

First Meeting of the Mexico-European Union Joint Committee

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On 2 October 2001, the first meeting of the Joint Committee established by the Economic Partnership, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement between the European Union and Mexico was held in Brussels.

The Mexican Delegation was led by Ambassador Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, Ambassador of Mexico to the European Communities, and also included Dr. Miguel Hakim, Undersecretary of Economic relations and International co-operation, and Mr. Fernando de Mateo, Coordinator General for Negotiations with Latin America, ALCA, Europe and Services Sector in the Ministry of Economy.

The Delegation of the European Union was headed by the European Commission, Mr. Fernando Valenzuela, Deputy Director General of External Relations and regarding trade issues by Mr. Roderick Abbott, Deputy Director General of Trade. The Presidency of the European Union was represented by Mr. Willy Stevens, Director for the Americas of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Both delegations expressed their most strong rejection to the terrorists attacks perpetrated in the cities of New York and Washington, D.C., on 11 September 2001, that caused incalculable human and material losses, and produced deep consternation in the international Community.

The delegations declared that these acts undermine the foundations of civilised coexistence among the nations and represent a serious threat to international peace and security. For this reason, they condemned categorically terrorism in all its forms and demonstrations whatever its motivations are, and the parties are committed to grant their political and diplomatic co-operation to the legitimate efforts that are undertaken to submit to the action of justice the authors, organisers and sponsors of those acts, as well as those responsible for giving them support or protection.

The parties reviewed activities carried out during the first year of operation of the Global Agreement in the three areas of coverage, political dialogue, trade and co-operation, underlining the significant advances in deepening their relations and acknowledging the efficient operation of the Agreement.

With respect to the political dialogue, the visit to Brussels of the then president elect of Mexico, Vicente Fox made in October 2000 was highlighted. In addition, the meetings of the Mexican Secretary of External Relations with the Troika of the EU on occasion of the first meeting of the Mexico-European Union Joint Council was underscored, as were the visits to Mexico of the President of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine, of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and that of the Vice-President of the European Commission, Loyola de Palacio.

Mexico and the European Union reaffirmed their will to further develop contacts between the parties and thereby contribute to the strengthening of the political dialogue between Mexico and the European Union. In accordance with the provisions of the Global Agreement, both delegations expressed their interest in holding the first Presidential-level meeting between Mexico and the European Union in the first half of 2002.

With regard to the Ministerial-level dialogue between Mexico and the Troika of the European Union, both parties recalled that the latter will be carried out in the framework of the Joint Council as well as on occasion of the United Nations General Assembly when previously agreed.

Both delegations reiterated their conviction that multilateralism is the best manner to deal with the principal issues of the current global agenda. In that context they recommended encouraging meetings between those responsible for multilateral matters in the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their counterparts in the European Union, in order to exchange information and experiences on respective positions in multilateral organisations in subjects such as: climatic change; defence of cultural identity; combating terrorism and money laundering; and the death penalty, among others.

The European Union wished Mexico a successful organisation of the United Nations Conference on Financing

Development, that will be held in March 2002 in the city of Monterrey.

Both delegations highlighted the importance of the next summit between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean countries, which will take place in May 2002 in Madrid.

Mexico and the European Union analysed co-operation between both parties and committed themselves to accelerate the implementation of this chapter of the Association Agreement. In this context, both Delegations expressed satisfaction with the progress made in the negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Multiannual Guidelines of Community Co-operation in Mexico, which is the instrument that sets out the priority areas on which co-operation will concentrate for the coming years. In addition both parties committed themselves to concluding the negotiation of the Financing Framework Agreement.

The priorities agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding are: the fight against poverty, and social development; scientific, technical, educational and cultural co-operation; co-operation in the economic sector, and strengthening the rule of law and institutional support.

Mexico and the European Union agreed on the need to promote the signing of sectorial agreements in the areas of science and technology and education and high-level training in order to complement the existing horizontal programmes in these areas.

The Mexican Delegation presented the main features of the Plan Puebla-Panama, one of the Mexican Government's principal projects, which offers a regional development framework that envisages new public policies for human development, the fight against poverty, investment promotion and productive sector development in the South of Mexico and the Central American countries. On its side, the European Commission expressed its willingness to study the possibilities to support Mexico's actions in the framework of this subregional co-operation Plan.

Mexico and the European Union recognised the importance of maintaining an open dialogue with Mexican and European civil society to exchange information and views on the best way to take advantage of the opportunities that the Association Agreement offers. In this respect, they decided to organise a Forum or Conference in 2002 that will include the participation of all interested parties, including among others, the academic sector, entrepreneurs, trade unions, political parties and non-governmental organisations.

In trade related matters, the parties reviewed the state of the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the European Union, which entered into force on July first, 2000. They noted with satisfaction that during the first year of existence of the free trade area, bilateral trade grew 25%. Mexican exports to the EU increased by 39%, while European sales to the Mexican market expanded by 20%. The trade agreement is also stimulating bilateral direct investment. Currently, 5,066 companies with European capital are established in Mexico, which represent 23% of companies with foreign investment in the country.

It was therefore concluded that the first year's results show that the agreement is allowing both parties to fully benefit from the potential that the bilateral relationship offers in the trade and investment field. In this respect, it should be recalled that this trade instrument offers Mexican and EU exporters access to a market of more than 470 million consumers.

At the same time, the agreement establishes the framework for further integration between Mexican and European firms. It opens the possibility to satisfy, through both parties' free trade agreements networks, the demand in markets such as North and Latin America, Mexico and Europe.

The parties also noted that the technical bodies established by the Agreement have begun their activity, opening a fruitful dialogue on issues which are crucial to ensure that trade flows are unhindered, such as customs and rules of origin, standards and technical regulation and sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

The Joint Committee was also the occasion for the parties to have an exchange of views and explore solutions on a number of specific trade issues. Information was also exchanged on the state of the multilateral discussions in view of the Doha Ministerial and on the regional negotiations in which both

parties are currently engaged.

Finally, it was proposed that the second session of the Joint Council be held during the first six-month period of 2002.