

Sustainable Development Goals: an opportunity to strengthen CELAC-EU cooperation on Climate Change

*by Juan Llanes-Regueiro**

The vision of development that emerged after the Second World War, an era of unprecedented increased prosperity (when the big oil multinationals declared, “We will do marvels with oil”), concealed the fact that that prosperity was essentially based on the kinetic energy of fossil reserves (reserves that are the equivalent of just two weeks of solar radiation), the consequences of which had been foreseen from the scientific point of view, but ignored in the euphoria of *developmentalism*.

The term ‘sustainable development’ was coined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature about 35 years ago, out of concern about the species that were becoming extinct. Nowadays, we are negotiating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that have a definite effect on all of us.

The concept of development has been modified in terms of its aims given that, without any doubt, economic growth is not a sufficient end in itself. Many people are of the opinion that we cannot sustain the traditional view that the present state of some countries should be the future state that other countries.

Climate change is generally perceived as being a question of global warming; the natural limits of global change are less obvious, however, and are hard to define. An invisible hand has encountered an invisible brake, so that now there is not the same scope for expansion as there used to be. What is needed is a new vision of the meaning of development that takes those limits into account. Universal access to education, health, food and energy security, sport and leisure are supremely important aspects of development.

The Agenda for Development after 2015 must consider devising an agreement to halt or at least to reduce emissions. This problem is not a technical one, nor an economic or political one: it is a *moral imperative*. It is only by pressing towards those objectives that we will have success and be able to look with satisfaction in the eyes of our children and grandchildren. Such an agreement would help reduce to some extent the uncertainty about our future climate.

I suggest that such an agreement should not just be framed within the UNFCCC, but ought to be endorsed also by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council and that it should be supported by all the relevant authorities around the world.

If we achieve such an agreement to limit climate change, the next agreement should be for the eradication or limitation of nuclear arsenals, followed by regulations to reduce the production and sale of dangerous weapons. This could allow for resources to be made available for research, development and investment in solar energy in its various manifestations, along with resources that would allow us to adapt to the climate of the future.

Collaboration between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean exists in many different forms, but greater collaboration would be essential in order to ensure that the rise in temperature is limited to 1.5° C.

The possibility of having instruments available to us that would allow us to model climate on a regional basis is one example of productive collaboration, which requires significant resources, as well as studies carried out by regional experts under the auspices of ECLAC with European funding. The workings of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre are another example of a promising collaboration that we hope will continue into the future.

The negotiation of an agreement between the two regions should ensure that targets are set for solar energy for 2030 and 2050, as well as ensuring a deepening of scientific research: of particular importance for the Caribbean SIDS are marine research and research on sea-level, drinking water and systems of energy production based on high levels of solar energy.

These are extremely sensitive issues for small islands, but Latin America is very diverse and other topics are also very important, such as the Andean zones, the forest areas, and boreal and coastal zones.

It is also necessary to carry out further research into climate change and the relationship between climate change and extreme events, as well as into the generation of innovative integrated regional models of impact-evaluation.

Academic collaboration is also very necessary; climate change science emerged on the basis of individual efforts made by leading physicists and chemists, and the work of the IPCC served to assist in the creation of more comprehensive knowledge of the area. The development of academic programmes as a joint effort on the part of European and Latin American universities and research centres is necessary, however, for the fostering of younger generations. Our little group in Cuba, working with associated experts, has identified the need for a system of fifteen conferences with a greater emphasis on

decision-making information, but we also suggest developing a programme of eight postgraduate short courses, each lasting up to two weeks.

When I reviewed the bibliography of the fourth IPCC report a number of years ago, I noted that much less than 10% of the bibliographic citations came from countries in the South and that, of those, some very promising work was being published using the English language, presumably in order simply to ensure publication. Would it not be possible to create a scientific publication as the fruit of our collaboration, that would allow us to exchange experiences and to publish joint results? That would constitute an important step forward. Thank you.

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