

DECLARATION OF GUADALAJARA

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the European Union, meeting in Guadalajara, Mexico, on 28–29 May 2004, reiterate our commitment to the consolidation of the bi-regional strategic partnership agreed at Rio de Janeiro in 1999.
2. We welcome the presence of the Heads of State and Government of the ten new Member States of the European Union as an important contribution to the strengthening of our partnership, which now includes more than a quarter of the nations of the world.
3. Our partnership is rooted in deep historical and cultural links and shared principles of international law and values of our peoples. We underline our respect for and full compliance with international law and the purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, including the principles of non-intervention and self-determination, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality among States, which together with the respect for human rights, the promotion of democracy and cooperation for economic and social development are the basis for the relations between our regions. We strive to strengthen the respect for all these principles and to meet the challenges and seize opportunities of an increasingly globalised world, in a spirit of equality, respect, partnership and cooperation.
4. We believe that democracy, the rule of law and social and economic development are essential for peace and security in our regions. We will continue to strengthen democracy and enhance and consolidate democratic institutions in each of our countries.
5. We reiterate our commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development and fundamental freedoms. We reaffirm our belief that human rights are universal, interdependent and indivisible. We recognise that the promotion and the protection of these rights, which belong to all human beings, is the responsibility of States.
6. We fully support the strengthening of the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights. We are determined to combat all threats to the full enjoyment of all human rights and to take the necessary measures to promote democratic, participatory, equitable, tolerant and inclusive societies.

7. We are fully committed to provide coherent and effective support to those individuals, organisations or institutions, including human rights defenders, working for the promotion and protection of human rights, in accordance with international law and UN General Assembly Resolution 53/144 on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

We declare that:

Multilateralism

8. We reiterate that an effective multilateral system, based on international law, supported by strong international institutions and with the United Nations at its centre, is essential for achieving peace and international security, sustainable development and social progress.

9. We reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the promotion of economic and social development and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

10. We share a core belief in the multilateral system of collective security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We stress our strong support for UN organs in the exercise of their full responsibilities, functions and powers, in accordance with the Charter.

11. We are committed to cooperating in the United Nations on the prevention of conflicts, peaceful resolution of disputes, crisis management, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building operations, in accordance with the UN Charter and the principles of international law.

12. We recognise the need to make the multilateral system more responsive and effective in meeting global threats and challenges. In this regard, we are committed to the reform and revitalisation of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council.

13. We underline our support for the work of the Open-Ended Working Group established by the General Assembly, and for the initiative of the UN Secretary-General to establish a High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

14. We recognise that the strengthening of regional organisations is an essential means of enhancing multilateralism.

15. We reaffirm our commitment to continue efforts to maintain and enhance dialogue and consultation, where appropriate, in order to define common positions and joint actions between the two regions within the various UN bodies and in major UN Conferences.

16. We are convinced that a multilateral approach to security provides the best

means to maintain international order. We will prioritise the promotion of concrete progress in disarmament, in particular nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, arms control, and non-proliferation, including by seeking the universalisation, upholding and implementation of the multilateral agreements in this area, and by reinforcing the role of the United Nations. We recognise the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, and we reiterate our support for the implementation of this instrument in all its aspects. Likewise, we will promote the effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arm-s and Light Weapons. We will support bi-regional projects to prevent the illegal production and trafficking of such arms and promote measures for their collection and destruction.

17. We express our deepest solidarity with the victims of terrorism and their families, including those who suffered in the terrorist attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004. We reiterate our firm condemnation of all acts of terrorism and its financing and we undertake, through mutual cooperation, to prevent, combat, sanction and eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever committed, strictly adhering to international law and in particular to human rights and international humanitarian law. In this regard we declare our full support of the implementation of all commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1373, and UN General Assembly Resolution 49/60, as well as relevant UN Conventions.

18. We express our full support for the International Criminal Court as an effective means to combat impunity from the most heinous crimes of concern to the international community. The States Parties call on those countries which have not done so to ratify or accede, as applicable, to the Rome Statute.

19. We firmly condemn all forms of abuse, torture and other cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of persons, including prisoners of war, wherever they occur. We express our abhorrence at recent evidence of the mistreatment of prisoners in Iraqi prisons. Such abuse is contrary to international law, including the Geneva Conventions. We welcome the commitment by the relevant governments to bring to justice any individuals responsible for such acts involving the abuse of Iraqi detainees, and their commitment to rectify any failure to adhere to international humanitarian law. We call upon all governments to enforce fully the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, in accordance with the UN Convention against Torture and the Geneva Conventions, and to bring to justice those who violate these provisions.

20. The States Parties will fully comply with their commitments under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction and promote its universalisation. The States Parties also recognise the Convention's first review conference, which will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 November to 3 December 2004, as an important milestone for taking stock of progress so far in implementing the Convention. We also condemn the use and production of anti-personnel mines by all non-state actors. We will continue to work together to eliminate the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines and to support programmes for mine

clearance and rehabilitation.

21. We emphasise the importance of signing, ratifying or acceding to the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its additional protocols.

22. We recognise the essential role of international cooperation in addressing the global problem of illicit drugs and their health consequences, as well as crimes related to their production and trafficking. We will ensure a balanced, multilateral, inclusive and non-selective approach to this issue, based on the principles of common and shared responsibility, and subject to national law.

23. We recognise the need to fully understand the causes of this problem in order to reduce drug consumption and addiction in our societies.

24. The European Union is exploring WTO-compatible ways to ensure access under the Generalized System of Preferences scheme to the EU market by LAC countries particularly affected by the production and trafficking of illicit drugs.

25. We recognise the specific challenge posed by the trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs and other related criminal activities to Caribbean societies. We therefore welcome the approval by the CARICOM of a Regional Strategy for Drug Demand Reduction, as well as the work and recommendations of the Regional Task Force on Crime and Security. Following the specific recognition by the Panama Action Plan of the need for closer maritime cooperation, we also welcome the conclusion of regional and bilateral agreements in the field of maritime cooperation, such as the Agreement Concerning Co-operation Aimed at Suppressing Illicit Maritime and Aeronautical Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in the Caribbean Area, opened for signature in San José, Costa Rica, on 10 April 2003.

26. We reiterate our commitment to strengthening cooperation in order to address problems caused by illegal drugs and to make full use of existing schemes for dialogue and cooperation between the two regions, mainly through the EU-Andean Community High Level Dialogue on Drugs and the EU-LAC Mechanism for Coordination and Cooperation on Drugs.

27. We therefore welcome and support the Dublin Declaration issued on 19 May 2004 at the conclusion of the VI High Level Meeting of the EU-LAC Mechanism for Coordination and Cooperation on Drugs. In this regard, we will endeavour to further develop the EU-LAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs as a forum for identifying new approaches and exchanging proposals, ideas and experiences.

28. We welcome the co-ordination of our positions at international fora, in particular at the 47th Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and express our desire to build upon this positive experience.

29. We call on all States to sign and ratify the UN Convention against Corruption in order to ensure its early entry into force. We will reinforce international cooperation

in this area, promoting a culture of democracy through effective administrative reform and governmental transparency at all levels. We will continue to strengthen democratic governance and institutions and encourage further participation by organised civil society and political parties, in accordance with relevant national legislation. We will strengthen mechanisms for the exchange of experiences in judicial matters and for enhanced co-operation among States in order to contribute to the efficient operation of the judiciary.

30. We will take measures to eradicate corruption, and to promote ethics and transparency in government and private sector actions. In this regard, we express our concern regarding corrupt, illegal and fraudulent practices of some public officials and executives of some national and transnational companies, which have negative economic consequences, particularly for developing countries and their producers and consumers.

31. We reiterate our commitment to the UN Convention on Climate Change and urge those countries which have not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so without delay. We underline that in addition to mitigation measures, which are key to addressing climate change, it is of great importance to give priority to activities and projects related to vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

32. We recognise the specific challenge that global climate change poses to the sustainability of development in those areas most affected, and its negative impact on fragile eco-systems. In this regard, we recognise the particular vulnerability of the Caribbean region arising from the increased intensity and frequency of hurricanes and flooding, and the resulting damage. We welcome the recent creation of the Hurricane Relief Fund within the framework of the Caribbean Development Bank.

33. We note the serious concerns expressed by the Caribbean and some other LAC States regarding the potential risks to environmental, maritime and human security from the transshipment of unprocessed nuclear and radioactive waste through the Caribbean Sea. We will work together to ensure that potential risks are properly managed and will support increased cooperation in this area in relevant international fora, including through information exchange in accordance with our international obligations. We also undertake to comply fully with all of our obligations under relevant existing international conventions, in particular those of the International Maritime Organisation. We further note the efforts by the Caribbean countries, through UN General Assembly Resolution 54/225, to develop and seek further recognition of the concept of the Caribbean Sea as an Area of Special Importance in the context of sustainable development.

34. We strongly welcome the outcomes of the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity and we will increase collaboration towards implementing and following up all of these outcomes.

35. We welcome the holding of a bi-regional meeting on migration in Quito on 4-5 March 2004. In accordance with its outcome, we will continue to promote a

comprehensive approach to migration, taking further steps to enhance cooperation and mutual knowledge of migratory realities in both regions.

36. We aim to address important issues such as the full respect for human rights of all migrants, regardless of their status; the need to continue and strengthen the prevention of illegal migration and the fight against trafficking in and smuggling of human beings; the brain-drain and its impact on the development of countries of origin; the recognition of the contribution of migrants to economic development and to social and cultural life in the countries of destination; and the prevention of violence and discrimination against migrants, in particular against women and minors, in keeping with relevant international commitments.

37. The Latin America and Caribbean signatory countries of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrants Workers and Members of their Families, emphasize the importance they attach to this Convention in the framework of the international system for the protection of human rights.

38. We highlight that remittances are a significant source of income in many countries. We will therefore cooperate to facilitate the transfer of remittances and reduce the costs, in accordance with relevant national legislation.

Social Cohesion

39. We stress that poverty, exclusion and inequality are an affront to human dignity, and that they weaken democracy and threaten peace and stability. We reiterate our commitment to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and underline our determination to build fairer societies by strengthening social cohesion, especially bearing in mind the principle of global common responsibility.

40. We reiterate the primary responsibility of our governments, together with civil societies, to lead processes and reforms aimed at increasing social cohesion, by fighting poverty, inequality and social exclusion. We stress the need to undertake measures to combat xenophobia and discrimination, based in particular on the grounds of gender, race, belief or ethnicity, while guaranteeing respect for cultural diversity. In addition, we underline the importance of combating all forms of violence, especially violence against women and domestic violence.

41. We underline our determination to build fairer societies by favoring social investment focused on education at all levels, nutrition, health, housing, water supply and sanitation, as well as employment-intensive infrastructure development projects, in order to alleviate poverty. Innovative multilateral financial mechanisms are essential instruments for achieving these ends.

42. We emphasise the need to dedicate an adequate level of public spending to social sectors, basic infrastructure, national solidarity funds, improved access to social services or other activities that benefit the poor and marginalised groups, avoiding excessive dependence on external financing for these policies.

43. We will promote economic policies which encourage investment and better income distribution in order to narrow the existing inequality and inequity gaps, so that macroeconomic achievements benefit population groups in situations of inequality, poverty and exclusion, thereby strengthening democratic governance.

44. We recognise that social policies and social protection regimes should be underpinned by sound and fair public policies, in particular fiscal policies, allowing a better redistribution of wealth and ensuring adequate levels of social expenditure. In this regard, we recognise the importance of integrating the social cohesion dimension into national strategies and development processes.

45. We stress the importance of fully implementing the commitments made at the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development in all its aspects. We call upon the International Community to support efforts which our countries are making domestically to improve social cohesion. We will promote cooperation in the fields of social policies, migration, effective market access based on stable rules, as well as improved access to external financing. These priorities should be taken into account in the programmes of the International Financial Institutions, the UN system, bilateral economic partners and donors.

46. We believe that the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals should be used as a comprehensive framework for policy dialogue between both regions as they provide a basis for the formulation of measurable objectives.

47. We encourage countries of the same region or sub region to continue to develop a regional or sub regional dialogue, whereby they could further exchange information on social cohesion aspects of national plans on a voluntary basis, consider common social cohesion goals, and share experiences on successes and failures.

48. We will promote exchanges of experiences between countries and regions, with the support of the international institutions, regarding the formulation and implementation of social cohesion policies. We will articulate the social policies of our States and direct them towards developing human capabilities through our education, health, nutrition, sanitation, housing, basic justice and security programmes, towards promoting decent employment and creating economic opportunities for the poorest, and towards forming networks of social protection and solidarity for people and families at risk, within the framework of the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

49. We resolve to give social issues greater prominence in the priorities of our bi-regional cooperation. In that context, we welcome the adoption of the EUROsociAL programme which aims to promote exchanges of experiences, know-how and good practice between the two regions in the social field, in particular in the education and health sectors which are key to increasing social cohesion.

50. We prioritise social cohesion as one of the main elements of our bi-regional strategic partnership and have committed ourselves to cooperate to eradicate

poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. We call on the European Commission, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin-America and the Caribbean, the UN Development Programme, the International Monetary Fund, the European Investment Bank and the World Bank to contribute to this objective.

Bi-regional Relationship

51. We underline the importance of projected agreements between the European Union and the sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, which together with existing agreements and those under negotiation, will allow us to continue to build on our bi-regional strategic partnership.

52. We welcome the signature of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreements between the European Union and the regions of Central America and the Andean Community on 15 December 2003, in Rome. In view of the progress achieved, we reconfirm the positive signal given by the Madrid Declaration in relation to the negotiation of Association Agreements, including Free Trade Agreements. Such Association Agreements are our common strategic objective. The Parties recognise that the prospect of Association Agreements should give a new impetus for strengthening regional economic integration processes.

53. We welcome the decision of the concerned parties to now open the process leading to such Agreements. This process will start, at this stage, with a joint assessment phase of the respective integration processes of the Central American and Andean Community's. The assessment will lead, in due course, to negotiations. We will spare no effort to ensure that the Doha Round advances as much as possible in 2004 towards its rapid conclusion. Any future Free Trade Agreement shall be built upon the outcome of the Doha Development Agenda and the realization of a sufficient level of regional economic integration.

54. We welcome the progress made in the negotiation of an Interregional Association Agreement between Mercosur and the European Union. Building on the clarifications and on the existing offers we believe we can achieve a balanced and ambitious result. We instruct our negotiators to intensify their work so that this result can be achieved by the target date of October 2004.

55. We recognise the importance of the negotiation of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the Caribbean countries and the European Union, and welcome the launch of these negotiations in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. We look forward to their successful conclusion and stress that the EPA should be an effective tool for sustainable development.

56. We welcome the Rio Group Initiative towards establishing innovative financial mechanisms intended to reinforce democratic governance and confront poverty, as an additional response of the international community to deal with basic social demands, productive investment and employment generation. We note with interest ongoing work to ensure that fiscal targets and accounting conventions take

account of the asset-creating nature of investments for the generation of social capital and financing of infrastructure projects.

57. We stress the importance of the role of the European Investment Bank, the Inter American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Andean Development Corporation, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, and other regional banks in supporting productive investment, notably in promotion of sustainable development and the integration of regional infrastructures. We also recognise the relevance of the World Bank, in this regard.

58. We welcome the ongoing initiatives in relation to innovative funding sources as a means to combat hunger and poverty, bolster democratic governance and support sustainable development. We take note of progress made in establishing various funds to orientate resources to these tasks. We welcome the Geneva Declaration on Action Against Hunger and Poverty and the meeting of world leaders to be hosted by Brazil on the eve of the opening session of the 59th UNGA. We also take note of the initiative of Venezuela to set up an International Development Fund and the proposal of the United Kingdom to establish an International Finance Facility.

59. We undertake to combat HIV/AIDS through preventive measures combined with adequate healthcare and access to medication for all affected. We reaffirm our support for the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the UNGA Special Session on HIV/AIDS on 27 June 2001.

60. We are committed to the principles of decent work proclaimed by the International Labour Organisation, in the belief that respect for workers' rights and dignity is vital for achieving poverty reduction and sustainable social and economic development for our peoples.

61. We undertake to strengthen cooperation mechanisms targeting vulnerable and excluded groups within our societies, with particular attention to tackling discrimination and to promoting the active involvement of minorities and indigenous peoples in the public policies of their countries and programmes that concern them. We will also prioritise the promotion of gender equality. To this end, we recognise the necessity of removing structural obstacles and of promoting the empowerment of women.

62. We emphasise the need to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. In this regard, we will work actively and constructively to conclude, as soon as possible, the UN Convention on this subject in the UN Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

63. We reiterate our commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, which should be a priority of our governments' social policies and programmes, in order to ensure the effective exercise of their rights. In this regard the best interest of the child should be a primary consideration in all actions

concerning children. We call for universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

64. We commit ourselves to maintain the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the focal point in the UN System for dealing with the integrated treatment of trade and development. We believe that the XI UNCTAD, to be held from 13-18 June 2004 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, will be a timely opportunity to debate the importance of trade for economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction, in a way that supports the integration of developing countries into the global economy and the multilateral trade system, as well as the narrowing of the income gap within countries and between North and South.

65. We undertake to work together so that the results of UNCTAD XI strengthen the implementation of the conclusions of the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Summit, and support the negotiations on the Doha Work Programme.

66. We underline the potential of external trade as a catalyst for economic growth. In our view we can and must play a prominent role in building an inclusive, broad-based World Trade Organization that promotes progress through implementation of the development objectives outlined in the Political Declaration and Work Programme as adopted at the IV WTO Ministerial Meeting, and that takes into account the special and differential treatment in order to help the integration of developing countries into the world economy.

67. We affirm that the Doha Work Programme provides a major opportunity to further liberalise further trade through increased market access and the strengthening of WTO rules and disciplines.

68. We recognise the need to ensure benefits for all countries, and in particular developing countries, and reiterate our strong commitment to achieve significant progress in the negotiations in 2004.

69. We will promote steps to improve the decision-making process and the functioning of international financial bodies and to reform the international financial architecture with a view to instituting measures conducive to preventing and satisfactorily resolving financial crises and improving financing conditions for international bonds, bearing in mind the situation of developing countries, and the most vulnerable among them in particular, as well as the recurrence of crises and the severity of their impact at national and international level.

70. We will endeavour to find an effective, just and lasting solution to the debt problem affecting LAC countries, taking account of the economic and social development priority goals of the countries concerned, while bearing in mind that any solution must uphold the principles of fairness and social justice and support the eradication of poverty, hunger, unemployment, and social exclusion.

71. We value the benefits of the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries

Initiative (HIPC) to the countries eligible for this form of debt relief and support its full implementation. We take note of the approval by the Paris Club of the Evian approach that addresses the treatment of the debt of countries not eligible for the HIPC initiative, and reiterate the need to endeavour to maintain and promote their access to international financial markets.

72. We reaffirm our support for the commitments adopted under the Monterrey Consensus.

73. We will increase efforts to promote sustainable economic development and to combat poverty, hunger and exclusion. We recall the commitment of the international community to work towards the objective of reaching 0.7% of gross national income of developed countries for official development aid.

74. We recognise the challenges faced by the small economies of the Caribbean in their efforts to promote sustainable development, eradicate poverty and to become more integrated into the world economy.

75. We agree that particular attention must be given to the situation of the poorest countries and their efforts to reduce poverty.

76. We recognise the special characteristics of Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, which deserve an approach suited to their specific needs and problems. In this regard, we highlight the importance of ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, adopted in August 2003, especially as regards to transit transport.

77. We look forward to a successful outcome of the International Meeting for the Ten Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States, to be held in Mauritius in the first quarter of 2005.

78. We also stress the importance of supporting middle income countries, including through international cooperation, in their efforts to eradicate poverty, increase social cohesion and promote sustainable economic development and institution building.

79. We recognise the importance of regional integration and we support projects designed to promote sustainable economic, social, cultural and human development on a regional basis. We shall continue to co-operate bi-regionally in the development and institutionalisation of the integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean.

80. We emphasise the significance of physical infrastructure projects, such as the Puebla-Panama Plan and the Initiative for the Integration of South American Regional Infrastructure, in encouraging the participation of multilateral financial organisations and private investors.

81. We undertake to contribute to the success of the Fourth World Water Forum, to be held in March 2006 in Mexico. We welcome the "European Union Water Initiative – Latin American Component" and support its further development. We recognise the importance of organising a specific follow-up conference on this topic to facilitate further progress and implementation. We also support the establishment of a European Water Facility for ACP countries and, in this context, will continue to explore opportunities for addressing the challenges of drinking water, sanitation and water management in, inter-alia, the Caribbean region.

82. We stress our commitment to promote energy efficiency and to increase the use of renewable energies as an important element in the pathway towards sustainable development. The participating countries welcome the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnerships and the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition and encourage countries that have not signed up to them to consider doing so. This process will be followed up at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnerships Conference in Bonn, Germany from June 1-4, 2004.

83. We will explore new ways to produce energy such as those based on hydrogen and fuel cells as well as ways to undertake joint research efforts in this area.

84. We reiterate the importance of EU-LAC cooperation in the fight against poverty and the achievement of development and social cohesion goals, and reiterate our commitment adopted in the Madrid Summit to increase cooperation between our two regions, which plays a key role in the consolidation of our strategic partnership.

85. We underline the progress made in the definition of a bi-regional cooperation strategy. We welcome the creation of the mechanism for the presentation and dissemination of bi-regional projects, presented in Costa Rica, in March 2004, and express our commitment to its full implementation which should facilitate better participation by both regions in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of bi-regional initiatives and projects. We call for an assessment before the next Summit of the achievements to date.

86. We will promote the allocation of funds for bi-regional cooperation, in order to strengthen the process of bi-regional partnership between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union.

87. We express our deep interest in continuing to support cooperation programs and projects such as -AL-Invest, @Lis; URB-AL, ALFA, AlBan, and our will to reinforce the decentralised approach on which such programmes are based, in order to increase future coverage, in terms of participants and recipients, of both regions in similar programs.

88. We undertake to explore ways to extend the benefits of these or similar programmes to the Caribbean countries.

89. We agree to extend the 2002-2004 Action Plan for building an EU-LAC

Common Area of Higher Education until 2008. The signatory countries call on other countries in both regions to join, in order to contribute to the improvement of the quality of higher education. We invite the Ministers concerned to meet in 2004 to design programmes, projects and actions for the 2004-2008 Action Plan. We ask them to take into consideration as appropriate, proposals made by higher education institutions and university associations and networks.

90. We will also encourage the participation of higher education and research institutions from the two regions in the Erasmus Mundus Programme.

91. We will reinforce the link between culture and development. We recognise the insoluble link between development, culture, science and technology. We agree to promote, on a bi-regional basis, cultural dialogue in sectors which reflect cultural identity, as well as cultural and linguistic diversity, and which benefit human development, as a contribution to sustainable development, stability and peace. In this regard, we support the ongoing negotiations on a Convention on Cultural Diversity in UNESCO.

92. We reaffirm our conviction that cultural industries contribute fundamentally to promoting cultural identity and cultural and linguistic diversity. We also recognise the important contribution of cultural industries to the promotion of sustainable development. We will explore means to enhance EU-LAC cooperation and interaction in this area.

93. We consider that the future EU-LAC Knowledge Area should be built on the results of the successful science and technology bi-regional dialogue and include reinforcement of cooperation in science and technology, higher education, innovation and information and communication technologies. Considering the importance of science and technology for the economic and social development of our countries, and guided by the outcome of the ministerial meetings and of the bi-regional working group on scientific and technological cooperation, we agree to launch a partnership in science and technology with a view to including Latin America and the Caribbean as a target region for the EU Framework Programmes in these sectors, thereby contributing to deepening and developing bi-regional links and encouraging mutual participation in research programmes.

94. We agree that bridging the digital divide and providing universal access should be essential objectives of policies aimed at creating an Information Society. We will develop the regulatory frameworks and enhance the development of infrastructure and applications necessary to provide broad access to the Information Society, in line with the commitments given in the Declaration of Principles and Action Plan of the World Summit on Information Society. In view of the social impact of information and communication technologies, we call on Ministers of both regions to consider the social cohesion aspects in the agenda of the next EU-LAC Information Society Forum.

95. We consider that satellite navigation has the potential to bring numerous benefits to users worldwide. We undertake to evaluate the possibility of closer

cooperation in this field.

96. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our cooperation with a view to facilitating an efficient management of all phases of natural or manmade disasters, with particular emphasis on prevention and mitigation. In this regard, we welcome ongoing initiatives to study the feasibility of establishing bi-regional initiatives aimed at the reduction of the vulnerability of the countries of Latin America.

97. We recognise the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) as an important regional entity, through which relations between the EU and the Greater Caribbean Area can be deepened and consolidated. We welcome the progress made by the 28 ACS Member States in the consolidation of the cooperation Zone of the Greater Caribbean Area, through political dialogue, cooperation, consultations, and coordinated action in the fields of trade, sustainable tourism, transportation, and natural disasters.

98. We reiterate the crucial importance of improving the capability of the international community to prevent and respond comprehensively and collectively to serious humanitarian crises resulting from natural or manmade disasters, through international cooperation, in accordance with international law and the UN Charter, and taking into account General Assembly Resolution 46/182.

99. We express our deepest sympathy with the victims of the recent floods in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. We call upon the international community to provide emergency and humanitarian aid. Recognising the seriousness of the situation, the European Union is working in close cooperation with the national authorities and our Latin American and Caribbean partners, and others, with a view to putting in place an effective response as a matter of urgency, in order to assist their recovery and improve their capacity in disaster prevention and preparedness.

100. We will further promote dialogue and consultation with civil society in the context of bi-regional association and partnership processes and the timely access to information for citizens.

101. We welcome the report on the outcome of the various meetings held in recent months within the bi-regional framework.

102. We welcome regular dialogue among parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, business communities, as well as organised civil society, in order to strengthen our Strategic Partnership.

103. We gratefully accept the invitation of Austria to hold the fourth EU-LAC Summit in Vienna, on 12-13 May 2006.

104. We express our deep gratitude to the Government and people of Mexico for all their courtesy and support, which ensured the successful outcome of the Guadalajara Summit.