

Preparatory Seminar to the EU-CELAC Summit of June 2015

Egmont Palace, 14th April 2015

The second EU-CELAC summit will be held in Brussels on the 10th -11th June 2015, bringing together 61 Heads of State and Government around the theme “Shaping our common future: working together for prosperous, cohesive and sustainable societies for our citizens”. This summit represents 1/3 of the United Nations members and over 1 billion citizens.

EU-CELAC, the European Union and Community of Latin America and Caribbean States, have enjoyed privileged relations since the first bi-regional Summit EU-LAC, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1999, which established a strategic partnership. They are natural partners linked by strong historical, cultural and economic ties, and shared aspirations. They co-operate closely at international level and maintain an intensive political dialogue at all levels with a view to build a secure and cohesive society, and offer increased prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. Both regions pursue similar aims and values, a wish for peace and prosperity that prevailing cultural and historical roots have helped to strengthen generation after generation. The two regions promote and defend together these values and principles in international bodies, partaking in challenges and responsibilities.

Various preparatory meetings are planned as side events in support of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the 10th – 11th June 2015, e.g. 7th Meeting of Unions of the EU and CELAC countries (10th March 2015), 8th Meeting of the Civil Society (11th -12th March 2015), 7th Forum of the Civil Society (19th - 20th March 2015), Youth Days EU-CELAC (9th – 10th April 2015), Eurolat Meeting (4th – 6th June 2015), Academic Summit (8th – 9th June 2015), Business Summit (10th June 2015).

1)

Subsequent to the welcome address by **Viscount Etienne DAVIGNON**, President of Egmont, at the Preparatory Seminar, H.E. **Mr. Didier Reynders**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, drew up an informative picture of the overall relationship between the two regions.

2)

For Mr. Reynders, the Summit will analyze the evolution in the region in the recent years, as expressed at the Summit of the Americas in Panama City (10th-11th April 2015). Very significant is the welcome fact that the United States and Cuba are moving toward normalization of relations for the first time in more than fifty years. Progress has been made since the Rio Summit in 1999 at economic and political level intensifying the partnership between EU and CELAC countries. The EU has become a leading CELAC trading and business partner, and is

the major foreign investor in the region, EU investments being considerably higher than those it has in Russia, India and China combined. In Madrid in 2010, the EU and CELAC both agreed on a single agenda, covering a large range of issues - science and research, sustainable development, migration, education, the world drug problem – and having added in Santiago in 2013, gender and investment. New fields of partnership such as higher education, citizens' security and food security will be strengthened in Brussels. The global challenges namely the fight against poverty and social exclusion, climate change, fight against terrorism are topics which the EU and CELAC should tackle together.

Three international conferences, of considerable interest both to the EU and the CELAC countries will be held in the coming months, namely the Financing Development Meeting in Addis Ababa in July, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in New York in September, and finally the Climate Change COP21 in Paris in December. The EU-CELAC Summit should also send a message to all stakeholders and their respective populations that they should translate their decisions into concrete and visible schemes.

A particular mention was made of the EU-LAC Foundation set up in 2012. Minister Reynders stressed the “people to people” perspective and its part to promote communication between academics, the media and the youth.

In economic and trade terms, mutual interests are indeed high. Belgium has shown its interest in this field as recently as last October with the royal mission of Princess Astrid to Colombia. Minister Reynders is planning a mission to that country this summer. Belgium has also a long history of development cooperation primarily, in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, in the spheres of rural development and academic cooperation. Belgian NGOs are also present in the CELAC area. Belgium is also an observer in some sub-regional institutions, such as the Pacific Alliance.

3)

2EU Presidency pointed out that the Summit will be hosted for the first time in the European capital and offers the perfect opportunity to continue expanding the partnership and inter regional cooperation.

4)

Mr. **Christian LEFFLER**, Managing Director for the Americas, at the European External Action Service, cited Ms. Federica Mogherini, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the EU, who recently stressed the need to revitalize the bi regional relationship. In San Jose in January 2015, at the 3rd CELAC Summit, she stressed the necessity to strengthen EU-Latin America and the Caribbean ties and the fact that this partnership is one of equals, based on mutual respect.

On the chapter of trade and investment, the EU has concluded the highest number of preferential trade agreements in the CELAC region where it has invested massively : about 400 billion euros, more than in all the other BRICS countries put together – accounting for one third of the overall

investment in the CELAC area. With long term mutual confidence and real interdependence, both regions need each other despite the slackening economy in Europe since 2008. Climate change and the fight against drugs are global problems on which the two regions can cooperate.

5)

H.E. Mr. **Carlos APPELGREN BALBONTIN**, Ambassador of Chile, president *pro tempore* of CELAC in 2012, stressed the need to strengthen the sub-regions of CELAC, i.e. MERCOSUR, the association agreement with Mexico ; a new approach to development through raising the level of education to combat poverty ; novel definition of welfare and of relations between state and society in the wake of the global crisis ; more support for small and medium size companies ; inclusion of the civil society, the private sector, the local authorities and the academic world in the plans of action decided by the summit ; replace the Kyoto Protocol where the weight of the two regions representing one billion citizens and 20 % of the global emissions can exert influence. It is an interesting and positive trend that the regular bi regional meetings focus not only on trade and economy but have gone beyond. To end his speech, Mr. Appelgren made the following suggestions : grant priority to a strategic partnership in the national agendas ; organize a yearly meeting of the 61 ministers of Foreign Affairs for inter summit dialogue ; focus more on youth; connect the citizens and give more support to the EU-LAC Foundation.

6)

The panel on “Economic opportunities in the EU/CELAC region and the cooperative strategy with the CELAC countries” was presided by Mr. Christian Ghymers, president of IRELAC (Institut Interuniversitaire pour les Relations entre l’Europe, l’Amérique latine et les Caraïbes) who introduced the next speakers, Mr. **Arnaldo Abruzzini**, General Secretary of Eurochamber, which represents the private sector, and more than 20 million firms and 1700 chambers of commerce, and Mr. **Peter Defraigne**, Executive Director of the Madariaga-College of Europe Foundation.

According to Mr. Abruzzini, from the private sector point of view, the EU’s attention is too involved in Asia and not enough in the CELAC countries, politically as well as in terms of business ventures. However, the usual declarations of good intentions do not often materialize into concrete achievements. This is unfortunate because opportunities are there and the level of complementarity between the two regions is high, specifically in management capacities, innovation, market access, integration in the global market, access to finance.

In spite of a certain number of structural barriers, on the one hand, namely productivity gaps, inequality in society, low international integration, an economy based on natural resources, and cyclical issues, on the other hand, attention should turn to small and medium companies. In the EU, there are 23 million companies which need to have more knowledge of their counterparts across the Atlantic.

To connect financial environments, as it fosters investment, would allow to capitalize on growth in both regions. The use of modern technologies should be encouraged to get in touch with each other, increase mutual knowledge by way of the creation of modern Business Registers.

Mr. Defraigne focussed on two issues : a domestic growth agenda, and a global trade framework, linking both concepts.

Considering the domestic growth agenda, innovation is the key, it is a way to include a country's economy in the global market and attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) and for the EU to generate its own technology, according to Mr. Defraigne. Globalization was a blessing for Latin America, through the improvement of the terms of trade and the impact of Chinese growth on the world demand for commodities. However, it also slowed down the industrialization process in Latin America and the Caribbean.

He concluded that emphasis put on effective competition, fair taxes, investments in educations and health, advancement of the middle class, reduction of poverty will lead to progress in both regions.

7)

The panel "Prospects for a Euro-Latin American and Caribbean common Area for Higher Education, Research and Innovation" was directed by Ms. **Christiane Daem**, Executive Director for Belgium of LOCAL (Observatoire des Changements sociaux en Amérique latine, Paris). She presented the two following orators, Ms. **Magda Vincx**, a marine biologist and professor and vice-rector of Ghent University, Ms. **Julieta Gonzalez**, Policy Officer in the Central America-ActAlliance/CONCORD, a European NGO.

Ms. Vincx claimed that priority given in national agendas to education and research will enhance economic and social inclusion and lead to improved terms of cooperation in higher education, research and innovation. Students study abroad for the added value of internationalization, for an experience that influences them for the rest of their lives. It is an added value to have taken part in an exchange program in Latin America and vice-versa.

For more than two decades, EU policies have pursued academic internationalization with the programs Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus Plus program, which support mobility, education and training and arranges for different participating countries to work together. Universities can be coordinators between CELAC and the EU on this subject. However, the perceptions are not the same on either side of the Atlantic and an effort to reach compromise is necessary to gain corporate partnership.

Ghent University has a number of agreements with Latin American Universities.

Ms. Gonzalez advocated bi regional relations in the current context, added value of social actors and opportunities for further cooperation with universities and other social actors. Promoting

exchanges to face similar problems : inequalities (despite the progress already achieved, the CELAC countries have still many pockets of disparity), violation of human rights, poverty.

The role of civil society organizations is complementary to that of the private sector, also in terms of social accountability and social audit of public policies, making sure international regulations are observed. She suggests a *modus vivendi* that comprehends several stakeholders from both regions. The end goal of the action of the civil society is to promote social integration and to reduce poverty and inequalities.

Concluding remarks :

Mr. **Geert Muylle**, Director General for Bilateral Relations at the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, drew the conclusions of the Seminar.

Debates during the summit will focus on bi-regional and global issues. It will be the occasion to underline the importance of EU-CELAC cooperation in a complex, rapidly changing world.

The summit will also promote once again the shared identity and values of Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

It will also be an opportunity to deepen political dialogue on citizen-oriented initiatives in terms of innovation for sustainable growth, education, security, and climate change.

A Summit is also an opportunity to pave the way for business. Quite a number of Belgian companies are involved in the CELAC region with an impact at multilateral level.

As for culture and education, the proximity is obvious, as shown by the number of students that cross the ocean both ways to study in the other region.

Belgium continues its programs of development cooperation and encourages NGOs who show interest.

Egmont Institute

Brussels, April 2015

Seminar in preparation for the CELAC-UE Summit of Heads of State and Government

Organized by the Egmont Institute, in collaboration with IRELAC

Egmont Palace, 14th April 2015, 8bis Place du Petit Sablon – 1000 Brussels

8h30 Registration

9h00 Welcome address by Viscount Etienne DAVIGNON, President, Egmont

The main challenges of the EU-CELAC Summit of Brussels 2015.

- Keynote speech by H.E. Mr. Didier REYNDERS, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- Statements by:
 - H.E. Ms. Ilze JUHANSONE, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the EU, Representing the EU Presidency,
 - Mr. Christian LEFFLER, Managing Director Americas, European External Action Service,
 - H.E. Mr. Carlos APPELGREN BALBONTÍN, Ambassador of Chile

10.00 ***Economic opportunities in the EU/CELAC region and the cooperative strategy with the CELAC Countries.***

Mr. Arnaldo ABRUZZINI, General Secretary, EUROCHAMBRES
Mr. Pierre DEFRAIGNE, Executive Director, Madariaga-College of Europe Foundation

Moderator: Mr. Christian GHYMERS, President, IRELAC

Debate

11h00 Coffee Break

11.30 ***Prospects for a Euro – Latin American & Caribbean common space for higher education, research and innovation.***

Prof. Dr. Magda VINCX, Policy Coordinator for Internationalisation, Rectorate Ghent University

The prospects of the implementation of policies for social integration in the framework of the alliance EU-CELAC.

Ms. Julieta Gonzalez, Policy Officer, Central America, ActAlliance/CONCORD (European NGO)

Moderator: Christiane DAEM, L'Observatoire des Changements sociaux en Amérique Latine (LOCAL) Paris

Debate

13.00 Concluding remarks by Mr. Geert MUYLLE, Director General, Directorate General of Bilateral Affairs, FPS Foreign Affairs