
CELAC Seeks Realistic Goals to Address Poverty among Bad Omens

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The heads of state and government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) consider the eradication of extreme poverty as its primary goal to boost economic growth, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the officials told reporters Wednesday.

Poverty in the region remains at 28.1 percent, the same level of 2012, and continues to affect 167 million people, 71 million of them in a situation of destitution in a region of 623 million, according to a recent report by ECLAC.

After joint economic growth of only 1.1 percent in 2014, “2015 will still be a difficult year where the expected growth will not exceed 2.2 percent,” said the Mexican Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Alicia Barcena.

The leaders stressed the summit’s position on the urgency of CELAC to consolidate and adopt clear, verifiable targets, as proposed by summit host Luis Guillermo Solis and Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa.

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet said that the reduction of poverty and inequality is a complex challenge and an obstacle to progress in the region.

Other leaders called for greater regional cooperation to combat drug trafficking and organized crime and to promote more trade, among other issues.

Apart from the main topic of the summit, the heads of state and government also will focus on a series of documents of a "broad nature," the Costa Rican Deputy Foreign Minister, Alejandro Solano told reporters.

Special statements cover a variety of issues, from the fight against terrorism, corruption and the control of small weapons, to combat bullying or the search for a common position on climate change.

In political terms, according to Solano, the content covers issues such as respect for human rights in the region or a new call on the United States to lift the economic embargo on Cuba in the midst of re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

Thanks to the thaw between Havana and Washington, the Summit of the Americas that is to be held on April 1 in Panama will be "historic" with a "united continent," said Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela.

The third CELAC summit which is being held Wednesday and Thursday has been convened under the theme "Building Together" with poverty eradication as its main objective.

According to officials, 21 presidents or heads of government of the 33 member countries are attending.
