

# EUROPEAN UNION (EU) LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN (LAC) FORUM ON SOCIAL COHESION

SANTIAGO, CHILE 23-25 September 2007

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Chile organised, in collaboration with the European Commission, a first meeting of the Forum on Social Cohesion on 23-25 September 2007 in Santiago, as a preparatory event of the Summit of Heads of State and Government between the European Union and Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) that will take place in Lima in May 2008.

The promotion of social cohesion - the fight against poverty, inequalities and exclusion - is one of the shared and key policy priorities in the relations of the European Union with the Latin America and Caribbean countries. At the EU - LAC Summit in Vienna (May 2006), the initiative was welcomed of periodically organising Social Cohesion Fora to stimulate dialogue and collaboration between the EU and Latin America and Caribbean in this area.

The Forum brought together key political players from the EU and LAC countries, as well from the most relevant international organisations. It was opened by the President of Chile Michelle Bachelet and attended by an important number of participants, including the EU Presidency represented by the Portuguese Minister of Labour and Social solidarity, the LAC Presidency of the V EU-LAC Summit, represented by the Peruvian Minister of Women and Social Development and several Ministers from both regions. Representatives of governments, civil society, trade unions, international organisations and universities also participated.

The Forum permitted exchanges of experiences between countries and regions regarding the formulation and implementation of social cohesion policies, comprising alleviation of poverty, measures against discrimination and exclusion and the recognition of fundamental social rights.

Forum discussions reiterated the determination of countries and both regions to build fairer societies by favoring social investment. They focused on developing human capabilities through providing quality education at all levels, on the promotion of decent employment, on fulfillment of social and economic rights, on equal opportunities with particular focus on the poorest, all the while respecting the principles of solidarity equality that should guarantee the whole

population adequate access to basic public services and social protection, including in the fields of health and social security.

The Forum also discussed policies which would permit the implementation of equal and sustainable policies, adapted to the biggest challenges of technological modernization, demographic development and globalization. It addressed questions of financing of social policies, the mobilization of professional resources, the democratic governance and the role of the different actors both from government and the civil society including the private sector on a local, national and international level. Promoting social cohesion requires indeed the development of consensus-building dialogue and joint cooperation between government, socially responsible enterprises, social partners and civil society.

Principles, guidelines, targets, and actions regarding the promotion of social cohesion- the fight against poverty, inequalities and exclusion- were proposed during the Forum discussions.

The V EU-LAC Lima Summit will be an opportunity to further develop the bi-regional dialogue and collaboration on key social cohesion themes as those identifies by the Forum:

- **The promotion of integrated strategies to generate social protection and fight against poverty and inequalities**
  - The need for focussed action on the poorest, most disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minorities, indigenous, women and children, ensuring equal access to rights and opportunities.
  - The importance to address both the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies to improve public expenditure, and the need to undertake reforms notably in the fiscal and social sectors.
  - The need of responsive public policies, conducive to a better distribution of wealth in order to narrow the existing inequality gaps, and ensuring an adequate level of social expenditure.
- **Education and Employment to create opportunities and investment in training**
  - The development of quality education at all levels and of human capital throughout the lifecycle and the creation of a supportive environment for SMEs, including the facilitation of dialogue in labour relations.

- The generation of quality employment, by promoting the Decent Work agenda, with a view to combating unemployment and incorporating the informal sector into the formal economy.

- **Social protection to reduce risks and promote solidarity: The development of social protection mechanisms**

- The expansion and modernisation of social protection systems, ensuring their financial and economic sustainability through adequate fiscal policies as well as their social adequacy.

- The promotion of networks of social protection and solidarity for people and families at risk, within the framework of the fulfilment of the MDG (Millennium Development Goals)

- **Financing of public policies**

- Social policies and social protection regimes should be underpinned by sound and fair public policies, in particular fiscal policies, allowing a better distribution of wealth and ensuring adequate levels of social expenditure.

- The social cohesion dimension integrated into national strategies and development process reinforces development and governability.

- **Governance and institutional capacity**

- Strengthening of democratic governance: There can be no sustainable development and social justice without democratic institutions and transparent, responsible and accountable governments. It is necessary to fight against social violence, as it significantly hampers democratic development.

- The reinforcement of the institutional framework in the social sector by strengthening the ability of social institutions and social services to formulate, implement and evaluate social policies and programmes and by setting the appropriate, standardized statistical and data-collection tools.

- **Collaboration Experience in the field of Social Cohesion**

- Continued promotion of exchanges of experiences, know-how and good practices between the two regions regarding social cohesion, in particular in the fields of education, health, justice and employment.

- Sharing successful experience on the development of a social dimension to the regional integration process, and in particular sharing EU experience of reducing economic, social and territorial disparities.

The Forum has confirmed the interest of further enhancing the EU-LAC partnership by working in collaboration to implement social cohesion initiatives in areas of common interest-inter alia- through the following instruments:

- The continuation of bi-regional and bilateral dialogues on policies which contribute to social cohesion promotion, and of fostering dialogue with other international and regional organisations, such as ECLAC, IDB, WB, IMF, ILO and UNDP.
- The continued cooperation and development assistance programmes with a focus on the promotion of social cohesion.
- Promoting analysis and exchanges of good practices on the field of social cohesion.

Santiago, Chile, 25 September 2007