



FORO
GOBIERNOS LOCALES
EU-CELAC
9 – 10 Nov 2023 · Barcelona



FINAL DECLARATION
EU-CELAC LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

The European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Local Government Forum took place in Barcelona on 9 and 10 November 2023, under the auspices of the FEMP (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces), Barcelona Provincial Council, Mercociudades and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions. The forum was attended by local governments and transnational networks from both regions. It was also supported by the EU-LAC Foundation, UCLG, the UCLG CIB Working Group, VNG International, FIIAPP, EuroSocial+, Plataforma, UNDP, Casa América Catalunya, CIDEU, Commonwealth of Local Governments Forum, Unión Iberoamericana de Municipalistas, the Fundació Catalunya Europa and Paradiplomacia.org.

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As representatives of local governments of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States:

- We welcome the resumption of the dialogue between the European Union and the Latin American and Caribbean region within the framework of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
- We hope that the commitments made at the EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government (Brussels, July 17-18, 2023) will set the course for a renewed relationship that should never have been broken off.
- We share the main areas of dialogue of this summit: enhanced cooperation in multilateral fora; world peace and security; trade and investment; the fight against climate change; and justice and security for citizens.
- We emphasise our firm conviction as regards the importance of local governments' involvement in the New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean in order to have a real impact on the implementation of a low-carbon, energy-efficient, inclusive, sustainable and resilient development model. We believe that this must lead to public policies that serve territories and their communities.
- We are convinced that this New Agenda, which calls for a strategic partnership through enhanced political dialogue and the encouragement of trade and investment, cannot be achieved without the governments in the two regions, and without establishing partnerships on various levels.
- We believe that this New Agenda must be aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The localisation of both agendas will be a crucial factor in the achievement of their objectives.



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- However, we believe that a great deal of work has still to be done in order to effectively position local governments within this renewed strategy in the two regions. This is not only because of the asymmetries between the two regions, but also because the impact of global problems takes different forms in Latin America and Europe.
- We declare our concern and disappointment that the final declaration arising from the EU-CELAC Summit did not take into account the series of recommendations arising from the previous European Union and the Caribbean: Partners in Change (Youth, Civil Society and Local Authorities) forum, which called for the Summit to listen to the voice of the local world, to take its experience into account, and to offer it a place at the discussion table for the renewal of the strategic partnership between the two regions.
- We wish to recall that in the current global context, a strategic alliance between the two regions must be based on strengthening democracy and respect for human rights, as well as on fostering just societies and inclusive communities in which everyone has a place.
- We are convinced that as the government bodies closest to citizens and territories, local governments are an essential factor in ensuring sustainable development, taking into account all the facets of the structure of the territory, and the fact that they act as guarantors of local democracy and proximity, and respect for human rights in highly complex and diverse contexts.
- We are concerned about processes involving recentralisation and the reduction of local autonomy. We are also alarmed by the lack of trust in the public sector, the increase in violence in the territories, and the increasing threats to human rights and their defenders. Local governments are committed to caring for democracy as a guarantee for their citizens' equality and freedom, and we stress the importance of care policies as a core aspect of our administration.
- We reaffirm our commitment to peace, and the importance of guaranteeing it in the communities and territories.
- We therefore wish to place ourselves at the disposal of the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in order to contribute to the implementation of the New Agenda.
- We acknowledge the role of local government associations from the two regions in coordinating and creating alliances in the localisation of the new agenda in order to strengthen the partnership between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.



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- We ask the EU for clear guidance on how the investment agenda envisaged for the LAC region, implemented within the framework of the Global Gateway, will benefit citizens, respect and promote fair trade, due diligence, social inclusion, human rights and the participation of local governments in both regions. This is in addition to taking into account the negative effects of climate change, particularly in the Caribbean region.
- We reiterate that the investment and trade agendas between the two regions must respect the international development cooperation standards for improved and more consistent development cooperation, such as the Busan principles for effective development cooperation. In this context, we also believe that it is important to take into account the establishment of partnerships with the private sector and the various actors present in the territory.
- We call for the development and promotion of new decentralised cooperation programmes, as a format that fosters consistency in development policies that enable the creation of links for collaboration, learning and financial support between the governments of the two regions within the framework of the new strategy.
- We believe it necessary to establish an ongoing and clearly defined mechanism for dialogue between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the local governments of the two regions, to monitor the implementation of the Agenda, as well as the EU-CELAC Strategic Roadmap designed for the period between 2023 and 2025, based on and in coordination with institutions including the EU-LAC Foundation and instruments including the EU-LA Decentralised Cooperation Observatory and other institutions in both regions that have convened this Forum.
- We believe in the need to institutionalise the European Union and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Local Government Forum as a space for oversight and monitoring of the European Union's renewed strategy within its territorialisation, and of the projects undertaken by the Global Gateway, and as local governments we therefore demand to be included in the official Agenda of the EU-CELAC Summits of Heads of State and Government.
- And we call for a second EU-CELAC local government forum in 2025 within the framework of the next Summit of Heads of State and Government.

Barcelona, 10 November 2023