

The 2018 Ibero-American summit

The Ibero-American Summit of heads of state or government is a unique multilateral forum of 22 countries from Latin America and Europe sharing a common history, values, culture and languages. Two EU Member States – Spain and Portugal – are full members of the summit, and four others are associated observers. The 26th summit was held in Guatemala in November 2018, with a focus on establishing a common road map towards implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The 26th Ibero-American summit

On 15 and 16 November 2018, the [26th Ibero-American summit](#) was held in La Antigua Guatemala (Guatemala) under the motto 'A thriving, inclusive and sustainable Ibero-America', with the participation of 19 Latin American countries plus Spain, Portugal and Andorra. Fifteen heads of state or government attended the summit, plus vice-presidents and foreign ministers, representing some 670 million citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. The [final declaration](#) featured the following points:

- strengthening the Ibero-American joint action towards the implementation of [Agenda 2030](#);
- deepening dialogue and establishing cooperation mechanisms with the EU to enable new alliances to achieve Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#));
- moving towards a common Ibero-American migration agenda and promoting actions to facilitate the respect of the principles, objectives and commitments of the UN [Global Compact for Migration](#);
- fighting violence against women, committing to gender equality and ending women's discrimination at work;
- supporting the [action plan](#) to implement the rights of indigenous peoples and strengthening the permanent dialogue and concertation mechanisms of indigenous peoples and afro-descendants;
- promoting the inclusion of [persons with disabilities](#);
- supporting academic mobility by strengthening the Ibero-American framework to this effect;
- promoting an Ibero-American innovation strategy;
- recognising the contribution of the laboratories of social innovation in the production of innovative solutions for the fulfilment of Agenda 2030;
- contributing to the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals on climate change.

The summit also adopted the [Guatemala Resolution](#) and the Guatemala [Action Programme](#), detailing the areas of cooperation, as well as 20 special communiqués proposed by the member states, including on [migration and refuge](#), [South-South cooperation](#), [climate change](#) and natural disasters, the [conservation and sustainable use of oceans](#), and [decent work](#). A second four-year [action plan](#) for Ibero-American cooperation ([PACCI](#)) was approved for the 2019-2022 period.

Also during the XXVI summit, the Ibero-American General Secretariat presented:

- the Ibero-American [Observatory](#) for sustainable development and climate change, and its first La Rábida-Huelva [report on climate change](#) and sustainable development in Ibero-America;
- the Ibero-American [Programme](#) on the rights of persons with disability, which is the only regional programme on disability in the world;
- mobility grants for students, teachers and researchers worth US\$2 million, with priority for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and the launch of the [Ibero-America Campus](#) web [portal](#) offering mobility opportunities for students, researchers and workers;
- a [report](#) on 'A Decade of South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America', analysing over 7 000 projects.

Among the other events related to the summit were the first [Ibero-American forum](#) of national mechanisms on the implementation of Agenda 2030; a [meeting](#) of Ibero-American businessmen and businesswomen, where they agreed for the first time to work towards Agenda 2030; and a [meeting](#) of Ibero-American think-tanks to discuss South-South cooperation and its importance for sustainable development.

The next Ibero-American summit will be held in [Andorra in 2020](#). This European country has assumed the *pro tempore* presidency of the Ibero-American Conference for the next two years.

Why this summit was so important

The [2018 summit](#) in La Antigua Guatemala was important, because, among other things:

- 1) The continuity of Ibero-American summits represents a clear commitment to multilateralism against the current background of growing isolationism and decline of pluralism in the international arena. The Guatemala summit has offered a renewed opportunity to advance with regard to this commitment;
- 2) The summit has compensated for the stalling of the EU-CELAC strategic bi-regional alliance due to the temporary suspension of the EU-CELAC summits, with Spain and Portugal acting as a link between both sides;
- 3) The Guatemala [summit](#) was the first Ibero-American summit with a [global agenda](#) focused on the future, where participant countries discussed and explored ways to reach the UN SDGs in order to achieve 'a thriving, inclusive and sustainable Ibero-America'. The summit served to chart a common road map towards achieving Agenda 2030.

The Ibero-American cooperation system

The [Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government](#) is the [highest authority](#) of the [Ibero-American Conference](#), and meets [every two years](#). The heads of state or government of the 22 [member countries](#) are invited to participate in these summits, which have been held uninterrupted for nearly three decades without any of the members having ever been expelled or vetoed. The [pro tempore secretariat](#), provided by the country hosting the current summit, coordinates the activities, subject matter and agenda, as well as the sectoral ministerial meetings. The Ibero-American General Secretariat ([SEGIB](#)) is the permanent body that provides institutional, technical and administrative support to the conference, working closely with the *pro tempore* secretariat in the preparation of summits, and also coordinating the different agencies of the [Ibero-American Conference](#) with the [other organs](#) of the [Ibero-American cooperation system](#).

The political agreements and commitments adopted by the Ibero-American heads of state or government at summits are translated into concrete actions through a unique [cooperation model](#), with a wide and inclusive regional scope and a horizontal and flexible design; this allows countries to participate on a voluntary basis and according to their national priorities. The main instruments of [Ibero-American cooperation](#) are its programmes, initiatives and projects, focused mainly on three priority areas: knowledge, culture and social cohesion. In [2015-2016](#), this cooperation mobilised over €411 million.

The EU and the Ibero-American Summit

Two Member States of the European Union – Spain and Portugal – are also full members of the Ibero-American Conference and participate in the summits. Other EU Member States – Belgium, France, Italy and The Netherlands – have [associated observer](#) status. The [initiative](#) to hold permanent dialogue at the highest level between Latin American and Caribbean countries and the EU, which would evolve into the EU-LAC and later into the EU-CELAC summits, was first proposed by Spain at the [1996 Ibero-American summit](#).

Since they became biennial in 2014, Ibero-American summits are usually held in the years before and after EU-CELAC summits, so that they can help provide continuity and improve relations between the two sides, as well as complement the EU-CELAC partnership. Moreover, institutional representatives from the Ibero-American conference and the EU are increasingly present at each other's meetings. Thus, the MEP and Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly ([EuroLat](#)) Co-President, [Ramón Jáuregui](#), (S&D, Spain) was invited to participate as an observer in the 2018 Ibero-American summit, while Ibero-American Secretary General, [Rebeca Grynspan](#), attended the EU-CELAC meetings of foreign ministers in [July 2018](#) (at which Agenda 2030 was a major topic, with a focus on consolidating multilateralism and strengthening cooperation in global fora), and in [March 2017](#). Rebecca Grynspan also attended both 2017 EuroLat plenaries. This implies greater recognition of the role played by the European Parliament and EuroLat in the Ibero-American context, and by the Ibero-American Conference in EU-CELAC relations.

