


Procedure file

Basic information		
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1995/2317(COS)	Procedure completed
San Jose Dialog between the European Union and Central America		
Subject 6.40.10 Relations with Latin America, Central America, Caribbean islands		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur
	AFET Foreign Affairs, Security and Defense Policy		Appointed 24/04/1996
			GUE/NGL CARNERO GONZÁLEZ Carlos
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion
	RELA External Economic Relations		Appointed 21/02/1996
			PPE VALDIVIELSO DE CUÉ Jaime
	DEVE Development and Cooperation		25/04/1996
			PSE DURY Raymonde M.E.A.
Council of the European Union	Council configuration		Meeting
	General Affairs		1989
	General Affairs		1891
		Date	
			24/02/1997
			04/12/1995

Key events			
28/11/1995	Additional information		Summary
29/11/1995	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1995)0600	Summary
27/03/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
18/12/1996	Vote in committee		Summary
18/12/1996	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0418/1996	
15/01/1997	Debate in Parliament		
16/01/1997	Decision by Parliament	T4-0014/1997	Summary
16/01/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
03/02/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

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Committee dossier	AFET/4/07383

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(1995)0600	29/11/1995	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0418/1996 OJ C 033 03.02.1997, p. 0023	18/12/1996	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0014/1997 OJ C 033 03.02.1997, p. 0059-0092	16/01/1997	EP	Summary

San Jose Dialog between the European Union and Central America

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND CENTRAL AMERICA The San Jose dialogue The San Jose dialogue between the Community and its Member States and the six countries of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) was launched at a ministerial conference in September 1984 held in the Costa Rican capital. It was put on a formal footing at the following conference, in November 1985 in Luxembourg, in the shape of a declaration setting out the dialogue's objectives and the principle of annual high-level meetings. Since then there have been 11 ministerial meetings, the last of which (San Jose XI) was held in Panama in February. This political and economic dialogue is an example of a unique political and cooperation commitment vis-a-vis a developing region of the world with which the Community had fairly loose geographical, historical and economic ties, but whose instability was, at the time, a potential source of increased East-West tensions with implications for the Community. For that reason, the key objective of the dialogue spelled out in the Luxembourg declaration was to find - with the support and encouragement of the Contadora Group - a peaceful, regional, comprehensive and negotiated solution in order to put an end to violence and instability in the region and to foster social justice and economic development and respect for human rights and democratic freedoms. This objective was largely achieved over the first decade: the Community has made a major contribution to the Central American peace process under the Esquipulas agreements at regional level and in domestic conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, as well as providing appreciable support for the consolidation of democracy. Cooperation agreement In addition to the strides made on a political level, the first cooperation agreement, also signed by the partners concerned in Luxembourg in 1985, entered into force on 1 March 1987 and has provided a framework for boosting Community assistance for the Central America. The Community recognized from the outset the critical link between the drive for stability in the area and socio-economic development. The increasing volume of Community aid throughout this period - with total commitments far exceeding ECU 1 billion (annual commitments in 1994 were ECU 170 million compared with some ECU 40 million before the dialogue) has made the European Community the main donor in Central America, which is now one of the principal per capita recipients of Community aid in the world. In line with the dialogue's objectives, Community aid over the first ten years has by and large been allocated to operations relating to the peace process (supporting rehabilitation programmes in Nicaragua and El Salvador and reintegration of uprooted populations) or to the most urgent needs of underdeveloped sectors such as large-scale food aid and projects to help peasant farmers. In February 1993, a more ambitious cooperation agreement including a human rights clause, a future developments clause and a wider range of cooperation sectors was signed in San Salvador. It is yet to enter into force, however, pending ratification by all the Central American countries. Panama and Costa Rica are the two main partners in the region, with a trade volume in 1994 of ECU 1 041 and ECU 1 162 million respectively. Around 85 % of EU imports from Central America are agricultural food products. (Source: RAPID)

San Jose Dialog between the European Union and Central America

OBJECTIVE: with a view to the meeting in March 1996 to renew the San José process, this communication assesses the areas and sectors where relations between the EU and Central America should be strengthened and adapted. SUBSTANCE: given the significant geo-political and strategic changes that have taken place in the world, the Community has constantly adapted its relations with third countries and the same is true for the countries of Central America. Relations were established with these countries in 1984 (San José process) to support in particular the emergence of new social and political forces, the spread of new technologies and the promotion of trade. This process also had a significant impact in terms of stabilising the political situation. The Commission is now proposing to reaffirm this commitment by renewing the San José process and particularly the following objectives: A) to reshape the basic aims of dialogue: - consolidating the rule of law, - stabilising society, including the reduction of inequalities and the protection of the environment, - helping the region to integrate into the world economy; B) to revise the substance of the cooperation process: - providing support for the consolidation and modernisation of the rule of law through measures promoting human rights and stronger democratic institutions and through measures to improve the operation of the state, - providing

support for social policies through measures strengthening citizens' economic and social rights (land ownership and popular savings) with a view to improving systems in the fields of education, training and health (fight against drugs), - improving the ability of Central America to integrate into the international economy through measures to enhance regional integration, diversify exports and facilitate the role of private operators (industrial cooperation, AL-INVEST, ECIP); C) to introduce new methods of cooperation concerning: - coordination: specialisation by financial backers (particularly NGOs) and greater coordination, - multiannual programming broken down according to the Community resources available, - reorientation of projects: support for sectoral policies implemented by the beneficiaries themselves, which requires greater dialogue and commitments on the part of the beneficiaries, assurances on the part of the EU and better information on projects; D) to adapt to the mechanisms of the San José process: - plenary ministerial meetings (every two years) which are better prepared and more specific, - ad hoc ministerial meetings (Troika convened to deal with significant problems) between the two-yearly meetings, - joint committee with an enhanced role in the areas of cooperation and trade relations (greater participation of civil society in the work of the Commission). In conclusion, the Commission calls for a solemn declaration to be signed at the Twelfth San José Ministerial Conference (March 1996, Italy) incorporating the new elements of the San José process as described above. ?

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This is the main objective of the report by Mr Carnero GONZALEZ (GUE, E) adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (chairman: Mr Gerardo FERNANDEZ-ALBOR (PPE, E)). In fact, this dialogue, which was launched in 1984, was "one the main achievements of the European Union and Central America". The aim now is to implement the Florence Declaration of 21st March 1996 which set new objectives for cooperation. Although the European Union had been instrumental in achieving progress (establishment of peace in the region, continuing regional integration, support for democratic processes and human rights), new threats needed to be removed, especially those arising as the result of poverty, which had reached "intolerable proportions". Consequently, the European Union needs to endeavour to widen the scope of cooperation, mainly by strengthening regional cooperation, if it is to respond to the new aspirations of these countries for "balanced, consistent relations between the European Union and Central America which exclude any kind of double standard". Other proposals were also made: a social dimension needed to be integrated into cooperation, greater attention needed to be given to the most vulnerable groups of society and efforts needed to be made to integrate the civil society into cooperation efforts. Local groups needed to be more involved in the management of programmes and the budget needed to be better distributed between the various geographical zones. Budgetary resources needed to be increased and the cooperation framework agreement needed to be accompanied by a financial protocol, both for this agreement and for future agreements of the same type. The committee considered that these efforts should be accompanied by another, namely "the remission, at least in part, of the external debt". Another avenue worth exploring was the extension to Central America of the new Generalized System of Preferences for industrial products of which the Andean Pact countries are already beneficiaries. Of course, the European Union needed to continue to support democratization, the protection of human rights and consolidation of the rule of law by introducing a global action programme under the CFSP for Central America, one of the objectives of which would be to oppose impunity by creating an international criminal court. This "odious phenomenon", which constituted "a serious violation of the human rights cause" needed to be combated in a determined manner. Hence the request that the European Commission draw up "an international convention against impunity". ?

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In adopting the report by Mr Carlos CARNERO GONZALEZ (E, GUE/NGL) Parliament pointed out the extent to which action against poverty and in support of the re-establishment of justice are and remain key problems for Central America. While noting the importance of the Florence Declaration of March 1996 which set new objectives for cooperation between the Union and Central America, it advocated a rapid implementation of this new cooperation and expressed its satisfaction at the progress achieved since the San José dialogue process was institutionalised in 1985. It was, however, in favour of extending the political dialogue to other topics such as social issues, the rules for applying the democracy clause, human rights, decentralization, trade policy and macro-economic policies. It called for a comprehensive, highly specific, well-defined and adequately funded CFSP action programme for Central America to be drawn up. The Union must extend its cooperation, in particular by strengthening regional cooperation, in order to satisfy the new aspirations of these countries for balanced, consistent relations between the European Union and Central America which exclude any kind of double standard. In particular it called for: - the creation of an institutional framework to strengthen regional cooperation, - support for regional policy coordination in the areas of agriculture, industry, trade, energy, services and customs, - support for regional compensatory funds to rectify social imbalances, - measures to promote cross-border cooperation. It attached priority to measures designed to consolidate the rule of law through the creation of an independent judiciary and the modernization of the state, decentralization and municipal development, the promotion of concerted action between governments and the general public, equal treatment of men and women and fiscal reform and education and health care. It reaffirmed its support for action against impunity and urged all bodies in Central America to support the efforts of the United Nations 'Truth Commission' which resolutely opposes any impunity for serious human rights abuses. Similarly, it called on the Commission to devote particular attention to impunity and suggested the drawing up of a proposal for an international convention against impunity. Budgetary resources should be increased and the cooperation framework agreement should be accompanied by a financial protocol, both for the agreement and for future agreements of the same type. This action should be accompanied by another, namely the remission, at least in part, of the external debt. Other areas to be considered were the extension to Central America of the new Generalized System of Preferences for industrial products, of which the Andean Pact countries are already beneficiaries. Lastly it called for a consultative forum with the civil society to be set up, for example within the framework of the Civilian Initiative for Central American Integration (ICIC). ?