

# **EU-India Summit: An opportunity to strengthen relations**

New Delhi, 25 November 2003

On 29 November 2002, the 4th EU-India Summit will take place in New Delhi to review the state of the bilateral relationship and examine means to further strengthen ties. Attending the summit will be Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, accompanied by his Minister for External Affairs Yashwant Sinha and their EU counterparts, the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in his capacity as President of the European Council, assisted by High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana, President of the European Commission Romano Prodi and Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten, will participate in the Summit Meeting. Commissioner Patten will also be visiting India from the 27th November with a programme in Chennai (Madras) and New Delhi, including meetings with a number of senior members of the government.

The 4th EU-India Summit will examine political and economic areas for greater co-operation between the EU and India, and will offer an opportunity for two major international players with a shared commitment to democracy and multilateralism, to exchange views on global concerns. In addition, the Summit is expected to yield the following results: conclusion of a Customs Co-operation Agreement, a discussion of India's possible participation in the Galileo Project, and the launch of negotiations on a Maritime Agreement.

## **Customs Co-operation Agreement**

The EU and India are committed to further deepening co-operation between their customs administrations. The agreement will help develop more efficient and transparent customs procedures. It will also provide for the exchange of information and mutual assistance in fighting customs fraud and irregularities.

## **Galileo**

Galileo is the first satellite positioning and navigation system specifically designed for civil purposes. It was jointly developed by the EU and European Space Agency (ESA) and will be operational in 2008. Third countries can participate in the programme and India has expressed strong interest.

## **Maritime Agreement**

The objective of the proposed Maritime Agreement would be to improve the conditions for maritime transport operations between India and the EU to benefit the economy and trade by reducing shipping times and costs, enhancing efficiency in the transport sector and fostering stability for economic operators. It would consolidate existing commercial practices in a legally binding text.

The EU-India Summit will be preceded by the **4th EU-India Business Summit** on 28th/29th November in Delhi. President Prodi will address the final session on 29th November and Commissioner Patten will participate in the opening session on 28th November.

In the run-up to the Summit, the “**EU Cultural Weeks 2003**” will stage different cultural events in New Delhi and in five other Indian cities.

During his visit, President Prodi will address the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

During a three-day trip to India Commissioner Patten will visit Chennai where he is expected to meet Mr. P. S. Ramamohan Rao, Governor of Tamil Nadu, and Ms Jayalalithaa, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,. The Commissioner will give a public lecture at Madras University in Chennai. During his stay in New Delhi, he hopes to meet Senior Members of the Government, including Indian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, Minister for External Affairs, Mr Yashwant Sinha, Finance Minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, and National Security Adviser, Mr Brajesh Mishra.

### **BACKGROUND**

The EU is both India's main trading partner and biggest foreign inward investor. The EU accounted for 23.2 % of India's exports and 21.2% of total imports in 2002. Trade between India and the EU has grown constantly over the past decade, nearly trebling to today's volume of €27 billion.

The EU and its Member States collectively make the biggest bilateral contribution to India's development programmes. Since 1976, the European Commission has committed €2 billion to India in development assistance, and will be devoting some €225 million to development and economic co-operation with India over the next 5 years. This is in addition to substantial humanitarian assistance offered, particularly in response to drought and floods.

EU-India relations are structured through a Co-operation Agreement (signed December 1993) and a political dialogue conducted at both ministerial and official level.

Close contacts are maintained also through regular Business Summits, bringing together Indian and European business leaders, the EU-India round table, which brings together leading members of Indian and EU civil society, and co-operation on joint research projects by Indian and European Scientists.