

What role can the EU-CELAC partnership play in securing a global deal on climate change?

*by Miguel Arias Cañete**

As Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Food and Environment, I was involved in enough negotiations to learn that if you want to pass a deal that's good for the planet; you need to build a broad coalition of supporters. As we enter the final stretch of global climate negotiations, cooperation between the EU and Latin American and Caribbean States will be crucial if we are going to secure an ambitious, binding, global deal in Paris in 2015.

The stakes could not be higher. The IPCC's 5th Assessment Report confirmed that the longer we carry on disturbing the climate, the greater the risks we will face and the more costly it will become to adapt to the changes.

As a former Minister for Agriculture and Food, I am particularly struck by the threat posed to global food security by climate change. The IPCC's report spoke about the high risk climate change posed for 'crop yields, food security, and local economies in Central America, northeast Brazil, and parts of the Andean region', as well as in my native Southern Mediterranean region, and many other regions around the world.

Thankfully, understanding of these risks has begun to turn into concrete action, and as the world comes together for COP 20 in Lima the hopes for a deal in Paris have never looked brighter.

In October, EU leaders agreed ambitious climate and energy targets for 2030, including a binding domestic greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 40%. Our announcement injected a new momentum into the global climate negotiations.

Last month, the US and China followed the EU's lead and announced their own targets. President Obama said the US would reduce emissions by 26%-28% by 2025, and China, for the first time ever, set a date by which its emissions would peak. Shortly afterwards the G20 reaffirmed its commitment to securing a global deal on climate change.

But we would never have reached this point were it not for the contributions of many Latin American and Caribbean states. At Cancun in 2010, the Mexican Chair secured a conclusion text that kept the intergovernmental climate negotiations alive.

The Durban Platform, which started the discussions towards agreement of a global deal in 2015, owed a lot to cooperation between the EU and Latin American and Caribbean countries. And the Rio+20 Conference results, actively supported by the European Union, firmly established sustainable development at the centre of "the future we want".

It is this type of cooperation that will be vital if we are going to deliver a legally binding deal in Paris that is ambitious, applies to all nations, and keeps global warming below 2° C.

So what should be the focus of EU-CELAC cooperation in the next year?

First the focus is on Lima. Peru has already done a fantastic job as COP chair. I hope that the Lima Conference will deliver clarification on the key elements of the 2015 agreement for further negotiation, as well as securing a decision that will allow us to evaluate the commitments that countries submit as part of the global deal.

Once Lima is finished, it will be important to ensure the next COP chair, France, builds on the progress achieved by its predecessor.

Then secondly, following Lima the focus will be on all nations coming forward with their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) by the end of March 2015.

Our two regions have a strong track record in this field. Latin American and Caribbean countries including Peru, were some of the first developing nations in the world to submit voluntary emissions pledges to the UNFCCC process years ago, and the EU is now one of the first movers in this round of commitments.

As well as submitting our own INDCs in time, we must use our strong position as climate leaders to influence the world's big emitters to submit their own commitments in time for the March deadline.

And finally, we must showcase the success story of the cooperation between our two regions as an example of positive international cooperation in the field of climate change.

Since the EU-CELAC Summit in 2010, our two regions have worked together closely on climate change. Through the Euroclima programme, the EU supports 18 Latin American countries in integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation into national development plans.

I am confident that this cooperation between the EU and CELAC regions will continue to flourish despite the diverse memberships and sets of national priorities of our two regions. The next EU-CELAC Summit, to be held in Brussels on 10, 11 June, will be an opportunity to build on Lima and enhance our cooperation.

We share a vision and an ambition. We are bound together by a strong commitment to see a binding deal agreed by 2015. EU-CELAC countries said in 2013: 'We express our will to adopt a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UNFCCC by 2015.'¹

Now it's time to turn that will into a way.

¹ http://www.eeas.europa.eu/la/summits/docs/2013_santiago_summit_declaration_en.pdf

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