

FOURTH MEETING OF EUROPEAN UNION-LATIN AMERICAN-CARIBBEAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

VIENNA, 5, 6 AND 7 APRIL 2006



FINAL DECLARATION

The Fourth Meeting of EU-Latin American-Caribbean Civil Society Organisations was organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, with the support of the European Commission and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce. The meeting brought together representatives of civil society from Latin America and the Caribbean, including the following regional bodies: Mercosur's Economic and Social Consultative Forum, the Central American Integration System's Consultative Committee and the Andean Community's Labour and Business Advisory Councils.

At this Fourth Meeting, representatives of EU, Latin American and Caribbean civil society organisations (employers, trade unions, social economy organisations and other organisations generating social cohesion), in keeping with the Declaration at the Third Meeting held in Mexico in 2004, adopted the following declaration, addressed to the Summit of Heads of State or Government to be held on 12 and 13 May in Vienna (Austria):



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The European Union and Latin America have a shared history and culture and a common set of values, such as the protection of human rights, private initiative, collective rights and respect for the rule of law, together with a multilateral policy within the framework of world governance. Together, the two regions provide a solid basis for taking forward a strategic partnership, helping their less developed sectors and areas to make economic progress under conditions conducive to sustainable development.
- 1.2 Organised civil society in the EU, Latin American and Caribbean calls for the Fourth Summit of Heads of State or Government to strengthen this partnership. They believe that in the interests of the future development of both regions, and in order to help achieve global governance, the agreements between the two regions must take greater account of the lower development levels and problems of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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- 1.3. The EU, Latin American and Caribbean civil society organisations consider that the relations, strategic partnership and various agreements between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean are not limited to trade and the economy. It is therefore also necessary to flesh out their political, cultural and social aspects. Organised civil society believes that these links should generate greater social cohesion in the two regions.
- 1.4. Organised civil society in the EU, Latin American and Caribbean shares the belief that social cohesion, understood as a process which can drastically reduce the social, economic and cultural gaps dividing a society's members and regions must become a priority goal. There exist political, economic and social conditions, which are closely interlinked and in whose absence it is impossible to achieve social cohesion: economic development, stronger civil society organisations and the democratic, efficient, fair operation of State institutions. These institutions are responsible for ensuring equal access to education, healthcare and other essential services, decent employment based on compliance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards, housing, an independent justice system and social security.
- 1.5. The integration processes and association agreements involve both challenges and opportunities which will require a clear, shared political commitment. If these processes are to succeed, then civil society must be involved in them and the right balance and relationship must be struck between economic, social and environmental objectives. To this end, instruments must in particular be set up that will enable organised civil society to be effectively involved and represented, the social dimension to be developed and socio-economic organisations strengthened in order to seek consensus in society. Latin American and Caribbean organised civil society believes that this aspect deserves much more focused attention than it has received in the past.

2. **Strengthening the bi-regional partnership**

- 2.1. The participants at the Fourth Meeting stress the strategic importance of EU-Latin American-Caribbean relations for promoting better multilateral global governance and supporting economic and social development in the two regions, while recognising the imbalances, and correcting the trade distortions, between them. They consider that, despite the progress made since the EU-Latin America-Caribbean summit in Guadalajara, the strategic partnership between the two regions needs to be given a strong boost at the Vienna summit.

Specifically, the participants:

- 2.1.1. **are keen** for a firm political commitment on the completion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement;
- 2.1.2. **request** that a decision be taken at the Fourth Vienna Summit to open negotiations for association agreements with the Andean Community and with Central America. This should lead to greater integration for these regions;

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- 2.1.3. **support** more extensive association agreements with Mexico and Chile;
- 2.1.4. **call for** a successful conclusion to the negotiations for a regional economic association agreement with the Caribbean countries;
- 2.1.5. **support** the European Parliament's call for a more formal political framework for EU-Latin American-Caribbean relations;
- 2.1.6. **stress** that the association agreements should strengthen the social, political and cultural - as well as the trade and economic - dimensions of the partnership;
- 2.1.7. in particular, **call for** civil society to be closely involved in monitoring negotiations and formally included in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of the association agreements between the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean countries or regions;
- 2.1.8. **agree** on the need for cooperation policy to build the technical negotiating capacities of representatives of the developing, and relatively less developed, countries;
- 2.1.9. **request** that handling migration flows be made a priority in relations between the two regions, in compliance with the principles of combating the trafficking of human beings, legalising the situation of migrants and ensuring their economic, social and political integration. They also call for the adoption of joint policies which would create favourable conditions for people to stay in their countries of origin, focusing on their economic and social development;
- 2.1.10. **call for** increased efforts to fight the illegal trafficking of drugs and narcotics.

3. **Proposals to boost economic and social cohesion**

- 3.1. The representatives of EU, Latin American and Caribbean organised civil society note that Latin America has been enjoying sustained economic growth over the last three years, which brings the region an opportunity to improve its social indicators. They recommend the implementation of measures to promote economic and social development and a stronger commitment from the European Union towards this goal.

The participants therefore:

- 3.1.1. **call for** a clear political commitment towards the gradual opening-up of markets, moving towards the goal of an EU-Latin American area of free trade and partnership in the economic, social, cultural, knowledge and environmental spheres;

- 3.1.2. **recommend** boosting European investment in Latin America and the Caribbean, creating a more favourable climate for this, and ensuring that European companies act as strategic partners in industrialisation, competitiveness, technological growth, infrastructure provision, employment and the maintenance and development of democratic frameworks for labour relations. All this should be in harmony with the usual patterns of behaviour in the countries of origin;
- 3.1.3. **ask** for special attention to be given to providing easier access for Latin American and Caribbean companies to the EU market and vice-versa, and to their products and investment;
- 3.1.4. **recognise**, in accordance with ILO Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of cooperatives, the role of cooperatives and other social economy enterprises in the overall development of our countries. Against this backdrop, it is felt that it should be put into effective practice, in keeping with the specific procedures of each country;
- 3.1.5. **urge** the EU to increase and adapt its public development aid to Latin America and the Caribbean, gearing it in particular towards programmes for providing infrastructure, expanding the productive fabric, and promoting education and research;
- 3.1.6. also **call for** a European policy to swap debt for programmes focusing on these objectives and on strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing civil society organisations;
- 3.1.7. **voice their support** for the Commission's proposal to promote the role of EU leading-edge sectors in Latin American and Caribbean development, by means of research and technological development framework programmes;
- 3.1.8. **consider** that special attention should be paid, where necessary, to the agricultural sector so that it can successfully adapt to the challenges of globalisation.
- 3.2. Cooperation between governments and organised civil society in the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean must be geared to creating a favourable environment – including within joint programmes – for dialogue and negotiation with a view to increasing social cohesion.

To this end, the participants:

- 3.2.1. **call for** the promotion of dialogue and bipartite and/or tripartite agreements so that ILO standards become part of everyday labour relations and practices;
- 3.2.2. **propose** setting up labour consultation and negotiation bodies (such as the National Labour Councils);
- 3.2.3. **urge** the International Labour Organisation to promote social dialogue in the countries and regions of Latin America and the Caribbean and, to this end, to put forward projects to

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promote this dialogue and to strengthen the organisations taking part in; and also urge the EU to support such projects;

- 3.2.4. **recommend** that the countries and regions of Latin America and the Caribbean promote civil dialogue and strengthen the organisations taking part in this dialogue; and also urge the EU to strengthen its development;
- 3.2.5. **request** that national pacts be drawn up in order to support formal employment through a number of mechanisms, including promotion of SMEs and the social economy;
- 3.2.6. **propose** increased cooperation between employers' organisations, trade unions, cooperatives, farmers, consumers, the social economy etc. in the EU, Latin American and the Caribbean;
- 3.2.7. **suggest** stepping up cooperation between the social dialogue partners in the EU and its Member States and in the countries and regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Cooperation should also be stepped up between organised civil society actors involved in civil dialogue.

4. **Proposals aiming to support the development and structuring of civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the regional integration process**

- 4.1. Regional integration is a strategic factor in relations between the two continents. It is also essential for the integration processes to include a socio-economic dimension, so as to ensure that they are sustainable and widely accepted: the aim is not merely to establish free trade agreements – it is about true integration for development.

The participants of the Fourth Meeting:

- 4.1.1. **strongly believe** that the regional integration processes should include financial mechanisms for redressing inequalities and promoting social and territorial cohesion and economic, social and environmental sectoral impact studies;
- 4.1.2. **are of the opinion** that these integration processes need to include a social and a labour dimension, bring in indigenous populations and other social groups and support young people and develop their professional skills;
- 4.1.3. **believe** that it would be very useful to implement measures that raise awareness of Europe's experience with regard to the social dimension, structural funds and organised civil society's involvement in its integration process;
- 4.1.4. **consider** that it is a key responsibility of Latin American and Caribbean governments to support civil society structures for dialogue, including through financial support, particularly at regional level;

- 4.1.5. **request** that the proposals and recommendations of organised civil society be considered, incorporated into social and political dialogue and taken into account when it comes to defining public agendas, on a national or regional scale;
- 4.1.6. **believe** that European cooperation programmes must (through training and information initiatives) foster a culture of participation among Latin American and Caribbean civil society organisations, and help to strengthen consultative bodies within regional integration institutions;
- 4.1.7. **call upon** the EESC and national ESCs in the EU to step up their cooperation initiatives, for instance by hosting organised civil society players in order to familiarise them with the way consultative bodies work;
- 4.1.8. **agree** to request that a programme be submitted, to the EU and other international bodies, supporting the institutional reinforcement of the consultative bodies (Mercosur's Economic and Social Forum, the Andean Community's Advisory Councils, the Central American Integration System's Consultative Committee and CARIFORUM). Similarly, they agree to call for a training programme to boost a culture of regional integration processes;
- 4.1.9. **propose** further coordination between the various bodies representing organised civil society in the subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to setting up a permanent system for coordination between them, and between them and the EU;
- 4.1.10. **support** the initiative of the Andean Business and Labour Advisory Councils to create of an Andean Economic and Social Consultative Committee.

5. **Proposals for institutionalising organised civil society participation in the EU-Latin America and Caribbean association agreements**

The participants:

- 5.1.1. **strongly believe** that civil society in both continents should not only take part in the negotiation processes and monitoring of the association agreements between the EU and the countries and regions of Latin America, but also in ensuring that they contain a social, as well as an economic, dimension;
- 5.1.2. **reiterate**, in line with the Final Declaration of the Third Meeting in Mexico, the need for the EU-Latin America-Caribbean association agreements to include a chapter on the social and labour dimension, covering gender equality and anti-discrimination policies;
- 5.1.3. **request** that the sectoral impact of the association agreements be analysed, and that the opinions of the production and social sectors affected be taken into consideration;

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- 5.1.4. **agree** that a study should be carried out, a seminar held and a publication prepared on the social dimension of the association agreements between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - 5.1.5. also **agree** that a study should be carried out, a seminar held and a publication prepared on the economic dimension of the association agreements between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - 5.1.6. **welcome** the European Commission's proposal to organise a forum for social cohesion in order to share the results obtained from its initiatives for social cohesion in Latin America. This requires an active policy for the consultation of civil society on social cohesion as an across-the-board objective of all the EU initiatives undertaken in relation to Latin America;
 - 5.1.7. **are willing** to contribute to and participate in these bi-annual forums for social cohesion;
 - 5.1.8. **recommend** involving organised civil society in all phases of development cooperation between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - 5.1.9. **propose** that all agreements should provide for a consultative body (joint consultative committee – JCC) for the monitoring and reinforcement of these agreements; thus, **have decided** to draw up a proposal on the required tasks, membership and content of these JCCs;
 - 5.1.10. **call** upon the representatives of organised civil society in Mexico to draw up a work programme aimed at establishing a body to represent organised civil society, and to act as a counterpart to the EESC when this participatory body is set up;
 - 5.1.11. **urge** organised civil society in Chile to draw up a work programme for the same purpose as set out in the point above;
 - 5.1.12. **agree** to continue and expand the mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation between organised civil society in the EU and the Caribbean within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement;
 - 5.1.13. **call for** EU-Latin America-Caribbean business, trade union, cooperative, farmers, consumers, social economy etc. forums to be recognised and supported;
 - 5.1.14. **call** upon the Fourth Summit to put the Meetings of EU-Latin American-Caribbean Civil Society Organisations on an institutional footing, as a contribution to the bi-annual Summits of Heads of State or Government of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, and an expression of the joint efforts of the civil society organisations in the two regions, and to supply the necessary means for this purpose.
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