

EU-CELAC Strategic Partnership: Fostering Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights Towards the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals

Asociación Estratégica UE-CELAC: Fomentar la paz, la democracia y los derechos humanos hacia los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible 2030 de la ONU

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ABSTRACT

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, and the European Union (EU) cooperate in multiple initiatives related to sustainability in Latin America. Joint initiatives undertaken within this partnership strengthen the region's political dialogue and social and cultural integration in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development goals.

Keywords: European Union – Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) – the 2030 UN Agenda – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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RESUMEN

La Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC) y la Unión Europea (UE) cooperan en múltiples iniciativas relacionadas con la sostenibilidad en América Latina. Las iniciativas conjuntas emprendidas en el marco de esta asociación refuerzan el diálogo político y la integración social y cultural de la región, en consonancia con la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible, a fin de erradicar la pobreza y alcanzar los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible.

Palabras clave: Unión Europea – Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC) – Agenda 2030 de la ONU – Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS)

INTRODUCTION

The global community faces various challenges nowadays, such as poverty, hunger inequalities, enforcement of peace and equality, human rights protection, promotion of gender, and the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. Addressing those issues is the main goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations. In order to achieve this goal, the Agenda resolves to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive, and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity, and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities (United Nations, 2015). Those challenges are also a concern of the European Union. That is why the EU played a crucial role in shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in public consultations, dialogue, and research. Consequently, the EU, in its policy, underlines the significance of the holistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda (European Commission, 2015).

However, other global actors also use a similar approach. In the Latin America and Caribbean regions, it is especially enforced by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) (European Commission, 2016), the regional mechanism involving 33 Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) countries, representing nearly 600 million people. A similar approach towards sustainable development goals implies that the EU and CELAC actively cooperate within the bi-regional partnership process. This cooperation is structured around biennial summits, regular senior officials' meetings, and specific thematic dialogues and initiatives. In line with the objectives outlined in the agenda, the main areas of that cooperation include action towards eliminating poverty, enforcement of human rights and rule of law, promotion of democracy, and good governance.

This paper examines the legal framework implying the EU's commitment to developing cooperation with Latin America. The research focuses on three major global issues: climate change, the post-2015 development agenda, and social inclusion and cohesion. It examines how the partnerships between the regions contribute to their adaptation to new realities and how it will mutually benefit their citizens.

With the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, the partnership between the EU and CELAC becomes especially relevant. Hence, future summits between these international actors will be an opportunity to deepen political dialogue on citizen-oriented initiatives in terms of innovation for sustainable growth, education to promote social inclusion and cohesion, gender, security, and climate change, among others.

In addition to the initiatives analyzed in this paper, the EU has agreements or is in negotiations with the region's countries through three types of arrangements: via trade blocs (MERCOSUR and EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement), multi-party trade negotiation and regional agreements (EU-Central America and EU-Andean Community), and free-trade agreements (FTAs) with individual countries (Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia).

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE 2030 UN AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The first positive outcomes of adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include increasing public awareness and political will and mobilizing resources to end poverty. However, it also advances the sustainability policy by incorporating follow-up from the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, aiming to address poverty eradication with sustainable development's eco-

conomic, social, and environmental dimensions. It will also address issues in the Millennium Declaration that were not in the MDGs, such as effective institutions, good governance, the rule of law, and peaceful societies (European Commission, 2015).

Over the last decade, Latin America and the Caribbean have shown significant economic growth and social development rates. However, this region still faces certain structural problems in its political, economic, and social systems. Hence, the development gains of many Latin American countries are still fragile. The biggest challenges of the region include a high level of social inequality, an increased criminality rate, a big influence of the organized crime bodies, and an economy based on the export of natural resources and raw materials. Those facts indicate the need for more sustainable and equitable growth and enhanced social cohesion. It is because economic diversification and steps to move up the value chain are vital to achieving stable long-term growth (European Commission, 2014).

The European Commission study underlined that the region is also exposed to various environmental risks: climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and environmental degradation. On the other hand, according to the study, Latin America also has a high potential to develop environmental and sustainable development solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through renewable energies and increased energy efficiency. As the European Commission stresses, it is also of crucial importance to continue the ongoing efforts towards enhanced governance, promotion and protection of human rights and gender equality, and creation of job opportunities for young people. Those actions are necessary in order to combat inequality, increase social cohesion, and reinforce civil society and the rule of law.¹

¹ Ibid

The EU promotes these goals, recognizing that sustainable development and poverty eradication are essential to guarantee peace and stability. Similarly, the European Union – Latin America and Caribbean Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation, 2023) refers to the strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Their main aims include promoting a socio-economic model based on knowledge transfer, education, and sustainable development while reducing poverty levels and social exclusion (EU-LAC Foundation). In this respect, the EU-LAC Foundation also establishes a platform for mobilizing 62 countries from Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean in implementing the new sustainable development agenda.

On one hand, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)² arises with the commitment to move forward in the gradual integration process of the region, striving to find a balance between unity and political diversity. It has helped to enhance the political dialogue among the region's countries on social development, education, nuclear disarmament, farming, culture, finance, energy, and the environment. On the other hand, the European Union (EU) has 27 Member States representing around 450 million people.

Thereby, EU-CELAC summits bring together the Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Presidents of the European Council, and the European Commission. These

2 CELAC can be summarized as follows: 1) It is a mechanism of political consultation and dialogue. 2) It is an articulator mechanism, which works on the basis of consensus. 3) It is a forum that advances on the convergence of actions and common interests. 4) It is a platform that facilitates a greater presence in our region in the world. 5) It is a space to meet common challenges. See: Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC). (n.d.). ¿Qué es la CELAC? Retrieved August 28, 2024, from <http://www.sela.org/celac/quienes-somos/que-es-la-celac/>

summits are the primary source of dialogue and cooperation between Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Summits are held roughly every two years on a rotational basis: one in Europe, one in Latin America, and the other in the Caribbean to deepen their dialogue, given the importance of the bi-regional strategic association in strengthening relations between both regions. The European Union has recognized that the countries of the former Rio Group (1986), now replaced by CELAC, have the necessary potential to be essential partners in international relations (European Commission, 2009) and that the forms of regional integration between the countries of Latin America will allow both international organizations and their Member States to participate more decisively in shaping global policies and have one voice in relation with crucial world affairs.

The cooperation scheme between the EU and the countries of Latin America is structured at three different levels, namely, through bilateral agreements, sub-regional agreements, and multilateral agreements. For example, Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR)³, the Central American Common Market (CACM), and the Andean Community (CAN) are the three main regional integration

3 The EU is currently negotiating a trade agreement with Mercosur as part of the overall negotiation for a bi-regional Association Agreement, which also covers a political and a cooperation pillar. All Mercosur countries, with the exception of Paraguay, no longer benefit from the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP) scheme as of 1 January 2014, due to their classification as high middle-income countries. Both positive and negative environmental impacts in the EU and Mercosur countries could arise depending on the policy measures that are taken to accompany the Agreement. These are not expected to be very significant in the context of the EU's regime and depending on the mitigating measures that are taken. Increased imports of raw materials could potentially induce land abandonment in the EU. In Mercosur, full trade liberalization in the agriculture and the forest sector could result in added pressure and potentially significant adverse impacts on natural resources, forest coverage and biodiversity, which would require adequate measures. On the positive side, Mercosur is expected to benefit from an increased access to environmental services. See: European Commission. (n.d.). EU-Mercosur agreement: Agreement explained. EU Trade Policy. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/mercotur/eu-mercotur-agreement/agreement-explained_en. Accessed on August 29, 2024.

processes with some supranational organs and intergovernmental institutions in Latin America.

Indeed, the cooperation between the EU and these partners reflects the importance committed by the EU to regional integration. Mexico⁴ and Chile⁵ are not members of any of these regional organizations, and the EU has developed a specific bilateral dialogue with each of them; besides, the Pacific Alliance⁶ (Colombia,

4 México was the first Latin American country to sign an Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement ('Global Agreement') with the EU (1997, in force since 2000 and expected to be modernized soon), comprising political dialogue, trade and cooperation, including a free trade area. Bilateral trade between EU and Mexico grew by more than 140% in the following years. It also has a Strategic Partnership with the EU, facilitating a wider dialogue and deeper cooperation between both parties. Mexico belongs to the G20, the OECD, the Pacific Alliance and APEC. Gomez-Ramirez, E. (2016). EU-Latin America trade relations (p. 18). EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, European Union.

5 Thus, Chile pursued a unilateral strategy of liberalization well before it undertook negotiations in regional integration (as with Mercosur in 1996) or bilateral trade agreements (as with the EU Association Agreement in 2002 or the U.S.-Chile FTA in 2004). The potential modernization of the Association Agreement also give opportunities for the EU and Chile to reduce pressures on biodiversity, by, for example, promoting organic agriculture which has still a negligible share of total agriculture in Chile (OECD/ECLAC 2016), by promoting more sustainable production methods in fish farms (aquaculture) for example through certification (e.g., Salmon Chile), and to intensify cooperation in the area of biodiversity policy, for example in the context of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) of which both the EU and Chile are members. See: European Commission. (2017). Ex-ante study of a possible modernization of the EU-Chile Association Agreement: Final report (p. 259). Prepared by ECORYS CASE. European Commission. (n.d.). EU-Chile relations: Overview and key documents. EU Trade Policy. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/chile_en. Accessed on August 29, 2024.

6 See: Framework Agreement of the Pacific Alliance. (2012, June 6). Signed in Paranal, Antofagasta, Republic of Chile. The Pacific Alliance has been established as a regional integration mechanism between Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, through the signing of a Framework Agreement between these Member States. As of 2024, these countries collectively account for approximately 230 million inhabitants and represent 35% of Latin America's GDP. They also generate 54% of the region's exports. If these four economies were combined as a single entity, they would rank as the seventh-largest economy in the world. The Pacific Alliance is responsible for 54% of Latin America's trade, encompassing 230 million potential consumers. Additionally, among the seven largest economies in Latin America and the Caribbean by GDP (in descending order, as of 2024): Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela, four are members of the Pacific Alliance.

Mexico, Peru, and Chile) and MERCOSUR explore new ways of integration and convergence under the premise of a “Dialogue on Regional Integration,” promoting a change at the structural level and the convergence between two markets – a convergence that could be the catalyst of this new process of integration, and finally through sub-regional and multilateral agreements, including the implementation of regional programs (EU-LAC Summits and the establishment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC).

The differentiated multilateral cooperation patterns in Latin America open more access points for external actors like the European Union. The variable geometry of internal and external cooperation diminishes the risk of stagnation in interregional relations between Europe and Latin America. However, it also makes Latin America more fragile to external influences (Nolte, 2015).

Since the relationship between the EU and Latin America is based on multiple purposes, they work together to promote peace and stability and commit to protecting human rights, democracy, and effective multilateralism⁷ The third and final pillar addressed in the 2004 Guadalajara summit was the effective multilateralism to be developed based on the United Nations, focused on the joint quest for practical solutions to various current international issues. The Commission described this commitment between both regions as the best way to prevent

⁷ Declaration of Guadalajara. (2004, May 28-29). III Latin America and Caribbean-European Union summit. Guadalajara. Multilateralism. “We reiterate that an effective multilateral system, based on international law, supported by strong international institutions and with the United Nations at its center, is essential for achieving peace and international security, sustainable development and social progress. We reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the promotion of economic and social development and the eradication of poverty and hunger.”

poverty, HIV, global terrorism, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (European Parliament 2008).

The 5th EU-CELAC Summit was held in Lima (Peru) on 16th -17th May 2008, that included the launch of the debate for EU-LAC Foundation; the “EUROCLIMA”⁸ was launched to the benefit of Latin American countries with the main objectives of knowledge sharing, fostering structured and regular dialogue at all levels and ensuring synergies and coordination in this field, to achieve: Equitable and inclusive levels of social development through the formulation and implementation of more effective social policies, towards the eradication of poverty, inequality and exclusion, strengthening the confidence of citizens in the effectiveness of democratic institutions and social development policies. It included sustained growth rates and the creation of decent, dignified, and productive work, as optimizing tax collection to improve social public expenditure and its redistributive impact (Lima Declaration, 2008). Summing up, the main topics were social cohesion, regional integration, promoting multilateralism, respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law as shared values between regions and environment, climate change and energy, giving priority to cooperation on climate change and policies for preventing

8 Together with EUROCLIMA, that aims at facilitating the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and plans into Latin American public development policies, are also other Programs like (Water Component), RAL-CEA aims to strengthen regional collaboration and promote capacity building and scientific-technical cooperation between water sector research institutions, while facilitating decision-making and action by key actors at national and regional levels. The main conclusions reached were that networking has driven the development of synergies between members of the network, providing concrete responses to actual governmental needs. Centers of Excellence have been strengthened in terms of their capacity to deliver improvements to the government sector and to society in general. More robust water sector institutions have enhanced capacity building processes and peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge in the regional context of Latin American countries. See: European Commission. (2023). EU climate cooperation with the Americas. Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved August 29, 2024, from https://climate.ec.europa.eu/international-action/non-eu-countries/eu-climate-cooperation-americas_en

global warming. That is important, especially for Indigenous populations, as they are especially exposed to the negative effects of climate change and a deteriorating environment⁹. Moreover, the partnership between the European Union and LAC is in this sense of crucial importance, taking into account a shared approach towards promoting sustainable development and environmental balance¹⁰.

During the last decades, at regional and multilateral levels, significant progress has been made in areas such as health research, environment (including climate change), energy, advanced materials, nanotechnologies, etc., where institutions from CELAC countries were successfully participating.

9 The European Commission-supported EURO-SOLAR Regional Programme which has a duration of 7 years and benefited the eight most disadvantaged Latin American countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru) through various projects provided rural communities that had no access to the grid with a renewable energy source for electricity and Internet connection to be used for community socio-economic development, improving education, healthcare and access to information. For example: The experience of the Program has shown that installing electricity and internet in remote communities was a fundamental issue for the needs of their inhabitants in terms of education, socio-economic development and healthcare. See: European Commission. (2023). EU climate cooperation with the Americas. Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved August 29, 2024, from https://climate.ec.europa.eu/international-action/non-eu-countries/eu-climate-cooperation-americas_en

10 The EU's development funding mechanisms can have either a geographical or a thematic scope. For the year 2021–27, three geographic and three thematic instruments define where and how the money is spent. The bulk of development funding comes from geographical instruments: The European Development Fund is the main instrument providing aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and overseas countries and territories; The Development Cooperation Instrument covers cooperation with Latin America, Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and southern Africa. It encompasses five thematic programs addressing global challenges: environmental protection, the role of non-state actors, food security, migration, and human and social development.; Finance for cooperation with other neighboring countries is provided through the European Neighborhood Instrument. European Commission. (2024). The European Union explained: International cooperation and development (p. 7). Publications Office of the European Union.

The European Union has its strategy for sustainable development that includes most of the economic, environmental, and social aspects discussed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, that consists of the following key challenges: climate change and clean energy, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production, conservation and management of natural resources, public health, social inclusion, demography and migration, global poverty and sustainable development¹¹.

At the Sixth EU-LAC Summit held in Madrid in 2010, which followed the commitments undertaken in Lima in 2008, the EU-LAC Structured and Comprehensive Dialogue on Migration was launched, as agreed in the action plan document “*Basis for structuring the EU-LAC dialogue*”. “Through a multidimensional approach, this institutionalized dialogue is intended to understand migration’s realities better and promote the effective enjoyment and protection of human rights for all migrants in both regions. It also intends to identify challenges and areas of mutual interest that require common solutions and to produce result-oriented cooperation on specific issues, such as those specified in this action plan. In the context of this dialogue, measures to combat human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and assistance to the victims were also addressed. The EU-LAC strategic partnership has initiated a dialogue

11 A set of 10 sustainable development strategy objectives have been defined and relevant indicators identified by Eurostat: socioeconomic development, sustainable consumption and production, social inclusion, demographic changes, public health, climate change and energy, sustainable transport, natural resources, global partnership and good governance. ‘Sustainable development can be defined simply as the pursuit of a better quality of life for both present and future generations. It is a vision of progress that links economic development, protection of the environment and social justice, and therefore concerns all citizens of the EU, and indeed of the whole world.’ See: Eurostat. (n.d.). Sustainable development indicators introduced. Retrieved August 28, 2024, from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Sustainable_development_indicators_introduced

on Climate Change and Environment based on the relevant commitments of the “*Lima Agenda for Sustainable Development: Environment; Climate Change; Energy*” as well as on biodiversity, for exploring innovative initiatives in this respect.

A joint approach for a “Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation” fosters sustainability and social inclusion through a targeted focus on science, research, technology, and innovation. The framework of the initiative provides that the thematic priorities should be addressed flexibly and updated periodically. The initiative’s scope includes the following areas: energy environment and climate change, agro-food health information and communications technology, and horizontal activities on S&T Science & Technology policy emphasizing human and institutional capacity building. Moreover, in line with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Research Area (ERA) became a primary political objective. That is why the strategy of the EU for 2020 identified science, technology, and innovation, along with education, as critical areas to develop Europe into a knowledge-based society, more ecological, more innovative, and more inclusive in the future (Joint initiative, 2014).

The seventh EU-LAC Summit was held in Santiago, where the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the European Union (EU), and the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission convened in Santiago, Chile, on 26 and 27 January 2013, to renew and deepen their Strategic Partnership, under the theme: “*Alliance for Sustainable Development: Promoting Investments of Social and Environmental Quality*” (CELAC, 2013).

For the first time in this Summit, Latin America and the Caribbean gathered for a bi-regional dialogue at the highest

level within the framework of CELAC, the representative mechanism of this region that shall promote its interests and objectives on integration and development. The main topics discussed were related to shared values and positions in the international and multilateral arena, such as the commitment to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental, through an Alliance for Sustainable Development, promoting investments of social and environmental quality, the establishment in Hamburg of the EU-LAC Foundation and strengthening the Latin America Investment Facility¹², to improve integration, energy and transport infrastructures, energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable communications networks, and to promote sustainable development, among others.

The biennial summit in June 2015 in Brussels was the second between the EU and CELAC. With the 33 Latin American/Caribbean Member States of the CELAC, 60 countries participated in the Brussels gathering. The summit aimed to strengthen links, enhance cooperation between the two regions, and address issues on the bi-regional and international agenda. Debates have focused on the following topics: democracy and human rights, fighting poverty, promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology, and environmental and climate change. The Brussels summit adopted a short political declaration, a more extended declaration on the different aspects of the partnership, and an

12 European Commission (2015), LATIN AMERICA Investment Facility, International Cooperation and Development, 2015 European Year for Development. The Latin America Investment Facility (LAIF) was officially launched during the EU-LAC Summit in May 2010. The Facility is an innovative financial mechanism that combines grants (non-refundable financial contributions from the European Union) with other resources such as loans from Development Finance Institutions in order to leverage additional financing for development and increase the impact of EU aid. Of the 25 projects, 9 were regional (7 involved the whole region and 2 focused on Central America). The other 16 projects concerned nine individual countries: Nicaragua, Mexico, Chile, Paraguay, El Salvador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia.

EU-CELAC ‘Action Plan’ based on the priorities established by the recent summits. The plan sets ten priority areas for bi-regional cooperation: science, research, innovation, and technology; sustainable development and the environment, climate change, biodiversity, and energy; regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion; migration; education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion; the global drug problem; gender; investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development; higher education; citizen security (European Parliament, 2023).

EU-CELAC also underlined the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in goals such as innovation, protection of the environment, urban resilience, health, and renewable energy, which aim to promote inclusive growth and the reduction of poverty. In this context, the Senior Officials committed to the implementation of the EU-CELAC Common Research Area around three strategic pillars: mobility of researchers, international outreach of research infrastructures, and increased thematic cooperation to address global challenges (EU- CELAC, 2017).

The EU has had a particular interest in aligning Latin American national priorities with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), assisting in the development of health, education, and investment in human capital. Yet, the need for convergence between the European Union and Latin America within EU-CELAC arises from an international context where several issues mentioned before may only be effectively tackled through interregional approaches. Such an alliance will also be fruitful in dealing with the problem of balancing the varying degrees of inequality between citizens belonging to the Member States of these blocks and improving the distribution of resources. This regional challenge requires new institutiona-

lized cooperation through universal and regional instruments on financial aid and trade preferences.

The last EU-CELAC summit took place in July 2023 in Brussels. This was the first diplomatic meeting on the level of the Heads of State since 2015. The main goal of the meeting was to renew the strategic partnership between the EU and Latin America region and reaffirm the joint commitment to shared values such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, economic cooperation, environmental protection, and sustainable development. The agenda of the summit addressed the following challenges: climate change, international security, digital transformation, and investments within the global Gateway Strategy (European Council, 2023).

As a result of the summit, the leaders adopted the final declaration and agreed to organize further summits every second year. The final declaration, signed by all countries except for one, underlined that cooperation between the sovereign states of southern regions is necessary to tackle the biggest global challenges. Within the first pillar of the declaration, the leaders underlined the importance of cooperation in human rights protection and condemned the slave trade that marked the history of relations between Europe Latin America, and the Caribbean. Within the second pillar, the EU and CELAC countries reaffirmed their commitment to peace-building and global security, especially in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the current situation in Haiti, Colombia, Venezuela, and Cuba. Regarding climate change and sustainable development, the declaration points out the necessity of reducing the global temperature by 1,5 C and protecting biodiversity. The following pillar addressed the necessity of raw materials trade and the development of Free Trade Agreements and investments within the Global Gateway initiative. The following pillars of the declaration

addressed the topics of digital transformation, justice and law enforcement cooperation, and health security (Council of the European Union 2023).

Another summit outcome was the adoption of the EU-CELAC Roadmap 2023 to 2025. The document foresees the organization of 29 joint events aimed to foster cooperation between the EU and CELAC in various areas: business, education, culture, civil society, trade (etc.). Those events include the participation of various actors representing national governments, international organizations, entrepreneurs, academia, and NGOs. The framework is supposed to be finalized by the following EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government, taking place in the CELAC region (EU-CELAC, 2023).

PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES ON REGIONAL COOPERATION WITH LATIN AMERICA

At present, the EU contributes through a multi-sectorial collaboration between other actors, including industry, environmental NGOs, and Indigenous communities, using innovative technologies and green infrastructure solutions for vulnerable communities, helping to change policies in Latin America, in three priority areas: social policy, democratic governance and gender equality, and that despite progress in this field, Latin America is still considered as the region with the most significant inequality in the world¹³.

13 The GDP of Latin America and the Caribbean contracted by 0.9% in 2023, which translates into a 1.8% decline in per capita GDP. This negative rate of GDP growth continues the process of economic slowdown and contraction that the region has been mired in since 2011. See: ECLAC. (2023). Preliminary overview of the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean (p. 15). Printed at United Nations, Santiago, Chile.

The EU has implemented the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), which covers, through its different programs, all the developing countries except those eligible for the Pre-Accession Instrument. The geographic programs under the DCI cover developing countries in Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Africa. The objectives and general principles of the DCI have been formulated in line with the Lisbon Treaty and the latest policies, notably the 'Agenda for Change' of EU development policy. Its prime objective is the reduction of poverty. Still, it will also contribute to the achievement of other goals of EU external action, particularly fostering sustainable economic, social, and environmental development and promoting democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights¹⁴. For the latter, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR's) budget has been increased. It will enable the EU to support the development of thriving civil societies and their specific role as critical actors for positive change supporting human rights and democracy. This will include increasing the EU's capacity to react promptly to hu-

14 The EU is virtually unique in its policy of including human rights conditionality clauses in its international agreements. Some of the free trade agreements of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) have copied the EU model, with conditionality clauses including non-execution clauses and dispute settlement.¹⁶ On the other hand, recent EFTA agreements with Chile (2003), Korea (2005), SACU (2006), Egypt (2007) and Canada (2008) do not include any conditionality clauses.¹⁷ This indicates that EFTA's commitment to the idea of human rights conditionality is on the wane. There are no other direct analogies to the EU's conditionality policy. In Latin America, the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay), Chile, Bolivia, and, since 2005, Peru and Venezuela, are party to a protocol providing that any disruption of democracy in a member state may lead to the suspension of that state's right to participate in Mercosur organs and the suspension of its rights under the preferential trade instruments promulgated by the organization. See: European Parliament. (2008). The application of human rights conditionality in the EU's bilateral trade agreements and other trade arrangements with third countries (p. 6). Brussels: European Parliament; MERCOSUR. (1998). Protocolo de Ushuaia sobre compromiso democrático en el MERCOSUR, la República de Bolivia y la República de Chile. (1998). Protocolo de Ushuaia sobre compromiso democrático en el MERCOSUR, la República de Bolivia y la República de Chile.

man rights emergencies and more support for international and regional human rights protection mechanisms (European Commission, 2024).

The EU development cooperation with Latin America will benefit the region by improving the capacities of local counterparts, access to services, and evidence-based changes in policies and regulations, amongst others. It is mainly conducted through the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and its different geographical (regional, sub-regional, and bilateral) and thematic programs. The DCI is the main legal and financial instrument regulating EU cooperation policy with developing countries. The principles of EU development cooperation are set out in the European Consensus for Development, the DCI Regulation, and the EU's Agenda for Change. The main current objectives are 'reducing disparities between people,' 'promoting sustainable development,' 'addressing climate change and advancing higher education and research'¹⁵. Latin America and the Caribbean region has made positive progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for example, in hunger and food security, education, gender parity, health, and environment, although the region continues to face problems in low levels of secondary education coverage, inferior quality and relevance of

15 European Parliament. (2017, April). EU development cooperation with Latin America [Briefing]. Social cohesion Regional programs: •AL-INVEST, aimed at facilitating the internationalization of Latin American SMEs •EURO social, to help change public policies that contribute to social cohesion •Urb-AL, a cooperation program involving EU and LA local and regional authorities •@LIS 2, to promote the information society and fight the digital divide in Latin America. Sustainable development Regional program: •EUROCLIMA, a regional cooperation program focused on climate change, extended to 2016 •EURO-SOLAR, to promote renewable energies in the eight most disadvantaged LA countries •FLEGT South America, to improve forest management and control the origin of timber •RALCEA, to create a Latin American network of centers of excellence in the water sector

education content overall, the inability to generate decent and productive work for all, persistently high levels of inequality that impede social cohesion, the marginalization of population groups due to racial-ethnic, gender, socio-economic inequities and the failure to empower women and foster their economic and physical autonomy (MDG Monitor, 2024).

How does the Millennium Development (MDG) 's overall performance regarding Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) look? And what have been the main limitations of this agenda as a reference in the regional development process? It is essential to consider that LAC was one of the most advanced regions in compliance with MDG. Additionally, LAC constitutes a mainly middle-income area— 61% of countries are located within this income bracket, and within these, 72% belong to the middle to high-income group—which tends to obscure the significant heterogeneities and inequalities existing in the countries and their domestic environments (Sanahuja, 2015).

Along the same line, the EU has developed the new European Consensus for Development; this new consensus aims to eradicate poverty, which is the core of EU development policy. This commitment has an economic, social, and environmental dimension in sustainable development, integrating itself into the 2030 Agenda for the United Nations Sustainable Development. Consequently, the EU and its Member States will develop new partnerships with more advanced developing countries to promote implementing the 2030 Agenda through a broader range of cooperation. Regional agreements, frameworks, strategies, partnerships, and policies about all developing countries will be guided by the Consensus and be based on shared goals, principles, and values. They will promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level with

partner countries, including those in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, as well as in Latin America and Asia¹⁶.

The new European Consensus on Development is the cornerstone of our revamped development policy and constitutes an integral part of the EU's overall response to the 2030 Agenda. A shared framework will be applied to all EU institutions and member states for the first time, providing a common approach to development policies in the following decades. It will guide their cooperation with all developing countries, bearing in mind the need to design tailor-made approaches that reflect the growing diversity of their partner countries. In implementing the Consensus, they will be guided by and promote shared principles, including democracy, the rule of law, human rights, equality, solidarity, and our commitment to a rules-based global order, with multilateralism and the United Nations at its core. The new approach to development is based on the 'five Ps' of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership (Council of the European Union, 2017).

In light of these challenges, cooperation established for 2014-2020 called for a general strengthening of the region in line with the EU's "Agenda for Change".

16 They will implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Change Agreement through coordinated and coherent action, and will maximize synergies. They will support national strategies, including cross-government planning and programming, which promote resilience, reduce climate risk and contribute to emission reduction, consistent with the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), taking into account the challenges faced by developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). SEE: The new European Consensus on development: Our world, our dignity, our future (A/RES/70/1, A/RES/69/313, A/RES/69/283, 4 FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/REV.1).

The European Union's 2014-2020 regional programs for Latin America supported development efforts by working in the following five priority areas:

- 1) The security-development nexus: Reinforce the capacity of states to ensure public security conditions that are conducive to inclusive development.
- 2) Good governance, accountability, and social equity: Enhance accountability and the capacity of institutions and public administrations to provide high-quality public services.
- 3) Inclusive and sustainable growth for human development: Poverty reduction through more inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Latin America.
- 4) Environmental sustainability and climate change: Reduce poverty in the most vulnerable populations by fostering environmentally sustainable development and improving their capacity to cope with climate change and disasters.
- 5) Higher Education: Promote mobility of students and academic staff and foster cooperation between higher education institutions to strengthen capacities and improve quality of education¹⁷.

17 The Multiannual Indicative Regional Program for Latin America for the period 2014-2020 comprised a major component: the Multiannual Indicative Program for Continental Cooperation with Latin America, with a budget of EUR 805 million for which all the Latin America countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) are eligible. This is complemented by a specific indicative program for sub-regional cooperation with Central America, with a budget of EUR 120 million, for which Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama are eligible. See: European Commission. (2014). Experiences of the European Union: Regional development cooperation with Latin America on climate change (p. 23). Publications Office of the European Union.

This policy was followed by the New Agenda to strengthen the EU's partnership with Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted in 2023 by the European Commission and the EU's High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The document underlines the necessity to foster cooperation between the EU and the CELAC, especially in the fields of trade, investment and sustainable development policy. Concerning the political aspects of the cooperation, the Agenda stresses that the EU should focus on bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the LAC. According to the publication, the trade cooperation must prioritize advancing the current negotiations of Free Trade Agreements in order to continue the positive trend of the trade exchange increase by 40% from 2018 to 2022. The New Agenda also marks the importance of the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda, which aimed to foster mutual investments in green transition, digital infrastructure, and transport. This initiative is of particular importance as it enhances the commitment of both regions to the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda by supporting the innovation and suitability of the EU-CELAC cooperation (European Commission, 2023).

In addition, the holding of the Paris Summit on climate showed the need to adopt a new international climate agreement to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon world economy, marking the culmination of years of efforts of the international community to achieve a universal multilateral agreement on climate change. On the other hand, since the end of the 20th century, the EU's environmental policy has been articulated around action programs that establish priority objectives in these matters.

The program, which is the seventh of its kind, was approved by the European Parliament and the Council of the European

Union in November 2013 and covers the period up to the year 2020 (Decision No 1386/2013/EU). With this program of action in the field of environment (PMA), the EU undertakes to step up its efforts to protect its natural capital, stimulate innovation and growth to a low-carbon economy and efficient in the use of resources, and protect the health and well-being of the population, respecting at all times the natural limits of the Earth¹⁸.

The EU's program identifies three priority areas that require more efforts to protect nature and strengthen ecological resilience, promote low-carbon economy growth that uses resources efficiently, and reduce threats associated with pollution, chemical substances, and the impact of climate change on human health and well-being. For marine pollution, announced the launch of WISE Marine, a gateway for information on European water issues for the general public and stakeholders to promote better ocean governance and ecosystem-based management with draft measures to reduce the leakage of plastics into the environment to reduce the discharges of ship-generated waste and cargo residues into the sea and to an integrated Arctic project focusing on the three priority areas of EU Arctic policy: Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment; Sustainable Development in and around the Arctic; and International Cooperation on Arctic Issues, among others (European Union, 2017).

18 European Union. (2015). Development is about people: 2015 European Year for Development. Luxembourg: European Union. The EU-financed project conducts research to provide guidance on ways to improve the design and implementation of schemes such as REDD+ that stands for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. People receive incentives for not clearing forests or through reforestation, thereby reducing carbon. Devising equitable and legitimate ways of distributing the costs and benefits of these initiatives are crucial to their success. The research focuses on six countries — Vietnam, Indonesia, Peru, Brazil, Cameroon and Tanzania. CIFOR has held over 20 consultations and workshops and produced 15 publications since the project began.

The EU continues to play a leadership role in the multilateral approach to climate change. Still, it is urgent to have more involvement by other States based on common responsibilities, although differential, indicating that realistic progress towards the goal of 2°C will be achieved only if it increases the number of countries adopting effective measures for its implementation, as well as the promotion of policies to combat climate change the which should be consistent with other essential objectives (e.g., the reduction of poverty, etc.)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) confirm countries' ambitions for 2030, eliminating poverty and promoting prosperity and people's well-being while protecting the environment. On the same line, the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD) focuses on deeper international cooperation, peer learning, and knowledge sharing, which are essential to addressing these challenges and achieving global goals. In this respect, LAC's relations with the EU can become a powerful tool to address these and other regional challenges. For example, Latin America could learn from EU social policy, where improvements to education, unemployment insurance, or pension coverage helped spur social mobility. Another area in which the EU has developed valuable tools is combating environmental degradation and loss, a pressing global concern. Latin American economies might learn from the EU's taxation of energy use to reduces (Guria, 2015). Carbon emissions, as well as its elimination of inefficient and damaging fossil-fuel subsidies.

The OECD has been supporting the idea of new approaches to international cooperation that reflect the degree of global integration, that are sensitive to the importance of emerging economies and the realities of the developing world, that base their decisions on new economic thinking, and that can gene-

rate political consensus, international standards, and binding decisions¹⁹. The epidemic of unemployment and underemployment now gripping the world is threatening the future of entire generations, undermining the progress of our economies over several decades, and putting at risk our achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Also, at the G-20 meeting in London in 2009, the EU and the United States agreed on the need for better regulation of the global financial system. In this respect, the G-20 stated that the challenges have increased in recent years. Geopolitical conflicts, terrorism, migration and refugee flows, poverty, hunger, epidemics, and increasing climate change place great burdens on societies worldwide and have far-reaching effects on economic development. The G20 must endeavor to reduce global risks and their possible negative impact through forward-looking cooperation. At the same time, the opportunity to make growing global connectivity of benefit to everyone through closer international cooperation has never been greater. The G20 thus fosters sustainable development, for which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement provide the key international frames of reference. People benefit from global action and the increasing integration of economies and societies – this message must be reinforced and communicated better. In this context, the G20 works on the principle that only joint endeavors will lead to success (G20 , 2017). Particularly, the G20 is making progress on

19 The leap from informal or ad hoc multilateralism to an institutionalized multilateralism that is more structured and based on a more solid framework is another challenge that is frequently cited. What are some of those challenges? 1) Correcting external payments imbalances; 2) Reforming the international financial system; 3) The unfinished development agenda; 4) Combating corruption; 5) Promoting green growth; 6) Innovation and the development of new skills; 7) Incorporating women into economic activity; and 8) International migration. Gurría, Angel, (2011). The G20: Emerging Countries, Global Governance and Development Remarks by Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General, delivered at SEGIB Seminar: “The Shift of Power, Global Governance and New Multilateralism” 3 October 2011, Madrid, Spain available at <http://www.oecd.org/about/secretary-general/theg20emergingcountriesglobalgovernanceanddevelopment.htm>

implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through individual and collective action, it will be resolute in its endeavors to ensure the rapid and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with its global goals for sustainable development, and of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda²⁰.

The Addis Agenda aims to mobilize public and private resources and establish appropriate public policies and regulatory frameworks to stimulate private finance, trade, and technology development. To create incentives for changes in consumption, production, and investment, the agenda has been broadened to include the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental, and social. As such, the Addis Agenda rests on the same principles as the 2030 Agenda and highlights the need for governments to assess their financing frameworks and consider how effectively they can shape and deliver financing policy to support the work of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs (Government of Sweden, 2017).

The Agenda includes regional processes that will draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level, including at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Recognizing the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level and allowing adequate policy space, all Member States should be encouraged to identify the most suitable regional forum to drive the shared efforts of the objectives by 2030.

CONCLUSION

The commitments made by the EU and Latin America through their strategic bilateral partnership have gradually reached

²⁰ Ibid. p. 8

higher levels of political dialogue and increased effectiveness towards sustainable development to achieve the full achievement of the MDGs necessary to improve their institutional framework for public aid governance.

The cooperation between the EU and Latin America must occur in a coherent political framework founded on fair economic growth and sectoral development policies. The coherence of international policies and programs is essential in achieving these goals (particularly in global economic governance, open markets, immigration, climate change, and risk management). The Commission stresses that the Community and its Member States have made a substantial contribution to the international community's efforts. Despite that, progress in achieving the MDGs must speed up²¹.

At this time, international organizations should strengthen their relationships to preserve multilateralism when they deal with increasing globalization that requires concerted responses

21 Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, and the Economic and Social Committee of 12 April 2005: Speeding up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals – The European Union's contribution (COM(2005) 132 final). Not published in the Official Journal.; Environment and sustainable management of natural resources, including energy. The Commission is proposing a programme of measures for the environment and the sustainable management of resources which could be financed by the Community and implemented as part of the European Union's external policy; Commission Communication of 25 January 2006, entitled: "External action: Thematic programme for environment and sustainable management of natural resources including energy" [COM(2006) 20 final - Not published in the Official Journal]; Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 9 April 2008 – The EU – a global partner for development – Speeding up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals [COM(2008)177 final – Not published in the Official Journal]. This Communication identifies the measures that need to be taken to speed up progress towards the MDGs as regards the volume and effectiveness of development aid, aid for trade and policy coherence. It also contributes to the formulation of a Community position with an eye to the Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha in December 2008 and the High-Level Forum on Aid effectiveness to be held in Accra in September 2008.

to problems of greater importance and concern in the world. The international system also faces significant changes that have structural implications, especially related to sustainable development affecting the recomposition of the world economy, taking into account the asymmetries that different Member States have and the growing evidence of a shared role in exercising competencies along with regional organizations and other States and non-state actors like individuals, international organizations, all subject to international law.

Furthermore, both regions can benefit from the bi-regional strategic partnership, and through several agreements and other ways of cooperation, to guarantee economic and social development. This requires the impulse of a new deep-rooted institutional multilateralism whose agreements that work should be maintained. To further advance and strengthen the Millennium development goals, as well as the goals of sustainable development to the year 2030, it is necessary to make a real commitment to the multilateral system, which is reinforced with a common leading role of Member States in its external action, with deeper trade integration.

A strategy to achieve these new global commitments is to participate in multiple international conferences and intergovernmental forums. Several agreements also include a partnership on sustainable development, appropriate to encourage the actions that are partly covered by this solid bi-regional political dialogue, which has helped to define common priorities to create sustained and inclusive growth, social inclusion, and climate change for future progress, especially in social, political and economic areas.

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