

XVI ALTIERO SPINELLI SYMPOSIUM

Regional Integration in a Globalized World

GENERAL ASPECTS

The 16th edition of the Altiero Spinelli Symposium took place on December 12, 2024, at the auditorium of the Circolo Italiano in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The event, dedicated to regional integration in a globalized world, was held successfully, featuring prominent presentations and active audience participation. This year, the central theme of the debate was Mercosur: Situation and Institutional Reforms.

The event, organised by the Civil Association Democracia Global, the Altiero Spinelli Foundation, and the Cátedra Altiero Spinelli, received institutional support from the World Federalist Movement and the Circolo Italiano of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The symposium began with opening remarks by **Camila López Badra**, Executive Director of Democracia Global, who highlighted the importance of strengthening Mercosur institutions to tackle the challenges posed by the current global context. The session was moderated by **Dalma Varela**, Parliamentary Advisor to the Foreign Affairs and Worship Committee of the Honorable Chamber of Deputies of Argentina, who guided the discussion and facilitated an enriching dialogue between the panelists and the audience.

During the central panel, the speakers addressed key issues related to the current state of Mercosur and the necessary reforms:



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Marisa Bircher, former Secretary of Foreign Trade and Agro-industrial Markets of Argentina, analysed the current state of the MERCOSUR-European Union agreement, emphasising its commercial and political significance. She pointed out that the agreement covers 99% of the trade between both blocs, with 84% of products to be subject to zero tariffs, bringing economic benefits, especially for Argentine provinces. Bircher stressed that the agreement would not only enhance trade and investment but also raise Mercosur's institutional standards. She also underlined that the agreement reflects both blocs' commitment to multilateralism, sending a positive signal amid global geopolitical tensions.

Richard Blanco, Deputy of the National Assembly of Venezuela, former political prisoner, and President of the Alianza Bravo Pueblo Party, spoke on the expansion of the democratic clause within Mercosur. He highlighted the importance of the Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001) as a key instrument for the social, political, and economic development of Latin America, stressing that democracy and citizen participation are essential to ensuring human rights. In his view, expanding democratic guarantees within Mercosur would be a crucial step toward consolidating the protection of fundamental rights and ensuring the democratizing nature of regional integration. He also proposed including the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights (the San José Pact) in this clause to strengthen democratic institutions in the region.



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Nicolás Simone, historian, political scientist, researcher and lecturer at the University of Buenos Aires, and Parliamentarian of Mercosur, reflected on the need to reform Parlasur to strengthen regional integration. He pointed out that Parlasur, with its current structure of 116 parliamentarians, faces asymmetries and challenges that hinder its effectiveness. He noted that Argentina, being the only country with direct elections for its representatives, has created an unequal composition that Parlasur has not addressed with clear mechanisms. He also stressed that integration must be approached from a political and legislative perspective, overcoming nationalism, protectionism, and sovereignty debates. According to Simone, it is crucial to equip Parlasur with effective institutional tools and undertake a deep cultural transformation to enable the body to support regional change and development processes.

Finally, **Christian Cao**, a lawyer, PhD in Law, and lecturer at the University of Buenos Aires, spoke about the need to create an Agency for Transnational Organised Crime in Mercosur. Cao emphasised that the fight against organised crime must be both regional and international, as the issue is transnational and cannot be resolved through isolated national responses. He highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and coordination, pointing out that the Palermo Protocol is an example of what can be achieved when countries recognise the issue.



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Cao recalled the campaign for a Latin American and Caribbean Criminal Court against Transnational Organised Crime (COPLA, for its Spanish acronym), which aims to create a supranational court to judge, sanction, and prevent such crimes. He also highlighted the progress in establishing an Agency for Transnational Organised Crime in Mercosur, supported by the Falcone-Borsellino programme, which would facilitate the exchange of information between countries and provide more effective tools for prosecutors and judges to combat transnational criminal gangs. This agency would operate within the framework of Public International Law and its treaties. Cao concluded by stressing that the creation of this agency is an urgent necessity, saying "tomorrow will be too late", and that Mercosur societies are convinced this is the way forward.

The conclusions were delivered by **Fernando A. Iglesias**, Argentine National Deputy and Honorary President of Democracia Global, who celebrated the fruitful discussions at the Symposium and reiterated the commitment to continue promoting dialogue spaces that foster regional integration. The event concluded with closing remarks by **Gaia Marchiori**, Director of the Spinelli Foundation, who thanked all participants and emphasised the need to maintain an agenda of institutional reforms within Mercosur.



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The day saw the participation of over 50 attendees, including representatives from the embassies of Brazil, Hungary, Ukraine, and the European Union delegation, as well as academics, experts, and members of civil society interested in regional integration.

The XVI Altiero Spinelli Symposium reaffirmed its role as a key platform for discussing the challenges and opportunities facing regional integration in Latin America, promoting the exchange of ideas and international cooperation.

Click here to access the event recording:

[XVI Altiero Spinelli Symposium](#)