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MARCH
2021

KEYS TO REACTIVATING THE EU–CELAC PARTNERSHIP AND CHANNELLING THE GLOBALISATION OF THE FUTURE

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This study is based on reflections that emerged from "*La UE y la CELAC, transformando la asociación para la globalización del futuro*", an event held on February 4th 2021 as part of CIDOB's Foreign Policy Dialogue, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation.

To reactivate EU–CELAC relations, new paths must be found that take in not only the consequences of the pandemic, but which also lay the foundations for a development that drives the energy and technological transition while remaining consistent with the 2030 Agenda. Interregionalism requires reconceptualisation and alignment with the overall agenda of strengthening multilateralism and reforming the United Nations system.

Besides an unprecedented mobilisation of resources, instruments of cooperation must also be designed that encourage specific structural transformations that change the production and consumption paradigm and break the patterns of inequality and structural violence that the COVID-19 crisis has made clearer than ever. This should be accompanied by regulatory instruments that encourage the creation of international regimes based on shared standards and values.

The current EU–CELAC bi-regional strategic partnership, which is in the process of being renewed, must become an instrument that can contribute to regional and global governance through normative convergence and the establishment of oversight mechanisms aligned with the SDGs that include social participation.

There are several reasons why the bi-regional strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) has been progressively losing momentum for a number of years. The global systemic changes affecting geopolitical balances, such as China's emergence and its competition with the United States are one driver; other factors relate to particular events – like the COVID-19 pandemic – which have ended up accelerating pre-existing processes and trends, such as digitalisation and inequality. Then there are regional dynamics with transregional effects, such as crises affecting integration processes, and the political polarisation and populism that affect both regions, albeit to varying degrees and in different ways. With tensions rising due to the conflicts emerging between the major powers, EU–CELAC interregional cooperation must be revitalised and a commitment must be made to generate partnerships that address the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in key areas of global governance, while at same time pivoting on people's present and future needs on both sides of the Atlantic.

The asymmetries and imbalances that exist both between the regions and within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are a key obstacle to improving relations, as the heterogeneity of circumstances makes uniform handling of the region as a whole

impossible. The current context of realignment of the global order has worsened this disequilibrium, as international actors like the EU and LAC countries find their roles being resized and seek strategic positions that will grant them as much space for autonomous action as possible while reducing their vulnerability to growing global interdependence. Defining strategic associations of variable, flexible geometry with other actors may be one response to these challenges. Strengthening the EU–CELAC alliance could form part of that response and contribute to global governance by providing assertive positions on setting the priorities of the sustainable development agenda, while avoiding a defensive retreat that would only worsen the power asymmetries.

Assessments of past EU–CELAC relations tend to list the many historical, economic and social links and highlight shared values. But without the definition of specific shared objectives, this is not enough to achieve successful cooperation. In a context as rid-

Strengthening the EU–CELAC alliance is one way to gain autonomy and contribute to global governance – assertive positions may be taken on establishing the priorities of the sustainable development agenda, while avoiding a defensive retreat.

dled with uncertainty as the current one, new ways to revive this partnership must be sought that not only address the negative effects of the pandemic, but which lay the groundwork for development that is both consistent with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and which definitively drives the energy transition towards a decarbonised economy and inclusive technological change.

The havoc caused by the COVID-19 health and economic crisis has highlighted the importance of more and better health cooperation, as well as of mobilising resources to meet short-term needs. But it has also shown that the rebuild must be done with sights set on the future, rather than on a return to the past: to avoid repeating mistakes new solutions are needed, and opportunities must be created that meet the needs of generations to come. The SDG agenda requires transformations that will involve the mobilisation of massive financial, technological and human resources to be channelled through international cooperation that overcomes the bureaucratic, political and financial obstacles that have emerged during the pandemic. At a time when the very nature of globalisation is being transformed – with changes underway

in the composition and flow of trade – the regionalism and interregionalism that have characterised the relationship between the EU and CELAC need reconceptualising and aligning with the global agenda in order to help consolidate international regimes that strengthen a multilateralism that is based on shared rules and values.

In this context, this study will analyse the opportunities for establishing strategic alliances around certain major challenges that should be at the heart of the EU–CELAC partnership in order to draw up a transformative agenda that targets objectives that are both mutually agreed and adapted to the regions' respective capacities. This agenda should be based on accurate diagnoses of both regions' challenges and capacities, prioritising objectives that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda and instruments that suit these goals. A multi-level approach will need to be taken in close collaboration with the international agencies with competences in each sector that includes local actors and broad civil society participation. In no way do the issues proposed here exhaust the bi-regional agenda, but they are essential to promote transformative action guided by innovation and inclusion.

Towards a greener and more sustainable future

Climate change as a global challenge was already an urgent priority on the international agenda before the pandemic broke out. It is an essential part of the 2030 Agenda, and its validity has not diminished – all economic and social recovery plans incorporate the green transition as an engine of job creation. In the case of the European Union, the **Green Deal Action Plan** aims to promote efficient resource use by transitioning to a clean, circular economy, restoring biodiversity and reducing pollution in line with the climate targets of the Paris Agreement (2016), with the aim of becoming the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. To this end, financial investment instruments and the **Just Transition Mechanism** (JTM) have been established for the most-affected regions. This internal action should be complemented by an international strategy, not only in international fora like **COP26**, to be held in November 2021, but also in interregional cooperation programmes.

The CELAC region, especially Central America and the Caribbean, is one of the world's most vulnerable areas to the **effects of climate change**. To address this, profound transformations are needed in the development paradigm. Specifically, policies must be designed for strategic sectors that reduce emissions

and create jobs, including unconventional renewable energy, the circular economy and recycling, more sustainable urban management, and the reduction of pollution. Substantial investment is required in all of these areas. The EU has been one of the region's main sources of investment in this field, but it is being displaced by China – which some time ago surpassed it in trade terms. In terms of volume, the EU will struggle to compete. Qualitative competition is more viable, if the goals of both **green** and **blue agendas** can be incorporated into relations with the region in a way that is coherent and aligned with the SDGs. This presents several challenges.

First, the pattern of extractivism should be broken through technology transfer. In the energy sector, European companies can contribute to changing the energy matrix in favour of renewables and securing greater diversification by investing in alternative energy power plants. Investment can also help promote a shift away from the extractive model of energy resource exploitation and towards new productive capacities. For example, the region's **lithium wealth** provides an opportunity to develop the battery industry needed for the storage and use of unconventional energies. The automotive industry is another strategic sector for emissions reduction, and the conversion both Europe and Latin America need can be aided by technological cooperation agreements.

The EU–CELAC Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation (**JIRI**) established in 2010 to promote science and technology cooperation is another potential area for fostering technology transfer. This will be fundamental to addressing issues such as the fight against climate change and resilience. Its **2021–2023 Strategic Roadmap** proposes a strategic focus on health, the green transition and the digital transformation. But it also addresses sustainable agriculture, the bioeconomy, the circular economy and the challenges and opportunities offered by the Atlantic Ocean – including seas like the Caribbean – for greater cooperation between the countries around it, through instruments such as the Atlantic International Research Centre (**AIR Centre**) and the **Mission Atlantic** project, which is funded by the Horizon 2020 programme.

Another major challenge in this area is to secure the resources to invest in the infrastructure needed to give the entire population access to sustainable energy security. The **EUROCLIMA+** programme, which is aligned with the SDGs, has been the main instrument for supporting environmental protection and cli-

mate change mitigation policies. But the EU has also committed to multilateral cooperation with CELAC, with new support expected to be announced ahead of COP26 for initiatives such as **Green Climate Fund** and the Adaptation Action Agenda. Consideration is also being given to public policies to convert external debt as a way to combat climate change. In this regard, the EU and CELAC should use existing dialogues to coordinate their positions in multilateral negotiations on issues of common interest to mobilise additional resources that can be added to those of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Latin America Investment Facility (**LAIF**). One option would be for the EU to carry out an analysis of the resources available to the region for the fight against climate change and to seek complementary funds available in other international bodies.

Meanwhile, the energy transition also requires regulatory improvements to be made at both domestic and international levels to increase transparency and ensure compliance with international environmental protection targets. Initiatives like the Regional Agree-

The EU is unlikely to be able to compete with the volume of Chinese investment, but it could provide qualitative competition, coherently incorporating the green and blue agendas into relations in a way that aligns with the SDGs.

ment on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (**Escazú Agreement**), which will enter into force in April 2021, may help establish synergies with the EU's Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (**Aarhus Convention**, in force since October 30th 2001) and contribute to strengthening a global regulatory framework for the implementation of **Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development**. Their promotion of transparency means these agreements are also important for **protecting human and environmental rights defenders**, who are persecuted in many countries.

Incorporating sustainability into partnership agreements, such as those being negotiated with Mexico, Chile and Mercosur, is another field where regulatory progress may be made. Indeed, environmental issues have become the main stumbling block in the signing of the EU–MERCOSUR agreement, due to entirely logical concerns about their proper regulation. However, this agreement and others that remain pending should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen in-

international sustainability standards and contribute to meeting global commitments through international cooperation and regulatory convergence in accordance with SDG 17. This can be done by establishing oversight mechanisms and ensuring the participation of independent civil society bodies.

An additional and no less significant challenge is the need to develop a new civic culture on sustainable use in energy production and consumption. The shift to a greener future requires not only productive transition, people's mindsets must be transformed to favour responsible consumption, as per SDG 12. Coop-

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eration on environmental awareness should therefore be promoted at all levels of education, from primary school to university, but also through public information campaigns that set out the benefits of the changes needed and the consequences of not making them in time for the wider citizenry.

Towards a more technological and connected future

A future-focused recovery requires a productive and educational transformation that incorporates the digital transition into all activities. COVID-19 has accelerated this process and highlighted technology gaps that will affect all fields. Lockdowns forced an accelerated process of adaptation to remote working and online learning and shopping at the cost of widening the digital divide between countries, regions, territories and social sectors. The technological dependence on particular companies and countries has also become clear, with the geopolitical competition over 5G technology presenting few risk-free alternatives. The EU and Latin America should join forces to avoid the dynamics of competition between blocs and should allocate additional resources to promote equitable access to the entire population, contributing to the regulation of the use of technologies and guaranteeing people's rights in the digital environment.

Digitalisation is a major challenge, but it also provides an opportunity to make a technological leap based on innovation and to open up new avenues of interregional cooperation. Connectivity is an essential factor in sharing knowledge and improving productivity in

the digital age. The two parties' efforts to establish high-speed connections between the regions should therefore be supported, such as the **BELLA**¹ project's **ELLA-Link** submarine cable and the infrastructure to strengthen **RedCLARA**, which links research and education networks in several Latin American countries. There is huge potential to promote future technological cooperation in this area and to strengthen ties with the pan-European **GÉANT** network, with which an interconnection agreement was signed in 2018. As part of this cooperation, specific funds should be allocated for joint projects.

Promoting joint research through the mentioned JIRI initiative, which has consolidated a bi-regional science and technology dialogue, establishing working groups, and the **Horizon Europe** programmes are fundamental tools for advancing the creation of an EU-CELAC Common Research Area, which has been endorsed at EU-CELAC summits and formed part of Brussels' **EU CELAC Action Plan of 2015**.

One way forward in this area would be to increase work on mutually defining research priorities, taking into account the needs of the various countries in the region and the heterogeneity of their resources and capacities. Efforts should be made to ensure all countries in the region have equal access to the calls, and they should be combined with initiatives such as those in other bi-regional fields such as the Ibero-American Programme on Science and Technology for Development (**CYTED**), which has already been running for over 35 years. As well as increasing investment in science and research, encouragement should be given to open science, which is accessible to the entire scientific community. Tensions around universal access to vaccines have reopened the debate over global public goods when it comes to technological advances: this debate should be taken to international fora.

But scientific opportunities also pose challenges for social inclusion, such as reducing the digital divide revealed by COVID-19. Half of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean has been unable to access remote activities due to a lack of connectivity. This technology gap above all affects large informal labour exchanges. In order to integrate them into the new much more technological world of work, it is necessary on the one hand to promote training programmes and, on the other, affordable connectivity for the whole population, either by reducing access costs or even by offering a digital basic basket. As infrastructure improves, access to the 5G network

1. Building Europe Link to Latin America (BELLA).

and cross-border coordination should be facilitated through bilateral and regional agreements.

Major regulatory challenges also exist in this field that should be reflected in partnership agreements, such as those between the EU and Mexico, Chile and Mercosur. Technical norms and cooperation should be incorporated that can significantly speed up technological advances and investment, as well as contributing to innovation. EU-CELAC regulatory convergence on technology would also encourage the generation of broader international regulatory systems that take development asymmetries into consideration, bringing them to global fora like the World Trade Organization (WTO). Joe Biden's new US administration creates more room for multilateralism and raises open questions about the treatment of the tech giants and the danger posed by technology platform monopolies.

Closer collaboration between the EU and CELAC would help better address the risks associated with the introduction and deployment of innovative digital technologies. Another important consideration is the tax treatment given to the technology giants' transactions. Taxes are already beginning to be imposed in Europe on certain large corporations' digital services, while a debate on the same issue remains ongoing in Latin America. Working groups should be promoted that can assist in defining digital regulations, taxation and the interoperability of the systems in the two regions, facilitating the safe and equitable use of digital applications.

Towards a less unequal and exclusionary future

CELAC remains one of the world's most unequal regions and COVID-19 – which has particularly affected the poorest, the elderly and the marginalised – has exposed structural deficiencies, such as informality, a lack of health infrastructure, deficits in housing and access to basic goods such as water, and the precariousness and insecurity in which millions of people live who were until recently considered middle class. Policies to tackle inequality should be at the heart of the bi-regional agenda; they should promote more inclusive societies and be adapted to middle-income countries – the majority in the region.

Health and education are two key elements in promoting social change to favour greater equality, and as such they require stronger public policies to be implemented. Public health systems must be supported

and universal access to healthcare as a right must be guaranteed, as should access to health supplies, medicines and vaccines. Meanwhile, the capacity to work with multilateral institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO) and regional organisations like the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) should be facilitated, so that COVAX becomes not only a tool for facing a one-off crisis, but serves to plan permanent cooperation mechanisms for handling other health crises.

Efforts should be made to achieve the 2030 Agenda's educational objectives, particularly SDG 4, which

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seeks to ensure equitable quality education for all. The pandemic has had a notable effect on this sector, as an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) **report** points out: school closures will harm both the quality of learning and increase school drop-out, which will in turn reduce opportunities for access to quality employment, especially among young people and women. The current situation must be therefore be turned around and a safe return to classrooms be brought about as soon as possible. Once the necessary diagnosis of the deficiencies has been made, additional resources will have to be allocated, prioritising the most vulnerable groups and those worst affected by the school closures, as well as planning educational policies that are adapted to the challenges, including digital insertion. In the university sphere, the **Erasmus+ programme's** higher education scholarships and teacher exchanges are undoubtedly powerful tools for promoting enduring international research teams that contribute to society as a whole. Nevertheless, progress remains to be made on harmonising higher education systems to facilitate mobility and the interregional recognition of qualifications: to achieve this, interregional partnerships between institutions will need to be established.

The precarious conditions of those working in the informal sector is another phenomenon that has gained relevance during the pandemic, and affects **over 50%** of people in LAC. Lockdown measures have aggravated their situations, and emergency measures have been required to guarantee a **basic income** for unemployed citizens. Two major challenges are proposed:

establishing a permanent basic income to assist the most disadvantaged and reducing informality by creating quality employment. The first requires fiscal reforms to broaden the tax base and make social protection systems sustainable. The fight against tax evasion, which threatens the progressiveness of the tax system, must be stepped up, and the system must be adapted to the digital economy, making companies pay taxes where they operate. This affects the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, albeit to different extents. Formalising employment is another way to raise tax revenue, as well as wages and productivity.

The pandemic has highlighted two major challenges: a permanent basic income should be established to assist the most disadvantaged and quality employment must be created in order to reduce informality.

But this requires financial and regulatory support for small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as quality vocational training to create a skilled workforce. In this regard, the **EUROsocial+** programme, which has been operating for decades and ends its third phase in 2021, should focus its endeavours on the public policies needed for post-pandemic recovery, prioritising quality job creation, social protection and care policies – three of the major deficits observed during the COVID-19 crisis.

Improving quality must also be a priority in public policy management. Administrations must become more efficient and promote the digitalisation of public services, while ensuring more transparency to reduce **high levels of corruption**. The 2030 Agenda, with its system of goals and indicators, can serve as a guide for strengthening the accountability of administrations. For this, it will be essential to support the efforts of the **Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda** of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA-ECLAC) to assess the consequences of COVID-19 in the region and design policies and allocate the available resources where they are most needed.

Finally, we must not forget the need to encourage greater civil society participation in public affairs by establishing an ongoing dialogue with social and community organisations in order to involve them in interregional cooperation programmes. The European Union–Latin America and the Caribbean Foundation (**EU–LAC**) should contribute to strengthening interregional civil society links in close coordination with the other cooperation instruments, especially

those in the academic and cultural sphere. It should focus not only on the exchange of experiences and lessons learned between countries, but on specific measures to address these inequalities that have tangible results.

Towards a future with fewer conflicts

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, social unrest was rising in several countries on both sides of the Atlantic. The **protests** in Latin America were particularly virulent. Structural inequalities have reduced trust in democracy, with data from the *Latinobarómetro* saying it has fallen below 50%, while disaffection has grown with elites perceived as removed from the real needs of the people. To strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law and the administration of justice must be reinforced, as must institutional pathways for the constructive and non-violent management of social conflicts. Rising violence has often been met with measures that securitise public space, which tend to limit citizens' rights and erode social coexistence. More than a solution, militarisation becomes part of the problem and ends up threatening the protection of fundamental rights.

Central America's high levels of violence mean that EU cooperation in the region has tended to focus on security issues, with support provided to the Central American Security Strategy (**ESCA**) since its inception in 2007 and attempts to address cooperation from the perspective of the link between security and development by taking a regional approach. The rise of organised crime and its penetration in the economy and institutions are seen as a transnational danger that requires joint solutions. Organised crime is one of the main causes of the region's high **homicide rate** and as well as drug trafficking it is increasingly involved in human trafficking and the organisation of migration to the United States.

In fact, the objectives of EU and Latin American and Caribbean countries' strategies for fighting the global drug problem largely overlap, including on the following related aspects: the search for balanced action between supply and demand reduction measures, the protection of human rights and the rule of law, and the linking of the fight against drug trafficking with medium- and long-term development programmes. In practice, however, efforts to control and suppress flows predominate, while efforts to implement development programmes that address the causes and consequences of the phenomenon struggle. US President Joe Biden's policy shift towards the region provides a window

of opportunity to achieve greater coordination to regain momentum to address the structural problems of violence and security from a multidimensional perspective. It may therefore be a good time to revisit the proposals that an international conference be held to promote cooperation to address the region's multidimensional migration and security crisis.

However, the shortage of means and persistent institutional weakness in many countries are major issues. Institutional capacities must be developed that increase the available information and resources, along with an international cooperation strategy with a more global vision.

Currently, the EU collaborates with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States (OAS) through the COPOLAD programme; while, through the EU–CELAC Drug Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism, national capacities are strengthened in collaboration with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Actions to reduce supply and promote alternative development activities have mainly been carried out through programmes in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The European Police Office (Europol) also collaborates with Ameripol and Interpol, while the European Judicial Network has collaboration programmes with Transparency International and Interpol. The Europe Latin America Technical Assistance Programme against Transnational Organized Crime (EI PAcTO) has recently been created in order to help strengthen the rule of law and citizen security. As part of this programme, the creation has been announced of an Instrument for Documentation and Assessment of Threats in Latin America (IDEAL) based on a model adapted from Europol's Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA).

Hence, there are numerous international cooperation programmes on security and crime reduction. In terms of results, however, they appear to be ineffective and they should be better integrated into a long-term global framework that is less fragmented and reactive. One interesting example in this direction was the initiative called the Cocaine Route Programme. Created in 2011, it aimed to coordinate the actions of law enforcement and judicial authorities on the routes from the Americas to Europe through West African countries, via a set of programmes aimed at improving synergies in the fight against international criminal networks. It was subsequently replaced by the Global Illicit Flows Programme (GIFP), which seeks to fight against the transregional trafficking routes used by organised crime and to bring coher-

ence to all pre-existing initiatives. However, a comprehensive evaluation of the existing programmes and a strategic vision linked to SDG 16 are needed to address the identification of the major threats. The announcement of the forthcoming establishment of a ministerial-level Latin America Internal Security Committee (CLASI) promoted within the EI PAcTO cooperation project is good news. Inspired by the European experience of the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) created in 2010, it will create a regional interlocutor for the purposes of addressing security issues from a more global perspective.

Rising violence has often been met with measures that securitise public space, which tend to limit citizens' rights and erode social coexistence.

In this context, there are two key steps to building long-term policies: (a) giving greater legitimacy to the decisions made; and (b) encouraging more actors to participate in the dialogue both on the design and implementation of development policies and on issues that affect people's safety. The actors may include judges, police officers, customs officials, tax authorities, intelligence agencies and members of parliament, among others, but also health workers, educators, NGOs, banks and the private sector. All of them must also be involved in preventing, detecting and fighting corruption, which so weakens institutions. This will require greater transparency and the facilitation of the monitoring of illicit financial flows linked to transnational crime, which requires global action, as called for in targets 4 and 5 of SDG 16. This future cooperation will require a debate to be held on the need to prevent and detect hybrid threats related to cyberattacks, terrorism and disinformation campaigns, which undermine trust in institutions and can lead to greater polarisation and political instability.

Final reflections: revitalise the bi-regional institutional framework

The last EU–CELAC ministerial meeting (mostly in virtual format), promoted by the German presidency of the European Council and held in Berlin on December 14th 2020, sought to show the willingness to intensify dialogue to give new impetus to bi-regional relations after five years without summits at head of state and government level. In a setting characterised by COVID-19, ministers recalled the need to strengthen international cooperation and reiterated the commitment to reform and strengthen the United Nations in the year of its 75th anniversary, reaffirming that the crisis also brought an opportunity to “build back better” along the path marked by the 2030 Agenda.

However, with the global order significantly fragmented, strengthening the strategic partnership requires going beyond purely interregional relations, as the EU–CELAC relationship is a platform with the capacity to agree and project shared interests in the international arena. In spite of the inter- and intra-regional asymmetries, common responses can be forged that integrate different perspectives with the shared goal of driving a more sustainable and equitable development agenda. Significant resources will need to be mobilised in the coming years to reverse the worldwide effects of COVID-19, and Latin Amer-

Europe and Latin America should strengthen their alliance and make proposals in international fora to meet the major challenges of the future, following a principle of variable geometry and flexibility that adapts to specific objectives.

ica cannot be left out. The effects on the region have been highly specific, with the result that certain indicators such as those on poverty have been set back by more than a decade. Even in the middle-income countries, the pandemic has revealed structural weaknesses that make it necessary to rethink the EU's cooperation strategy in the region.

At present, a large number of cooperation programmes already exist on sustainable development, scientific and technical exchange, social cohesion and public security which have helped maintain strong links between diverse institutions and actors in the two regions. However, a new more strategic direction is needed that focusses on the greatest challenges of the green transition and digital revolution, and which does so from a global perspective that is aligned with the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The political divisions and confrontational discourse that have damaged relations must be overcome, and the range of interests must be reconciled within an assertive agenda that seeks to move beyond geopolitical rivalries. Clearly, neither Europe nor Latin America can stay out of the global geopolitical shifts underway and they must not settle for being mere spectators. They should therefore strengthen their alliance and make proposals in international fora to meet the major challenges of the future, following a principle of variable geometry and flexibility that adapts to specific objectives.

To make the shift towards a fairer and more sustainable planet, it is necessary to strengthen institutions at all levels, from local and national to regional and

international. EU–CELAC interregionalism has been vulnerable to tensions, polarisation and fragmentation, but enhanced cooperation can make it an instrument of inclusive reconstruction. To make the structural changes the sustainable development agenda demands and achieve its objectives, civil society must become a key player in the project. Through effective cooperation, the EU and CELAC can help shape the globalisation of the future. Even where their priorities match, they need to find a way to align their wills, which can only occur through inclusive dialogue. All of this must be accompanied by regulatory instruments that favour the creation of international regimes based on shared standards and values.

Partnership agreements – both existing and due for renewal – should ultimately be geared towards contributing to regional and global governance through regulatory convergence and the establishment of cooperation mechanisms that include a range of actors and contribute to promoting a transformative development agenda.