

Athens, 27 March 2003

7436/03 (Presse 84)

**MINISTERIAL MEETING BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION,  
MERCOSUR, BOLIVIA AND CHILE**

**Athens, 27 March 2003**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. A Ministerial Meeting on political dialogue between the European Union, Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile, under the chairmanship of the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, George A. Papandreou, in his capacity as President-in-Office of the European Union, took place in Athens, on 27 March 2003. The Mercosur delegation was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, José Antonio Moreno Ruffinelli, in his capacity of representative of Mercosur Pro Tempore presidency. The Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maria Soledad Alvear, and the Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carlos Saavedra Bruno, represented their countries. Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council and High Representative for the CFSP of the EU, and the European Commission, represented by Pascal Lamy, Commissioner for Trade, also participated in this meeting.
2. Ministers underlined the fact that political dialogue between the two regions was promoted and strengthened through their adherence to the principles of representative democracy, political pluralism and the respect of Human Rights. They reaffirmed that the fight against poverty, especially the elimination of extreme poverty, constituted a common and shared goal that should be pursued by their governments and societies. In this regard, Ministers supported all efforts that aim at eradicating hunger in the world.

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen democratic institutions and nurture the process of modernisation in their societies taking into account the importance of sustainable development, poverty eradication, cultural diversity, justice and social equity.

Internet: <http://ue.eu.int>  
E-mail: [press.office@consilium.eu.int](mailto:press.office@consilium.eu.int)

7436/03 (Presse 84)

3. They reaffirmed their intention to further strengthen and deepen their political dialogue through closer consultation on bi-regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest of the international agenda, as agreed by the EU-Mercosur Heads of State and Government at their latest Summit, held in Madrid, on 17 May 2002.

Ministers decided to convene an ad-hoc Senior Officials meeting before the next UN General Assembly, in addition to the regular ministerial meetings that take place in New York. They instructed their representatives in the United Nations to schedule working sessions, in order to exchange views and explore the possibility of concerted actions on issues of mutual interest.

4. Ministers analysed the conflict in Iraq as well as other critical situations in the world like the Middle East. They underlined current menaces to world peace and security, in particular all kinds of terrorist threats, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and drugs trafficking. In this regard, they reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations for the peaceful solution of conflicts.
5. Ministers expressed concern about the current international economic situation and reaffirmed that a steady return to economic growth was essential to reduce unemployment and promote social equity. In this regard, they stressed the importance of a strong, sustainable world economic recovery and the role of free and equitable trade, and effective market access, to the creation of a more competitive and dynamic economic and social environment in their countries.

Ministers also recalled the consensus achieved at the Monterrey Conference of Financing for Development on the objective of improving access to markets in industrialised countries, as an essential factor for the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment and the repayment of foreign debts. They also stressed that an increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other resources would be required if developing countries were to achieve internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

6. Ministers exchanged information on the latest developments in their respective integration processes. They reaffirmed their strong belief that open regional integration played an important role in promoting economic growth, trade liberalisation, economic and social development, as well as in facing the primary challenge of reducing poverty and inequality and the construction of a more inclusive and just society, all of which were essential to the consolidation of democracy.

EU Ministers provided detailed information on the conclusions of the Copenhagen Summit and, in particular, on those aspects concerning the enlargement process. They affirmed that the Union was now looking forward to welcoming 10 acceding European States as new members. They stressed this achievement was testament to the common determination of the peoples of Europe to come together in a Union that had become the driving force for peace, democracy, stability and prosperity in the European continent. As fully-fledged members of a Union based on solidarity, these States will play a full role in shaping the further development of the European integration.

Mercosur Ministers informed their EU counterparts about the latest steps to strengthen the Mercosur integration process. They referred to their decisions aiming, inter-alia, at further institutionalisation, the elimination of asymmetries, improvement of macro-economic co-ordination as well as market integration and the development of the external negotiations. Ministers reaffirmed the strong commitment of their countries to Mercosur as the cornerstone for the economic and social development of their societies as well as a fundamental tool to strengthen democracy and political stability in the region.

7. The EU has a long-term commitment to Mercosur and its integration process. Taking into account that Mercosur is implementing and improving macro-economic co-ordination, the EU stands ready to offer on a regional basis technical co-operation to Mercosur for the design and implementation of monetary, exchange rate and financial policies.
8. Ministers welcomed the progress achieved so far on the EU-Mercosur negotiations. They underlined the importance they attach to the full implementation of the work program, agreed at the meeting between trade negotiators at Ministerial level in Rio de Janeiro on 23 July 2002, and reiterated their common objective of making rapid progress and concluding the negotiations of the Bi-regional Association Agreement, as soon as possible.

Ministers also agreed on the importance of holding the third meeting of the EU-Mercosur Co-operation Council to review the main aspects of their bilateral relations.

9. Ministers reiterated the importance they attach to strengthening the multilateral trading system enshrined in the WTO. In this regard, they called for a successful mid-term Ministerial in Cancun and a timely conclusion of negotiations on all items included in the Doha Development Agenda.