



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**XXI San José Dialogue Ministerial meeting
between the EU and Central America
Luxembourg, 26 May 2005**

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The meeting of the Troika of EU Ministers with the Ministers of the countries of Central America held in Luxembourg on 26 May 2005 was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Mr Jean Asselborn, President of the EU Council. The Central American delegation was led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Leonidas Rosa Bautista, President of the SICA, The European Commission was represented by Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations.

The meeting resulted in a fruitful exchange of views on the main topics covered by the political dialogue and cooperation agreement signed in 2003. After ratification, the agreement will considerably reinforce the already very close relations between the European Union and the Republics of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

P R E S S

2. The Ministers reaffirmed that the conclusion of an Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America, including a Free Trade Area, remained their common strategic objective, as declared in May 2004 in Guadalajara. The Ministers also reaffirm that the prospect of an Association Agreement should give a new impetus for strengthening the regional economic integration process in Central America. In this context they welcomed the launching of the joint assessment exercise on regional economic integration in January 2005 and the setting up of the ad hoc joint working group, which is scheduled to meet three times in 2005 to complete said assessment. The assessment will lead, in due course, to negotiations. In Guadalajara we agreed that no effort will be spared to ensure that the Doha Round advances as much as possible towards its rapid conclusion. Any Free Trade Agreement shall be built upon the outcome of the Doha Development Agenda and the realization of a sufficient level of regional economic integration.

The Ministers applauded the constructive spirit in which the first meeting of the Ad hoc Joint Working Group was conducted in San José, Costa Rica on 31 March/1 April 2005 and reaffirmed that the Joint Committee established by the Cooperation Agreement between Central America and the EU would meet before the end of 2005 to discuss the results of the Joint Assessment.

In this regard, the Central American Ministers reiterated their aspiration for a decision to launch negotiations for an Association Agreement between CA and UE, in the next Summit of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the European Union, to be held in May 2006 in Vienna.

The Ministers considered that such an Agreement shall constitute a step forward in the CA-EU economic and trade relationship.

3. The Central American Ministers referred to the improvements obtained recently within the framework of regional economic integration and to the high priority that the Governments grant to the consolidation of the above-mentioned process. In the first instance, they highlighted the relevant advances registered to consolidate the Central American Customs Union and to stimulate the facilitation of the interregional trade, emphasizing the important steps that are being taken for the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Central American Customs Union.

Likewise, they referred to the commitments adopted in the framework of the Central American Presidential Summits related to "Safe Central America"-initiative, which seeks to strengthen the regional efforts in the struggle against criminality and all threats against the democratic security, as well as the positive evolution of the work of the Ad-hoc Commission, empowered to elaborate an integral reform of the Central American Institutional Framework, in order to strengthen the integration process. They highlighted the achievements reached in other fields of integration, such as in the area of migration, "Plan de Integración Migratoria Centroamericana" between Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, and the actions of regional coordination adopted in the social, tourist, education, fishery and environment sector, among others.

4. The European Union for its part drew attention to the measures it had taken in support of the regional integration process in Central America, notably the cooperation provided to the Secretariat for Economic Integration in Central America (SIECA) with implementing the customs union and with formulating and implementing joint policies, together with the program of support for regional institutional development and the participation of civil society in the integration process through the General Secretariat of the SICA. Furthermore, the adoption of a major program of aid targeting the region's vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental degradation was planned for the current year.
5. The two sides agreed that support for the regional integration process needed to remain the focus of the regional cooperation program in the 2007-2013 period currently in preparation. A regional consultation with the participation of Representatives of the Governments, Regional Institutions, Civil Society, the EU and other International Agencies on the proposed strategy is to be held in San Salvador on 14 June 2005, whereas for the country-level strategies consultations have already taken place in all Central American countries.

The Central American Ministers called upon the European side to consider these objectives of reinforced cooperation with the region in the future budgetary allocations that will accompany this new framework of cooperation.

6. The EU Ministers referred to the new system of generalised preferences (GSP), which is expected to enter into force shortly. They underlined the importance of GSP, and of "GSP Plus" in particular, which would allow for a continued privileged market access to the Community market for the Central American countries committed to promote sustainable development and good governance. They recognised the efforts made to fulfil the necessary conditions, in line with WTO requirements, allowing Central American exporters to benefit from the advantages of "GSP Plus".

7. The European Union made reference to its own integration process, in particular the accession of ten new Member States on 1 May 2004, and the recent signing on 25 April 2005 of the Treaties of Accession of Bulgaria and Romania. The Ministers held an exchange of views on the ongoing ratification process of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.
 8. The Ministers also emphasised the importance of the continued involvement of civil society in the regional integration process. In accordance with the XIII Joint Committee, the Parties agreed to organize in Central America a follow up meeting of the civil society.
 9. The Ministers reaffirmed their resolve to play a major role within the United Nations in general and in preparations for the United Nations Summit in September 2005 in particular. Ministers were determined that this process should result in the devising of common responses to the main development, security and human rights problems.
 10. The Ministers recognized the serious difficulties that high oil prices are causing in markets and economies, which are affecting growth expectations and living conditions in many countries. They agreed on the relevance of a continued dialogue on this problem.
 11. The Ministers emphasized the importance of the incorporation of the Kingdom of Spain as an extra regional member of the Central American Bank of Economic Integration (BCIE), which will strengthen the relations between Spain and the Central American region. The Central American Ministers encourage other Member States of the European Community to strengthen their ties and cooperation with the Bank, and consider future incorporation.
 12. The Ministers expressed their deep gratitude to the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for their hospitality and the cordial and constructive dialogue which ensured the successful outcome of the XXI San José Dialogue Ministerial meeting, and announced that the II Summit European Union-Central America, would take place in Vienna in 2006, in the framework of the events of the IV EU-LAC Summit.
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