



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the UK and Ireland

*Fact Sheet:*

## Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

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### Background

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The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (known as CELAC by its initials in Spanish) is a regional bloc of countries launched on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2010 following an agreement at the Rio Group–Caribbean Community Unity Summit. It is comprised of all sovereign countries in the Americas except the US and Canada.

CELAC was officially launched at an inaugural summit hosted by Venezuela on the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2011. The summit was attended by over 30 heads of state of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

*“It’s an honour for Venezuela [to host the summit]... many talk about the dream of Bolivar [for a united Latin America] but few talk about it as a project, about actually putting it into practice. Today we’re laying down the first stone, a fundamental one for the unity of Latin America and for our real independence”*

**President Hugo Chavez**

### Purpose of CELAC

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The aim of CELAC is to deepen Latin American unity and cooperation and to reduce US economic, political, military, and cultural domination in the region. CELAC is proposed as a more balanced and equitable organisation than the Organization of American States (OAS) that has been largely dominated by the US since its establishment in 1948.

CELAC is expected to become the main representative body of the region.

### How is CELAC organised?

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CELAC consists of six bodies:

Summit of Heads of State and Government:

The supreme body of the Community

Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs:

These will take place twice a year

Pro Tempore Presidency:

The institutional, technical and administrative support to CELAC

Meeting of National Coordinators:

Responsible for the coordination and direct monitoring of the topics under discussion

Specialized Meetings:

These will be attended by high level officials to address areas of interest and priority

Troika:

Formed by the State holding the Pro Tempore Presidency, by the former State in this responsibility and by the one that will be assuming the Pro Tempore Presidency<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Procedimientos para el funcionamiento orgánico de la CELAC.” Document available for download from: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/> retrieved December 19 2011



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## Inaugural Summit in Caracas

The summit primarily focused on the global economic crisis and its effects on the region. Several leaders, including presidents Cristina Fernandez, Dilma Rousseff and Juan Manuel Santos, encouraged an increase in regional trade, economic development, and further economic cooperation among members in order to defend their growing economies.

The summit was broadcast live making it one of the most democratic, transparent and inclusive summits in history.

## Plan of Action

A Plan of Action document was ratified outlining a number of CELAC's objectives:

### International financial crisis and a new financial architecture:

- Boost intra-regional trade
- Solid monetary and fiscal policies to prevent systemic risk and address the impact of regional imbalances
- Exchange of expertise and experiences as a means of preventing wider impacts of crises
- Deepen regional economic integration
- Develop a new regional financial architecture based on justice, solidarity and transparency
- To encourage the democratisation of international financial institutions to give developing countries more voice
- Strengthen those existing and promote new democratic regional financial institutions

### Complementarity and cooperation:

Discussions will centre around four key spheres: Economic-Commercial, Productive, Social and Institutional, Cultural

- Strengthen regional cooperation and deepen coordination between representatives of member states
- Develop a trade facilitation programme
- Creation of a database outlining technical regulations for importing goods
- Strengthen and promote direct intra-regional investment
- Develop Regional Action Plan on social policies and joint projects for inclusion and the reduction of poverty
- Foster the active participation of civil society and social movements within the process of inclusion and regional integration
- Promote cultural integration and creative development

### Energy:

- Create an institutional framework with national representatives on energy matters
- Promotion of sustainable development aiming to diversify sources of energy
- Reduction of greenhouse gasses

### Integration of infrastructure, transport, telecommunications and border control:

- Reinforce infrastructure initiatives in the region and identify solutions to cross-border traffic



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- Accelerate the convergence and joint regulation of road, air, maritime, river and rail traffic control and exchange best practises
- Reduce the “infrastructure gap” in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### Social development and eradication of poverty and hunger:

- Create a forum of ministers to address social issues in the region, promote the harmonisation of national policies in the social field and implement common regional plans
- Boost literacy programmes to eradicate illiteracy in the region by 2015 in line with the Millennium Development Goals
- Design a programme for the eradication of hunger in the region, based on successful national policies

### Environment:

- Create a working group to address environmental issues in the region and harmonise national policy in the environmental field
- Evaluate the possibility of creating a multi-disciplinary research centre to strengthen institutions, training, and support communities in the management of water resources

### Humanitarian assistance:

- Create a working group to ensure Latin America and the Caribbean are represented internationally

### Protection of Migrants:

- Develop a regional strategy to facilitate immigrants’ integration into the host society focusing on legal, labour and cultural matters in keeping with national legislation

### Culture:

- Hold a ministerial meeting on the topic of culture and identity

### Information and communication technologies:

- Coordination between national institutions in charge of telecommunications and information technology and their regional counterparts to lower costs and improve infrastructure
- Promote broadband universalisation for social, innovative and educational purposes
- Analyse international roaming and long distance conditions and explore the possibility of consolidating charging areas to reduce prices of mobile voice, text and data services<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Plan de Acción de Caracas 2012.” Document available for download from: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/> retrieved December 19 2011



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### **Other Key Documents:**

Among the 22 documents signed, the following were approved:

#### **Special Declaration in the Defence of Democracy and Constitutional Order in Latin America and the Caribbean:**

A commitment to work together to defend the Rule of Law, the right to sovereignty and full human and democratic rights and liberties<sup>3</sup>

#### **Special Communiqué on the need to put an end to the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade of the United States against Cuba:**

The member states reject the continued blockade against Cuba and its extraterritorial nature and demand that the US, in recognition of the various United Nations resolutions, puts an end to this unjustifiable policy<sup>4</sup>

#### **Special Communiqué on the Malvinas Islands:**

The member states reaffirm their support for Argentina's legitimate rights in the sovereignty dispute over the islands and call for the resumption of negotiations in order to find a peaceful and definitive solution<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Declaración Especial sobre la Defensa de la Democracia y el Orden Constitucional en la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC)" Document available for download from: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/> retrieved December 19 2011

<sup>4</sup> "Proyecto de Comunicado Especial sobre la necesidad de poner fin al Bloqueo Económico, Comercial y Financiero de los Estados Unidos contra Cuba" Document available for download from: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/> retrieved December 19 2011

<sup>5</sup> "Proyecto de Comunicado Especial sobre Las

### **Issues raised by heads of state**

Each head of state was also given the opportunity to address the summit and make proposals with regards to issues pertinent to the Latin American and Caribbean region

#### **Human rights:**

Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador, highlighted the need for the CELAC as an alternative to the OAS, which has worked according to the interests of the US. He called for the defence of human rights in the region, and rejected the contradictions, hypocrisy, and imperialist arrogance of human rights "reports" originating from U.S-backed organisations. He also reiterated his commitment to freedom of speech, whilst attacking the blatant abuses by private media of such freedom.

#### **Drugs:**

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, President of Argentina, spoke about the persistent problem of the international drug trade and its devastating impacts on the region. She criticised the developed, drug-consuming countries for not having done enough to stem the demand for illegal substances. "It seems that Latin America ends up with all the deaths and guns, and others end up with the drugs and the money," she said.<sup>6</sup>

Islas Malvinas" Document available for download from: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/> retrieved December 19 2011

<sup>6</sup> "CELAC, Counter-OAS Organisation Inaugurated in Caracas," December 4 2011, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6668> retrieved December 19 2011



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### **Foreign Military Bases:**

Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, clearly stated, “With respect to the presidents [here], we cannot allow United States’ military bases in our territory. Now is the best moment to put an end to certain impositions that are coming from above with regards to our armed forces.”<sup>7</sup> He highlighted the pretexts of the wars on drugs and terrorism as motives for US military presence in the region and the need to re-educate those elements of the military which had been trained to repress rather than to defend their citizens.

### **Venezuelan Embassy in the UK 20<sup>th</sup> of December, 2011**

For further information on Venezuela, please see the Embassy website:

<http://www.embavenez-uk.org/index.asp>

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<sup>7</sup> “CELAC, Counter-OAS Organisation Inaugurated in Caracas,” December 4 2011, <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/6668> retrieved December 19 2011