

# The European Union and Brazil in the Quest for Global Climate Governance: Potentials and Perils of a Partnership

by Carolina Pavese

## ABSTRACT

The EU and Brazil share an interest in building an effective international climate-change regime. For an effective partnership to be promoted, at least three main conditions should be met. First, there must be a minimum degree of compatibility of agendas and interests. Second, more effective instruments should be devised to strengthen cooperation at the bilateral level. Third, the partners need to prioritize their partnership at the multilateral level over other alliance options. If it fails to meet these three conditions, cooperation between the EU and Brazil on global climate governance can hardly become truly strategic.

*European Union | Brazil | Climate change*

**keywords**

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by Carolina Pavese\*

### Introduction

Brazil and the EU have a long-standing relationship. Brazil was the first Latin American country to establish diplomatic ties with the European Economic Community in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Bilateral cooperation has developed in an irregular fashion, but has also gained in scope and importance. The 2007 Strategic Partnership marked a new phase: for the first time, a framework for EU–Brazil relations placed strong emphasis on cooperation on global issues, with the parties agreeing that the best approach to deal with these problems was “through effective multilateralism”.<sup>2</sup>

Climate change is a key priority in the EU–Brazil Strategic Partnership. The two Joint Action Plans adopted to operationalize the partnership outline the measures envisaged to strengthen cooperation in this area.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the proposed strategies entail a stronger link between the bilateral and the multilateral levels of EU–Brazil cooperation.<sup>4</sup> Exchanges of views, coordination of approaches and

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, *EU-Brazil Relations*, 30 September 2011, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-11-651\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-651_en.htm).

<sup>2</sup> *EU-Brazil Summit Joint Statement*, Lisbon, 4 July 2007, p. 2, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/95167.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/95167.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> For the Joint Action Plan 2008-2011, see European Commission, *Brazil-European Union Strategic Partnership - Joint Action Plan*, 2nd Brazil-European Union Summit, Rio de Janeiro, 22 December 2008, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2008\\_joint\\_action\\_plan\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2008_joint_action_plan_en.pdf). For the Joint Action Plan 2012-2014, see Council of the European Union, *V European Union Brazil Summit - Joint Statement*, Brussels, 4 October 2011, [https://eeas.europa.eu/node/6657\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/node/6657_en).

<sup>4</sup> See Carolina Pavese, *Level-linkage in European Union–Brazil Relations: An Analysis of Cooperation on Climate Change, Trade, and Human Rights*, PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political

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possible joint positions regarding the issues of multilateral climate negotiations have thus been regularly incorporated into the bilateral agenda of the partnership. Given that the EU and Brazil are both important and active players in climate-change negotiations, the prospects of an alliance between the two actors looks, in theory, very promising. In practice, however, an EU–Brazil strategic partnership on climate change has not yet truly developed.

A strategic partnership requires more than political discourse and action plans if it is to be effective; it needs to be embraced as a commitment and a priority by the partners. To this end, three conditions should be met: first, compatibility of interests and agendas on climate change; second, effective instruments of cooperation; third, strong commitment to pursuing the partnership at the multilateral level – even when that entails hindering the prospects of alliances with other parties.

## 1. The EU's and Brazil's GHG-emission profiles

To effectively tackle climate change, domestic policies and legislation need to address the main sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These sources should be at the core of an actor's climate agenda and should respond, to some extent, to that actor's preferences projected at both the domestic and the international levels. It follows that the compatibility of domestic agendas is a first requirement for cooperation with other actors. Equally important, a successful partnership benefits from a similar degree of commitment to and interest in addressing climate change. Thus, the best starting point for assessing EU–Brazil cooperation on climate change is to consider the parties' GHG-emission profiles.

The EU28 comprise the third largest GHG emitter in the world, accounting for 9.66 per cent of the global total.<sup>5</sup> Nearly 78 per cent of the EU28 GHG emissions in 2016 came from fuels combustion and fugitive emissions from fuel (transport included), whereas agriculture contributed 10 per cent, industrial processes and product use accounted for another 8 per cent, and management of waste for 3 per cent.<sup>6</sup> As a result, energy-related matters are central to the EU climate agenda, and are addressed in the spirit of pursuing a low-carbon economy projected on a global scale.

Brazil's share of global emissions stands at 2.3 per cent, making the country the seventh-largest emitter in the world. The primary source of GHG emissions from Brazil is deforestation, accounting for 69 per cent of its total emissions. Excluding land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) data, as of 2016 the country's energy sector was responsible for 47 per cent of Brazil's emissions –

Science (LSE), 2014, <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/917>.

<sup>5</sup> World Resources Institute, *CAIT Climate Data Explorer*, <http://cait.wri.org>.

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat, *Greenhouse Gas Emission Statistics - Emission Inventories*, updated June 2018, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Greenhouse\\_gas\\_emission\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Greenhouse_gas_emission_statistics).

closely followed by agriculture (42 per cent) – whereas industrial activities and management accounted for only 4 and 3 per cent respectively.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for Brazil, climate change is a matter of environmental protection and the promotion of clean energy sources and use.

The outcomes of the EU's and Brazil's domestic efforts to curb their GHG emissions can be measured by the success rate achieved over time. Whereas the EU managed to reduce its emissions by 22 per cent in the period between 1990 and 2015, Brazil went in the opposite direction, increasing emissions by 14 per cent in the same timeframe. Yet, neither of these two actors has followed a linear trajectory in this process.<sup>8</sup>

Brazil, for example, witnessed an overall increase in emissions from 1998 to 2006, reduced them between 2009 and 2011, and subsequently embarked on a new upward trend from 2012 onwards. Analysing LULUCF data only, the increased levels from 1990 to 2006 were reversed by national anti-deforestation measures, which reduced LULUCF-induced emissions by 86 per cent between 2005 and 2012. Now, however, numbers are continuing to rise: compared with 2015, total deforestation went up nearly 30 per cent in 2016. If Brazil's pollution rate is strongly determined by LULUCF, a successful long-term outcome for national policies must inevitably address deforestation and land use. Equally important, the country must strengthen its efforts to promote renewable energy sustainably, as an alternative to fossil fuels, especially when considering the steady growth of emissions from its energy sector.

Despite these requirements, the country currently seems to be moving in the opposite direction. Recently, the government has increased investment in fossil fuels and softened legislation on illegal deforestation. These measures illustrate the low profile of climate change on the country's current agenda; paradoxically, domestic policies go against the latest commitments taken under the framework of the Paris Agreement, in which Brazil announced it expected to reduce emissions between 36.1 per cent and 38.9 per cent below the projected emissions rates by 2020, including a target of zero illegal deforestation in the Amazon region by 2030.<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to those in Brazil, EU emissions followed a downward trend between 1990 and 1999, and remained unchanged from 1999 to 2005. Dropping sharply in 2009, GHG emissions increased in 2010 while essentially receding from 2011 onwards.<sup>10</sup> These shifts can be accredited mainly to industrial activities, especially to levels of energy consumption. Regarding the commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol

<sup>7</sup> Juliana Speranza, Viviane Romeiro and Franklin Feder, "Will Brazil Meet Its Climate Targets?", in *World Resources Institute Blog*, 7 July 2017, <http://www.wri.org/node/49851>.

<sup>8</sup> World Resources Institute, *CAIT Climate Data Explorer*, cit.

<sup>9</sup> World Resource Institute, *CAIT Climate Data Explorer: CAIT Pre-2020 Pledges Map*, <http://cait.wri.org/pledges>.

<sup>10</sup> Eurostat, *Greenhouse Gas Emission Statistics - Emission Inventories*, cit.

(2013–20) agreed on at the time of the 2015 Paris Accord, the EU28 pledged a 28–30 per cent reduction in GHG emissions below 1990 levels by the year 2020.<sup>11</sup> To remain on a path of emissions reduction and meet this target, the EU needs to foster policies and legislation that promote the decarbonization of its power sector and improve energy efficiency.

Over the past few decades, Brazil and the EU have made progress in formally adopting domestic climate-change policies but achieved different success rates in terms of their implementation. Nevertheless, climate change continues to be an issue important to both partners and should remain a priority area for cooperation. Regarding their respective political agendas, interests converge – especially on issues related to decarbonization of the economy and energy efficiency. Additionally, for obvious reasons, LULUCF issues are also a priority for Brazil – an area that the EU also has an interest in supporting given its own commitment to responsible land use and forestry.<sup>12</sup> Cooperation between the two partners can contribute to their domestic goals in addressing climate change, if embraced as a priority. The next section assesses EU–Brazil engagement at the bilateral level.

## 2. Crafting bilateral cooperation on climate change

Cooperation on climate change was first institutionalized by the 1992 EC–Brazil Framework Cooperation Agreement, under the environment and energy agenda. Ever since, the EU and Brazil have promoted bilateral dialogues and projects addressing these issues. However, climate change became a specific area of cooperation only in the 2000s, especially after it was appointed as a priority for the 2007 EU–Brazil Strategic Partnership.

Over the past few decades, the framework for cooperation on climate change has unfolded according to a conservative pattern of policy-making. Basically, cooperation has been structured at three levels: the bilateral governmental level; EU technical assistance to Brazil; and the inclusion of non-governmental actors.

Regarding the exclusive governmental level, the first instrument envisaged for the sake of political coordination was the EC–Brazil Joint Committee. Established in the 1980s, it had met only 17 times by November 2017. While it gathers together officials and bureaucrats from both sides to discuss the pace of bilateral cooperation, this body lacks the political power and the regularity needed to set the agenda for cooperation; as such, it remains little more than a formality.

Addressing the need for more effective instruments, the 2007 Strategic Partnership (SP) introduced a permanent dialogue at the highest political level: that of the EU–

<sup>11</sup> Climate Action Tracker, *Countries: EU*, <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/eu>.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission website: *Land Use and Forestry Regulation for 2021-2030*, [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/lulucf\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/lulucf_en).

Brazil Joint Summit. Planned to take place on an annual basis, the purpose of these meetings is to discuss the strengthening of bilateral cooperation and to exchange views on global issues of common interest. The EU is represented by the president of the European Council; the president of the European Commission; and, sometimes, the head of a particular directorate-general. The Brazilian president and the country's foreign minister, often accompanied by other ministers, represent Brazil.

Thus far, the most important outcome of these summits has been the adoption of the two Joint Action Plans for the Strategic Partnership.<sup>13</sup> The Joint Statements delivered at the end of each meeting are also important because they at least provide for a symbolic commitment continuing on the path towards a strategic partnership. Back in 2007, climate change was placed at the very heart of the Strategic Partnership, as the parties concurred on "the need to identify and promote common strategies to tackle global issues". The two Joint Action Plans (2008–11 and 2012–14) present a common view on climate governance, and reinforce a mutual interest in collaborating in multilateral climate negotiations. Both plans indicate a range of actions for cooperation, with a strong emphasis on tackling deforestation, renewable energy and energy efficiency. Since these specific topics cover the main sources of both the EU's and Brazil's GHG emissions, the Strategic Partnership has the potential to generate gains from bilateral cooperation for both parties. Nevertheless, it all comes down to implementation; in that regard, the Strategic Partnership has produced mixed results.

During the first ten years of the Partnership (2007–17), cooperation made some limited progress. EU–Brazil summits were held annually from 2007 to 2014, but were interrupted in 2015 and have yet to resume. The latest Joint Action Plan expired in 2014 and has not been replaced. Despite the release of a joint statement to mark the tenth anniversary of the Strategic Partnership in July 2017, the political agenda of EU–Brazil relations as conceived in 2007 is currently in a vacuum. Nevertheless, the "high-level dialogues" established on the environment (2006) and on climate change (2011) have been important in ensuring the maintenance of systematic exchanges on these specific agendas – especially as they bring together officials working on climate-change portfolios. Arguably, exchanges of views facilitate the identification of common goals that can lead to further EU–Brazil cooperation. Policy-makers from both the EU and Brazil point out that the scope of these dialogues is restricted to ensuring that communication between the parties occurs on a regular basis. In addition, bilateral dialogues are not the venue in which joint strategies or common positions regarding multilateral climate negotiations can be agreed upon.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira, "The European Union's Partnership Policy Towards Brazil: More Than Meets the Eye", in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2016), p. 55-77; Miriam Gomes Saraiva, "The Brazil-European Union Strategic Partnership, from Lula to Dilma Rousseff: A Shift of Focus", in *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (February 2017), p. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201600117>.

<sup>14</sup> Carolina Pavese, *Level-linkage in European Union–Brazil Relations*, cit.

Besides the political dialogues, the EU has used its standard approach to third parties in order to engage with Brazil. Cooperation on climate change has benefited largely from being a priority for the EU under the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) on Brazil. Adopted in two editions (2001–6 and 2007–13), the CSP follows a “donor–recipient” format, in which the EU is the “sponsor” of the relationship. That much is clear when considering the National Indicative Programmes (NIP). Adopted as budget lines for the CSPs, the NIPs provide the financial support for projects developed in Brazil, prioritizing actions on sustainable development and environmental protection. Hence, despite requiring the partner’s approval in order to be implemented, the CSP could be considered an EU development-cooperation instrument.

The first CSP presented a brief assessment of the development of cooperation between the EU and Brazil, indicating that the environment was the sector to which most resources were allocated until 2001. The 2002–6 NIP included nearly 64 million euro to support three priority areas for cooperation: economic reform, social development and the environment (the last-named of which came third in terms of budget allocation). Interestingly, no specific bilateral instrument to promote cooperation on environmental issues was adopted. Instead, under the NIP for the 2002–6 commitment period, the EU opted to channel its financial support for this sector (6 million euro) through the multilateral framework of the Pilot Programme for the Conservation of Brazilian Tropical Forests (PPG7),<sup>15</sup> which is still in place and has the World Bank as its trustee.<sup>16</sup> The European Commission supported eight conservation and sustainable-economy projects with civil-society participation, with a contribution of nearly 16 million euro. Most of these projects were developed in the Amazon region, in line with the EU’s continuing support for the PPG7 and for reinforcing the understanding of an emphasis on deforestation issues when crafting cooperation with Brazil.

In the second CSP mid-term review, the EU made explicit its frustration at the Brazilian Government’s sluggish implementation of agreed-upon measures. The document stated that “The Brazilian legal and administrative procedures required to ‘internalise’ external donors’ resources into the national budgets are complex and time-consuming, usually resulting in lengthy preparation and start-up delays”.<sup>17</sup> The text also criticized the lack of political interest from local authorities as well as the Brazilian Congress in engaging more actively with the EU. Consequently, the second CSP (2007–13) placed greater emphasis on the role of non-governmental

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, *Federative Republic of Brazil–European Community. Country Strategy Paper 2001-2006 and National Indicative Programme 2002-2006*, 13 June 2002, <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/node/5256>.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank, *Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest (PPG7)*, 14 December 2005, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/880921468238160692>.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, *Brazil Country Strategy Paper/National Indicative Programme 2007–2013. Mid Term Review and National Indicative Programme 2011–2013*, December 2012, p. 10, [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/brazil/docs/brazil\\_csp\\_mid-term\\_review\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/brazil/docs/brazil_csp_mid-term_review_en.pdf).

actors, not just as beneficiaries but also as stakeholders in the process of discussing and designing bilateral cooperation initiatives.

The second NIP (2007–13) allocated nearly 18 million euro for the promotion of “the environmental dimension of sustainable development”.<sup>18</sup> The second CSP also indicated that projects based in Brazil would be likely to continue as the main beneficiaries of another two EU policy instruments – namely, the Programme for the Environment and the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

From 2014 onwards, the EU decided to recraft its framework for cooperation with third parties, replacing the CSP with the Partnership Instrument (PI). Rather than planning a budget for a specific bilateral agenda, the PI reflects a decentralized strategy in which funds are allocated according to the priorities outlined in the Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs), addressing bilateral, regional and inter-regional cooperation. Among its objectives, the PI aims at “promoting policy dialogue” and “developing collective approaches and responses to challenges of global concerns”. It also establishes the fact that “the attainment of that objective [e.g. the development of effective cooperation partnerships] shall be measured, inter alia, by the progress made by key partner countries in the fight against climate change or in promoting the environmental standards of the [European] Union”.<sup>19</sup> Again, climate change features as a priority area of cooperation for the EU.

Non-governmental actors have played an important role in this new framework; the 30 sectorial dialogues implemented since 2007 are a good example of this trend. Unlike in the earlier case of the CSP, both the EU and Brazil now provide technical and financial support to these dialogues. Between 2008 and 2016, 228 dialogue actions were promoted, engaging governmental and civil-society entities from both Brazil and the EU. Moreover, these dialogues adopt a very pragmatic approach, focusing either on technical issues or the exchange of best practice on specific matters.

Among the issue-areas addressed, there is a specific dialogue on climate change and another on energy policy. These two dialogues fall under the “global challenges” label, reinforcing the connection between the bilateral and the multilateral level in the cooperation “set” for climate change. Activities along these lines address such issues as exchanges on biodiversity monitoring, the EU–Brazil exchange in strategies for increasing the use of renewable-energy sources, the exchange of best practice in policies that foster sustainable wind-energy generation, sector dialogue on biofuels, forest concessions and private-sector involvement in the

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Brazil Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013*, 14 May 2007, p. 25, <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/node/4771>.

<sup>19</sup> Article 1(2a). European Parliament and Council of the European Union, *Regulation (EU) No 234/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries*, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32014R0234>.



management of public forests in Brazil as a source of sustainable forest products, and the strengthening of partnerships for monitoring and observing climate-change impacts, among others.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the EU–Brazil Civil Society Round Table, established in 2009, provides another opportunity for the engagement of non-state actors in the process of EU–Brazil relations.<sup>21</sup>

Adding to this complex set of overlapping fora, in which the EU and Brazil cooperate, the resumption of negotiations over an overarching EU–Mercosur trade agreement lays bare the link between bilateral and inter-regional cooperation. So far, the text under negotiation includes a chapter covering trade and sustainable development. The two parts of the draft text thus far released contain provisions in which the parties agree to “promote the positive contribution of trade to the transition to a low-carbon economy and to climate-resilient development” and to “cooperate with the other Party on trade-related climate change issues bilaterally, regionally and in international fora as appropriate”.<sup>22</sup>

Environmental organizations have been highly critical of the terms of this proposed EU–Mercosur agreement. The main sources of criticism are concessions over products accounting for a significant share of GHG emissions and environmental degradation in the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay).<sup>23</sup> These concerns are not groundless. The EU is offering a system of tariff rate quotas (TRQs), to be applied on up to 70,000 tonnes of beef and 600,000 tonnes of ethanol per year exported from Mercosur countries to Europe. In exchange, the EU is asking for reduced tariffs on its industrial products – mainly on cars and car parts, machinery, and soap and beauty products.<sup>24</sup>

There seems to be a conflict of interest between the trade and the environmental agendas of EU–Brazil bilateral cooperation. The conclusion of an inter-regional agreement is expected to significantly increase bilateral trade on livestock and soy and probably also on cars, ultimately fostering EU–Brazil trade relations. The problem is that an increase in trade in these sectors would create incentives for the expansion of activities that represent the main source of Brazil’s GHG emissions, and that thereby pose a major threat to the environment.

<sup>20</sup> Sector Dialogues Facility website: *About: Background*, <http://www.sectordialogues.org/background.php>.

<sup>21</sup> Sector Dialogues Facility website, *Sector Dialogues: Civil Society*, <http://www.sectordialogues.org/sector-dialogues/civil-society>.

<sup>22</sup> See Article 5(b, c). European Commission, *EU-Mercosur: EU Proposal on Trade and Sustainable Development*, April 2017, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/155481.htm>. For Articles 14-18, see: *EU-Mercosur Association Agreement: EU Text Proposal on Trade and Sustainable Development*, October 2017, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/156339.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Greenpeace European Unit, *Greenpeace Netherlands Leaks EU-Mercosur Trade Papers*, 7 December 2017, <http://bit.ly/2kqOeT8>.

<sup>24</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *Mercosur and EU Miss Free-Trade Deadline*, 5 January 2018, <http://www.eiu.com/industry/article/1666296350/mercotur-and-eu-miss-free-trade-deadline/2018-01-05>.

Over almost 70 years of formal political ties, the EU and Brazil have developed a comprehensive framework for bilateral cooperation – in terms of both instruments and scope. Global climate governance has been introduced into the framework of cooperation as a priority issue. Nevertheless, actions to promote a systematic engagement at the bilateral level that could be projected onto the multilateral arena have been lacking. Since the role of non-governmental actors in forging cooperation is restricted to the “domestic” level of the agenda, they have little influence on the bilateral dialogue on the global dimension of climate change. Thus, any assessment of cooperation at the multilateral level must prioritize the role of governmental actors.

### 3. The EU and Brazil in multilateral climate negotiations

Multilateral cooperation on climate change is based on the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), established in 1992, and the Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997. The agendas of these two fora set the scope of global climate governance, a process advanced at the highest political level by the periodic meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP). The Paris Agreement, signed by COP21 in 2015 and in force since November 2016, is expected to update the current framework for cooperation in 2020.

Brazil and the EU are both considered important actors within the climate-change regime, and have been very active in the development of the current framework of multilateral cooperation. Their shared interest in building a strong regime is a point of convergence upon which a strategic partnership at that level can be built. Yet, no real action has followed.

The framework of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol observe the “common but differentiated responsibilities principle”. Taking into account “historical responsibilities”, the EU is included in the Annex I group, whereas Brazil is in the non-Annex I. This classification entails distinct obligations for the two groups, with legally binding targets on GHG-emission reductions applying only to the Annex I countries. This positioning in different groups may potentially impact on the dynamics of negotiation blocs. In theory, actors subjected to similar obligations are more likely to join forces with each other in order to influence norms to act in their favour. Yet, in the case of multilateral climate negotiations this argument cannot be taken as a given.

Over the past few decades, the EU has adopted stricter domestic targets for emission reduction than those set by the UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol regime, and has pushed for ambitious commitments from all parties. This position is often disliked by other Annex I members, but it brings the EU closer to developing countries as it accepts that wealthy countries should take on greater responsibilities than the poor ones. However, the EU has also positioned itself against granting developing countries too much flexibility, fearing that such an approach would hinder the effectiveness

of the regime. Thus, it is not unusual for the Union to find itself isolated during negotiations.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the complex internal policy-making process needed to establish the EU's agenda for multilateral negotiations makes it more difficult for the Union to grant concessions to other parties – thereby limiting its own room for manoeuvre.<sup>26</sup> Often, the EU's strategy is to act as a political group in itself. Together, these factors explain why its approach to negotiations has combined unilateral positions with alliances with either developed or developing countries.<sup>27</sup>

From the inception of multilateral climate negotiations, Brazil has demonstrated loyalty to developing countries.<sup>28</sup> To some extent, this approach is based on the foreign-policy strategy of using the role of “interlocutor with the developing world” to reinforce its importance as a global actor beyond the climate regime.<sup>29</sup> Shared material and normative interests also explain Brazil's preference for partners. While, similarly to the EU, Brazil has adopted voluntary commitments in order to reduce its GHG emissions, there have been very few occasions on which it has not acted through a coalition. A long-standing and solid alliance has been represented by Brazil's membership of the “G77/China” grouping of developing nations. The emergence of a strong BASIC group (combining Brazil, South Africa, India and China) seemed, for a while, to indicate Brazil's preference for partners in multilateral negotiations. However, the group has been losing relevance over the course of the past few COPs. During COP 23, held in November 2017, Brazil caused a sensation by joining Argentina and Uruguay in a bloc that they considered an “extended delegation”. None of these moves, however, reveals a preference for a partnership with the EU.

Given Brazil's loyalty to the G77/China and other coalitions of developing countries, most of the occasions on which the EU and Brazil have sided with each other occurred because the EU chose to align with developing countries. Analysing negotiations over the course of the last few COPs, there are no signs that the EU or Brazil is going to change its choice of political groups.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Charles F. Parker, Christian Karlsson and Mattias Hjerpe, “Assessing the European Union's Global Climate Change Leadership: From Copenhagen to the Paris Agreement”, in *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2017), p. 239-252.

<sup>26</sup> See Sebastian Oberthür and Claire Roche Kelly, “EU Leadership in International Climate Policy: Achievements and Challenges”, in *The International Spectator*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (September 2008), p. 35-50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932720802280594>; Louise G. van Schaik, *EU Effectiveness and Unity in Multilateral Negotiations. More Than the Sum of Its Parts?*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> See Karin Bäckstrand and Ole Elgström, “The EU's Role in Climate Change Negotiations: From Leader to ‘Leadiator’”, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 10 (2013), p. 1369-1386.

<sup>28</sup> See Kathryn Ann Hochstetler, “The G-77, BASIC, and Global Climate Governance: A New Era in Multilateral Environmental Negotiations”, in *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, Vol. 55, Special Issue (December 2012), p. 53-69, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0034-73292012000300004>.

<sup>29</sup> See Marco A. Vieira, “Brazilian Foreign Policy in the Context of Global Climate Norms”, in *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (October 2013), p. 369-386.

<sup>30</sup> See Stavros Afonias and Lindsay C. Stringer, “The Environment As a Strategic Priority in the European Union–Brazil Partnership: Is the EU Behaving As a Normative Power or Soft Imperialist?”, in *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (March 2014), p. 47-64.

One point on which the EU and Brazil have converged, however, is the maintenance of the regime itself. For instance, the partnership between the two actors proved crucial in securing the conclusion of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and the number of ratifications needed for its entry into force in 2005. Another example was their shared membership of the “high ambition coalition”, an alliance made up of 35 Annex I and non-Annex I members to push for an agreement at the Paris Climate Summit (COP21) in 2015.

Concurring on the importance of strengthening the climate-change regime and jointly acting towards this goal do not, however, imply a shared understanding of the norms promoted by the regime. Therefore, the EU’s and Brazil’s positions regarding the instruments of the framework of multilateral cooperation have varied. Overall, observing the approaches taken by the EU and Brazil at multilateral climate-change negotiations, it is clear that EU–Brazil cooperation at the multilateral level is, at best, irregular. Periods of reciprocal collaboration and eventual alliances contrast with diverging positions embraced on other occasions. It is also remarkable that the compatibility of their positions has varied in the same round of negotiations. So far, a lack of agreement and divergent preferences for partners constitute the main reasons for the low success rate of EU–Brazil cooperation in the multilateral arena.

Considering the complexity of multilateral negotiations, and the material and normative interests of their actors, an EU–Brazil partnership on multilateral negotiations will only occur if both parties embrace the goal of devising a comprehensive agenda as a priority. One issue on which the two have generally agreed concerns financial mechanisms to support mitigation activities related to forest management. Brazil has largely benefited from international cooperation in this area, such as the Forest Investment Programme (FIP) of the World Bank and the Amazon Fund, both of which contribute to REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation and enhancement of carbon stocks).<sup>31</sup> The EU is, in fact, one of the largest donors to REDD+.<sup>32</sup> The compatibility of European and Brazilian interests on this issue is even greater if the emphasis on forest-related issues at the bilateral level of EU–Brazil cooperation (as outlined above) is taken into account. Another topic of common interest, and a rather controversial one, is that of carbon markets. The EU has long adopted emission trading schemes (ETS), whereas Brazil has developed this practice only recently. Based on the interest in promoting these instruments at the multilateral level, the EU and Brazil adopted a joint proposal on a new carbon mechanism, at COP 21, in Paris, in 2015.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Peter H. May et al., “The Context of REDD+ in Brazil: Drivers, Actors and Institutions – 3rd Edition”, in *CIFOR Occasional Papers*, No. 160 (2016), [http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf\\_files/OccPapers/OP-160.pdf](http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/OccPapers/OP-160.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> EU REDD Facility, *Making FLEGT and REDD+ Work Together. EU REDD Facility: Insights and Activities 2013-2017*, April 2018, <http://www.euredd.efi.int/publications/making-flegt-and-redd-work-together>.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *EU and Brazil Agree Ground Breaking Proposal on Carbon Markets at Paris*

Considering these two examples and the overall pattern of EU–Brazil engagement in multilateral climate negotiations, it can be stated that the two parties have collaborated more systematically when it was necessary to combine political efforts to avoid a collapse of negotiations or when their concrete and specific material interests were compatible. This suggests that EU–Brazil cooperation can benefit from a more pragmatic approach than the one adopted hitherto.

#### 4. The way forward: Conclusions and recommendations

The development of EU–Brazil relations has not followed a linear path. In its earliest stage, cooperation was restricted to diplomatic political dialogue and centred on trade issues. The 1990s witnessed a further institutionalization of this process with a broadening of scope of bilateral ties to new areas, such as the environment and energy.

Yet, the evolutionary pattern of the EU–Brazil relationship has reinforced the two actors' asymmetries rather than enabling an engagement as partners on an equal level. The 2007 Strategic Partnership aspired to change this approach. However, ten years after its inception it is difficult to claim that a solid partnership has been built; there has been undoubtedly certain progress, but setbacks have occurred as well.

So far, cooperation between the EU and Brazil has been more instrumental and pragmatic than strategic in nature. Interestingly, if efforts at the highest political level have not been very successful in promoting a strong partnership on climate change, the EU–Brazil sectorial dialogues seem to have been more fruitful instruments for cooperation. Yet, the engagement of civil society in the development of this cooperation is fundamentally restricted to "domestic" issues. Cooperation in multilateral fora has lagged behind.

In order to overcome the structural and conceptual obstacles that hinder the prospects for an effective EU–Brazil strategic partnership for climate change, the following recommendations could be considered:

*1. Promote internal policy-making coordination.* In both the EU and Brazil, policy-making processes are rather fragmented as far as levels of cooperation and agendas are concerned. One problem is that the policymakers engaged in the framing of bilateral relations do not show the same level of commitment in setting their climate diplomacy in a multilateral arena. Moreover, depending on the issue, different actors and bodies are responsible for following different issues on the bilateral agenda. These fragmented policy-making processes pose an obstacle to cooperation at a number of levels. Both the EU and Brazil need further policy-

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*Climate Talks*, 8 December 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/news/articles/news\\_2015120804\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/news/articles/news_2015120804_en).

making coordination in order to avoid overlaps and excessive limitation of their scope of cooperation.

2. *Pursue inclusive policy-making for better governance.* Bilateral cooperation can benefit from the constructive engagement of non-state actors in the development and implementation of the political agenda. The EU and Brazil should seek the participation of such actors in high-level dialogues. They should also adopt a permanent consultation mechanism that includes academics and representatives from different interest groups in the discussion of a comprehensive and coordinated EU–Brazil approach to the climate negotiations. Such a mechanism would facilitate the prospects for cooperation at all levels.

3. *Support non-governmental cooperation initiatives.* The increased role of non-governmental actors in the climate agenda should be encouraged beyond the boundaries of the current government-led framework for cooperation. The EU and Brazil should provide continuous financial and technical support to the development of independent cooperation activities on climate change between non-governmental actors from the two parties. The two actors should seek collaboration with the UN and other international organizations in order to jointly promote these actions, avoiding overlaps and maximizing the use of resources.

4. *Increase policy coherence across different issue-areas.* The multidisciplinary nature of combating climate change requires a coherent development of bilateral relations across different areas. This is particularly important as far as such issues as trade, investments, energy, technology, and research and innovation are concerned, as these are all policy areas with an important climate-change dimension. Actions undertaken in these fields need to observe climate-change goals and targets.

5. *Increase policy coherence across different levels of cooperation.* In addition to the bilateral and the multilateral level, there are also subregional and regional dimensions to EU–Brazil relations. As the agendas for cooperation at these levels overlap, they all need to be compatible with the goal of addressing climate change. As negotiations on the new EU–Mercosur agreement are still ongoing, it is essential that they lead to an instrument that promotes exchanges in goods linked to sustainable development and that is compatible with climate-change policies.

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