# 6

# Great Expectations

## *Challenges to the Implementation of Climate Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean*

PABLO CRISTÓBAL JIMÉNEZ LOBEIRA

### 6.1 Introduction

The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is a distinct geographic, economic and cultural area with a place in the climate change landscape. With an area of 30 million square kilometers,[1] LAC possesses a population of 650 million people and 46% of forested land area.[2] According to Statista, the LAC gross domestic product (GDP) is approximately 4.8 trillion U.S. dollars,[3] with Brazil and Mexico, respectively, the largest Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries in the world, accounting for 54% of the population and 59% of GDP.[4] According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), LAC has a population of around 660 million people,[5] a GDP of $5.2 trillion,[6] and a GDP per capita of $7,931.[7]

Latin America and the Caribbean comprehends countries located in four geographical areas: North America (Mexico), the Caribbean (with 21 countries), Central America (7 countries) and South America (13 countries).[8] That adds up to 42 countries, which coincides with the World Bank's definition.[9]

The most comprehensive definition results from the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs 'regional groupings' used for the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators. It divides LAC into three sub-regions with 49 States or

[1] The World Bank, Land area (sq. km) – Latin America & Caribbean, 2022. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.TOTL.K2?end=2020&locations=ZJ&start=1961&view=chart.

[2] L. Baumgartner, R. Carman, Y. Jo, Latin America and the Caribbean – The State of Climate Ambition. June 2022, United Nations Development Programme. https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research_report_document/Climate%20Ambition-LAC-ENG_v6.pdf.

[3] Statista Research Department, América Latina y el Caribe – Datos estadísticos. 10 July 2022. https://es.statista.com/temas/5605/america-latina-y-el-caribe.

[4] Given the different approaches to defining the LAC, certain inconsistencies may appear between figures relating to the area depending on how the source defines the LAC.

[5] Or 640 million for Statista (Statista Research Department, América Latina y el Caribe – Datos estadísticos. 10 July 2022), and 652 for the World Bank (World Bank, Latin America & Caribbean, 2022).

[6] US$5.49 trillion, according to the World Bank (World Bank, Latin America & Caribbean, 2022) and US$4.8 trillion for Statista (Statista Research Department, América Latina y el Caribe – Datos estadísticos. 10 July 2022).

[7] CEPALSTAT, Perfil Regional Económico – CEPALSTAT Bases de Datos Y Publicaciones Estadísticas. (2021). https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/perfil-regional.html?theme=2&lang=es. Or $8,340 for Statista (Statista Research Department, América Latina y el Caribe – Datos estadísticos. 10 July 2022) and the World Bank (World Bank, Latin America & Caribbean, 2022).

[8] Latin American Network Information Center, Countries in Latin America & the Caribbean. 2015. http://lanic.utexas.edu/subject/countries/index.html.

[9] World Bank, Latin America & Caribbean, 2022.



Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

territories, some of them contested:[10] the Caribbean (with 26),[11] Central America (with 8),[12] and South America (with 15).[13]

A more restrictive definition of LAC comes from considering the 33 members of the Latin American and Caribbean Community of States (or CELAC: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil,[14] Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Dominica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.[15]

Here, CELAC is preferred as the best proxy for LAC for several reasons. First, because it is a formal grouping with a commitment to unity and integration, both economic and political, based on shared historical and cultural similarities and common challenges. Second, because its reach is comprehensive of all LAC countries. Third, because it pursues coordinated strategies to tackle common problems in the region (and beyond) such as threats to democracy, corruption, organized crime, violence, poverty, inequality, and climate change. And finally, because it provides a platform for its Member States to advance common interests at the UN and in other multilateral fora,[16] including the CELAC–EU summits.[17]

Latin America and the Caribbean is a highly unequal region with low economic growth.[18] Although income inequality has decreased in the past 30 years, LAC remains one of the most unequal regions in the world,[19] the highest, indeed, except for Sub-Saharan Africa.[20] This situation was exacerbated by COVID-19 and LAC suffered from the most

[10] United Nations Statistics Division, Regional Groupings Used in Report and Statistical Annex. 2022. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups.

[11] Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and United States Virgin Islands.

[12] Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.

[13] Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Malvinas or Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

[14] Under President Jair Bolsonaro, in 2020 Brazil pulled out of CELAC. Ahead of the elections that took place in October 2022, presidential candidate Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva had indicated that, if elected – polls at that point put him ahead by a margin (Harrison 2022) that turned out to be much smaller – he would reintegrate Brazil into CELAC and other regional and international initiatives (Revista Fórum, Leia a íntegra do discurso de Lula no lançamento da chapa com Alckmin. Brasil de Fato, 7 May 2022. www.brasildefato.com.br/2022/05/07/leia-a-integra-do-discurso-de-lula-no-lancamento-da-chapa-com-alckmi). Later in this chapter, we draw on his post-victory speech which is consistent with these election promises.

[15] SELA, CELAC – Estados Miembros. The UN Development Programme follows this exact definition. See, for instance, United Nations Development Programme, Country insights. Human Development Reports, 2022. https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks. United Nations Development Programme, Regional snapshot: Latin America and the Caribbean. 19 July 2022. https://climatepromise.undp.org/research-and-reports/regional-snapshot-latin-america-and-caribbean.

[16] Agencia EFE, La UE estudia cómo celebrar cumbre con A. Latina al faltar Brasil en CELAC. SwissInfo. 1 October 2021. www.swissinfo.ch/spa/ue-latinoam%C3%A9rica_la-ue-estudia-c%C3%B3mo-celebrar-cumbre-con-a-latina-al-faltar-brasil-en-celac/46995970.

[17] A. Ayuso, CIDOB – Claves para Reactivar la Asociación UE-CELAC y Encauzar la Globalización del Futuro. March 2021. www.cidob.org/ca/publicacions/series_de_publicacio/notes_internacionals/247/claves_para_reactivar_la_asociacion_ue_celac_y_encauzar_la_globalizacion_del_futuro.

[18] Our World in Data, Income inequality. October 2021. https://ourworldindata.org/income-inequality.

[19] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World* (United Nations, 2020).

[20] UNDP, Regional Human Development Report 2021. 22 June 2021. www.undp.org/latin-america/publications/regional-human-development-report-2021-trapped-high-inequality-and-low-growth-latin-america-and-caribbean. According to other sources, LAC has the highest income inequality rate. Unfortunately, LAC shares the highest place in income inequality, with two of the

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

significant economic setbacks (as against the world's other regional groupings),[21] with a 6.7% decrease in GDP in 2020, although in 2021 it grew again by 6.8%. At any rate, GDP per person in real terms has barely grown for the past 30 years.

Furthermore, the problem of low economic growth per capita seems even more serious when seen in conjunction with the situation of high inequality alluded to above. As of 2020, LAC's Gini coefficient sat at 0.50.[22] Its poverty rate reached 33%, with just over 13% of the population living in circumstances of extreme poverty.[23]

Unfortunately, income inequality in a region rich in resources, youth, territory, and economic activity is only one of several symptoms that reveal a greater problem. Organized crime, violence, corruption, the gray economy, nepotism, and lack of opportunities are also signs of a region yet to mature politically. Fundamental freedoms, democratic representation, an open public sphere, the balance of powers, and the rule of law need to become prevalent so that those symptoms may recede and the new environmental challenges affecting the region can be mitigated through successful climate policies. Against this background, this chapter assesses the impact of climate change on LAC and countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in the region in order to determine LAC's potential to tackle global climate change.

## 6.2 The Impact of Climate Change on Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean has suffered the impacts of climate change at a level disproportionate to the amount of emissions it produces. Figure 6.1 shows that in the past 30 years only Sub-Saharan Africa has emitted less carbon. Data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,[24] the United States Environmental Protection Agency,[25] and Climate Watch indicate that LAC produces less than 10% of global greenhouse emissions.[26] This is corroborated by the sixth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report.[27]

Numerically, the comparison between regions is laid out in Table 6.1. While the figures may be different when emissions beyond carbon dioxide are considered,[28] the basic assessment remains.

biggest countries by GDP and population, Mexico and Brazil, among the world's most unequal, with 10% of their respective populations holding close to 60% of the income.

[21] World Bank, Global Economic Prospects. 7 June 2022. www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects

[22] The Gini index, as defined in the OECD glossary, 'measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution', with a Gini index of zero representing perfect equality (Directorate, OECD Statistics, Gini index. OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms. 16 February 2006. https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=4842).

[23] CEPAL, Población en Situación de Pobreza Extrema y Pobreza Según área Geográfica. 1 April 2022. https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/dashboard.html?indicator_id=3328&area_id=927&lang=es.

[24] CEPAL, Economía del cambio climático en América Latina y el Caribe. 23 May 2019. www.cepal.org/es/infografias/economia-cambio-climatico-america-latina-caribe.

[25] EPA, Climate change indicators: global greenhouse gas emissions. 1 August 2022. www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions.

[26] Climate Watch, Latin America and the Caribbean. 2022. www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions?end_year=2019&regions=LAC&start_year=1990.

[27] IPCC, Climate Change 2022: mitigation of climate change. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. 2022. www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3.

[28] The UN Development Programme calculates that the region accounts for 8.1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, including from the land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) sector.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

Table 6.1 *Global carbon dioxide emissions by region, 2018*

| Region | Metric tons | Share (%) |
|---|---|---|
| East Asia and Pacific | 14,420.47 | 40.91 |
| Europe and Central Asia | 6,428.11 | 18.24 |
| United States and Canada | 5,698.73 | 16.17 |
| South Asia | 2,828.14 | 8.02 |
| Middle East and North Africa | 2,608.22 | 7.40 |
| Latin America and Caribbean | 1,749.36 | 4.96 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 845.63 | 2.40 |
| Others | 670.08 | 1.9 |

*Source:* Environmental Protection Agency. Taken from: EPA, Climate change indicators: global greenhouse gas emissions. August 2022. www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions.

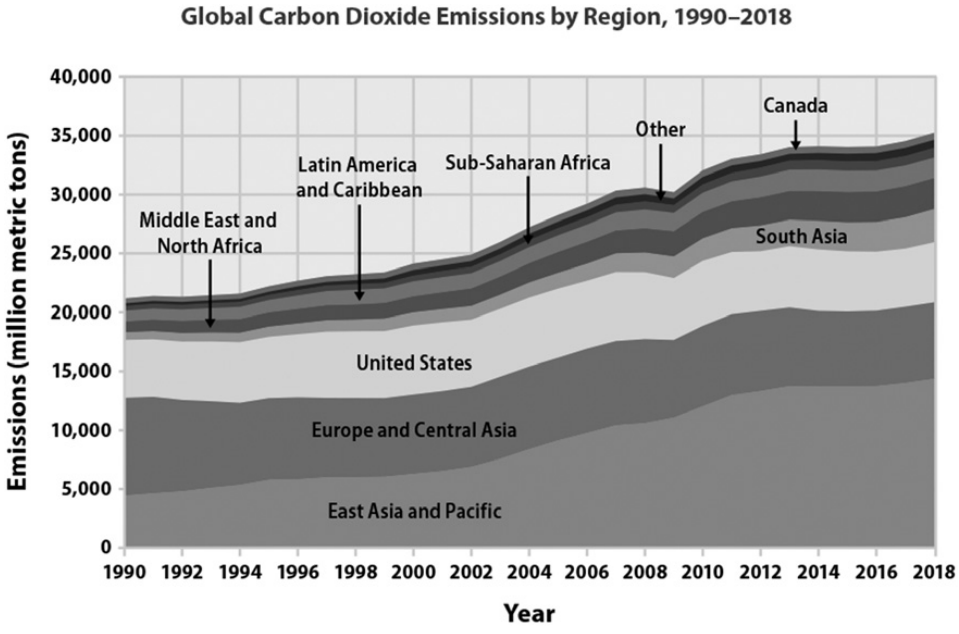



Figure 6.1 Global emissions by geographical region. *Source:* EPA, Climate change indicators.

However, the effects of climate change are being and will continue to be strongly felt in the region. Recent reports by the World Meteorological Organization show how significantly LAC is being affected by climate change.[29]

[29] Organización Meteorológica Mundial, El estado del clima en América Latina y el Caribe 2020. 17 August 2021. https://public.wmo.int/es/resources/library/el-estado-del-clima-en-am%C3%A9rica-latina-y-el-caribe-2020.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

Sea levels in 2020 along LAC coastlines rose above the world average. Roughly a third of the population in LAC live by the coast, with an estimated 6–8% living in areas that are at high or very high risk of being affected by coastal hazards. Temperatures in the North Atlantic Ocean were warmer than usual. The sea level in the Caribbean has been rising at a slightly higher rate than the global average.[30]

Glaciers in the Andes between Argentina and Chile continued to melt, with temperatures rising and rainfalls diminishing commensurately. In Guatemala, climate change contributed to the loss of nearly 80% of the corn harvest. In Haiti, some four million people faced food crises. Between 1998 and 2020, the impacts of climate change have cost more than 312,000 lives and affected over 277 million people in LAC.[31]

The average temperature in the 30 years to 2021 increased by 0.2%, twice as much as in the previous three decades. Glaciers in the tropical Andes have lost at least 30% of the area they had in the 1980s, and the figure is closer to 50% for some glaciers in Peru. Chile's central region faced its 13th consecutive year of drought, while parts of Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia faced their worst drought since 1944. Sea levels, flooding, and hurricanes all reached extraordinary increases. Deforestation of the Amazon grew by 22% compared to 2020 levels. Of the 175 natural disasters occurring between 2020 and 2022, 88% had a meteorological, climactic, or hydrological cause.[32]

These effects, although caused only fractionally by LAC, constitute a strong motivation for the region to join efforts towards the achievement of Paris Agreement goals. Such efforts will have a greater impact the larger the emitters who undertake them.

Within the 33-country region, 90% of emissions can be attributed to just 10 Member States, and 77% of emissions to only 5 of them (see Table 6.2). Without trying to detract from or diminish the importance each country has in climate action in this region, due to space constraints, emphasis throughout this chapter falls on those States that pollute the most and which can therefore make the largest contribution towards the global goal.

Table 6.3 presents the latest available information and is therefore taken here as reference in singling out the biggest emitters in the region. Analysis on these 10 countries can provide an accurate approximation to the whole region's situation, as they account for over 90% of emissions.

## 6.3 Laggards, Heroes, and Zombies

Climate policy implementation to meet Paris Agreement commitments is still incipient in LAC, with some of its countries serving as models, some as laggards and the rest positioned somewhere in between. As advanced above, experience of the effects of climate change has prompted countries to join the Paris Agreement efforts. Such efforts will be more impactful

[30] Ibid.
[31] D. Mora Díaz, Cambio climático: América Latina será una de las regiones más afectadas. Noticias ONU. 17 August 2021. https://news.un.org/es/story/2021/08/1495582.
[32] UNFCCC Secretariat, La megasequía, el deshielo de los glaciares, las precipitaciones extremas y la deforestación acarrean graves efectos en América Latina y el Caribe. 22 July 2022. https://unfccc.int/es/news/la-megasequia-el-deshielo-de-los-glaciares-las-precipitaciones-extremas-y-la-deforestacion-acarrean.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

Table 6.2 *Greenhouse gas emissions in LAC (2019)*

| Country | Carbon dioxide equivalent (megatons) | Percentage of LAC's greenhouse gas emissions | | Percentage of global greenhouse gas emissions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brazil | 1451.6 | 35.94 | | 2.92 |
| Mexico | 670.8 | 16.61 | | 1.35 |
| Argentina | 398.9 | 9.88 | 76.54 | 0.80 |
| Venezuela | 299.6 | 7.42 | | 0.60 |
| Colombia | 270.5 | 6.70 | | 0.54 |
| Peru | 190.7 | 4.72 | | 0.38 |
| Bolivia | 138.7 | 3.43 | | 0.28 |
| Ecuador | 98.7 | 2.44 | 14.36 | 0.20 |
| Paraguay | 96.6 | 2.39 | | 0.19 |
| Chile | 55.3 | 1.37 | | 0.11 |

*Source:* Taken from Climate Watch. Latin America and the Caribbean. Historical GHG emissions. 2022. www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions?end_year=2019&regions=LAC&start_year=1990.

Table 6.3 *Carbon emissions by LAC country (in megatons)*

| Country | 1990 | 2005 | 2020 | Global % | LAC % | Accum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **World** | **22,727.88** | **30,170.03** | **35,962.87** | **100.00** | | |
| LAC | 958.86 | 1495.66 | 1572.27 | 4.35 | 100.00 | |
| Brazil | 228.30 | 382.82 | 451.80 | 1.26 | 28.97 | 28.97% |
| Mexico | 291.04 | 448.86 | 407.70 | 1.13 | 25.98 | 54.94% |
| Argentina | 108.15 | 165.90 | 176.51 | 0.49 | 11.26 | 66.21% |
| Colombia | 52.53 | 60.92 | 90.25 | 0.25 | 5.75 | 71.95% |
| Venezuela | 102.74 | 153.45 | 88.95 | 0.25 | 5.75 | 77.70% |
| Chile | 33.01 | 58.88 | 84.56 | 0.24 | 5.52 | 83.22% |
| Peru | 20.89 | 31.87 | 44.48 | 0.12 | 2.76 | 85.98% |
| Ecuador | 17.59 | 28.38 | 33.28 | 0.09 | 2.07 | 88.05% |
| Trinidad & Tobago | 12.67 | 34.25 | 30.27 | 0.08 | 1.84 | 89.89% |
| Dominican Republic | 8.04 | 18.80 | 29.09 | 0.08 | 1.84 | 91.72% |

*Source:* M. D. Crippa, D. Guizzardi, E. Solazo, et al., *GHG Emissions of All World Countries – 2021 Report* (Publications Office of the European Union).

the larger emitters those countries are. At least some of the largest emitters are taking the challenge seriously.

Like most other countries who signed the Paris Agreement, LAC States have submitted their NDCs to the UN's NDC Registry.[33] The complexity of comparing NDCs from different LAC countries can be appreciated in a recent study published

[33] Created to enact Article 4, paragraph 12 of the Paris Agreement.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

by CEPAL.[34] Although comprehensive and a good overview of the situation in the region, it does not facilitate a clear comparison of NDCs between countries, as the way and perspective in which each of them presents their proposed courses of action to achieve Paris Agreement objectives may differ from one to the other. For instance, Brazil takes 2005 levels as a reference to measure the evolution of its emissions whereas Mexico uses 2000 as a benchmark. Similar considerations apply to the corresponding UN Registry.[35]

Other sources such as Climate Action Tracker showcase countries' commitments against the common goals of the Paris Agreement in general terms, but only for a selection of States and not always by reference to a volume of emissions. For LAC, for instance, the analysis leaves out Venezuela, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago, each of them in the list of the 10 largest emitters (see Table 6.3), while it includes Costa Rica,[36] whose $CO_2$ emissions in 2019 represented less than 0.2% of the LAC's total and just under 0.02% of the global figure.[37]

The Joint Research Centre for Policy Report of the European Commission aggregates its own Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR) and complements it with other sources such as the International Energy Agency. EDGAR 'offers an alternative that complements national inventories and has advantages in terms of producing timely emissions estimates that are comparable across countries' and provides a good basis for the analysis presented in Section 6.3.[38]

Overall, few countries in LAC have taken climate action seriously, among them Colombia and Chile.[39] The most noticeable laggards have so far been Brazil and Mexico, the region's two largest economies, with the largest populations and the highest amount of greenhouse emissions. Their situation can be explained in large part by the coming to power of two populist presidents (right wing in Brazil; left wing in Mexico) who have stalled any commitment and, in the case of Mexico, actually reversed progressive policies that had already been set in law under a previous president. The situation in Brazil might improve if the newly elected president can implement the environmental features of his election platform as of 2024, which includes protection of the Amazon, a halt on deforestation and the fulfilment of Paris Agreement goals.[40]

The largest fossil fuel $CO_2$ emitters in the LAC region in 2019 were Brazil and Mexico, with emissions of 1.3% and 1.2%, respectively (as a share of the world's total). In the same year, Russia, India, United States, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in order accounted for 4.6%, 7.8%, 14.5% and 27.9% of global emissions.[41]

[34] J. L. Samaniego, Panorama de las actualizaciones de las contribuciones determinadas a nivel nacional de cara a la COP 26. Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe.
[35] UN Climate Change, Nationally Determined Contributions Registry. 2022. https://unfccc.int/NDCREG.
[36] This is not to imply or suggest that Costa Rica is not worth attending to. The country showcases some of the best practices in the region. However, our focus in this chapter seeks to be comprehensive of the largest emitters, as good climate policies coming from them will have a greater net impact.
[37] Climate Watch, Latin America and the Caribbean.
[38] Crippa et al., *GHG Emissions of All World Countries*.
[39] P. Schechter, J. Cortiñas, Will Latin America listen to climate change warnings? BRINK – Conversations and Insights on Global Business. 6 September 2021. www.brinknews.com/will-latin-america-listen-to-the-climate-change-warnings.
[40] J. M. Cullell, El programa electoral de Lula da Silva: subidas de impuestos a los ricos y protección a las minorías. El País, 30 October 2022. https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-10-30/el-programa-electoral-de-lula-da-silva-subidas-de-impuestos-a-los-ricos-y-proteccion-a-las-minorias.html.
[41] I. Tiseo, Largest emitters of $CO_2$ worldwide 2020. Statista. 27 July 2022. www.statista.com/statistics/271748/the-largest-emitters-of-co2-in-the-world.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

At a Leaders Summit on Climate convened by U.S. President Joe Biden in April 2021, Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro claimed that his country would achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.[42] True, this pledge may have been motivated by the international pressure to end deforestation that Brazil had been under.[43] However it was not clear how the goal would be achieved. President Sebastián Piñera committed to decarbonize Chile's energy matrix by 2040, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and become the most efficient green hydrogen producer in the world. Colombian President Iván Duque reiterated commitments to a 51% emissions reduction by 2030 and a long-term target of carbon neutrality by 2050. He highlighted some of the measures that Colombia has taken to achieve its targets, including a clean energy transition that will achieve 14% clean electricity by August 2022, the largest fleet of urban and cargo transport in the region, and a reforestation effort that aims to plant 180 million trees by August of 2022. Mexico's President Andrés López did not commit the country to any particular goal,[44] and only promised vague actions in reducing crude oil production (despite recent oil discoveries), to generate cleaner energy through hydroelectricity (even though the laws introduced by his government on electricity have actually reversed any progress made by previous governments), and to plant trees on a million hectares in the country.

With the election of Lula as a president, the situation for Brazil – and indeed for LAC, given Brail's prominence in the whole region – will change. The Amazon (60% of which is located in Brazil) possesses half of the remaining tropical rainforests in the world. Years of unchecked deforestation under Bolsonaro cannot be undone. And Lula is receiving a divided country, a Congress dominated by the opposition and other challenges. Still, his track record as a former president and his post-victory speech point to 'a strong commitment to preserving the Amazon, protecting Indigenous people's rights and reaching a zero-deforestation target'.[45]

Table 6.4 shows the 10 largest LAC emitters according to the European Commission. This is a result similar to the one for 2020 (Table 6.3) with small variations in the order,[46] but still the same countries in the list of the 10 largest emitters. As together they account for over 90% of emissions in the region, a brief analysis of their NDCs can provide a fairly good approximation to the situation of LAC as a whole.

Ahead of the Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) in 2021 the UN calculated, based on the latest NDC pledges available from most of the 193 Parties to the Paris Agreement, that our planet was headed towards a 13.7% *increase* in global greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 in comparison with 2010. The IPCC estimated that, in order to keep the rise in temperature on Earth to only around 1.5°C, global emissions need

[42] M. Schreiber, Pressionado, Bolsonaro promete na Cúpula do Clima dobrar recursos para repressão ao desmatamento. BBC News Brasil. 22 April 2021. www.bbc.com/portuguese/internacional-56848474.

[43] S. Branford, M. Torres, 'As climate summit unfolds, no Biden–Bolsonaro Amazon deal forthcoming. Mongabay News. 22 April 2021. https://news.mongabay.com/2021/04/as-climate-summit-unfolds-no-biden-bolsonaro-amazon-deal-forthcoming.

[44] C. Herrera, M. Martinez, A. Maxwell, Latin America at the Leaders Summit on Climate. NRDC. 23 April 2021. www.nrdc.org/experts/carolina-herrera/latin-america-leaders-summit-climate.

[45] K. Baragwanath, Lula's victory in Brazil comes just in time to save the Amazon – can he do it?' The Conversation. 2 November 2022, Australia and New Zealand edition. https://theconversation.com/lulas-victory-in-brazil-comes-just-in-time-to-save-the-amazon-can-he-do-it-193618.

[46] Concretely, Colombia has descended from being the fourth to the sixth largest emitter.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

Table 6.4 *Carbon (megatons per year) emissions in 2021*

| Country | Total | Per capita | Change vs 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brazil | 489.86 | 2.28 | 114% |
| Mexico | 418.35 | 3.09 | 44% |
| Argentina | 189.00 | 4.12 | 88% |
| Venezuela | 104.67 | 3.12 | 2% |
| Chile | 85.70 | 4.61 | 160% |
| Colombia | 77.57 | 1.53 | 48% |
| Peru | 55.14 | 1.64 | 164% |
| Ecuador | 41.14 | 2.34 | 134% |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 28.99 | 21.01 | 129% |
| Dominican Republic | 27.73 | 2.47 | 245% |

*Source:* Crippa et al., GHG Emissions of All World Countries.

to *decrease* 45% by 2030.[47] How then should we assess the performance of individual countries, and in particular the LAC's 10 largest emitters, in that context?

A study from the Institute of the Americas reveals useful insights to answer the question. Unfortunately, the study leaves Venezuela out,[48] but includes the other nine. Table 6.5 presents a summary of findings relevant to this chapter, extracted mostly from the country 'NDC Scorecards' provided by Miranda.[49]

On the bright side, two 'heroes' among the region's largest emitters are Colombia and Chile. Ahead of COP26, held in November 2021, Colombia updated its NDC to aim for a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to its 2014 emissions level, a reduction of black carbon emissions by 40%, and a net-zero target of 2050. Its NDC is among the most ambitious in LAC and highly aligned with the country's goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. Colombia is one of the few countries in the region on track to achieve its Paris Agreement pledges. Its NDC includes massive landscape reforestation and restoration projects, including an initiative to plant 180 million trees by 2022, an Active Transport and Travel Demand Management program to increase the share of trips made by bicycle above 5% in all Colombian cities by 2030, and a pilot Emissions Trading Scheme started in 2018 to be ready for implementation by 2025. It also envisages more stringent vehicle emission standards for road transport as well as reductions in agricultural burning, and switching to more efficient technologies for heating and cooking. Building Back Greener indicates a 26% recovery spending from the country's total spending, of which just under 28% has been green recovery spending according to the UN Environment Programme's COVID-19

[47] UN Climate Change, COP26: Update to the NDC Synthesis Report. 4 November 2021. https://unfccc.int/news/cop26-update-to-the-ndc-synthesis-report.

[48] A direct reading of the NDC Registry reveals that the only commitment Venezuela made in November 2021 was to reduce emissions by 20% by 2030 with respect to a business as usual (that is, were it to take no action) scenario. This same pledge was present in the country's initial NDC from 2015, and thus there is no improvement.

[49] Miranda, Tania, Nationally Determined Contributions Across the Americas: A Comparative Hemispheric Analysis. Full information at https://iamericas.org/nationally-determined-contributions-across-the-americas-a-comparative-hemispheric-analysis.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

Table 6.5 *Nationally determined contribution pledges of the LAC's largest emitters (2021)*

| Country | Is the updated NDC GHG emission reduction target more ambitious? | Does it have a carbon neutrality commitment? | Is it on track to achieve its pledges? | Is it implementing policies/regulations consistent with NDCs? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brazil | No | Yes | No | No |
| Mexico | No | No | No | No |
| Argentina | Yes | Yes | ? | ? |
| Venezuela* | No | No | ? | ? |
| Chile | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Colombia | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Peru | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Ecuador | Yes | No | ? | ? |
| Trinidad and Tobago | ? | ? | No | Yes |
| Dominican Republic | Yes | Yes | ? | Yes |

*Note:* GHG, greenhouse gas; NDC, nationally determined contributions.

*Source:* Miranda, Nationally determined contributions. Note that for Venezuela, we have taken information directly from the NDC Registry (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat, Nationally Determined Contributions Registry (2022). https://unfccc.int/NDCREG).

Recovery Tracker for LAC.[50] In 2022, Colombia matched COP27, exceeding expectations. The goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 is accompanied by more than mitigation measures and adaptation targets which include limiting the gross annual deforestation rate to a maximum of 50,000 ha by 2030, and the commitment to generate carbon budgets in 2023. It also contains a commitment to strengthen and develop carbon pricing mechanisms, plus guidelines for the implementation of the NDCs at both sectoral and territorial levels.[51]

Chile brought an updated NDC program to COP26, which included limiting its total annual greenhouse gas emissions at 95 megatons (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent ($CO_{2\text{-}e}$) by 2030; setting an 'emissions budget' limit of 1,100 Mt of $CO_{2\text{-}e}$ between 2020 and 2030, and reaching peak emissions by 2025. To achieve its NDC, the policy emissions pathway includes the Unconventional Renewable Energy Law; a carbon tax; an action plan to achieve electrification for 40% of the private vehicle fleet and 100% of public urban transport by 2050; and a National Green Hydrogen Strategy to provide clean fuel to decarbonize key sectors. Chile is also formulating a Climate Change Framework Law to engrain carbon neutrality commitments in domestic legislation by 2050, along with financing measures and economic instruments. The government also announced in 2020 that the retirement of coal-fired power plants would be achieved 15 years ahead of schedule.[52] In 2022 Chile's commitment to the Paris Agreement

[50] Ibid. [51] Baumgartner et al., Latin America and the Caribbean. [52] Miranda, Nationally determined contributions.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

ahead of COP27 remained. Its NDC contains a social pillar with commitments on which the implementation of the NDC must rest to guarantee a fair transition and sustainable development in the country. Comprehensive measures that integrate both adaptation and mitigation include circular economy, land use, land-use change and forestry, and ocean commitments. This NDC also stands out for having an ambitious unconditional goal in absolute terms, with Chile one of the few countries in LAC with a carbon emissions budget for the 2020–2030 period, in the light of its commitment to becoming carbon-neutral by 2050. Chile's NDC is based on a comprehensive evaluation of mitigation measures and an analysis that provides clarity in terms of goals and the economic impact on society to facilitate acceptance and implementation.[53]

In 2022 the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has undertaken initiatives such as the Regional Snapshot to explore NDCs of countries in the region, their ambition, progress, and feasibility,[54] in order to support progress towards the attainment of the Paris Agreement goals: containing the rise in global temperature to less than 2°C and as close as possible to 1.5°C in comparison with 'pre-industrial' levels.[55]

### 6.4 A Flurry of Initiatives towards Common Goals

Latin America and the Caribbean faces serious challenges moving forward. On the one hand, it is already experiencing the impacts of the planet's warming in a noticeable, and at times irreversible, way. Poor governance, weak rule of law and fragile democratic structures hold back its economic and social progress. The design, implementation, and upkeep of effective and sustained climate policies is in jeopardy too. There is no easy solution. On the other hand, there are reasons for hope. Current and future efforts by LAC countries have as a background the region's large youth population, its increasing middle class, its vast natural resources, and its considerable economic growth potential.

In 2020 the majority of the population in LAC was aged between 5 and 29 years old, with the largest age group being 20–24 years old.[56] Figure 6.2 provides some perspective: LAC's proportion of youth *vis-à-vis* the general population is comparable to Central and Southern Asia's and only inferior to Africa.[57] In 2021, LAC's proportion of persons under 15 was 24%.[58]

Latin America and the Caribbean possesses 57% of the primary forests in the world – storing some 104 gigatons of carbon and hosting between 40% and 50% of the world's biodiversity, and a third of all plant species.[59] Not only are forests important to sequester

[53] Baumgartner et al., Latin America and the Caribbean.
[54] United Nations Development Programme, Country insights. Human Development Reports. 2022. https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks. United Nations Development Programme, Regional snapshot: Latin America and the Caribbean. 19 July 2022.
[55] 'Pre-industrial' is understood as 'the multi-century period prior to the onset of large-scale industrial activity around 1750'. The reference period between 1850 and 1900 is used to approximate the pre-industrial global mean surface temperature (IPCC, Global Warming of 1.5°C Special Report– Summary for Policymakers (2018)); UNFCCC. 2022. Paris Agreement, opened for signature 22 April 2016, entered into force 4 November 2016.
[56] CEPAL, América Latina y el Caribe 2022.
[57] Which is expected to host some 40% of the total world population by around 2100.
[58] Banco Mundial, Población Entre 0 y 14 Años de Edad (% Del Total) – Latin America & Caribbean. 2022. https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS?end=2021&locations=ZJ&name_desc=false&start=2021&type=shaded&view=map.
[59] World Meteorological Organization, State of the climate in Latin America and the Caribbean 2020. 13 August 2021. https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/library/state-of-climate-latin-america-and-caribbean-2020.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007




Figure 6.2 Between 20% and 30% of LAC's population is 14 years old or less, making it a region with high youth potential. 'Youth Index' Percentage of Under-Fifteens (2018). *Source:* World Bank, Population ages 0–14 (% of total population), 2021 (based on data from the United Nations Population Division), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS?end=2021&start=2021&type=shaded&view=map.

atmospheric carbon, they also help to regulate hydrological cycles, stabilize landscapes, and contribute to soil and water conservation in fragile ecosystems.[60] The region holds 23% of the world's total forested areas.

### *6.4.1 Regional Collaboration*

Constructive collaboration with other regions can help. Springing from its cultural and historical affinities, the region has borne a flurry of polycentric initiatives promoting exchange, integration, and coordinated approaches to common problems starting as far back as 1826, with few other regions having a closer affinity to LAC than the EU. This background is important for climate policymaking, as coordinated approaches are more likely to succeed in the long run as they involve expertise, resources, communication, and solidarity across the whole region.

Noteworthy initiatives include (by year of creation):

- 1960: ALALC – The Free Trade Latin American Association.[61]

[60] CEPAL, Forest loss in Latin America and the Caribbean from 1990 to 2020: the statistical evidence. 9 August 2021. www.cepal.org/en/publications/47152-forest-loss-latin-america-and-caribbean-1990-2020-statistical-evidence.

[61] Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración, Asociación latinoamericana de libre comercio (ALALC). 2021. www.aladi.org/sitioaladi/alalc.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

- 1969: The Andean Community.[62]
- 1975: SELA – Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.[63]
- 1980: ALADI – The Latin American Association for [Economic] Integration.[64]
- 1991: MERCOSUR – The Southern Common Market.[65]
- 2004: ALBA – The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America – People's Trade Agreement.[66]
- 2008: UNASUR – The South American Nations Union.[67]
- 2019: PROSUR – The Forum for the Progress and Integration of South America.[68]
- CELAC – The Latin American and Caribbean States Community.[69]

The most representative of those organizations would appear to be CELAC. If Brazil returns to full participation it has a promising future, which both the EU and PRC have anticipated by establishing relations with this body. As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the UN Environment Program lists for its LAC region virtually the same countries that are CELAC members.[70]

The Latin American and Caribbean States Community faces many challenges, the first of which is to show its difference and relevance *vis-à-vis* the other existing integration initiatives described above. Self-defined as 'an intergovernmental mechanism for dialogue and political accord [*concertación*]', it constantly attempts to master contradictory forces. On the one hand, it aspires to gather, integrate, and represent *all* the States in the region; but, on the other hand, some of those States may disagree with one another over a variety of issues and in general be less reliable given the decline in political culture of the whole region,[71] and in the vigor of its respective democracies.[72]

This is not a CELAC-specific problem. A fragile political culture is and has been a handicap for this region from the beginning of its independent existence in the nineteenth century. It is one of the reasons why the strong pull towards convergence and unity present

[62] Secretaría General de la Comunidad Andina, ¿Quiénes somos? 2021. www.comunidadandina.org/quienes-somos.
[63] Secretaría Permanente, Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe, ¿Qué es el SELA? 2022). www.sela.org/es/que-es-el-sela.
[64] Secretaría General, Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración, ¿Quiénes somos? 20 August 2021. www.aladi.org/sitioaladi/quienes-somos-2.
[65] Secretaria do MERCOSUL, Objetivos do MERCOSUL. 2022. www.mercosur.int/pt-br/quem-somos/objetivos-do-mercosul.
[66] Alianza Bolivariana para los pueblos de nuestra América – Tratado de comercio de los pueblos, Historia del ALBA-TCP. 2022. www.albatcp.org/historia.
[67] Secretaría Permanente – Sistema económico latinoamericano y Del Caribe, Cumbres regionales – UNASUR. 2015. http://s017.sela.org/es/cumbres-regionales/unasur.
[68] Foro para el Progreso e Integración de América del Sur, Sobre PROSUR. 2022. https://foroprosur.org/sobre-prosur.
[69] Secretaría Permanente, Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe.
[70] UNEP, Our work in Latin America and the Caribbean. 24 October 2017. www.unep.org/regions/latin-america-and-caribbean/our-work-latin-america-and-caribbean.
[71] In 2021, LAC suffered the sharpest year-on-year decline of any region since the Democracy Index began recording data (2006), especially in the 'political culture' category. There is 'growing scepticism about the ability of democratic governments to address the region's problems and about growing tolerance for authoritarian governance' and a weakening commitment to democratic political culture which has permitted 'the growth of illiberal populists such as . . . Bolsonaro in Brazil . . . Lopez Obrador in Mexico or . . . Bukele in El Salvador, as well as fostering authoritarian regimes in Nicaragua and Venezuela' (Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index 2021: the China challenge. 9 February 2022. www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021).
[72] Only two LAC States appear in the list of 'fully democratic' countries, while 11 are classified as 'flawed democracies', 7 as 'hybrid regimes', and 3 as 'authoritarian regimes'. Under this perspective, in a full democracy 'not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. The functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse. There is an effective system of checks and balances. The judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced. There are only limited problems in the functioning of democracies' (Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index 2021: the China challenge).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

in those then-newly independent States two centuries ago has not yet materialised, while similar efforts in other parts of the world – most eminently in Europe – have progressed more in less time. It is also a strong reason why previous integration initiatives have collapsed, the latest one being UNASUR.[73]

These difficulties notwithstanding, CELAC has been a credible interlocutor between the EU and the United States and seems to be gathering viability because the biggest players in the region are investing time, resources, and political capital in it. Mexico just ended its *pro tempore* presidency in which CELAC was revitalised.[74] Argentina has been elected by consensus to hold the presidency as of 2024.[75] Unfortunately, Brazil suspended its participation in CELAC, most likely due to political differences with other members.[76] Mexico has for the time being exercised leadership and filled the vacuum left by Brazil, whose GDP represents 30% of the regional total,[77] but its return is highly desirable for the success of the initiative.

In fact, Brazil seems likely to rejoin CELAC, throwing all its weight behind it (as well as other regional initiatives) in an effort to present a common front of interaction and negotiation with China, the United States, the EU, and others,[78] with climate change ranking top of the agenda. In fact, during his post-victory speech, the newly elected President referred to 'a longing' expressed to him by contacts from different countries for:

> that sovereign Brazil who spoke as a par to the wealthiest and most powerful countries . . . contributed to the development of the poorest . . . worked for the integration of South America and Latin America and the Caribbean, strengthened MERCOSUR and helped to create the G20, UNASUR, CELAC and the BRICS. Today we are telling the world that Brazil is back . . . that Brazil is too big to be relegated to the sad role of world pariah.[79]

The Latin American and Caribbean States Community is still in development and faces many challenges, one of which was rightly pointed out by Colombia, as Argentina takes the baton for the 2022 *pro tempore* presidency: how to deal with Member States who are clearly not functioning democracies such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela.[80] However, if strengthened, CELAC has the potential to serve as a platform for integration and climate governance for which there is already interest, as seen in the dialogue between Pacific Alliance and MERCOSUR.[81]

[73] T. Fonfara, B. Storino, A. Fochesatto, A. Rosetto, La disolución de la unasur: un análisis desde el realismo. Córdoba Global – Centro de Estudios Internacionales. 9 September 2019. https://cbaglobal.com.ar/la-disolucion-de-la-unasur-un-analisis-desde-el-realismo.

[74] Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Gobierno de México, La presidencia pro tempore de México en la CELAC. 27 December 2021.

[75] Argentina asume el liderazgo de la CELAC, en medio de tensión, El Universal. 8 January 2022. www.eluniversal.com.mx/mundo/argentina-asume-el-liderazgo-de-la-celac-en-medio-de-tension.

[76] Agencia EFE, La UE estudia cómo celebrar cumbre con A.Latina al faltar Brasil en CELAC. *S*wissInfo. 1 October 2021. www.swissinfo.ch/spa/ue-latinoam%C3%A9rica_la-ue-estudia-c%C3%B3mo-celebrar-cumbre-con-a-latina-al-faltar-brasil-en-celac/46995970.

[77] P. Silva Barros, Brasil: un extraño en su propio continente – Latinoamérica 21. Latinoamérica 21. 18 September 2021. https://latinoamerica21.com/es/brasil-un-extrano-en-su-propio-continente.

[78] A. Taglioni, Lula y AMLO acordaron potenciar la Celac y construir una agenda regional en el G20. La Política Online. 3 March 2022. www.lapoliticaonline.com/mexico/internacionales-mx/lula-y-amlo-acordaron-potenciar-la-cela-y-construir-una-agenda-regional-en-el-g20.

[79] C. Molina, Sánchez anuncia una cumbre entre la Unión Europea y América Latina para 2023. Público. 24 August 2022. www.publico.es/politica/sanchez-anuncia-cumbre-union-europea-y-america-latina-2023.html.

[80] R. García, 'Argentina asume liderazgo de Celac en medio de tensión por DD.HH en la region. SwissInfo. 7 January 2022. www.swissinfo.ch/spa/celac-reuni%C3%B3n_argentina-asume-liderazgo-de-celac-en-medio-de-tensi%C3%B3n-por-dd-hh-en-la-regi%C3%B3n/47246072.

[81] O. Rosales, La convergencia entre Alianza del Pacífico y MERCOSUR: potencial y conflictos. Real Instituto Elcano. 6 February 2020. www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documento-de-trabajo/la-convergencia-entre-alianza-del-pacifico-y-mercosur-potencial-y-conflictos.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

### 6.4.2 Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union — A Natural Partnership?

Partnerships with regions that have advanced more in the implementation of climate policies can prove useful. The links between Europe and LAC go back centuries, and, although relations have not always been optimal and grievances remain, there is also a history of constructive and positive exchanges crossing the Atlantic in both directions.

Today, the EU and LAC share several languages (eminently Spanish and Portuguese, but also French, Dutch, and English) and a myriad of economic, academic, social, and cultural exchanges. In order to be strong and relevant in the twenty-first century, both face the challenge of fostering unity in diversity. For different reasons, the EU, albeit far from perfect, has managed to advance more in the realm of both integration and climate policy – in which it is a world leader. All these reasons make the EU a valuable climate partner for LAC.

Several exchanges and initiatives exist between the two regions to address climate change. The EU–CELAC summits and the Euroclima program are two examples. Mutual collaboration has benefited both regions and brought motivation and support to them in the achievement of Paris Agreement goals. For LAC, this partnership has also produced financial support and valuable know-how from Europe in the design, implementation, and follow-up of climate policies. The EU–CELAC relationship includes summits, roadmaps, and agreements. Euroclima focuses on cooperation and contains a funding mechanism to foster the implementation of sound climate policies.

Summits between the EU and LAC have existed since 1999, when the first was celebrated in Rio de Janeiro. However, after the foundation of CELAC in 2011, the summit with the EU gathers two regional organizations. The first EU–CELAC summit took place in 2013 in Santiago (Chile). The second one was celebrated in Brussels in 2015. In the Action Plan that followed the 2015 summit,[82] the second in a list of topics for action was 'Sustainable development; environment; climate change; biodiversity; energy' and proposed collaboration and exchange with the following outcomes in mind:

- Improved knowledge on problems and consequences of climate change including vulnerability and risk assessment, biodiversity loss and environment issues in its widest meaning, and integration of these issues into sustainable development and climate adaptation strategies and other adaptation activities.
- Strengthened capacities and emergency networks to prevent and address the effect of natural disasters.
- Improved capacity for sustainable development, environmental and climate change-related challenges, and for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- Improved use and accessibility of renewable energies, increased energy efficiency and saving as these play an important role in the diversification and complementarity of the energy matrix.

[82] Council of the European Union, EU–CELAC Action Plan 2015. 11 June 2015. www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23757/eu-celac-action-plan.pdf.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

Although the 2017 summit was cancelled,[83] in 2018 the European External Action Service declared that CELAC is the EU's official counterpart for the region-to-region summit process and strategic partnership. The EU's 'engagement with CELAC is complemented by strong bilateral relations with individual countries and does not exclude cooperation with sub-regional groups such as MERCOSUR, CARICOM/CARIFORUM, Pacific Alliance, SICA and UNASUR'.[84]

Ministers of the EU and CELAC met in Berlin in December 2020 and agreed to work in the preparation of the next EU–CELAC summit. Among several areas of agreement for continued or future joint cooperation they concluded on the importance of climate change and the aspiration to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. An informal meeting took place at the end of 2021.[85] Another ministerial meeting between the two organizations took place in Buenos Aires on 27 October 2022 with the purpose of renewing the bi-regional partnership to strengthen peace and sustainable development.[86] The EU has planned a 2023 summit with CELAC,[87] coinciding with the presidencies of those blocs by Spain and Argentina, respectively.[88] This commitment has been publicly confirmed by the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez.[89]

Several initiatives of support from the EU to CELAC to this end were mentioned, in particular Euroclima+, a flagship program of the EU in LAC,[90] which aims at reducing the impact of climate change and its effects in the region. The program only includes 18 LAC countries at present and finances a broad range of activities, including technical assistance, capacity building, exchange of best practices, studies, events, seminars, workshops, peer-to-peer exchanges, and pilot projects.

Euroclima+ aims at reducing the impact of climate change and its effects in Latin America by fostering action towards the fulfilment of the Paris Agreement.[91] It is financed through a commitment of €144 million since 2010 by the governments of Germany, Spain, and France.[92] Euroclima+ comprehends six priority sectors – forests, biodiversity, and ecosystems; energy efficiency; disaster risk management; resilient food production; water management and urban resilience perspective; and urban mobility – and six strategic action lines – plans and

[83] European Economic and Social Committee Press Unit, Civil society strengthens dialogue between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean despite the Postponement of the EU–CELAC Summit. 5 October 2017. www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/civil-society-strengthens-dialogue-between-european-union-latin-america-and-caribbean-despite-postponement-eu-celac.

[84] European External Action Service, EU–CELAC relations. 16 July 2018. www.eeas.europa.eu/node/13042_en.

[85] General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, EU–Latin America and Caribbean Leaders' Meeting via Video Conference, 2 December 2021. European Council – Council of the European Union. 2 December 2021. www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2021/12/02.

[86] M. D. Lenzu, Reunión ministerial UE–CELAC, 27 de Octubre de 2022. Consejo de La Unión Europea. 27 October 2022. www.consilium.europa.eu/es/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2022/10/27.

[87] AFP, La UE plantea cumbre con América Latina y Caribe para 2023. France 24. 4 May 2022. www.france24.com/es/minuto-a-minuto/20220504-la-ue-plantea-cumbre-con-am%C3%A9rica-latina-y-caribe-para-2023.

[88] Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto, Cafiero con miembros de Eurolat: 'Desde la CELAC, Argentina quiere ampliar y fortalecer lazos con la Unión Europea'. Cancillería, Gobierno Argentino. 13 April 2022. www.cancilleria.gob.ar/es/actualidad/noticias/cafiero-con-miembros-de-eurolat-desde-la-celac-argentina-quiere-ampliar-y.

[89] Molina, Sánchez anuncia una cumbre entre la Unión Europea y América Latina para 2023.

[90] Euroclimaplus Secretariat, A flagship programme of the European Union in Latin America. 2020. www.euroclima.org/en/home-en/about-the-programme.

[91] Secretariado de Euroclima+2022, 1.2. ¿Qué es EUROCLIMA+? Informe Anual Euroclima+ 2022. 2022. https://informeanual2022.euroclima.org/1-euroclima-en-el-periodo-2021-2022/que-es-euroclima.

[92] Secretariado de Euroclima, 1.3. El Programa en la actualidad. Euroclima, Informe Anual 2022. 2022. https://informeanual2022.euroclima.org/1-euroclima-en-el-periodo-2021-2022/el-programa-en-la-actualidad.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

policies; climate financing: transparency; intersectoral, multilevel, and multiple stakeholder coordination; action for climate empowerment; and gender and vulnerable groups.[93]

## 6.5 Conclusion

Like other areas of the world, LAC is experiencing the impacts of climate change and, while Chile and Colombia have effectively implemented viable NDCs in line with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement, most LAC States have not. LAC response matters not so much for the size of its emissions but especially for its potential to act as a net carbon sink. Indeed, according to JP Morgan, the LAC's sequestration potential places it as a leader in the carbon credit market.[94] LAC's natural resources, young population, and economic capacity provide reasons for hope – 'great expectations' – about its future.

Due to cultural, geographical, and historical commonalities, LAC has sat at the juncture of an array of initiatives and networks pushing for integration at different levels and with diverse center points since the nineteenth century. The most comprehensive of those initiatives is CELAC, although others, such as MERCOSUR and Pacific Alliance, are more developed in their degree of cooperation.

The level of integration matters, as more of it will help the region tackle the big problems individual countries cannot face by themselves. This is evident in the case of climate policy. While due to space constraints only the largest emitters have been analyzed to a certain degree, action, motivation, solidarity, and best practices are needed from all 33 States. And there is much that large emitters lagging behind in meeting their Paris Agreement commitments can learn from low emitters who are exemplary in climate policy, such as Costa Rica.

Although the level of progress towards the achievement of Paris Agreement goals may be modest so far, recent changes in the political landscape in Brazil provide room for optimism,[95] as do the partnerships the region is establishing with parts of the world that are more advanced in climate policy such as Europe. However, the key takeaway is that the political atmosphere and framework under which LAC operates is as important as the policies themselves if the region is to progress in climate action terms (as well as in other aspects such as economic growth, income equality and regional integration). Due to its high levels of inequality and social unrest, the key challenge to implementing climate policies in LAC will be the strengthening of a political atmosphere where human rights, the rule of law, and democratic values prevail.

Climate policies need a cooperative legal framework where the law is created through transparent and democratic processes and enforced, once approved, through an independent judicial system and checks on the executive. Freedom of information and expression are

[93] Secretariado de Euroclima+, Acerca del Programa. 2021. www.euroclima.org/inicio-es/quienes-somos.

[94] D. Stubbs, The climate opportunity: getting ahead of Latin America's net-zero transition. JP Morgan Insights. 15 April 2022. https://privatebank.jpmorgan.com/gl/en/insights/investing/the-climate-opportunity-getting-ahead-of-latin-americas-net-zero-transition.

[95] Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the second largest country in the region, Mexico, which will be muddled in inaction at least until 2024 (while López Obrador is president), notwithstanding efforts by the Biden administration to encourage greater climate ambition from the United States' southern neighbor (S. Lewis, K. Madry, A. Ellis, COP 27-Mexico to make major climate commitment, says John Kerry. Reuters. 2 November 2022. www.reuters.com/business/cop/cop-27-mexico-make-major-climate-commitment-says-john-kerry-2022-11-02).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007

also essential to promote debate in the public sphere, fostering respect for all citizens and their freedom and fair and free elections of representatives. A framework where democracy, the rule of law, balance of powers, and human rights prevail would provide stability, predictability, and a foundation for sound, clear, legitimate, and sustained climate action. This atmosphere is not a given in LAC and must be created, maintained and enhanced through deliberate and persistent cooperation.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:04:39, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009341493.007