

**EUROPEAN UNION AND MEXICO
- The Joint Council -**

Athens, 27 March 2003

UE-MX 3853/03 (Presse 95)

III MEETING OF THE EU-MEXICO JOINT COUNCIL

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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1. The third session of the Joint Council established by the Economic Partnership, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement between the European Union and Mexico was held in Athens, on March 27th 2003. The Minister for Foreign Affairs Luis Ernesto Derbez led the Mexican delegation. Mr Anastasios Giannitis, the Greek Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, led the EU delegation in his capacity as President of the Council of the EU. Commissioner Pascal Lamy represented the Commission.
2. Delegations reiterated their close historical, cultural and economic relations.
3. The parties proceeded to the evaluation of the results of the Agreement thirty months after its entry into force. Furthermore, they discussed the short and medium-term perspectives of bilateral relations, in view of the forthcoming enlargement of the EU to ten new member states.
4. In the framework of political dialogue, Ministers welcomed the progress achieved so far and exchanged views on fundamental issues of the global agenda.
5. The Mexican delegation thanked the EU for its support to the initiatives of the Mexican government aimed at consolidating democracy and strengthening public institutions.
6. Delegations expressed their common commitment to the United Nation's System and the Rule of International Law; the promotion of Human Rights; the abolition of death penalty; sustainable development and the protection of the environment, and the fight against internationally organised crime.
7. They recalled that the scourge of terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security and reiterated their commitment to combat all forms of terrorism in full respect of international law, human rights and international humanitarian law.

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8. Delegations firmly expressed their attachment to the universal character of human rights and stressed that these constitute a shared responsibility of the international community. They pledged to undertake the steps required enhancing their world-wide validity.
9. Both parties underlined the importance of establishing regular contacts between EU and Mexican senior officials, in order to intensify their collaboration and to deepen the bi-regional political dialogue.
10. Delegations recalled the importance of the recent intervention by the Mexican President in the European Parliament.
11. They underlined the importance of the Third EU-LAC Summit to be held in Mexico City, in the first semester of 2004.
12. 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 that, in accordance with the import figures from both parties, during the first two years since the agreement came into effect, bilateral trade grew by 28.3%. However, as a result of the difficult global economic situation, the dynamism of trade has been reduced and bilateral trade decreased last year by 1.7%. Parties expressed their wish that once the economic situation will recover and the market access possibilities offered by the FTA are fully exploited, bilateral trade could come back to the significant rise previously experienced.
13. The FTA has also promoted investment flows and there are currently more than 5.000 businesses in Mexico with capital originating from the European Union. It was also acknowledged with optimism, that Mexican businesses are also investing in the European Union.
14. The meeting of the Joint Council was, at the same time, an occasion to exchange opinions on the multilateral trade discussions, in regard to the Fifth WTO Ministerial Meeting, which will occur in the Mexican city of Cancun, in September 2003. The European Union also informed their Mexican counterparts of the new opportunities for bilateral trade and investments derived from an enlarged European market following the accession of the 10 new member states.
15. The parties reviewed the general state of bilateral trade issues and appreciated the work done over the last year by the technical bodies foreseen in the Agreement, with the objective of ensuring the development of the trade flows and the deepening of administrative co-operation. In this sense, they reiterated the importance of fulfilling the trade commitments reached at the Joint Committee of October 2002.
16. Moreover, both parties re-emphasised their intention to improve the conditions for bilateral trade and promote relations between European and Mexican business, specially the small and medium enterprises. In order to achieve this, they will also have the support of economic co-operation projects currently being identified.

17. With regard to co-operation issues, both delegations welcomed the conclusion and implementation of the legal bilateral framework, namely the Financing Framework Convention and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Multi-annual Guidelines of Co-operation.
 18. They examined the progress on the implementation of the co-operation projects in four main priority areas: social development and reduction of inequalities; scientific and technical co-operation; economic growth; and consolidation of the Rule of Law and institutional support. They were pleased with the results of the technical preparatory missions of these programmes.
 19. The Mexican delegation presented to the European Commission a co-operation project on human rights aiming at incorporating international norms and standards in Mexican policies, in the context of the dialogue held by an inter-ministerial commission with the civil society.
 20. The parties expressed their satisfaction with the progress in the negotiation of an agreement on science and technology, which will enable Mexican researchers to participate in all areas of the VI Framework Program of Investigation and Technological Development of the European Union. They also welcomed the organisation by the European Commission and CONACYT of a seminar to promote this Programme within the Mexican scientific community, to be held in Mexico City in the first week of April.
 21. On regional co-operation, delegations reviewed the characteristics and content of the various horizontal programmes of the European Commission: Alban, Alfa, Al-Invest, Alis, Allure, Atlas, Human Rights, NGOs and Urbal. They stressed their importance for the present and future co-operation and underlined the high degree of Mexican participation in these programmes.
 22. Concerning the “Plan Puebla Panama”, PPP’s member countries confirmed their intention to organise an information conference in Brussels during the present year.
 23. Both parties highlighted the importance and the success of the Civil Society Dialogue Forum, which took place in Brussels, in November 2002. They underlined that this forum contributed to strengthening this dialogue process and emphasised the importance of a follow-up, including the organisation of another meeting in Mexico.
 24. Finally, they agreed to hold the third meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Committee in Brussels in the second half of this year and the next meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Council in Mexico City in the first semester of 2004, in the margins of the Third EU-LAC Summit.
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