

## Multi-Actor Dialogue Forum:

Just Green Transition, Inclusive Digital Transformation and Social Cohesion.

Heredia, Costa Rica, 4 October 2023

—Report—



### Executive Summary

The Multi-Actor Dialogue Forum: **“Just Green Transition, Inclusive Digital Transformation and Social Cohesion”**, organised by the EU-LAC Foundation and the National University of Costa Rica (UNA) on 4 October 2023, gathered around 170 leaders from civil society organisations, academics, business and labour representatives, development banks, international organisations, and governments to discuss the outcomes of the EU-CELAC 2023 Summit and discuss strategies and proposals for its implementation. The Forum, which is part of the EU-CELAC Roadmap 2023-2025, was divided on parallel panels, where each one corresponded to three thematic areas:

In the first thematic panel – **“Social Cohesion”**, - two main dimensions were addressed: economic and social inequalities, as well as political inequalities. The panellists defined social cohesion as the capacity of a state to guarantee the well-being of society through democratic means, combating exclusion and promoting social mobility. They mentioned the need for labour policies that adapt to global decarbonisation and proposed the creation of a social justice coalition to address inequalities in the labour market. They also stressed that social cohesion starts with development in societies and the importance of a cross-cutting approach that addresses human rights and planetary boundaries, underlining the importance of women's physical and economic autonomy in promoting social cohesion.



In the second part, participants discussed political inequalities, highlighting the need to develop effective mechanisms to address women's under-representation in political positions. For instance, rural women play a crucial role in society despite their invisibility in public policy, thus, their needs must be included. In addition, decisionmakers shall consider public opinion and a new social pact for the well-being of children and young people. The growing inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean, specially affected by the climate and the care crisis, were also addressed, highlighting the importance of the bi-regional cooperation to tackle these issues.

The second panel, dedicated to the **“Just Green Transitions”**, addressed the issues of financing and cooperation for the transition to more sustainable and just economies. Participants advised the inclusion of the reform of the global financial system in the bi-regional agenda and offered recommendations for cooperation, such as providing financial incentives to help small producers affected by the transition and promoting energy cooperation that fosters value-added production in Latin America and the Caribbean. They also mentioned the need to close gender gaps in job creation, foster technology transfer and strengthen global economic governance. Finally, they highlighted the importance of involving civil society in project monitoring and the need to address social externalities in the transition.

The panellists then discussed investment and cooperation in clean energy and critical raw materials, analysing the need to accelerate the transformation of the energy matrices and to consider the social and environmental implications of this change. They highlighted the importance of cooperation in technology transfer and the development of sustainable supply chains through diligence and standardisation processes. In addition, there are specific challenges in the region such as fiscal dependence on fossil fuels and the need for adequate financing for the transition. Finally, the importance of promoting green taxation and the participation of civil society in decision-making within the bi-regional agenda was underlined.

Finally, the panel on **“Inclusive Digital Transformation”** focused on cooperation in infrastructure, connectivity, access and regulatory dialogue between Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe. The panellists suggested approaching the digital transition in an inclusive and human-centred way. They highlighted the need to improve connectivity in Latin America and the Caribbean and the importance of managing cybersecurity for governments, businesses, and citizens, with an emphasis on personal data privacy. This requires developing regulations that adapt to the context of digital markets in a less bureaucratic way, as well as improving technology education and digital literacy to address the regional lag in digital development.

On the second part, the importance of focusing the digital transformation on social knowledge through a strategic framework that guides this process and considers the internal gaps of each country was discussed. Similarly, it is necessary to ethically regulate the development of artificial intelligence so that it focuses on human beings. The group discussion highlighted the importance of investment in academic and technological infrastructure, as well as the need to consider human rights in the context of digital transformation. Finally, the participants called for the strengthening of health technology development in bi-regional cooperation due to its global relevance.

The Multi-Actor Forum not only provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the outcomes of the EU-CELAC 2023 Summit, but also served as a space where they could express their needs and present proposals to guide the implementation of the commitments made. This space highlighted the potential for close collaboration between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, driven by the shared interests and global challenges that both regions face. It is therefore essential to maintain a continuous dialogue on how to steer bi-regional relations towards the implementation of what was agreed in the Summit Declaration, while addressing the new challenges that both regions face.

## Report

The Forum “**Multi-Actor Dialogue: Just Green Transition, Inclusive Digital Transformation and Social Cohesion**” was part of the Roadmap 2023-2025, established by the Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) during their Summit held on 17-18 July 2023 in Brussels. This event has been organised by the EU-LAC Foundation and the School of International Relations of the UNA on 4 October 2023 in a hybrid form.

The **Multi-Actor Dialogue Forum** offered a space to:

- Analyse the priorities and commitments of the EU-CELAC Summit and its Roadmap.
- Discuss the opportunities and limitations of the EU-CELAC Summit agreements.
- Analyse and propose strategies, programmes, and actions for the implementation of the EU-CELAC Summit agreements with the participation of CSOs.
- Propose follow-up mechanisms to the EU-CELAC Summit commitments with the participation of CSOs.
- Provide a space to articulate sub-regional, regional, and bi-regional initiatives and cooperation, particularly with CSOs from both regions.

The event gathered more than 170 participants (face-to-face and online), mostly representatives of civil society organisations, scientific institutions, business and employee sectors, development banks, international organisations, specialised in areas of social, environmental, and economic knowledge from the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region and the EU. It was also attended by government authorities from both regions.

The following is an extended report containing the main contributions presented during the event. It is an effort to recover and synthesise the most relevant arguments and ideas that were developed.

## *Inaugural Session*

The Vice-Minister of Multilateral Affairs of the Republic of Costa Rica, **Alejandro Solano Ortiz**, underlined the importance of the Multi-Actor Dialogue Forum both to share ideas and build consensus between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. To this end, Costa Rica supports multilateralism in the face of the profound technological, environmental, and social challenges currently facing both regions. He also commented on the need to take action to promote equitable digital connectivity, as the lack of access to new technologies aggravates inequalities and affects opportunities for economic growth. About social cohesion, he indicated that Costa Rica faces challenges in terms of security issues such as migratory flows and organised



crime. Regarding the environment, he reaffirmed the country's commitment, as evidenced through various initiatives, including its role in the organisation of the Oceans Summit. The Vice-Minister also pointed out the importance of international cooperation in tackling these problems, such as the Global Gateway project, which promotes local and regional projects. Finally, he underlined the importance of the Forum, as it generates a space for the exchange of ideas between the education sector and civil society actors.

**Leire Pajín**, President of the EU-LAC Foundation, highlighted the various thematic forums organised by the Foundation for the implementation of the decisions taken at the bi-regional Summit. She also highlighted the role of journalists in a world where disinformation is on the rise, generating the need for the truth. The President also stressed the importance of collaborating with research centres to achieve an effective connection between academia and decision-makers. She also highlighted EU-LAC's efforts to address current digital divides and promote gender equality as a fundamental pillar for a just community. In her speech, the President underlined that the Foundation's current objective is to deepen the challenges and goals set at the Brussels summit and to continue building a common bi-regional agenda. To achieve this, she considered essential the work of the Foundation in stimulating partnerships to establish methodologies and objectives for collaboration. The goal is to strengthen multi-stakeholder spaces and achieve the implementation of the agreed objectives. Finally, the President called for a frank and sincere dialogue and to continue building networks to facilitate collaboration between the various actors.

The Ambassador of the European Union in Costa Rica, **Pierre Louis Lempereur**, mentioned the CELAC-EU Summit Declaration and the quest to continue working on bi-regional priorities and commitments. He then highlighted key elements of the declaration, relating to shared values, resilient and democratic societies, and the rule of law. He also mentioned that the declaration shows determination with climate commitments, including the protection, conservation, and sustainable use of the oceans. For this, from the EU-LAC cooperation scheme, dialogues have been established on investment in environment, energy, infrastructure, 5G connectivity and public services with a multi-stakeholder perspective for a better impact.

Finally, the Vice-Rector for Research of the UNA, **Jorge Herrera Murillo**, mentioned that for the UNA and the School of International Relations to lead the Forum space implies its firm commitment to contribute to the establishment of an institutional framework where principles such as mutual trust, inclusion and the allocation of financial resources permeate. He highlighted the University's desire to position itself as a relevant actor both in the Forum and in the relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. He also underlined the importance of approaches to capacity building, innovation diplomacy and establishing multi-sectoral dialogues, as well as its support for inclusive transformations in terms of technology. He underlined that the Forum is an opportunity for the generation of regional, sub-regional and bi-regional cooperation initiatives, which include civil society organisations and promote the happy future of both regions.

### Keynotes Session

The session started with the intervention of **Monica Araya**, Executive Director for International Affairs of the European Climate Foundation, who highlighted the Summit as a first step to re-establish cooperation between Europe and Latin America after several years of inactivity. She also highlighted Europe's vision of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, which requires both a domestic



and an external approach. For this reason, the European Green Pact has both an external and a diplomatic factor, as its realisation depends on its relations with other continents. Therefore, Europe's interest in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Latin America's role at the global level, is intertwined with these purposes. For this reason, she commented that his Foundation has proposed a strategy called “Europe in the World”, which works on issues such as climate trade, financial greening, the intersection between climate and nature, just green transition, and transition minerals.

**Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir**, Director of the OECD Development Centre, then highlighted the importance of Latin America and the Caribbean in the climate debate due to its biodiversity and renewable energy potential. She therefore stressed the need for a bi-regional partnership for the transformation towards green hydrogen and renewable energies. She also stressed the need to address the social challenges in the region, including inequality, distrust in government and poverty, as they generate an unstable and less productive region. This requires multidimensional policies aligned with the three transitions, such as an approach that includes the most vulnerable populations and socio-economic challenges. She also stressed the importance of looking at the impact of European initiatives such as the Green Deal in other regions of the world, as they will need support and capacity building to avoid damage. Finally, she mentioned that the OECD seeks to broaden the understanding and application of the Triple Helix in activities such as the UNDP G20 Workshop, as well as to increase discussion on national or regional platforms for financing and cooperation on shared goals.

The Secretary General of the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Public Administration and Policy (FIIAPP), **Inmaculada Zamora**, emphasised public technical cooperation through counterpart governmental institutions. However, the participation of private actors and NGOs is also fundamental for public policies. She also highlighted the importance of regional programme management in Latin America, as it encourages policy dialogue to exchange experiences. She mentioned the case of Eurosocial, with which they have been strengthening social cohesion in the Latin American region for 17 years. From there, they had observed the need of more emphasis on the social agenda and institutional strengthening for the impact of certain investments. She also acknowledged the creation of the Summit Declaration with points such as the Global Gateway strategy, from which the EU proposes a multi-stakeholder agenda for investment in the region and a technical assistance package based on the idea of “policy first” rather than business interests. The Director identified Eurosocial+ as a key programme in Latin America, as it seeks to tackle inequalities through public policies. Finally, she pointed out the importance of finding mechanisms for oversight and monitoring of the Global Gateway Initiative.

Finally, **Eduardo Mauricio Agudelo**, Digital Transformation Director at CAF Development Bank, stressed that the digital transition in Latin America and the Caribbean must address regional structural challenges that were aggravated by the pandemic, such as educational inequality and public policy challenges. To address these challenges, he proposed cooperation approaches that encompass household infrastructure, regulation, digitisation, digitalisation, digital economy, and aspects such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and data protection. He recognised the importance of supporting countries with funding and expertise to address digital challenges. For this reason, he highlighted the opportunity for bi-regional cooperation and the need to adapt the Bank's offer to the specific needs of each country. He also mentioned regional progress in public policies and connectivity, as 71% of the population already has access to the Internet, which opens



opportunities in health, education, and employment. However, challenges remain in infrastructure, especially in the deployment of technologies such as 5G, and the promotion of a green digital economy. To this end, he emphasised the application of technologies of the fourth industrial revolution in the State and the Bank's focus on feasibility studies, infrastructure, use of the Internet in the productive sector, data economy and technologies to address climate change.

The keynotes session featured a commentary section by **José Andrés Fernández Leost**, Associate Professor of Political Theory at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) and Head of Analysis at the Carolina Foundation, and **Olga Baus-Gibert**, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships.

**José Andrés Fernández Leost** mentioned the challenges in bi-regional relations, such as the high costs of the green agenda and the need for the triple transition (green, digital, and social) within a framework of inclusive cooperation and renewal of the social contract. He also highlighted the economic complementarity between the regions and the importance of trade as a peacemaker amid crisis scenarios. To this end, he stressed that 2023 was a positive year for Latin America, but where it is necessary to tackle debt, improve fiscal policies and train human capital. For her part, Olga highlighted the importance of the triple transition and the Global Gateway strategy for economic growth focused on citizenship and digital transformation. This strategy is important because it generates added value to EU investment in the region. She also mentioned the digital alliance between LAC and the EU, promoting bi-regional projects with a focus on labour and regulatory areas. Olga Baus-Gibert detailed the progress made in bilateral agreements under the umbrella of the Global Gateway Initiative and emphasised the importance of fostering a dialogue focused on the processes underway and their results.

## Social Cohesion

### 1. Social and Economic Inequalities

Moderator **Alex Segovia**, Coordinator of the Central America Initiative Network, introduced the panel with a reflection on the meaning of social cohesion. The moderator defined the term as the capacity of a state to ensure the well-being of society through democratic means. Thus, social cohesion promotes social advancement and, in so doing, combats exclusion. Furthermore, he stressed that, in practice, EU and LAC relations have privileged economic and geopolitical issues, which has not allowed the promotion of social exclusion.

**Moustapha Kamal Gueye**, Coordinator of the Green Jobs Programme of the International Labour Organization (ILO), began his intervention by mentioning that his organisation was born to promote social justice from a multi-stakeholder approach, where decisions are taken between governments, workers, and employers. This example underlines the importance of generating policies based on horizontal dialogues to truly transform the economic and labour system. Global decarbonisation has the potential to create more than 100 billion jobs, but also to eliminate another 80 million. The crucial challenge is how do we seize this opportunity while minimising the risk of job losses? For this, labour policies must consider a constant process of reskilling and upskilling, since it is estimated that our children's generation will have to change jobs at least five times in their lifetime. This involves reskilling our economies, for which the ILO proposes to create a global social justice coalition to break down current inequalities in the labour market.



**Sandrea Maynard**, Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Affairs at the University of the West Indies (UWI), mentioned that social cohesion begins with development in societies and therefore the definition of this term has also evolved. Under a society that has been characterised by a patriarchal system, a multi-sectoral approach is essential and reflected in education systems. In addition, globalisation has created great economic inequality and, as a result, the advances that have been adopted have not implemented the social dimension and have not been perceived by the whole population. On the other hand, in terms of climate change, although the LAC region is not the main cause of this problem, it is the main one affected. For this reason, she insisted that it is not only essential to identify the region's problems, but also the way in which they can be tackled.

**Inmaculada Alonso**, Coordinator of the NGO Committee, said that multi-stakeholder participation is key to successful policies and added that social cohesion is closely linked to democracy. It is therefore important that the Summit Declaration mentioned the promotion of free elections, democracy, and the rule of law. However, the Declaration must be built horizontally to enable the design of a new social pact. She stressed that public policies must be built from a cross-cutting perspective, with a high degree of coherence and that they must consider human rights and planetary limits. Furthermore, current policies must consider the physical and economic autonomy of women for the conception of social cohesion, since the participation of civil society guarantees the development of the processes.

The panel included **Regina Leão**, Coordinator of the Pastoral Care of Children and social programmes for children and adolescents in the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro, who gave an in-depth overview of the historical and political context of inequalities in Brazil, focusing on their impact on children. She highlighted how these inequalities are rooted in colonial oppression, the invasion of Brazilian territories and the subjugation of indigenous peoples, as well as the dehumanisation resulting from more than three centuries of slavery. She stressed that structural racism, machismo, and adult-centrism in Brazilian society affect the daily lives of children and young people, denying them opportunities for a better future. She also highlighted the importance of civil society participation in promoting children's rights as an effort to address and overcome these inequalities. Regina referred to the 1988 Federal Constitution and the 1990 Statute of the Child and Adolescent to underline the relevance of legal frameworks that uphold the rights of children and youth. Finally, she advocated solidarity, fraternity and dialogue as means to address social and economic inequalities.

Finally, **Laura Sánchez León**, gender expert at the French Development Agency, highlighted that her organisation adopted a feminist strategy and diplomacy, hosting the Beijing +25 Forum to advance the rights of women and girls. In each project, they allocate 70% of the budget to a transformative transition towards gender equality, which seeks to replace the social roles that maintain inequality. In addition, she stressed the need to strengthen the specific agenda of women and girls in the Summit Declaration to contribute to three pillars: autonomy and physical empowerment, economic and political development. To achieve this, a real evaluation and follow-up of the Roadmap is required, as well as deeper institutionalisation that guarantee the rights of women and girls. She then emphasised the high impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on women, reinforcing unequal roles and unpaid jobs that prevent them from accessing decent work and social security. Finally, from the point of view of cooperation, she stressed the importance of working with civil society and highlighted projects such as Eurosocial+, where AFD seeks to be the development bank that finances the biggest number of feminist projects.



## 2. Political Inequalities

The moderator, **Carlos Cascante Segura**, researcher at the School of International Relations of the UNA, spoke about the role of international organisations in achieving social cohesion. He said that to achieve social cohesion, it is not only necessary to provide equal opportunities, but also to develop affirmative mechanisms that allow us to break the entrenched patterns in Latin American and European societies that place women as secondary actors in political decision-making, which is why it is essential to identify social challenges through dialogue and demands to both governments and international organisations.

First, **Luz Haro**, Executive Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Rural Women (RedLAC), stressed that “rural women are the ones who maintain life and sustain the world”, as was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. The inequalities and invisibility of indigenous women in politics have a long history. In this context, the LAC Network is working on the establishment of the agenda for the decade of rural women at the UN, considering that this agenda 2024-2034 has already been established at the OAS through the collective effort of rural women. Similarly, rural communities should not be seen as a burden for the state, but as a strategic ally that shall be considered by new leaders in policy articulation, since up to now, proposals in international forums continue to be purely urban in focus. Through this, very relevant issues such as rural-urban migration, child pregnancy and the prostitution of peasant women can be addressed.

**Merike Blofield**, Professor for Society and Politics in Latin America at the University of Hamburg, highlighted the importance of public opinion and the need for a new social pact that seeks the well-being of children and adolescents. Through her case study focused on Guatemala, she emphasised the variables related to public opinion, the situation of poverty in the country and the possible solutions to this challenge. She highlighted the consequences of extreme poverty that these vulnerable groups experience in their childhood or adolescence, such as malnutrition, deterioration of physical and mental health, and its impact on individual development with lifelong repercussions. To overcome these vulnerabilities, a joint multilateral effort is needed to address the challenges faced by young people in Guatemala. Among the research proposals, the relevance of implementing direct monetary transfers to the population was highlighted. Furthermore, to address the issue of social cohesion in the context of Guatemala, various international organisations could implement this type of financial support for the benefit of a vulnerable social group through targeted projects.

**Raquel Coello-Cremades**, UN Women's regional policy specialist on Economic Empowerment for the Americas and the Caribbean, began her participation by pointing out that it is not possible to build social cohesion in unequal societies, where Latin American inequality is especially complex due to its intersectionality. These inequalities continue to deepen around various crises such as the climate crisis, where there are sectors such as rural areas that suffer the consequences more than others. It is not the same to get water in the countryside as in the city, even more so with the increasing droughts. Another current crisis is on care work, where these activities are not recognised and are disproportionately linked to women in poverty. This is an agenda that cannot be put off, as more and more of the population needs care and less and less is available to provide it. In view of this, the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean have a common agenda through the Buenos Aires Agreement, which prioritises this issue for the promotion of care



strategies. However, she pointed out that a bi-regional pact is needed to push this agenda even further, because there is much more to gain from collaboration between the two regions.

**Silvia Castellano**, technical specialist of the Gender Equity and Youth Programme of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), mentioned the projects of their action programme, through which they seek to promote greater gender equality, but from a generational and territorial approach and focused on rurality. She also identified some priorities in his experience that are related to several points of the Summit Declaration. She highlighted the need to work for inclusive and equal participation, to include comprehensive care systems in public policy, to develop an inclusive digital transformation and a sense of co-responsibility. To this, she emphasised the need to work for rural women, who spend 3 to 10 hours more on unpaid citizen tasks compared to urban women according to ECLAC. Finally, she advocated on strengthening bi-regional cooperation and carrying out gender projects from a territorial and intersectional approach that considers the different needs of each community.

### **Just Green Transitions**

#### **1. Financing the Just Green Transition**

The moderator **Jorge Herrera Murillo**, Vice-rector for Research of the UNA, introduced the session with a reflection on the EU-CELAC 2023 Declaration and highlighted the presence of the issue of financing transitions within the agenda, thus positioning the review of global financing systems and global financial governance as central issues. He commented on going beyond GDP growth to measure development, focusing his approach on a multi-causal vision. Finally, he highlighted the centrality of the climate issue, which, although it had been on the agenda before, this time it was influenced by the worldview and language of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Programme Director of the CIPÓ Platform, **Mariana Rondón**, began the discussion by giving recommendations for bi-regional cooperation in relation to a just green transition. To this end, she suggested applying positive incentives and financial contributions to facilitate compliance with environmental objectives, especially for small producers who are affected by the transition. She also mentioned the need to prioritise energy cooperation that promotes the production of added value for Latin America, which is focused on technology transfer to position the region as a producer and not only as a source of raw materials. This should include respect for the rights of local communities through free, prior, and informed consent for sustainable extraction. As a final recommendation and emphasising the crucial role of civil society, she raised the need to create an independent bi-regional body represented by civil society organisations, indigenous people, and local communities to monitor the negative effects of projects.

**Andrea Costafreda**, Programme Director for Latin America, and the Caribbean of Oxfam Intermón, identified omissions in the Declaration, especially regarding inequality and social cohesion in the context of increasing polarisation in the region. She pointed out several “traps” in the wording, such as the tension between green transition and fiscal dependence on fossil fuels, the gender gap in job creation, the concern of transitions without transformation, the risk of political capture, and the question of who will finance transitions in Latin America's difficult financial situation. She proposed concrete solutions, such as the Global Gateway initiative to finance transitions with Official Development Assistance (ODA), focusing on protecting human rights and the well-being of populations.



In addition, he recommended strengthening global economic governance, promoting cooperation focused on social cohesion and inequalities, making the investment package conditional on technology transfer, and establishing inclusive regional articulation mechanisms, such as a technical secretariat with civil society representation.

Similarly, **José Vicente Troya**, UNDP Resident Representative in Costa Rica, stressed that a just green transition and its financing face profound and complex challenges due to the multiple crises underway. He stressed the importance of addressing the climate crisis with an intersectional perspective that considers both environmental externalities and the impact on vulnerable populations, especially women and girls. He called for a focus on a political economy that cares for women and nature, recognising their contribution to the economy and the need for Feminist and Green Economics. Then he analysed the decarbonisation of public finances in Latin America and stressed the importance of giving women and indigenous people access to financing funds to make investment decisions. In this regard, José mentioned the transformative power of investment and the need for green taxation to address tax exemptions in sectors such as hydrocarbons and pesticides that have an impact on people and the environment.

**Sandra Guzman**, Founder of the Climate Finance Group of Latin America, and the Caribbean (GFLAC), highlighted the importance of finance in the just green transition, referring to article 2.1 of the Paris Agreement that calls for aligning financial flows with sustainable and resilient development. She stressed the need to accelerate these flows and slow down those that contribute to the problem, as well as to transform the financial system. She also noted that the energy transition must focus on a social and inclusive vision and advocated a shift to a model driven by climate justice and sustainability. She identified three opportunities for bi-regional cooperation: a social agenda with greater civil society participation in emissions reduction and biodiversity protection, closing financing gaps in adaptation and loss and damage, and collaboration on global financial institution reform and debt management.

In the discussion following the presentations, they commented that the Declaration does not mention the effect of the transition on small producers, who will see it in the short term. In view of this, the EU has a deforestation regulation that comes into operation in one year, but there is no certainty on how producers can comply with it. Expressing concern about how it will be implemented and how it will affect small coffee and cocoa producers, they commented that there is a lack of space for dialogue with the European Union about the impact of this regulation.

## 2. Investing and Cooperating in Clean Energy and Critical Raw Materials

The moderator, **Olman Segura Bonilla**, director of the International Centre for Economic Policy for Sustainable Development (CINPE), gave an introduction on the technical aspects, necessary technologies, and the management of materials for clean energy, without neglecting the element of justice when talking about green transition. Then he mentioned the need for a consensus on financing to enable climate resilience and mitigation in Latin America and the Caribbean and to develop technologies that position the region as a producer.

**Rodolfo Lacy**, former Director for Climate Action and Environment for Latin America at the OECD and former Undersecretary for Environmental Policy and Planning at the Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, opened the discussion. He analysed the Action Plan towards Resilience and Climate Neutrality, developed with the EU-LAC Foundation, to move towards



resilience and climate neutrality. This plan was built in the face of statistics such as the fact that 70% of the countries in the region have not been able to make their long-term plans, seeking a more balanced, fair, and accelerated development in the face of Latin America's technological stagnation. The Action Plan suggests as the most urgent actions that: i) adaptation urgently needs to have early warning systems supported by a civil protection system, ii) in biodiversity there is a need to recreate the existing biological corridors in Latin America to avoid the massive loss of species, iii) expand the use of renewable energies and technology transfer to become producers, iv) in the area of mining it is necessary to avoid sacrifice zones allowing the creation of positive synergies, v) the need for circular energy, moving from being buyers to being producers.

**Martín Obaya**, Director of CENIT - Argentina, spoke about the critical minerals for the green transition, the decarbonisation of transport, clean energy production and the construction of supply chains. He stressed that this transition is a mineral-intensive process, which makes it difficult to be green and fair. Based on the Delphi study conducted by the Green Dealings research consortium, of which he is a member, on the sustainability of lithium mining, he presented the following results: (i) the main challenges for environmental sustainability are the impact on water basins and its impact on biodiversity, (ii) the main challenges for economic sustainability are the participation of local communities and the need to strengthen the link between mining activity, the local productive apparatus and the local science and technology system, (iii) the main challenges for social sustainability are the need for territorial planning to ensure the coexistence of lithium mining with other economic activities and reduce the impacts of mining on populations. He then assessed the EU-CELAC 2023 Summit Declaration, mentioning that its proposals did not adequately address these challenges and presented gaps in sustainability and the generation of technological capital in the region. However, he pointed out the possibility of cooperation based on the complementarity of productive structures and European sensitivity to social and environmental issues, highlighting strategic resources such as lithium in Latin America.

For her part, **María Elena Huertas**, Co-founder of POLEN Just Transitions, highlighted complementary strategies identified by her organisation: i) investments in Latin America and the Caribbean should take the form of donations and not debts, and she proposed the need to exchange debt for climate action, ii) programmes are needed to facilitate energy transition, iii) bi-regional cooperation projects aimed at new industries, iv) due diligence standards should be established for financing and investment mechanisms. On the other hand, she mentioned the role of civil society, where there is a need for a bi-regional digital platform to have condensed information that can be accessed quickly. Finally, she reaffirmed the need to be alert to false solutions, financing with binding mechanisms and to form a bi-regional dialogue platform.

**Josep Puxeu**, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee (Group I, Employers), commented on the Committee's plans for COP-28, to which he said that the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean should present a common position. He stressed that both regions are on the brink of irrelevance and the strong climate change issue, which is why coordinated regional strategies are crucial. He mentioned that by 2050 there will be a social change as 80% of the world's population will be living in megacities of more than 12 million inhabitants. Environmental policies must therefore focus on the supply of raw materials for energy, food, and water, with proposals for bi-regional cooperation that go beyond restrictions and policies. He concluded by mentioning that civil society is always active and has the capacity to react within bi-regional cooperation to achieve a just green transition.



During the dialogue, **Andrea Quesada Aguilar** from the United Nations Development Programme spoke about the multilateral commitments that connect gender and climate change by talking about a just transition, such as article 7 of the Paris Agreement, for the following actions. She stressed that there are currently multiple crises at the global level, which are evidenced by the setbacks that have occurred on gender issues. She emphasised the need to accompany the gender principle in the green transition to generate systemic changes and ensure that new jobs do not follow an unequal structure. A just green transition must have three crucial parts in relation to gender: i) theories of change and implementation to eliminate gender inequalities in certain sectors, ii) provision of rapid training for women, iii) investment in new areas that promotes the strengthening of their skills for new areas.

The attendees also discussed the different forms of technology development or transfer and the problems that persist in relation to mining. The need for both regions to be technologically up to date through continuous training in order not to be left behind in the face of changing realities was mentioned. On debt in Latin America and the Caribbean, they reaffirmed the need for Latin American participation in relation to where the funds come from and reform of the financial system. They also commented on the need for green technologies, with the collaboration of local communities and women, generating financial incentives for their adoption. Finally, the moderator emphasised the need for financing, the review of fiscal aspects and, above all, action to achieve a truly green and just transition.

### ***Inclusive Digital Transformation***

#### **1. Cooperation in Infrastructure, Connectivity, Access, and Regulatory Dialogue**

The first session on digital transformation focused on cooperation in infrastructure, connectivity, access, and regulatory dialogue. The moderator of the panel, **Francia Serrano**, from My World Mexico, began by presenting some of the challenges present in the region and emphasised the importance of fostering development in areas such as cybersecurity and infrastructure. She referred to the objective mentioned in the Summit Declaration of promoting a digital and sustainable model based on human beings and fostering development through new green technologies.

The first panellist was **José Ignacio Torreblanca**, Senior Policy Fellow and Head of the Madrid Office and of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), who advocated for discussing how to improve the design of the Global Gateway. He asserted that the central problem in the region is the lack of connectivity and consequent regional inequality in the face of global technological progress. Also, it is crucial to manage cybersecurity for governments, businesses, and citizens. where only Argentina and Uruguay have adequate regulations in accordance with the general data protection regulation. Therefore, it is necessary to establish new regulatory frameworks that do not necessarily follow European regulations. Instead, regulations should be formulated according to the context of digital markets in a less bureaucratic way. Finally, he commented on the regulation of large digital platforms, raising the need to discuss how these platforms negatively affect activism, democracy, and individuals. It is therefore essential to propose digital regulations that curb these harms rather than focusing only on the platforms themselves.



The second panellist, **Luis Eliécer Cárdenas**, Executive Director of RedCLARA, mentioned that the development of the Digital Alliance represents an important opportunity in terms of investment for the development of shared capacities and objectives, particularly in relation to the “Global Gateway”. However, he stressed that the challenge of connectivity in Latin America and the Caribbean requires significant investment, estimating between 50 billion and 200 billion dollars for connectivity infrastructure alone. A sum that exceeds the capital invested through the whole Global Gateway. In addition, he emphasised the importance of developing knowledge and skills along with connectivity to actually address the growing output gap. For this reason, projects focused on capacity building through education and technology transfer, such as the Vera 2 project, are necessary. Finally, he stressed the need to establish credit mechanisms that allow for targeted investment and cooperation, as well as to design an agenda that responds to the needs of all those involved in the initiative.

Afterwards, **Leonie Kellerhof**, Policy Advisor on the EU-LAC Digital Alliance for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), argued that in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in Europe, it is crucial to address the issue of inclusive connectivity in regulation. To improve connectivity, it is not enough to focus only on infrastructure, as there are still issues related to digital skills, gender equality and the prevention of digital violence. She also stressed that the Digital Alliance represents a joint and inclusive vision that is oriented towards the entire population. In this regard, the incorporation of high-level policy dialogues with various international agencies and the participation of civil society should be promoted. Furthermore, dialogues should not be limited exclusively to political spaces, but it is crucial to involve diverse actors in the discussion. Finally, she addressed the role of development agencies, such as GIZ, in ensuring that the dialogues generate technical assistance projects, capacity building and the exchange of experiences so that the dialogues translate into concrete actions in the digital sphere.

The last panellist of the dialogue was **Mihajela Crnko**, representative of the International Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO (IRCAI), who mentioned that it is paramount to address the issue of physical connectivity before other issues. Artificial intelligence can be useful in providing greater inclusion and access, but first strong regulations are needed to enable its responsible use. In this way, she commented that, from a regulatory perspective, the EU approaches artificial intelligence in a human-centred way. Therefore, paragraph 29 of the Summit Declaration states that this technology requires more attention and the inclusion of human society, to be used in the field of digital transformation. On the other hand, in the field of science, she emphasised the need to strengthen human capacity through bi-regional academic networking.

The panellists’ speeches were followed by a dialogue between the participants and the audience in which several key points were highlighted. The importance of focusing the digital transformation on the human being and not only on technology was emphasised, prioritising skills training and digital literacy. In addition, the need to conceptualise and clearly define inclusion in the digital space, where governments, business, civil society, and academia must collaborate to address technological challenges, was underlined. The importance of avoiding monopolisation of digital services and promoting a level playing field in partnerships was mentioned. Finally, the dialogue suggested shifting the perspective of digital transformation from a human rights perspective and the challenges in Europe related to 5G technology and the involvement of civil society in these issues.



## 2. Closing Digital Gaps, the Use of Infrastructures and Connectivity for Skill and Productivity Development.

The second panel on digital transformation was moderated by **Ricardo Cáceres**, Director of Information Technologies at the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SG-SICA), who presented some key facts on the topic in question. He mentioned that the pandemic has accentuated the global digital gap and highlighted the strategic importance of technology. In the last decade, humanity surpassed the mark of giving Internet access to more than half of the population, with more than 12 billion connected devices. However, the digital inequality continues to grow. It is therefore essential to drive the digital transformation in Latin America, focusing on inclusion and preventing it from becoming a factor of inequality. In this way, the forum should focus on generating concrete actions to support the development of a roadmap that allows the generation of mechanisms for digitalisation.

The first panellist was **Javier González**, Director of SUMMA, who stressed that, although technology is considered a human-centred tool, there is an excessive focus on digitalisation to the detriment of social knowledge. For this reason, he advocated establishing a more explicit connection between technology and the generation of a knowledge-based society. This requires establishing a strategic framework to guide digital transformation and understanding the effects of technology, as technology products and their impact are poorly evaluated and often biased by manufacturers. He also highlighted the need to generate an institutional framework that integrates technology into higher education, addressing the unequal distribution of knowledge. To this end, collaboration between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean can change the process of knowledge production, through public policies and social monitoring of agreements. He stressed the importance of considering the perspectives of multiple actors and ensuring the allocation of resources to translate agreements into concrete actions.

**Ángel Machado**, President & CEO of Canon Medical Systems Argentina and Director of the Argentinean Chamber of Commerce and Services, focused his intervention on the effects of digital transformation in healthcare. He highlighted the scarce mention of this field in the Summit Declaration, but also acknowledged Europe's leadership in technological regulations for its application to healthcare. In this, it must be understood that health policy is the result of a complex interaction of economic and social factors, where technology has diverse implications. Thus, digital health refers to the use of technologies to improve health systems, including access and effective coverage of medical services. It is therefore a concept necessarily linked to an inclusive approach to health, which implies removing barriers to access and promoting the active participation of citizens. However, digital health faces challenges such as the scarcity of physical and human resources that lead to the disconnection of both public and private health systems. For this reason, it is necessary to advance in technological standardisation, following the European example, to address these challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Shirley Saborio**, Vice-President of the Boards of Directors of the Costa Rican Chamber of Commerce and the Productivity Promotion Council (CPC), pointed out that the EU-CELAC 2023 Summit Declaration is very general as it lacks specific proposals. She pointed out the need to address not only the “what”, but also the “how” and the more concrete aspects related to digital transformation. To this end, digital transformation should be considered an essential axis in the human agenda and should be addressed according to the internal gaps of each country.



For example, in Costa Rica there is a notorious access gap between metropolitan and rural areas, directly related to the quality of education that children receive in each region. Therefore, technology education should be a priority, where the declaration does not specify how to address these challenges. Considering the close relationship between education and technology, both aspects must be considered together to achieve significant progress in the digital transformation.

On the other hand, **Hernán Aguirre**, Professor of the Faculty of Engineering at Shinshu University in Japan, pointed out that the priorities and commitments of CELAC and the European Union are very broad in terms of digital transformation. He spoke about the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation, highlighting that human-centred AI is a tool that enhances people's cognitive abilities. AI has vast potential in various fields such as writing and reading, but for it to be human-centric, it is essential that it is developed alongside humans. In addition, he identified four key pillars for AI: skilled human resources, funding, infrastructure, and data. The variability in user skills in relation to AI is a key disruptive technology that depends on the region in terms of its use and practical utility. In this regard, he stressed the importance of regulation and the development of ethical frameworks related to AI.

Finally, **Dumitru Fornea**, member of the European Economic and Social Committee (Group II - Employees), stressed the importance of ensuring fairness in the handling of dynamic data and that this responsibility lies with citizens and society at large. He warned against the risk of artificial intelligence (AI) benefiting mainly large corporations rather than society if it is not properly addressed. This requires improving skills and infrastructure, while addressing the challenges of cybersecurity, which should be a priority in both Europe and Latin America. He emphasised the right to disconnect, a relevant issue but not mentioned in the discussion. In terms of cybersecurity, it is important that Latin America and the Caribbean begin to monitor aspects such as data sovereignty and informed consent for citizens' rights, stressing that truly informed consent requires an understanding of the technology. To this end, it is positive to note the successes of the EU in protecting data against large companies through regulation in the digital context.

During the group discussion, some felt that the EU-CELAC 2023 Declaration left a sense of disappointment by focusing on economic interests and overlooking the academic perspective. The lack of consideration of higher education systems was perceived as a problem. To address the knowledge society, they proposed three key actions: developing a conceptual framework, examining existing programmes and learning from good practices. Investment in academic and technological infrastructure is essential, and prioritising contextualised content and methodologies was highlighted. In addition, digitisation raises human rights issues, especially in digital skills training from the perspective of individuals, where e-learning needs specific accreditation models. Furthermore, they highlighted that technology should be seen in a broader context that encompasses universal connectivity and improving quality of life, prioritising resources, and long-term sustainability. In addition, a call was made to strengthen the presence of health in the declaration due to its high global relevance.

## Closing Session

The session began with a video message from **Epsy Campbell Barr**, former Vice-President of Costa Rica, in which she highlighted the importance for Latin American peoples to strengthen their relations with the European Union. She spoke about the social gaps suffered by the 200 million people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean as the effect of a colonial legacy, facing exceptional challenges such as systemic racism or unequal access to the education system. In view of this, she mentioned the importance of making the needs of people of African descent visible in the EU-CELAC Roadmap, as well as a focus on care and women's empowerment.

**Matteo Banti**, Head of Regional Cooperation for Central America of the European External Action Service, referred to the need for a green and blue transition from a multi-actor perspective with the various actors involved. The academic part is essential for the Global Gateway strategy, because this is what European investors are asking for through capacity building. In Central America, this strategy seeks to promote the protection of biodiversity through the 5 Great Forests of Mesoamerica initiative, with a European contribution of more than 30 million euros. In the area of trade, they are working with SIECA to implement the Regional Master Plan for Mobility and Logistics 2035. Finally, he mentioned the prioritisation of privacy within the context of the digital transition, where the EU is proposing a regulatory model for Central America.

**Sandrea Maynard**, Vice Chancellor for International Affairs at the University of the West Indies, emphasised the need to promote the triple transition from a cross-cutting and intersectional approach. She also recalled the importance of having bi-regional instances to share experiences, best practices, and knowledge, such as the Multi-Actor Forum, considering the lack of resources in Latin America and the Caribbean for the digital transition. The region has great potential for digital development but needs external support in order not to be left behind. Finally, she highlighted the participation of **Luz Haro**, as an example of empowerment for rural women.

Afterwards, **Marco Méndez**, Director of the School of International Relations of the UNA, thanked the EU-LAC Foundation for the collaboration to organise this event successfully. He emphasised the role of the University as an open space for the participation of diverse civil society actors, which motivated the Forum. Finally, he stressed the need to work towards a three-dimensional approach, for the environment, digital development, and social cohesion, but also including intersectionality in the face of the unequal impact of current problems on vulnerable populations.

Finally, **Adrián Bonilla**, Executive Director of the EU-LAC Foundation, stressed that the Forum is part of the organization's efforts to bring together various actors to discuss the impact of the EU-CELAC Summit. The fact of holding the Summit is remarkable because it represents a reactivation of bi-regional relations after a period of inactivity. Furthermore, the establishment of the Summit Declaration is an achievement, as it reflects the complex consensus of more than 50 Heads of State. This Declaration lays the foundation for the generation of activities and public policies related to the agreed issues, focusing on the triple transition and the Global Gateway Initiative, reflecting the shared interests between the two regions. He concluded by stressing the EU-LAC Foundation's intention to continue to communicate the impact of the Summit Declaration through events such as this one.



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