

10 years of the Global Agreement between the European Union and Mexico

On 16 March, the Delegation of the European Union to Mexico celebrated, together with the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Spain in Mexico, the Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Mexico with a seminar called "*El Acuerdo Global entre México y la Unión Europea: 10 años trabajando juntos*" (The Global Agreement between Mexico and the European Union: 10 years working together). The Agreement has had a significant impact for the commercial and political relations between the EU and Mexico. However, the participants emphasized that further positive results can still be achieved.

The Opening Ceremony

The seminar was opened by the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador **Lourdes Aranda**, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Mexico **Marie-Anne Coninx**, and the Ambassador of Spain in Mexico **Manuel Alabart**. Ms. Aranda pointed out that the Agreement has increased the commercial and investment flows between the EU and Mexico. Ms. Coninx confirmed that Mexico is a natural ally for the EU, and that the new Strategic Association between the EU and Mexico will strengthen the cooperation to confront today's challenges. The participants emphasized the fact that Mexico was the first Latin American country that signed a Global Agreement with the EU. Ambassador Alabart predicted that the EU will assume a stronger role in the international politics, with the help of the Lisbon Treaty that strengthens the EU's unanimous voice.

The First Roundtable

The First roundtable, "*10 years of constructive political dialogue*", was moderated by Undersecretary Lourdes Aranda. Mr. **Stefano Sannino**, the European Commission's Deputy Director-General for Latin America, confirmed that, during the past 10 years, the EU and Mexico have achieved very important results within the framework of the Global Agreement. Mr. Sannino mentioned that for the EU it is vital to find partners who share its values and who walk along the same path, and thanked Mexico for its ambitious and concrete aims in the struggle against the climate change. He also assured that the EU wants to be a reliable partner for Mexico in its fight against the organized crime.

According to Dr. **Lorena Ruano Gómez**, Professor and researcher at the Economic Investigation and Education Centre (CIDE), the relationship between the EU and Mexico has become broader and more complex, although their priorities are different. For Mexico the priority is the security, when Europe emphasizes the economic issues. Moreover, Mexico has its eyes on the United States when Europe looks towards its neighbouring countries.

Mr. Fernando Solana, President of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI), criticized that Mexico does not yet export enough to Europe. "We have not been able to take the full advantage of the Agreement's potential", he stated.

Ms. Aranda agreed that climate change is a good example of those themes, in which Mexico and the EU share a common position. She emphasized that also the fight against organized crime requires international cooperation.

The Second Roundtable

The second roundtable, "*Achievements and challenges of the economic and commercial relations*" was moderated by Undersecretary of External Trade **Beatriz Léycegui**. Ms. Léycegui underlined that Mexico was the first country in Latin America to sign a Free Trade Agreement with the EU. She said Mexico and the EU share a common view on the global financial crisis and on the solutions it requires, like increasing the international trade. Therefore, she called for the strengthening of the relations between the EU and Mexico, as well as the deeper integration of both parties in their own regions.

Dr. **Jaime Zabudovsky**, one of the main negotiators of the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Mexico and former Mexican Ambassador to the EU, stressed the success of the Agreement in light of statistical indicators. He stated that during the past decade, Europe has been Mexico's most dynamic partner, enabling structural changes in the Mexican exportation. Mr. Zabudovsky hoped to see soon expansions in the Agreement in areas like services and agriculture, not depending on the schedule of WTO's Doha Round. As a breath of fresh air for the bilateral relations, he proposed to insert the Global Agreement into the frame of a new ambitious Joint Agreement with participation of all those Latin American countries that have signed a Free Trade Agreement with the EU (i.e. Mexico, Central America, Chile, Colombia and Peru).

Mr. **Pierre Defraigne**, former Deputy Director-General for Trade in the European Commission, reminded that the Agreement includes various, at that time innovative instruments. It was the first Free Trade Agreement to cover areas like the trade of services, investments, public purchasing etc. The Agreement was also the first one the EU negotiated with a country not being its neighbour. The success of the Free Trade Agreement is even more notable taking into account that during the years the context of the global economy has changed significantly. Mr. Defraigne admitted that the Agreement could suffer from a premature obsolescence, if commercial and domestic reforms are not implemented. More specifically, he focussed on high public spending and SMEs' strengthening as key elements for sustainable development of the Mexican economy.

Valentín Diez Morodo, President of the Mexican Business Council for External Trade (COMCE), expressed his great satisfaction with the Agreement that let the Mexican enterprises to diversify the exportation markets and increased the flow of foreign investments. However, he emphasized the insufficient use of the existing opportunities by SMEs. According to him, SMEs should play a more remarkable role in the development of competitiveness of the Mexican economy.

Ambassador **Manuel Armendáriz**, the chief negotiator of the Association Agreement in 1997, provided a detailed retrospective on the phases that led to the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Mexico, including the negotiation process of the Association Agreement.

The Third Roundtable

The last roundtable, "*Balance of and perspectives on the cooperation between Mexico and the European Union*", was moderated by Mr. **Rogelio Granguillhome**, Head of the Unit of Economic Relations and International Cooperation of Mexico's Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador **Mendel Goldstein**, one of the EU negotiators of the Global Agreement and

Head of the European Commission's Delegation in Mexico from 2005 to 2009, stressed that even though Mexico is a big and important economy, it is important to keep working with cooperation projects in the country. He emphasized the importance of the fact that Mexico contributes up to 50 percent of the budget to all the projects implemented with the EU. These projects deal with issues such as innovation and technology, which is, according to Ambassador Goldstein, "the best way to use these limited funds". Ambassador predicted that the global science projects are the future of the cooperation between the EU and Mexico.

Dr. **Leopoldo Vilchis**, Technical Secretary of the Fund for International Cooperation in Science and Technology between the EU and Mexico, revealed that in the call for projects in 2008, 34 projects were accepted with the total value of €15.5 million. These projects are implemented by 204 institutions in Mexico and Europe. In the recent call for nanotechnology projects, four projects were accepted for a total budget of €11 million.

Mario Chacón, Director-General of International Relations in the Secretariat of Public Education and one of the negotiators of the Global Agreement, remarked that the Erasmus Mundus Programme has benefited hundreds of Mexican students, and that Mexico is now in a process of adapting its institutions to take the best advantage of the possibilities offered by the EU cooperation in the area of education. One important aim is to develop a system of comparable degrees.

The Governor of Chiapas State, Mr. **Juan Sabines Guerrero**, presented the cooperation his state has established with the EU. Chiapas is the first Mexican state with a cooperation agreement with the EU. Within the framework of the agreement, the EU has financed more than 100 projects in Chiapas. As an example, the Governor mentioned the investment of more than 4 million pesos in the area of Selva Kaltik to set up an equipment for purification and bottling of water, benefiting to more than one thousand local producers.

Closing Ceremony

Ambassador **Patricia Espinosa**, Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. **Miguel Ángel Moratinos**, Spain's Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Minister, participated in the closing ceremony of the event. Ambassador Espinosa confirmed that the Global Agreement has become the base of the relations between Mexico and the EU. Minister Moratinos revealed that the new EU, strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty, wants to take a more active and more responsible role in the international issues, Mexico being one of those countries to deepen the relations with.