



Information session on preparations of  
the IV CELAC-EU Summit and the 2025 LAC-EU Civil Society Forum  
Wednesday 10 September 2025  
Online Meeting

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## Executive Summary

As part of the ongoing dialogue with civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs) within the framework of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, held an online information session on 10 September 2025. The session provided updates on the IV CELAC-EU Summit 2025 (Santa Marta, Colombia, 9-10 November 2025), and the preparations of the 2025 LAC-EU Civil Society Forum (same location, 7-8 November), and offered participants the opportunity to raise questions and seek clarifications. The information session follows up on a consultation session held on 29 April 2025, during which an updated overview was provided on the progress in the implementation of the 2023-2025 CELAC-EU Roadmap, with particular emphasis on preparations for the IV CELAC-EU Summit, and on the engagement with civil society in the run-up to the IV CELAC-EU Summit.

The meeting opened with a welcome address by **Erica Gerretsen, Director, INTPA G Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace**, who highlighted that the information session reflects the strong commitment to close collaboration and continued dialogue with CSOs within the framework of EU-LAC bilateral relations. The meeting is a follow-up on the April 2025 session that discussed the implementation of the 2023-2025 CELAC-EU Roadmap and provided updates on the IV CELAC-EU Summit 2025 and the planned 2025 LAC-EU Civil Society Forum. Since then, significant progress has been made, including on the confirmation of the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum dates in November 2025; the establishment of a Steering Group with CSOs from both regions; and the launch of an open [call for expressions of interest](#) inviting CSOs to apply for participation in the Forum before 14 September (23:59 CEST).

Subsequently, **José Ignacio Juliao Ali, Head of the CELAC Office at the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, briefed the floor on the state of play of the upcoming IV CELAC-EU Summit, which is organised at a strategic point, coinciding with COP30 in Brazil. Colombia is working with the national coordinators of the CELAC countries on the draft of the CELAC-EU 2025/Santa Marta Declaration, a central document that seeks to guarantee concrete and measurable commitments on political, economic, social, and environmental cooperation. He highlighted the main thematic axes of the Summit: triple transition (environmental/energy, digital, and social); health self-sufficiency and equitable access to medicines; sustainable agriculture and food security; and gender equality.

**Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui, Director/Deputy Managing Director for the Americas, EEAS**, also shared insights into the Summit, which will be a key event in engagement with the region, as it strengthens the EU's partnership with CELAC. The Summit will be an opportunity to deepen the relationship in key areas: democracy and multilateralism; improving trade and economic ties; climate, energy, and regional interconnections; and security and the fight against organized crime. There is also great importance attached to the triple green, digital, and fair transition, where the Global

Gateway strategy is the spearhead for mobilising transformative sustainable investments. The role of CSOs is crucial, especially in light of the reduced spaces in CSOs in LAC, which is why it is imperative to defend them and organise meetings such as the upcoming LAC-EU Civil Society Forum. The floor then engaged in an open discussion, raising questions and providing suggestions.

Subsequently, **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** briefed the floor about the state of play of the upcoming LAC-EU Civil Society Forum, highlighting its purpose of ensuring that CSOs' proposals inform the discussions of the IV CELAC-EU Summit and contribute to guiding high-level debates and decisions toward more sustainable, fair, and inclusive development. It is foreseen that the Forum will adopt a Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society, which would be a roadmap that will synthesise consensus and recommendations.

**Félix Fernández-Shaw, Director INTPA B Latin America & The Caribbean; Relations with Overseas Countries & Territories** explained that the call for candidacies to participate in the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum is open until 14 September (23:59 CEST), and that the selection process is being jointly designed by Colombia and the EU. Special attention is being given to ensuring the inclusion of youth, feminist, indigenous groups, environmental, and community organisations, with a view to achieving a balanced geographic and thematic representation between LAC and EU countries.

**Susana Eróstegui, Executive Director of the Bolivian Network for International Cooperation**, representing the Articulation Table of National Associations of NGOs and Regional Platforms of Latin America and the Caribbean (MESA) and **Andrés Rodríguez, Youth Sounding Board Colombia**, briefed participants on the composition of the Steering Group, the work done thus far, the draft agenda including the organisation of the thematic sessions, and the planned next steps. This was followed by a question-and-answer session from the floor.

**José Ignacio Juliao Ali** and **Félix Fernández-Shaw** closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation. They underlined that CSOs are part of the work carried out between the two regions, stressing the importance of taking their views into account and ensuring their active participations in the debates and exchanges of ideas.

The main next steps and takeaways are:

- Ongoing work to finalise the preparations for the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum, including the agenda, sessions, and draft Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society.
- The Forum's Joint Declaration, drafted by the Steering Group, will be shaped by the discussions and outcomes of the Forum's sessions.
- CSOs are invited to submit [expressions of interest](#) to participate in the Forum by 14 September 2025, 23:59 CEST.

- CSOs are encouraged to follow the minutes of the Steering Group meetings, available on [Capacity4Dev](#) and the [PFD Dialogue Space](#), and to provide feedback and suggestions to the Steering Group members.
- The Forum will only be able to host up to 200 participants from civil society onsite. While the main sessions will be webstreamed, it will not be possible to actively participate and engage virtually.
- Selection criteria for the participation Forum are being jointly designed by Colombia and the EU and will ensure balanced geographic and thematic coverage across LAC and EU countries, as well as the inclusion of diverse civil society actors.
- Work is ongoing on the 2025-2027 CELAC-EU Roadmap.
- CSOs expressed repeated interest in the bi-regional care pact, health, youth inclusion, just transition and climate change, and the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda.
- Suggestions were raised for a follow-up report or mechanism regarding to track developments between Summits and Forums.

## Welcome notes

**Erica Gerretsen, Director, INTPA G Human, Development, Migration, Governance and Peace** welcomed everyone to the information session on the preparations of the IV CELAC-EU Summit and the 2025 LAC-EU Civil Society Forum, highlighting that it reflects the strong commitment to close collaboration and continued dialogue with CSOs within the framework of EU-CELAC bilateral relations. The meeting follows up on the April 2025 session with CSOs that discussed the implementation of the 2023-2025 CELAC-EU Roadmap and the initial preparations for the upcoming IV CELAC-EU Summit and LAC-EU Civil Society Forum. Since then, significant progress has been made including on: confirming the dates of the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum on 7-8 November 2025 in Santa Marta; establishing a Steering Group with CSOs from both regions, currently designing the draft agenda of the Forum; and launching an open [call for expressions of interest](#) inviting CSOs to apply for participation in the Forum. Erica Gerretsen reiterated that the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum aims to be as inclusive as possible. She invited participants to provide contributions and suggestions on the Forum's draft agenda to the Steering Group, underlining the major role that CSOs play in shaping bi-regional relations.

## State of play of the IV CELAC-EU Summit

**José Ignacio Juliao Ali, Head of the CELAC Office at the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, briefed the floor on the state of play of the upcoming IV CELAC-EU Summit. Scheduled for 9-10 November 2025 in Santa Marta, the Summit will bring together Heads of State and Government, international organisations, and representatives of the private sector and CSOs. The Summit is organised at a strategic point, coinciding with COP30 in Brazil. This will provide greater international visibility and reinforce the key issues of climate change, sustainability, and energy transition, while also serving to assess progress made and strengthen links between the two regions. Colombia is working

with the national coordinators of the CELAC countries on the draft of the CELAC-EU 2025/Santa Marta Declaration, a central document that seeks to guarantee concrete and measurable commitments on political, economic, social, and environmental cooperation. The negotiation process has been carried out in two phases: first, an intra-regional phase where the CELAC countries build a common position based on consensus, and second, the sharing of the text with the EU to open bi-regional negotiations. The process is directly connected to the CELAC-EU Roadmap 2025–2027 and to the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda, which is mobilising resources, investments, and cooperation for sustainable infrastructure, digitalisation, the green transition, health resilience and human development. Some of the objectives are to define the cooperation roadmap, prioritising a fair energy transition, sustainable development, and inclusive digitalisation. José Ignacio Juliao Ali reiterated that the thematic axes of the Summit include the triple transition (energy, digital, and environmental); health self-sufficiency and equitable access to medicines; sustainable agriculture and food security; and gender equality.

**Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui, Director/Deputy Managing Director for the Americas, EEAS,** explained that, amidst the turbulent geopolitical situation, it is important for the two regions to convey a message of opportunities, solutions, and cooperation – one that is hoped to be reflected in the Summit. He underlined that LAC is a close, democratic partner for the EU, and stressed the importance of finding common global solutions together. This, he noted, is the rationale behind what we aspire to achieve and why Summits are valuable, as they crystallise such types of political commitments at the highest level. Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui highlighted the need for global solutions and common interests about issues related to multilateralism, peace and security, and the reform of the international system. Agreements with Mexico and Mercosur mark a milestone in this regard, indicating that the region is part of the solution, albeit the challenges faced. He underlined that the IV CELAC-EU Summit will be a key event for engagement with the region, strengthening the EU's partnership with CELAC and providing an opportunity to deepen the relationship in key areas: democracy and multilateralism; improving trade and economic ties; climate, energy, and regional interconnections; and security and the fight against organised crime. On economic relations, he noted that 95% of CELAC's GDP would be covered by preferential economic agreements, an unparalleled figure. He further underlined the importance attached to the triple green, digital, and fair transition, where the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda serves as the spearhead for mobilising transformative sustainable investments. He also highlighted the crucial role of CSOs, especially in light of the shrinking civic space in parts of LAC, making it imperative to defend them and to organise meetings such as the upcoming LAC-EU Civil Society Forum. This, he explained, goes hand in hand with public policies that counter restrictions on fundamental freedoms and rights at all levels. Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui added that 2025 must be a delivery year, and it is important to focus on a positive agenda based on deliverables. An EU and CELAC Foreign Ministers meeting is planned for 24 September 2025 in New York, on the sidelines of the High-level Segment of the 80th UN General Assembly, a timely opportunity to show commitment. To conclude, he reaffirmed that the EU attaches great importance to its relationship with LAC and with CSOs, and is committed to working hand-in-hand in the run-up to the Summit.

## Open discussion

Following the presentations, the floor engaged in an open discussion regarding the upcoming IV CELAC-EU Summit.

**MESA** enquired about the bi-regional health and care pacts, and whether information could be shared on their current state of play, if they are expected to be adopted during the Summit, and how the process will unfold. **La Coordinadora** also enquired whether it would be possible to access the draft bi-regional health and care pacts, as well as the draft Summit declaration, so that CSOs could offer input. **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** confirmed that the bi-regional health and care pacts are among the priority areas being addressed by both regions and will constitute deliverables of the Summit. **Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui** underlined the importance of these pacts, noting that political agreements will be essential to achieving deliverables. He recalled that there has long been formal, informal, and institutional dialogue, with the EU-LAC Foundation playing an important role, as well as CSOs by providing input and insights. It is hoped to have a specific deliverable for the bi-regional Pact on Care, backed by the political support of both regions. Regarding the Summit declaration, **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** clarified that it will be shared with CSOs once it is signed by the Heads of State and Government.

**LATINDAD** raised a question about the possibility of engaging and exchanging with CSOs in a more formal manner within the framework of the upcoming Summit, and whether it would be possible to present ideas for inclusion in the official declaration of the Heads of State and Government. **Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui** highlighted that the Steering Group has proven to be a useful platform to put forward proposals and reach consensus, while acknowledging the challenges owed to the large number of CSOs. He added that continued contributions through the Steering Group would be useful.

**Climate Action Network Europe** expressed appreciation for the work done on just transition, which will be a major theme at COP30. They voiced the hope that leaders from both regions would support a global just transition mechanism encompassing all sectors, and underlined the need to end environmentally harmful trade, stressing the role of the CSOs in these efforts. **Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui** confirmed that, given its back-to-back timing with COP30, the Summit will draw attention to climate issues, and it is important to explore how to link the COP30's political messages with the Summit.

**ActionAid** enquired a follow-up report on developments since the previous Summit in 2023 exists to track how things are moving forward. They also asked about the type of representation from both regions expected at the Summit. **Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui** explained that while there is no follow-up document per se, the current roadmap provides a good overview of the progress made thus far. **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** added that progress has been made since the last Summit, with periodic meetings with EU partners through coordination mechanisms that have facilitated the monitoring of

commitments and progress. It is hoped that the Summit will gather the widest possible representation of Heads of State and Government and conclude with a robust declaration that covers topics that benefit both regions.

### State of play of the 2025 LAC-EU Civil Society Forum

**José Ignacio Juliao Ali** briefed the floor on the state of play of the upcoming LAC-EU Civil Society Forum, describing it a space for dialogue between CSOs from both regions and an opportunity to foster stronger cooperation. Efforts are underway to ensure broad and representative participation, bringing in the voices of youth, women, Afro-descendant communities, and other diverse social actors that enrich the bi-regional agenda. The Forum aims to ensure that CSOs' proposals inform the discussions of the IV CELAC-EU Summit and contribute to guiding high-level debates and decisions toward more sustainable, fair, and inclusive development. A Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society is expected to be adopted, demonstrating that within the universe of CSOs it is both possible and necessary to generate spaces for discussion and to build common ground. This Joint Declaration would serve as a roadmap, synthesising consensus and recommendations that reflect the priorities of our societies in the face of the great challenges lying ahead. The Forum is a starting point for building a structured and sustained dialogue between governments and CSOs, with a view to transforming proposals into concrete policies and projects. José Ignacio Juliao Ali confirmed efforts towards ensuring continued cooperation, inclusiveness, and joint construction, thereby strengthening bi-regional ties, and fostering spaces for dialogue and civic participation to reach concrete solutions.

**Félix Fernández-Shaw, Director INTPA B Latin America & The Caribbean; Relations with Overseas Countries & Territories**, explained that the [call for expressions of interest](#) for participation in the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum is ongoing until 14 September (23:59 CEST), and that the link would be shared again with the floor. He underlined that the selection process, jointly managed by Colombia and the EU, will place particular emphasis on ensuring the participation of youth, feminist, indigenous groups, environmental, and community organisations, whilst securing balanced geographic and thematic representation between LAC and EU. He acknowledged the organisational and logistical constraints, noting that onsite participation will be limited to up to 200 participants. However, the plenary sessions of the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum will be webstreamed, though active online participation will not be possible. He also highlighted that the LAC-EU Business Forum will take place on 9 and 10 November, thereby allowing for genuine dialogue between all stakeholders.

Félix Fernández-Shaw further noted that the Summit will address the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda, which is already showing major progress in driving sustainable development, creating decent jobs, and strengthening inclusive societies. It follows a 360-degree approach, addressing the full spectrum, from social inclusion and environmental standards to good governance and human rights. A key element is the active participation of CSOs, which allows efforts to be translated into real impact on the ground. He underlined that the road to Santa Marta represents a



unique opportunity to further deepen the partnership between the two regions, strengthen trust, and ensure inclusion, reaffirming that the EU-CELAC partnership is grounded in shared values and a joint commitment to working together for the benefit of both societies.

**Susana Eróstegui, Executive Director of the Bolivian Network for International Cooperation**, representing the Articulation Table of National Associations of NGOs and Regional Platforms of Latin America and the Caribbean (MESA), and **Andrés Rodríguez, Youth Sounding Board Colombia**, briefed the floor on the composition and work of the Steering Group. The Group comprises 10 organisations from the PFD and five additional members, including sectoral bodies, regional NGOs, cooperatives, trade unions, feminist organisations, indigenous and youth representatives, alongside DG INTPA and the Colombian Ministry of Equality and Equity. It was selected through a [call for expressions of interest](#) coordinated by the PFD, and has been meeting weekly since July 2025 to co-create the Forum's draft agenda, including the panels, and drafting the Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society. Susana Eróstegui noted that the minutes are available on [Capacity4Dev](#) and the [PFD Dialogue Space](#), and encouraged participants to engage through the Steering Group members in the co-design of the Forum. She further outlined how the agenda is being structured and how the panels and their themes are being selected, and provided logistical information on the available halls, which include a plenary and three halls with different capacities, all equipped with interpretation. Andrés Rodríguez presented a draft agenda, noting that the closing session will consolidate all the inputs received to ensure that the needs of CSOs are reflected. Thematic sessions will address: the bi-regional Pact on Care, social cohesion and digital justice, financing for sustainable development, organised crime, climate resilience, food security, and indigenous communities. The Forum is expected to conclude with a Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society that will contribute to enriching the Summit's discussions.

The next steps include defining the sessions proposals, identifying potential panellists, seeking the EU's and Colombia's validation of the proposals, and preparing the content of each session. At the same time, work is underway on the Joint Declaration, focusing on its format, its main messages, its structure, and the methodology for its review.

## Question and Answer Session

Following the presentations, the floor engaged in an open discussion on the preparations for the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum.

**The Millennials Movement** raised a question about how to provide input and recommendations for the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum, and how to create a link with the 2023 Youth Day to ensure continuity. **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** clarified that the Forum is an open process, and all organisations can provide their input through the available channels, such as the [PFD Dialogue Space](#), [Capacity4Dev](#), and through reviewing the minutes of the Steering Group's meetings. **Teresa Caverro, Technical Assistant**



of the **Policy Forum on Development**, added that contributions can also be made through the organisations of the Steering Group, which can be contacted through the [PFD Dialogue Space](#). Participants were encouraged to be proactive and share their input and recommendations. **Félix Fernández-Shaw** underlined that youth and children's perspectives will be reflected in the broader discussions, with young people taking part across sessions and panels to guarantee inclusive representation.

**POLEN** enquired whether CSOs could establish parallel events or meetings on the sidelines of the Forum, allowing for deeper dialogues on certain issues. **Teresa Caverio** clarified that no side events are envisaged, but participants will have space to hold meetings and prepare sessions or debates.

**Oxfam** raised two questions about the criteria for participation in the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum, highlighting the importance to ensure balanced participation, and suggested exploring the possibility of establishing a mechanism to follow-up on the agreements reached at the Forum and Summit. **Félix Fernández-Shaw** explained the complexity of establishing formal follow-up mechanisms but noted that ongoing coordination meetings provide continuity, allowing conclusions from Forums and Summits to be monitored and, as far as possible, translated into practice. **Teresa Caverio** confirmed that participation criteria will aim to ensure adequate geographic and thematic coverage of across countries and sub regions, as well as diversity of civil society actors.

**Redes Chaco** commended the work of the Steering Group and asked whether CSOs would be given a space to set up stands or display posters at the Forum. They also underlined the importance of the Global Gateway strategy and the 360-degree approach, and the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda, noting that CSOs should be granted opportunities to engage more deeply with these initiatives. In addition, they suggested involving other actors, such as banks, in the green and just transition. In response, **Félix Fernández-Shaw** and **Teresa Caverio** clarified that stands and posters are not currently envisaged at the Forum.

**Fundacion Tiempo de Cambios** enquired whether organisations working with international bodies (e.g. UN, UNESCO) could apply under the [call for expressions of interest](#), and whether virtual participation in panels would be possible if they cannot take part in person. **Save the Children Colombia** also asked how CSOs not selected through the call could participate. **Félix Fernández-Shaw** and **Teresa Caverio** explained that the plenary sessions of the Forum will be webstreamed, but that it will not be possible to actively participate and engage virtually.

**SOLIDAR** asked about the venue of the Forum, and whether topics such as trade, and the Global Gateway strategy were included among the proposed themes by the Steering Group for the Forum's agenda. **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** explained that the topics of the Forum are still being discussed and expanded, with the intention of making it as inclusive as possible.

**Save the Children Colombia** asked about how dialogue between the Steering Group and selected CSOs would be structured, and later between CSOs and Heads of State and Government. They asked whether engagement would be limited to a Declaration or framed as a structured dialogue. They also raised the issue of youth representation, asking whether youth would be divided into subgroups within the broader youth category. In addition, they enquired about the mechanism to participate in the Forum if a CSO is not selected in the call for expression of interest. **YPARD** recalled the 2023 Youth Day in Brussels and enquired whether the Forum would prioritise building on this experience, recognising the importance of ensuring continuity in giving youth a prominent role in such spaces. **José Ignacio Juliao Ali** and **Félix Fernández-Shaw** reiterated that youth and children's considerations will be taken into account and integrated into the larger dialogue, stressing that general youth representation will be ensured across the different sessions and panels.

**AFM** highlighted that, given the current situation in the world, the Forum's equality agenda is very important. They underlined that equality in its dimensions and for all people is imperative, and should stand at the political centre of the agenda. It is hoped that governments and leaders will also give due priority to safeguarding the equality agenda.

**The Millennial Movement** asked whether it would be possible to organise virtual preparatory sessions with youth to familiarise them with the agenda and enable their participation in discussions, either at this Forum or in future events. **Teresa Caverio** explained that any effort to prepare young people and minors for this type of Forum would be welcome, provided it is self-organised.

**Red Jubileo Sur/Americas** highlighted the issue of reparations, noting that debt mechanisms are increasingly burdensome and closely linked to environmental systems. They also raised the issue of the energy transition, and how this can be addressed at the territorial level, particularly in relation to mega-projects. **Teresa Caverio** explained that these issues have been included in the proposals; however, participants are invited to pass them on to the Steering Group.

**Asociacion Nacional de Centros** stated that, with regard the Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society, it would be useful to share a proposal or draft in national, regional, or sub-regional coordination spaces. This would allow sufficient time to build consensus, foster dialogue, and exchange views ahead of the drafting of the Joint Declaration. **Teresa Caverio** clarified that the Joint Declaration of LAC-EU Civil Society is currently being drafted but must emanate from the Forum and its sessions. She explained that the sessions are being defined to identify what the key points will be, so that they can then feed into the Joint Declaration. A methodology for its ratification during the Forum will also be established. She underlined that the Joint Declaration should not exceed two pages if it is to be read by high-level leaders.

**PSD** suggested that the Forum address protection mechanisms for leaders, noting their importance in LAC given the risks they face. **Teresa Caverio** explained that the issue of protection and guarantees

for leaders and human rights defenders is already included in the proposals; however, participants are encouraged to pass them on to the Steering Group.

### Wrap up and next steps

**José Ignacio Juliao Ali** thanked everyone for their participation and contributions and expressed satisfaction with the process made in organising the IV CELAC-EU Summit and the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum. He encouraged everyone to continue providing inputs and recommendations through the established channels, as these will further enrich and strengthen the work being developed.

**Félix Fernández-Shaw** also expressed his gratitude for the active participation of all attendees and underlined his support and availability to include a dedicated session on the EU LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda in the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum. He emphasised that CSOs are integral to the work undertaken by both regions, making it essential to take their views into account and ensure their participation in debate and exchange of ideas, an important political dimension of the EU-CELAC partnership.