



**PRESS RELEASE**

**EU-LAT Network urges the EuroLat Parliamentary Assembly to promote a way out of the crisis that puts human rights at its centre**

**Brussels, 4 May 2021.** This afternoon EuroLat met with civil society, in the framework of the meetings of the parliamentary committees, to which the EU-LAT Network was invited to **present the main challenges facing Latin American society in relation to the current covid-19 pandemic.** The session, held in the European Parliament, was chaired by the Vice-President of the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, Marc Ángel, from the Social Democrat Eurogroup, and included four presentations by representatives of civil society and the intervention of members of the EuroLat Assembly.

Representing the EU-LAT Network, Rosa Llobregat, Policy Officer, outlined the main concerns of European civil society: **the exacerbation of economic, gender and racial inequalities; and fair and equitable access to vaccines.** "The virus does not affect us all equally. The lack of quality public policies, such as in the area of health, and the need for a universal social protection system now are evident. Vaccines against covid-19 are a fundamental tool for overcoming the crisis. However, according to the Organisation of American States, 90% of people in low-income countries will not have access to vaccines by 2021", she explained.

The EU-LAT Network has called for solidarity, echoing the declarations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: **"vaccines must be a global public good and everyone should have access to them"**. To this end, "intellectual property regimes must cease to be an obstacle to the production of safe and effective vaccines".

The EU-LAT Network intervention highlighted the exacerbation of inequalities and the differentiated impacts on three groups: women, indigenous peoples, and human rights defenders. "According to the United Nations, **54% of women work informally, which leads to an alarming increase in poverty.** Through political dialogue, the European Union should urge governments to adopt direct measures to undertake a massive formalisation of the informal economy and ensure social protection coverage," Llobregat urged MEPs.



"Far from hospitals and media attention, **indigenous people fall ill and die without access to the essential means to protect themselves**. According to Oxfam, 40% of indigenous households have no access to water. Health infrastructures are very poor: in Peru, for example, only 10% of indigenous peasant communities have health posts". In this context, the EU-LAT Network regrets that extractive industries are being prioritised in economic recovery plans, as "these activities are a potential source of risk and also represent a significant ecological hazard".

The EU-LAT Network recalled the importance of the current **European legislative process for a law on human rights and environmental due diligence** and called on the inter-parliamentary assembly to open spaces for dialogue with Latin American actors to exchange experiences and best practices. EU-LAT also requested Eurolat to issue a statement sending a clear message to the European Union for a new strong and ambitious law, enough to prevent human rights violations and to provide redress to victims.

The EU-LAT Network also wanted to highlight **the work of human rights defenders in a region with the highest rates of violence against them** - 75% of attacks worldwide, according to FrontLine Defenders. It called on the European Union to urge the ratification of the Escazú Agreement and to support its implementation. Escazú is the first legal instrument that refers to the protection of environmental defenders.

Finally, she also stressed the importance of denouncing corruption and impunity, especially the capture of the state by political and economic elites. **"The role of the European Union as an international observer is crucial** at this time: visits to prisons, accompaniment of trials and election observation. This year there are elections in Peru, Honduras and Nicaragua. It is necessary to adapt to the situation and look for new ways to continue accompanying processes as international observers, if health conditions do not allow us to do so in person, we can take advantage of the opportunities offered by new technologies".

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