



EU-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit

Spanish Presidency sees summit as a golden opportunity to establish deeper, more concrete and more useful cooperation

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The Spanish Presidency of the EU sees the summit with Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Madrid this Tuesday, as a “golden opportunity” to establish deeper and more concrete relations between two regions that can also cooperate productively at a global level.

The summit is “one of the central points on the Spanish Presidency’s agenda”, Spanish government sources said this week in a briefing, stressing that Madrid has actively promoted the relationship with Latin America ever since it joined the EU, and that Spain is the “natural bridge” between the two regions.

Now, “the moment has come to give the bi-regional relations new depth, in order that they may be more intense, more useful and able to respond to international circumstances”.

The Spanish Presidency has “worked hard” for this meeting to be a success and hopes it will end with an ambitious final declaration, with the creation of a foundation to enable civil society to participate in the construction of the bi-regional relations, and with the approval of an action plan, which will be the first to be adopted at a EU-LAC summit.

This action plan includes cooperation programmes in five areas: science, technology and innovation; the environment, climate change and energy; regional integration and cohesion; education and employment and the battle against drugs.

The final declaration of the summit, which is being held under the theme of “innovation and technology for sustainable development and social inclusion”, will also reiterate the fact that the two regions are “partners in tackling global challenges”, starting with “overcoming the crisis” and the possibilities for creating “a new international financial architecture”.

The instruments to be approved at the summit are intended to “guarantee the work will continue” and to establish financing mechanisms to enable this.

Sub-regional and bilateral summits

As well as the plenary meeting, four sub-regional summits will be held, starting with the EU-CARIFORUM, on Monday 17; a summit with Mercosur, held on the same day, and on Wednesday a summit with the Andean Community and another with Central America. Two bilateral meetings were also programmed, with Mexico and Chile, on 16 and 17 May respectively.

The summit with Mercosur comes as the European Commission, after carrying out "extremely in-depth work", has approved the resumption of talks for an association agreement. An EU-Mercosur treaty would create the biggest free trade area in the world and the Spanish Presidency has said it is very pleased that these talks, suspended since 2004, are to resume.

In the summit with Central America, the Presidency hopes to formalise the association agreement that is currently being finalised.

In the meeting with the Andean countries, a free trade agreement will be signed with Colombia and Peru, and this will be open to other countries in the zone. This agreement, the sources explained, "involves political dialogue and cooperation" and includes a "supervision clause" in the area of human rights, which allows for the possibility of suspending the treaty with one of the parties.

In the summit between the EU and the CARIFORUM countries, with which it already has an economic association agreement, it is hoped to lay the foundations for political dialogue.

Finally, in the bilateral summit with Mexico, held in Cantabria on Sunday, instead of Madrid, the first Joint Executive Plan will be approved to widen cooperation in many areas, including the overhaul of the UN and the fight against organised crime.

In the summit with Chile, a roadmap for cooperation will be established in two main areas: the first being education, and the second, energy, the environment and climate change.

All the countries from the American side will be represented at the highest level in the plenary meeting, except Honduras, Cuba and Uruguay. In the case of Honduras, an agreement has been reached that President Lobo, the winner of the November elections organised after the coup d'etat that deposed Manuel Zelaya, will attend the Central American summit, but not the plenary. Cuba will be represented at ministerial level, and the President of Uruguay, José Mujica, will not attend due to medical advice.

On the European Union side, 25 of the 27 member countries have confirmed they will be taking part (there has been no response as yet from the United Kingdom or Greece), of which at least 14 will be represented by heads of state or government leaders, as well as the leaders of three candidate countries, Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.