

Private Roundtable Discussion: A Broadened Transatlantic Relation and the Future of the Multilateral System

September 22, 2023

3:00 to 4:30 pm (EDT)

Venue: Baha'i International Community Centre

(866 United Nations Plaza #120, New York, NY 10017, United States)

1. Background

On July 1, 2023, Spain assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. As the Spanish Government's [Foreign Action Strategy 2021-2024](#) reflects, Spain is committed to a more integrated European Union and sees Latin America and the Caribbean as key partners, based on shared values, interests, and priorities on international issues. Thus, the Spanish Presidency offers a unique opportunity to promote an enhanced transatlantic relationship between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, while engaging the United States as a strategic partner, focusing on common strategic priorities such as defending the international rules-based order and advancing the digital and green transitions.

The countries of the EU and the Americas make up one-third of the membership of the United Nations and are highly represented in intergovernmental initiatives such as the G20. A strategic alignment of these regions would be decisive in transforming the multilateral agenda and addressing global challenges.

In this context, Club de Madrid and the Atlantic Council, with the support of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, are partnering to leverage Spain's efforts to institutionalize EU-LAC cooperation with a broadened transatlantic focus, including the United States as a key geopolitical ally in building the interregional integration agenda.

To this end, both organizations are convening a series of consultations on issues related to democracy, human rights, the rules-based order, and the twin transitions.

On 22 September, on the sidelines of the High-Level Debate of the United Nations General Assembly, Club de Madrid and the Atlantic Council are holding a private roundtable discussion titled, "A Broadened Transatlantic Relation and the Future of the Multilateral System."

This discussion will serve as an opportunity to discuss the preliminary findings of previous consultations held in the context of this partnership, which will culminate in a policy report to be published in December.

2. Session Description and Objective

Using the results of the EU-CELAC Summit and its roadmap, the session is aimed at addressing ways in which the countries of the European Union and the Americas can partner together on the basis of their commitment to strengthen multilateralism and advance green and digital transitions.

Strengthening the multilateral system and protecting the rules-based order

Transatlantic relations have historically been characterized by close cooperation and continuous engagement around common interests and values. This partnership has been essential in building and strengthening a multilateral system based on shared principles of democracy, rule of law, and fairness. Similarly, the expanded transatlantic relations with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are based on history and shared social, cultural, and political values. However, the partnership is fraught with a paradox: despite much in common, integration between the EU and the Americas remains far from its potential.

In recent years, the economic impact of COVID-19, technological breakthroughs in social media and artificial intelligence, the rise of disinformation, and the increasing influence of non-democratic geopolitical actors have challenged democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the global rules-based order. Amid rising geopolitical challenges and widespread skepticism about the premise that [democracy can deliver prosperity](#), cooperation between the European Union and the Americas to strengthen the global enabling environment for democracy to thrive and endure is as important as ever.

The green transition

The worsening and increasingly frequent effects of climate change are accelerating the need for a green transition. Following significant declines during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 saw an uptick in global carbon emissions by almost 1 percent and an increase in emissions from oil by 2.5 percent. Despite this rise, Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries contribute less than 10 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, LAC faces the indirect effects of a fossil fuel-driven global energy system, from economic shocks due to rising oil and natural gas prices, stronger climate-related disasters, and limits on the region's export potential due to new clean energy domestic policies across the United States and the European Union.

Therefore, the transatlantic community has a role to play as a partner in supporting LAC's green transition. The region holds significant renewable energy potential, including high solar penetration, wind capacity, and installed hydropower. Furthermore, the green transition lies at the intersection of the EU, the United States, and LAC's shared interests. Transitioning to clean energies has positive economic effects on trade and reaching development goals as well as strengthening public-private partnerships. Partnering with LAC to advance the green transition would also further the shared geostrategic interests of the EU and the United States, particularly in their efforts to achieve open strategic autonomy and strengthen supply chain resilience, respectively. The challenge and opportunity are working together across continents with governments, the private sector, civil society, and international financial institutions to create cost-effective and sustainable energy models across LAC. There is currently no partnership more equipped with the necessary financial resources, expertise, natural wealth, and political will to undertake the green transition than that between the transatlantic community and LAC.

The digital transition

The digitization of Latin America and the Caribbean has increasingly become a matter of global importance, encompassing crucial aspects such as connectivity, accessibility, infrastructure development, data protection, digital trade, internet governance, artificial intelligence, and digital policy discourse. The joint declaration of the historic EU-CELAC Summit 2023 stressed, “the importance of cooperating to promote a responsible human-centric, values-based and inclusive model of digital transformation that protects privacy as a fundamental right, increases digital connectivity and cybersecurity, aims at closing digital gaps, fosters the trustworthy development and use of Artificial Intelligence, and contributes to trust in the digital economy.” Existing collaborations like the [EU-Latin America and the Caribbean’s Digital Alliance](#) allow countries to converse and cooperate on a strategic framework building on existing EU-LAC digital cooperation.

Digital transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean represents a critical avenue for economic development, social progress, and global cooperation. However, gaps in access to digital technology in Latin America and the Caribbean hinder the streamlined implementation of digital programs. Similarly, the region lacks the infrastructure or regulatory framework necessary to tackle concerns over digital privacy, cybersecurity, the ethical use of artificial intelligence, and others. Bridging this digital divide holds the promise of reducing inequality, increasing social inclusion, and unlocking economic opportunities.

As the region continues to embrace digital technologies in sectors ranging from digital government to environmental sustainability and beyond, the European Union and the United States, with their expertise in digital innovation, are uniquely positioned to forge partnerships and provide invaluable support. This endeavor not only aligns with global sustainable development goals but also strengthens the bonds of cooperation between Europe, Latin America, and the United States, contributing to a more interconnected and prosperous world.

Agenda

3:00 – 3:05 p.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Danilo Türk, President of CdM, President of Slovenia (2007-2012)

Jason Marczak, *Senior Director, Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center*, Atlantic Council

3:05 – 4:25 p.m.

Moderated Conversation

1. Strengthening the multilateral system and protecting the rules-based order
2. The green transition
3. The digital transition

Moderator: **Diego Area**, *Deputy Director, Strategic Development, Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center*, Atlantic Council

Discussants:

- Carlos **Alvarado**, President of Costa Rica (2018-2022)
- Tarja **Halonon**, President of the Republic of Finland (2000-2012)
- Danilo **Türk**, President of CdM, President of Slovenia (2007-2012)
- María Elena **Agüero**, Secretary-General, Club de Madrid



- Irene **Braam**, Executive Director, Bertelsmann USA
- María Fernanda **Espinosa**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador and 73rd President of the United Nations General Assembly, Advisor of Club de Madrid
- Cornel **Feruță**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Romania to the UN
- Luis **Jiménez-McInnis**, Director, External Relations, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, Pan American Health Organization
- Tony **Jones**, Advisor of CdM, Executive Director of GFNA
- Jessye **Lapenn**, Ambassador, Senior Coordinator for Atlantic Cooperation, Permanent Representation of the USA to the UN
- Susana **Malcorra**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship for the Republic of Argentina, Advisor of Club de Madrid
- Jason **Marczak**, Senior Director, Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, Atlantic Council
- Aldo **Natalizia**, Corporate Affairs Director, Tigo Paraguay
- Daniel **Perell**, Representative of the Baha'i Community at the UN Office, Baha'i International Community
- Ted **Piconne**, Chief Engagement Officer at World Justice Project & Senior Non-resident Fellow at Brookings Foreign Policy
- José Manuel **Salazar-Xirinachs**, Executive Secretary, ECLAC
- Jay **Tannon**, Advisor of CdM, Senior Counsel at DLA Piper
- Tobias **Thyberg**, Head of Department for UN Policy, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Antonio **Vargas**, Head of Public Policy for Iberia at AWS Spain
- Sabina **Veksler**, Managing Director Official Institutions Coverage – Americas, BNP Paribas
- Ana Paula **Zacarias**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the UN

4:25 – 4:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Danilo Türk, President of CdM, President of Slovenia (2007-2012)

Guiding questions

I. **Strengthening the multilateral system and protecting the rules-based order**

At our joint consultations, participants proposed recommendations including establishing a formal space for coordination between the EU-CELAC Summit and Summit of the Americas; creating a well-funded cooperation program for the development of science, technology, and innovation capabilities in Latin America; and equipping existing multilateral institutions with the right tools to deliver on their mandates, such as by recapitalizing the Inter-American Development Bank.

Given the considerable influence that these regions jointly hold in the multilateral space, what specific reforms or proposals should they prioritize in their efforts to transform the multilateral agenda to address global challenges and ensure peace and prosperity? What other strategies, instruments, or priorities do you believe that partners in Europe and the Americas should seek to advance in future iterations of the EU-CELAC Summit and Summit of the Americas? How can the inclusion of the United States as a strategic ally for both regions

strengthen the EU-CELAC partnership's efforts to protect and strengthen multilateralism and the rules-based order, and what areas of cooperation can be explored with the United States in this regard?

How could the implementation of the EU-CELAC declaration and its road map be supported within the United Nations and the broader multilateral system? How can the EU-CELAC partnership contribute to ongoing UN system reform efforts, and what role can these regions play in defending the rules-based order, and promoting effective and inclusive global governance?

II. The green transition

At our consultation on the green transition, participants highlighted the importance of meeting financial commitments to support low- and middle-income countries in addressing climate change; maintaining regular high-level forums for discussing standards harmonization and best practices sharing; and leveraging multilateral development banks to deploy risk abatement mechanisms (such as guarantees and blended finance instruments) at the scale needed to capitalize on LAC's clean energy potential.

What mechanisms and partnerships have been particularly effective in facilitating the coordination and harmonization of environmental standards in Europe and the Americas? What other solutions do you believe should be implemented to accelerate the green transition in Europe and the Americas?

III. The digital transition

During our consultation focused on the digital transition, we identified the digitization of government processes and bridging gaps in access to digital technology in Latin America and the Caribbean as the key priorities for future cooperation to advance the digital transition in Europe and the Americas.

To that end, how can the EU collaborate with the United States and LAC to ensure that a larger segment of the population can benefit from the digital transition? What are the best applications of technology for improving the quality of public administration in Europe and the Americas? What successful models and initiatives can or should be adapted to the LAC context?

[Club de Madrid \(CdM\)](#) is the world's largest forum of democratic former presidents and prime ministers, who use their individual and collective leadership, as well as their global reach, to strengthen inclusive democratic practice and improve the well-being of people around the world. The strengthening and promotion of a more robust multilateral system that provides global solutions to common challenges through inclusive cooperation that leaves no one behind has also been one of the essential strategic pillars of the organization.

The Atlantic Council's nonpartisan [Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center](#) (AALAC) broadens understanding of regional transformations while demonstrating why Latin America and the Caribbean matter for the world. The Center focuses on pressing political, economic, and social issues that will define the region's trajectory, proposing constructive, results-oriented solutions to inform public sector, business, and multilateral action based on a shared vision for a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future.