

CRES 2018 DECLARATION

To all men and women of Latin America and the Caribbean:

The sweeping changes, affecting the region and the world in crisis, call us to fight for a radical change; for a more democratic, more equal, more sustainable, and fairer society.

A century ago, the students of the Cordoba Reform proclaimed that “The griefs that remain are the liberties we still lack”. This message cannot be forgotten, because the grief is still here, and it takes many forms; for we still see poverty, inequality, injustice, and social violence in the region.

Just as a century ago, the university today is in favor of science with a humanistic perspective, and in favor of a technology that is fair, and provides for the common good and the rights of all men and women.

The Third Regional Conference on Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean endorses the agreements reached in the Declarations adopted in the Regional Conference held in La Habana (Cuba) in 1996, the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris (France) in 1998, and the Regional Conference on Higher Education held in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) in 2008 while reasserting the principle that considers that Higher Education is a common public good, a universal human right which should be ensured by all States. These principles are based on the deep conviction that the access to, and use and democratization of knowledge is a collective, strategic social asset essential to guarantee the basic human rights and the wellbeing of our peoples, the construction of full citizenship, the social emancipation, and the regional integration with solidarity of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We hereby reassert the autonomy that allows higher education institutions to play a critical and proactive role in society without the constraints imposed by the governments in office, religious beliefs, the market or special interests. The defense of higher education institutions’ autonomy is an una-



voidable contemporary responsibility for the Latin America and Caribbean region, and it entails, at the same time, the defense of the higher education' social commitment.

It is important to think that education, science, technology and arts will solve the current human pressing issues, but this is not enough. They should become the means to freedom and equality, without any distinction based on social status, gender, ethnicity, religion or age. If the dialogue of knowledges is to be universal, it should be many-sided and based on an equal footing; only then will the dialogue among cultures be enabled.

The economic, technological and social differences existing between the North and the South, and the internal divide among States are becoming more exacerbated, rather than disappearing. The international system promotes the free exchange of goods, while applying exclusionary migration regulations. The high rate of emigration of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean shows the lack of opportunities and inequalities affecting, above all, the young.

Gender inequality manifests itself in the pay gap, in the discrimination in the workplace and in the difference in the access to decision-making positions in the public or private sector. The worst indicators of poverty and social exclusion are seen among Indigenous and Afro-descendant women.

Science, arts and technology should become the pillars for cooperation tending towards an equal development of the region with solidarity, based on processes that lead to the consolidation of an independent and politically sovereign block.

The weak regulation of foreign supply has intensified the transnationalization processes and the market-oriented view of higher education; thus, precluding, or in many cases, restraining the actual social right to education. This trend has to be reverted and we urge all the States of Latin America and the Caribbean to establish strict regulatory systems for higher education as well as for other educational levels.

Education is not a good to be traded. That is why we ask our States not to sign bilateral or multilateral free trade treaties which consider education as a for-profit service, or that foster the commodification of any level of education. We also request them to increase the resources allotted to education, science and technology.

States have to assume the inalienable commitment to regulate and evaluate public and private institutions and degrees, in all their modalities, to ensure



universal access to higher education as well as retention and graduation, while offering quality training that promotes inclusion and local and regional relevance.

Similarly to what happened in 1918, “rebellion has broken out” in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in a world where the international financial system is concentrated in powerful minorities that push large majorities into the margins of exclusion, social vulnerability and job insecurity.

In spite of all the great achievements attained in the development of knowledge, research, and academic and popular knowledge and wisdom, a significant sector of the population, both in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the world, does not have access to basic social rights, to employment, health, drinking water or education.

In this 20th Century, millions of children, youngsters, adults and the elderly are excluded from current social, cultural, economic and technological progress. Furthermore, regional and global inequality is so strong that in many situations and contexts, there are communities which have no access to higher education, because it continues to be a privilege and not a right as the young students of 1918 longed for.

In the Centennial of the Reform, we cannot remain oblivious to human suffering or our historical mandate. We cannot continue to be indifferent to the collective future, to the fight for the heroic truth, and to the transcendental desire for human freedom. Higher Education should be forged by the local, state, national and international leadership, as they are fully represented here. If we bear this in mind, it will be possible to begin a new and historical transformation of higher education with social commitment and responsibility to guarantee the full exercise of the right to free, public higher education, with wide access.

In agreement with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal of the Agenda 2030 adopted by UNESCO, we urge the States to promote a strong policy to widen the provision of higher education, to carry out an in-depth review of the procedures for access to the system, and to develop affirmative action policies making no distinctions based on gender, ethnicity, social class and/or disability; to ensure universal access to, retention and graduation from higher education.

In this context, higher education institutions should accept all colors, and recognize the interculturality of our countries and communities so that higher education becomes a means for equal access and social promotion, and not a sphere where privileges continue to exist. We cannot remain silent in the face of the deprivation and pain suffered by men and women, as stated relentlessly by Mario Benedetti, “there is nothing more deafening than silence”.

A century ago, the students of the Cordoba Reform strongly denounced that in Cordoba and in an unfair and tyrannical world, the universities had become “*the faithful reflection*



of our decadent societies, which continue to exhibit a dismal parade of senile immobility. Many years have gone by, and this message for the future is challenging us and piercing us like an ethical arrow that questions our practices. How do we contribute to the creation of a fair order, to social equality, to harmony among nations and to human emancipation?; how do we contribute to the overcoming of the scientific and technological gap of our production structures?; what is our contribution to the forging of the identity of the peoples, human integrity, gender equality and free discussion of ideas so as to guarantee the strength of our local, national and regional cultures?

That is why we truly believe that our institutions should be actively engaged in the much-needed social, cultural, political, artistic, economic and technological transformation which is essential today. We have to educate the leaders of tomorrow on the value of social awareness and the desire to promote Latin American bonds. Let us forge working communities willing to learn and build a critical knowledge where the dialogue among students and professors is the rule. Let us build democratic learning environments where the vital manifestation of the personality develops, and where artistic, scientific and technological creations are expressed without any boundaries.

The higher education to be created should fulfill its cultural and ethical calling with full autonomy and freedom; thus, contributing to practical, political definitions which shall influence the changes needed and desired by our communities. Higher education should be the emblematic institution symbol of the national critical awareness of our Latin American and Caribbean region.

Higher education institutions are called upon to fulfill a crucial role in the promotion and strengthening of the Latin American and Caribbean democracies, rejecting all dictatorships and any violation of public freedoms, human rights and all forms of authoritarianism in the region.

We feel our solidarity with all young people from Latin America, the Caribbean and the world, whose life we celebrate, and we also recognize in their fights and dreams, our own aspirations in favor of the social, political and cultural transformation.

The task that falls upon us is not simple, but great is the cause that is lit by the brightness of its truth. It is, as anticipated in the Liminal Manifesto, a desire to *"become a glorious omen or it may have the virtue of a call to the supreme fight for liberty"*.

We call upon all men and women of Latin America and the Caribbean to look into the future and work relentlessly for a permanent educational reform, and for the rebirth of the culture and the life of our societies and peoples.



THEMATIC AXES

Higher education as part of the education system in Latin America and the Caribbean

Higher education is today an aspiration of young people graduating from high schools and of many adults who did not use to have access to this educational level. The increasing demand for access to higher education requires the satisfaction of multiple needs, resulting in the diversification of the offer provided through different types of institutions, programs, teaching-learning modalities and training strategies. Today, when discussing higher education, we refer to a wide and diverse set which goes beyond our traditional conception, which used to identify higher education with universities.

In this context, the articulation of higher education with the other educational levels is essential. However, while higher education criticizes the education students received before having access to it, it does not assume the commitment it has, more specifically, in terms of the quality of teachers' training. This is a critical aspect which should be addressed, both by higher education institutions, as well as by public policies: it is necessary for the institutions to give priority to quality training, centered on the current needs of children and adolescents. Moreover, public authorities should be actively involved in the design and implementation of policies that reassess the teaching profession, recognizing its central role, and adequately rewarding educational performance.

Furthermore, the issues related to quality should be addressed in a context of diversity. This requires the definition of quality with the participation of the main social actors, and the establishment of indicators adequate to the training objectives of the institutions, which should incorporate inclusion, diversity and relevance as core values. It is necessary to design policies and mechanisms which are not limited to assessing, but which are determined to promoting quality and support



to the institutions so that they, while in exercise of a responsible autonomy, assume the commitment to steadily advance in the capacity to meet the needs of the students and the social environment surrounding them.

If higher education is to contribute more and more to the wellbeing of the region, it is necessary to promote the articulation of higher education institutions with the different social sectors, and to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for all.

1. Governments and higher education institutions should endeavor to implement agreements, programs and institutional arrangements that recognize knowledge, skills and prior studies, as well as the respective credentials and certifications, acquired in the same or other systems of higher education, in secondary education or in the workplace, fostering initiatives that promote lifelong learning, surpassing the terminal curricula.
2. It is necessary to address the real needs of students from the beginning, based on the expectations demanded by higher education institutions. Processes that facilitate the transition between secondary and higher education should be generated, with vocational, support and leveling programs, through the re-design of curricula.
3. The flexibility of the curricula is essential. It is necessary to review the curricular structures in order to arrange them by competencies, reduce the content in undergraduate studies and expand opportunities in postgraduate studies. The result of this process should produce open educational trajectories (such as the accreditation of modules and not of subjects), and be oriented towards the recognition of verifiable qualifications.
4. States and higher education institutions must develop connective strategies and collaborative programs, at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, guaranteeing the resources for innovation, science, technology and research, and thus avoiding the dissociation between higher education and the productive environment.
5. Accreditation should be based on simultaneous evaluations in those careers within the same area of knowledge, integrating the institutional (financial, administrative and managerial) and academic (professional training) aspects in order to perform comparative analysis. Also, regulatory and evaluation mechanisms of the accreditation agencies, should be established in order to ensure international criteria of credibility and effectiveness.



Higher education, cultural diversity and interculturality in Latin America

The policies and institutions of higher education should proactively contribute to the struggle against all mechanisms generating racism, sexism, xenophobia, and all other forms of intolerance and discrimination. It is essential to guarantee the rights of all sectors of population which may be discriminated due to their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic standing, disability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality or forced displacement. Financial resources and research, teaching, and outreach efforts should be allotted to these purposes.

It is necessary to promote cultural diversity and interculturalism under conditions of mutual respect and equality. The challenge is not just for higher education institutions to include women, people with disabilities, members of Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations and individuals of groups historically discriminated, but to transform the institutions so that they become socially and culturally relevant. These changes should ensure that the worldviews, values, knowledge, wisdoms, linguistic systems, learning methods, and means of production of knowledge of those social groups and peoples are incorporated into higher education institutions.

The epistemology, learning methods, and institutional designs characteristic of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, farming communities, and other sociocultural distinct communities have to be recognized and valued. All these should be guaranteed by adequate quality assurance policies and mechanisms; and to this end, specific indicators should be used. The free and informed participation of representatives of those groups should be fostered.

Education is not just a human right but a right of all the peoples. The Latin American and Caribbean States and societies have a significant historical debt with Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. Although their rights are recognized in several international documents and in most of the national constitutions, there is still a deficit in the effective enjoyment of these rights, even in higher education. The institutions of higher education should guarantee the effective enjoyment of these rights and should educate the population in general, and in particular, their communities against racism and all forms of discrimination and related intolerance.

It is essential to promote and facilitate the learning of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant languages and their effective use in teaching, research and outreach activities. The training of intercultural bilingual teachers for all levels of the educational systems is a priority for higher education.



1. Higher education institutions (HEI) have a legal, ethical, social and political obligation to apply the rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples effectively.
2. Institutions of higher education have an obligation to educate respecting and applying rights against racism and all forms of racial discrimination and related forms of intolerance towards the population in general, and particularly, towards its own teachers, researcERSs, officials and managers, as well as to those who provide professional, scientific and humanistic training.
3. The public and institutional policies of higher education must proactively contribute to dismantle all the mechanisms that generate racism, discrimination and all forms of intolerance that still exist in Latin American societies.
4. It is imperative for public and institutional policies to guarantee not only the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples' rights, but also the rights of all the groups that are frequently discriminated, in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, socio-economic situation, sexual orientation, disability/special abilities and situations of forced displacement. It is unavoidable for higher education institutions to make all the efforts in research, teaching and extension programs required to meet these ends.
5. HEI should promote cultural diversity and inter-culturality in equitable and mutually respectful conditions. The challenge is not only to include Indigenous, African descendant and other culturally differentiated people in the institutions such as they exist now, but to transform these to make them more relevant for cultural diversity. It is imperative to incorporate the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples' knowledge, traditional lore, values, linguistic systems, worldviews, forms of learning, and ways of producing knowledge, and for this to be done with the informed and active participation of these peoples' representatives.
6. Public and institutional policies on higher education should promote and facilitate the learning of native American languages.
7. Higher education public policies and institutional accreditation mechanisms must recognize and value the experiences of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples' educational institutions, their contributions to the resolution of important social problems and their educational innovations. To this end, they must incorporate specific indicators in their definition and ensure the informed and opportune inclusion of these peoples' professionals and representatives in the evaluation and accreditation processes.



Higher education, internationalization and regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean, “ensuring the right to equitable and inclusive quality education” (CEPAL, 2016) is one of the cornerstones supporting the necessary social and economic change. Its achievement is related to the development of competencies allowing the region, its countries and its citizens to act in a relevant manner in complex scenarios, and to be inserted effectively in the knowledge-based world dynamics. This requires changes in the educational systems and their institutions, which should consider cooperation, exchange of knowledge and transference of resources among regions, countries and institutions with solidarity. In the region, internationalization should foster interinstitutional cooperation based on solidarity among equals, with emphasis in South-South cooperation and regional integration. It should promote an intercultural dialogue, respecting the idiosyncrasy and identity of the participating countries, fostering the organization of interuniversity networks, and strengthening the national capacity by means of interinstitutional collaboration and interaction among academic peers at regional and international spheres. This will foster the flow and ownership of knowledge as a strategic social good, favoring the sustainable development of the region and its countries.

In this context, internationalization is a key tool, which is essential to transform higher education, to strengthen the communities, and to promote quality and ownership of teaching, research, and outreach. This favors the training of citizens and professionals, while being respectful of cultural diversity, and committed to intercultural understanding, and a culture of peace, with the capacity to live together and work in the global and local community. The antithesis would be the conception of a market-oriented internationalization which favors the hegemonic and denationalizing interests of globalization.

Compliance with these objectives demands the use of systemic, comprehensive, global strategies cutting across all institutional development policies. Likewise, it is essential to have public policies supporting the internationalization process by means of the establishment of organizational frameworks facilitating regional academic integration, student and teacher mobility, the recognition of international training, the international dimension of academic programs and international cooperation in research, among others.

1. We recognize a humanistic and supportive internationalization that contributes to a greater and better understanding and cooperation between cultures and nations, based on an inter-institutional collaboration based on solidarity and mutual respect.



2. The links between universities and other higher education institutions strengthen, consolidate and nurture the creation of the national capacities of the countries involved. This guarantees the diversity of academic sources in the fields of research and knowledge production, on a regional and global scale.
3. Higher education institutions contribute to the consensual design of projects of nation, with their own educational projects as starting points, committing all their teaching, research and service activities to the process.
4. Internationalization will become a lever for the transformation of the tertiary education sector with systemic, all-embracing, comprehensive and transversal strategies permeating all the institutional development policies with curricular contents and structures.
5. Internationalization is a strategic medium for the production of knowledge with a perspective based on international collaboration. It is a process for the innovation and improvement of the quality and relevance of tertiary education in relation to the development of global and intercultural competences in students.
6. Public and institutional policies are determinant to consolidate the institutionalization of the international dimension of universities and of the three levels of the educational process: the micro (teaching-learning process in the classroom), the medium (structure and curricular content), and the macro (design of institutional policies on teaching, research and dissemination).
7. The international dimension is an intrinsic component of national scientific policies and of the scientific and research development instruments, with collaborative schemes towards regional integration, through:
 - a) the promotion and funding of the internationalization of research,
 - b) the increase and consolidation of the importance of international relationships between researchers,
 - c) the introduction of the international dimension in graduate programs for the training of researchers,
 - d) the improvement of the quality, relevance, productivity and visibility of research.
8. The internationalization of higher education will be consolidated through a regional scientific development policy and strategy, which will coordinate efforts, strengthen resources and multiply programs.
9. The governments of the region need to boost, deepen and consolidate the political will towards regional integration. In relation to higher education, a per-



manent articulation between public and institutional policies is imperative in order to build a regional academic community that respects diversity and simultaneously recognizes the validity of other systems and institutions.

10. In regional higher education it is essential to establish policies, coordinating structures, regional programs and the corresponding financial structure to strengthen and extend the integration efforts, the cooperative work and the programs of the different councils and associations of national, regional and international universities, international organizations, and HEI.
11. It is imperative to increase intraregional student mobility through inclusive initiatives and financing schemes that reach all the countries of the region, enabling the incorporation of disadvantaged students.
12. The pliability of the programs and curricula, their recognition and the coordination of the academic calendars, are basic conditions for the growth of mobility in regional higher education.

The role of higher education ahead of social challenges in Latin American and Caribbean

In view of the social challenges the region faces, education should provide a quality, universal service to the local community so as foster the human development of each environment, articulating tradition and state of the art innovation, promoting the diversity of competencies, skills and knowledge, merging specialized activity with daily life, popular wisdom and authentic ethical and esthetic intelligence in territorial harmony beyond any impact. It is essential to consider all people as unique and unfinished, as facilitators of change and agents of development by generating mechanisms for personal and social growth, and for the establishment of communities. In other words, higher education is the co-creator of knowledge and innovation, transforming them into knowledge that is embodied in the social practices, intellectual independence tools, social transformation and the construction of fairer, more equitable and supportive political structures, and above all, subsidiary to vernacular shared values. The region should promote science for all, critical citizenship and authentic, democratic and transparent governance for an effective construction of re-humanizing territorial relationships with all actors, improving communication among them, and making it possible to select the best contributions, thus generating relationships of co-responsibility which facilitate the wellbeing of the people.



1. The social responsibility of higher education institutions requires a new relationship with society and calls for an innovative transformation of higher education.
2. The limited approach of university social projection and extension, which make them visible as appendices of the central function of student education and knowledge production, should be qualitatively overcome, and the consistent social commitment of higher education to society's new realities should be identified.
3. The social commitment of higher education is based on the promotion of quality education for all. It implies promoting lifelong education, considering the student as a permanent ally of a process in which his/her knowledge and skills are at the service of social transformation for the good of all, especially the most vulnerable sectors.
4. Higher education must profoundly review its actions, in order to guide society and contribute to solve the chronic problems that afflict it. Higher education institutions must commit themselves to develop projects of inclusion, combat against poverty, innovate and promote social entrepreneurship for groups that face diverse situations of vulnerability, in favor of social justice. In this context, the relationship of higher education institutions with society, linked to the common good, highlights the need to operate with all the actors, may they be institutions or persons.
5. The social responsibility of higher education involves developing territorial and transformative commitments, from the perspective of an expanded academic community, in which the graduate is an ally and social transformer. In it, knowledge, training and action are interwoven to achieve a truly fair and sustainable development.
6. Training in higher education institutions is a permanent exercise of re-humanization.
7. Higher education institutions should link up with society to jointly create and design new scenarios for the democratic generation of knowledge, overcoming the disciplinary and academic vision of education.

Scientific and technological research and innovation as the engine of human, social and economic development for Latin America and the Caribbean

There will be no justice in the region if there is no freedom of thought and expression for the society as a whole, and there will be no freedom of thought if our countries do not generate knowledge relevant to their realities and social innovations to transform the primary production export matrix and secondary production import matrix, and to challenge the established order. Higher education institutions should claim sovereignty



to imagine, create, have access to, and apply the knowledge we need for the wellbeing of our societies, as part of their strategic role. One cannot think of a strategy to overcome unfair cognitive gaps without opening new epistemic roads. These new roads require breaking up with the (neo)colonial, (neo)dependent, anthropocentric, racist and patriarchal thought still prevalent in our societies. Only if learning what is known, and the generation of new knowledge are reconciled, if theory and practice go hand in hand, knowledge will support social justice. To understand the dimension of the change required by this epistemic matrix, we have to refer to the management of science and knowledge in the current system in a world favoring accumulation. This management is based on the construction of a hegemonic thought system, in which the exclusive role of science is the accumulation of capital through the production of proprietary technological innovation for commercial purposes. If we are to break up with this logic, we should consider knowledge as a universal human right and a collective right of the people, for it is a social and common public good promoting the sovereignty, wellbeing and emancipation of our societies and the construction of the Latin American and Caribbean integration. In other words, we should recognize that knowledge is the product of the intellectual and experimental heritage of humanity, being therefore a common good, and as a general rule, part of the public domain. This epistemic breakup implies the recognition of the strategic role played by the arts and culture in the production of knowledge with social commitment, and in the fight for cultural sovereignty and multi-cultural integration of the regions.

The political dispute over “which knowledge we want” becomes, at the same time, a political dispute over “which society”, and “which region we wish”. There will be no transformation of knowledge without a change in the historical power relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, there will be no change in the historical power relationships in the region without a transformation of knowledge.

1. Knowledge is a universal human right and a collective right of the peoples, a public and social common asset for well-being, sovereignty and the emancipation of our societies, for the construction of Latin American and Caribbean citizenship.
2. The social function of science and knowledge is rethought in order to guarantee sustainability, peace, preserve cultural diversity, democracy, human coexistence and the reproduction of life.
3. Knowledge is a common resource and a public asset, therefore society has the right to demand the democratization of its access, and make the best use of it. Universal access to the system of science, technology and innovation and effective participation in the generation of knowledge of all actors in the system, guarantee gender and ethnic-racial equity, and equality of peoples and nationalities.



4. The promotion of technological development, responsible scientific research and the construction of inter-institutional knowledge networks, with trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, guarantee quality and theoretical-methodological rigor.
5. The development of sociotechnical innovation ecosystems will sustain itself on the transfer of technology, technological disaggregation and the closing of cognitive gaps.
6. The human, social, economic and cultural development of LAC requires the recovery, re-evaluation and protection of the traditional and ancestral knowledge within the framework of respect for diversity, epistemic equity and the dialogue of knowledge.
7. The impulse towards a knowledge management oriented towards a sovereign, free and collaborative construction of science, to advance in the construction of regional knowledge in a context of greater integration of higher education actors.
8. The region demands new and adequate processes of evaluation, production and dissemination of knowledge, with standards of relevance.
9. Training processes at the graduate level aimed at scientific and technological research in the region will be enhanced with emphasis on social relevance.
10. The strategic use of the intellectual property system is directly linked to the recovery of the public and common sense of knowledge and technologies.

The strategic role of higher education in sustainable development of Latin America and the Caribbean

Sustainable development is a way of thinking that projects man towards a better relationship with the context, a categorical imperative that establishes the ethical value of coexistence in the world. It should respond to the social demands that require efficient and appropriate technical knowledge and its goal should be to overcome the conflicts and situations that affect the social sphere in order to reach common welfare. This premise establishes sustainable thinking as an integrated, complex, inter-disciplinary, universal and transforming social sciences' epistemic construction of high economic, social and environmental content in order to face the crisis of civilization. It views humankind's reality through multidimensional approaches to its problems, intervening in accordance



with risk management towards a better coexistence. Therefore, its principles are based on humanism, the public good, human rights and the platform to guarantee the realization of other rights.

Education is immersed in ethical assessments; therefore, society and education are articulated in an indissoluble construction of a social and complex way of thinking that is expressed through the sustainable development goals, and particularly the 4th goal of the UNESCO Education Agenda 2030. This objective “guarantees an inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Consequently, the dynamics of social thought guide the discussion about higher education under the considerations of sustainable thinking with multidisciplinary approaches. In addition, the dimensions that define its pedagogical performance are those of gratuity, equity, quality, relevant and effective learning, accessibility, employability, gender equality, recognition of differences, and the development of theoretical and practical knowledge in order to promote the Sustainable Development Goals.

Society and higher education based on sustainable thinking must consider the difficulties, especially in the constantly changing current reality, imposed by degrees of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity. It is time for academics, scientists and all members of society to dialogue; it is time to review the institutions’ structures, to innovate in their commitments and ways to achieve them. Higher education’s main goal is to form citizens with sustainable thinking to be the engine of the new society.

Under this interpretation, higher education as a social-strategic public asset, human and universal right, and State obligation in Latin America and the Caribbean, acquires new functions, different values, different challenges, unprecedented commitments and a strategic role in sustainable development. HEI must establish closer links with the contexts to which they belong, so they can be more relevant to and responsible for society. They must participate in social advancement, in the generation of wealth, in a culture of peace, of integration and social identification, in the struggle against hunger and poverty, and the growth of identities. Likewise, it must be proactive in the prevention of climate change and the energy crisis.

These broad and demanding challenges make HEI become strategic organizations for the development of countries, specifically in LAC. It will mainly be these institutions who will contribute to reduce and overcome the gaps that exist in the areas of science, technology, innovation and culture between our countries.

The idea of sustainability as a principle is that the knowledge generated in academic spaces can be introduced, used and adapted to social, economic and environmental goals that benefit all people; to build the mechanisms to live well and have better so-



cities. Higher education can help us learn how to do it through the following actions: (a) optimizing institutional structures, (b) redesigning its mission, objectives, values, governance, and funding; and (c) innovating in order to meet social commitments. Four challenges emerge from this: 1. to become engines for social promotion and mobility; 2. to respond to the new challenges imposed by globalization and knowledge societies upon developing countries to generate their own capacity for scientific and technological production. 3. to connect and integrate themselves in a better way with their own societies; 4. to promote the development of a responsible citizenship committed to social issues, sustainability and the construction of better, more just, equitable and peaceful societies, based on human values and democratic coexistence.

1. The results of debates and discussions on university autonomy must have an impact on its legal status and should be developed within the framework of the Constitution of each of the region's countries.
2. The processes of design, formulation and application of higher education public policies must guarantee academic and financial autonomy and, consequently, the sustainability of higher education institutions.
3. Investment in research and development affects the productive capacity of countries, for this reason, the States will be responsible for its increase according to adequate criteria and indicators.
4. Sustainability as an organizational culture is the foundation for the design of public funding policies for higher education. In this context, higher education institutions will design outreaching strategies for society to know and assume the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the 2030 Education Agenda and work towards its achievement.
5. The criteria of sustainable development in relation to higher education may:
 - a) be applied in their plans, programs, policies, strategies and actions, especially in the orientation of the investment for those purposes; and,
 - b) establish research, development and innovation programs and projects, and proposals for its transformation, jointly with public entities and social productive organizations.
6. Access, inclusion and equity, quality and relevance are, together, a strategic regional objective of an at distance and virtual higher education system duly regulated, with renewed and flexible curricular designs, which takes advantage of free access to technology and educational resources.



7. Tertiary education is essential for the insertion of people in the labor market and the eradication of poverty. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize investment at this level and establish links and compatibilities between the productive sector and higher education institutions. This will make it possible to reduce the gap between the human talent required by the productive sector and the one that is graduating from higher education institutions (HEI).
8. The HEI will be responsible for graduating professionals with technical, professional and cultural skills able to face the challenges of society and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, and to have access to decent employment and to activate entrepreneurship.
9. Access, inclusion and equity, quality and relevance are, together, a strategic regional objective of a privately managed higher education system, and it is in a position, not only to invest additional financial resources, but also to introduce approaches, experiences and innovations. Similarly, this management system should continue to aim, along with public institutions, to achieve this strategic objective.
10. For-profit private education does not fall within the scope of the principle of “national treatment”; on the other hand, public subsidies and other public policy tools that are granted to a national institution should be granted to others, regardless of whether they are public or private, national or foreign.
11. The Regional Conference on Higher Education 2018 ratifies its rejection of the conception of higher education as a service. Higher education is not part, neither now nor in the future, of the negotiations of international commercial forums.

Centennial of University of Córdoba Reform. Towards a new Manifesto of the Latin American Higher Education

In order to continue with the spirit and the principles of the 1918 Reform, the Declarations adopted in the Regional Conference, held in Havana, Cuba in 1996, the Regional Conference of Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean held in 2008 and the World Conference on Higher Education held in 1998 are hereby endorsed. Higher education is a public, social good, and a human right which should be ensured by the State. Knowledge should be considered a social public good. The State should regulate the higher education system, and it should prohibit all higher education institutions that are for profit.



The current political context in the region leading, in some countries, to the persecution of university authorities, violence against students, economic adjustments and a violation of university autonomy is a historical regression. All these violations should be strongly condemned.

The higher education institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean should defend the political and social rights, and critically advocate for their insertion in the face of a neoliberal development model. Thus, they shall contribute, with social responsibility and commitment to new proposals which recreate the traditions of autonomy, social transformation, anti-authoritarianism, democracy, freedom of teaching, and specifically a political influence based on knowledge and reason.

Social commitment should be accompanied by equality, full democracy, economic development, creation of and access to culture and the arts, and the defense of human rights. This commitment implies that higher education should be part of the society, and it should uphold democratic principles in all its spheres of action.

Autonomy is an essential condition if the institutions are to play a critical proactive role in the society. This is based on the right to have access to decision making, to representation and full democratic participation expressed in the co-governance as well as in the transparency and accountability of their actions.

It is essential to achieve full gender equality, to eradicate harassment and other forms of gender violence, and to establish affirmative action programs and policies to increase the presence of academic women in postgraduate courses and in the management of universities.

We propose that universal coverage be guaranteed for all between the ages of 18 and 23. The procedures for access should be reviewed, affirmative action policies which do not discriminate on the basis of gender, ethnicity, class, disability should be established, and social inclusion should be expanded.

Public higher education should be free, and it should be accompanied by a system of grants for low income students and students from marginalized populations

1. Reaffirmation of the fundamental role of Latin American and Caribbean public universities in society.

We ratify the central role of the region's public universities since they are privileged spaces for the construction of bridges between global trends and national identities. They are the main institutions in the public sphere for reflective understanding and criticism –based on knowledge- of contemporary society, and are fundamental institutions for the production of knowledge, attending to a very broad set of social concerns, demands and problems in various fields.



2. It is necessary to reaffirm the identity of the University of LAC, as opposed to the standardized hegemonic model of an elitist university. To this end, the question of the inseparable nature of teaching, research and extension, of the identity and tradition of its history with its mission and purposes must be included in the definitions and policies of the Latin American public university. This makes it possible for it to assume a relevant role in society regarding its contribution for creative, productive and cultural development.
3. We confirm the commitment of the LAC Universities to the transformation and democratic progress of our societies. Universities should participate in national and international discussions on knowledge and scientific and technological development, as well as on intellectual property (patents and application of knowledge in products) and on the right to traditional knowledge.
4. In the present, it is an unavoidable obligation to participate in the discussion about the philosophy and orientation of education in our countries; to produce teaching materials and promote pedagogical innovations; to contribute to the training of teachers and to present alternative public policies in this sector.
5. The crisis of the political institutions and republican bases that the region's countries are going through, pose new political responsibilities towards society. In this sense, the ideology of the University Reform of Córdoba is reaffirmed, its university model proposes a social, educational and essentially political project with a special Latin American perspective. In addition, the University's firm and inescapable commitment to republican values, social democracy and human rights must be reasserted.
6. The autonomy that is being demanded is that which allows the university to exercise its critical and proactive role vis-à-vis society, without restrictions and limits imposed by the governments of the day, religious beliefs, the market or particular interests. The defense of university autonomy is an inescapable and highly relevant responsibility in Latin America and the Caribbean and is, at the same time, a defense of the university's social commitment.
7. It is necessary to include universal coverage in higher education as a strategic goal in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the Development Agenda. To achieve this, a vigorous policy of expansion of the public proposal of free higher education is required. It should be in line with an in-depth review of the procedures for accessing the system, establishing a new generation of affirmative action policies -based on gender, ethnicity, class and different capacities- in order to expand social inclusion and diversity in the policies of access, permanence, degree qualifications and graduation.



8. We express our conviction that public higher education in Latin America should be free and a duty of the State, which should assume it as a non-delegable responsibility, guaranteeing the access and permanence of students in higher education. In order to be complete, solid systems of assistance for students with limited economic resources and for those from traditionally marginalized populations should be put into practice.
9. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030, it is fundamental to reverse the trends towards a mercantilist education. The SDGs and, in particular, those concerning higher education, require a public commitment and a new pact that includes adequate funding of public higher education institutions as a state policy.
10. The regulation of private higher education is necessary in order to guarantee the quality of education and the rights of those who choose it. There is an important difference among private higher education institutions; those that have arisen, especially in recent years, for profit are different from others that are founded within the educational systems. In order to contribute to the quality of education and the corresponding SDG, we propose the prohibition of higher education institutions for profit in all the countries of the region.
11. There is a delay in LAC in the creation of knowledge associated with fundamental research and, to a greater extent, in its application linked to innovation processes in social and productive spheres. It is important to consider a strategic scientific and technological development program, regionally agreed upon, promoting research applied to contexts related to the most important social, cultural and productive issues, as a goal for the next decade. In line with this, greater public funding for scientific and technological development should be encouraged in each of the LAC countries.
12. A fundamental aspect in the regionalization / internationalization process of the University of LAC is that it should constitute itself as one of the pillars and central actors of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In terms of regionalization-internationalization, this process should boost and strengthen the contribution that the region's universities have made. This has been achieved through joining efforts (national and regional) in order to build the Espacio Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación Superior (Latin American and Caribbean Area for Higher Education) – ENLACES as a representative space of higher education in LAC. The CRES 2018 must propose objectives and goals for its development during the next years.
13. The CRES 2018 axle 7 has to incorporate this aspect as a central and unavoidable issue. It has to do essentially with the spirit of the young reformers of '18, who from their critical and discontented view expressed a university capable of thinking and rethinking itself. Nowadays, this extraordinary exercise of imagining a possible future can be reached depending on the regional agreement expressed today in CRES 2018.
14. We propose the creation of a Program of Higher Education Studies and Prospects for LAC.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Under the framework of the celebration of the 100 years of the Cordoba Reform, the RCHE 2018 ratifies the following principles: higher education is a socio-strategic public asset, a State obligation, a space for knowledge, a human and universal right; its exercise strengthens democracy and makes it possible to overcome inequities. It unfolds its commitment to the human being, to his/her context, to the development of values and ideals that inspire a culture of peace, with respect for human rights in an environment of democratic guarantees in the context of the sustainable development goals.

The declaration of the principle on higher education sets itself within the UNESCO legal framework and regulations. It is inscribed within a humanist conceptual structure, with focus on human development and as an element for social mobility, able of transforming people's lives and their realities. A politically active consideration and commitment to promote access, equity, inclusion, quality, learning and relevance is highlighted. The commitments, demands and challenges we have to face are many and they respond to the solid intention of consolidating our systems and institutions.



LETTER FROM THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF EDUCATION

Córdoba, Argentina, June 14, 2018

Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural (Intercultural Indigenous Autonomous University) UAIIN- Colombia; Universidad Indígena Intercultural Comunitaria Productiva Guaraní (Guarani Productive Intercultural Indigenous University), Pueblos de Tierras Bajas "Apiaguaiki Tupa" ("Apiaguaiki Tupa" Lower Lands People) and Universidad Indígena Intercultural Productiva Quechua "Casimiro Huanca" ("Casimiro Huanca" Quechua Productive Intercultural Indigenous University) Bolivia; Universidad Intercultural Amawtay Wasi (Amawtay Wasi Intercultural University), Ecuador; Consejo QOMPI (QOMPI Council), Centro Educativo Integral QATAXAC NAM QOMPI – IES – CESBI Pampa del Indio Chaco (Integral Educational Center QATAXAC NAM QOMPI – IES – CESBI of the Pampa del Indio Chaco), and Instituto de Educación Superior Intercultural "Gloria Pérez", ("Gloria Pérez" Intercultural Higher Education Institute), Argentina; Oficina de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Universidad Nacional de Panama (National University of Panama Indigenous Peoples' Office), Panama; Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaraguense (University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast) –URACCAN- Nicaragua; Universidad Ixil (Ixil University) and Universidad Maya Kakchikel (Kakchikel Maya University) Guatemala; and the Red de Universidades Indígenas Interculturales y Comunitarias de Abya Yala (the Abya Yala Intercultural and Communitarian Indigenous Universities Network) "RUIICAY".

TO THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (CRES 2018)

Within the framework of CRES 2018, which took place in Cordoba, Argentina, on June 11, 12 and 13, 2018, Doctor Alta Hooker, URACCAN Rector and RUIICAY Coordinator, delivered the Conference "Interculturality and Internationalization from a Latin American and Caribbean Perspective" and in The Symposium Thematic Axle "Higher Education, Cultural Diversity and Inter-culturality in Latin America" which was also held. The Intercultural and Communitarian Indigenous



Universities that attended these events decided to open a space of discussion and exchange of experiences, which had the following results:

1. Our recognition to the organizers of the CRES 2018 for having propitiated the approach of intercultural issues and cultural diversity in higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has allowed us to promulgate our word and our own experiences on university education, thus making our contribution to the CRES 2018.
2. Interculturality, understood as a way of promoting cultural diversity and the values of our millenarian cultures, permitted important steps in favor of our Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in conventional universities during the last decades. For examples on specific programs with indigenous contents, training of intercultural professionals, positive actions favoring young people, among others. However, we must affirm that the historical debt of the States and the higher education institutions (HEI) towards Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples persists. This manifests itself by the lack of recognition and respect for our educational and cultural institutions, by the academy that turns us into objects of study instead of protagonists, the loss of indigenous culture by those who attend the universities, and even by epistemic violence or the devaluation of our concepts and indigenous pedagogy, among others.
3. Within the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2018) framework, we want to share with the States and HEI that, during the last decades, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our wise people, and our indigenous communities, by means of a shared effort with our social organizations and community authorities, have begun a process of reconstruction and re-creation of our indigenous and afro-descendant educational, social, cultural and spiritual institutions. Our universities and educational institutions with their own curricula, pedagogies, identity and symbols, are born inter-cultural, reaffirming their indigenous and afro-descendant content and character. At the same time, they also seek access to other cultures, educational systems, knowledge, sciences and cultures aiming for a pluri-cultural and inter-cultural education constituting processes of growing pluri-diversity.
4. Our universities and educational institutions have been created under the constitutional laws of our countries. They apply international conventions such as the ILO 169 Convention, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Afro-descendant People's Declaration of the Decade, the Sustainable Development Goals; and exercise the universal right to decide their own and their future generation's destiny. However, only some States recognize the institutionalism of our Universities and Educational Institutions and give them financial support. Other cases



are in process, and in several cases, our Universities and higher education institutions (HEI) are simply not recognized or respected. Nevertheless, many of these institutions of indigenous and afro-descendant people exist, some are being created and others are growing, becoming a part of the cultural and educational wealth of our countries.

5. Earth, our territories and their natural assets, that are part of the contents of our universities and educational institutions that have the goals of educating our people for the life and the good living, recovering solidarity through our worldviews and pedagogies, dreams and hopes, and forms of evaluation and accreditation. All this in exercise of our right to education as a public and social asset, a universal human right and an obligation of the States and of the higher education institutions (HEI), which also have an institutional responsibility to support and accompany to harmonize in a joint and respectful way, both educational and cultural processes.

6. In closing our message to CRES 2018, we value and support the efforts of the Indigenous Community QOM and other Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples of Argentina and of all our America that are trying to re-build their own universities or different forms of educational institutions. We reiterate our recognition for the opportunity to promulgate our word and our own experiences on education, and we express our commitment to continue participating with actions and proposals in the dialogue between knowledge promoted by the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2018).

Córdoba, Argentina, June 14, 2018.

Presented at the assembly of the III Regional Conference of Higher Education held at the National University of Cordoba, on the 14th day of the month of June 2018.

