



# The South American Perspective on the Sustainable Development Policy of the European Union

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## A. INTRODUCTION

What role does or could the EU play in the sustainable development of our region? Recent experience shows up at least two relevant roles. The main one is perhaps that attributed to international trade, including direct foreign investment in the region by EU countries; this is a strong driver of economic growth, with consequent (positive and negative) environmental and social effects. Another role – probably of greater weight for the CAN<sup>1</sup> than the MERCOSUR<sup>2</sup> or Chile – is the international cooperation from EU countries; this latter case mainly involves positive effects on regional sustainability.

Why is the EU interested in listening to and considering the viewpoints of South America and other regions of the world in its sustainable development policy? The most obvious answer is contained in the recently published EU document – entitled 'External Dimension Strategy'<sup>3</sup> – in which the EU recognises the importance of achieving a global partnership for sustainable development.

To which priority issues for the region's sustainable development has EU domestic and foreign policy contributed and/or to which could it contribute in the future? What kind of action can the EU consider when reviewing its policies, particularly in the context of its external dimension strategy? These are the main questions this initiative seeks to answer.

This document summarises the results of analysis of the situation of the CAN, MERCOSUR and Chile in terms of sustainable development and the existing relationship between these and European Union policy. The activities carried out – which have been an input into this document – include the creation of three documents: on the CAN<sup>4</sup>, on the MERCOSUR<sup>5</sup>

and on Chile<sup>6</sup>, and the workshop 'The South American Perspective on the Sustainable Development Policy of the European Union', which took place on 19th and 20th July, 2004, in Santiago. The workshop was part of a project for the European Union's internal review of their sustainable development policy and its external dimensions. The project's objective was to bring together regional perspectives (South America, Africa and Asia) on the issue, with emphasis on two central elements:

- firstly, to reinforce the EU's relationship with civil society in other regions of the world in order to improve mutual understanding of priorities and perspectives and;
- to generate key policy messages to inform the European Union's decisions on the subject of sustainable development.

Experts from Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru and Costa Rica participated in the workshop in Santiago, including representatives from Government, the private sector and research institutes (list of participants attached).

The debate centred on the areas defined by the European Union as priorities for sustainable development<sup>7</sup>. These were:

- Harnessing globalisation: trade for sustainable development
- Fighting poverty and promoting social development
- Sustainable management of natural and environmental resources
- Improving coherence of European Union policy
- Better governance at all levels (with emphasis on environmental dimensions)
- Financing sustainable development.

This summary is based on personal opinions of experts in the region who attended the workshop, as well as information from documents specially prepared for its development. In addition, background documents were used from the larger project of which this South American initiative forms a part ('Improving the value of the EU global partnership for sustainable development through southern perspectives') as well as the general literature on the issue included in the attached bibliography.

<sup>1</sup> The Andean Community (CAN) in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela

<sup>2</sup> The southern Common Market, an agreement between Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2002). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards a global partnership for sustainable development. COM Brussels.

<sup>4</sup> By María Amparo Albán (Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental, CEDA, Ecuador) and Juan Dumas (Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano, Ecuador).

<sup>5</sup> By Rubens Harry Born (Vitae Civilis, Brazil).

<sup>6</sup> By Juana Alvarez (Rides, Chile).

<sup>7</sup> Mentioned in the external dimensions document.

### "Southern Perspectives on the EU's Sustainable Development Policies"

IIED and the Ring are leading a programme of work focusing on the European Union's impacts on the rest of the world, and the ways in which these could be made more sustainable and accountable. This project will generate Asian, African and Latin American perspectives on the EU Sustainable Development Strategy's external dimensions, and on some of the key policy instruments and processes which shape the interaction of the European Union with other regions.

This paper is one of a series commissioned to inform the initiative. For more information please contact Tom Bigg at IIED.



## B. THE REGION'S CURRENT STATUS IN MATTERS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Although the region as a whole and most of its individual countries do possess sustainable development strategies at a formal level, unlike in the European Union these have not achieved the desired level of implementation. In most of the countries of the region there is only a preliminary acknowledgment of the concept in general and of environmental sustainability in particular. However, initiatives are being developed and efforts undertaken tending towards increasing recognition of the issue within the region. Some examples are the *Iniciativa Latinoamericana y Caribeña para el Desarrollo Sostenible* (Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development or ILAC)<sup>8</sup>, and sub-regional initiatives within the CAN and the MERCOSUR<sup>9</sup>.

On the other hand, from an analytical viewpoint the region is very diverse in ecological, economic and social terms. Nevertheless, when examining the two sub regions – CAN and CONOSUR (comprising MERCOSUR and Chile) – there are certain common elements and other contrasting features regarding sustainability.

The table below sets out the priority issues for sustainable development in the different sub regions; it provides an overview of the most relevant issues as identified and analysed in diverse recent publications.

No.	Issue	Sub region where the issue is most pressing
1	Eradication of extreme poverty	CAN and CONOSUR
2	Improvement of equality levels in society	CAN and CONOSUR
3	Sustainable agricultural management and protection of forests	CAN and CONOSUR
4	Compensation for environmental services	CONOSUR
5	Sustainability of energy supply	CONOSUR
6	Investment in training	CAN and CONOSUR
7	Progressive reduction of environmental content in exports	CAN and CONOSUR
8	Promotion of economic activities that raise the value of environmental protection and offer more local jobs	CAN and CONOSUR
9	Strengthening of multilateral trade and environmental processes	CONOSUR
10	Incorporation of the environmental issue in business management	CONOSUR
11	Promotion of conservation and sustainable management of natural resources	CAN and CONOSUR
12	Prevention of deterioration of the environment	CAN and CONOSUR
13	Promotion of environmental education, creation of training possibilities and intensification of citizen participation	CAN and CONOSUR
14	Protection and development of traditional knowledge and practices related to the sustainable use of biodiversity resources	CAN

## C. IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE REGION<sup>10</sup>

Several of the issues identified below relate directly to lines of action of the EU's sustainable development policy, particularly the issues outlined in the external dimensions strategy. On the other hand, diverse stakeholders emphasise the potential cause-effect

relationship existing between EU policies – both internal and external – and the quality of development in the region. Examples of this relationship are i) the tariff escalation faced by higher value-added goods that the region tries to introduce into European markets, and ii) the agricultural subsidy policies in EU countries and the negative effects on price and agricultural production in the countries of the region. It is argued that these policies do not encourage industrialisation and hamper agricultural development in the countries of the region. It is, without doubt, difficult to establish a unique cause-effect relationship; to achieve this would require an in-depth investigation, which goes beyond the objectives of this study.

As highlighted below, the battle against poverty is a central issue within the social pillar of sustainability. The environmental pillar seems to be closely related to strengthening institutional structure and governance. Lastly, the economic-environmental pillar is directly related to sustainable management of natural resources.

### 1. Social dimension of sustainability: fight against poverty and social exclusion

The eradication or overcoming of poverty is seen – by diverse sectors – to be a fundamental requisite for advancing sustainability in the region. The priorities are:

**Eradication of extreme poverty.** In 2003, according to figures from the GEO 2003<sup>11</sup>, around 44% of the region's population was living in poverty. According to the Millennium Development Goals, extreme poverty should be reduced by 50% by 2015, not just in the region but worldwide. Trends in the region indicate this goal could be achieved in the established period.

**Improvement in levels of social equality,** both in terms of wealth distribution and people's access to opportunities to improve their standard of living. During the 90s, Latin America was the most inequitable continent in terms of wealth distribution with a Gini coefficient of 0.54. Likewise, there is a high incidence of discrimination towards minorities and indigenous peoples as well as those of limited means. These factors go hand in hand with poor education and current high unemployment rates. Such low levels of education (adults over 25 years of age have had an average of 5 years' schooling)<sup>12</sup> mean human capital has become an obstacle for economic growth, in turn limiting possibilities for technological modernisation and increase in productivity.

**Fight against social exclusion in general.** Education plays an important role, alongside access to opportunities and effective access to justice and active participation in decision-making. According to a recently published study in Chile, poverty is one of the chief causes of social exclusion. According to this study, starting in poverty severely reduces an individual's chances of improving his standard of living and eventually belonging to a wealthier economic group. The same is true of minorities and indigenous groups<sup>13</sup>. The phenomenon of exclusion is also directly related to unreliable labour supply, the technology gap, and consequently, market access.

**Ensuring people's access to clean water and basic sanitation,** is one of the Millennium Development Goals and closely linked

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.rolac.unep.mx/ilac/ilace.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Examples are the MERCOSUR's *Acuerdo Marco de Medio Ambiente* (Framework Agreement for the Environment), approved by DEC. No.02/01, which came into force in June, 2004, and the *Programa de Desarrollo Sostenible y Medio Ambiente* (Sustainable Development and Environment Programme) set up in the CAN (<http://www.comunidadandina.org/desarrollo/politica.htm>).

<sup>10</sup> The following is largely based on results from the workshop held in Santiago, Chile on 19th and 20th July, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations' report on the global state of the environment (Global Environment Outlook).

<sup>12</sup> Towards sustainable and equitable development. Sector Strategies for Latin America and the Caribbean. Inter-American Development Bank, February 2004, Washington.

<sup>13</sup> This is the case in Chile, according to the *Estudio sobre movilidad social en Chile* (Study on social mobility in Chile) (2003). Faculty of Economics, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

to the eradication of extreme poverty.

**Raising standards for the population at large**, including improvements in the quality of education, access to health services, legal rights and awareness of sustainability in general and specifically the need to protect the environment.

## 2. Environmental dimension of sustainability: building-up and strengthening of institutional structure for environmental governance

This priority is related to the need for an institutional structure able to sustain an environmental policy for adequate management and use of each country's natural resources. The priorities are:

**To strengthen the governments' ability to comply with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)** and provide greater international cooperation for their implementation.

**To strengthen environmental institutions**, particularly regarding monitoring and regulatory capabilities. This involves creating internal skills within the field. Two years on from the Johannesburg Summit significant progress has been made in creating environmental institutions, policies and plans; however, the enormous task remains of achieving a) better coordination between relevant actors, b) effective regulation of environmental regulations and c) implementation of innovative instruments to facilitate compliance with environmental regulations.

**To take regional and national differences into consideration when drawing up trade and environmental policies in the region as a whole.** One of the region's characteristics is the existing asymmetry not just between countries but even between areas of a single country. Such differences must be taken into consideration when drawing up and implementing policies, plans or programmes.

**To create the mechanisms and opportunities to guarantee access to information and justice and the participation of civil society** at every level of decision-making. In this respect it should be noted that civil society has the obligation to be not only critical but also proactive and prepared to make its own proposals, scrutinising government undertakings, taking on their commitments, generating a sense of responsibility and participating in debates on the issue in depth. Likewise, channels of communication must be created for national, regional and international levels<sup>14</sup>.

## 3. Economic-environmental dimension of sustainability: protection and sustainable use of natural resources

This is a particularly important issue for the region, which possesses great natural wealth upon which it is highly dependent for its economic development. The priorities are:

**To formulate policies to use natural resources according to defined sustainability priorities.** The 178 eco-regions identified in the region hold over 40% of the world's species of flora and fauna. Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela are all considered mega-diverse countries, thus demanding appropriate policies for adequate protection and rational use of resources. The issue of forest destruction in the tropical regions of South America is particularly sensitive; in Brazil this has reached

25,746 km<sup>2</sup> a year (between August 2001 and August 2002), given up for expanding agriculture (mainly soy production) and livestock.

**To promote production diversification strategies and improved competitiveness**, thus reducing pressure on natural resource exploitation in the region. Production in the region's countries is characterised by a high concentration of primary activity, particularly extractive industries. On the other hand, strategies such as cleaner production could pave the way for diversification towards production of goods with higher value-added, as well as contributing to protection of the environment<sup>15</sup>.

**To promote and increase the use of renewable sources of energy;** the GEO 2003 suggested the region should receive some 10% of its energy from renewable resources, in order to reduce pressure on water resources and pollution problems related to traditional sources of energy such as oil and coal.

**To promote direct foreign investment according to the criteria of protection and rational use of resources** in order to avoid contradictory situations where on one hand trade liberalisation contributes to the replacement of forests by agriculture while on the other, international cooperation agreements – arising from the very same trade partners – seek to contribute to forest conservation.

**To create specific instruments to provide incentive for rational use of resources**, particularly regarding matters of conservation and exploitation of biodiversity; and conservation of natural areas by private parties. This is particularly significant to the potential development of tourism with the creation of private conservation areas. In Chile, a regulation for private conservation is currently underway and Costa Rica has also seen a great deal of development in ecotourism as an economic activity. There is space to implement more original instruments to strengthen public-private partnerships for environmental purposes.

**To incorporate environmental sustainability as a cornerstone of trade alliances.** This point becomes essential in view of the negotiation of future trade agreements with the EU, which should include sustainability assessments as part of the preparation process. However, it will not be enough to undertake environmental or sustainability assessments, such as those carried out for the agreement between Chile and the European Union; but it will be essential to implement the greatest degree of participation from the region's stakeholders and to guarantee public access to this information.

## D. POSSIBLE LINES OF ACTION FOR THE REGION

The priorities identified in the previous section indicate diverse possible lines of action. In addition, this section includes some strategic lines of action that contribute to progress in diverse priority issues.

### 1. Fight against poverty and social exclusion

**To use a development focus based on respect for human rights**, understanding this to mean that every project and development strategy should point to full realisation of the fundamental

<sup>14</sup> Guerrero and Velasco, "La Lucha no ha terminado" ("The fight is not over"), in *Oportunidades para América Latina después de la Cumbre de Johannesburgo. Una visión regional sobre el Desarrollo Sostenible*. (Opportunities for Latin America after the Johannesburg Summit. A regional view on Sustainable Development) UICN, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> One interesting experience in this aspect is that being developed by the MERCOSUR's Sub-workgroup No.6 on the Environment together with GTZ, within the framework of the cooperation project with the German government entitled "Fomento de la Gestión Ambiental y la Producción Limpia para las PYMES en el MERCOSUR" (Promoting Environmental Management and Clean Production for SMEs in the MERCOSUR) (see [http://www.dinama.gub.uy/descargas/SGT\\_N6\\_Medio\\_Ambiente/ANEXO%20V/Resultados%20ARGENTINA.ppt](http://www.dinama.gub.uy/descargas/SGT_N6_Medio_Ambiente/ANEXO%20V/Resultados%20ARGENTINA.ppt))

human rights, such as health, shelter, work, education, equality, etc.

**To invest in education** (primary, secondary and higher): in curricula, strategies, teachers, material resources, etc., and particularly in improving the quality of teaching and reducing truancy, the region's main problems.

**To implement professional technical training programmes** that allow the incorporation of qualified production workers, leading to improved competitiveness and assistance in the fight against social exclusion.

## 2. Building up and strengthening of the institutional structure of environmental governance

**To promote wider coordination of environmental issues**, fostering the incorporation in all aspects of public and private activity. It is particularly important to encourage coordination between institutions in environmental-related issues: for example, one recognised problem in the region is the poor coordination and interaction between the foreign ministries and environmental ministries when facing issues of trade and the environment in the diverse multilateral, regional and bilateral forums.

**To foster the use of economic instruments to tackle specific environmentally relevant issues.** The region has diverse experience in the use of economic instruments in natural resource management. Although such instruments have limitations, there are many fields where their use has proved both efficient and effective<sup>16</sup>. Voluntary economic instruments should complement the compulsory ('command and control') instruments implemented by each country.

## 3. Protection and sustainable use of natural resources

**To invest in clean production processes and technologies;** this initiative could enjoy ongoing support from the European Union in the countries of the region.

**To create alliances between consumers in Europe and producers in the region** involved in fair and/or sustainable trade initiatives<sup>17</sup>.

## E. Possible lines of action for the EU

With regard to the role of the European Union and the external dimensions of its policies, two tasks are seen to be priorities: a) improve coordination between the European Union's cooperation policies and those of the member countries of the Union, and b) enhance the coherence of the European Union's cooperation policies and its sectoral and trade policies, especially those that have direct effects on development in the region, for example, policies regulating market access of goods and services in general and environmental goods and services in particular, and agricultural subsidies.

Some elements to be considered are:

**To promote participation of regional actors (private, public and civil society) in the formulation of EU cooperation initiatives.** Listening to these stakeholders is crucial when drawing up any such initiatives in order to maximise possible synergies and positive effects.

**To formulate and foster cooperation projects with effects that can be duplicated in the region.** One good example is the action of the German government within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement with the MERCOSUR, in the project 'Promotion of Environmental Management and Clean Production for SMEs', carried out by Sub-workgroup No.6 on environment of the MERCOSUR and the GTZ.

**To guarantee open access to information and transparency** in the way decisions are made and cooperation initiatives are managed and implemented.

**To give technical support for the compliance of standards and non-tariff requirements** on imports into the EU from the region.

**To promote the use of widely recognised environmental and social codes of conduct** by European investors, such as the code of conduct for multinationals developed by the OECD.

**To promote the use of sustainability assessments** for trade agreements, with active participation of stakeholders from the countries of the region and guaranteeing free access for all to the findings and results

**To review the coherence of the Union's policies**, particularly regarding their real potential to contribute to the priority issues for SD in the region. One example is a review of tariff escalation policies for higher value-added regional production, and of agricultural subsidies in the EU.

**To help promote market access to the region's environmental goods and services.**

**To foster opportunities for strengthening institutional structure in the region** similar to the twinning projects carried out when including Eastern European countries in the Union.

## F. SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE REGION AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE EU EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS STRATEGY

The table below summarises the priority issues identified in the region relating to the different priority areas of the European Union's Strategy for Sustainable Development. In each case possible lines of action are identified for the countries of the region as well as possible concrete action for the European Union.

## G. CONCRETE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

In the context of the workshop, participants suggested possible lines of action to follow, we need to identify forums and meetings in which the initiative and this document of conclusions could be disseminated in order to achieve greater effect including:

- Incorporation of Latin America in the transferable emissions market in January 2005
- COP meeting on Climate Change
- Summit of the Americas process (next one in Argentina 2005)
- Implementation of the DOHA agenda (e.g. certification and MEAs)
- Continue inserting these ideas into the framework of bilateral relations and regional negotiations (MERCOSUR, CAN, CAFTA, NAFTA, etc.).

<sup>16</sup> In the context of its 'Regional Dialogues on Policy' initiative (<http://www.iadb.org/int/DRP/default.asp>), the Inter-American Development Bank has developed specific publications on concrete experiences in issues of the region.

<sup>17</sup> See note 13.

Priority areas of the EU's SD policy	Priority issues of the region	Proposed action to be taken by the region	Current or possible mechanisms that could strengthen synergies between the region and the EU in this field
Harnessing globalisation: trade for sustainable development	To improve understanding of the real effects of trade liberalisation on sustainability.  Poor diversification in regional production and low levels of competitiveness.	To incorporate sustainability as cornerstone of the trade alliances to be defined.  To foster the incorporation of production strategies that improve competitiveness and promote diversification.  To improve levels of specialisation in the workforce to increase competitiveness.	To foster private sector and NGO participation in the region in drawing up the EU cooperation initiatives.  To create and foster cooperation projects with the possibility of successful replication in the region.  To implement the practice of sustainability assessments of trade liberalisation processes with widespread participation of regional stakeholders.  To promote the use of sustainable conduct codes (e.g. that of the OECD on multinationals).  To promote cooperation initiatives aimed at training the regional workforce.  To promote direct European investment in key or priority areas for the competitive sustainable development of the region and its countries.
Fighting poverty and promoting social development	High levels of extreme poverty.  Social exclusion (inequality).	To establish objectives and plans to eradicate extreme poverty in the shortest possible time.  To adopt measures to reduce social exclusion, for example, literacy programmes and technical and professional training.  To invest in projects to give people access to clean water and basic sanitation.  To invest in improving the health systems in the countries of the region.	To promote cooperation in education.  To review the coherence of EU policies, particularly regarding their real potential to contribute to the priority issues for SD in the region.  To help promote access to the region's environmental goods and services markets.  To promote direct European investment in key or priority areas for competitive sustainable development in the region.
Sustainable management of natural and environmental resources	Degradation of natural resources (unsustainable exploitation).	To draw up and implement policies allowing rational and sustainable exploitation of natural resources.  To coordinate between institutions for environmental management.  To create innovative instruments for environmental management (e.g. economic instruments for specific natural resource management).	To promote technical cooperation to generate internal capabilities (examples: exchanges of experts and experiences on economic instruments for natural resources management; exchanges on implementation of multilateral environmental agreements).  Greater coherence between EU trade policies and EU cooperation in the subject.  Greater coherence between EU member countries in their cooperation programmes for the region.  To foster the use of environmental and social codes of conduct by European investors.
Improving coherence of European Union policy	Lack of cohesiveness between EU policies affecting the region (particularly between trade and cooperation policies).	To identify and assess the specific consequences and inconsistencies between the EU policies. To promote wider coordination of environmental issues.	To review the coherence of the EU trade and cooperation policies in the light of the priorities drawn up by the region and its diverse countries.  To identify possible areas of intervention in order to improve the incoherencies detected.  To implement a permanent mechanism and multi-party dialogue between the region's stakeholders and the Commission.  To take the region's opinions into consideration when reviewing and possibly rewriting EU policies.
Better governance at all levels	Poor environmental institutional structure.	To strengthen government capabilities for adequate compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreements.  To improve monitoring and regulatory capabilities of the environmental institutional structure.  To improve civil society's access to justice, information and the decision-making process.	Technical cooperation in the matter in order to generate internal capabilities: a scheme similar to that used within the 'twinning projects' is suggested, organised by the EU to ease the integration of newly-joined countries into the Union.
Financing sustainable development	Few resources for development initiatives that promote or ensure sustainable development.	To create internal incentives for sustainable investments.  To create alliances between consumers in Europe and producers in the region.  To foster the use of economic instruments to tackle selected environmentally relevant issues.	To improve coherence of investment policies and cooperation initiatives to be executed in the countries of the region.  To generate internal incentives to promote sustainable investment.  In matters of technical cooperation, to privilege those projects with proven positive effects and the possibility of successful repetition in other countries of the region.  To help promote market access to the region's environmental goods and services.

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4	Berensztein	Sergio Fidel	Argentina	Universidad Torcuato Di Tella
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