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REPORT

FOLLOW-UP MEETING AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE SESSIONS

“EU-CELAC RELATIONS: CREATING CERTAINTY IN THE FACE OF COMMON GLOBAL CHALLENGES” *Brussels*

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FOLLOW-UP MEETING AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE SESSIONS “EU-CELAC RELATIONS: CREATING CERTAINTY IN THE FACE OF COMMON GLOBAL CHALLENGES”

Brussels (Belgium). On 3rd December 2024
From 15:00 to 18:30 (GMT Brussels)

Permanent Representation of Spain to the European Union, REPER
Rue Ducale 89-93- 1000 Brussels (Belgium)



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Y COOPERACIÓN



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JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA



PROGRAMME

Brussels, 3rd December 2024

OPENING SESSION

15h00 EU-CELAC RELATIONS TODAY

- **Marcos Alonso Alonso**. Ambassador Permanent Representative of Spain to the European Union. REPER.
- **Juan Carlos Moreno Piñero**. Director of the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation.
- **Guillermo Santamaría Galdón**. Regional Minister of Economy, Employment, and Digital Transformation. Regional Government of Extremadura
- **Leire Pajín**. First Vice-President of EUROLAT.
- **Gabriel Mato**. President of EUROLAT - Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly of the European Parliament.
- **Fernando Mariano Sampedro Marcos**. Secretary of State for the European Union. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of the Government of Spain.

15h45 DIALOGUE: HOW TO BUILD CERTAINTY IN EU-CELAC RELATIONS: MULTILATERALISM, PEACE, INVESTMENTS, SUSTAINABILITY, AND SECURITY

- **Pelayo Castro Zuzúarregui**. Director / Deputy Managing Director for the Americas at the European External Action Service (EEAS).
- **Felix Fernández-Shaw**. Director for Latin America, the Caribbean, and Relations with All Overseas Countries and Territories at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). European Commission.
- **Javier Samper Orgilés**. FIIAPP (International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies). Director of EL PacCTO 2.0: EU-LAC Partnership on Justice and Security.
- **José Guadalupe Ruelas García**. Ambassador of Honduras to the Kingdom of Belgium and Mission to the European Union, Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC.
- **Gianni Avila**. Ambassador of Belize to the Kingdom of Belgium and the EU.



16h45 COFFEE BREAK

17h00 DIALOGUE: LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE: PRIORITIES AND KEY SECTORS TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION

- Érika Rodríguez Pinzón**. Director of the Carolina Foundation.
- Cristina Manzano**. Director of International Relations at the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).
- Alberto Brunori**. Director of EU-LAC Foundation.
- Myriam Ferran**. Deputy Director-General at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission.
- Camila María Polo Florez**. Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Colombia to the Kingdom of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Mission to the European Union and NATO, CELAC Pro Tempore Presidency, first semester 2025.
- Symone Betton Nayo**. Ambassadress of Jamaica to the Kingdom of Belgium and the EU.

18h15 CLOSING WORDS

- Javi López**. Vice-President of the European Parliament.
- Susana Sumelzo Jordán**. Secretary of State for Ibero-America and the Caribbean and Spanish in the World. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of the Government of Spain.

Moderator: **Miguel Ángel Martín Ramos**
Rapporteur: **Paula Folino Juanola**



DIRECTOR	Juan Carlos Moreno Piñero. Director of Yuste Foundation
COORDINATOR:	Miguel Ángel Martín Ramos. Delegate of Yuste Foundation in Brussels
ORGANISED BY:	European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation State Secretariat for the EU of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation of the Government of Spain

ORGANISED BY:



JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



This meeting aimed to analyse and reflect on the mechanisms and spaces for cooperation in EU-Latin America and the Caribbean relations. It focused on the outcomes of the EU-CELAC Summit held in July 2023 in Brussels under the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU, and looked ahead to the next summit in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2025,



to address major global challenges while minimising their impact, and creating contexts of security and certainty that contribute to ensuring progress, stability, democracy, and the rule of law. The meeting followed up on the sessions with the same title organised in Guadalupe, Extremadura, between 21 and 22 November, and the recording of which can be consulted here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLavIJsUxU6WP5lzsfaqywVGnk76B-N7tB>

INSTITUTIONAL OPENING SESSION

- **Marcos Alonso Alonso.** Ambassador Permanent Representative of Spain to the European Union. REPER.
- **Fernando Mariano Sampedro Marcos.** Secretary of State for the European Union.
- **Juan Carlos Moreno Piñero.** Director of the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation.
- **Guillermo Santamaría Galdón.** Regional Minister of Economy, Employment, and Digital Transformation. Regional Government of Extremadura.
- **Leire Pajjin.** Member of the European Parliament (MEP).
- **Gabriel Mato.** Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

In his keynote speech, **Marcos Alonso Alonso**, ambassador permanent representative of Spain to the European Union, highlighted the importance of strengthening ties between Europe and Latin America, emphasising that both regions share a common legacy of the past, present, and, above all, the aspiration to build a joint future in a complex world, or a fractured world, quoting Fernando Vallespín.

He expressed his gratitude to the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, and the Secretariat of State for organising this meeting, describing it as a valuable contribution to consolidating interregional relations. He also acknowledged the significance of this event as part of the follow-up to the work initiated in Guadalupe and within the framework of the EU-CELAC summit held in 2023, which marked a milestone by institutionalising relations between both regions.

Alonso stressed that, in a complex and fragmented world, it is crucial to work together to harness the enormous potential that exists between these communities. He concluded by thanking the participants for their involvement and expressing his hope that meetings like this would continue to drive the shared objectives of cooperation and sustainable development.

Fernando Mariano Sampedro Marcos, secretary of State for the European Union, began his address by expressing gratitude to the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Permanent Representation of Spain to the European Union for organising this meeting. He acknowledged the continuation of the dialogue initiated in Guadalupe, highlighting the importance of



collaboration between European, Latin American, and Caribbean institutions to strengthen bi-regional relations.

The secretary of State framed the meeting within a strategic moment, marked by the beginning of a new institutional cycle in the European Union and recent advances in EU-Latin America relations, as well as renewed interest in the region, driven by its own merits and further promoted by Spain's presidency in 2023. Spain supports all initiatives that bolster this bi-regional agenda, he noted. He underscored the achievements of the third EU-CELAC summit, including the establishment of an institutional structure to monitor bi-regional relations, the commitment to biennial summits, and the promotion of key areas such as the digital, green, and social transitions, the fight against climate change and transnational crime, as well as other topics like health, food security, and governance.

Sampedro also highlighted specific initiatives such as the Global Gateway investment agenda and projects like BELLA II and the Digital Development Hub, which enhance connectivity between the two regions. He stressed the importance of maintaining this renewed interest and deepening strategic alliances as an essential approach to addressing global challenges and seizing shared opportunities.

He emphasised that strengthening this bi-regional partnership is not solely the responsibility of governments but also of civil society, economic stakeholders, and academic and cultural actors. Sampedro called for continued joint efforts to shape a shared future, reminding attendees that Europe and Latin America are natural partners with a shared responsibility to expand their potential and uphold their common values in the coming cycle.

Juan Carlos Moreno Piñero, director of the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation, opened the event by highlighting its significance as a platform for dialogue and cooperation between Europe, Ibero-America, and the Caribbean. He began by recalling the first phase of the event held at the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe, one of the Foundation's headquarters, and emphasised the continuity of the work now taking place at Spain's Representation to the European Union, a "home for all".

During his address, Moreno Piñero underscored the mission of the Foundation, honourarily presided over by King Felipe VI, to strengthen ties between Extremadura, Europe, and Ibero-America, guided by principles such as respect, solidarity, and the promotion of democracy, human rights, peace, and sustainable development. He also stressed the value of shared culture, particularly language, as a unifying element, and the necessity of finding joint solutions to global challenges, framing this effort as a legacy for future generations.

He highlighted the importance of cooperation between these regions, which collectively represent a significant proportion of the global GDP and hold substantial political influence in international organisations such as the UN and the G20. However, he noted that the path to a more cohesive future is fraught with uncertainties and requires steadfast commitment to values such as democracy, freedom, and human dignity, all rooted in the rule of law.



Moreno Piñero expressed gratitude for the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, as well as the participants in both phases of the event. He voiced his hope that the work undertaken would extend beyond the academic sphere to generate practical impacts in the context of upcoming international summits, including the EU summit in Bogotá in 2025 and the Ibero-American summit in Spain in 2026. He concluded by emphasising the importance of this forum as a vital space for fostering the necessary dialogue to illuminate the path towards a shared future.

The regional minister of Economy, Employment and Digital Transformation of the Regional Government of Extremadura, Guillermo Santamaría Galdón, emphasised the significance of the meeting held in Brussels as a key opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). He noted that in a turbulent global context, marked by structural changes and geopolitical challenges, it is essential to foster certainty and strengthen strategic ties between the two regions. He stressed that these relationships should be founded on shared values such as democracy, solidarity, and respect for human rights, while leveraging their common historical and cultural heritage to build a sustainable and inclusive future.

The minister presented the “Extremestiza” initiative, promoted by the Regional Government of Extremadura, as a regional effort to strengthen ties with Latin America and position Extremadura as a bridge between Europe and Latin America. He reiterated Extremadura’s commitment, as reflected in its Statute of Autonomy, to act as a key player in strengthening these relationships. He also highlighted the role of Yuste Foundation in promoting projects and initiatives that encourage bidirectional dialogue and cooperation between the two regions.

Referring to the meeting in Guadalupe, he underlined the importance of the discussions held there, which fostered hope and optimism in the face of global challenges. He insisted that dialogue, cooperation, and multilateralism are essential to addressing the current international context. He highlighted the strategic weight of the EU-CELAC alliance, noting that these regions together represent a third of the United Nations membership, 14% of the world’s population, and 21% of global GDP.

Finally, he called for maintaining the continuity and effectiveness of these summits, avoiding delays in agendas, and ensuring that the proposals and reflections lead to concrete recommendations to strengthen bi-regional relations. He recognised that global challenges require joint solutions and expressed his gratitude to Yuste Foundation and all participants for fostering spaces for reflection and understanding that contribute to building a shared path towards the future.

Leire Pajín Iraola, member of the European Parliament and first vice-president of EUROLAT, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, underscored in her address the importance of maintaining and strengthening relations between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union. She highlighted that both regions are strategically aligned in shared values and common interests. Pajín noted that the recent political context, shaped by Spain’s presidency of the European Union and Josep Borrell’s leadership in foreign policy, presented a unique opportunity to place this



relationship at the centre of the European agenda. However, she cautioned against the challenges of ensuring these priorities remain relevant amid a complex geopolitical landscape.

She emphasised the crucial role of the European Parliament in this endeavour, particularly through platforms such as EUROLAT and committees on international trade, development cooperation, and foreign policy. Pajín called for deeper understanding of the diversity and complexity of Latin America and the Caribbean, urging efforts to dismantle stereotypes and recognise the opportunities the region offers. She highlighted the progress achieved in global agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda and the climate agreement, driven by both regions in multilateral forums. Strategic areas of cooperation she mentioned included combating climate change, advancing digitalisation, promoting trade, and addressing inequalities.

Pajín urged for the acceleration of pending processes, such as the Mercosur agreement and the partnership agreement with Mexico, to consolidate tools that would benefit both regions. She prioritised issues such as gender equality, the protection of human rights, and the defence of environmental activists safeguarding global biodiversity. She acknowledged the work of organisations like Yuste Foundation in fostering informal dialogue spaces, which are essential for building relationships based on trust, openness, and joint problem-solving.

Finally, Pajín reaffirmed her commitment to a relationship that is not only institutional but also political and human, emphasising the role of culture, music, and knowledge in strengthening ties between the two regions. She concluded by advocating for keeping Latin America and the Caribbean as a priority on the European agenda and working towards a summit that further consolidates this strategic partnership.

Gabriel Mato Adrover, member of the European Parliament and President of EUROLAT, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, focused his remarks on the strategic importance of parliamentary diplomacy as a key tool to strengthen relations between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). He noted that, while less visible than traditional diplomacy, this approach facilitates direct exchanges between legislators from both regions, fostering collaboration and the sharing of experiences to address shared challenges. This mechanism also ensures that Latin America remains a priority on the European Parliament's agenda.

Mato Adrover highlighted how EU-CELAC relations enable a joint response to global and regional challenges, addressing issues such as organised crime, climate change, threats to democracy, and digital transitions. He stressed that only through a shared vision and constant communication can effective solutions be achieved.

He underscored that the primary role of EUROLAT is to maintain fluid and ongoing communication between the parliaments of both regions. This not only enhances mutual understanding but also facilitates the harmonisation of regulations that affect the bi-regional relationship. In this regard, he emphasised that many European legislations, particularly in environmental and industrial matters, have direct implications for Latin



American partners. Ensuring that these policies are well understood and adapted to shared needs is therefore crucial.

Mato Adrover also addressed the current geopolitical context, marked by significant challenges requiring greater unity between the regions. He emphasised the need to jointly defend democracy, human rights, and the fight against climate change, recognising that the EU and LAC share democratic values and a mutual interest in preserving their way of life.

He underscored the importance of maintaining and strengthening the historical and strategic ties between Europe and Latin America. Despite existing challenges, he emphasised that the relationship should be grounded not only in shared history and culture but also in a common interest in defending democratic values and adapting to current geopolitical shifts. This requires fostering strong and enduring alliances.

He also advocated for leveraging the historical, cultural, and linguistic connections between the two regions to consolidate a strategic partnership capable of addressing global threats and promoting mutual well-being. He concluded with a call to avoid complacency and to actively work towards sustaining and enhancing the bonds between Europe and Latin America.

From EUROLAT, he reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring that these relations remain a priority, shedding light on the path towards deeper and more effective cooperation in an era of global uncertainty.



FIRST SESSION OF DIALOGUE: HOW TO CREATE CERTAINTY IN EU-CELAC RELATIONS: MULTILATERALISM, PEACE, INVESTMENTS, SUSTAINABILITY, AND SECURITY

- **Miguel Ángel Martín Ramos.** Head of European Affairs and delegate in Brussels of the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation.
- **Pelayo Castro Zuzúarregui.** Director / Deputy Director for the Americas at the European External Action Service (EEAS).
- **Felix Fernández-Shaw.** Director for Latin America, the Caribbean, and Relations with All Overseas Countries and Territories at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). European Commission.
- **Javier Samper Orgilés.** FIIAPP (International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies). Director of EL PacCTO 2.0: EU-LAC Partnership on Justice and Security.
- **José Guadalupe Ruelas García.** Ambassador of Honduras to the Kingdom of Belgium and Mission to the European Union. Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC.
- **Gianni Avila.** Ambassador of Belize to the Kingdom of Belgium and the EU.

Miguel Ángel Martín Ramos, head of European Affairs and Delegate in Brussels for the European and Ibero-American Academy of Yuste Foundation, shared reflections, conclusions, and proposals from the forum held at the Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe on 21-22 November 2024, entitled ‘EU-CELAC Relations: Creating Certainty in the Face of Common Global Challenges’. His words highlighted the key topics discussed during the event and emphasised the importance of strengthening cooperation between the European Union and Latin America.

Firstly, he stressed that these forums represent a collective effort to address global challenges through collaboration, inclusion, and sustainability. He underscored the need to reinforce multilateralism and international institutions, advocating for greater inclusivity and representation, particularly regarding Latin America and the Caribbean, a region of strategic importance to the European Union due to shared historical and cultural ties and common values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. He also highlighted the importance of involving a broad spectrum of actors, including civil society, the private sector, researchers, and governmental experts.

He emphasised the critical role of investment, trade, and sustainability as driving forces for strengthening the bi-regional relationship. Initiatives such as *Global Gateway* and programmes like *Aeroclima* and *Amazonia Plus* were presented as essential tools to promote digital connectivity and the green transition. The need to enhance productivity through technical collaboration and increased awareness of existing cooperation mechanisms was highlighted, particularly given the lack of knowledge in certain sectors.

Martín Ramos addressed challenges linked to climate change, social and climate justice, and an inclusive green transition. He advocated for the promotion of biodiversity, the



circular economy, and the fight against plastic pollution. Additionally, he called for reforms in the international financial system and the establishment of strategic alliances concerning critical raw materials essential for the energy transition.

On security and governance, he underlined the importance of addressing citizen insecurity, organised crime, and corruption through collaborative approaches that foster the exchange of best practices and the creation of a public policy laboratory. The relevance of peace was also highlighted, with references to ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, stressing the urgency of keeping this issue at the forefront of the agenda.

Finally, he discussed the importance of education and innovation as tools to tackle future challenges. He underscored the need to invest in essential skills, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence to prepare societies in both regions. Decentralised cooperation and the involvement of local communities were emphasised as key elements in addressing specific needs, ranging from food security to gender equity.

Martín Ramos concluded by emphasising the importance of translating political declarations into concrete actions that directly benefit the citizens of both regions. He highlighted the unique opportunity to strengthen a strategic alliance grounded in shared values and stressed the need for a study on the costs of failing to advance this relationship. He underlined that only through clear commitments could a more inclusive, resilient, and equitable future be built for both regions and the world.

Pelayo Castro Zuzúarregui, Deputy Director for the Americas at the European External Action Service (EEAS), fully endorsed the conclusions from Guadalupe presented by Martín Ramos and addressed several key points during his speech.

First, he stressed that creating certainty in EU–Latin America relations cannot be achieved through transactional agreements but requires deep and comprehensive partnerships involving governments, civil society, and businesses. He underscored that the historical relationship between the two regions, forged over centuries of cultural and familial exchanges, necessitates a cooperation-driven approach rather than one based on tactical interests.

Second, he highlighted the need to adopt a geopolitical perspective on this relationship. While natural proximity and shared values are vital starting points, he asserted that mutual interests must be understood within a changing global context. In this regard, he pointed to the increasing centrality of the Atlantic in geopolitics, particularly in the wake of the war in Ukraine. This development, he argued, calls for Europe to enhance its focus on Latin America and the Caribbean as strategic partners.

Finally, he addressed the role of CELAC in EU–Latin America relations, suggesting that while it is fundamental, it should not be the only platform for cooperation. He insisted that the European Union should be pragmatic and work on multiple levels: bilateral, subregional, and multilateral. Additionally, in relation to the growing influence of China, he emphasised that Europe should not attempt to emulate the Chinese or American



models but should instead value its own nature and the historical ties it shares with Latin America, basing its collaboration on its own values and capabilities.

Félix Fernández-Shaw, director for Latin America, the Caribbean, and relations with Overseas Countries and Territories at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission, addressed the relationship between Europe and Latin America, highlighting the need to reconsider the purpose and importance of this alliance. He noted that while both continents share a long history of cooperation, the relationship has diminished in terms of expectations and achievements. He emphasised the need to project an image of Latin America and the Caribbean as a region of opportunities, beyond internal issues, acknowledging that, although these issues should not be ignored, they should not dominate the narrative.

He highlighted the importance of productive investment and supporting the energy transition in Latin America, mentioning key areas like artificial intelligence and green hydrogen, where the region has significant potential. Fernández-Shaw criticised the European tendency to talk more about problems than about concrete solutions, as demanded by Latin American countries. He also stressed that Europe should focus on tangible actions and collaborate on concrete projects, underscoring the need for greater European presence in the region to compete effectively in the global context, especially in terms of technology and environmental issues.

Finally, he pointed out that competition in these areas is inevitable, and the relationship should be strengthened not only in commercial terms but also through technology and shared standards, urging that concrete actions replace words in order to move forward together towards a common future.

Javier Samper Orgilés, director of the EL PacCTO 2.0 programme at the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP), presented his institution's strategic approach to strengthening justice and security between the European Union, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In his speech, he highlighted that the PacCTO, funded by the European Commission, focuses on technical cooperation and solving shared problems in these areas. He noted that through this programme, the aim is to support the political cycles of justice and security on both continents, fostering capacity building and overcoming technical and political obstacles in the fight against organised crime.

Samper highlighted that the growing importance of justice and security on the public and political agenda, reflected in the final declaration of the 2023 EU-CELAC Summit, indicates a need to update traditional approaches. He emphasized that the Pact operates at three levels: strategic, institutional, and operational, working on concrete initiatives such as cooperation to dismantle criminal networks, the fight against drug trafficking, and strengthening international cooperation. He also highlighted operational projects such as conferences on artificial intelligence and training in Central America to tackle mercury trafficking.

Finally, Samper explained that the programme's approach goes beyond mere citizen security, advocating for the defence of the rule of law, understood as the necessary



framework to guarantee not only the protection of fundamental rights but also the legal stability that favours investment and economic development. From his perspective, strengthening the rule of law is key to combating the infiltration of organised crime and ensuring an environment conducive to effective social and economic policies.

José Guadalupe Ruelas García, ambassador of Honduras to the Kingdom of Belgium and the European Union, and pro tempore president of CELAC, emphasised the importance of strengthening relations between the European Union and CELAC, particularly in key areas such as multilateralism, peace, sustainability, and security. He pointed out that, unlike in past decades, the current focus is on comprehensive development and human rights, both individual and collective. Through multilateralism, the two regions can learn from each other, share experiences, and offer solutions to common challenges.

The ambassador highlighted the need for a joint approach, with both regions collaborating to build a safer and more sustainable future. He stated that to achieve this, it is essential to go beyond traditional solutions, addressing prevention, the reconstruction of social fabric, and the recovery of public spaces. He also emphasised the importance of maintaining permanent forums for dialogue that are not limited to specific events but contribute to continuous progress on these issues.

Finally, Ruelas García invited the attendees, and everyone in general, to promote initiatives that strengthen the ties between the European Union and CELAC, highlighting the importance of working together in the pursuit of peace, security, and development. He quoted Eduardo Galeano, noting that utopias serve to maintain the momentum towards progress. He stressed that cooperation should not be understood as a one-way relationship, but as a mutual collaboration to achieve common goals.

Gianni Avila, ambassador of Belize to the Kingdom of Belgium and the European Union, highlighted the importance of keeping dialogue channels open between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), stressing that the constant evolution of the bi-regional relationship is essential to adapt to international geopolitical and economic changes. In this regard, she emphasised the committee meeting scheduled in Colombia in 2025 as a positive step towards strengthening collaboration between the two regions.

The ambassador also focused on creating “avenues of dialogue” within broader cooperation frameworks, such as the digital alliance, which encompasses key policies like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and e-governance. These high-level dialogues, as she explained, are crucial for laying the foundation of a lasting and sustainable relationship between the European Union and LAC. She also highlighted programmes such as PacCTO 2.0 and Euroclima, which address issues like security and climate change, respectively, and have been extended to the Caribbean region, contributing to the strengthening of bi-regional connections.

Finally, Avila emphasised the importance of the subregional approach, particularly in the Caribbean, referring to initiatives like the El PacCTO programme, which also addresses specific challenges in the region, such as the impact of sargassum on tourism and fishing



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industries. This effort, according to the ambassador, is an example of how the concerns and needs of the Caribbean are being integrated into cooperation with Latin America and the European Union, helping to revitalise and modernise regional relations.



DIALOGUE: LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE. PRIORITIES AND KEY SECTORS TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION

- **Érika Rodríguez Pinzón.** Director of the Carolina Foundation.
- **Cristina Manzano.** Director of International Relations at the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).
- **Alberto Brunori.** Director of EU-LAC Foundation.
- **Myriam Ferran.** Deputy Director-General at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission.
- **Camila María Polo Florez.** Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of Colombia to the Kingdom of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Mission to the European Union and NATO, CELAC pro tempore presidency, first semester 2025.

Érika Rodríguez Pinzón, director of the Carolina Foundation, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the panel and shared her analysis of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America, drawing from her experience at the Foundation. She began by addressing the current scenario in Latin America, noting that while the region is well diagnosed, it continues to face persistent challenges such as social and institutional gaps. Despite accurate diagnoses, she emphasised the growing distrust towards multilateralism and the crisis in diplomacy within the region, which has led to a lack of coherence and coordination in the foreign policies of Latin American countries. Additionally, she pointed to the security crisis, marked by extreme violence and the expansion of the illegal economy, as a key issue to consider.

Rodríguez Pinzón also stressed the importance of avoiding an agenda focused solely on summits, highlighting the need to make other mechanisms of cooperation, such as ministerial meetings, more visible, as they reflect the depth and diversity of the EU-Latin America relationship. She argued that the region should not be reduced to traditional actors like CELAC, Brazil, or Mexico, but should also recognise the particularities of countries experiencing significant growth, such as Paraguay, Uruguay, and Panama.

In her proposal, the Director suggested a long-term vision for the relationship, focusing on key areas such as data sovereignty, where Latin America and the EU have opportunities for collaboration, and the need to strengthen open channels like Euro Social, which has already demonstrated its impact on public policies in the region. She emphasised the importance of deepening cooperation agendas, particularly in training and capacity development, which are crucial for the social and economic transitions underway. Finally, she called on Europe to become more actively involved in shaping a new generation of experts in international relations with a structural focus on Latin America, not just in a short-term, episodic manner.

Cristina Manzano, director of International Relations at the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), highlighted the importance of the Ibero-American community in the international context, emphasising its complementary and distinct role in the relationship between the European Union and CELAC. She noted that SEGIB represents 22 Ibero-



American countries, comprising 19 Latin American countries and 3 European countries, underlining the significance of this community at various levels, from political to business and local.

In her speech, Manzano highlighted the recent Ibero-American summit held in Cuenca, where the region's political diversity was evident, but the message of unity was also reinforced, as indicated by King Felipe VI during the transition of the pro-tempore presidency from Ecuador to Spain. The director stressed the importance of focusing on the aspects that unite Ibero-American countries, such as cooperation, a core element of the Ibero-American project, characterised by its horizontal and intergovernmental nature. This cooperation has been crucial in the development of projects and initiatives in various areas such as culture, science, and technology, which have been driven by member countries for over 30 years.

Manzano mentioned several key cooperation projects, including those related to the digital environment, artificial intelligence, the protection of digital rights, and the environment. She also referred to the importance of cooperation in areas such as the reform of international financial architecture and youth employment, highlighting the Ibero-American community's efforts to generate concrete proposals to address these challenges. Moreover, she emphasised the ongoing work in cross-cutting areas such as public innovation and citizen security, with initiatives aiming to improve public policies through collaboration among countries and international actors.

Finally, Cristina Manzano stressed that the Ibero-American community, despite its political differences, maintains active cooperation that continues to evolve and can serve as a testing ground for relations with the European Union. She concluded by noting that Spain's presidency in SEGIB and the upcoming summit in Spain will represent an opportunity to further strengthen the Ibero-American project, learning from shared experiences and promoting mutual exchanges of knowledge and lessons in public policies.

Alberto Brunori, director of the EU-LAC Foundation, expressed his gratitude for the invitation to participate in the event and highlighted the broad consensus reached regarding the cooperation priorities between Latin America and the European Union. He identified key areas such as gender, women's rights, care pacts, trade, investment, security, the fight against organized crime and illicit economies, climate change, and democracy. According to Brunori, these areas are essential for strengthening bi-regional cooperation and advancing common objectives.

He also mentioned the success of the EU-LAC Foundation in its short trajectory, noting that it had made significant progress, with more than 49 ratifications from the 61 members of the organization. This achievement is seen as a positive sign that bi-regional cooperation can produce meaningful results. Brunori emphasised that while following up on the previous summit is important, future meetings must present concrete outcomes. He called for filling the interim space between summits with active participation from civil society, creating multi-actor platforms to support the bi-regional agenda.



Finally, he highlighted the importance of creating bi-regional networks, such as the gender network, which promote concrete initiatives like the care pact. He also underlined efforts to engage with various actors, such as business, academic, and human rights organizations. Brunori emphasized that the EU-LAC Foundation must build a complementary path to support the realization of the upcoming summit, aiming to generate tangible results for the region.

Myriam Ferran, deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the European Commission, emphasised the importance of strengthening relations with Latin America beyond summits and throughout the year. In her speech, she highlighted the relevance of maintaining constant and close contact with Latin American countries, citing concrete examples such as the upcoming delegation from Argentina to discuss cooperation on rare critical materials supply chains.

She underscored that the European Commission is continuously working to develop effective cooperation, with a focus on the Global Gateway investment agenda. This programme, centred on high-impact local projects, aims to create jobs and added value in partner countries. Ferran stressed the importance of private investments, both European and local, to achieve the necessary development levels, going beyond official development assistance. She pointed out that cooperation with the private sector is crucial to achieving tangible impact in local communities.

Finally, Ferran outlined the priorities of the agenda, including climate change, digital transition, and the development of the private sector to foster local growth. She highlighted initiatives such as Eurosocial and the fight against inequalities, which ensure that investments are not only focused on infrastructure but also on the social and economic impact for local populations. She affirmed that the European Commission's work always seeks sustainable impact, with the private sector playing a key role in the success of these initiatives.

Camila María Polo Flórez, chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Colombia to Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Mission to the European Union and NATO, reflected on Colombia's responsibility in assuming the pro tempore presidency of CELAC in the first half of 2025. She expressed the need to adopt a pragmatic and strategic approach to bi-regional relations, emphasizing that while all issues are priorities, there is a need for gradual and concrete construction to ensure effective long-term cooperation. She stressed that the CELAC-EU relationship should focus on Latin America's strengths, such as the biodiversity of the Amazon, its potential for non-polluting energy, and its agricultural production capacity, beyond the common challenges both regions face, such as climate change and migration.

Polo Flórez highlighted the importance of advancing a just energy transition, responding to shared interests to tackle the triple climate crisis. She pointed out that both regions can work together on key issues such as reindustrialization, workforce training, education, technology, and innovation, all aligned with global decarbonization and sustainability commitments. She underscored the crucial role of Latin America in combating climate change, especially in the Caribbean island territories. She acknowledged that the effects of climate change are generating greater inequalities and new social challenges, which



requires strong cooperation between the two regions to address issues like education, organized migration, and technology.

Colombia's proposal, she emphasised, will give momentum to the commitments made at the 2023 EU-CELAC summit and channel resources such as Global Gateway and initiatives like Euroclima to generate positive local effects. She particularly highlighted the Global Gateway programme as an opportunity to strengthen cooperation between Latin America and the EU, not only through large investments but also through smaller projects that have significant local impact. She stressed the importance of advancing towards a joint strategy that, through a progressive approach, generates trust, follow-up, and concrete results for future CELAC-EU summits. Polo Flórez concluded by emphasizing that Colombia's presidency aims to build upon previous agreements and work towards concrete results that will strengthen bi-regional relations.

CLOSING WORDS

- **Javi López.** Vice-president of the European Parliament.
- **Susana Sumelzo.** Secretary of State for Ibero-America and the Caribbean and Spanish Worldwide. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of the Government of Spain.

Javi López, vice president of the European Parliament, reflected on the relations between the European Union (EU) and Latin America, emphasising the strategic and geopolitical importance of strengthening this bond in the current global context. He pointed out that the world is undergoing a search for a new international order, characterized by rising tensions, especially in areas such as security and trade, which could result in a multipolar environment without a clear centre of power. In this scenario, he highlighted that both the EU and Latin America have a crucial role as buffers against international tensions, offering a space for cooperation that could be decisive for global stability.

López also referenced the recent reactivation of the relationship between both regions, driven by the war in Ukraine and a renewed geopolitical interest from the EU, and stressed the relevance of Spain's presidency of the Council of the European Union in this process. He also mentioned the need for continuity in the summits and the importance of key agreements, such as the modernisation deal with Mexico and the agreement with Mercosur, which he sees as essential for structurally transforming the relations between the EU and Latin America. In economic terms, he proposed focusing efforts on common areas such as industry, natural resources, climate, and green technology, while in the non-economic sphere, he suggested collaboration in protecting democracies, combating organized crime, and managing migration, recognizing the positive contributions of Latin American migration both in Europe and Latin America. He concluded by emphasizing that the relationship between the two regions is not only crucial for their mutual interests but also for the well-being of the world in general.



Susana Sumelzo, secretary of State for Ibero-America and the Caribbean and Spanish Worldwide at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation, closed the session on EU-Latin America and Caribbean relations. In her speech, she highlighted the importance Spain places on these relations, emphasising that during its presidency of the EU Council, Spain ensured that 2023 was declared the Year of Latin America and the Caribbean in Europe. Within this framework, the EU-CELAC summit in July 2023 marked a significant milestone, consolidating the regularity of high-level events between the two regions, with future summits already scheduled for 2025 in Colombia and 2026 in Spain.

Sumelzo emphasised the strong cultural, economic, and shared values ties, such as the defence of human rights, international legality, and peace, that unite both regions. She also highlighted the importance of moving towards a future of prosperity through green, digital, and social transitions, collaboration in health, and the fight against the climate emergency, which has already had severe consequences, such as the recent ones experienced in Spain. Additionally, she underscored the importance of strengthening trade and investment relations, ensuring that meetings like the one that day are crucial for consolidating a strategic bi-regional relationship. She concluded her speech by encouraging participants to continue working together to make progress and strengthen cooperation between the two regions.



IMAGES OF THE EVENT





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