EC/Mercosur agreement: interregional framework cooperation agreement

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- OBJECTIVE: conclusion of an interregional cooperation agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay), of the other. - SUBSTANCE: . General principle: the agreement is concluded for an indefinite duration and aims to reinforce the existing links between the parties by laying down the conditions for establishing an interregional association and by intensifying the relations between the institutions of the two parties; . Democracy clause: the agreement is founded on the respect of democratic principles and human rights; . Main elements: - regular political dialogue at all levels: this will involve contacts, exchanges of information and meetings at the appropriate level between the different authorities of MERCOSUR and the European Union; - commercial category: intensification of the relations in order to promote the increase and the diversification of exchanges and the subsequent and progressive liberalisation of these exchanges. The agreement will favour the creation of conditions to facilitate the setting up of the interregional association, taking into account the sensitivity of certain products, in conformity with the WTO. An economic and commercial dialogue is set up in order to reinforce this cooperation. Measures are provided covering cooperation on agro-food standards, industrial cooperation, the recognition of conformity, customs matters, and on statistics and intellectual property; - economic category: the parties will facilitate, in respect of their mutual interest, the reciprocal expansion of their economy and the encouragement of international competitiveness. The agreement consists of the regional treatment of all the cooperation activities. Economic cooperation will be the subject of a regular dialogue. In this context, measures are provided which deal with industrial matters, investment promotion, the areas of energy, transport and telecommunications, scientific and technological development and environmental protection. - reinforcing integration: cooperation between the parties aims to support the integration processes of MERCOSUR in all fields. EC systems for exchanging information and technical assistance are provided to this effect. Measures are also laid down to encourage cooperation between the institutions of the European Union and of MERCOSUR. - other areas of cooperation: the agreement includes provisions which seek to improve cooperation in training and education, culture and the fight against drugs. An evolutionary clause is provided for the purpose of expanding the scope of the cooperation, if necessary. - implementation of the agreement: a Cooperation Council is set up to supervise the smooth functioning of the agreement and this will meet at ministerial level at regular intervals.