



A crucial negotiations round between EU and Central America opens the way for a possible conclusion of Association Agreement talks this year

Brussels, 26 – 30 January 2009

After one week of intense negotiations, the European Commission, representing the European Union, and Central America concluded their 6th round of talks towards an Association Agreement.

Building upon a strong preparation and exchanges between the two sides, this week of negotiations was marked by significant progress in every component of the future Association Agreement. The three pillars of the Agreement (Political Dialogue, Cooperation and Trade) were simultaneously discussed as well as some provisions on horizontal and institutional matters.

Under the Political Dialogue's areas, the parties agreed on a long-standing issue relating to international conventions on human rights, good governance, core labor standards and the environment. Convergence of views could also be observed on migration, though some open issues are still to be negotiated.

Discussions on Cooperation matters allowed both sides to enlarge the scope of already substantial relations. Very significant progress was made on a large number of provisions such as social cohesion, gender equality, environment, fight against terrorism, cultural and audiovisual cooperation, and scientific and technological cooperation.

The European Commission organized an information session on the EU's regional policy (the so-called Structural Funds) which could be a source of inspiration to Central America in its efforts to reduce inequalities. A fruitful exchange of views took place and raised great interest from the Central American delegates.

The trade part was characterized by good discussions, which confirmed the entry into the final stages of these negotiations. The Central American countries reiterated their desire to fulfill their commitments related to regional integration. However, while some areas negotiated under the Trade pillar came closer to a conclusion, there are still issues that are in need of joint efforts to achieve the right balance. In order to deliver on the ambitious plan of concluding this agreement within the first half of this year, the Parties need to increase their efforts, in particular in the elements lagging behind.

Finally, the Parties maintained an open dialogue with civil society organizations and attended several events organized by them in the margins of the negotiations.

The next round of negotiations is scheduled from 30th March to 3rd April in Honduras.

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