



Council of the
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Council Conclusions on relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, as approved by the Council at its 3985th meeting held on 21 November 2023.

Council Conclusions on relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean

1. A stronger, modernised strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is more important than ever. By joining forces, the EU and LAC can make a meaningful difference in promoting sustainable growth, building fair and resilient societies and advancing peace and security, inclusive multilateralism and the rules-based international order. Shared values, notably democracy, the rule of law, gender equality, and the respect for human rights, must remain at the core of EU-LAC relations. Together, the EU and LAC are stronger and better placed to address the multiple challenges of today's world, including the global climate and environmental crises.
2. The third Summit between the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) held in Brussels on 17-18 July 2023 relaunched the bi-regional relationship at the highest level and reaffirmed the unique partnership between the two regions. An open, inclusive, and constructive dialogue allowed both regions to better understand each other's interests, priorities and concerns. It is important for this process of closer engagement to continue, including through increased contacts and high-level visits between the EU and LAC countries.
3. The Summit set out an ambitious and forward-looking common agenda which should be implemented in the years to come. The Council commends the new momentum in EU-LAC relations and welcomes the Joint Communication "A New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean" by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, including the outlined priorities and suggested actions.

4. The EU-LAC partnership derives its strength from the fundamental commitment of both regions to all the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (UN), including the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international humanitarian law. The EU reaffirms the importance of the promotion, protection and respect of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and media, the protection of human rights defenders and journalists. The EU also reaffirms the need to strengthen the rule of law and democracy, including free and fair, inclusive, transparent and credible elections and gender equality. The EU will maintain a close dialogue with LAC on the implementation of these principles and cooperate with a view to promote a rights-based approach, tackle inequalities, promote the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, protect civic space and combat all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity.

5. The EU will continue its engagement with LAC on Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, including on its repercussions experienced also far outside of Europe. In the EU-CELAC Summit Declaration, leaders from both regions expressed deep concern at the ongoing war against Ukraine, which continues to cause immense human suffering and is exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy, constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity and elevating financial stability risks. The leaders also expressed support to the efforts aimed at a just and sustainable peace in line with the UN Charter. The EU will seek the support of LAC countries for Ukraine's Peace Formula, including through an upcoming Global Peace Summit, the accountability for war crimes, crime of aggression and other most serious crimes committed during the war as well as for countering Russia's disinformation.

6. A strong EU-LAC partnership requires renewed political engagement at all levels as well as in multilateral fora. At bi-regional level, the EU will continue to enhance an inclusive dialogue and cooperation with the CELAC by holding Summits every two years, the next one in Colombia in 2025, and regular meetings of Foreign Affairs Ministers. The Council welcomes the bi-regional roadmap 2023-2025 presented at the EU-CELAC Summit and looks forward to its implementation. The Council encourages to promptly set up the agreed consultative coordination instance to advance shared commitments.

7. The EU will continue to engage with the Caribbean as a distinct sub-region with its own specificities, following the EU-Caribbean Leaders' Meeting which took place in Brussels on 17 July 2023. An EU-Caribbean Ministerial meeting in 2024 will help reinforce the common agenda that includes cooperation on climate change, deforestation mitigation, biodiversity protection, the reform of the international financial system, private sector involvement especially through the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda, social inclusion, human development and security challenges. Future relations will be pursued in the context of the new Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (EU-OACPS) and its Caribbean regional protocol. The EU reaffirms the need to give due consideration to the sustainable development challenges of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) given their particular vulnerability to climate change, including sea level rise. This is also emphasized in the run-up to the Fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. The strengthening of cooperation between LAC and the EU's outermost regions, as well as the Overseas Countries and Territories situated in the LAC region will also continue.

8. The EU will continue to support national and international initiatives aimed at restoring necessary governance and security conditions for the holding of free elections in Haiti, ensuring humanitarian access to populations in need of protection, and addressing the worsening multidimensional crisis.

9. The EU will continue to engage with other sub-regional groupings, as well as international organisations active in the region. The EU is committed to holding regular summits with strategic partners Brazil and Mexico. It will continue to strengthen bilateral political dialogues and to constructively engage with the countries in the region with an inclusive spirit, also recognising the vital role and contributions of civil society organisations in this regard. The EU will continue actively supporting peace and democratic solutions in the region, such as in the case of the peace process in Colombia and the Venezuelan-led negotiations under the Mexico process.

10. At multilateral level, the EU and LAC are natural partners and should further strengthen their cooperation in addressing regional and global challenges. The EU is committed to working with LAC partners for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as on the reform of global governance, including the international financial architecture, to make it more inclusive and effective. Strong EU-LAC engagement at the UN and regular exchanges between the EU and the Inter-American Human Rights System should continue. Cooperation in the WTO context, especially regarding the upcoming 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) and the ongoing process of WTO reform, should be strengthened.

11. The Council recognises the importance of strengthening and developing a solid EU-LAC trade and investment agenda, based on an extensive network of bilateral and regional trade and association agreements between the two regions. The full implementation of existing agreements, and the ratification of agreements signed and currently applied, are important priorities. The Council welcomes the imminent signature of the modernised EU agreement with Chile, looks forward to the rapid finalisation of the modernised agreement with Mexico and takes note of the ongoing work between the EU and Mercosur.

12. The Council welcomes the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA), which demonstrates the common priorities of the EU and LAC and is underpinned by the highest environmental and social standards, as well as transparency, which define Europe's way of doing business. As reiterated at the first ever EU-CELAC meeting of Ministers of Economy and Finance, held in Santiago de Compostela on 15 September 2023, the EU-LAC GGIA will play a crucial role in helping to address investment gaps in the region, with the goal of mobilising both private capital and public funding from the EU and its Member States, in a Team Europe approach. It will also help advance a fair, green, digital transition in both regions by supporting local value chains, growth, human development, health resilience and decent jobs while promoting cooperation on digital transformation, education, socially responsible business environment, transport, sustainable supply chains, including of critical raw materials, energy efficiency, safe and sustainable low-carbon technologies, climate adaptation, and water among others.

13. Recognising that the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution requires a strengthened EU-LAC partnership on the green transition, the Council stresses the importance of increased dialogue, strengthening of regulatory frameworks, climate education, research and innovation, and investments, in view of the significant potential for cooperation towards climate neutral and nature-positive economies. The full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, including by keeping the 1.5°C goal within reach, as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Global Framework on Chemicals, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Water Action Agenda of the UN 2023 Water Conference and the Treaty of the High Seas, as well as the ongoing negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, under the chairmanship of Peru and Ecuador, remain key shared objectives. The EU will work with LAC partners to establish a Global Pledge to triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency efforts at global level by 2030. Acknowledging the key role of the Amazon rainforest and the importance of the fight against deforestation both in the Amazon and in other wooded lands, the Council welcomes the Belém Declaration adopted by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) in August 2023 and reconfirms that it is essential to engage with partner countries to jointly address the root causes of deforestation and forest degradation, in particular in the context of the EU regulation on deforestation-free supply chains. The Council encourages actions and commitments for the protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the oceans in view of the ‘Our Ocean Conference’ in Athens in April 2024, and the third UN Ocean Conference hosted by Costa Rica and France in Nice in June 2025. The EU stands ready to work with LAC partners to accelerate actions for clean water and sanitation for all, as well as to promote integrated water resources management. Mindful of the responsibility of both continents for long-term global food security, the EU will cooperate with LAC in enhancing the resilience and sustainability of food production systems and will use dialogue and cooperation mechanisms, including in research, inter alia to promote the sustainable management of fertilisers and pesticides and to improve soil health.

14. The EU is committed to working with LAC partners to promote a responsible human-centric and rights-based model of inclusive digital transformation that safeguards protection of personal data and privacy as fundamental rights, increases secure and universal digital connectivity and cybersecurity, supports a free, open and trusted internet, promotes the convergence of digital policy and the closing of digital gaps, not least the gender digital divide, and fosters the trustworthy development and use of artificial intelligence. These areas of action are addressed by the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, which remains open to all interested LAC countries on the basis of shared values, and in its Joint Declaration of July 2023. The Council welcomes the first EU-LAC Bi-Regional Digital Policy Dialogue in November 2023 as an important milestone. To promote the implementation of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, the EU will work in Team Europe also using the Digital4Development Hub (D4D Hub). The Council looks forward to the inauguration of the regional Copernicus centre in Panama and the expansion of the BELLA fibre-optic cable, building secure digital backbone connectivity.

15. The Council underlines the importance attributed by both regions to social justice and recommends stepping up joint work to promote social cohesion, gender equality, tackling inequalities and discrimination on any ground, as well as preventing and eradicating sexual- and gender-based violence, including when it occurs through or is facilitated by the use of technology. The Council furthermore emphasises the need to advance women's economic empowerment and facilitate inclusive growth that addresses the different needs and provides equal opportunities to youth, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, LGBTI persons, older persons and persons with disabilities. The EU stands ready to advance work on the bi-regional partnership on health systems resilience and local manufacturing of vaccines, as well as the regional Team Europe Initiative on inclusive and equal societies. The Council recognises the need for broad participation in delivering social justice and underlines the importance of civil society participation and consultation in all sectors.

16. The Council stresses the importance of continued support and advocacy efforts to address humanitarian crises impacting LAC. Recognising that the LAC region is one of the most exposed regions to natural disasters, the EU welcomes increased overall cooperation in the area of disaster preparedness and disaster risk management, as well as exchange of best practices between the EU and LAC region, to be formalised by a Memorandum of Understanding on those issues between the EU and the relevant regional intergovernmental bodies and countries in LAC.

17. The Council calls for stronger EU-LAC cooperation on justice and security at all levels as a matter of priority to tackle the manifold and increasingly significant challenges posed by transnational organised crime that negatively impact both sides of the Atlantic. These include high risk criminal networks, drugs, firearms and human trafficking, as well as corruption, financial and environmental crime, hybrid threats, including cyber-crime, disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference. Building on the successful joint work in the EU-LAC partnership on Justice and Security and taking into account the EU-CLASI (Latin American Committee on Internal Security) declaration of 28 September 2023, and the ambitious phase II of the EL PAcCTO programme, the Team Europe Initiative on Security and Justice should be further developed. Considering the more holistic approach that LAC countries are taking to address security challenges, the EU is committed to stepping up cooperation with LAC partners in the fight against transnational organised crime, based on the rule of law and a high level of protection for fundamental rights, tackling profit motivators, the reduction of drugs supply and demand, crime prevention, as well as the promotion of institutional capacity building and common standards. The Council looks forward to the forthcoming high-level meeting of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs in 2024.

18. On security and defence, the Council welcomes the participation of the LAC countries in EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, encourages more joint activities, such as in the context of the EU Coordinated Maritime Presences in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as strengthened dialogue with LAC partners on CSDP matters, such as the dialogues with Colombia and with Chile.

19. Recognising the critical role of research and innovation for addressing common challenges, such as the twin transition, global health, and other priority areas, the Council calls for the continuation and strengthening of the bi-regional dialogue through the EU-CELAC Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation (R&I) by updating the strategic R&I roadmap including on the open science part and strengthening the role of research centres. The Council recalls the importance of stepping up cooperation in the area of higher education which allows students, academic staff and researchers from both regions to benefit from mobility and similar opportunities and stresses that the European Universities alliances could be relevant partners to develop further cooperation with CELAC counterparts, building on available international cooperation opportunities. The Council stresses that people-to-people initiatives should remain at the centre of the EU-LAC partnership and calls on all partners to fully use opportunities granted by Erasmus+ and the Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

20. Welcoming the discussions at the EU-LAC Forum ‘Partners in Change’ including youth, civil society and local authorities, and the Business Round Table organised ahead of the Summit, and taking note of their recommendations, the Council recognises the important contribution civil society is making to the bi-regional partnership and calls on deepening and structuring the dialogue with youth, civil society organisations, the private sector, trade unions and local authorities. The Council stresses the importance of a full involvement of civil society and youth in all the dimensions of the partnership with LAC. The Council welcomes and supports the active role played by the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat), the EU-LAC International Foundation as well as think tanks and academia. EU public diplomacy efforts, cultural diplomacy and the promotion of EU-LAC cultural relations are also important priorities. In this regard, the EU’s first-time participation as guest of honour in the International Book Fair in Guadalajara, Mexico, from 25 November to 3 December 2023, will be an important milestone.
