

Strengthening ties: A new agenda for the EU's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean

SUMMARY

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and United States-China rivalry continue to dominate the global political and economic landscape in 2023. Challenges to the multilateral rules-based global order are redefining strategic relations. In its attempt to foster alliances, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President (HR/VP) and the European Commission adopted a joint communication setting out a new agenda for relations between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) on 7 June 2023. To strengthen and modernise the strategic partnership, reinforced political engagement, boosted trade and investment, and more sustainable investment through the Global Gateway connectivity strategy are key priorities of the EU strategy towards the region – one of the most aligned in terms of interests, culture and values.

Less than a year earlier, on 27 October 2022, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and EU foreign ministers adopted the joint CELAC-EU Roadmap 2022-2023 in Buenos Aires. This paved the way for the long-awaited EU-CELAC Summit to take place in Brussels, set for 17-18 July 2023, under the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU. Expectations are high, as this will be the first fully-fledged summit in 8 years.

EU-CELAC relations are not free of challenges: the LAC countries' stance on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (including EU sanctions against Russia), China's emergence as a key actor in Latin America, political and ideological divisions and economic asymmetries within the LAC region, and concerns relating to EU legislation on the green transition all need to be addressed. A litmus test for the strategic partnership will also be whether the partners manage to finalise the three key pending international agreements (Mercosur, Mexico and Chile).



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Background

A [strategic partnership](#) links the EU and Latin America since their first summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1999. In 2010, 33 Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) countries decided to merge the [Rio Group](#) and the CALC (Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean on Development and Cooperation) into one forum: the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Since then, [CELAC](#) is the EU's counterpart in the bi-regional partnership process.

EU and CELAC consider themselves natural partners, linked by strong historical, cultural and economic ties. The partnership is a political process that has evolved over the years, promoting political dialogue, cooperation, trade and investment. The principal forums for dialogue and cooperation are the **EU-CELAC summits**. These summits strengthen links between the two regions at the highest level and address issues on the bi-regional and international agendas. Debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights; fighting poverty; promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology; and the environment and climate change. To date, [eight](#) EU-CELAC summits have taken place. However, the most recent EU-CELAC summit dates took place in Brussels in 2015, whereas previously, summits took place almost every 2 years. Following this long hiatus, the next [EU-CELAC summit](#) will take place in Brussels on 17-18 July 2023.

The 2015 Brussels summit adopted the [EU-CELAC action plan](#), based on the priorities established by the previous summits. The plan sets out 10 priority areas for bi-regional cooperation:

- Science, research, innovation and technology;
- Sustainable development and the environment, climate change, biodiversity and energy;
- Regional integration and interconnectivity to promote social inclusion and cohesion;
- Migration;
- Education and employment to promote social inclusion and cohesion;
- The global drug problem;
- Gender;
- Investment and entrepreneurship for sustainable development;
- Higher education;
- Citizens' security.

After four years of absence, the third [CELAC-EU Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#) took place in Buenos Aires on 27 October 2022, with the theme of 'Renewing the bi-regional partnership to strengthen peace and sustainable development'. The main outcome was the joint [CELAC-EU Roadmap 2022-2023](#), which contains a list of bi-regional events and the agreement to organise a fully-fledged EU-CELAC Summit in 2023. Both parties considered the meeting a [turning point](#), and the beginning of a major overhaul of relations between the two regions. Among other things, ministers agreed to [deepen cooperation](#) on food security, energy, health, social justice and the integration of production systems and value chains, including with respect to raw materials; and to strengthen trade and investment relations. Most recent examples of increased cooperation between the EU and CELAC are the bi-regional [EU-CELAC Digital Alliance](#) (14 March 2023), the high-level forum on [sharing pharmaceutical innovations](#) (21 March 2023).

The EU and LAC countries together account for 60 out of 193 United Nations member states, include seven members of the G20 and are allies on many global challenges, including sustainable development, climate change and protection of biodiversity, human rights and fair and free trade. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and US-China rivalry continue to dominate the global political and economic landscape in 2023. Challenges to the multilateral rules-based global order are redefining strategic relations. Key states from the **Global South**,¹ such as Brazil, Mexico, India or South Africa, are increasingly important in moves to isolate Russia and to address global challenges. The EU's objective of further strengthening relations with LAC countries should also be seen in this context.

Many memorandums of understanding, programmes and initiatives have been taken over the years at different levels, which – together with [numerous association and trade agreements](#) – have contributed to fostering the EU-CELAC relations and (in the absence of EU-CELAC summits) helped to maintain the strategic partnership alive. In addition to the region-to-region dimension, political dialogue and particularly trade (and trade negotiations) between the EU and LAC countries take place at the sub-regional level ([Andean Community of Nations](#), Mercosur, [CARIFORUM](#), the [Central American Integration System](#) (SICA)). In its approach towards the region, the EU has pursued a strategy of promoting such **sub-regional integration** initiatives. Nevertheless, bilateral relations with LAC countries are equally important: Mexico and Brazil for example are strategic EU partners. Both countries are G20 members. Mexico is on top a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The EU deepens its relations with these two Latin American key players through bilateral summits and sectoral dialogues in different areas. On the bilateral level, there are many framework agreements, initiatives and programmes in place, through which the EU tries to deepen its relations with LAC countries. One example from the recent past is the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with Peru on an agenda of enhanced political and sectoral dialogue and cooperation and the [EU-Peru Framework Participation Agreement](#) for Peru's participation in EU crisis management operations. Unfortunately, neither the European External Action Service (EEAS) nor the European Commission publish an implementation report that summarises the variety of initiatives initiated over the years and takes stock of their implementation. The absence of such a document not only hampers an overview of the many EU and CELAC commitments, but also complicates any assessment of the progress made. No implementation report similar to the Commission's [comprehensive report](#) on the implementation of its trade and investment policy has been prepared.

The EU is the largest provider of **development assistance** to Latin America. The EU has allocated over [€3.4 billion](#) in 2021-2027, under the NDICI-Global Europe financial instrument for cooperation with LAC countries. Regional programmes for LAC countries mainly support the green transition, digital transformation, sustainable and inclusive economy, democratic governance, security and migration.

Economic ties between LAC countries and the EU are strong: The EU is the LAC region's third largest [trade partner](#), after the US and China, while LAC countries are the EU's fifth largest trading partner after China, the US, the UK and Switzerland. The total amount of EU merchandise trade with LAC

EU-CELAC Trade

- Total trade (goods and services): €369 billion
- Trade growth since 2013: 39 %
- EU investment stocks in LAC region: €693 billion/ First investor in the region
- EU investments supports 2.75 million jobs in the region
- Exports to LAC region create more than 1 million jobs in the EU

countries was €176 billion in 2020, or 4.8 % of total EU27 trade with the world. These economic ties are underpinned by a [network of association, trade or political and cooperation agreements](#) with 27 of the 33 LAC countries. Today, the EU is the main foreign direct investor [in the region](#), representing 36 % of the total (followed by the US and China).

Since the adoption of the EU [trade for all](#) strategy in 2015, the EU pursues stronger economic ties with LAC countries by boosting trade and investment. The trade for

all strategy envisaged the following international agreements to take EU-LAC trade relations to the next level:

- [EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement](#). On 9 December 2022, the EU and Chile announced the conclusion of negotiations to modernise the 2002 EU-Chile Association Agreement. The agreement is currently undergoing legal scrubbing, after which it will be translated and can be signed by the Council and Chilean counterparts. According to the Commission, the signature could take place by the end of 2023.

Following its signature, the Agreement will be submitted to the European Parliament for consent. The EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement will constitute a single, comprehensive agreement (which must be ratified at EU and Member State level to enter into force). A second legal instrument, the [Interim Trade Agreement \(iTA\)](#) covering trade and investment liberalisation, will only need to be ratified at EU level (i.e. by the Council, with the Parliament's consent) to enter into force. The Chair of the Committee on International Trade (INTA), Bernd Lange (S&D, Germany) and the INTA Standing Rapporteur for Chile, Samira Rafaela (Renew, the Netherlands) [called](#) on the Commission to speed-up the procedure (legal scrubbing and translation), to allow the Parliament to consider its consent before the European elections.

- EU-Mexico Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Co-operation Agreement ('[Global Agreement](#)' or 'GA'), which entered into force in 2000. On 28 April 2020, the EU and Mexico concluded their negotiations for a modernised agreement. As a mixed agreement, it requires approval at both EU and Member State level. However, the European Commission has proposed to the Mexican authorities to complement the modernised GA with an iTA, containing those parts of the GA's trade pillar that fall within the EU's exclusive competence (and would therefore require ratification at EU level only). The iTA would expire when the modernised GA enters into force; mirroring the architecture of the recently concluded agreement with Chile. Final confirmation by the Mexican government of the proposed legal architecture is pending; it therefore remains unclear whether a timeline that would allow for a consent procedure within the current European Parliament legislative term will be feasible for the modernised EU-Mexico GA.
- The future of the envisaged [EU-Mercosur Association Agreement](#) (AA) also remains in question. On 28 June 2019, an 'agreement in principle' was reached on the trade pillar as part of a wider AA including political dialogue and cooperation; the latter part was agreed in June 2018. However, the agreement met with resistance from several EU Member States. In a [resolution](#) of 7 October 2020 on the implementation of the common commercial policy, the European Parliament emphasised that the EU-Mercosur agreement cannot be ratified as it stands. According to [reports](#), the Commission proposed an additional instrument to accompany the agreement, aimed at addressing concerns about sustainability and the potential environmental effects of the agreement in early 2023. At the time of writing, the EU is awaiting a [counterproposal](#) of Mercosur. Reopening negotiations could be time-consuming; it is therefore unlikely that the ratification procedure could start in the current legislative period.

The LAC region is facing a series of **challenges**:

- With more than [1.7 million deaths](#), the LAC region is among those worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with significant differences between countries.
- EU-LAC [trade fell](#) by almost 16 % in 2020, while the LAC region recorded its worst trade performance since the global finance crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with exports and imports falling by an estimated 13 % and 20 % respectively.
- The region is experiencing [democratic backsliding](#): Political instability and polarisation shapes the political landscape in many parts of Latin America, particularly the Andean region (most recently [Peru](#)) and [Brazil](#). Today, the LAC region is amongst the [most polarised](#) in the world.
- According to [Human Rights Watch](#), Latin America (especially Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba) is facing some of its gravest human rights challenges in decades.
- Divergent views persist on the crisis in Venezuela and on the current Maduro regime. Following changes of governments in Brazil and Colombia towards the political left,

key countries are starting to [re-engage](#) with Venezuela, while others do not agree to cooperate with Nicolás Maduro as a democratically elected leader.

- The economic outlook for Latin America is not rosy: The [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC\)](#) has warned that growth will slow to 1.4% in 2023, from 3.4% in 2022.
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has [impacted the region](#) in several ways. These include an increase in food, fertiliser and energy prices, rising transport costs, supply-chain obstacles, tightening global financial conditions (to control inflation) and increased financial volatility.
- [Migration and forced displacement](#) remains a key problem in LAC countries. Forced displacement is even rising in 2023, as the root causes – violence, insecurity, democratic erosion, inequality, the impact of climate change and human rights violations – persist. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the region hosts more than 18.4 million refugees, asylum-seekers, and displaced and stateless people.

Cooperation in multilateral forums on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Many LAC countries have preferred to adopt a **neutral** position on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This is reflected in the [declaration](#) adopted by the Leaders at the CELAC Summit in Buenos Aires on 24 January 2023, which does not refer to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Some [experts](#) explain this position in reference to the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of another country, which has deep roots in Latin America. Key countries, such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina or Colombia, neither apply sanctions against Russia, nor respond positively to the Western alliance's [call to provide weapons](#) to Ukraine. So far, only [Costa Rica](#) has joined the global sanctions against Russia. The Latin American experience with [international sanctions](#) has been mostly as sanctioned states rather than targeting states. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva [called on the EU and the US](#) to stop sending weapons to Ukraine and, after meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in April 2023, declared the US should [stop encouraging war](#). Nevertheless, LAC states have proven to be reliable partners for the West within the UN. The **UN General Assembly** (UNGA) has so far adopted six resolutions related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, with LAC states voting by a clear majority in favour (see Annex, Table 1). Of the 33 LAC countries, 26 voted in favour of the latest [resolution](#) (Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine). By way of comparison, the majority (52%) of [African states](#) either abstained from voting, or effectively did the same by not attending. Three BRICS states (China, India and South Africa), were also once more among the 32 countries that abstained from voting for the February 2023 UN resolution.

Russia has allies in the LAC region, including Nicaragua, Bolivia, Cuba, El Salvador and Venezuela. Russia has [tried to bind](#) these countries to its side using aid, COVID-19 and flu vaccines, technical support, and military exports. Russia is also present in the region: most recently, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov completed a [four-country tour](#) of Latin America to foster partnerships. During the trip from 17-21 April 2023, Lavrov met with the heads of state of Brazil, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba in their respective countries, as well as holding another meeting with Bolivian emissaries in Venezuela.

Most recently, Brazilian President Lula da Silva attended the [G7 Summit](#) in Hiroshima on 19-21 May 2023. A planned meeting between Lula da Silva and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy did not take place, as the Ukrainian leader was late, reportedly upsetting President Lula. President Lula stated that the correct forum to address Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was the UN and not the G7. He also used the occasion to reiterate a longstanding Brazilian demand for reform of the UN Security Council, including new permanent members, to

allow the UN to regain its effectiveness and the political and moral authority to deal with the conflicts and dilemmas of the 21st century. Brazil will hold the **G20 Presidency** in 2024.

Global Gateway and the green transition

Latin America is a natural ally in tackling the climate change crisis: As a whole, the region has been among the strongest advocates of ambitious climate policies and LAC countries played an [important role](#) in achieving the **Paris Agreement**, which all CELAC countries have [ratified](#). Latin American countries are amongst the [most vulnerable](#) to the effects of climate change. The region is home to 50% of the world's biodiversity and a renewable energy powerhouse (its generation mix has the [largest share of renewables in the world](#), amounting to 61% in 2021). Moreover, it is a major [food producer](#), accounting for 14% of global food production and 45% of net international agri-food trade.

The [LAC-EU Ministerial Meeting](#) on Environment and Climate Change held in Costa Rica on 5 May 2023 demonstrated that the LAC region is a like-minded partner for tackling the planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The EU on the other hand is committed to spending at least 30% of its cooperation budget on climate and biodiversity initiatives in the LAC region.

On 1 December 2021, the Commission and HR/VP Josep Borrell launched the [Global Gateway](#), the EU's connectivity strategy. The Global Gateway aims to speed up sustainable development, create inclusive growth and jobs, and transition to a cleaner and more circular global economy. The principal tool for shaping the EU-CELAC relations in a sustainable way is the [EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda \(GGIA\)](#), currently under preparation and planned for presentation at the EU-CELAC Summit. However, the EU has already launched a series of projects and initiatives with the LAC region, under the umbrella of the Global Gateway investment strategy:

- Completion of a 6 000 kilometre-long fibre-optic cable linking the EU and Latin America under the [BELLA programme](#).
- Launch of the [EU-Latin America and Caribbean partnership](#) in June 2022, for the local manufacturing of vaccines, medicines and other health technologies, to strengthen health systems resilience and increase self-sufficiency in health matters.
- Commitment to [post-coronavirus recovery](#) by jointly identify other viable projects, such as developing the potential of green hydrogen and creating sustainable raw material value chains in the region. A recent example is the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on [Green hydrogen \(GH2\) development](#) in Chile.
- [EU-Latin America partnership on raw materials](#) aiming at promoting and intensifying cooperation between the EU and seven Latin American partner countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay) along the value chains of minerals-based industries.
- Launch of the [Digital Alliance](#), on 14 March 2023. This joint EU-LAC initiative seeks to champion a human-centric approach to digital transformation. An initial contribution of €145 million from Team Europe includes €50 million from the EU budget to boost digital cooperation between both regions.
- Launch of the €35 million [EUROCLIMA](#) climate action programme in Latin America and the Caribbean on 9 May 2023, to contribute to the implementation of the Global Gateway investment agenda in the region. The objective is to reduce the impact of climate change and its effects in Latin America by fostering climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience and investment.
- Agreement on [cooperation priorities](#) between the EU and Costa Rica on 1 June 2023, and launch of a biodiversity protection initiative facilitating the envisaged Global Gateway investment agenda.

China's evolving presence in Latin America

Over the past two decades, **China** has [increased its footprint](#) in the LAC region, in particular politically, through the [China-CELAC-Forum](#) summits launched in 2016. China's [diplomatic efforts](#) include its observer status at the Organization of American States, membership of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank, and participation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. From the EU perspective, it is remarkable that the EU and China seem to be equally important to the LAC region – as the declaration adopted at the CELAC Summit in Buenos Aires document refers to both China and the EU twice. President Xi Jinping has visited the region [11 times](#) since he took office in 2013. China has signed [comprehensive strategic partnerships](#) with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Vaccine diplomacy has also become a cornerstone of China's regional strategy, delivering more than 300 million doses to LAC countries (compared with 125 million from the EU). Economically, [China plays a crucial role](#) in the LAC region: China has overtaken the EU and is the region's second biggest trading partner after the US. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), Latin America's bilateral trade in goods with China grew 26-fold from US\$12 billion in 2000 to US\$315 billion in 2020 – and is expected to more than double by 2035, to over US\$700 billion. Focusing on South America, China's economic role of China is even stronger – China has overtaken the US and is currently South America's top trading partner. China drives its economic ties with Latin America by complementing its network of trade agreements in the region. It has already signed free [trade agreements](#) with Peru, Costa Rica and Chile. In addition, [Uruguay](#) is currently negotiating a free trade agreement with China, and [Ecuador](#) concluded technical negotiations on a trade deal with China in January 2023. China's two main policy banks – China Development Bank and China-Export Import Bank – have [provided](#) more than US\$141 billion in loan commitments to LAC countries and state-owned enterprises since 2005.

A new agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean

Although the EU has demonstrated engagement towards the region, EU-Latin America relations face major challenges. These result from rising geopolitical tensions, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (including the EU's sanctions against Russia), China's emergence as a key actor in Latin America, political and ideological divisions and economic asymmetries within Latin America. The LAC countries also have concerns related to EU legislation related to the green transition and the EU's sustainability and human rights approach.

[Experts](#) point out that, especially in the last decade, relations between the EU and the LAC countries have lost intensity and relevance. HR/VP Borrell himself pointed out that, while the US has kept a steady engagement in the LAC region, and China overtook the EU as Latin America's second most important trading partner, the attention paid by the EU towards LAC countries is [not proportionate](#) to the region's importance. As a result, HR/VP Borrell observed a 'growing sense of neglect' in Latin America.

Economic trends indicate that the EU has to face a new global order: by [2050](#), four (China, India, Indonesia and Brazil) of the five largest economies are in the Global South (a term generally used to identify countries and regions in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania). The EU's share of the world's economy could fall from almost 15% today to below 10% by 2050. Europe's share of the world population will also decrease, with the EU population predicted to remain stable (around 445 million) in contrast to a world population expected to grow to 9.7 billion by 2050.

Against this background, the EU has once more reiterated that Latin America is a key partner, stressing that the two regions are closely aligned in terms of interests and values.

The EU sets its objectives towards the LAC region in numerous strategies. The communication entitled '[European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: joining forces for a common future](#)', adopted on 16 April 2019, has defined the EU's approach towards the LAC countries for the last 4 years. The document set out four priorities on which the partnership should focus: prosperity,

democracy, resilience and effective global governance. However, the Commission [pointed out](#) that the substantially changed global circumstances after 2019 (a devastating pandemic and major geopolitical challenges), have rendered the 2019 strategy towards the LAC region outdated.

Against this background, the EEAS prepared the EU-LAC 'Road 2023' road map to upgrade the EU's relations with the region in 2022. The EEAS did not publish the road map, but presented it to the Council and Members of the European Parliament at a [meeting](#) of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) on 12 September 2022. One of the objectives is to build strategic autonomy with the LAC region and to cooperate on shared priorities such as the green transition, digital transformation and social cohesion. In its [2023 work programme](#), the Commission announced it would propose a new agenda to reinvigorate relations with LAC countries and to push for full ratification of the modernised agreements with Chile and Mexico; the envisaged AA with Mercosur was not mentioned.

The new EU impetus to revive relations with LAC countries is also underlined by a series of high-level diplomatic visits to LAC countries, which aim to pave the way for the EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government. HR/VP Borrell participated in the third CELAC-EU [Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Buenos Aires](#) on 27 October 2022 (the first formal EU-CELAC Ministerial since July 2018). On 25 January 2023, President of the European Council [Charles Michel](#) addressed the seventh CELAC Summit in Buenos Aires on behalf of the EU. Numerous events and activities have been agreed and are outlined in the [CELAC-EU bi-regional roadmap 2022-2023](#). Most recently, HR/VP Borrell travelled to [Cuba](#) from 25-27 May 2023, to represent the EU at the third Joint Council, established by the EU-Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA). President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen visited **Brazil** on 12 June 2023, and **Argentina** on 13 June 2023, where she met with [President Lula](#) and Argentinian [President Alberto Fernández](#), as part of a [visit](#) to the region that also includes visits to **Mexico** and **Chile**. The [focus](#) of the visits was climate change, the digital transition, strategic partnership on critical raw materials, the EU-Mercosur Agreement and the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Finally, the HR/VP and the European Commission adopted a joint communication setting out a [new agenda for relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean](#) on 7 June 2023. It aims for a [stronger and modernised strategic partnership](#), to be achieved through reinforced political engagement, boosted trade and investment, and building more sustainable, fair and inter-connected societies through Global Gateway investments. The communication identifies **six key areas for the renewed strategic partnership** with LAC countries:

1. Renewed political partnership;
2. Strengthened common EU-LAC trade agenda;
3. Global Gateway and supporting partnerships for a fair green and digital transition;
4. Joining forces for justice, citizen security and the fight against transnational organised crime;
5. Working together to promote peace and security, democracy, rule of law, human rights and humanitarian aid;
6. Building a vibrant EU-LAC people-to-people partnership.

A series of concrete action points (62 in total) underpin the six priority areas. Among other things, the EU calls for more regular summits and the establishment of an **EU-CELAC permanent coordination mechanism** and stronger cooperation between the EU and CELAC in multilateral forums. From the perspective of the European Parliament, which needs to consider granting its consent to the final text of international agreements, as set out in Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the most relevant actions envisaged are:

- Finalise EU-Chile Agreement;
- Make decisive progress towards the signature and ratification of the EU-Mexico and EU-Mercosur agreements.

The communication focuses on the **sustainability agenda** and sets an objective to work with LAC countries towards a **fair green and digital transition**. The key instrument proposed to achieve this goal is the [Global Gateway investment agenda](#), which should leverage quality investments in LAC infrastructure.

Another objective of the 'new agenda' is to ensure access to raw materials in LAC countries by establishing a global '[Critical Raw Materials Club](#)' with interested LAC countries.

Moreover, the European Commission and the HR/VP explicitly call on the European Parliament (and the Council) to endorse the new agenda.

With a view to the external dimension of EU (internal) legislation, in particular the proposed [EU deforestation regulation \(EUDR\)](#), is of major concern for some countries from Latin America. The [products targeted](#) are palm oil, beef, coffee, cocoa, soya, wood and rubber. As regards the latter, 14 major commodity-producing countries – including Brazil, Argentina and Colombia – sent a [letter](#) to the Presidents of the European Parliament, European Council, European Commission and the Presidency of the Council, in November 2022, to complain about the unilateral aspect of the initiative. The letter was copied to the World Trade Organization. The communication therefore also refers to the **impact of EU legislation**, in particular that related to the European Green Deal and suggests that the EU and LAC countries should step up dialogue to address the impact of EU legislation jointly (including providing support to facilitate trade).

European Parliament position

In 2006, the **Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly** ([EuroLat](#)) was created to provide the parliamentary dimension of the bi-regional strategic partnership. The 75 Members of the European Parliament work alongside the 75 Latin American Members from the regional parliaments in the EuroLat Assembly, to provide a parliamentary dimension to the EU-LAC bi-regional strategic partnership and to debate, monitor and review each of these issues and other questions relevant to citizens in the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits [resolutions and recommendations](#). These are addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean bi-regional strategic partnership'. EuroLat also organises the EuroLat plenary meetings close to the EU-CELAC summits. The 15th EuroLat plenary session will take place in Madrid on 24-27 July 2023.

The **European Parliament** adopted a [resolution](#) on political relations between the EU and Latin America in September 2017, in which it identified the LAC region as a strategic priority and opportunity for the EU's foreign policy. In the [plenary debate](#) on 19 January 2021 on enhancing EU external action in Latin America and the Caribbean, Members demonstrated broad political support for a stronger EU-LAC relationship and the revitalisation of the partnership between the two regions. Several Members shared the HR/VP's insistence on the importance of ratifying the agreements with Mexico, Mercosur and Chile.

Outlook

Strengthening EU and LAC relations has been an essential element in many speeches over the past two decades. Indeed, progress has been made in the attempt to strengthen ties. However, as HR/VP Borrell pointed out, the attention paid by the EU towards the LAC region was not proportionate. The **EU-CELAC Summit** in Brussels on 17-18 July 2023 therefore constitutes an important political milestone and a chance to lift the relationship to the next level. A litmus test of its success will be whether the partners manage to finalise the three pending key international agreements (Mercosur, Mexico and Chile) soon. The **EuroLat plenary meeting** in Madrid on 24-27 July 2023 will provide an opportunity for parliamentarians to assess the outcome and conclusions of the upcoming Summit.

Annex: Table 1 – CELAC countries voting in UNGA resolutions related to Russian aggression against Ukraine

	ES-11/1 of 02/03/2022 'Aggression against Ukraine'	ES-11/2 of 24/03/2022 'Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine'	ES-11/3 of 07/04/2022 'Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council'	ES-11/4 of 12/10/2022 'Territorial Integrity of Ukraine: Defending the Principles of the Charter of the United Nations'	ES-11/5 of 14/11/2022 'Furtherance of remedy and reparation of aggression against Ukraine'	ES-11/6 of 23/02/2023 'Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine'
Antigua and Barbuda	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
Argentina	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bahamas	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Barbados	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Belize	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Bolivia	A	A	N	A	A	A
Brazil	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Chile	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Colombia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Costa Rica	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cuba	A	A	N	A	N	A
Dominica	Y	X	Y	Y	X	X
Dominican Republic	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ecuador	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
El Salvador	A	A	A	X	A	A
Grenada	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	X
Guatemala	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Guyana	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Haiti	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
Honduras	Y	Y	Y	A	A	Y
Jamaica	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
Mexico	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
Nicaragua	A	A	N	N	N	N
Panama	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Paraguay	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Peru	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Saint Lucia	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Suriname	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Trinidad and Tobago	Y	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Uruguay	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Venezuela	X	X	X	X	X	X

Y: Vote in favour of resolution

N: Vote against resolution

A: Abstention

X: Vote not cast

¹ Although some [experts](#) are of the opinion that the term 'Global South' is misleading and not useful, as it gives the impression that the Global South is a homogenous group of nations.

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