



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 19 April 2007
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**SAN JOSÉ DIALOGUE MINISTERIAL MEETING
BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION TROIKA
AND THE MINISTERS OF THE COUNTRIES OF
CENTRAL AMERICA**

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 19 April 2007

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The meeting of the European Union Troika and the Ministers for External Relations of the countries of Central America was held in the Dominican Republic on 19 April 2007. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Eamon Courtenay, Minister for Foreign Relations and Foreign Trade of Belize and President *Pro Tempore* of the SICA, and Mr Javier Solana, High Representative and Secretary-General of the Council. Mr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany and President of the Council of the European Union also attended the meeting; the European Commission was represented by Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy. The meeting provided the opportunity for an important exchange of views on various topics of special interest to both regions. At the same time it helped to strengthen the political dialogue and cooperation between the SICA and the European Union.

P R E S S

2. The European side informed the Central American Ministers on the process of adoption, by the Council of the European Union, of the directives for the negotiation of a comprehensive Association Agreement, including the creation of a free-trade area. For their part, the Central American Ministers informed the European side of the progress made in the region on the preparation for and the organisation of the negotiation of that association agreement, which had resulted in the approval of the document entitled "Central American negotiating and coordination structure for the association agreement between Central America and the European Union", reflecting the consensus reached in the region.

At the same time both sides have agreed that the format, methodology and programme of the negotiations shall be discussed by the XV CA-EU Joint Committee.

3. The European side recognised the efforts made by Central America to strengthen regional economic integration, in particular towards the creation of the Central American Customs Union. At the same time, the representatives of the European Union encouraged Central America to pursue its efforts to strengthen the regional integration process including as outlined by the Vienna Summit Declaration of May 2006. In this context, the Central American Ministers reiterated their governments' firm commitment at the highest level to the creation of the Customs Union, highlighting, among other progress, the signature of the Treaty on Investment and Trade in Services (Tratado sobre Inversiones y Comercio de Servicios – TICS) including its annexes; progress in approving the new Central American Uniform Customs Code and the negotiation of the regulation; progress in completing common external tariff; and the signature of the Treaty on Mutual Assistance and Technical Cooperation between Central American Tax and Customs Administrations; and the adoption of the Treaty on the compatibility of Internal Taxation applicable to trade between the States Parties to the Central American Customs Union.
4. Taking into account the Vienna Summit Declaration, both sides expressed their satisfaction at the gradual rapprochement of Panama to the Central America regional economic integration system (SIECA).

5. The Central American Ministers expressed their gratitude for the support given by the European Union to the Central American integration process. In this regard, both sides welcomed the approval of the Regional Strategy Paper "2007-2013" for Central America, which laid down the general guidelines for cooperation between the European Commission and this region, and which aims in particular to support the Central American integration process in the framework of the future Association Agreement between both sides. Regional cooperation for this period includes also other important areas such as good governance and security.

The CA side was also grateful for the increased indicative fund allocated to the region for 2007-13, which is a concrete expression of the solidarity of the European Union towards Central America, in particular in view of the prospects regarding the future Association Agreement. The Central American Ministers also stated the wish that the multiannual programming should also be used to support Central America in the negotiations for the future Association Agreement.

6. Both regions expressed their determination to ensure security. They proposed to promote actions aimed at reinforcing security for people and property, and also to seek other forms of cooperation in this field. They also rejected and condemned terrorist actions of any kind.
7. Both sides emphasised the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as of respect for the rule of law, including justice. The European side recalled its position on the abolition of the death penalty. Both the European Union and Central America expressed concern at violations of human rights in all its forms, wherever they occur, including against women, minorities, human rights defenders and migrants. Taking into account their international commitments in the area of good governance and human rights, both sides also expressed their willingness to enhance bi-regional cooperation in these areas.

8. Both sides highlighted the various programmes supported by the European Union in Central America aiming at promoting and spreading human rights principles and values, as well as the instruments which aim to guarantee them. They reiterated their satisfaction with the establishment of the Human Rights Council in the framework of the United Nations, which will contribute to the strengthening of these rights at a global level, as is its intended purpose. They have shown their willingness to strengthen the efficiency of the work of the Council, in particular, through constructive cooperation aimed at a satisfactory finalisation of the institutional building process.
9. Both sides recognised the serious economic challenges posed by the high cost of countries' investments in energy resources, particularly in view of their horizontal effects in the economic and social spheres, and the negative impact on countries' competitiveness. In this respect, they agreed to step up technical cooperation between the two regions in the energy sector, especially as regards the creation and development of renewable alternative energy sources which were also compatible with the environment. They also reiterated their interest in maintaining ongoing dialogue to seek solutions to this growing problem.

They highlighted the possibilities offered in the field of renewable energy by the European Investment Bank's new ALA mandate, and they urged their authorities to identify projects aimed at meeting this challenge.

10. Both regions took note of the II EU-Central America Civil Society Forum ("Towards an Association Agreement"), held on 5 and 6 March 2007 in Honduras, in coordination with the SICA Consultative Committee. Both sides recognised the importance of involving the organised civil society in the framework of reinforcing bi-regional relations.
11. Both sides also reiterated their commitment to holding the III CA-EU Summit in Peru in 2008, in the framework of the V Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, and to hold the next San José Dialogue Ministerial Meeting in 2009.
12. Both sides expressed their deep thanks to the Government of the Dominican Republic for its hospitality and support, which helped to make the meeting a great success.