

Common Goals:

**China–Latin America and the Caribbean
Cooperation on Human Rights Development,
the Present and the Future**

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Abstract

▪ Hegemonism, power politics, regional conflicts, economic slowdown, and climate change, among other factors, are posing significant threats to human rights protection in today's world. The global human rights governance deficit is increasingly evident, presenting severe challenges to the development of human rights.

▪ China-Latin America and the Caribbean (China-LAC) cooperation on human rights development is an important initiative for human rights development and has attracted significant international attention. China and LAC countries account for about 1/5 world's land area and nearly 1/3 of the global population. As the growing significant power in the world, China and the LAC need to jointly address a series of global dilemmas and challenges in international human rights affairs.

▪ China-LAC cooperation on human rights development is good for consolidating consensus on human rights, enhancing human rights protection in their own countries, promoting the strength and voice of Global South in global human rights governance, and thus improve global human rights governance. It has the potential to harmonize different cultural traditions and pluralize the inherently conflictual and transformative potential of the language and process of realizing human rights.

▪ In recent years, China and LAC have made big achievements on human rights development. China has been practicing the view of promoting human rights through

development, working tirelessly to ensure that development is for the people and by the people and that its fruits are shared by the people. Since the reform and opening-up, more than 770 million of China's rural population have been raised from poverty, accounting for more than 70% of the global total over the same period according to the World Bank's international poverty standard. In 2023, China's GDP per capita has reached around USD 12,614 and have owned increasing scientific, technological and industrial capacities. China now have more favorable conditions for the ultimate ideal of people's all-round development.

- In recent years, LAC countries have continued to explore development models suitable to their own, with a greater focus on safeguarding and improving people's livelihoods, promoting social equity, yielding a series of positive results. LAC countries have also increasingly emphasized environmental rights. For example, the Brazilian government led by President Lula has made the commitment to realize zero deforestation by 2030 and established Ecological Transformation Plan, making more ambitious green development goals.

- China and LAC have fostered many consensus on human rights affairs through communication and cooperation. China and LAC agree that, all countries need open human rights development paths based on their own national conditions; without securing the right to subsistence and the right to development, the realization of other human rights is challenging; and the Global South countries must work together to play an important role in global human rights governance.

- China-LAC cooperation on human rights development is

rooted in China-LAC existed collaboration in various sectors, including economy, trade, social welfare, healthcare, education, environmental protection etc. In 2022 China and LAC goods trade volume has reached nearly USD 500 billion, 35 times the amount of 2000. Since 2012, China has consistently become LAC second-largest trading partner and the third-largest source of investment. In recent years, China and LAC countries have also formed a number of cooperation and consensus in new energy, aerospace and other emerging industries, which have become models of Global South cooperation, laying a solid foundation for future cooperation in the development of human rights.

- In recent years, China and LAC have been actively leading the setting-up of international human rights agendas, voicing for a fairer, more equitable, reasonable and inclusive, opposing to the use of human rights as a tool for unilateralism and hegemonic behavior, and supporting the impartial and objective functioning of the United Nations human rights organizations. The involvement and contributions of China and LAC to the global human rights governance have steadily increased.

- China-LAC cooperation on human rights development is an important part of South-South cooperation, showing promising prospects in the future. Looking forward, China-LAC cooperation on human rights development needs to focus on three areas. First, to boost human rights communication and mutual learning to reach more consensuses. Second, to oppose the instrumentalization of human rights issues and to strive for fairer, more equitable, reasonable and inclusive global human rights governance. Third, promote transnational common development for human rights protection and set an example for Global South cooperation on human rights development.

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Introduction

Today, our world, our times, and history are changing in ways like never before. The volatile international circumstances have exacerbated the global human rights deficit, presenting severe challenges to human rights protection worldwide.

In early 2024, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres gravely stated when outlining the year's priorities, "As conflicts rage and geopolitical divisions grow, peace in our world is threatened. As polarization deepens and human rights are trampled, peace within communities is undermined. As inequalities explode, peace with justice is shattered."¹

Against these backdrops, China and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), representing the world's largest developing country and one of the most concentrated areas of Global South countries, respectively, have attracted significant international attention for their cooperation on human rights development.

Human rights development in China and LAC countries is characterized by historical similarities, shared views, converging goals, and aligned paths. Historically, China and LAC countries share many commonalities in their struggles and fights for national independence, liberation, and building homelands. In recent years, China and LAC countries have achieved a series

¹ UN, *In Today's Troubled World, Building Peace 'Humanity's Greatest Responsibility'*, Secretary-General Stresses, *Outlining Organization's Priorities for 2024*, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22127.doc.htm>, August 21, 2024.

of achievements in enhancing strategic mutual trust, economic and trade cooperation, environmental protection, and cultural communication, laying a solid foundation for further cooperation in human rights development. On human rights affairs, China and LAC countries have not only made progress domestically but have also supported each other and built consensus, continuously pushing forward the world human rights protection making more progress.

China and LAC account for about 1/5 world's land area and nearly 1/3 of the global population. As two important growing power, both China and the LAC have the responsibility, obligation, as well as the foundation and conditions, to jointly address a series of global dilemmas and challenges in human rights governance. Cooperation on human rights development between China and the LAC is good for human rights protection for both sides, promoting human rights development in the Global South, and improving global human rights governance.

Looking forward, China-LAC cooperation on development needs to focus on three aspects. First, to boost human rights communication and mutual learning to reach more consensuses. Second, to oppose the instrumentalization of human rights issues, and to strive for fairer, more equitable, reasonable and inclusive global human rights governance. Third, to promote transnational common development for human rights protection making more progress, and set an example for Global South cooperation on human rights development.

I. The Global Human Rights Governance Deficit Calls for China-LAC Cooperation on Human Rights Development

Hegemonism, power politics, regional conflicts, economic slowdown, and climate change, among other factors, are posing significant threats to the human rights protection, plunging global human rights into an unprecedented governance deficit and crisis since the end of the Cold War. Facing the numerous dilemmas and challenges in global human rights governance, China and LAC countries need to support each other, actively foster cooperation in human rights development, and contribute solutions and wisdom to the global human rights governance.

1. Dilemmas and Challenges in Global Human Rights Governance

First, frequent wars and conflicts strictly harm the right to life of innocent civilians. Wars and conflicts are tragedies of human society. The process and result of wars and conflicts always directly violate various human rights of innocent civilians, especially the right to life, and usually lead to severe humanitarian crises, such as refugee crises, health crises, social crises, economic crises, and political crises, etc., posing widespread threats to human rights even to the long term.

Since 2022, frequent wars and military conflicts have occurred globally. For example, the Ukraine crisis is raising more and more world concerns, and the prolonged Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been causing heartbreaking civilian casualties. At the same time, however, hegemonism and power politics have been intensifying, with actions to trample on human rights and to interfere in other countries' internal affairs under the guise of human rights becoming rampant. Wars and military conflicts are making the world with further international instability and continuous spillover effects.

Second, slowed poverty alleviation undermines the right to subsistence and the right development. World poverty alleviation progress has been slowed and become highly uneven, affected by COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing conflicts, etc. In July 2023, the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) released the latest Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report. The report shows that out of the 110 countries and regions covered by the index, 1.1 billion people are still living in severe multidimensional poverty, accounting for over 18% of the population covered by the report.¹

China views poverty as the greatest obstacle to human rights.² Eliminating poverty not only safeguards the right to subsistence and the right to development, but also provides the foundation for achieving other human rights. Poverty directly erodes the enjoyment of the right to subsistence, as people in poverty often need access to sufficient food, water, and shelter, leaving basic subsistence needs unmet. Poverty also hinders the realization of the right to development, as those living in poverty struggle to access necessary healthcare and health security, education opportunities, employment, and cultural resources.

Moreover, poverty limits the exercise of civil and political rights, as the poor often face hidden restrictions in political participation, including limited access to political information and resources, resulting in insufficient protection of their right to vote, right to know, right to participate, and the right to oversee.

Third, intensified climate change hampers the protection of the right to the environment and the right to health. In recent years, the intensifying global climate change and the increase in extreme weather events have been severely affecting the sustainable subsistence and development of human society.

The report released by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 2023 revealed that 2023 was the hottest year on record.³ The World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) State of the Global Climate 2023 report, published in 2024, indicated that the global average near-surface temperature in 2023 was approximately 1.45°C higher than the pre-industrial baseline (1850-1900), due to the

¹ UNDP, *2023 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI): Unstacking global poverty: Data for high impact action*. New York: UNDP Publishing, July 11, 2023, <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/2023mpireporten.pdf>, August 21, 2024.

² *The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection -- A 100-Year Quest*, June 2021, http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2021n_2242/202207/t20220704_130680.html, August 21, 2024.

³ IPCC, *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report*, Geneva: IPCC Publishing, March 20, 2023, pp. 35-115. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_LongerReport.pdf, August 21, 2024.

combined effects of climate change and the El Niño.¹

Climate change has extensive and deep impacts on human rights. Numerous studies shows that further global warming is going to have significant adverse effects on human subsistence and development. The resolution (A/HRC/RES/41/21) by IPCC and the UN Human Rights Council has noted that climate change directly or indirectly threaten the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights worldwide, including the right to life, the right to adequate food, the right to the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to adequate housing, the right to self-determination, the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, the right to work and the right to development, etc.² A report released in 2024 by Health Effects Institute and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) revealed that, air pollution led to 8.1 million deaths globally in 2021, making it the second-largest risk factor for death worldwide, posing significant threats to elderly and children in particular.³

Fourth, pervasive unilateralism deteriorated the imbalanced global human rights governance. In today's world, global human rights governance exhibits numerous unjust and unreasonable phenomena. Some countries try to impose their own human rights models on others, leading to a series of social and economic problems and humanitarian crises. In UN human rights instruments & mechanisms, the Global South countries remain underrepresented, with voice and influence still limited.

Moreover, some countries exert negative diplomatic, economic, and political pressure on the UN Human Rights Council, making the council difficult to focus on its agenda to resolve real human rights issues. Some countries misuse human rights affairs, politicizing and weaponizing human rights, to create obstacles to a fruitful dialogue between the people of the countries involved, even to use human rights as tools to impose unilateral sanctions. These actions above harm human rights development, challenge the fairness and justice of global human rights governance, violate sovereignty, and severely threaten world peace.

¹ WMO, *State of the Global Climate 2023*, Geneva: WMO Publishing, April 23, 2024, <https://library.wmo.int/records/item/68835-state-of-the-global-climate-2023>, August 21, 2024.

² UN Human Rights Council, *Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 12 July 2019*, Geneva: UN Human Rights Council, July 12, 2019, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g19/223/65/pdf/g1922365.pdf>, August 21, 2024.

³ Health Effects Institute, *State of Global Air 2024*, Boston:Health Effects Institute Publishing, June 19, 2024, https://www.stateofglobalair.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06/soga-2024-report_0.pdf, August 21, 2024.

2. The Necessities and Potentials for China-LAC Cooperation on Human Rights Development

The increasing global human rights governance deficit calls for greater unity among the Global South countries raising their voices, proposing their solutions, and contributing their wisdom to improve global human rights governance. Without a doubt, the Global South, with China and LAC as representatives, is becoming a significant force in global human rights development and governance. The Global South need and must play key roles in addressing global human rights governance challenges, including hunger, poverty, war, terrorism, environmental pollution, climate change, and people engagement in all these issues related.

As the China and LAC economic, political, and cultural strengths continue to grow, their roles in international human rights governance are becoming more prominent.

China has proposed "building a human community with a shared future", along with Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative. China advocates and stands for safeguarding human rights with security, promoting human rights with development and advancing human rights with cooperation. China prioritizes the right to subsistence and the right to development as fundamental human rights, and regards the free and all-round development of human beings as the ultimate value in human rights endeavors. China's human rights views are gaining increasing support worldwide.

In practice, China has made significant breakthroughs in domestic poverty alleviation, anti-corruption, and green development. China is also actively promoting various international communication and cooperation including human rights with the efforts continuously building worldwide cooperation platforms.

Similarly, LAC countries advocate for the right to development, with human rights views and goals becoming more coordinated and comprehensive. Many LAC countries are increasingly pushing forward to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include various important human rights objectives such as poverty eradication, hunger elimination, environment protection, etc., using own efforts, strengthened South-South cooperation and regional development mechanisms.

In conclusion, China and LAC countries have reached more and more consensus on the views and action plans of human rights development, thus can enrich more cooperation on human rights development in the future. It is evident that both China and LAC, as important growing power in the world, need and are capable of jointly addressing the various dilemmas and challenges in global human rights affairs. Through China-LAC cooperation on human rights development, both sides can build a better understanding on human rights development, enhance human rights protection capacities, increase voice of the Global South in global human rights governance, and contribute to a healthier development of global human rights.

II. A Review of China-LAC Human Rights Development, Communication and Cooperation

China and LAC countries have long emphasized their own human rights development, making notable progress on human rights protection. Since the wave of diplomatic ties established between China and LAC countries in the 1970s and 1980s, human rights-related communication and cooperation have progressed a lot alongside the development of China-LAC relations, achieving new milestones one after another.

China and LAC countries have not only reached a number of human rights consensus, but have also established various practical cooperation promoting human rights development. In addition to enhancing bilateral understanding and mutual trust in human rights, China and LAC have also strive to maximize world solidarity, especially within Global South, making positive contributions to the global human rights governance.

1. Big Progress in Human Rights Development

In recent years, China and many LAC countries have been continuously making progress in their own human rights development. By highly emphasizing the efforts to assure people's capabilities in gaining human rights, China and many LAC countries have prioritized poverty

elimination, economic development, social fairness and justice, and green development in human rights development.

China has been practicing the view of promoting human rights through development, working tirelessly to ensure that development is for the people and by the people and that its fruits are shared by the people. Over decades of continuous development, Chinese living standards have greatly improved. China eradicated absolute poverty by the end of 2020, securing the right to subsistence for the vast majority of people. Since the reform and opening-up, more than 770 million of China's rural population living below the current poverty line have been lifted out of poverty, accounting for more than 70% of the global total over the same period according to the World Bank's international poverty standard.¹

China is now trying hard to further extend economic fruits to most people through rural revitalization, to further increase livelihood protection and to further raise the income of low-middle income families, thus continuously to raise human rights development level for the majorities of people. In 2023, China's GDP was approximately USD 17.8 trillion, and the per capita GDP exceeded USD 12,614. With the increasing scientific, technological and industrial capacities, China now have more favorable conditions for the ultimate ideal of people's all-round development.

Many LAC countries have highly applauded China's development ideas and achievements. In 2023, during a state visit to China, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva described China as an impressive development model. Ronnie Lins, the president of Center China-Brazil: research and business, who conducted several field studies in China's poverty-stricken areas says that, under the guidance of the Communist Party of China (CPC), China has shown the world how to achieve goals like eradicating extreme poverty with political wills and effective actions. Evandro Menezes de Carvalho, law professor of Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), says that China's "rapid and extraordinary economic development resulted from the successful policy of reform and opening-up, and had to be accompanied by an adequate foreign policy", and, "the concept of 'building a community with a shared future for mankind' is a

¹ *Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2021, pp.58-59, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/2021-4-6/FullText.pdf>, August 21, 2024.

reinterpretation of universalism in the Western style and may usher in a new era of world enlightenment”.¹

LAC countries have been attaching great importance to human rights for long time. As early as 1978, the *American Convention on Human Rights*, agreed upon by 12 Latin American countries, officially came into force. In recent years, LAC countries have continued to explore development paths suited to their own, with greater focuses on safeguarding and improving people’s livelihoods, promoting social equity, and raising the living standards of low-income groups. Many LAC countries have introduced a series of proactive measures for poverty reduction, yielding notable results.

For example, Chile has been implementing long-term programs to reduce poverty and has achieved remarkable result. In 2023, Chile’s GDP per capita reached USD17,093, and from 1983 to 2023, Chile enjoyed a real economic growth of 252%; in 2022, Chile’s poverty rate, as measured by the World Bank’s standard of 3.65 international dollars per person per day (at 2017 PPP), has fallen to 1 percent, meaning that the extreme poverty has almost disappeared in Chile.² Many international organizations, such as the World Bank, OECD, etc., see Chile as a great model for poverty reduction efforts in the world.³ Besides, according to relevant World Bank documents, Mexico has also seen a significant decline in poverty since 2020.⁴ What’s more, in 2023, the Brazilian Government for the first time established the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples. Brazil also has the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Racial Equality, etc., to protect the rights of different groups.

Besides focusing on securing the right to subsistence and the right to

¹ E.M. Carvalho, *China’s Diplomacy Promotes a Human Community with a Shared Future*, March 8, 2021, <http://www.evandrocarvalho.com.br/chinas-diplomacy-promotes-a-human-community-with-a-shared-future>, August 21, 2024.

² World Bank Group, World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org>, August 21, 2024.

³ P. Garda and J. Arnold, *Towards lower poverty and inequality in Chile: Strengthening social protection and job quality*, in *OECD Economic Surveys: Chile 2022*, 2024, Paris: OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/311ec37e-en>, August 21, 2024.

⁴ World Bank, Mexico Macro Poverty Outlook, 2024, Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099702204042461973/IDU1dfa02ba01dfa114ea41ad16171bd9b08c6ec>, August 21, 2024.

development, LAC countries have also increasingly emphasized protecting the right to the environment, and thus has made various environmental protection and green development plans. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) report *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*, from 2005 to 2022, LAC attracted over USD 170 billion in renewable energy investments from overseas, ranking the third among all industry sectors.¹ What's more, Brazil committed to realize zero deforestation by 2030, and in November 2023, the Brazilian government led by President Lula launched the Ecological Transformation Plan, setting more ambitious environmental targets, including a commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 48% at the end of 2025 and by 53% at the end of 2030, comparing to the figure in 2005.

2. Foster Consensus through Human Rights Communication

In recent years, China and LAC countries have actively engaged in consultations and communication on human rights, reaching an increasing number of human rights consensuses. Through platforms and mechanisms such as the United Nations Human Rights Council, bilateral human rights consultations and communication, various human rights forums, etc., China and LAC countries have communicated and exchanged human rights views, thus deepening China-LAC mutual understanding, coordination, and cooperation on human rights affairs.

First, China and LAC agree that all countries should open or choose paths of human rights development based on own national conditions. In history, the human rights development of most countries has been influenced by the West. However, different countries have different national conditions, rendering foreign human rights views and approaches incompatible with local contexts. Therefore, the mutual respect for other countries' circumstances and cultural diversities is an vital premise of cooperation on human rights development. Because human rights governance does not follow a one-size-fits-all model, all countries should open or choose paths of human rights development

¹ ECLAC, *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*, Santiago: ECLAC Publishing, 2023, p.16, <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/fd2ce029-2846-4900-a0e6-14818f6191b3/content>, August 21, 2024.

that align with their own national conditions, ultimately striving for the universal enjoyment of human rights.

China and LAC have repeatedly emphasized the need to respect the right of all countries to choose their own development paths based on their national conditions. In 2014, at the China-Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Countries Leaders Meeting held in Brasilia, Brazil, the attending countries issued Joint Statement on China-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit in Brasilia, reaffirming the full respect for the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law, advocating the peaceful resolution of disputes, seeking development through international cooperation, opposing the use or threat of force, respecting self-determination, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, adhering to non-interference in internal affairs, and committing to the protection and promotion of human rights.¹

Second, China and LAC countries recognize that, without securing the right to subsistence and the right to development, it is challenging to realize other human rights. China and LAC countries place great importance on the right to subsistence and the right development, believing that for most Global South countries, ensuring these fundamental rights is a top priority at the current stage.

In 2017, with the participation of numbers of LAC countries, the first "South-South Human Rights Forum"(SSHRF) was successfully held in Beijing, China. The *Beijing Declaration (Adopted by the First South-South Human Rights Forum)*, discussed and adopted at the meeting, explicitly proposed "advancing development through cooperation, and promoting human rights through development, making efforts to achieve more adequate human rights protection"². At the 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2022, Cuba, speaking on behalf of 69 countries, stressed the importance of "paying equal attention to all human rights, with particular focus on economic, social, cultural rights, and the right to development"³. In 2023, during the "G77 and China"

¹ *Joint Statement on China-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit in Brasilia*, July 18, 2014, https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-07/18/content_2719810.htm, August 21, 2024.

² SSHRF, *Beijing Declaration (Adopted by the First South-South Human Rights Forum)*, December 8, 2017, http://english.scio.gov.cn/scionews/2017-12/11/content_50096884.htm, August 21, 2024.

³ *Joint Statement Delivered by Cuba on Behalf of 69 Countries at the 50th session of the Human Rights Council*, June 14, 2022, https://geneva.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/dbdt/202206/t20220616_10703983.htm, August 21, 2024.

Summit held in Havana, Cuba, participants unanimously adopted the *Havana Declaration*, further underlining "the opportunity offered by science, technology and innovation for the full enjoyment of human rights by all, including the right to development"¹.

Third, China and LAC countries agree that Global South countries must work together to play important roles in global human rights governance. The Beijing Declaration (Adopted by the First South-South Human Rights Forum) confirmed that "South-South cooperation is an important way to promote development and human rights progress in developing countries."² In May 2024, China and Brazil jointly issued the China-Brazil Consensus on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis³, emphasizing that dialogue and negotiation are the only way to get out of the crisis, and calling on all parties to work together to promote a de-escalation of the situation. The consensus represents the international community's general concern and sincere willingness to reach a political settlement of the crisis. To date, over 100 countries and international organizations have positively responded or joined, collectively making a constructive call for world peace.⁴

3. Various Cooperation to Promote Human Rights Development

The cooperation of China-LAC human rights development is not flying in the thin air. Instead, it is rooted in extensive China-LAC's collaboration across various sectors, including economy, trade, social welfare, healthcare, education, environmental protection, etc. By expanding South-South cooperation, China and LAC countries have significantly bolstered and enhanced their own human rights protection levels, serving as a practical model for all Global South countries.

¹ Letter dated 26 September 2023 from the Representative of Cuba to the United Nations (Group of 77 and China) addressed to the Secretary-General, September 28, 2023, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/285/17/pdf/n2328517.pdf>, August 21, 2024.

² SSHRF, *Beijing Declaration* (Adopted by the First South-South Human Rights Forum), December 8, 2017, http://english.scio.gov.cn/scionews/2017-12/11/content_50096884.htm, August 21, 2024.

³ *Brazil and China present joint proposal for peace negotiations with the participation of Russia and Ukraine*, May 23, 2024, <https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2024/05/brazil-and-china-present-joint-proposal-for-peace-negotiations-with-the-participation-of-russia-and-ukraine>, August 21, 2024.

⁴ According to the data provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on June 11, 2024, see https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202407/t20240730_11463236.html, August 21, 2024.

First, China and LAC have largely expanded bilateral economic and trade cooperation. China-LAC economic and trade cooperation contribute to the right to development, directly impacting the right to work and the labor protection, providing the material foundation necessary to realize other human rights.

In the 1970s, the economic and trade relationship between China and LAC countries has grown rapidly since the establishment of diplomatic relations. China signed trade agreements with several LAC countries, including Chile (1971), Mexico (1973), and Argentina (1977).

Entering the 21st century, China-LAC economic and trade cooperation entered a new phase with rapid growth. According to the ECLAC report *International Trade Outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean 2023*, the bilateral goods trade volume of between China and LAC reached nearly USD 500 billion in 2022, 35 times the amount of 2000¹ (See Figure 1).

Since 2012, China has consistently become LAC second-largest trading partner and third-largest source of investment and has continued to be the largest goods trading partner of countries such as Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay. In 2023 and 2024, China signed Free Trade Agreements with Nicaragua and Ecuador respectively, adding to China's regional free trade partners alongside Chile, Peru, and Costa Rica. As of August 2024, China has signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) memorandum of understanding with 22 out of 26 LAC countries that have established diplomatic relations with China. China and LAC cooperation on BRI has been fruitful, and the cooperation on BRI now has more potential and a promising future.

The long-term economic and trade cooperation between China and LAC countries has not only created significant material wealth, job opportunities, and talent development opportunities for both sides but also laid a solid foundation of mutual trust for collaboration in other areas.

China and LAC are actively engaged in cooperation on enhancing people's livelihoods. Livelihoods have a close tie with the right to subsistence, which include but is not limited to food security,

¹ ECLAC, *International Trade Outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean 2023. Structural change and trends in global and regional trade: challenges and opportunities*, Santiago: ECLAC Publishing, 2023, p.85, <https://hdl.handle.net/11362/68664>, August 21, 2024

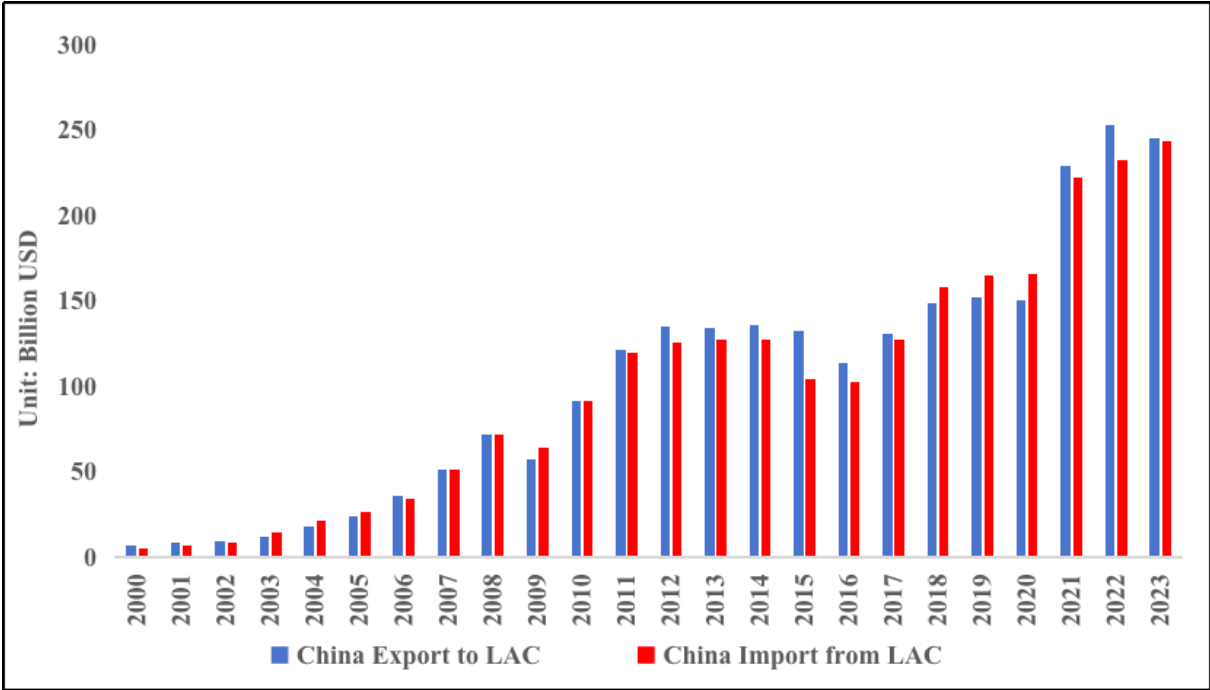


Figure 1 China's Goods Import and Export Value with LAC Countries, 2010-2023

Source: General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China

access to clean water, compulsory education, basic healthcare, housing security, and the right to a standard of living for people in extreme poverty, as well as social security rights and the interests of specific groups of people.

In recent years, China has actively shared its poverty alleviation experience with LAC countries, providing policy advice and launching demonstration projects to reduce poverty. Agricultural cooperation between China and LAC countries is one of the crucial efforts in poverty alleviation. China and LAC have successfully convened the China–CELAC Ministerial Forum on Agriculture three times. By 2024, China had established bilateral agricultural cooperation mechanisms with 19 LAC countries. In 2023, the agricultural products’ trade value between China and LAC countries exceeded USD 81 billion, double from a decade ago.¹

China and LAC continue to engage in medical and healthcare cooperation. Medical and healthcare cooperation directly relates to the right to life and health.

Since the Chinese medical aid team’s first going abroad in 1963,

¹ According to the data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People’s Republic of China on June 25, 2024, see <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/cj/2024/06-25/10240241.shtml>, August 21, 2024.

it has extended a hand of life and friendship to a number of countries, including many LAC countries.¹ Recently, China and LAC countries have deepened cooperation in the research and production of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. China and Cuba have established a multidimensional cooperation framework involving government departments, research institutions, and partner enterprises, covering areas including drug production, pharmaceutical research, public health, and drug regulation, reaching over 20 key projects.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, China and LAC countries intensified their cooperation in pandemic prevention and control research, working together to build a safety net for public health. On August 5, 2021, China, along with several LAC countries, signed a joint statement at the International Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation, undertaking to collaborate on the testing, research, development and production of COVID-19 vaccines, medicines, as well as medical equipment.² Data shows that by the end of 2021, China had provided nearly 400 million doses of vaccines and almost 40 million units of anti-pandemic supplies to dozens of LAC countries,³ striving to protect the lives and health of local people.

China and LAC continue to engage in cultural and educational exchange and cooperation. Cultural and educational exchange and cooperation between China and LAC countries facilitates the realization of the right to education and the participation in cultural life.

In July 2014, during President Xi Jinping's visit to LAC, he proposed the idea of holding the China-Latin America and Caribbean Year of Culture Exchange, which first took place in 2016 across nearly 30 countries in both regions. This initiative allowed countries to showcase their achievements in arts, literature, cultural heritage, cinema, media, and tourism, greatly enriching the cultural communication and mutual

¹ National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China: *The 60th Anniversary of China's Dispatch of Medical Aid Teams to Foreign Countries: 1963-2023*, 2023, <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/gjhzs/zgppywls/ywlszn.shtml>, August 21, 2024.

² *Joint Statement of the International Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation*, August 5, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-08/05/c_1310110373.htm, August 21, 2024.

³ *State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press*, https://wb.beijing.gov.cn/home/wswm/yyhj/fyyd/202203/t20220317_2633319.html, August 21, 2024.

understanding between China and LAC countries. By August 2024, China had established 50 Confucius Institutes and 15 Confucius Classrooms in LAC. Additionally, from 2022 to 2024, China is expected to offer 5,000 government scholarships and 3,000 training opportunities to several LAC countries and signed scholarship exchange agreements with several LAC countries, enabling more students from China and LAC to broaden their horizons and gain knowledge.

China and LAC countries expand cooperation in environment protection. Cooperation in environment protection is key to safeguarding the right to the environment, balancing regional development disparities, and improving people's quality of life.

In recent years, LAC countries have paid increasing attention to environmental issues, with stricter demands for greener development in mineral extraction, industrial production, and infrastructure construction. Responding to the newest LAC development needs, China has made clean energy and low-carbon environmental projects as crucial parts of China-LAC industrial cooperation. China has continuously increased the proportion of sustainable energy in its investments in LAC countries (See Figure 2),¹ rigorously adhering to environmental standards that exceed local requirements in project construction.

For instance, in 2020, A large Chinese electric vehicle enterprise launched its power battery factory in Manaus, Amazonas in Brazil, and its manufacturing complex base in Salvador, Bahia, which is expected to start production between the end of 2024 and early 2025. In 2023, a lithium carbonate factory project in Bolivia was finished by a Chinese construction company, marking the country's entry into lithium industrialization. Currently, a Chinese power grid company is involved in constructing Chile's first high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line, spanning 1,350 kilometers, which is expected to create at least 5,000 jobs locally. This is also the company's largest overseas greenfield investment project to date. China and multiple LAC countries have also signed several green development-related agreements, such as the *Initiative for Belt and Road Partnership on Green Development and the*

¹ ECLAC, *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean 2021*, Santiago: ECLAC Publishing, 2021, p.99, <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/46b412b1-e939-4b20-8c2f-dade9809865b/content> , August 21, 2024.

Brazil-China Joint Statement on Combating Climate Change, aiming to enable people on both sides and globally to live and work in more comfortable and beautiful environments.

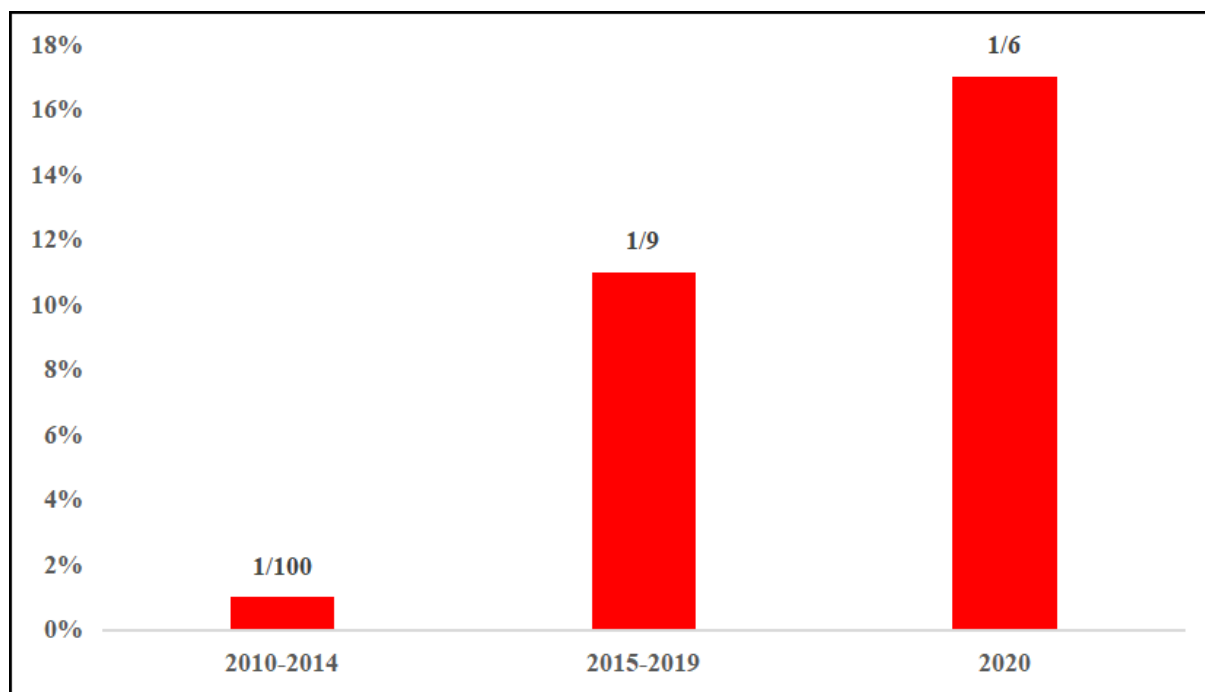


Figure 2 Proportion of Sustainable Energy Projects in China's Total Investments Number in LAC, 2005-2020

Source: ECLAC

4. Joint Efforts to Improve Global Human Rights Governance

In recent years, China and LAC have been actively leading the setting-up of international human rights agendas, voicing for a fairer, more equitable, reasonable and inclusive, opposing the use of human rights as a tool for unilateralism and hegemonic behavior, and supporting the impartial and objective functioning of the United Nations human rights organizations. The involvement and contributions of China and LAC to global human rights governance have steadily increased.

First, China and LAC have actively led the setting-up of international human rights agenda. In 1977, with the joint efforts of Global South countries, including China and LAC countries, the UN Commission on Human Rights (now Human Rights Council) for the first time recognized the right to development as a fundamental human right. In 1986, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on

the Right to Development, emphasizing that all countries have the right to development, with China and 24 LAC countries voting in favor. In 2023, the UN Human Rights Council, by consensus, passed the Resolution A/HRC/54/L.23 initiated by China and co-sponsored by 80 countries including many LAC countries. The Resolution urges *promoting and protecting economic, social, and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities*¹, which highly demonstrates the efforts and potential for cooperation between China and LAC countries in advancing human rights worldwide.

Second, China and LAC have been advocating for fairer, more just, reasonable, and inclusive global human rights governance. China and LAC countries advocate for more equal participation and voice in global human rights governance, calling for all countries to have a more equitable role in global human rights activities such as elections of members to the UN Human Rights Council, agenda settings, voting, etc., thus to enhance the representativeness of the Global South in the Human Rights Council. China and LAC also suggest multilateral human rights institutions such as the UN Human Rights Council to address human rights issues in a fairer, more just, reasonable, and inclusive manner, and to oppose the politicization of human rights and double standards, with less confrontation yet more cooperation. China also supports improving the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies to ensure they fulfill their mandates based on treaty obligations and to promote dialogue and cooperation with contracting states on the basis of mutual respect; advocates for special meetings on important issues such as food security and international financial mechanisms, in a bid to improve the international human rights system.

Third, China and LAC reject using human rights as tools for unilateralism or hegemonic behavior. China and LAC countries agree that while promoting and protecting human rights is a shared goal of human society, all sides should engage in dialogue and communication based on equality, mutual benefits, as well as mutual respect and work together to address common challenges rather than using human rights as a pretext for hegemonic behavior.

¹ UN Human Rights Council, *Promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities*, Geneva: UN Human Rights Council, 2023, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltid/g23/205/40/pdf/g2320540.pdf>, August 21, 2024.

On international platforms such as the United Nations, China and LAC countries have taken an increasingly firm stand against external interference in internal affairs. Over the years, Latin American representatives have repeatedly proposed at the United Nations General Assembly to end the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, and have consistently emphasized their opposition to the politicization of human rights issues and the application of double standards. China has repeatedly opposed the use of human rights issues to interfere in the internal affairs of countries at the United Nations Human Rights Council, and has called for the lifting of unilateral coercive measures imposed on other countries.

III. Prospects of China-LAC Cooperation on Human Rights Development

Since *UN Charter* recognized "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all" as a UN purpose in 1945, human rights have become one of the most important bonds for strengthening international cooperation. China-LAC cooperation on human rights development is an essential part of South-South cooperation, deeply rooted in history and reality, showing promising prospects in the future. At present, China is making concerted efforts to promote Chinese modernization, and LAC countries are putting more effort on enhancing unity and self-empowerment.

China and LAC will strengthen their cooperation based on the existing solid foundation. While promoting their own human rights endeavors, China and LAC will reach more consensus on human rights issues, amplify the voices and perspectives of the Global South in the international human rights affairs, thereby making greater contributions to global human rights affairs.

1. Boost Human Rights Communication and Mutual Learning to Reach More Consensuses

First, foster the communication. Focus on clarifying each other's and the world's critical human rights agenda. It involves questions such as whether the international human rights discourse and norms predominantly shaped by a few developed countries are suitable for the Global South? Whether the influence of external human rights views and practices have improved local human rights conditions? By thoroughly analyzing these issues with the spirit of seeking truth from facts, clearly explaining the underlying mechanisms, and reaching consensus, a more robust China-LAC, and even broader global cooperation on human rights development will be achieved.

Second, bridge the differences. Continue to uphold principles of equality, have mutual respect, keep harmony in diversity, have dialogue without confrontation, and establish partnership without alliance. While there are commonalities, there are also unique aspects between China and LAC countries in human rights development, human rights protection mechanisms, etc. So that, it is highly necessary for China and LAC to put greater efforts in understanding each other and consensus-building, as well as inclusive mutual learning in interactions.

Third, co-construct communication and consultation mechanisms. To upgrade existing platforms and to create such new platforms as regional China-LAC human rights dialogue platforms. In the future, both China and LAC can make full use of existing mechanisms, such as UN Human Rights Council, bilateral human rights consultations, Beijing Forum on Human Rights, South-South Human Rights Forum (SSHRRF), Forum on Global Human Rights Governance, and China-CELAC Forum (CCF), to enhance the frequency and scale of China-LAC human rights communication. We advise to establish a regional human rights consultation mechanism and expand the scope and scale of dialogue on human rights affairs.

2. Oppose the Instrumentalization of Human Rights issues, and Strive for Fairer, More Equitable, Reasonable and Inclusive Global Human Rights Governance

China and LAC countries have strongly opposed to the instrumentalization and weaponization of human rights issues and have supported each other on many international occasions, jointly opposing hegemony and power politics in international politics and upholding multilateralism and fairness and justice in global human rights governance. Looking forward, China and LAC countries need continue to build on existing human rights cooperation, actively participate in UN human rights affairs, and promote the establishment of a more robust and inclusive international multilateral human rights cooperation mechanism.

First, stand together against political or sovereign interference in the name of human rights. China and LAC countries make good use of the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*, respect the diversity of human rights development, and actively promote international cooperation in safeguarding human rights worldwide.

In the future, China and LAC need to jointly oppose the politicization of human rights issues and prevent human rights from being exploited as a tool for the geopolitical interests of a few countries. Specifically, China and LAC should strongly oppose the use of human rights as a pretext for unilateral sanctions, even armed intervention. Jointly oppose unjustified economic, financial, and military unilateral sanctions that harm the human rights of other countries, so as to protect the legal rights and interests of the Global South.

Second, China and LAC countries should oppose double standards in human rights. Double standards in human rights undermine the credibility of multilateral institutions such as UN. China and LAC countries should firmly oppose these double standards in human rights, consolidate the broadest possible international consensus, strengthen international multilateral dialogue and cooperation, and jointly formulate and implement fair human rights assessment mechanisms, thereby contributing to a more equitable, reasonable, and inclusive global human rights governance.

Third, continue to promote reforms in global human rights governance institutions and raise the voice of the Global South regarding human rights. China and LAC countries support and maintain the role of the United Nations Human Rights Council and other human

rights institutions in international human rights affairs. However, there are issues with these institutions, such as a lack of enough transparency, inadequacy, and injustice. In response, China and LAC countries need to work with other Global South countries to further consolidate consensus and coordinate positions. By sharpening their capabilities in setting human rights agendas, formulating rules, and operating mechanisms and by gradually elevating their influence in human rights governance, the two sides can push international human rights governance toward a more just and reasonable direction.

3. Work Together to Promote Human Rights through Development and Set an Example for Global South Cooperation on Human Rights Development

China-LAC cooperation on human rights should always adhere to the core idea of "promoting human rights through development", working together to support each other's human rights endeavors. This partnership should further expand the scope of human rights cooperation through economic co-development, livelihood cooperation, and cultural communication, ultimately becoming a model for human rights development cooperation between Global South countries and even worldwide.

To achieve mutual economic development, serving as the foundation of cooperation on human rights development. Both China and LAC countries belong to the Global South, where a significant social challenge is the disparity between the economic base of the countries and the people's aspirations for a better life. The shared aspiration for independence, development and revitalization connects the Chinese dream closely with the LAC dream. Since 2013, high-level exchange between China and LAC countries have remained close. President Xi Jinping has made five visits to Latin America and hosted numerous Latin American leaders in China. The two sides have held multiple meetings in bilateral and multilateral settings, forging strategic consensus on various issues.

During President Xi Jinping's visit to LAC in July 2014, he proposed

building a China-LAC community with a shared future, the "1+3+6" cooperation framework¹, and other cooperation plans. Over the past decade, cooperation across various fields has become increasingly frequent, and economic and trade ties have grown stronger, bringing China-LAC relations into a new era characterized by "equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness, and benefits for the people". Looking to the future, China and LAC countries should continue to advance development through cooperation and promote human rights through development. This includes deepening cooperation in agriculture, mining, logistics, electricity, and information technology, while also exploring new areas of cooperation in new quality productive forces such as renewable energy, aerospace, and artificial intelligence.

In 2023, leaders from 10 LAC countries visited China, including Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela. In April 2024, the first China-Latin American and Caribbean States Space Cooperation Forum was successfully held in Wuhan, China. In August 2024, the first China-Latin America and Caribbean Development Forum was successfully held in Beijing. These series of platforms have not only promoted the connection between the BRI and the LAC regional development agenda, but have also promoted the views exchange and mutual understanding between the two ancient civilizations.

To cooperate more in social security, healthcare, and other livelihood aspects, serving as priorities of the cooperation on human rights development. Social security and basic healthcare are critical to ensuring people's well-being and the foundation for realizing other human rights. In recent years, both China and LAC countries have made great strides in these foundational areas, but gaps still need to be compared to developed countries. Therefore, it is necessary to actively promote communication and mutual learning in constructing of social security systems such as pensions and healthcare. Deep collaboration should be undertaken in areas where both sides have made remarkable progress to effectively safeguard the basic quality of life of the people, with particular

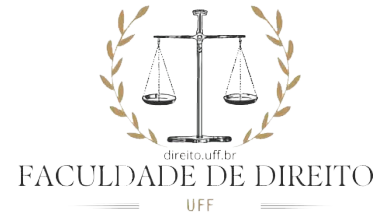
¹ "1+3+6" Framework: "One Plan" (China-LAC Five-Year Cooperation Plan), "Three Engines" (Trade, Investment, Finance), and "Six Areas" (Energy and Resources, Infrastructure Construction, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Scientific and Technological Innovation, Information Technology).

attention given to the rights of specific groups such as children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Establishing a China-LAC medical cooperation mechanism would allow for sharing medical resources and technologies, intensifying the training of medical personnel, and improving public health standards. Additionally, China and LAC countries could collaborate on disease prevention and control projects to address challenges posed by infectious and chronic diseases.

To communicate and exchange in cultural fields between universities and think tanks, serving as an important platform for the cooperation of human rights development. Efforts should be made to facilitate cultural communication between China and LAC countries, effectively promote a "connection of hearts", and boost understanding of each other's ideas. They may organize events like "China-Latin America and Caribbean Year of Culture Exchange" to promote cultural diversity and inclusiveness; encourage courses related to each other's languages to facilitate better cultural understanding and communication; support academic collaboration between Chinese and LAC institutions in social sciences and human rights to provide a platform for exploring the theory and practice of human rights protection, ultimately driving progress in such policies.



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