they do not reach or are designed to eliminate the deeper causes that hinder development processes.

24. South-South cooperation is also a necessity for the countries of the South, which can be promoted with a flow of resources that are not necessarily monetary that allow exchanges of technology, provision of medical and educational services, as well as engineering services and cooperative productions, among others. others. In this direction, it is also necessary to promote development banking in the countries of the South, under their leadership and control, taking into account the examples of Banco del Alba and the New Bank of BRICS.

The Group of 77 and China

In the already cited book by Fidel Castro and directed especially at the work of the Non-Aligned Movement when it held its Seventh Summit in New Delhi, India, in 1983, the author expresses in the last paragraph of the Epilogue: «We have never characterized by resigned submission or defeatism in the face of difficulties [...]. In this same spirit and with this same determination, we must be ready to fight the most colossal, legitimate, dignified and necessary battle for the life and future of our people.

It is clear that the Group of 77 and China plays today, and has played for many years, an irreplaceable role in representing developing countries and as the broadest and most representative grouping of the countries of the South. His current career, often in harmony with the Non-Aligned Movement, has been crucial in defining basic concepts of the international debate around international economic relations and many of the concepts recognized by the United Nations, even when these They fail to materialize or be implemented due to the resistance of developed countries. Based on this trajectory and responsibility, practical and concrete action proposals for the Group's actions are suggested below:

1. Regularize the celebration of the South Summit every five years, in order to adopt and/or update the Group's political platform at the highest level.
2. Strengthen, as appropriate, the teams in charge of following the broad substantive agenda of the G77 and China in each multilateral headquarters where it operates.
3. Coordinate training and technical assistance spaces for the Group's experts on topics of high technical complexity and specialization, taking advantage of the potential of Southern countries and organizations and institutions related to it.
4. Strengthen, as appropriate, support teams in capitals to react in a timely manner to changing scenarios.
5. Develop more proactive strategies with a longer-term projection for the interests of the South, with coordinated actions in all the chapters where the Group operates.
6. Use and promote in a more intensive and deliberate manner collaboration with the Group of institutions or think tanks of the South – for example, Third World Network, Progressive International, or relevant civil society groups –, with a view to informing and serve as a reference for the development of negotiating proposals in the different areas where it operates.
7. Update and relaunch the role of the South Center, in order to strengthen its capacities for intellectual and purposeful support.
8. Undertake an analysis of the role of institutions such as UNCTAD and UNIDO, so that they renew and expand their actions in strengthening institutional frameworks and public policies in support of developing countries.
9. The Group of 77 and China must propose a strategy for the defense, promotion and support of demonstrably competent candidates from the South for senior positions in organizations directly linked to development.
10. Continue to revitalize greater coherence, coordination and feedback between the Chapters of the Group of 77 and China in their different headquarters.
11. Increase the coordination and internal coherence of the Group between its different areas of action in each Chapter where it operates.12. Revitalizar y fortalecer el papel del Comité de Coordinación Conjunto MNOAL-G77. Incrementar la sinergia, la coherencia y el activismo entre ambas agrupaciones.
13. Promote periodic meetings of ministers and other high authorities of the Group, as appropriate, in order to carry out assessments in technical areas of interest for the development agenda, project the strategic actions of the Group and strengthen South-South cooperation in these spheres.
14. Establish the Day of the Group of 77 and China – for example, June 15 –, in reference to the signing of the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries", at the

end of the first session of UNCTAD, in 1964). This would allow us to highlight each year the role, relevance and work of the Group inside and outside of it; promote their unity, identity and solidarity; and contribute to its greater visibility and impact.

15. Improve the website of the Group of 77 and China, adapting it to the most current designs and standards, without losing the wealth of valuable information it contains. Update information regarding chapters outside of New York. Create and develop the presence and identity of the Group on the main social networks.
16. Recapitalize the Pérez Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation (FFPG) with the purpose of increasing its support for economic and technical cooperation activities between developing countries, seeking to increase the donor base.

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