EU strategy for the relations with Latin America

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by José Ignacio SALAFRANCA SANCHEZ-NEYRA (EPP, ES) on the EU strategy for relations with Latin America and welcomed the Commission communication 'The European Union and Latin America: Global Players in Partnership', (see COM(2009)0495). It also welcomes the efforts of the Spanish presidency to secure the signing of the EU-Central America Association Agreement and the multi-party trade agreements with Colombia and Peru, as well as its clear commitment to re-launching negotiations between the EU and Mercosur. Members stress that support for the various regional integration processes in Latin America is a basic principle for the biregional strategic partnership, and they reaffirm that the ultimate goal of the EU-Latin America biregional strategic partnership is the creation of a Euro-Latin American global interregional partnership area, by, approximately, 2015, in the areas of politics, economics, trade and social and cultural affairs, intended to ensure sustainable development in both regions.

The political area of the biregional strategic partnership: the committee calls on the Vice-President / High Representative (VP/HR) and on the Council to set clear guidelines for the best way of working closely together in order to foster effective multilateralism, ensure preservation of the environment , combat climate change, boost the UN's peacekeeping capacities, ensure achievement of the Millennium Goals, and tackle common threats to peace and security, including trafficking in illegal drugs and weapons, in line with the decisions reached in Lima. Members also call for the creation of appropriate mechanisms for institutional cooperation between the EuroLat Assembly and the various EU bodies, and reiterate that the future European External Action Service (EEAS) must ensure that the EP has valid interlocutors in the EU's delegations - above all in key regions such as Latin America - so as to guarantee full cooperation with Parliament.

The committee goes on to make the following points:

- a Euro-Latin American Charter for Peace and Security should be adopted, including strategies for joint political and security action in order to deal with the common challenges facing the members of the biregional strategic partnership;
- the internal stability of many Latin American partner countries continues to depend on the reform of the state, which must include participation in the decision-making process by all indigenous populations and other minorities;
- an independent judiciary and an effective policy of respect for human rights as part of a responsible administration subject to controls and operating transparently will give citizens a sense of security; and prevent them from becoming alienated from that system;
- with reference to the projects currently under way in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia, the funding allocated to programmes to eradicate drugs crops through alternative development programmes should be stepped up;
- climate change and global warming should remain a priority on the political agenda, with the need to agree joint positions in the various forums for dialogue on the environment and climate change.

Members deplore the fact that some countries' financial efforts have prioritised an excessive increase in military spending at a time when it is essential to reduce the effects of underdevelopment, poverty, pandemics, malnutrition, crime and natural disasters.

Economic area of the biregional strategic partnership: the committee reiterates its proposal for the creation of a **Euro-Latin American global interregional partnership area** based on a 'WTO–Regionalism' compatible model in two stages. With a view to completing the first phase, it supports the

resumption of negotiations on the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, which affects 700 million people, and would be the world's most ambitious biregional agreement; the conclusion of negotiations on the EU-Central America Association Agreement before the Madrid summit; the revision of the 2003 political and cooperation agreement with the Andean Community; and the deepening of the existing Association Agreements with Mexico and Chile. In order to complete the second stage and with a view to reaching a global interregional partnership agreement by 2015, Members call for legal and institutional support and full geographical coverage to be provided for the various strands of the biregional strategic partnership, and for common provisions to be established that facilitate the exercise of the various freedoms, so as to create as broad a partnership as possible by deepening both the integration agreements within Latin America and the EU's partnership process with the various countries and regional groupings.

Social area of the biregional strategic partnership: the committee considers the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be one of the most important objectives to be achieved by 2015, and suggests coordinating the positions of both regions on how to achieve the MDGs ahead of the MDG high-level meeting to be held in September 2010. Members also make the following points:

- the opening of a serious dialogue on topics linked to science, technology and innovation should boost the creation of a Euro-Latin American area of innovation and knowledge, with the agreement on innovation concluded with Chile being taken as an example to follow;
- decisive action must be taken against illiteracy, the rate of which remains high in some countries in the region, in particular among girls and women;
- welcoming the recent ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the Campo Algodonero feminicides in Mexico, as a precedent for the whole region, Members want the governments of the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean to use this ruling as a guideline for future work, and to ensure that their strong condemnation of violence against women is accompanied by properly funded protection and prevention programmes;
- the committee recommends that the Latin American governments - hoping also that the EU will offer all possible support for this huge task and aware of the difficult social situation despite a reasonably sound economic outlook - adopt policies including investment in public works, strengthening of the internal market, support for SMEs, extension of credit facilities, greater investment in health and education, and more decided steps to deal with youth unemployment and gender discrimination in the workplace. Although it may not be easy to obtain suitable funding for the above objectives - it is necessary to build a fair, tax system capable of fighting tax avoidance, while also reviewing excessive military expenditure.

Institutional mechanisms: the report recommends that the biannual summits should be maintained, but stresses that relations with Latin America should not be restricted to a biannual vision but should be strengthened through a long-term vision. It proposes that a biregional political dialogue be opened with new triangular approaches on matters of common interest embracing EU-LAC-Asia, EU-LAC-Africa and EU-LAC-US, with a view to moving towards a Euro-Atlantic area comprising the US, Latin America and the EU. The committee reiterates its proposal for the **creation of a Europe-Latin America and Caribbean Foundation,** whose primary purpose would be to help prepare the summits, follow up on the decisions and political courses of action adopted at the summits, and act as a forum for dialogue and coordination in the periods between summits for all the political, economic, institutional, academic and civil society bodies working to strengthen Euro-Latin American relations, including the EuroLat Assembly. The Foundation's budget should be limited but sufficient for it to carry out its tasks, financed by contributions from its EU and Latin American member states, the EU budget, and own resources generated by the Foundation itself or made available to it by sponsoring bodies with connections to the Euro-Latin American area.

Financial mechanisms: the committee supports the Latin America Investment Facility proposed by the Commission. It notes that an amount of EUR 100 million has been set aside under the Community budget for the period up to 2013. It emphasises the need to go beyond the purely assistance-based approach to

development cooperation with Latin America - so that the financial resources from the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) are concentrated on the poorest countries and most vulnerable groups - and to establish new forms of cooperation with middle-income countries in Latin America through the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI+). Lastly, Members support the efforts made by the EIB to finance projects in Latin America, while pointing out that if it is to fulfil its objectives the EIB will require more funding and contributions from both the EU and its Member States.