

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

MERCOSUR-EU NEGOTIATORS MEETING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL

BRUSSELS, 2 SEPTEMBER 2005

Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the strategic relationship between Mercosur and the EU and the priority they attach to the conclusion of an ambitious and equitable inter-regional Association Agreement as an instrument to reinforce political, economic and trade relations and to contribute to the reduction of existing socio-economic disparities between the two regions.

In line with the previous Lisbon Ministerial meeting, Ministers acknowledged that substantial progress has been made already towards the conclusion of the Association Agreement, including a free trade area in accordance with WTO rules. However, they agreed that more needs to be done to reach the level of ambition that reflects the strategic importance of this Association Agreement.

To this end, and recognising the relation between the ongoing Mercosur-EU negotiations and the Doha Development Agenda, Ministers agreed to re-convene again in early 2006 for substantive negotiations at their level. In the meantime, Ministers called for two meetings in November 2005 and February 2006 at co-ordinators level to prepare the ground, exploring ways and means to substantially advance towards an ambitious and balanced outcome taking into account the different levels of development between the two regions.

Underlining the importance of the future Association Agreement, which goes well beyond trade into political, economic, social and cultural co-operation, Ministers also defined a number of actions designed to further deepening the strategic dimension of our partnership, including the forthcoming Political Dialogue Meeting at Senior Officials level as well as convening the Third Meeting of the Cooperation Council and an event to be organised in early 2006 to consult the private sector and bring together representative members of the business community.