

Country: Kingdom of Sweden/ Republic of Finland

Commission: International Summit of Madrid EU-CELAC

Topic: What areas of cooperation to strengthen between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean?

Nowadays, the world is deeply impacted by globalization and because of it, countries, especially developing ones, have to deal with hugely important issues whether in the political, economic, social or environmental sector. The joint delegation of Sweden and Finland is deeply concerned by this and believes that as developed countries, it is our duty to help those struggling nations in their transition so that we can all achieve a fair and sustainable society. In this context, the UE-CELAC meetings aim at strengthening the relations between the two continents in order to share knowledge and helping all parties achieve sustainable development. Sweden has always been in favor of collaboration with Latin America and has in fact, in 2015, relaunched its support and aid to the continent (especially Bolivia Colombia and Guatemala) with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Finland has also been involved in development collaboration through numerous different tools such as the Institutional Cooperation Instrument (ICI), Finnfund, Finnpartnership, local cooperation funds, the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) or NGOs. It is with this spirit in mind that the delegation wishes to strengthen collaboration in order to help solve the numerous issues of all kinds in Latin America while still benefiting from it.

First of all, there are a lot of serious social problems in Latin America such as education, safe access to critical infrastructure, migratory flux or women's rights. Regarding those issues, we are proud to say that in research and innovation, Finnish actors such as the Academy of Finland, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES) and VTT are very involved in the continent, especially in Brazil and Chile. There are ongoing research projects in various scientific disciplines. Moreover, the Swedish capital has also hosted the Latin America and the Caribbean Focus at the Stockholm International Water Institute's World Water Week in 2018 emphasizing the need for Latin America to progress towards a wiser combination of green and traditional infrastructure to satisfy the water needs of the 21st century and so that all Latin Americans can get safe access to water infrastructure. The kingdom believes the dialogue should be extended to all critical infrastructure (housing etc.) as well as natural disaster damage control. Regarding the migratory flux of Latin Americans in Sweden, the country has welcomed close to 70,000 Latin Americans since 2016. However, the Swedish asylum policy has taken a stricter turn since the country received a record-breaking number of asylum seekers in 2015. Nonetheless, it tries to help to the most of its ability to help asylum seekers and refugees just like in 2019 when the country provided SEK 15.2 million (1.4 million € approximatively) to help UNICEF provide lifesaving aid to over 165,000 migrant children and their families who left Venezuela as well as host communities across Latin America and the Caribbean. NGOs such as Solidarity Sweden-Latin America which is a Swedish solidarity organization that works together with popular movements in Latin America help make these people heard and bring us one step closer towards justice and a better society. Ultimately, regarding women's rights, Finland is one of the world's leading countries in fostering gender equality. It was the first country to grant women full political rights and wants to nurture that legacy. Gender equality is a social innovation that has generated social renewal and prosperity, as the contribution of both women and men has been accessible. Finland propels a worldwide commitment to gender equality and thinks it is a duty to provide social security

and equal rights for all and that, in order to achieve that, more specific legislation on gender equality needs to be implemented for Latin American countries.

Secondly, the economic aspect of the UE-CELAC cooperation is one of the most important because both continents could hugely benefit from it. Finland's interests in Latin America and the Caribbean have traditionally been of the economic kind. In addition to exports, imports of key products have lately grown in importance, as have mutual investments. Exporting know-how and services is also becoming a more important part of bilateral relations. The continent is a significant trade partner in certain sectors, and in mining equipment, for instance, it accounts for one fifth of Finland's exports. Latin America is also where 11% of Swedish exports go (thanks to a Free Trade Agreement). It is considered as the world's fourth largest economy. Sweden and Finland, as wealthy countries with small, export-led economies, have a strong interest in maintaining good bilateral commercial and investment ties with Latin American countries, and more broadly, keeping the EU's trade policy as liberal as possible. Moreover, Latin America, with its resources and culture has potential to make for a great economic cooperation with the European Union. Hence, the delegation strongly believes members of MERCOSUR and UE should meet and discuss furthermore the terms of the Free Trade Agreement as it believes an economic collaboration could benefit Europe and Latin America and numerous ways.

Thirdly, it is clear to Sweden and Finland that a sustainable and prosper society cannot be achieved if there is no stable political system. Indeed, it seems as though the political issues in Latin America are stopping its development and real change can only happen if citizens trust in the political system and corruption is eradicated. Political values that are of the utmost importance for both countries are respect for human rights and individual freedoms, transparency, and access to public documents. Those values are the ones the joint delegation stands for when it comes to solving the political issues in Latin America and would advocate for stricter policies and sanctions (especially for corruption cases) as well as transparency from the government to make the people trust in it.

Lastly, one of the most fast-growing concerns in today's world, and the last item to achieve sustainable development is to be discussed: the environment. Latin America concentrates a huge amount of biodiversity and natural resources that need to be protected at all costs. In most of these countries, the economic development of the last decade has often happened at the expense of the long-term use of natural resources and caused deforestation and soil erosion. Air and water pollution and environmental toxins impair people's access to water and adversely affect their health as well as agriculture. Sida supports efforts to reduce the impact of environmental problems and climate change, including by improving water and sewage systems. One example is the Agua Tuya Foundation in which Sweden, in collaboration with several municipalities, works for the sustainable use of water. A new sewage treatment plant in the Cliza area of Bolivia is one of the results – where wastewater is now purified and can be used in agriculture, instead of flowing out into the nearby river. The Swedish organization SIDA also supports the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), which works to increase the environmental awareness of young people and children. The independent institute CEDLA finances research and knowledge development in relation to Bolivia's environmental challenges. Finland has also adapted its economic relations to these modern challenges, and, for instance, Peru's abundant natural resources offer potential for cooperation by Finnish companies in sectors such as sustainable forestry, energy efficiency, renewable energy and environmentally

friendly technology. Sustainable use of natural resources, preparing for climate change and improving the overall level of competence in Peru are key elements in cooperation between Peru and Finland. Finland has been investing in many eco-friendly projects as well, in sectors like solar power, hydropower or forestry in order to help those countries sustainably use energy and preserve their environment.

Finally, During the years of the armed conflict, there has been many serious violations of human rights. Since 1985, almost seven million Colombians have been forced to flee their homes. Many people have lost their land, on which they rely on for their livelihoods and threats against human rights defenders have increased. Women and those defending natural resources are particularly vulnerable. In response, Sweden is cooperating with Diakonia, the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation and the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR). One example of this kind of intervention is the international accompaniment program, which increases the political cost of threatening human rights defenders and social leaders.

To conclude, Sweden and Finland have a long history of cooperation with Latin American countries in order to achieve sustainable development, whether in economic free trade agreements, social support or even environmental action on the continent. The delegation encourages European countries to continue working with the CELAC in order to further the collaboration between the two continents in a relation that will profit both parties. We hope to do this while finding solutions to our world's modern issues respecting human rights and principles like democracy and the protection of the environment.