

EU-Brazil Ministerial Meeting for Political Dialogue

The agreement with Mercosur may be signed at the EU-Latin America summit in May in Madrid

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Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Catherine Ashton and Celso Amorim, in Madrid. EFE

The EU and Mercosur are getting closer to an association agreement that could be signed in May in Madrid at the EU-Latin America-Caribbean summit, according to the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Amorim, who said "I do not know if there will be final agreement, but there will be an agreement that could be signed, which is not just a declaration of intentions".

The Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miguel Ángel Moratinos; the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton; and the Brazilian Minister all participated at a press conference in Madrid following the EU-Brazil Ministerial Meeting for Political Dialogue which examined issues on the bilateral and international agenda.

Despite the huge complexity of the EU-Brazil trade negotiations, "there is every possibility of making good progress and the most recent contacts have been positive, given the huge political will of the European presidency and the presidency of Mercosur held by Argentina", said Amorim.

Furthermore, reaching an agreement with the EU "would be an inspiration for the multilateral negotiations", added the Brazilian minister, referring to the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation, which has currently stalled.

Catherine Ashton pointed out that "the EU-Brazil Strategic Association is one of the most important and dynamic held by the EU". Among the issues discussed at the meeting, Ashton highlighted the alignment of their positions regarding the reconstruction of Haiti and the importance of relations with Iran, issues in which "Brazil has a key role to play".

Haiti Donors' Conference

With regards to the upcoming Haiti Donors' Conference at the end of March, the EU and Brazil will collaborate to reinforce the Haiti government and the role of the UN in stabilising the country, where Brazil is at the helm of the international MINUSTAH force and is contributing 20% of all military personnel in Haiti, with more than 2,000 soldiers.

With regards to the Middle East, Mr Amorim told his EU counterparts about the official visits that the Brazilian President, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, will make to Israel,

Palestine and Jordan in March, and to Iran in mid-May. The visit to the latter will be an opportunity to tackle the differences that the international community has with Iran regarding its nuclear and uranium enrichment program.

Brazil is less in favour of sanctions and prefers to reach out to Teheran which, according to Amorim, "is no different from the EU's position, in terms of the objectives". Both parties, he said, accept Iran's right to develop nuclear energy, but Teheran must "guarantee the international community that it will do so for peaceful purposes".

Regarding Brazil's complaint to the EU on the increase in European sugar exports above the level authorised by the WTO, Celso Amorim said that it is "a public warning so that an analysis can be made of the possibility that subsidies are being used". If necessary, he said, Brazil will resort to the procedure in the WTO rules, but "we would prefer the negotiation route".

The parties also discussed the preparations for the 6th EU-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit (Madrid, 18 May); the 3rd Forum of the Alliance of Civilisations (Rio de Janeiro, 28 and 29 May); and the G-20 Summit (Toronto, 26 and 27 June).

The EU and Brazil also hope to increase the cooperation planned for the Action Plan of the EU-Brazil Strategic Association, adopted in 2008, in the following areas: the fight against poverty, climate change, strengthening the multilateral system, human rights; economic, trade and investment relations, consular and migration matters, education and culture.

Trade between Brazil and the European Union increased by 183.8% between 2002 and 2008, from \$29,539 billion to \$82,588 billion, according to sources from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The South American country accounts for 70% of Mercosur's GDP.

[Video: Highlights of the EU-Brazil Ministerial Meeting for Political Dialogue](#)