

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States called CELAC, is a regional bloc of 33 sovereign countries in the Latin American and Caribbean with a total of about 600 million people, land area 6 times bigger than India with GDP of US\$ 3 trillion. It was created on February 23, 2012, at the Rio Group–Caribbean Community *Unity Summit* held in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico. At this meeting the leaders agreed to form this organization. The bloc forms a political dialogue to deepen Latin American integration. CELAC is the successor of the Rio Group and the *Latin American and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development* (CALC). Chile holds the pro-tempore presidency of the CELAC and Cuba will take over in January 2013.

Member countries: The 33 members CELAC includes Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Uruguay.

The Declaration of Caracas, issued in December 2011 reflects that CELAC, a single mechanism of dialogue and agreement which gathers the 33 nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, is the greatest expression of our will of unity amid diversity." It added that it was "necessary to strengthen cooperation and to implement social policies to reduce domestic social inequalities so as to solidify nations capable of meeting and overcoming the Millennium Development Goals." The declaration underlined the need to respect international law, people's self-determination, sovereignty, peaceful resolution of differences, promotion and protection of human rights, sustainable development of the region, consolidation of a multi-polar, democratic, fair and balanced and peaceful world, free of colonialism and military occupation."

India - CELAC

EAM and Chilean counterpart, on the sidelines of UNGA in September 2011, during India-Rio Group Dialogue decided to initiate India-CELAC Dialogue. Accordingly the first India-CELAC Foreign Ministerial Meeting Dialogue is now scheduled on August 7, 2012 in New Delhi in a Troika Format. Foreign Ministers of Chile and Venezuela; and Vice Minister of Cuba are participating in the meeting.

CELAC gives India a platform to interact directly with these 33 sovereign countries of this region. Most of the countries are positively disposed towards India. India-CELAC share common democratic values and developmental aspirations; and have common commitment to strengthening South-South Cooperation in the interest of developing countries. Our cooperation with the UN and other multilateral fora has been close and determined by common interests.

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