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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

First Session of the EU-Mexico Joint Council

The first meeting of the Joint Council established by the Economic Partnership, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement between the European Union and Mexico took place on February 27th, 2001.

The Mexican Delegation was headed by the Foreign Minister Dr. Jorge Castañeda and the Minister of Economy, Dr. Luis Ernesto Derbez. The EU Delegation was led by Ms. Anna Lindh, the Swedish Foreign Minister as current President of the EU Council. She was accompanied by Mr Javier Solana Madariaga, Secretary General of the EU Council and High representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Representing the Commission were Commissioners Chris Patten and Pascal Lamy, respectively in charge of External Relations and Trade.

The ministers were pleased to hold the first session of the Joint Council, which allowed the entry into force of the whole of the Global Agreement with its three pillars: political, commercial and co-operation. The ministers agreed that this was a key date in the formation of a strategic relationship based on both parties deep and lasting high political objectives.

During today's meeting, the Joint Council adopted the results of the negotiations in relation to trade in services, capital movements and related payments and intellectual property, which will come into effect on 1st March 2001. Furthermore the meeting determined the entry into force of the Agreement's Title on government procurement. As soon as these rules come into effect, the legal framework, which governs the bilateral commercial relationship, has already been established in its entirety, thus complementing the commercial liberalisation of goods, which came into force on the 1st July 2000.

The parties agreed that the established free trade area would allow them both to benefit from the potential increase of bilateral trade and investment. The ministers signalled that this agreement offered Mexican and European exporters access to a market of more than 470 million consumers. Furthermore, the Agreement will promote the formation of strategic partnerships between Mexican and EU companies, creating the possibility of satisfying the market demands of North America, Latin America, Mexico and Europe using the network of Free Trade Agreement signed by the Parties.

The parties supported the launching of a new round of multilateral negotiations within the WTO.

Within the framework of political dialogue, the ministers referred to current issues both within Mexico and the EU.

The EU expressed its recognition of the profound changes that have come about in the democratic life of Mexico, and of its political initiative with respect to human rights and the promotion of democracy. The EU ministers praised the initiatives of President Vincent Fox's government in favour of the peace dialogue in Chiapas as well as the recent Mexican decision to extradite presumed perpetrators of crimes against humanity, conforming to related treaties and international law.

For its part, Mexico congratulated the EU for what it achieved at the recent Intergovernmental Conference, which culminated in the Nice Treaty, and on its progress in European integration. Mexico also congratulated the EU for its political resolve, which has satisfactorily led to the process of new members joining the Union.

On addressing the multilateral agenda, both parties exchanged points of view about UN reform and recent peacekeeping operations. The European Union took note of Mexico's interest in becoming a member of the UN Security Council for the period 2002 – 2003. On a regional level, the situation in Latin America, including Colombia and the integration process in Central America, were examined.

With regards to co-operation, ministers analysed the legal framework which governed the relations between the parties and promised to implement this chapter of the agreement by identifying priority areas upon which co-operation will focus in the coming years. On this note, the parties agreed upon finalising, in the near future, the talks for signing the Financing Framework Convention and the Memorandum of Understanding.

The ministers highlighted the importance of the economic co-operation programmes so that the players, especially small and medium enterprises, could benefit from the agreed trade liberalisation. Similarly, the ministers analysed schemes for triangular regional co-operation where they paid particular interest to the presentation of the Puebla-Panama plan.

Mexico and the EU agreed upon the suitability of promoting the subscription of sector agreements foreseen in the Agreement.

Finally an agenda was proposed for holding the first session of the Joint Committee before finalising the first year of the entry into force of the Global Agreement, as well as for the next session of the Joint Council, which should take place during the first semester in 2002.
