

**Ratification of the EU-LAC Foundation Agreement – Committee on EU Affairs  
Minister Burke Opening Statement**

A Chathaoirligh agus a Chomhaltaí,

I am pleased to appear before the Committee today seeking approval to proceed with ratification of the EU-LAC Foundation International Agreement, following referral of the relevant Dáil motion to the Committee yesterday.

Members will be aware that in February last year, Ireland's Strategy for the Latin America and the Caribbean region was launched under the Global Ireland initiative. The Strategy contains over 60 commitments mapped to five key objectives, covering political, economic, development/cooperation, cultural and diaspora-based engagement with the countries of the region.

The Strategy is delivering a sea change in terms of Irish engagement with the LAC region, and the vast majority of its commitments are already undergoing implementation.

A key commitment in the Strategy is to ratify the Agreement that establishes the EU-LAC Foundation as an international organisation. This Agreement was signed by Ireland back in 2016.

As Members are aware, the EU-LAC Foundation is made up of the members of the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC. Its principal objective is to strengthen the bi-regional partnership and it conducts a range of initiatives across a host of priority themes in order to do this.

Its key lines of action, which chime with Irish and EU priorities for the relationship with the LAC region, include education, climate, gender, multilateral cooperation, culture, science, technology and innovation, and social and economic development.

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We are one of just two EU Member States yet to ratify the Agreement and believe that it is important to ratify it as soon as possible. Ratification will send a clear signal to EU and CELAC partners around the value we place on the bi-regional relationship and the work of the Foundation.

Like Ireland, the EU has also been prioritising enhanced engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean. As part of these efforts to step up engagement, an EU-CELAC Leaders Summit will take place in Brussels in July 2023, with the Taoiseach scheduled to attend.

Ensuring that the EU-LAC Foundation Agreement is ratified by Ireland before the Summit is of great importance.

For all of these reasons, approval of the Committee to proceed with ratification of the Agreement is sought today.

I would be happy to answer any questions from Committee Members on this issue, and wish to thank you sincerely for your time.