EUROPEAN UNION – LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS:

A BRIDGE FOR CHANGE

APRODEV , CIDSE , CIFCA , GRUPO SUR and OIDHACO are Brussels-based civil society networks who monitor relations between the European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). We represent more than 100 civil society organisations (NGOs, solidarity committees, research institutes, etc.) from 15 countries including European Union member States, plus Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, the United States and Canada.

We have been working together on several European Parliament initiatives and processes, **to monitor the impacts of European Union policies in the Latin American region and ensure that they are consistent with human rights** and tackle the most pressing issues, and to ensure that the voices of those who are most affected are heard. Here are some examples of our work:

- ✓ Monitoring the ratification processes of the Association Agreement between the European Union (EU) and Central America and the Trade Agreement between the European Union and Colombia and Peru.
- ✓ Providing opportunities for dialogue between civil society and the committees and delegations of the European Parliament on Latin America, providing technical input and expert knowledge of the region.
- ✓ Promoting the participation of European and Latin American civil society in the Euro-Latin-American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) since 2011, strengthening dialogue between civil society and representatives from both regions[1].
- ✓ Producing research and analysis papers on the impact of EU policies in Latin America.

1 For further information see http://cifca.org/IMG/pdf/EUROLAT_Resolutions_Report.pdf

APRODEV CIDSE CIFCA GRUPO SUR Oidhaco

NEW TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The European Union (EU) and Latin America have developed political, cooperation and trading relationships which have a significant impact on the populations of Latin America. In recent years new disturbing trends in the relationship between these two regions have been observed:

- Development cooperation with Latin America has become less of a priority. This is demonstrated for example by the reorientation of EU policies that have led to a **decrease in aid** to Latin America between 2014 and 2020, from 16% to 13% when compared to the previous period (2007-2013).

- EU development cooperation policy gives an increasingly leading role to the **private sector,** to the detriment of the State and civil society. The introduction of new mechanisms that mix grants and loans (blending) such as LAIF (Investment Facility for Latin America), are part of these trends[2].

- Finally, despite high levels of poverty and inequality, the EU has either withdrawn or is in the process of withdrawing its **bilateral development cooperation** with several countries in Latin America.

ASYMMETRY IN TRADING RELATIONSHIPS

The EU is the second largest trading partner with Latin America. From 2001 to 2011, exports of raw materials from Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 44% to 52%, and these are expected to increase even further following the signing in December 2012 of the Association Agreement between the EU and Central America and the Trade Agreement between the EU and Peru and Colombia.

According to a resolution passed by the Euro-Latin America Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) on trade in raw materials between the EU and Latin America, "there is still a reliance on **long-established LAC-EU trading structures"**, that is to say "the increasingly unequal trade of natural resources for, primarily, manufactured products with high added value"[3].

LAC countries have 44% of world copper reserves, representing 43% of world exports; in 2013 most of Colombia's exports to the EU were in coal (37.6%) and oil (36.6%). The mining sector in LAC provides the highest average income in Foreign Direct Investment (26%), two to three times higher than in other sectors. In 2010, six of the 25 largest multinational companies in the EU were directly related to the mining industry[4].

Our networks have warned of the many problems arising from this trade relationship that encourages **a more unequal distribution of wealth, the depletion of non-renewable natural resources, global warming and social conflicts.** The resolution cited above recognises "the high correlation between social conflicts and mining" and highlights the relationship between the energy matrix in European and Latin American countries and global warming. It also stresses that the benefits gained from this model are concentrated in a very small part of the population, which also leads to a decrease in accessible land for local food production, threatens food sovereignty, contaminates water and land, marginalises nearby populations - especially small-scale farmers and indigenous communities - and denies future generations the benefits of natural resources.

2 For further information, see the report " New European Union Development Cooperation Strategies in Latin America: The LAIF investment facility", Brussels, June 2013, http://www.aprodev.eu/files/Central_America/20130619%20report%20laif%20ingles%20web.pdf

3 EuroLat Resolution: «Trade in raw materials between the European Union and Latin America ». Seventh Ordinary Plenary Session, March 27-29, 2014, Athens, Greece.

4 Info-graphic on trade in extractives between the European Union and Latin America, at: http://www.gruposur.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/comercio-y-extractivismo-EN.pdf

DIFFICULTIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AND THE DEFENSE OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The participation of European and Latin American civil society in the formulation, monitoring and control of public policy is limited, as is their access to information to ensure relevant inputs and access to funds for this participation. Also, work undertaken by organised civil society[5] in Latin America is becoming increasingly dangerous[6]. Accompanying communities, **defending fundamental rights,** p articularly for the most vulnerable, is **high-risk work,** as demonstrated in countries like Colombia, where since 2010 killings of human rights defenders have steadily increased from 32 to 78 in 2013, while in Guatemala 657 cases of attacks against human rights defenders were recorded in 2013[7].

In recent years there has been a sharp increase in Latin America in the **trend to persecute, punish, stigmatize and criminalize** social protest and the legitimate claims of those who promote and defend human rights, especially in the context of large-scale projects funded through European investment. This is occurring amid the **promotion of laws** which restrict freedoms of expression, assembly and demonstration; and the **manipulation of the administration of justice** in favour of groups who hold economic and political power[8].

June 2014 marked 10 years since the entry into force of the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders. Despite some progress in their implementation, further actions are still necessary to ensure effective support for the work of human rights defenders, as stated in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy[9].

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A PRESSING ISSUE

Another problem is the increase in violence against women and its most extreme manifestation; namely feminicide; the murder of women because they are women[10]. **It is estimated that more than half of the 25 countries with the highest rates of feminicide are situated in Latin America.** Feminicide is widespread in the majority of Latin American countries, exacerbated in places where conflict persists with armed forces, paramilitaries, organized crime and drug trafficking.

Between 2000 and 2012, 6,716 feminicides were committed in Guatemala, around 4,770 in El Salvador, 3,095 in Honduras and 927 in Nicaragua. In Colombia, during the first half of 2013, 514 women were murdered. Given this fact, civil society organisations in Brussels have repeatedly called for **the creation and implementation of concrete measures to eradicate violence against women and feminicide, such as designing specific indicators and evaluation mechanisms, in coordination with civil society initiatives from Latin America.**

5 Including trade unions, small-scale farmers' and indigenous peoples' organisations, professional associations, women's movements, NGOs, social and grassroots movements, and indigenous communities

6 Source: ACT Alliance and CIDSE: Report "Space for Civil Society: How to protect and expand an enabling environment", May, 2014.
Available at: http://www.actalliance.org/resources/publications/SpaceForCivilSociety.pdf

7 Source: UDEFEGUA: Annual report 2013: "El silencio es historia"

8 For further information see
http://www.cifca.org/IMG/pdf/Position_paper_on_criminalization_English_Final_June_2012.pdf
Sources: PBI-Guatemala (www.pbi-guatemala.org); PBI-Honduras (www.pbi-honduras.org); OIDHACO (www.oidhaco.org).

9 Human rights and democracy: Strategic framework and EU Action Plan:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131181.pdf

10 Sources: Diakonia-Flacso Guatemala; Centro de Derechos de Mujeres CDM-Honduras; Bibiana Peñaranda Sepúlveda; COPAF-Guatemala; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights; feminicidios.net; joint press release:
http://www.gruposur.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NOTA-PRENSA-APROBACION-RESOLUCION-FEMINICIDIO_-EN.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The **APRODEV**[11], **CIDSE**[12], **CIFCA**[13], **GRUPO SUR**[14] and **OIDHACO**[15] networks believe that the EU should continue to work closely with Latin America with the aim of reducing poverty and inequality and developing more inclusive, sustainable and just societies. We are confident that the **European Parliament has a key** role to play, as set out in the following recommendations:

- ✓ **Promoting more symmetrical relations** between the European Union and Latin America, to respect human rights and promote sustainable alternatives to the current economic model which is based mainly on the extraction of raw materials.
- ✓ **Promoting the participation of civil society** in both the European Union and Latin America through the work of the European Parliament.
- ✓ Monitoring the **consultation processes** between the EU and civil society to ensure that they respect **criteria related to transparency, frequency and access to information** in the following situations among others:
  - + The EU dialogues on human rights with Latin American countries.
  - + Processes for the drafting of strategies on cooperation and human rights
- ✓ **Raising awareness** on human rights violations and calling upon the EU to take action, using the European Parliament's political control mechanisms as leverage.
- ✓ Monitoring the implementation of the **recommendations made in existing resolutions** on trade in raw materials, feminicide, business and human rights and food sovereignty, among others.
- ✓ Ensuring **transparent monitoring and the participation of civil society in trade agreements** and demanding that the European Union develop mechanisms to implement the human rights clauses included in these agreements.
- ✓ **Working on new resolutions** and other actions which propose alternative solutions to pressing issues and promote **a genuine shift** in economic, social and environmental models.
- ✓ **Taking advantage of the EU- CELAC Summit in June 2015** as a strategic time to address these issues in terms of EU-Latin America relations, as well as to share information with European and Latin American public opinion.

11 **APRODEV** is a network of 15 European ecumenical organisations working on humanitarian aid and development. Its Central America advocacy program monitors and influences policies on trade, development, human rights and citizen security in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. | www.aprodev.eu

12 **CIDSE** is an international alliance of 17 Catholic development agencies in Europe and North America, working for global Justice. CIDSE challenges governments, businesses, churches and international bodies to adopt policies and actions that promote human rights, social justice and sustainable development. | www.cidse.org

13 **CIFCA** is a network of 35 European civil society organisations. CIFCA promotes participatory European policies that contribute to the full respect of human rights, democratization and fair and sustainable development in Central America and Mexico. | www.cifca.org

14 **GRUPO SUR** is a political alliance between European NGOs that share objectives and strategies for building solidarity cooperation alternatives between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. Grupo Sur carries out awareness-raising and advocacy work with the EU and its Member States from a human rights perspective. www.gruposur.org

15 **OIDHACO** is the International Office for Human Rights - Action on Colombia, a network of 35 European and international organisations. From Brussels it accompanies Colombian civil society initiatives which seek full respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and a negotiated solution to the armed conflict in Colombia. | www.oidhaco.org

concept by notsocrazy.eu