

Beat: Politics

Cuba, Venezuela and Colombia debated at 8th EUROLAT plenary session

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USPA NEWS - US-Cuba relations, Venezuela's situation and the Colombia Peace Process were among the topics debated at the eighth plenary session of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (Eurolat), which opened on Thursday in Brussels.

MEPs and members of Latin America's parliaments are to deliver a political message to the heads of state or government meeting in Brussels on 10-11 June for the European, Latin American and Caribbean Summit (EU-CELAC). "Latin America is a key player for the European Union - we cannot look only to China, Russia or India", said European Parliament First Vice-President Antonio Tajani (EPP, IT) when opening the session.

He nonetheless noted the progress made thanks to the EU-Central America association agreement and EU trade agreements with Colombia and Peru. He also said that the EU and Latin America must cooperate on three common challenges: the climate change conference to be held in Paris in December, a post-2015 development agenda and fighting drug trafficking, organized crime and corruption.

European Commission Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva highlighted the recent visit to Cuba by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and noted that 22 out of 36 Latin American countries have bilateral agreements with the EU. Despite the economic crisis, these countries have been able to lift over 60 million people out of poverty in recent years, she said.

Eurolat Co-President José Leonel Vázquez Búcaro (El Salvador), described Europe as a "reference to build welfare societies in Latin America", and stressed that despite past exploitation and conflicts, the region had "found itself" and solved its problems through dialogue. While respecting each other's sovereignty, the EU and Latin America should pursue their progress in economic cooperation and stand up for democracy and human rights, he added. He also hoped that "the situation is solved in Venezuela" as well as "the historical problem between Cuba and the US."

Eurolat Co-President Ramón Jáuregui (S&D, ES), stressed that political decisions must keep pace with the speed of events in a context of global crisis, and urged global players not to ignore Latin America. Commenting on talks between the US and Cuba, Mr Jáuregui stressed the existing and enduring relationship between the EU and this Caribbean country. He also voiced his support for the Colombia peace process and progress in Venezuela, reiterating that "Europe has a voice and hope that human rights are fulfilled."

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