Executive Summary

2015 is a crucial year for the global development agenda. The deadline for the MDGs launched in 2000 by the United Nations is approaching and negotiations to define new goals (Sustainable Development Goals, ODSs) have entered the final phase. The conclusions of the Rio+20 process have highlighted the need to include three dimensions of sustainability (economic viability, respect for the environment and social equity) at the centre of the new post-2015 global agenda alongside the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Yet, given their very ambition to serve as global goals, the SDGs have a weak anchor to regional and subregional levels. While the resonance of the SDGs in different contexts has been relatively marginal in the design of the new targets, this will certainly become a crucial issue in the implementation phase, particularly for their harmonization within national policy frameworks, which will require to build new bases of legitimacy in concrete realities.

In recent decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has become a middle-income region with a growing degree of regional and global integration. While most countries have shown progress in meeting some of the MDGs (e.g. reducing hunger and child mortality and gender equality), high rates of poverty, access to education and health services, environmental sustainability and climate change responses remain key challenges for many governments.

Given the new regional landscape and the imminent transition in the international development agenda, this seems like an appropriate moment to launch a reflection on the possible scope and impact of the new global development agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. With the aim of identifying gaps, opportunities and priorities that could enhance coordination efforts and encourage shared initiatives, the Institute for International Development at the University of Sheffield (SIID) in collaboration with the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the United Nations (UN) in Ecuador launched the consultation "Latin American Perspectives on the Post-2015 Development Agenda". The event was held in Quito, Ecuador in April 2015 and brought together 40 between scholars from different disciplines, experts from international organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with regional reach, community leaders and representatives of government and intergovernmental institutions, from 18 countries in the region. The consultation was conducted over two days and used a set of deliberative and participatory methods to facilitate dialogue and consensus-building.

The event was not a consultation about the SDGs themselves; the final draft of the goals was rather used as a starting point for a strategic and critical reflection on the impact of the new agenda at the regional level. The value of this exercise and its results is to offer regional interpretative lenses to navigate the contents of the 17 objectives and 169 goals contained in the new global agenda. These lenses are not arbitrary, but the product of a collective process of reflection and definition of consensus among a group of experts in various areas of development.

In this final report, we present the main results of the consultation as well as some more general conclusions about their significance for the implementation of the post-2015 agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean. In particular, the consultation helped to identify ten key thematic and crosscutting issues critical for the implementation of the new global agenda in the region:
1. **Economic viability**: there is an agreement on the identification of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth as the main engine of development, through increased productivity, diversification, progressive taxation reforms, improved infrastructure, and better access to quality education. Also democratic institutions should be strengthened as well as the fight against parallel economies. In this area, the gaps in the SDGs include the design and strengthening of counter-cyclical policies, of universal systems of social protection, and mechanisms to resolve conflicts related to the implementation of these development programs. Among the regional barriers, short-termism and inefficiency of public policies and the absence of a meritocratic bureaucracy were mentioned, alongside inappropriate legal frameworks to fight organized crime and the commodification of natural resources.

2. **Social Equity**: Human rights, gender equality, ethnic and racial diversity, and intergenerational equity should be the guiding principles of the SDGs. Specific policy priorities for Latin America and the Caribbean should include universal social protection, the reduction of violence and insecurity and implementation of quality education. Among the important issues that remain off the agenda are collective and cultural rights and the rights of refugees and displaced persons. An important regional barrier is represented by the limitations and weaknesses of the states to design and implement public policies. In this respect, more and better planning and governance would be needed to deepen decentralization and coordination between the national and the local levels and develop more balanced intersectoral approaches for the implementation of the social agenda.

3. **Environmental Respect**: Universal access to water resources, combating climate change and the protection and restoration of degraded and fragile ecological regions were identified as the main issues to be prioritized across the region. Among regional barriers, the inherent tensions between an exporter and extractive economic model and environmental sustainability were brought into focus. In terms of public policy, it was highlighted the need to reform the rules about environmental and resource management, introducing a constitutional framework for the regulation of water resources, comprehensive and multidisciplinary environmental assessments of mega projects, incentive-based mechanisms for conservation and processes of free, prior and informed consultation. Among the gaps in the SDGs, the absence of an explicit reference to the rights of nature stood out.

4. **The weakness of the state**, both in terms of institutional and bureaucratic inefficiency and the lack or inconsistency of public policy or political will of governments, remains the main barrier to development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. The SDGs represent an opportunity both to deepen, building on past achievements, as well as to innovate the development agendas and practices in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region is witnessing great strides since the MDGs were launched. The new framework can take advantage of an agenda under construction to encourage a more sustainable and equitable development path.

6. In Latin America it is no longer possible to talk about development without talking about rights. The two agendas - development and protection of human rights - must go together and find more explicit forms of harmonization.
7. The new agenda embeds unresolved tensions between development goals and means of achieving them, which are now expressed in the language of rights. One of the most evident contradictions is between socio-economic development and growth on the one hand, and environmental protection on the other.

8. The State is regaining its position as key development actor in Latin America. The design of legislative frameworks and appropriate public policies, and institutional capacities to implement development programs are key elements for change.

9. Although many of the issues raised require subregional, national and sub-national contextualization, it is possible to define new opportunities for joint development agendas across the region and to strengthen existing interregional governance systems.

10. The SDGs open an opportunity to define new interdisciplinary research agendas, particularly from the triangular cooperation between academia, civil society and the public sector.