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Strengthening relations between the Council of Europe and Latin America

Report[1]
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
Rapporteur: Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES, Spain, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

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1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15448, Reference 4638 of 25 April 2022.

A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Europe and Latin America share multidimensional ties: the Parliamentary Assembly, in its Resolution 390 (1968) "Relations with Latin America", already recalled that "the many bonds linking Europe and Latin America are not simply the result of the economic realities of the modern world, but also of their heritage of civilisation". Indeed, their cultures, politics and economies are deeply intertwined, and the links forged during more than five centuries of common history have facilitated the exchange of ideas, traditions and values across the Atlantic Ocean.

2. With some exceptions, countries and organisations in the Latin American region share the same fundamental values that lie at the heart of the Council of Europe: the universality of human rights, the irreplaceable nature of democracy and the primacy of the rule of law over the rule of might.

3. The Council of Europe has already institutionalised relations and established contacts with several regional organisations and institutions in Latin America:

3.1. a Co-operation Agreement was signed in 2008 between the Assembly and the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino);

3.2. a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States (OAS) in 2011;

3.3. the European Court of Human Rights, together with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted the San José Declaration in 2018, establishing a Permanent Forum of Institutional Dialogue;

3.4. dialogue and co-operation activities have been developed with the Ibero-American System and its Sectoral Organizations.

4. The Council of Europe also has bilateral relations with a number of Latin American countries. Mexico is the country with the strongest ties with the Organisation, considering that, since 1999, it enjoys observer status with the Council of Europe and the Mexican Congress enjoys observer status with the Assembly. Other Latin American countries co-operate with the Council of Europe, for example through the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission): since 2002, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Peru have joined the Venice Commission as members, and Argentina and Uruguay as observers.

5. The existing links between Europe and Latin America are particularly relevant in the current volatile and uncertain geopolitical context. The rules-based international order is under attack, and at the same time, the global challenges requiring a common international response based on multilateralism and co-operation are growing: geopolitical conflicts and threats to international security, climate change and environmental degradation, energy transition and the management of relevant natural resources, mass migrations, health risks, and the use of artificial intelligence.

6. The Assembly considers that it is more important than ever for Europe to strengthen its ties with regions that share its values. The Latin American region should be considered as a natural ally. While the existing partnerships with multilateral organisations and countries in Latin America should be strengthened, the Council of Europe should also seek to develop dialogue and new forms of co-operation in the region.

7. The Assembly recalls that in the Reykjavik Declaration, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe committed to strengthening the role of the Organisation in global governance by enhancing its external dimension, through a new engagement based on its core values with democracies in the world. They also underlined the need to promote increased ratification of Council of Europe conventions that are open to non-member States, extending the outreach of the Organisation to non-member countries also through the active contribution of observer States, and called for more political dialogue with other international organisations.

8. The Assembly pays tribute to the important contributions made by the observer delegation of the Mexican Congress to the work of the Assembly, and to the role played by Mexico as a State that has observer status with the Council of Europe, for more than 25 years. It therefore invites Mexico and its Congress to continue to promote the work and standards of the Council of Europe, and to serve as an inspiration for other countries and their national assemblies in the region that might be interested in strengthening their relations with the Organisation.

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2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 5 March 2025.

9. In line with these considerations, and building on Resolution 2581 (2025) "The need for a renewed rules-based international order", the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States and observer States to:

9.1. strengthen their relations with relevant multilateral organisations in Latin America, in particular the OAS and the Ibero-American System, through high-level meetings, sectoral agreements, technical co-operation activities, exchange of expertise and joint events, with a view to:

9.1.1. upholding multilateralism and the respect for international law;

9.1.2. promoting and protecting human rights;

9.1.3. countering the backsliding of democracy;

9.1.4. promoting the principles of the rule of law;

9.1.5. addressing the impact of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity;

9.1.6. addressing the impact of new technologies and artificial intelligence;

9.2. engage in a dialogue with Latin American States, to promote Council of Europe standards and technical expertise and to encourage their accession to the enlarged agreements, enlarged partial agreements and conventions that are open to non-member States of the Council of Europe, such as the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225), the Venice Commission, and the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group).

10. The Assembly welcomes the fruitful collaboration of the European Court of Human Rights with its regional counterparts, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and encourages them to further strengthen their joint efforts, in particular with regard to the promotion of their regional instruments, the sharing of their jurisprudence with national courts, and the available mechanisms for monitoring the enforcement of judgments.

11. Convinced of the importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy in building bridges across continents, ensuring the cross-fertilisation of ideas, and protecting and strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Assembly resolves to:

11.1. revive the Co-operation Agreement signed with the Latin American Parliament in 2008 and contribute to its implementation, by:

11.1.1. inviting the President of the Parlatino, at appropriate intervals, to attend and address the Assembly's plenary during its part-sessions;

11.1.2. inviting a delegation from the Parlatino to attend the Assembly's part-sessions, conferences and other events, whenever appropriate, and organising joint *ad hoc* meetings on matters of common interest;

11.1.3. exchanging official documentation and putting its expertise on parliamentary practice and procedure at the disposal of the Parlatino and its members;

11.2. enter into a dialogue with the ParlAmericas, the independent network comprised of national legislatures of the member States of the OAS, to assess possible areas of collaboration on matters of common interest.

12. The Assembly encourages national parliaments from the Latin American region to explore the strengthening of their relations with the Assembly, with a view to submitting a request for observer status with the Assembly.

13. With regard to the general outreach of the Council of Europe in the Latin American region, the Assembly recognises the value of having available and updated texts and information regarding the Organisation translated into Spanish, and recommends that this effort be continued whenever possible.

B. Draft recommendation[3]

1. The Parliamentary Assembly draws the Committee of Ministers' attention to its Resolution …. (2025) "Strengthening relations between the Council of Europe and Latin America", in which it underlines that Europe and Latin America share multidimensional ties as well as the same fundamental values: the universality of human rights, the irreplaceable nature of democracy and the primacy of the rule of law over the rule of might.

2. The existing links between Europe and Latin America are particularly relevant in the current volatile and uncertain geopolitical context. The rules-based international order is under attack, and at the same time, the global challenges requiring a common international response based on multilateralism and co-operation are growing: geopolitical conflicts and threats to international security, climate change and environmental degradation, energy transition and the management of relevant natural resources, mass migrations, health risks, and the use of artificial intelligence.

3. The Assembly recalls that the Council of Europe has already institutionalised relations and established contacts with several regional organisations and institutions in Latin America:

3.1. a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States (OAS) in 2011;

3.2. the European Court of Human Rights together with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted the San José Declaration in 2018, establishing a Permanent Forum of Institutional Dialogue;

3.3. dialogue and co-operation activities have been developed with the Ibero-American System and its Sectoral Organizations;

3.4. a Co-operation Agreement was signed in 2008 between the Assembly and the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino).

4. The Assembly considers that it is more important than ever for Europe to strengthen its ties with regions that share its values. The Latin American region should be considered as a natural ally. While the existing partnerships with multilateral organisations and countries in Latin America should be strengthened, the Council of Europe should also seek to develop dialogue and new forms of co-operation in the region. In the light of the above, and building on the Reykjavik Declaration, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to:

4.1. further strengthen the relations of the Council of Europe with relevant multilateral organisations in Latin America, in particular the OAS and the Ibero-American System, through high-level meetings, sectoral agreements, technical co-operation activities, exchange of expertise and joint events, with a view to:

4.1.1. upholding multilateralism and the respect for international law;

4.1.2. promoting and protecting human rights;

4.1.3. countering the backsliding of democracy;

4.1.4. promoting the principles of the rule of law;

4.1.5. addressing the impact of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity;

4.1.6. addressing the impact of new technologies and artificial intelligence;

4.2. engage in a dialogue with States from the Latin American region, to promote Council of Europe standards and technical expertise and to encourage their accession to the enlarged agreements, enlarged partial agreements and conventions that are open to non-member States of the Council of Europe, such as the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225), the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), and the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group).

3. Draft recommendation adopted by the committee on 5 March 2025.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Limones, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Europe and Latin America have deep historical, political, cultural, and economic ties. They also cherish common values, including respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe has relations with a number of Latin American countries and regional organisations, at different levels. The motion for a resolution at the origin of this report – which I initiated – stems from the conviction that there is a high potential and a mutual interest for strengthening these relations and reinforcing multilateral co-operation with Latin America based on common rules and values.

2. This idea is consistent with the Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe during their 4th Summit held in Reykjavik on 16-17 May 2023, through which they committed to "strengthening the role of the Council of Europe in the evolving European multilateral architecture and in global governance by enhancing its external dimension, … through a new engagement based on its core values with democracies in the world". In addition, they also called for more political dialogue with other international organisations.[4]

3. One year after the Reykjavik Declaration, the Committee of Ministers, on the occasion of its 133rd Session, stressed again the importance of strengthening the external dimension of the Organisation, in particular through political dialogue, including at the highest level, and co-operation with other international organisations, as well as through the strengthening of relations with observer States and non-member States which share its values.

4. Furthermore, in Resolution 2581 (2025) "The need for a renewed rules-based international order", the Parliamentary Assembly called on Council of Europe member States to engage in a dialogue with countries from the Global South and strengthen the Council of Europe's co-operation with other multilateral organisations, in Europe and beyond; it also committed to review and, where necessary, enhance the effectiveness of its co-operation agreements with other international parliamentary assemblies or organisations.

2. The steps taken so far

5. The Assembly has repeatedly taken position in the past on the situation in Latin America and the relationship of the Council of Europe with the region. In particular, the following texts adopted by the Assembly should be mentioned:

– Resolution 354 (1967) and Recommendation 501 (1967) "General development of the situation in Latin America";

– Order 304 (1970) and Resolution 441 (1970) "Relations between the Council of Europe and Latin America";

– Order 409 (1982) "Europe and Latin America";

– Resolution 835 (1985) "Situation in Latin America".

6. Following my appointment as rapporteur in April 2022, the Sub-Committee on External Relations of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy – which I was chairing – held exchanges of views in June 2022 with Mr Éctor Jaime Ramírez, member of the observer delegation of Mexico to the Assembly, and with Ambassador Manuel Montobbio, Permanent Representative of Spain and Chairperson of the Rapporteur Group on External Relations of the Committee of Ministers (GR-EXT) at that time. Mr Ramírez reiterated Mexico's commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and noted that the report could contribute to reactivating relations between the Assembly and the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino). Ambassador Montobbio presented the Activity Report on the Reflection process on the Council of Europe contribution to the international order and global governance, as well as to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[5] The Activity Report proposals included developing exchanges of views with relevant international organisations; promoting Council of Europe instruments that are open to non-member States; and developing relations with States and international organisations sharing the Council of Europe's

4. Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values.

5. See document CM(2022)84-final "Reflection process on the Council of Europe contribution to the international order and global governance, as well as to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Activity Report".

values and principles and with which dialogue could be further enhanced.[6] Ambassador Montobbio stressed that the Assembly's ongoing work on strengthening relations with Latin America would be a valuable contribution to achieve these goals.

7. In May 2023, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy held hearings with Ms Carmen Almendras Camargo, former Vice-Chancellor of Bolivia; Mr Enrique Ojeda Vila, Director General of Casa América (Spain); and Mr Javier Velasco Villegas, Ambassador of Chile to Spain, during which the latter stressed the great potential for developing more streamlined and flexible relations between the Council of Europe and Latin American countries. The meeting was yet another opportunity to emphasise the need to enhance the Council of Europe's co-operation not only with its geographical neighbours but also with countries sharing its common values.

8. In November 2023, the President of the Assembly, Mr Tiny Kox, visited Mexico, where he met with representatives of the Congress and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then Washington D.C. (USA), to meet with officials of the Organization of American States (OAS). The Mexican authorities confirmed their willingness to play a more active role in promoting the values of the Council of Europe in the region, given their status of observer State. Similarly, the Secretary General of the OAS expressed his interest in expanding the co-operation between the two Organisations.

9. On 30 September 2024, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy held a hearing with Ms María Corina Machado, National Co-ordinator of Vente Venezuela, who had been awarded the 2024 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize that same day. Ms Machado joined the committee meeting online, from a hidden and secured location in Venezuela. During the hearing, the current political crisis in Venezuela was discussed, and it was stressed how the international community could play a role in pushing Maduro's regime towards a negotiated transition.

10. Furthermore, in December 2024, I visited Panama, to attend the 38th Ordinary Assembly meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino). During this visit I met with the President of the Parlatino, Mr Rolando González Patricio, and its Secretary General, Mr Juan Martín Rodríguez, who were both eager to relaunch the collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly.

11. While in Panama, I also met, *inter alia*, with the President of the Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay, Ms Ana Olivera Pessano, who showed interest in exploring the possibility for the national parliament of Uruguay to become an observer to the Parliamentary Assembly.

12. In addition, I was given the floor to address the plenary of the Parlatino's Ordinary Assembly meeting, calling for a renewed impetus in the relationship between the Assembly and the Parlatino, and emphasising the role that political dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy can play in facing the main global challenges such as the threats to international security and peace, the climate change, the rising inequalities and the development of new technologies and of artificial intelligence.

13. From Panama I travelled to Colombia, where I met with Ms Patricia Cortés, Director for Europe of the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mr Heraclito Landinez Suárez, member of the Chamber of Representatives: both expressed interest in strengthening the ties of Colombia with the Council of Europe and its Assembly. This was also confirmed by Mr Jaime Raúl Salamanca Torres, President of the Colombian Chamber of Representatives, whom I had the chance to meet briefly.

3. Existing relations between the Council of Europe and Latin America

3.1. The Organization of American States

14. The Organization of American States (OAS) is a regional organisation supporting democracy, human rights, security and development in the American continent. It came into being in 1948 with the signing in Bogotá, Colombia, of the OAS Charter, just one year before the Statute establishing the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1), and inspired by the same wish to consolidate peace, ensure progress and protect democracy and human rights. The OAS Charter entered into force in December 1951.

15. The OAS was established to achieve among its member States "an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence".[7] The OAS brings together all 35 independent States of the Americas[8]and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social inter-governmental forum of the region.

6. CM/Del/Dec(2022)132/3ci.

16. It is worth mentioning that the OAS also has 74 permanent observers, out of which 44 are Council of Europe member States (only Andorra and San Marino, among Council of Europe member States, do not have this status). On the other hand, 3 OAS member States enjoy observer status with the Council of Europe (Canada, Mexico and the United States), and 2 States enjoy observer status with both Organisations (the Holy See and Japan).

17. The co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OAS was institutionalised in a 2011 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), where the two Organisations identified the following issues as priority areas in which co-operation should be developed: human rights protection, development and awareness raising; freedom of the media, data protection, information society and internet governance; women's rights, elimination of violence against women and fight against trafficking in human beings; children's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities; social cohesion; democracy building, electoral matters, good governance and civil society; conflict prevention and management, post-conflict rehabilitation; rule of law: strengthening the judiciary, fighting terrorism and transnational organised crime, corruption and cybercrime; reducing the production, trafficking and use of illegal drugs; promoting international legal standards, in particular by exploring the opportunity for each Organisation to encourage accession by its members to selected conventions (or legal instruments) adopted by the other Organisation.[9]

18. This MoU paved the way for sectoral agreements, such as the one signed by the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) and its counterpart in the OAS, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), on 25 February 2021. The OAS is also an observer to the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) since 2011.

19. Furthermore, a co-operation agreement was signed between the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the OAS on the advancement and realisation of exchange, co-operation and technical assistance actions related to the further development of the principles of rule of law and separation of powers in Latin America (2020). As an example, following a request of the OAS Secretary General, the Venice Commission adopted in December 2024 a Final Opinion on possible constitutional and legislative solutions to conduct future electoral processes in Haiti,[10] and a Report on election observers as human rights defenders.[11]

3.2. The Inter-American System of Human Rights

20. The Inter-American System of Human Rights is responsible for monitoring, promoting, and protecting human rights in the OAS countries. It is composed of two principal and autonomous organs: the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR).[12] Both bodies can decide on individual complaints concerning alleged human rights violations and may issue emergency protective measures when an individual or the subject of a complaint is in immediate risk of irreparable harm. The Commission also engages in a range of human rights monitoring and promotion activities, while the Court may issue advisory opinions on issues pertaining to the interpretation of the Inter-American instruments at the request of an OAS organ or member State.

21. There is a solid judicial dialogue ongoing between the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) and the IACtHR. In 2018, the two regional human rights courts as well as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted the San José Declaration, establishing a Permanent Forum of Institutional Dialogue aimed to "strengthen the protection of human rights and access to international justice of the people under the jurisdiction of the three courts, to contribute to state efforts to strengthen their democratic institutions and human rights protection mechanisms, and to overcome the common challenges and threats to the effective validity of human rights by working together."

22. In line with this Declaration, the three courts met yearly and undertook important projects, including the publication of an annual Joint Law Report which showcases their case law and encourages a jurisprudential cross-fertilisation. In particular, the three courts have held three International Human Rights Forums: in 2019 in Kampala, in 2021 online, and in 2023 in San José, with the signature of a Second San Jose Declaration.[13]

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7. Article 1 of the Charter of the OAS.
8. www.oas.org/en/member_states/default.asp.
9. Memorandum of Understanding.
10. www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2024)042-e.
11. www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2024)039-e.
12. The IACtHR is an institution of the Inter-American System embodied by the OAS, and corresponds to the European Court of Human Rights and the European Committee of Social Rights in the Council of Europe's human rights protection system.

23. As the IACtHR also deals with social rights, a conference was held on 3-4 October 2019 in Madrid, to broaden the discussion between the IACtHR and the Council of Europe European Committee of Social Rights. This was the first dialogue between the two institutions and it laid the ground for a relationship of mutual knowledge and co-operation to be further developed.[14]

24. The Court also maintains regular relations with many South American countries, often within the framework of a dialogue of judges.

3.3. The Latin American Parliament (Parlatino)

25. Parlatino was established in 1964 by parliamentarians from 14 countries of Latin America, and institutionalised by a treaty in 1987. Its members are democratically constituted national parliaments of the region and are represented by pluralist parliamentary delegations. The 23 countries and territories whose parliaments are members of Parlatino are Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Sint Maarten, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

26. According to its statute, Parlatino's aims include upholding the full realisation of freedom, social justice, economic independence, representative and participatory democracy, through free and transparent elections, abiding by the principles of non-intervention, people's right to self-determination and the effective rule of law; ensuring strict respect for human rights; contributing to the strengthening of international peace, security and the legal order; striving for the strengthening of the parliaments of Latin America, thus safeguarding the constitutional and democratic life of States; maintaining relations with parliaments, international organisations and States in all geographical regions.

27. In 2008, in view of their common concerns and complementarity at intercontinental level, the Assembly and the Parlatino agreed to establish a political dialogue, particularly with a view to promoting the principles of parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, which they formalised through a Co-operation Agreement.

28. Accordingly, "the Parlatino will encourage the competent authorities to make use of the possibilities to sign, ratify or accede to the relevant Council of Europe conventions, which are open to non-member States, as well as the expertise offered by the [Venice Commission] and by the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre)". The agreement also foresees that the two Assemblies "will endeavour to encourage the competent Latin American authorities to introduce a moratorium on executions and abolish the death penalty, where necessary".[15]

29. Despite its relevance, this Co-operation Agreement has remained unexploited to date due to a lack of resources and the change of political priorities.

3.4. The Ibero-American System

30. The Ibero-American System consists of the 22 member countries, comprising three Council of Europe member States (Andorra, Portugal and Spain) and one observer State (Mexico), the Ibero-American General Secretariat and the Ibero-American Sectoral Organizations, namely the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America (OIJ), the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS), and the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Ibero-American Countries (COMJIB).

31. The Ibero-American System includes, among its main purposes and lines of action, human rights, rule of law and democracy. These are channelled by its co-operation programmes and Sectoral Organizations, which can be interesting counterparts for Council of Europe's external relations and the achievement of the proposed objectives and lines of action for its contribution to international order and global governance.

32. So far, the Council of Europe's relations with the Ibero-American System have been mainly developed by the Venice Commission – as explained by its former President Gianni Buquicchio during the exchange of views held in the GR-EXT in the framework of the reflection process – and mainly carried out with the COMJIB. In June 2021, Mr Buquicchio, together with the Secretary of the Venice Commission, Ms Simona

13. www.echr.coe.int/regional-human-rights-courts.
14. www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/-/implementing-social-rights-lessons-learnt-first-dialogue-between-the-european-committee-of-social-rights-and-the-inter-american-court-of-human-rights.
15. Co-operation Agreement.

Granata-Menghini, paid a visit to Madrid where they held a meeting with relevant counterparts of the Ibero-American System. Those contacts were further developed during a visit in June 2022 by the new President of the Venice Commission, Ms Claire Bazy-Malaurie and Ms Simona Granata-Menghini.

33. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that in 2018 the OEI started co-operation activities with the European Institute of Cultural Routes and was subsequently granted "participatory status" with the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in 2021.

34. In the framework of the GR-EXT reflection process, an informal high-level exchange was held on 21 February 2022 between the GR-EXT Chair and relevant services of the Secretariat and the Ibero-American General Secretariat – whose delegation was chaired by the Ibero-American Deputy Secretary General, Mr Marcos Pinta Gama. This exchange confirmed areas of common interest for co-operation as well as the potential for further developing such co-operation.

3.5. Relations with Latin American countries

3.5.1. Mexico

35. As a State enjoying observer status the Council of Europe and its Assembly since 1999, Mexico has a privileged relation with the Organisation. In 2020, marking the 20th anniversary of this status, a Joint Declaration was adopted on a Council of Europe-Mexico strategic partnership, which foresees high-level meetings on a regular basis to exchange views on issues of common interest and discuss areas of co-operation on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The partnership also foresees that Mexico will continue to actively participate in the negotiation of the Council of Europe's legal instruments and promote their broader ratification.[16]

36. Mexico is party to eight Council of Europe conventions, and has the right to sign 18 other conventions. Furthermore, Mexico is a member of the Venice Commission and the Pompidou Group. During his visit to Mexico in November 2023, the then President of the Assembly Mr Tiny Kox made a Joint Statement with Ms Ana Lilia Rivera, Speaker of the Mexican Senate, and Ms Marcela Guerra Castillo, Speaker of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, in which they declared "that a stronger bond between the Council of Europe and Mexico, as well as other Latin American countries, will give further strength to human rights, democracy and rule of law as universal values which surpass geographical boundaries", and in which they reiterated their "commitment to keep co-operating and working together in this direction".[17]

3.5.2. Other countries

37. In 2002, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Peru joined the Venice Commission as members and Argentina and Uruguay as observer States. The Venice Commission prepared several opinions upon request from the authorities of Latin American countries. It also developed a wide range of activities (seminars, conferences) with Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru in fields such as democratic transition, constitution-building, constitutional justice and electoral legislation.[18]

38. Several Latin American States are parties to Council of Europe's conventions that are open to non-member States. The countries that are most closely linked to Council of Europe's instruments (in terms of ratifications of conventions and participation in partial agreements) are Argentina and Chile.

3.6. Council of Europe's projection to the Spanish-speaking world

39. The availability, in Spanish, of information on the Council of Europe and of its documents constitute a key factor to reach the Spanish-speaking world and foster and develop the Organisation's relations with Latin America. At the initiative of Spain, a number of actions were taken in recent years to facilitate such availability:

– inauguration of the Council of Europe's webpage (and Twitter account which became X) in Spanish on 5 May 2022, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Council of Europe, which is offered in the same way as the webpages in German and Italian;

16. www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-and-the-council-of-europe-establish-a-strategic-partnership?idiom=en.
17. Joint statement by the PACE President and the Speakers of the two chambers of the Mexican Congress, 15 November 2023.
18. For a detailed account of the Venice Commission's co-operation with Latin America, see CDL-PI(2021) 017.

– translation and publication of the European Court of Human Rights' case law and the Venice Commission's opinions, in the framework of their co-operation with Spanish counterparts;[19]

– publication of other collective books such as *Construyendo los derechos humanos en Estrasburgo (*Building human rights in Strasbourg*)* and *El Tribunal Europeo de Derechos Humanos y el Consejo de Europa* (the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe), at the initiative of the European Court of Human Rights and the Permanent Representation of Spain to the Council of Europe, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe in 2019 and the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights in 2020,[20] with the aim of becoming a reference on the Council of Europe and the Court and its work. *Estado de Derecho, democracia y globalización* (Rule of Law, democracy and globalisation) and *Una aproximación a la Comisión de Venecia en su XXX Aniversario* (An approach to the Venice Commission at its 30th Anniversary), aimed at taking stock of the Venice Commission's work concerning the challenges to the rule of law, democracy and globalisation and promoting it in the Spanish-speaking world.[21]

4. Possible areas of co-operation

40. It is high time to reactivate the co-operation between the Assembly and the Parlatino, bearing in mind that already back in 2019, the Assembly had considered it "timely to evaluate its co-operation agreements with various international parliamentary assemblies or organisations with a view to possibly updating them and enhancing their effectiveness".[22]

41. This can be done through various means already contained in the 2008 Co-operation Agreement, including through reciprocal representation; joint activities on areas of common concern, notably parliamentary democracy, rule of law, human rights and North-South relations; and various working arrangements, including regular exchange of official documentation such as adopted resolutions and recommendations, with the possibility for the Assembly and the Parlatino to submit written communications on subjects under consideration in the other Assembly, when appropriate.

42. The members of the Mexican Congress sitting in the Parlatino have already expressed their availability to facilitate this process. Furthermore, during the meetings I held in Panama with the President and Secretary General of the Parlatino, they both expressed a sincere interest in relaunching the Co-operation Agreement, stressing the need to focus on specific issues such as the defence of multilateralism, the respect for human rights, and acting against the climate change crisis. The idea of holding joint committee meetings of the two Assemblies was also discussed.

43. The ParlAmericas, an independent network comprised of national legislatures of the member States of the OAS and headquartered in Ottawa (Canada), could also be a potential partner for the Assembly. This would provide an effective means not only for promoting the Organisation's fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and its conventions embodying these values, but also for extending the Council of Europe's outreach to Latin American countries.

44. Relations with Latin American organisations sharing Council of Europe's values and principles such as the OAS and the Ibero-American System should be strengthened and developed as well. As an example, the office of the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed strong interest for a dialogue with the Council of Europe and its Assembly on matters related to human rights protection.

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19. In the case of the European Court of Human Rights, the Spanish Attorney General and the Agent of the Government of Spain before the Court; in that of the Venice Commission, the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies of Spain.

20. Co-ordinated by the Judge at the Court elected in respect of Spain, Ms María Elósegui, and the Spanish lawyers working at the Registry of the Court, Ms Carmen Morte-Gomez, Ms Anna-Maria Mengual and Mr Guillem Cano-Palomares, this publication offers a complete approach to the Court system and the Council of Europe and its mechanisms, becoming a reference book in Spanish in the world, and covering the previous gaps.

21. Fruit of the joint initiative of the Venice Commission, the Spanish Permanent Representation and the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies of Spain (CEPC), the book was co-directed by Mr Josep Maria Castellà, Venice Commission member in respect of Spain until May 2022, Ambassador Manuel Montobbio, Permanent Representative of Spain to the Council of Europe, and Ms Simona Granata-Menghini, Secretary of the Venice Commission and published by CEPC.

22. Resolution 2277 (2019) "Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future".

45. On 21 February 2022, an informal exchange was held with members of the Ibero-American General Secretariat, which included a presentation of the rule of law mechanisms and conferences of the Ibero-American System and highlighted the already existing co-operation with the Venice Commission. The two Organisations should continue these technical exchanges, exploring other possible areas and topics of common interest, and considering holding high-level bilateral meetings to further consolidate them.

46. On 4 April 2022, the then GR-EXT Chair and relevant services of the Secretariat held an informal high-level exchange with the participation of OAS Secretary General Mr Luis Almagro. This confirmed the interest in co-operation that exists on both sides and highlighted some similarities concerning respective mechanisms and the active role of each organisation in promoting the instruments of the other. The Venice Commission, the Pompidou Group, GRECO, the European Committee of Social Rights, and the Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No.185)[23] were mentioned in particular, as well as co-operation between the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and, on the one hand, the European Court of Human Rights and, on the other hand, the European Committee of Social Rights.[24] The high-level dialogue is continuing through regular contacts between the Secretaries General of the two organisations, who last met in September 2024.

47. As an observer State and close partner, Mexico could also play an instrumental role in enhancing the Council of Europe's unique conventional system by promoting conventions that are open to non-member States, as well as well by inspiring other countries to become observers. A possibility would be to hold an annual hearing on the relationship between the Council of Europe and Mexico within the Sub-Committee on External Relations of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, in order to take stock of achievements and possible challenges.

48. This format could subsequently be extended to other Latin American countries. In particular, the political dialogue already established with Mexico could also be developed with other Latin American States sharing the Organisation's values and principles. Special attention could be given to political dialogue and co-operation with Latin American States member of the Venice Commission. As an example, Colombia could benefit from the technical expertise provided by the Council of Europe in the ongoing implementation of its peace process.

49. Several Latin American countries have also been actively involved in the preparatory work to negotiate the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225):[25] Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. The Framework Convention was open for signature on 5 September 2024, and it should be promoted among countries and multilateral organisations in the region.

50. The initiatives and lines of action carried out in recent years to increase availability in Spanish of information on the Council of Europe and of its documents should continue and be consolidated, while making full use of their potential to strengthen Council of Europe relations with Latin America and promote its external and global outreach.

5. Conclusions

51. The rules-based international order is under attack, but at the same time, the list of global challenges that need a joint, international answer based on multilateralism and co-operation is growing longer: these include geopolitical conflicts, climate change and environmental degradation, energy transition and the management of natural resources, mass migrations, health risks, and the use of artificial intelligence.

52. Now more than ever, in order to tackle these challenges, counter the backsliding of democracy and secure the protection of human rights, it is crucial for Europe to strengthen its bonds with regions that share the same values, and Latin America should be considered as a natural ally. As another illustration of the development of Europe's relations with Latin America, the European Union has established trade, political and co-operation agreements with 27 Latin American countries, and regularly holds meetings with the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States: these meetings represent an important forum for dialogue between

23. The Convention on Cybercrime was ratified by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Panama, Paraguay and Peru.
24. Article 26 of the American Convention on Human Rights expresses the general commitment of States parties to adopt measures with a view to the full realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. Therefore, the IACtHR is also competent to hear cases of alleged violation of economic, social and cultural rights.
25. www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatynum=225.

the two regions. Furthermore, the European Union recently signed trade agreements with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) (in December 2024) and with Mexico (in January 2025), which, once ratified, will further strengthen the economic bonds between the two regions.

53. The Council of Europe should increase its external projection and outreach in the Latin American region, including through enhanced high-level political dialogue and interparliamentary co-operation. The important bonds already established with organisations such as the OAS, the Ibero-American System, and the Parlatino, should be encouraged and strengthened, with a specific focus on high-level political dialogue, parliamentary diplomacy, technical co-operation and mutual support on common issues.

54. Furthermore, the Council of Europe standards and expertise should also be further promoted among Latin American States, encouraging them to access the Organisation's enlarged agreements, enlarged partial agreements and treaties.

55. A renewed attention towards Latin America by the Council of Europe will not only contribute to strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law at the global level, but will also enrich the portfolio of possible solutions to the main challenges that the European continent is facing, through the exchange of ideas and experiences with the region.