

# THIRD INTERREGIONAL DIALOGUE ON **EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN, AFRICA AND EUROPE**

**3-7 NOVEMBER 2025**

**BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA**

HOSTED BY **UNIVERSIDAD EAN**

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**A MAP OF INTERREGIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

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## 1. REIMAGINING COOPERATION: THE INTERREGIONAL APPROACH

The **Third Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development** represents a political and collaborative space redefining relationships among Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and beyond. Promoted by **Obreal** and its regional partners since 2020, the Dialogue builds upon a sustained process of cooperation that places education, science, and innovation at the heart of equitable and sustainable development.

This initiative stems from Obreal's conviction that **cooperation in education, research, and development demands urgent political innovation** — the creation of democratic, participatory, and inclusive mechanisms that bridge the gap between bilateral arrangements and global frameworks, combining political legitimacy, multilateral resilience, and tangible impact. Grounded in principles of mutual accountability and co-responsibility, it fosters governance practices that balance vision with verifiable implementation. From this perspective, it mobilises regional political, social, and educational actors. This principle already underpinned Obreal's main strategic framework launched in 2020–2021.

The Dialogue operates as a **polycentric and plural architecture**, reflecting the diversity of educational systems, political traditions, and epistemic cultures across continents. It explicitly rejects any binary vision of global relations, affirming instead the existence of **multiple Norths and multiple Souths**, each bearing distinct histories, responsibilities, and capacities for innovation. **It shares the main characteristics of multilateralism: non-exclusion and equal treatment of all countries.** It is not meant to undermine other forms of international cooperation; on the contrary, **it intends to articulate them and reinvigorate its effectiveness**, demonstrating that diversity can be a source of shared strength.

Within this polycentric logic, **multilingualism becomes both a political and ontological dimension of interregionalism.** The coexistence of languages as diverse as English, Spanish, Catalan, Chinese, Arabic, Swahili or Zulu is not merely a technical instrument of translation, but a declaration of equality and reciprocity among peoples and knowledge systems. Linguistic diversity embodies the ethical and cultural depth of genuine multilateralism: the recognition that universality is not homogeneity, but the capacity to engage across difference.

**Interregionalism**, as practiced in the Dialogue, is therefore multilingual by nature — both a method of encounter and an affirmation of plural global governance. This multilingual and multilateral ethos extends beyond the Dialogue itself, informing the content, projects, and follow-up actions that make the process truly impactful. Shaping the initiatives promoted by Obreal and its partners across the political, economic, social, and educational sectors through a genuinely polycentric and plural approach.

## 2. FROM BARCELONA TO BOGOTÁ: BUILDING AN INTERREGIONAL PROCESS

The roots of the Interregional Dialogue go back to Obreal's consultations between 2020 and 2021, which brought together associations of universities and governments from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe to reflect on the future of cooperation in higher education and science. These early dialogues — documented in Obreal Global in Focus (2021) — gave rise to a strategic, political, and ethical vision of action grounded in **polycentric cooperation**. At a time of growing geopolitical fragmentation, Obreal and its partners called for the recovery of the multilateralist spirit and for joint, material responses to shared challenges, reaffirming that development is not merely an economic adjustment but a collective process of material construction, knowledge production, and social innovation.

This approach **revives the founding values of international politics** that inspired the search of peace at the end of World War II and decolonization — equal treatment, solidarity, cooperation, and the pursuit of peace through shared responsibility — and reinterprets them in global, regional and interregional contexts. In doing so, it seeks to restore the ethical and political foundation of international collaboration, moving from competition to co-creation, and from transactional partnerships to genuine political dialogue.

The same spirit underpins the role of universities as key actors in the educational and research policy spectrum, and particularly of university associations, as key participants within the Dialogue. They are not merely observers of development, but active agents of change, capable of translating knowledge into public value, and linking scientific inquiry with social progress. By placing higher education institutions at the centre of interregional dialogue, Obreal and its partners reaffirm that universities are strategic actors of development, contributing directly to the construction of democratic, participatory, inclusive, and innovative mechanisms for cooperation and policy innovation across regions.

Building on that vision, the Dialogue took institutional shape in Barcelona (2022), where Obreal — with the support of the Government of Catalonia, the Argentine CELAC Presidency, and the Forum for Sustainable Development in Higher Education — acting as a Team Europe Initiative in coordination with the EU-AUC HAQAA flagship initiative (funded by the EU and coordinated by Obreal) convened the First Interregional Encounter on Education and Development.

That meeting provided the political and intellectual foundations for a new model of cooperation capable of connecting regions historically underrepresented in global knowledge governance. It also inspired further “Team Europe Initiatives” in the education sector, a model that the EU has adopted and promoted, and aligns with the spirit of shared investment and commitment to international collaboration for development.

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This first encounter was the origin of the First Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development, held in **Buenos Aires (March 2023)** under CELAC's Argentine Presidency and co-organized by Obreal and the African Union Commission (AUC), and which marked the first political manifestation of this vision. The Association of African Universities (AAU) played a central role in mobilizing higher education institutions across the African continent, reinforcing the academic and institutional dimension of this emerging partnership. Latin American associations and governments expressed commitments to strengthening South-South interregional ties, through the implementation of scholarships, exchange and collaborative teaching and research.

**In Windhoek, Namibia (July 2023)**, Obreal, the AUC, the AAU, and the Government of Argentina — joined by key partners DAAD and the European University Association — convened a high-level meeting of university associations from Africa, Latin America, and Europe at the margins of the AAU Vice-Chancellors' Conference. The meeting reaffirmed universities' role as strategic development actors and consolidated the institutional foundation of the interregional process. It also presented the concrete commitments and actions undertaken since Buenos Aires, in preparation for the second edition of the Dialogue.

**In 2024 (July), the Dialogue moved to Addis Ababa, hosted at the African Union headquarters**, symbolically confirming Africa's central role and consolidating the institutional alliance among Obreal, AUC, and AAU as the cornerstone of the interregional process, **within the framework of the African Union's 2024 Year of Education**.

**The Bogotá Dialogue (2025)**, co-organized by Obreal, the Government of Colombia, the African Union Commission (AUC), the Association of African Universities (AAU), and ASCUN, in partnership with the Government of Catalonia, DAAD and IDRC (Canada), is articulated with the UNESCO/OWSD General Assembly —an independent yet complementary event taking place in parallel. Building on this trajectory, it expands the process to incorporate European and North American perspectives while maintaining the South-South-North balance, and focuses on inclusion, scientific cooperation, and sustainability as central pillars of equitable development.

## 3. FROM UNILATERAL OR BILATERAL COOPERATION TO INTERREGIONALISM

Unlike traditional models of aid or association in which the role of the “donors” is paramount, the Dialogue promotes horizontal interregionalism — an exchange among equals grounded in mutual learning, reciprocity, and shared responsibility; and in which the countries and regions more in need (the different Souths) lead the agenda. This approach turns cooperation into a genuinely horizontal practice — one where knowledge and initiative circulate across all regions on equal footing, as exemplified by

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partnerships such as UNESCO/OWSD, which connect women scientists from the different South and the different North in a spirit of mutual learning and shared responsibility. By acknowledging existing structural asymmetries among regions, the Dialogue helps to render them visible not as obstacles but as shared responsibilities, offering a reimagined collective approach to cooperation: one that transforms disparity into a catalyst for mutual learning, innovation, and balanced development.

This third edition, held under Colombia's pro tempore presidency of CELAC, reinforces Obreal's role as a platform connecting governments, universities, and regional organizations. The Dialogue has been built through a **continuous and participatory process** — the Road to Bogotá — which included preparatory activities across continents throughout 2024 and 2025. These dialogues, workshops, and consultations brought together governments, university associations, youth associations, industry representatives, research networks, and international partners to co-construct a truly consensual and interregional agenda and the share results of initiatives that connect continents and regions.

Interregionalism, as promoted by Obreal, is not merely an institutional model; it becomes a political culture and an ethical stance. It transforms multilingual and multicultural exchange into a form of knowledge diplomacy that enables new spaces of cooperation and recognition. It affirms that science, education, and innovation are common goods, to be co-created through cooperation among regions that are different but equal in dignity and potential.

The **Bogotá Dialogue** thus represents not an endpoint but a milestone in a broader polycentric process — one that acquires even greater meaning at a time when multilateralism itself is under strain. In an era marked by uncertainty, asymmetry, and the erosion of trust, the Dialogue recovers the original vocation of international cooperation as a shared endeavour: working together across borders to enhance the role of tertiary education, and the educational sector as a whole, to face real, material challenges that affect all societies — from food security to climate resilience, from digital transformation to educational and science inclusion.

By embodying this vision, the Interregional Dialogue draws upon a long-standing tradition of commitment to multilateralism, solidarity, and shared responsibility, while it aligns with a broader aspiration to renew confidence in collective action, demonstrating that a new generation of cooperation — polycentric, equitable, resilient, and jointly constructed — can contribute to restoring purpose and legitimacy to global governance. As the process enters a new phase of consolidation, the Bogotá Dialogue not only strengthens the achievements of previous encounters but also ushers in a stage of renewed reflection and strategic projection, paving the way for a shared vision of the future of interregional cooperation.

## 4. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Interregional Dialogue is not a one-time event. From Barcelona to Buenos Aires, Windhoek, Addis Ababa, and now Bogotá, the Interregional Dialogue has evolved into a sustained political and institutional process — a living mechanism that redefines how regions engage to address global challenges. Together with the AUC, AAU, the Government of Colombia, ASCUN, and other regional and international partners, Obreal reaffirms its commitment to a diplomacy of knowledge that transcends borders and nurtures collective capacity for transformation. This commitment is expressed through measurable cooperation outcomes — joint policy projects, shared capacity-building platforms, and regionally owned monitoring mechanisms — that ensure continuity and accountability beyond each Dialogue edition. It also forms the operational core of Obreal's work, implemented through projects jointly developed with partners from Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, translating the Dialogue's principles into tangible, sustained, and impactful portfolio of actions. These efforts also reflect a shared commitment to evidence-based policy learning and transparent cooperation practices, ensuring that interregional dialogue evolves as both a political and knowledge-driven process.

Looking forward, this process must continue to expand its geographical and political reach, embracing new partners and regions that share the aspiration for a more balanced and resilient world order. In particular, the Mediterranean and Arab regions — spaces where cultures, economies, and histories converge — stand as crucial horizons for interregional dialogue. They should not be seen as frontiers of division, but as opportunities to consolidate cooperation, foster proximity, and transform potential tensions into frameworks of shared progress.

Moreover, the Dialogue also underscores the importance of intra-African student mobility programmes and youth policies as essential instruments for building a new generation of interregional cooperation. By strengthening academic, professional, and civic exchanges within the continent, and by empowering young people as agents of transformation, these initiatives foster a more cohesive and innovative Africa that can engage the world from a position of confidence, equality, and shared purpose. Strengthened intra-African student mobility will become an essential element of both South-South and North-South academic cooperation, resonating with a broader vision of inclusive and sustainable collaboration — one where equality, transparency, and long-term commitment form the basis of trust among partners.

In doing so, the Interregional Dialogue contributes to building bridges across regions and reaffirms the enduring belief that development and peace are inseparable, and that dialogue itself is a political act of construction rather than confrontation. Partners such as OWSD/UNESCO, articulating their general assembly with the celebration of the Dialogue, illustrate how interregional collaboration can be synergetic with multilateral initiatives and turn inclusion and diversity into real engines of scientific innovation, inclusion and shared development.

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The outcomes of the Interregional Dialogue should also feed into Europe's ongoing reflection on international cooperation and development, particularly within platforms such as the Forum for Sustainable Development in Higher Education (S-DHG), the Team Europe EU's framework, other forums shaping the future of international partnerships and the Global Gateway EU approach. The Dialogue offers concrete evidence that interregional cooperation enriches and complements traditional development paradigms, introducing perspectives and priorities from Africa, Latin America, and other regions that strengthen the global commons of knowledge and policy innovation. At the same time, the process remains open to learning from and integrating the recommendations of other international forums, ensuring coherence, mutual reinforcement, and shared accountability across regions. In doing so, the Dialogue contributes to the emergence of a new generation of cooperation policies — more inclusive, plural, and politically grounded — that reaffirms the central role of knowledge, education, and scientific collaboration in achieving sustainable global development.