

## “A partnership of hope for the good of our peoples and a more fraternal world”

### Our **recommendations** in view of the 2023 EU-CELAC Summit and the future EU-LAC cooperation

In view of a **renewed people-centred and hope-giving EU-CELAC partnership**, we as Bishops, Church communities and humanitarian and development organisations of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) and European regions, wish to contribute to the upcoming Summit, planned to take place in Brussels on 17 and 18 July 2023, bringing together heads of State and government from the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, with our reflections, best practices and recommendations based on our daily experience of accompaniment and engagement at the side of people experiencing poverty and in situations of vulnerability.

Our regions face serious challenges such as climate change, the energy crisis and rising food insecurity. While these have been exacerbated by the consequences of the war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic, it is our hope that the renewed EU-LAC partnership focuses on tackling **structural issues** that increase multidimensional poverty and inequalities, while undermining social justice and cohesion.

We consider particularly worrying: countries engaging in the international system on unequal terms; production and business models that rely on exploitation of people and planet; unfair trade rules; unjust global financial and debt architecture; fragile democratic ownership of policy- and decision-making processes; unsustainable and unjust food systems. As these challenges and global imbalances can only be addressed through their acknowledgement and international cooperation, it is essential that Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean engage in **building common responses**.

It is also our hope that the renewed EU-LAC partnership is built on **trust**. We are aware of colonial debt and legacies and **historical injustices and imbalances** that in certain forms are perpetuated by some European policies and practices, which regrettably still undermine sustainable and inclusive development in LAC countries. These must be acknowledged and addressed, while building upon the strong **cultural, religious and personal ties, hopes and shared values** that unite our two regions beyond economic interests.

These ties make the EU and CELAC natural partners in steering global efforts to **reinvigorate multilateralism**. The EU-CELAC partnership bears the potential to **enhance global standards** and **make international institutions more democratic and effective** in addressing key issues of today and tomorrow, such as human development, climate action, conflict prevention, disarmament, as well as sustainable fair trade and a human-centric and ethical development and use of modern technologies.

Offering a ‘prophetic vision’ rooted in today’s reality, we propose to orient the future EU-CELAC partnership around **three pillars: 1) Integral human development and social justice; 2) Integral ecology and care for our common home; and 3) Peace and a culture of encounter**. Under each pillar, we suggest several areas and concrete initiatives to put this vision into action.

## I. INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### A. LAUNCHING A NEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN TRADE RELATIONS AND A FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL TRADE

- The EU and LAC countries, including the Mercosur bloc, should negotiate trade agreements through a human rights approach, ensuring a **fair, participatory and balanced negotiating process**. In particular, they should:
  - provide public and civil society organisations with opportunities for meaningful **consultation**;
  - carry out social, environmental and human rights **impact assessments** with the participation of potentially affected communities and sectors before the signing of trade agreements;
  - provide channels for the identification and settlement of potential conflicts of interest or for ensuring **independence from commercial interests**.
- The EU and the **Mercosur** bloc should aim at adopting an association agreement that includes both the economic dimension, as well as the **political and sustainability dimensions** (without splitting them), with strong commitment and political will to implement the latter.
- When negotiating trade agreements (including the EU–Mercosur Agreement), the European Commission should follow a people-centred approach in line with the principles enshrined in Art. 3 para. 5 and Art. 21 of the Treaty on the European Union.
  - In practice, this means that the Commission should insist on the inclusion, in trade agreements, of instruments ensuring an effective implementation of **human rights and environmental clauses**, including **labour workers’ rights** and a ban on the exploitation of **child labour**, as well as their **enforceability**.
  - Beyond that, it should also refrain from supporting agribusiness and over-exploitation of natural resources by European and multinational business companies in the LAC region. Instead, it should promote a **fair and sustainable** trade model, prioritising and fostering **diversification and industrialisation in LAC**, through family and small-scale farming, habitat protection by indigenous communities, and agroecological production by Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and social enterprises.
- Both the EU and the CELAC should jointly engage in a **strengthened multilateral trading system**, based on **fair rules** that do not harm , indigenous and Afrodescendants’ communities in LAC, and Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), social and solidarity enterprises and small-holder farmers in both regions.

### B. ADDRESSING THE STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF POVERTY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY MORE EFFECTIVELY

*At a macro-level, the EU should further global efforts to enhance LAC countries’ fiscal space, enabling them – in close dialogue with civil society – to increase investments in quality public education, universal health programmes and social protection.*

- EU countries play a major role in the governance and agenda setting of the IMF and the World Bank and should take the lead in **cancelling debt**, which is what **needs to happen and what is morally just**. EU countries should also adopt legislation to reduce the **imbalance of power** between lower-income governments and **private creditors** holding debt in their countries.
- EU countries, being among the largest **Special Drawing Rights** (SDRs) beneficiaries, should re-channel a percentage of their SDRs to highly indebted and low-income LAC countries.
- Resources made available through debt cancellation and SDRs should be channelled to the social sectors, and decision-makers should involve civil society in the definition and monitoring of such resources.
- LAC countries that have not yet done so, should adhere to pertinent **international agreements**, including the Convention on Administrative Assistance in **Tax Matters** (MAAC), improve **transparency**, for example, through participation in the automatic exchange of financial account information (AEOI), and promote fair and progressive tax policies.

*At a micro-level, policy-makers must ensure that private sector actors cause no harm, and that actors distinctively equipped to promote social inclusion and protect the environment receive more support.*

- The **EU Global Gateway** must also assume a **clear development mandate** (rather than focusing primarily on private sector's interests), and its governance structure should allow the **participation of local** LAC civil society representatives and social and popular economy **actors**.
- The EU should support LAC countries with the **transformation towards a formal economy** based on experiences of the popular economy and the social and solidarity economy; building upon EU initiatives concerning support for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, the European Commission should **upscale investments in the social and solidarity economy** in LAC – it should:
  - ensure **access to finance** (e.g. through the Global Gateway and the EFSD+) that specifically supports social economy enterprises;
  - offer **technical assistance** to and promote exchange of experiences with LAC countries in developing adequate legal and regulatory frameworks that allow social and solidarity economy to flourish;
  - ensure that **EU Delegations** in LAC countries have regular dialogue with social economy actors, and provide adequate training on social economy to EU Delegation staff;
  - **support** existing **solidarity economy networks**.
- EU and LAC governments must make sure that **financial institutions and development banks** are covered in relevant human rights and environmental due diligence frameworks and that they comply with clear and strict rules in that regard, as well as with transparency and accountability requirements.

### C. BUILDING MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES AND PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION

- The EU-CELAC partnership should encourage the countries that have not done so, to **ratify Convention ILO-102 and to follow-up Recommendation ILO-R202** in its full scope; the EU should support LAC countries in **fostering the social protection of all**, including those working in the informal economy; it should also promote the reception, protection of rights and full inclusion and integration of **migrants, refugees and displaced persons and their families** in the two regions.
- The EU should support LAC countries in **upscaling investments in education** (formal / informal), **formation and vocational training** in view of **enhancing employability and entrepreneurship** for young people, women and groups in situations of vulnerability, including people with disabilities, refugees, displaced persons and Afro-descendant people.
- The EU should support LAC countries in the **enhancement of connectivity** between popular neighbourhoods and main cities, as well as between urban and rural areas, by building public infrastructure and **bridging the digital gap**. With regard to digitalisation, especially the following actions could be supported:
  - Develop special programmes for the spread, transfer and use of digital technologies (including by MSMEs as well as by social and solidarity economy actors), while promoting globally a **human-centric and ethical approach**;
  - promote **technology research and development adapted to the specific needs** of the LAC countries, e.g. in the areas of distance learning, distance medicine, as well as natural disaster prevention and mitigation.

## II. INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

### A. WORKING TOWARDS GREATER BI-REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

- The EU and CELAC should take a leading role in the **establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility**.
- The EU and LAC countries should: **internalise 'environmental externalities' in trade agreements** to effectively counter their potential negative impact on natural resources, pollution and biodiversity; redouble efforts to reach a rapid conclusion of the WTO negotiations for the elimination or reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers on **environmental goods and services**.
- Both regions should reinforce cooperation on the **diversification of energy resources**, while respecting the environment of local communities and ensuring that processes of energy transition do not reinforce **irresponsible mining and extraction of raw materials**.

### B. ENSURING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DUE DILIGENCE

- The EU and LAC countries should work constructively together towards the adoption of an **International Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights**, to ensure compliance of corporate actions throughout the global value chain and to provide victims of corporate abuses with **fair access to an effective remedy**.

- The European Parliament and Council should work on adopting a **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive** that: ensures **effective access to justice for victims** of corporate abuses through a fair distribution of the burden of proof regarding civil liability; does **not exclude important sectors** such as financial institutions or arms trade; expands the range of environmental risks and human rights impacts covered, including ensuring the respect for the principle of **Free Prior Informed Consent**.
- EU and LAC countries should ensure a better protection of **human rights and environmental defenders**; the EU should update its Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders for new cases and enhance their implementation in practice.

### C. FOSTERING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH AGRO-ECOLOGY AND SUPPORT TO SMALL-HOLDER FARMERS

- The EU and LAC countries should move away from investing in agribusiness towards investing in **agroecology** and promoting family and **small-scale farming, agro-forestry** and environmentally friendly production, especially by **social and solidarity economy** actors. This includes the EU revising with caution its initiatives that heavily invest in **climate-smart** and **industrial agriculture**.
- The EU-CELAC partnership should prioritise addressing major barriers facing smallholder farmers (such as access to land, seeds and markets), and promoting the role of smallholder farmers in decision-making and policy design.
- The EU should develop a **concrete roadmap** for the transition to the sustainable use of **fertilisers** and the deployment of sustainable alternatives to mineral fertilisers.

## III. PEACE AND A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

### A. ENCOURAGING GREATER POLITICAL COOPERATION TO SUPPORT PEACE-BUILDING, HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION AND DEMOCRATISATION PROCESSES

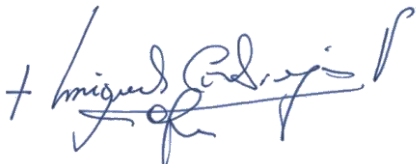
- The EU and CELAC should jointly promote a **reform of international bodies, including the United Nations and its Security Council**, so that they have enhanced regional representation and equity, and are subject to fairer procedures, better reflecting local needs and sensitivities.
- Both regions should reinforce joint efforts in fighting against and addressing the **root causes of organised crime and human trafficking** in LAC; more support should be provided for investment in basic social services, socio-economic empowerment opportunities for young people, and public infrastructure and connectivity in informal neighbourhoods.
- The EU should continue supporting **conflict transformation, transitional justice, and peace-building and democratisation** processes in LAC, and in **empowering local communities** by increasing its material, technical and financial support for projects that promote **access to truth, justice and reparation** for victims and contribute to the reintegration of former combatants.
- The EU should reinforce its **Global Europe Civil Society Organisations Programme** as a means of strengthening civic spaces, and **mobilise new funds for humanitarian assistance and support of people forcibly displaced** within their countries and across borders.

- The EU-CELAC partnership should address systematic human rights abuses more effectively and conduct **joint workshops allowing an exchange of experiences, good practices and technical advice** on countering challenges present in both regions, such as weakening of democracies, societal polarisation, disinformation campaigns, racism, xenophobia, corruption and shrinking civic space.

## B. STRENGTHENING INTER-CULTURAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS COOPERATION

- The EU-CELAC partnership should: ensure that **religious and cultural diversity** are respected and promoted; support **multicultural and interreligious encounters** within and between the two regions, and contribute to the protection and promotion of the fundamental right to **religious freedom**; give particular importance to preserving the language, knowledge as well as cultural and religious heritage of **indigenous peoples**.
- The EU-CELAC partnership should promote **locally-led humanitarian action and development** through: granting an equitable and non-discriminatory access to EU funding instruments for projects of local civil society actors as well as religious and faith-based organisations supporting sustainable development and peace on the ground; increasing the proportion of humanitarian and development funds going directly to local organisations and covering their indirect costs.
- EU-CELAC Summits should be held more regularly and besides the meeting of the respective political leaders, adequate space for **consultation with and participation of civil society and faith-based actors** from both regions should be ensured ahead, during and also in the follow-up to the Summits.

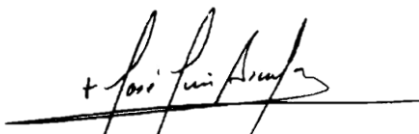
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## WHO WE ARE

The **Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM)** is an organism of collegiality, communion, reflection and collaboration, at the service of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, through the 22 Episcopal Conferences that comprise it. It was created in 1955 by the Holy See, at the request of the Latin American Episcopate, as a sign and instrument of collegial affection, in perfect communion with the Universal Church and with the Bishop of Rome. CELAM coordinates activities with other regional episcopal and ecclesial organisations to promote the mission of the Church in the continent based on the postulates of the Word of God, the pontifical Magisterium and the social thought of the Church, with a prophetic voice, a perspective of incidence and an integrating vision, articulating and integrating networks in favour of life, both in the ecclesial and social spheres.

**The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)** brings together the Bishop delegates from Bishops' Conferences of the 27 EU Member States. For more than forty years now, COMECE has been closely involved in the process of European integration and sharing its reflections with EU institutions. COMECE is the Catholic Church partner of EU institutions in the Dialogue foreseen by Article 17(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Its permanent General Secretariat, based in Brussels, analyses EU policies on a day-by-day basis, striving to bring the specific contribution of the Catholic Church into the European debate. COMECE maintains close contacts with Bishops' Conferences and ecclesial institutions from other regions of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Caritas Latin America and the Caribbean** has 22 member organisations in 22 countries across the region. In many of these countries, Caritas has a long history of working for the poor – over fifty years – tackling natural and man-made disasters and providing healthcare. Working together, the members of the Caritas LAC region focus on peace, social and economic justice, integral human development, and safe migration.

**Caritas Europa** is a Catholic network working with people of all faiths to end poverty and to promote the dignity of all people. Caritas Europa has 49 member organisations in 46 countries across the European continent, including in all member states of the European Union. Many Caritas Europa member organisations carry out humanitarian and development projects in LAC.

This paper was prepared jointly by the four organisations and by **Caritas Internationalis**, with contributions from **Caritas Spain**.