

President of the Council, Charles Michel
HR/VP, Josep Borrell Fontelles
Commissioner for INTPA, Jutta Urpilainen
Spanish President, Pedro Sánchez
Belgian Prime Minister, Alexander de Croo

Cc: Frédéric Bernard, Camilo Villarino, Pelayo Castro, Javier Niño Pérez, Taneli Lahti, Renaud Savignat, Félix Fernández Shaw, Ambassador Marcos Alonso Alonso, Ambassador Willems van de Voorde

EULAC Civil Society WG ETUC CLGF, FLACMA, Mercociudades, Platforma-CEMR
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Brussels, 6 July 2023

Ref: EU-CELAC Multistakeholder follow-up mechanism and the role of civil society, trade unions and local governments and their associations

President Michel, HR/VP Borrell, Commissioner Urpilainen, President Sanchez and PM de Croo,

Our organisations, as members of **the EU-LAC Civil Society Working Group, trade unions, local governments and their associations**, would like to request a clear commitment by the EU for a **long-term engagement of civil society, trade unions, local governments and their associations in the development of the EU-CELAC partnership**, even beyond the summit. As a concrete proposal we suggest a **political commitment by EU and CELAC leaders to establish an official multi-stakeholder follow-up mechanism** that includes civil society, trade unions, local governments and their associations in it among other actors, and with adequate funding.

As EU-LAC Group, and with the support of trade unions, local governments and their associations, have been advocating for an in-depth civil society consultation well ahead of the Summit, including in our letter dated 23 February 2023, in meetings with DG INTPA and the EEAS, and through the CSO/LA Forum Steering Group. **We acknowledge and appreciate the spaces, consultations, open dialogue and initiatives such as the upcoming EU-LAC Forum already implemented by the EU in this EU-CELAC process.** However, we believe the above-mentioned proposal, will support the cooperation between different actors and will contribute to a renewed political long-term engagement, one of the main objectives of the EU as stated in the *New Agenda for Relations between the EU and LAC*.

We also consider that strategic information about the EU-CELAC partnership and the possibilities for civil society, local governments and their associations engagement must be **proactively shared well in advance**, in a transparent, inclusive and accessible manner. This is key to allow us to prepare, consult and coordinate horizontally, and to provide relevant and constructive inputs into a meaningful dialogue. In this sense, promoting **regular dialogue**

with civil society, trade unions, local governments and their associations through an **official multi-stakeholder mechanism** would be the most appropriate way forward, to enable our contributions to the monitoring and implementation of commitments made at the summit.

We **acknowledge the role that the EU LAC Foundation**, as an intergovernmental entity, has in bringing together different actors and contributing to building dialogues around emerging ideas. However, for this process to be fully accountable and inclusive, the voices of civil society, trade unions and local governments and their associations, must seat at the table. We believe that to pursue a "renewed political partnership" the inclusion of these actors is central. Otherwise, we risk failing on the democratic principles and good governance and policy makers accountability towards citizens. Thus, we entreat you to ensure a multistakeholder mechanism that includes these actors among others. The mechanism will be pivotal to articulate and build common positions among different actors, directly participate and contribute into the intergovernmental spaces envisioned.

It is therefore our expectation that the **joint declaration** that will be adopted at the summit will include a **paragraph acknowledging civil society, trade unions, local governments and their associations key issues of concern and policy recommendations**, and, as mentioned, making the **political commitment by EU and CELAC leaders to establish an official space for multi-stakeholder dialogue**.

In line with this sustained engagement in the EU-CELAC bi-regional relations and based on our lessons learned from previous experiences (EU-AU Summit CSO Forum), other concrete proposals for you to consider also include civil society, trade unions, local governments and their associations being given **observer status during the summit** and the **opportunity to directly present key messages to Heads of State and Government and other officials**.

Finally, as we acknowledge that establishing an official space for multi-stakeholder dialogue will require some time, we would like to request that the Commission organises **briefing and debriefing meetings with civil society, trade unions, local governments and their associations, before and after the high-level meetings planned for after the summit**, to offer consultation opportunities in the short-term.

We remain confident that the EU will make every effort henceforth to ensure that our voices are heard and considered as it moves forward in shaping the future EU-CELAC relationship.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

EU-LAC Working Group (among others):

11 11 11, ActionAid, AIDSFOUND, Alliance 2015, Amnesty Europe, Brot fur Die Welt, Caritas EU, CIDSE, Civil Rights Defenders, CNCD 11 11 11, CONCORD, Coordinadora de ONGD española, COSPE, CSW, EU-LAT Network, FIDH – International Federation for Human Rights, Justice et Paix, Fundación Avina, Fundación Ebert Stiftung, GRET, Heinrich Boll Foundation, HIAS, Human Rights Watch, IFSI-ISVI, ODHACO, OMCT – World Organisation Against Torture, Oxfam, Pax Christi International, PBI-Guatemala, PIN – People in Need, Plataforma Europa-Peru, Race and Equality, Red Cross EU Office, RIDH Europa, SOLIDAR, SOLSOC – Solidarité Socialiste, Wetlands International, Wide+, WSM – We Social Movements, WWF

ETUC - European Trade Union Confederation

Local authorities' association members of the EU-LAC Steering Group:

Commonwealth Local Governments Forum (CLGF); Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Municipal Associations (FLACMA); Mercociudades; PLATFORMA - Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).