

Second European Union – Mexico Joint Committee

October 3, 2002 Joint press release

On October 3rd 2002, the second meeting of the Joint Committee established by the Economic Association, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement signed between Mexico and the European Union was held in Puebla, Mexico.

The Mexican delegation was chaired by Dr. Miguel Hakim, Under-Secretary of Economic Relations and International Co-operation, within Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations in collaboration with Lic. Fernando de Mateo Venturini, General Co-ordinator of Negotiations with Latin America, ALCA, Europe and Service Sector of the Ministry of Economy who is in charge of issues relating to commerce.

The Delegation from the European Union was chaired by Mr. Francisco Da Câmara, Director for Latin America in the Directorate-General for External Relations in the European Commission and, for issues concerning trade, by Mr Karl Falkenberg, Director for Free Trade Agreements, Agricultural Commercial Matters, the ACP and Bilateral Commercial Relations, from the Directorate-General for Trade. The Danish Ambassador to Mexico, Mr. Soren Haslund, represented the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The parties reviewed activities carried out during the second year of operation of the Global Agreement in the three areas of coverage: political dialogue, trade and co-operation.

Under the framework of Political Dialogue, representatives from the Mexican government and the European Union congratulated themselves on the strengthening of bilateral relations and exchanged views on recent developments in the regional and international arena. In addition, they also analysed the situation in Latin America. In this regard, the Mexican delegation referred to the recent visit made by President Vicente Fox to Brazil, Argentina and Chile. The European delegation commented on the latest progress with respect to the EU's migration policy, derived from decisions adopted in the European Council in Seville. Both delegations also analysed the subject of human rights in Mexico, the situation in Iraq and, in the multilateral area, the follow-up of the international conferences of Monterrey and Johannesburg and the International Criminal Court.

Mexico and the European Union both emphasised the importance of the "Civil Society Forum" that will occur on November 26th 2002 in Brussels. The Forum will provide an opportunity for Mexican and European civil society to exchange information and opinions on making the most of the opportunities that the Global Agreement offers. The Forum is open to, among others, academics, industrialists, trade unions, political parties and members from non-government organisations.

With respect to bilateral co-operation, Mexico and the European Union signed, in the framework of this meeting, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Multiannual Guidelines of Co-operation for the period 2002 - 2006, with an overall budget of Community financing amounting to EUR 56.2 million. This instrument establishes the priorities, chosen jointly, for the implementation of joint actions.

Both delegations reviewed the current co-operation projects and the programmes under consideration in the Memorandum of Understanding on the Multiannual Guidelines of Co-operation. They especially emphasised the progress of the experts' mission from the European Commission which sought to identify a co-operation programme concerning social development in the South of the country.

Regarding the sector concerning strengthening of the rule of law and institutional support, both delegations congratulated themselves for approving the project "Strengthening and modernisation of the administration of justice in Mexico".

In the framework of economic co-operation the delegations emphasised the actions undertaken for the implementation of co-operation projects to support small and medium-sized enterprises, and for facilitating the Free Trade Agreement signed between Mexico and the European Union. The actions and conclusions of bi-regional co-operation undertaken in Verona (Italy) and Guadalajara (Mexico) which were presented to the Summit the EU -ALC of May of 2002 were also emphasised.

Moreover, Mexico and the European Union analysed the advances in the negotiation process of the sectoral Agreement in regard to science and technology. Both delegations celebrated the imminent launching of formal negotiations. The date and place is yet to be decided.

This Agreement will allow Mexican researchers to access all areas of the VI Framework Program of Investigation and Technological Development of the European Union, and Mexican programmes will respectively be opened to scientists from EU member countries.

After negotiations have been concluded, the European Union and Mexico will analyse the possibility of carrying out a programme to promote the sectoral Agreement in Mexico with the participation of European experts.

In regard to the environment, the Joint Committee emphasised its desire to forge a series of meetings between experts from both

delegations to analyse subjects of mutual interest. The exchange of experiences and knowledge among the environmental specialists will contribute to defining areas of action and specific activities in which they will be able to collaborate in the future.

Both delegations reaffirmed their interest to strengthen consultations in order to advance the preparation of a sectoral Agreement regarding education.

The European Commission also emphasised its intention to support two projects concerning human rights. First, to strengthen the Federation of Human Rights Public Defence Organisations and its members, and second, working with the Ministry of Foreign Relations, to harmonise the implementation of Mexico's international instruments to protect human rights and promote an environment for dialogue among the public authorities and civil society in this matter.

Mexico is conscious of the need to review bilateral co-operation, in order to consolidate relations among partners. However, both administrations require, in advance, essential budget provisions for the implementation of actions.

The Mexican delegation expressed an interest that, in order to guarantee the fulfilment of the future stage in bilateral relations, greater resources for bilateral co-operation are assigned. This will guarantee the realisation of specific actions, enable the implementation of mutual interest programmes and will drive the Economic Association, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement between Mexico and the European Union.

The European Commission noted Mexico's concerns and underlined the need to have a joint reflection on the prospects of co-operation in the medium and long term period.

The European Union emphasised the initiation of two new programmes for Latin America including Mexico. The program 'ALBAN' will grant a total of 4000 grants for postgraduate studies and the program '@lis' in the sector of information society. Furthermore the 'ALFA' inter-university co-operation programme will be strengthened.

Both delegations, congratulated themselves on the process of devolving the administration of community co-operation, resulting from the direct participation of the European Commission in Mexico, which allows for an improvement in the effectiveness of the initiation of bilateral co-operation.

In the commercial field, the parties revised the state of implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the European Union. The delegates noted, with satisfaction that, in accordance with the import figures from both parties, during the first two years since the agreement came into effect, bilateral trade grew 28.3%. Mexican exports to the European Union increased 45.5%, while the European sales to Mexico grew 25.0%. However, as a result of the problematic global economic situation over the last few months, the dynamism of trade has been reduced. The commercial treaty has, also, promoted investment flows and there are currently 5.364 businesses in Mexico with capital originating from the European Union.

In this context, it was concluded that the results of the Agreement proved that both parties are taking advantage of the potential of the Agreement regarding trade and investment despite the difficult global economic context. Both sides also emphasised that this commercial instrument offers the Mexican and EU exporters access to a market of more than 470 million consumers.

At the same time, both delegations indicated that the agreement is promoting the formation of strategic alliances among Mexican and European businesses, opening the possibility to satisfy the demand of the North America, Latin America and European markets, by using the network of trade agreements signed by both sides.

The parties reiterated their commitment to optimise the measures adopted in the framework of the Agreement. To do so, they urged that the technical bodies established by the Agreement continue their work in order to assure that trade flows are developed normally, by including the reduction in unwarranted technical barriers that affect bilateral trade.

The meeting of the Joint Committee was, at the same time, an occasion to exchange opinions on specific bilateral commercial matters. The state of the multilateral commercial discussions was also reviewed, in regard to the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO that will occur in the Mexican city of Cancún, in September 2003, as well as that of the regional commercial initiatives in which both parties currently take part.

Finally, it was proposed that the third session of the Joint Committee will occur in Brussels during the second six-month period of 2003.