

High-level Dialogue: 'Foundations for a Bi-Regional Pact of Care between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union'

Date & hour: 14 March de 2024 // 09:30-11:30 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time, EST)

Venue: Instituto Cervantes, 211 East 49th Street. New York, NY 10017

Format: face-to-face

Concept Note

Background and context

In a context of multiple crises, deepening of structural nodes of gender inequality and persistent gaps between men and women in the labour market, in access to decent employment and to social protection and social security systems, the care agenda is occupying an increasingly relevant place in the international debate. Moreover, with a growing demand for care, the allocation of almost all domestic and care work to women and the insufficient supply of care services, it is urgent to advance in policies to ensure gender co-responsibility and between the State, the market, families, and communities.

Several European Union (EU) and Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) member states have made commitments to take steps towards a new social organisation of care that incorporates care as a fundamental pillar of well-being and as a driver of socio-economic recovery to successfully overcome poverty and social and gender inequalities. **In September 2022, the European Commission presented the [European Care Strategy](#) and the [recommendations on early childhood education and care services and the access to long-term care](#), adopted in December 2022 at the European Council, set out an agenda to improve the situation of both carers and people in need of care. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the [Buenos Aires Commitment](#) in November 2022 at the 15th Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, recognising care as a right of people to care, to be cared for and to exercise self-care, including measures to overcome the sexual division of labour and move towards a fair social organisation of care.**

These shared commitments have motivated governments and parliaments from both regions, international organisations, civil society and academic organisations and institutions that have accompanied the bi-regional dialogue process to propose a **'Bi-regional Pact for Care' between LAC and the EU**, which would aim to promote cooperation on public policies and comprehensive systems of care among the countries of both regions and in multilateral fora.

Ideas about the pact started to circulate during the [EU-LAC Gender Equality Forum](#) held in Berlin in May 2023, convened by the EU-LAC Foundation and partners¹. At this Forum, the EU-LAC Foundation, together with the governments of Mexico, Argentina, Spain, and Germany committed to promoting the pact initiative. Subsequently, and prior to the EU-CELAC Summit, during the [EU-LAC Forum: Partners in Change](#) held in Brussels in July 2023, the pact proposal was promoted in

¹ Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation of Spain; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

the [declaration](#) of organisations, networks, civil society platforms and trade unions from both regions.

At the **EU-CELAC Summit held in Brussels on 17 and 18 July 2023**, the Heads of State and Government committed themselves to *“fighting multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and gender based violence, and to promoting fundamental labour principles and rights and ILO core labour standards and conventions of decent work for all, gender equality, full and equal representation and participation of all women and girls in decision-making processes, rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, rights of the child, human rights defenders, and the rights of persons in situations of vulnerability and people of African descent, full and equal representation and participation of all women and girls in decision-making processes, the rights of indigenous peoples as reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the rights of the child, the rights of human rights defenders, and the rights of persons in vulnerable situations and indigenous peoples. Afro-descendants”*².

At the legislative level, the pact proposal has been taken up by the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat), in its commitment to advance gender equality during the [15th Ordinary Plenary Session](#) held in Madrid in July 2023 and in paragraph 35 of the [Declaration of the Executive Bureau](#), which took place in Santo Domingo in October 2023.

Finally, in October 2023, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean³, at its 65th Meeting, as part of their agreements, decided to *“(e)ncourage the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in coordination with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the EU-LAC Foundation, to advance a bi-regional pact for care between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, with a view to promoting cooperation among the countries of both regions on comprehensive care policies and systems with a gender perspective, in the framework of the implementation of the Buenos Aires Commitment and the European Care Strategy, and fostering cooperation initiatives in this area with other regions of the world”*⁴.

High-level dialogue

The member states of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean share common challenges to develop universal care policies and systems that include the provision of quality, affordable and accessible care services from early childhood and in the long term, as well as ensuring decent working conditions and quality employment of caregivers.

Against this backdrop and taking advantage of the presence of authorities and representatives of EU member states and Latin American and Caribbean countries in New York on the occasion of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW68](#)), the EU-LAC Foundation, UN Women and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in association with the Spanish Ministry for Equality, the Global Alliance for Care, the National

² See paragraph 9 Declaration of the 2023 EU-CELAC Summit:

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12000-2023-INIT/en/pdf>

³ The Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is an intergovernmental body on women's rights and gender equality in the region. ECLAC is the Secretariat of the Presiding Officers. The meetings of the Presiding Officers are organised by ECLAC in coordination with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

⁴ See Paragraph 7 of the Agreements of the Sixty-fifth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/23-00947_mdm.65_agreements_adopted.pdf

Institute for Women of Mexico (INMUJERES), and United National Development Programme (UNDP) are convening a high-level meeting aimed at joining efforts to promote this Bi-regional Pact for Care between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union.

Guiding questions for dialogue

During the meeting, we want to provide a space for the authorities and representatives of the EU and LAC countries present to exchange, through short interventions, their perspectives on the initiative for closer cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union related to care, based on the different elements contemplated in the Bi-regional Pact for Care. Participants in the dialogue will be asked to prepare their interventions considering the following guiding questions:

Questions for government representatives

Despite the diversity that exists in the approach and design of care systems between European, Latin American, and Caribbean countries, what could be, from your perspective, a common agenda, and shared needs?

How can your government promote the Bi-regional Pact for Care between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union and promote joint actions between both regions?

What areas do you see as priorities for your government in the implementation of a Bi-regional Pact for Care and how could your country contribute?

What, from your perspective, could be the next steps in view of the next CELAC-EU Summit to be held in 2025 in Colombia? What are the challenges and opportunities to advance this proposal?

Questions for representatives of International Organisations

How can international organisations cooperate with the development of the Bi-regional Pact for Care between Latin America and the Caribbean and promote joint actions between both regions? What are the challenges and opportunities to advance this proposal?

How could the Bi-regional Pact for Care become an element of the agenda of international cooperation and multilateral instruments - in view, for example, of the agenda of the "Summit of the Future" to be held at the United Nations in September 2024?

Questions for civil society

How can civil society contribute to the development of the Bi-regional Pact for Care between Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean, what are the challenges and opportunities to advance this proposal?

What, from your perspective, could be the next steps to ensure that the Bi-regional Pact for Care acquires the importance it deserves in view of the next CELAC-EU Summit to be held in 2025 in Colombia?

Expected results

- Offer a space for open dialogue between authorities from EU member states and CELAC countries to disseminate the proposal and the contents that a Bi-Regional Pact for Care could contain;
- Discuss ideas on how interested countries could accompany the process to promote the Pact and achieve a stronger commitment to its implementation vis-à-vis the CELAC-EU Summit to be held in Colombia in 2025 and the Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean which will take place in Mexico;
- Listen to proposals of civil society, of international organisations and alliances that can contribute to the Pact;
- Agree on the next steps.