



*Event: "How can the EU-CELAC Summit contribute to a partnership of equals and promote global justice?"*

## WELCOME REMARKS

by H.E. Msgr. Mariano Crociata, President of COMECE

Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
Dear friends,

As President of COMECE, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, let me **welcome you all** – those physically present here at our Secretariat in Brussels as well as those connected online – to this roundtable debate co-organised together with the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), Caritas Latin America and the Caribbean, and Caritas Europa.

Our event takes place against the **background of the upcoming Summit** between political leaders of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) who will gather in this framework after more than seven years here in Brussels next month. "*How can the EU-CELAC Summit contribute to a partnership of equals and promote global justice?*" is the question that stands in the centre of our debate today. Indeed, at a time when our two regions are facing a **number of humanitarian, security, socio-economic, political as well as environmental challenges**, the Summit and its follow-up represent a **unique opportunity** to reinforce bi-regional cooperation, but also to engage in unity for a world based on the principles of justice, solidarity, fraternity, and sustainability that leaves no one behind.

Based on these **shared values**, the European Union and CELAC are natural partners in shaping the post-COVID world by jointly **addressing the structural causes** of imbalances and in **humanising our societies** in an international system that risks being more and more fragmented, with fewer global common standards, with eroding international institutions and multilateral relations, and growing economic-financial logics of profit maximisation at all costs.

Since a people-centred partnership between our two regions that would also benefit the world, is of **concern to the Catholic Church on both sides of the Atlantic**, we as Bishops of the European Union elaborated jointly with our brothers in Latin America and the Caribbean, together with Caritas sister organisations of both regions, [a contribution](#) in view of the upcoming Summit. Entitled "*A partnership of hope for the*

*good of our peoples and a more fraternal world"*, the **joint document** is grounded on the Church's daily accompaniment of people facing situations of vulnerability, and it offers a number of observations, reflections, recommendations and good practices that are structured around **three pillars**: 1) *Integral human development & social justice*; 2) *Integral ecology & care for our common home*; and 3) *Peace & a culture of encounter*.

Throughout history, our two regions have developed **strong economic and social relations**. The economic and trade cooperation has grown over years and it promises to intensify even further in the coming months and years. **However**, we are **also** aware of **colonial legacies and historical injustices**, which created imbalances in our relations that **in certain forms continue to be perpetuated** by some European policies, practices and consumption patterns, irresponsibly exploiting the natural resources of the LAC region and undermining efforts aimed at sustainable human development.

In this respect, it is my hope that our today's debate will enable us to reflect on perspectives from both sides of the Atlantic on how a mutually beneficial partnership could better promote **fair and sustainable trade and corporate accountability**, implement a **just ecological transition**, and enhance **socio-economic justice** across our regions. I would, however, also wish to invite us to regard the EU-CELAC cooperation as an opportunity to learn from each other and to **foster personal and community ties** between our regions.

Strong human, cultural as well as spiritual ties unite us **beyond economic interests**. Human mobility between the two regions, in both directions, has been a constant feature in our relations for centuries. We share history, languages, culture, and religious beliefs. **Religion and culture** are still deeply embedded in local realities, and they are one of the key determinants of community and personal bonds across LAC societies, and it is therefore my hope that the future EU-CELAC partnership may also focus on this dimension and promote inter-religious and inter-cultural cooperation as a source of mutual enrichment.

Strengthening **people-to-people contacts** and, indeed, creating **opportunities for participation** in political and economic processes for all, particularly those most affected and those facing situations of marginalisation, is also key for overcoming threats to **social cohesion and peace**.

Attitudes of **mutual listening and learning** may also inspire our discussions today, so that these may contribute to the shaping of a partnership that, in challenging times like these, can give hope to the people of our regions and promote a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and welcoming world.

I thank you for your attention and wish us all a fruitful debate.