
Press release

■ **CENTRAL AMERICA** Brussels, 22 March 2011

An important step towards regional integration: EU and Central America initial Association Agreement

Representatives of the European Union and Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) today initialled a comprehensive Association Agreement.

After more than three years of talks, the negotiations for this Agreement were concluded in May 2010. Work on revising the legal texts has now been completed. The initialling will be followed by the formal process of translation, signature and ratification of this Agreement so that it can enter into force as soon as possible for all parties. The Agreement includes a comprehensive trade pillar.

"I am delighted that the Association Agreement with Central America has been initialled. This agreement is concrete proof of our long-standing commitment to the Central American region. It will enable us to further deepen our dialogue and strengthen our presence in Central America, where the EU is already a major donor, and investor and partner," said High Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton.

EU Commissioner for Trade, Karel De Gucht said: *"I strongly welcome the initialling of the EU-Central America Association Agreement. It is an important step towards the entry into force of this real "region to region" agreement. It is an ambitious and comprehensive agreement, which will boost trade and investment between us, hence growth and jobs, and help Central America progress in its regional integration".*