



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of the European Council  
Herman Van Rompuy  
at the opening of the EU-CELAC Summit**

I am very pleased to be here today in Santiago. I would like to thank Chile and you, Mr President, for welcoming us so warmly. The organization of such an important event is by no means a small feat and we are very grateful for your efforts.

The relationship between Europe and the Americas goes back more than 500 years. Our close political and economic ties are founded on profound cultural affinities and on strong and multiple links between our peoples, built up over the centuries.

As a result of this shared journey through history, we are united in our commitment to the universal values of human rights and democracy. We are united in believing that the welfare and aspirations of our citizens must be placed at the heart of the work of the State and that the people have to decide on this. This common vision underpins a relationship which is close, and becoming even closer. Since 1999, we have deepened our “strategic partnership” through the process of summits between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Together the countries from our regions represent roughly one third of the UN membership of the General Assembly, more than a billion citizens and around one-third of the global economic output. Some of our countries sit at the UN Security Council and the G20. We already do a lot together, and we will continue to do more.

This is already the 7th Summit between our regions, and this meeting is notable for bringing CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for the first time to the table.

**P R E S S**

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You can imagine that the European Union, from our own experience of integration, views with great interest and sympathy the ambitious project of political, economic, social and cultural cooperation that CELAC represents. But regional integration endeavours are also heavily anchored in Latin America's common political culture and this is the best guarantee for success.

Globalisation means that our economic destinies are intertwined, a realisation that has been further reinforced during the global financial crisis of the past years. Let me reassure you that the European Union has taken resolute action to address the causes and effects of the crisis in the eurozone. Unrelenting efforts both in individual countries and together as a Union, are starting to bear fruit. I am confident to say that Europe has turned the corner, while much remains to be done. In order to deepen our European Monetary Union and to enhance our overall competitiveness.

Of course our level of prosperity and social protection are different and cycles are not aligned. But political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic must continue to take decisive action. I applaud the growth that has been maintained by many Latin American Countries, while the European Union strives to restore its own growth and employment levels. These trends cannot be but mutually reinforcing. At the same time we have to distribute the results of this growth more evenly among all.

We have to continue fighting inequalities, although tens of millions of people in this part of the world have already been lifted out of poverty.

We value our CELAC relationship deeply, because we know we have a strong partner in you with whom to address the challenges we all have to face. CELAC and CELAC countries play an important role in the international community, not only economically, but also politically. We need to remain ambitious and forward-looking:

To counter the global challenges, we need political globalisation, and a value driven movement. The fact that we share common values is an important element in pursuing common goals in our Foreign Policy, based on the rule of law, human rights and peace and security. This is particularly important when dealing with current international crises such as in the Middle East or in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

On many global issues, our cooperation is already deeply enshrined. I welcome the fact that we are committing ourselves to continue collaboration to strengthen international Human Rights bodies, to achieve sustainable development. It is also important that we continue our cooperation on climate change in a constructive spirit of engagement.

The theme of the summit is particularly pertinent in this respect. The promotion of investment of social and environmental quality is a central element for achieving sustainable development on both sides. It is at the heart of our European social models. I also welcome that the Action Plan which guides our cooperation is strengthened and that we are adding two new areas: 1) protecting women's rights in terms of political participation, eradication of violence against women as well as economic empowerment; 2) promoting investments and entrepreneurship for sustainable development.

We will continue to strengthen our trade and investment relationships. The European Union is already the main investor in the region. The recently concluded free trade agreement with Colombia and Peru and the signed Association Agreement with Central America, as well as the Economic Partnership Agreement with the Caribbean countries, are important building blocks for even closer economic ties. We are negotiating with MERCOSUR an Association Agreement (including Free Trade Agreement). We already have Free Trade Agreements with Chile and Mexico. Trade is a driver for growth.

Last but not least, we are pleased to see the EU-LAC Foundation up and running, and we look forward to the conclusion of negotiations for turning it into a fully-fledged international organisation, as soon as possible. On its side, the EU will spare no effort to achieve this within the next few months.

Ladies and gentlemen, together we can and should make a real difference for our societies and in world affairs. I am confident that our discussions today and tomorrow will help us to achieve this goal.

To quote the Chilean poetess Gabriela Mistral, the first Latin-American to receive (in 1945) the Nobel prize for literature:

*"Donde haya un árbol que plantar, plántalo tú;*

*Donde haya un error que enmendar, enmiéndalo tú.*

*Donde haya un esfuerzo que todos esquivan, hazlo tú.*

*Sé tú el que aparta la piedra del camino"*

*"Where there is a tree to plant, you should plant it. Where there is a mistake to amend, you should amend it. And where there is an effort they all avoid to make, you should make it. You the one that clears the way"*

Respondamos unidos a esta llamada a la acción.