



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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II. EU - CENTRAL AMERICAN SUMMIT Vienna, Austria, 13 May 2006

Joint Communiqué

1. The Heads of State and Government of the European Union (EU), represented by the Troika, and Central America, met in Vienna, Austria, on 13 May 2006. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen relations between the regions, based on the San José Dialogue inaugurated in Costa Rica in 1984. They acknowledged that bi-regional dialogue has played a central role in the establishment of peace and democracy in Central America, in the economic and social development, as well as in the region's integration process.
2. Recalling the common strategic objective of the Guadalajara Declaration and taking into account the positive outcome of the joint assessment exercise on regional economic integration carried out with Central America, we welcome the decision taken by the European Union and Central America to launch negotiations for an Association Agreement, including the establishment of a Free Trade Area.

Central America confirmed its commitment to implement as planned the decisions taken by CA Heads of States on 9 March 2006 in Panama, as well as to seek ratification of the CA Treaty on investment and services and to develop a jurisdictional mechanism that could secure enforcement of regional economic legislation throughout the region.

P R E S S

We welcome Panama's involvement in the process. The parties recognize that active participation in the negotiations will follow a formal decision of its joining the economic integration process in Central America, SIECA.

The concerned parties share the objective of concluding a comprehensive Association Agreement and look forward to a rapid process of negotiations, as well as an effective implementation of the future Association Agreement. In this respect, the parties recognize the value of the preparatory work undertaken in the context of the Joint Assessment for the negotiation process.

3. The Leaders underlined key areas covered by the Political Dialogue and Cooperation agreement signed 15 December 2003, in Rome. They welcomed its ratification by a number of states and reiterated the importance of the prompt implementation of the agreement.
4. The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the important role of the United Nations System. They welcomed the achievements of the United Nations Summit in September 2005 and reiterated their commitment to work together towards the full implementation of the reforms agreed at the Summit. In this respect, they particularly welcomed the creation of the Peace Building Commission and the Human Rights Council. Leaders reaffirmed their willingness to contribute resolutely through constructive engagement into common responses to the main development and security problems.

They confirmed that respect for democracy, the rule of law and the full enjoyment of human rights for all, including the rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, recognizing that the protection of human rights defenders and the elimination of impunity, are basic conditions for progress in these areas. They expressed their determination to work closely to promote effective multilateralism and strengthen UN peacekeeping and peace building capacities.

They further reaffirmed their commitment to combat threats to peace and security, i.a. proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

5. The Heads of State and Government celebrate the consolidation of the democratic processes of the Central American countries. The recent elections in CA have shown that this region is strongly committed to democracy and the values it entails. We reaffirm our willingness to continue in the future with the promotion of democratic values by means of fostering transparent, inclusive and civic electoral processes.
6. The Heads of State and Government recognize the need for closer regional and international cooperation in the energy sector. In this context, they emphasize the urgency to address the serious difficulties posed by the high oil prices in their respective economies, and they confirm their deeper commitment to increase actions towards the promotion of energy efficiency particularly on the areas of research, development, cooperation and investment in renewable energy resources.

In this regard, they welcome efforts to promote initiatives of cooperation and energy market integration and to encourage grid-connected renewable electricity and biofuels in Central America.

The Heads of State and Government welcome the Finnish invitation to promote participation in the meeting that will take place in Panama, concerning the “Energy and Environment Partnership with Central America Initiative” in the second half of 2006.

7. The Heads of State and Government recognized the high degree of vulnerability of Central America to natural disasters and agreed to cooperate in strengthening disaster preparedness and prevention through the exchange of experience and the rapid dissemination of emerging good practices, particularly in the area of monitoring and early warning, local capacity-building and response.
8. The Heads of State and Government reiterated the importance of enhanced cooperation between both regions in order to achieve higher levels of social cohesion, including good governance, as well as deeper regional integration in Central America. In this context, they welcomed the Joint EU Statement on "The European Consensus on Development" which puts poverty eradication at the core of EU Development cooperation, in the context of sustainable development, including the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and which applies to all developing countries.

Additionally leaders took note of the advanced state of progress of the 2007-2013 Regional Strategy for Central America that will support the process of political, economic and social integration in the context of the future Association Agreement. Both sides agreed that the findings of the joint assessment process of economic regional integration carried out by the Ad Hoc Joint Working Group in 2005 and 2006 should be taken into account, among others, for the definition of the specific cooperation activities related to regional integration taking into consideration the initiative for Harmonization and Alignment of Cooperation.

9. The leaders welcomed the holding of “The Central American Forum on Harmonization and Alignment” in Vienna on 10th May 2006 and stressed the importance of this forum in terms of integration and sustainable socio – economic development of the region, emphasizing the importance of advancing coordination and harmonization of development efforts, in line with the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness.
10. Both sides reiterated the importance of the involvement of civil society in the regional integration process. In this context they welcomed the future organization of a second EU-Central America Civil Society Forum on regional integration in Honduras, in coordination with the SICA Advisory Committee.
11. The Leaders of both regions agreed on a further meeting at a Ministerial in 2007 and at Summit level on the occasion of the V Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean in Peru in 2008.