

VII PARAGUAY-EUROPEAN COMMUNITY JOINT COMMITTEE
Asunción, 26 November 2008

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

1. In accordance with the 1992 Framework Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Paraguay, the seventh meeting of the Paraguay-European Community Joint Committee was held in Asunción on 26 November 2008. As the host, Mr Jorge Lara Castro, Paraguay's Vice-Minister for External Relations, chaired the meeting. The European Commission delegation was headed by Mr Stefano Saninno, Director for Latin America of the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations. Representatives of various Paraguayan public bodies also took part, as did representatives of the EU Member States, including resident and non-resident ambassadors.
2. The Joint Committee lent renewed impetus to relations between the two sides, and there were fruitful exchanges of information on key questions of bilateral, regional and international interest. As previously agreed, talks centred on the general situation with regard to Paraguay and the European Community, economic and trade relations, cooperation and new areas of mutual interest.
3. The Paraguayan delegation drew attention to the efforts being made to consolidate democracy and stability in Paraguay and to the need to implement far-reaching changes to resolve the problems of poverty and the exclusion and marginalisation of social groups, in accordance with the guiding principles of honesty and austerity. It also stressed the need to recast the international agenda by defining priorities designed to promote Paraguay's reintegration into the international community and its economic, social and political development on the basis of economic regeneration, job creation, sustainable development and the fight against poverty, corruption and insecurity, as well as by defending and promoting the country's interests through diversified international relations and the establishment of strategic alliances with countries and groups of countries with which it shares common traditions, history and interests, including the European Union as a major player.
4. In this context, the Paraguayan delegation recalled that Paraguayan culture reflects a remarkable symbiosis between the country's pre-Hispanic roots and European civilisation, and that the adoption of certain measures relating to migration by European authorities therefore gives cause for concern. It also argued that there is a need to address migration issues at both regional and bilateral level, so as to adopt policies designed to eliminate the factors fuelling emigration, address the links between migration, poverty and development and encourage the voluntary and orderly return of migrants, creating a framework for cooperation and the promotion of a joint approach to migration and mobility issues. In view of the above, the Paraguayan delegation appreciated the European Union's commitment, in accordance with the Lima Declaration, to fostering mutual understanding of existing challenges and immigration policy and consolidating cooperation in such a way as to establish a concerted framework for cooperation.

5. The European delegation listened with interest to the political will expressed by the Government of Paraguay as regards the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion and stability. It also noted the progress made by democracy in Paraguay in tackling corruption and impunity.

6. The European delegation also referred to its strategic vision of relations with Latin America and outlined the internal institutional processes under way and its vision of relations with Latin America.

7. The Paraguayan delegation hoped that the European Commission's existing representation in Paraguay could be upgraded to a full delegation in the context of the institutional reform initiated by the European Union. This would be a significant advance which would help enhance the efficient and effective implementation of the projects it dealt with.

8. The two delegations discussed topics of mutual interest in the field of economic and trade relations. In this context, particular emphasis was placed on the return of Paraguayan beef to the European market, as it now met EU health standards. Relevant topics such as legislation on organic products and health standards were also discussed. Other topics addressed concerned the economic and trade agenda for bilateral relations.

The delegations also discussed protection for intellectual property rights and the efforts made by the Paraguayan authorities in this area. Discussions focused on pharmaceutical patents and Paraguay's efforts to combat piracy and forgery. Other topics addressed by the delegations related to procedures for importing goods into Paraguay, including consular taxes and the Representation Law. Finally, trade in services was discussed.

9. On the multilateral front, the EU and Paraguay expressed their full support for the Doha Round and agreed to continue cooperating to achieve an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive agreement and also an agreement on modalities before the end of this year.

The delegations discussed the current status of the MERCOSUR-EU bi-regional negotiations, reiterating their commitment to press ahead with them when conditions so permitted, with a view to reaching an agreement that is both ambitious and balanced.

10. The Paraguayan delegation expressed its interest in becoming a beneficiary of the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance under the European generalised system of preferences from January 2009 and stated its conviction that it meets all the requirements. The European delegation said that the process of examining the applications was under way and the results would be made known in December.

11. The delegations fully agreed that Paraguay, as a *"developing country that has no sea coast"*, needed to simplify trade operations, transit and control systems in order to foster trade facilitation measures so that countries with a small and vulnerable economy could really gain from multilateral trade, thereby enabling products from countries like Paraguay to be more competitive.

12. In the cooperation field, the Paraguayan delegation outlined the Government's priorities for the 2007-2013 period and gave a general rundown of the bilateral projects under way, namely: the project to boost the competitiveness of Paraguay's export sector; the project to modernise the public administration and the project to combat poverty, and also the EUROSOLAR regional programme.

13. The delegations also discussed the programmes already drawn up for 2007-2010 under the priority sectors for Paraguay-EC cooperation established in the 2007-2013 multiannual programming exercise - support to the education sector and support for Paraguay's economic integration.

14. As regards support for Paraguay's economic integration, the importance of this sector in helping to increase the country's competitiveness in the integration processes in which it is involved was underlined, as was the inclusion of new initiatives in the sector.

15. Other areas touched on included the information society and specifically the adoption of the terrestrial digital TV standard, with the European delegation outlining the advantages of the DVB standard (proposed by the EU), especially as regards e-inclusion. The European delegation has expressed its willingness to cooperate with Paraguay in this field.

16. Both delegations also highlighted the relevance of the forthcoming visit to Brussels by the President of Paraguay, Mr Fernando Lugo Méndez, in the first half of 2009, in response to an invitation by the President of the European Commission, Mr José Manuel Durão Barroso.

17. It was agreed to hold a training workshop on the rules and methods of European Community cooperation with a view to familiarising national and regional stakeholders with the systems used for executing and implementing projects.

18. Lastly, the delegations undertook to sign the minutes of the Seventh Paraguay-European Community Joint Committee within three months and to hold the Eighth Paraguay-European Community Joint Committee in Brussels, at a date to be finalised through diplomatic channels.
