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**LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN  
AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: BASIS OF A STRATEGIC ASSOCIATION**

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1. Latin American and the Caribbean and the European Union are seeking to implement a joint project of the utmost importance for both regions and for international relations: the establishment of a Strategic Association.
2. The Strategic Association has truly emblematic status for both regions, since it is the sole project of its kind which they are implementing in their respective international relations.
3. A project on this scale is possible only as a result of long maturing, with deep roots in a common history, a common culture, a set of common principles and values that guide all respective national development and international relations, and a resolute political will to transform all of the foregoing into a joint vision and joint action for the future.
4. The Biregional Strategic Association is emblematic, moreover, because its very nature and significance are different from any other international initiative undertaken by the two regions. It has five fundamental features: its scope, its amplitude, its depth, the way it seeks to involve the various levels of society, and its institutionality.
5. The countries which form part of the Strategic Association number 58: 33 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and the 25 EU Member States. However, decisions already adopted by the EU means it will not be very long before we are talking about over 60 countries. Its vast scope means that a joint project of this kind is unparalleled; it involves practically one third of the membership of the United Nations. The potential for progress and well-being which the Strategic Association offers its citizens, and the potential for joint action amongst its members, and for their relations with third countries and with international bodies, is simply unprecedented.
6. The Association covers all relations between the countries and their international relations. It is a global Association. It is a Globalisation Project between two regions, organised around three principal areas: political, economics and cooperation. The last-named incorporates

areas as diverse as social affairs, culture, education, science and technology, and also cooperation on tackling terrorism, drugs and organised crime. Furthermore, provision is made that the joint activities will keep pace with changes at both national and international level, so as to make an active contribution to facing up to fresh challenges and opportunities arising from changing circumstances

7. The global nature of the Biregional Association means it involves another central issue in international relations: the involvement of civil society. The wish is that that the Association be cemented not only by involving the political authorities in the two regions, but by having as an explicit goal the guaranteed, organised participation of the full spread of all levels of civil society. This goal has become steadily more important in recent years, particularly during the periods preceding the holding of Summits of Head of State and Government. The different visions of Euro-Latin American relations put forward by the various non-official bodies of our countries have made a constructive contribution to the debates at the Summits.

8. The depth of the commitments made is another feature of the Association worth highlighting. The very way in which its objectives are defined demonstrates the importance of these commitments. The Association seeks political, economic, social and sustainable development. In other words, this is an Association whose depth goes far beyond that of the Agreements normally signed by our countries, subregions or regions, which generally refer only to liberalising trade in goods. In each one of the areas covered by the Association, we are seeking to make progress at the deepest level possible, but at the same time, with appropriate flexibility in terms of the specific real situations being tackled.

In the political sphere, for example, the goal is that the highest levels of authority should discuss both issues relating to biregional relations properly speaking, and relations with the rest of the world and issues relating to international bodies. Provision is made for exchange of information, but also for consultation and, when appropriate, establishment of joint positions and joint action by the two regions in the appropriate fora. Turning to the economic sphere, the goal is the liberalisation of all trade, i.e. trade in goods, services, movement of payments and of capital, but on a gradual, reciprocal basis. The goal of liberalising trade, moreover, is to go hand in hand with jointly adopted rules guaranteeing conditions of genuine competition.

9. Institutionalisation is a fundamental feature of relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, and in recent years, it has therefore been a fundamental feature of the progress made on the Strategic Association. In order better to understand this institutional dimension, we need to recall various milestones.

10. Since the very outset of our perspective integration processes, in the 1960s, formal contact was made, e.g. the establishment in 1967 of a Commission Permanent Office in Latin America. In 1974 it was the turn of the European and Latin American Parliaments, holding the first Conference of EC and Latin American members of parliament, to initiate the Institutionalised Dialogue, not only between the two Parliaments, but between the regions themselves. We have now successfully reached an seventeenth meeting.

11. The European Parliament and the Latin American Parliament have played a major role in deepening relations between the regions. In practice, these institutions have been in the vanguard of the process, and the activities of both Parliaments has been essential in guiding the major

progress made to date. Likewise, the national parliaments of the European and Latin American countries have played a decisive role in strengthening mutual relations. When the national parliaments were asked to give a formal endorsement, their support for the Agreements between the EU and the countries of Latin American was virtually unanimous.

12. Furthermore, in 1990, the Rome Declaration established Institutionalised Political Dialogue between the Foreign Ministers of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, represented by the Rio Group.

13. The Institutionalised Dialogue between governments in the shape of the foreign ministers, and between the European and Latin American Parliaments, have played a fundamental role in strengthening mutual relations, and in particular in making progress on giving concrete expression to our 'new relations' with 'new instruments' which have been pushed ahead with over the last ten years. This has seen a clear cut and definitive fine-tuning of the institutional network linking the two regions. Here, it is worth stressing that over the last ten years, new 'ambitious and innovative' Agreements have been reached between the European Union and Central American and the Andean Community, Chile, Mercosur and Mexico; each one of these agreements in turn established its own institutional framework for bilateral dialogue. This fine-tuning of dialogue between the two regions reached a high point in 1999, which saw the beginning of the Summits of Presidents and Head of State and of Government of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean. Indeed, it was at the First Summit and in the words of the Rio Declaration, that the Head of State and Government in Latin American and the Caribbean and the European Union agreed to establish the Biregional Strategic Association. Since then, we have seen the Madrid and Guadalajara Summits, and the Fourth Summit is scheduled for Vienna in 2006.

15. From these Summits, have emerged the general features of Strategic Association in the political, economic and cooperation spheres, and the drive for specific Agreements to give the Association concrete form. A Biregional Group of Senior Civil Servants has also been set up now with the goal of monitoring and assessing how agreements are complied with, and also to prepare for the following Summit.

16. The major and growing role these Summits have played in strengthening mutual relations is of particular significance, both with regard to depending our common principles and values and establishing our shared objectives and the appropriate mechanisms to enable us to achieve them.

In particular, I should highlight the role played by the meetings of the Heads of State and governments of both regions in giving concrete shape to the objectives pursued and adopting the appropriate legal commitments in the shape of the Bilateral Association Agreement. The role played by the Summit here was particularly important in the EU Association Agreements signed with Mexico in 2000, and with Chile in 2002. Likewise, the Summits initiated and have paid particular attention to the negotiations to establish an Association between the EU and Mercosur, and most recently, it was the Guadalajara Summit which initiated the process which should lead to EU association agreements with Central America and with the Andean Community.

17. The Guadalajara Declaration by the Presidents and Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, issued by the Third Summit in May

2004, updated and deepened the agreements reached at the two previous Summits, and in particular, reiterated the commitment to consolidate the Biregional Strategic Association. It is worth specially highlighting the fact that the Guadalajara Summit saw the deepening of two of the key issues on the joint Euro-Latin American agenda: **multilateralism and social cohesion**.

18. The Guadalajara Declaration restated the shared vision of all the parties that an efficient multilateral system, based on international law and on solid international institutions, with the United Nations playing a central role, is essential if we are to achieve international peace and security, sustainable development and social progress.

19. The Strategic Association between Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union is essential for dealing with the attempts of the US Government to impose its own visions unilaterally on the rest of the planet. Globalisation without rules could condemn vast swathes of the world to marginalisation and stagnation. A New Economic Order leading to greater economic rationality is both necessary and feasible. But in order to bring it about, we require a massive concentration of strength to face up to the USA's attempt to impose its hegemony as a substitute for a higher order based on fair and efficient rules. Our Strategic Association, with over 60 participant countries, is the principal means of channelling the strength needed to push globalisation towards getting beyond the 'unipolarity' which exists today.

20. Furthermore, the Heads of State and Government of our two regions agreed to prioritise social cohesion as one of the major elements of the Biregional Strategic Association, and undertook to cooperate on eradicating poverty, inequality and social exclusion, describing them as affronts to human dignity which undermine democracy and threaten peace and stability.

21. One of the Strategic Association's crucial contributions is its ratification of the fact that a range of options on economic and social issues exists. The wealth of our countries' national experiences demonstrates the groundlessness of claims that there is a 'Single Ideology', which is universally valid when it comes to economic processes conducive to development. Any development strategy is a complex, multi-dimensional construction, and cannot be reduced to a simple set of technical recipes. Europe's experience in **market social economics, industrial policies and the welfare state**, is an outstanding point of reference when it comes to reconstructing the democratic debate around a broader set of economic options.

22. The establishment of the Strategic Association is without doubt a fundamental challenge for both the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean with international repercussions of the greatest significance in terms of the insertion of our regions in the globalisation process and, quite particularly, for Latin America and the Caribbean's own integration process.

23. We are constantly seeking the fullest and most efficient implementation of the impressively complete institutional format which our two regions have created: the Summits, the European and Latin American Parliamentary Meetings, and the meetings of the Foreign Ministers, alongside the EU Agreements with Mexico and with Chile, and the forthcoming signing of the EU Association Agreements with Mercosur, the Andean Community and Central America, are all essential milestones towards achieving the definitive consolidation of our Biregional Strategic Association.

24. The Strategic Association is a vast project, whose progress and construction call for a range of very demanding prerequisites. To begin with, a Europe which is solid and a Latin America and a Caribbean which are solidly integrated. At this level, no one can deny that at present, the situations here are far from symmetrical. While the debate on more Europe or more Europeans is clearly relevant, there is no doubting that the European Union has achieved a colossal amount of integration. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite the progress made here and there, we continue to be a region with very minimum levels of integration. The integration of our infrastructures, our energy parks and our efforts in the field of technology remain, to all intents and purposes, matters pending. To this we need to add the fact that political cooperation and integration, as a process, is still embryonic, and faces very powerful obstacles.

25. The Summits have set out a broad range of initiatives, and giving these concrete shape would constitute a most important step forward. And rather than adding fresh initiatives to the list, it would be more appropriate to produce a **Short Agenda** featuring a limited number of initiatives which could be more or less rapidly implemented and would thus generate fresh strength and fresh energy to tackle more far-reaching tasks of greater scope. Here, I would suggest four areas in which concrete initiatives could be undertaken, conducive to producing with practical effects in relatively short spaces of time:

- (i) Establishing a **voluntary monitoring system for monitoring Latin American democracies**, so as to have **early-warning mechanisms** on hand with regard to the political crises which constantly consume the strength of our region.
- (ii) Establishing a **joint proposal** for tackling the major debate on **United Nations reform**.
- (iii) Agreeing on a **joint investment programme** to support Latin America and the Caribbean's efforts to achieve integration in the energy sector.
- (iv) Devise a programme for spreading good national practice in the area of social economics, so as to broaden the range of options and successfully outface the absurd but pertinacious idea that there is a 'Single Ideology' and a single model in this area.