San Jose Dialog between the European Union and Central America

1995/2317(COS) - 18/12/1996

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 combatted in a determined manner. Hence the request that the European Commission draw up "an international convention against impunity".