

Fourth meeting of the EU-Mercosur biregional negotiations committee

Brussels, 19-22 March 2001

Final conclusions

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Negotiators from the Mercosur and the European Union met for the fourth time in the context of the EU-Mercosur Biregional Negotiations Committee during 19-22 March 2001 in Brussels. This meeting formed the fourth round of negotiations between the EU and Mercosur, aiming at the conclusion of an Interregional Association Agreement between the European Union and the Mercosur. The negotiators established the following set of conclusions.

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

The Paraguayan Vice-Minister for International Economic Relations and Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Juan Alfredo Buffa Ramirez, on behalf of the Pro-Tempore Presidency of Mercosur, and the Director-General for External Relations of the European Commission, Mr Guy Legras, on behalf of the European Union, jointly opened the fourth meeting of the BNC with statements that strongly reflected both sides' commitment to the negotiating process and interest in making progress in the discussions during the present phase of the negotiations.

Discussions took place on the institutional framework of the future Association Agreement, based on draft text proposals presented by both sides. On the basis of these proposals negotiators were able to make substantial progress in reaching agreement on most of the paragraphs for a draft joint text, leaving some points open for further discussions.

The three Technical Groups dealing with trade worked intensively in all areas, in particular on the basis of proposals. Both sides could deepen their knowledge of their respective positions and started identifying common ground and areas of divergencies. Both Parties agreed that business facilitation constituted relevant objectives, in conformity with the ambitious agenda set out for the future agreement. Both Parties confirmed their intention to intensify the negotiating process in all areas with a view to launching negotiations on tariffs and services as soon as possible after 1 July 2001.

The Subgroup on Economic Co-operation and the Subgroup on Social and Cultural Co-operation also met during the fourth meeting of the BNC in Brussels. They established a number of joint texts in the field of social and cultural co-operation. The Subcommittee on Co-operation also met after these two subgroup meetings and presentations of various Community programmes were made during this meeting.

The European Union and Mercosur decided to hold a fifth round of negotiations within the framework of the BNC during July 2001 in Montevideo. The exact dates of the meeting and other arrangements will be agreed on through the regular diplomatic channels.

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FUTURE POLITICAL DIALOGUE

During this session of the BNC, the Parties discussed the draft text for the institutional framework of the future Agreement, on the basis of negotiating text proposals provided by the Parties. Mercosur had already presented a proposal during the third meeting of the BNC in Brasilia, while the European Union presented its proposal for Mercosur's consideration in advance of the fourth meeting of the BNC.

Thorough discussions took place on the basis of these proposals and due to the convergence emerging from the examination of the two documents negotiators were able to agree on most of the paragraphs for a draft joint text, leaving some points open for further discussions. These points and other related issues in the political field will have to continue to be discussed during the next meeting of the BNC.

NEGOTIATIONS ON CO-OPERATION

During the morning of March 20th the Subgroup on Economic Co-operation and the Subgroup on Social and Cultural Co-operation met and were able to establish a number of joint texts in the field of social and cultural co-operation. Both parties made further text proposals in various areas related to Economic Co-operation, Social and Cultural Co-operation and related to the up-grading of co-operation, which will be discussed at the next meeting of the BNC.

During the afternoon of March 20th the Subcommittee on Co-operation met for the first time and the European Commission made presentations to Mercosur on various Community framework programmes. These presentations included Community programmes such as RTD, SAVE, ALTENER, SYNERGIE, Culture 2000, Erasmus, Socrates, Leonardo, Juventud II, Media and Media Plus and programmes in the field of science and technology, statistics, research and SMEs.

NEGOTIATIONS ON TRADE ISSUES

The trade groups worked intensively in all areas, in particular on the basis of proposals put forward by both delegations. Both sides could deepen their knowledge of their respective positions and started identifying common ground and areas of divergencies. Furthermore, it was agreed that experts should continue, during the first semester, technical work with a view to exchange information and to clarify positions. In this regard, both sides reiterated the importance to put into place mechanisms to ensure technical work will continue among experts.

Both Parties agreed that business facilitation constituted relevant objectives, in conformity with the ambitious agenda set out for the future agreement. They agreed to present proposals or more detailed papers before the next round.

In view of the next round both Parties agreed to continue to prepare working documents and negotiating text proposals. These will be made available one month before the fifth round.

Finally, both Parties confirmed their intention to intensify the negotiating process in all areas with a view to launching negotiations on tariffs and services as soon as possible after 1 July 2001.