



Press release. Brussels January 28, 2013

## **Civil Society in Brussels pronounce themselves in view of the First Summit between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean States.**

Brussels, 28 January 2013. The Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC), the European Union (EU), and the presidents of the European Council and the European Commission have agreed in Santiago de Chile, the 26 and January 27, 2013, to renew and deepen their strategic partnership, under the theme: "Partnership for development: Promoting Investments of Social and Environmental Quality. "

The European and Latin American networks, Alop, Aprovev, Cifca, Grupo Sur Oidhaco as well as the European NGO confederation CONCORD, express their willingness for this partnership to be reflected in a more balanced, efficient and constructive relationship, based on complementarity and solidarity between the two regions. "From our side, we reaffirm the importance of an inclusive, plural and constructive social dialogue, in order to achieve the commitments laid out in the official statement of the Summit."

In Brussels, the undersigned networks recall the importance of trade policies that help ensure sustainable development and employment generation in both regions, based on cooperation and complementarity, solidarity and the fight against inequality and poverty. The recently ratified trade agreements with Colombia, Peru and Central America have raised serious concern among civil society due to the asymmetries of the two regions and the priority of economic interests over the guarantee of human and social-environmental rights. The agreements are more likely to weaken rather than strengthen the internal processes of subregional integration.

As stated in the VI Euro-Latin American -Caribbean Civil Society Forum, held in September 2012 in Santiago de Chile, the networks in Brussels reiterate their call for a change of direction towards an equitable integration of peoples, and the emergence of a global financial architecture that protects the rights of citizens. In this sense, both trade and financial flows, one of the main themes of the First EU - CELAC Summit, "must respect international law, in particular with regards to taxation, transparency, environmental protection, social security and decent work. "

Similarly, the networks strongly express their concern for the establishment of the EU-LAC Foundation in Hamburg, which has started functioning without proper legitimacy, consultation and participation of civil society. They express equal concern towards the lack of transparency in the functioning of the Latin American Investment Facility (LAIF), its lack of control and accountability towards civil society, and that the objectives of sustainable development and poverty reduction pursued by this mechanism are overshadowed by geopolitical and corporate interests of the EU.

Brussels based European and Latin American NGOs working in defense of an integral respect for human rights, welcome the creation of a bi-regional dialogue on gender issues to be launched by a specific high-level body. They are convinced that the inclusion of this perspective in the bi-regional partnership will strengthen gender equality, democracy, and promote fair and equal societies. The organizations ensure that "it is essential to open within this bi-regional dialogue a space dedicated to the eradication of violence against women in general and femicide in particular."

The recognition in the official declaration of the Summit of the Rights of Nature in the context of promoting sustainable development, is seen as another step forward. "We are convinced that to achieve a fair balance between the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with Nature".

In conclusion, the undersigned organizations believe that now more than ever, with the establishment in Latin America and the Caribbean of this bi-regional dialogue at the highest level within the CELAC, the voices of the people must be taken into account promptly and actively. This constitutes a basic guarantee for social legitimacy and democratic governance when dealing with determination the challenges facing the two continents. In this sense they congratulate the more than 400 organizations from the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean that have participated this weekend in the People's Summit. This is a crucial and integral component of any democracy, and from where the conclusions of the meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the two regions gathered in the Chilean capital will be monitored.