



OP-ED

From Lima to Paris, from San José to Brussels: 2015, A momentous year for EU- CELAC relations in shaping together the global agenda

By HRVP Mogherini

The people of Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe have a long history of common aspirations. We have often been brought together by destiny, and lived through difficult and even dramatic times. Nowadays we share a wish for peace and prosperity that our cultural and historical roots have helped to strengthen from generation to generation. That is why I am particularly glad – and honoured by the invitation - to participate at the celebration of the third Summit of CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which will be hosted in San José this week. At this important event, I will bring a message of friendship, support and cooperation from the European Union.

The Summit in San José will be an opportunity for me to hear first-hand the hopes and ambitions that this great region has for itself, for its citizens and for all of us, as CELAC countries continue to assert their role in the wider world on issues that concern us all: climate change, energy, human rights, security, trade, culture.

This meeting represents the conclusion of an active and successful Costa Rican pro tempore presidency of CELAC, as the regional leadership passes to Ecuador for a busy year ahead. Indeed, 2015 will be marked by another important event next June in Brussels when we will have the pleasure of hosting your leaders for the Second EU-CELAC Summit.

In San José I will also have the opportunity to assure Latin America and the Caribbean, after the very first months of my mandate, about the renewed impetus

that the EU wants to give to our relations. A new political open vision, well aware that strengthening our relationship is a strategic priority. In such a fragmented world, where development and democracy are so threatened, we are asked as Europeans, Latin Americans and Caribbeans to work on new perspectives for a safe space of peace and dialogue. Only a shared political vision of the principles to be defended can make us ready for these challenges. That's why Europe is following closely the debate on deeper integration that is going on in Latin America and the Caribbean. And that's why we really need to deepen our integration. The historical shift in the relations between the US and Cuba is definitely good news. That is why I have so many expectations for the outcome of the upcoming EU-CELAC Summit in Brussels. I will be in San José to work with your leaders, to see how the EU-CELAC partnership can be of most value to us all.

The EU and CELAC represent 61 States, almost a third of the United Nations membership. But we are much more than just the sum of our parts. We have of course a range of different views and approaches, but there is much more that unites us than divides us. And this partnership between our two regions is very much needed in an ever-more complex world, where key principles of the international order are at stake. We, together, can influence decisions on important issues that touch us all.

As for climate change, CELAC countries are partners committed to carrying forward this agenda and I welcome the excellent management by Peru of last December's Conference of the Parties (COP). We now need to build on the outcome of Lima, and work hard to achieve a global, legally binding agreement at the Paris conference next December.

Another global issue where EU and CELAC countries can further join forces is the fight against poverty. A lot has been achieved in the last decade in Latin America and the Caribbean: poverty has been reduced almost by half. This was mainly due to economic growth and targeted social programmes. As EU, most of our financial cooperation worldwide is focused on fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. The EU remains the largest multilateral donor in the region with over € 5 billion to help the most vulnerable across the continent. Five years after the catastrophic earthquake, our commitment to helping Haiti remains total, with over €1

billion devoted to housing, economic recovery, governance, among others. It is essential that EU and CELAC countries continue to work together, on concrete projects at the local level, and on ambitious targets at the international level. We will coordinate messages and join our voices in the global discussions about sustainable development (the so-called UN post-2015 development agenda), so that the voices of our people can be heard in the call for a fairer world.

However, there can be no real development without security, in all its aspects. The EU and CELAC countries have an opportunity and a responsibility to do more together, in the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking, in combating terrorism and restoring peace in post-conflict situations in the Americas and further afield. Chile and Colombia have signed agreements to participate in EU crisis management missions, for example in fighting piracy off the Somali coast. In several CELAC countries, peace is back after long tragic years of conflict. In Colombia, promising negotiations are underway and the EU is keen to continue supporting the process: I had the chance to share views on this with President Santos during his recent visit to Brussels.

Security is a common challenge that needs to be addressed in partnership not only by law enforcement but also with social and economic development and growth, the creation of new jobs, overcoming social injustice and the defence of human dignity.

Here again, deep economic ties unite our people across the Ocean. The EU is the second trade partner and the first foreign investor of the CELAC region with an impressive current stock of investments of € 464 billion, greater than EU investments in China, India and Russia combined. I think it is fair also to define EU investments as quality investments, socially responsible, that bring added value in terms of job creation, technology transfer, research and innovation. Sustainable development and corporate social responsibility lie at the heart of our trade agreements, which we hope to expand further with the region. But trade and economy are a two-way street. Latin American and Caribbean investments in EU countries are increasing every year and Brazil is now the second investor in the EU after the US, contributing to the creation of our own jobs and growth.

The last years in Latin America have been defined as the "golden decade", but how to consolidate the positive results achieved? In CELAC countries as well as in Europe, how do we ensure that growth remains sustainable, benefits the largest

segments of the population, harnesses progress while respecting the environment? How do we allocate resources and shape our children's future, based on orientations determined through democratic choice? We agree with many CELAC leaders, like President of Chile Michelle Bachelet, that the answer is in education, innovation and the development of business with a high added value. Can we work together on this too? Horizon 2020 is the EU's new research and technological innovation programme; with an € 80 billion budget over seven years, it's the world largest research programme fully open to researchers from across the whole world. Here is an area with unique growth potential for both our regions! With such a wealth of opportunities, with so many ways to turn our challenges into joint success stories, let us look forward to the Summits, knowing that the EU-CELAC partnership can truly make a difference, on both shores of the Atlantic Ocean.