Agreement establishing the EU-LAC International Foundation

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PURPOSE: to conclude the Agreement establishing the EU (European Union) – LAC (Latin, American and Caribbean) International Foundation.

PROPOSED ACT: Joint Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: the European Union (EU) and the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries signed a strategic partnership at the first bi-regional summit of their heads of state and government in Rio de Janeiro in 1999.

Since 1999, successive summits have ensured a **steady intensification of political dialogue and progress** on jointly tackling a wide range of issues including climate change, migration, the fight against illicit drugs, the promotion of human rights and gender equality, education and cultural issues, and in the fields of science and technology.

At the Fifth EU-LAC Summit (Lima, 2008), leaders of both regions decided to consider the creation of a **bi-regional foundation** to foster debate on common strategies and action to strengthen the partnership and enhance its visibility.

The EU-LAC Foundation was formally established in Hamburg in 2011 as a German civil law body, pending the possible conclusion of an international constituent agreement to convert it into an international organisation.

Council Decision 2012/493/EU authorised the Commission to open negotiations for an international agreement on the creation of the EU-LAC Foundation as an international organisation, with the EU, its Member States and the LAC countries as members. Negotiations started in December 2012 and the European Parliament has been kept regularly informed throughout the negotiations.

The High Representative and the Commission consider that the objectives set by the Council in its directives on the negotiation of the Agreement have been met, and that the draft Agreement can be submitted for signature and conclusion.

CONTENT: the joint proposal constitutes the legal instrument for the conclusion of the Agreement establishing the EU-LAC International Foundation is hereby approved on behalf of the European Union. The aim of the Agreement is to establish the EU-LAC Foundation as an international organisation with legal personality under public international law.

The Foundation can be seen as an instrument of EU common foreign policy because its activities contribute to the convergence of Member States' actions towards the Latin American and Caribbean region, ensuring that the EU is able to assert its interests and values in the framework of the partnership between the two regions.

Specific activities of the Foundation contribute to the **political dialogue** between the EU and CELAC in areas such as global governance and the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Foundation will also **strengthen cooperation between the EU and LAC regions**, fostering intercultural exchange, notably by facilitating and promoting participation by, and inputs from, civil society and other social actors. It will aim to:

- support EU-CELAC policy dialogue and cooperation involving some or all LAC countries in key areas of common interest such as research, sustainable development, climate change, competitiveness, jobs and growth, and gender equality;
- conduct or support analysis and research on themes of interest for the partnership;
- develop and support bi-regional networks and foster exchanges of knowledge and best practices between them.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: the conclusion of the Agreement will have no direct budgetary implications, as it will be on a voluntary basis. The Commission has made financial contributions to the Foundation since it was established under German civil law in 2011, most recently (through the Partnership Instrument) the sum of EUR 3 million for the two years from October 2015. Some LAC and EU countries, including Germany as host country, have contributed financially on one or more occasions.