Toward an Agenda of Regional Integration and Science and Innovation Policies for Sustainable and Sovereign Development in Latin America

The co-chairs of the Inter-American Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS) and the Academies of Sciences whose countries participate in the Latin American Network of Innovation Agencies (RELAI)[1], gathered within the framework of the meeting "The Science-Innovation Interface in Latin America", recognize that strengthening the links between scientific production and innovation systems constitutes a central element for sustainable development, industrial competitiveness, and the sovereignty of the countries in the region.

It is widely acknowledged that technological progress and the capacity to innovate are critical determinants of long-term economic growth, productive diversification, and qualified integration into global value chains. In this context, robust national innovation systems, characterized by effective interaction among universities, research centers, the productive sector, government, and civil society, are essential to transform scientific knowledge into tangible socioeconomic benefits.

Science forms the foundation of knowledge that supports innovation; fundamentally, there is no true innovation without science, as both exist in a deeply complementary relationship. This includes fundamental science, whose long-term contributions are essential for disruptive innovation, talent formation, and technological sovereignty. However, its effective contribution to development depends on the existence of institutional mechanisms, public policies, and instruments capable of enabling the translation of scientific results into technologies, production processes, and innovative products and services. This translation should complement, rather than replace, sustained support for fundamental research. Evidence shows that economies that invest continuously and strategically in research and development, and that foster cooperation between science and industry, exhibit greater economic dynamism, productive sophistication, and resilience to external shocks.

Nevertheless, Latin America faces persistent structural challenges, including insufficient levels of investment in science, technology, and innovation, as well as limited coordination among the various actors in the innovation system, resulting in significant dependence on external technologies. These challenges are further compounded by the fact that asymmetries affecting the region are not limited to North-South dynamics, but also reflect profound internal inequalities across ethnic, territorial, and social dimensions within and among our countries. These limitations affect the capacity to generate added value, restrict technological competitiveness, and compromise the strategic autonomy of countries in the region.

In this scenario, Science Academies play a unique role as independent institutions grounded in scientific excellence and committed to the public interest. They are well positioned to act as bridges between the scientific community, policymakers, and the productive sector, supported by the best available scientific evidence. At the same time, governmental innovation agencies perform a central function in the formulation and implementation of policies, the financing of strategic initiatives, and the promotion of coordination among actors in the innovation ecosystem. Structured, continuous, and institutionalized dialogue between these agencies and the Academies has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of public policies by aligning scientific and technological priorities with national and regional needs, while also strengthening the evidence base that supports decision-making.

[1] Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

Accordingly, we emphasize the importance of promoting the institutional strengthening of the science-innovation interface through the creation and consolidation of mechanisms that encourage cooperation among universities, research institutes, companies, and government, including open innovation platforms, collaborative networks, and technology transfer environments.

We recommend the sustained expansion of public and private investment in research and development, from fundamental science to applied research and technological innovation, recognizing it as a strategic investment for economic, social, and sustainable development, grounded in the understanding that driving innovation inherently requires the robust advancement of underlying scientific research.

We propose the establishment of permanent channels of interaction between the region's Science Academies and members of RELAI, including the participation of Academies in advisory bodies, the joint development of strategic agendas, and collaboration in the evaluation of programs and funding mechanisms.

Moreover, as the deployment of AI accelerates, we emphasize the need to promote a culture of evidence-based innovation by strengthening the capacity for analysis, monitoring, and evaluation of innovation systems.

It is also essential to invest in the training of highly qualified human resources with interdisciplinary profiles that integrate different fields of science and technology, and generate real impact on innovation, entrepreneurship, and public policies.

We highlight the importance of fostering mission-oriented innovation approaches aimed at addressing major contemporary challenges such as health, biodiversity and climate emergencies, energy transition, and food security, mobilizing the region's scientific potential to lead responses to complex and highly relevant social problems.

We underscore the importance of intensifying regional cooperation through the sharing of scientific infrastructure, the dissemination of best practices, and the development of joint initiatives, contributing to the reduction of asymmetries and to the consolidation of a Latin American agenda for science, technology, and innovation.

The signatory Academies reaffirm their commitment to proactively promote the interface between science and innovation by contributing qualified advice to governments and society, fostering regional and international dialogue, and supporting initiatives that strengthen the scientific and technological sovereignty of Latin American countries.

We reiterate that strengthening this interface is not only an economic imperative but also a fundamental requirement for building more just, resilient, and sustainable societies, capable of generating sustainable prosperity, reducing inequalities, and asserting their autonomy on the global stage.

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