Common strategy for relations between the European Union and Latin America

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The purpose of the present communication is to set out the general principles and actions that the Commission intends to take to contribute to meeting the priorities resulting from the June 1999 EU, Latin America and Caribbean Rio Summit. It aims to give impetus to the follow-up. The communication takes into account the EU's general policy objectives in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the Commission's own constraints. It should be stressed that the Commission does not propose in this communication a new strategy for relations between the EU and Latin America/the Caribbean. In the follow-up to Rio, the Commission intends to act primarily at two levels: 1) in the immediate future, in the anticipation of the 2002 Summit, the Commission proposes to step up its action in the following three priority areas: the promotion and protection of human rights; the promotion of the information society; and the reduction of social imbalances. The particular emphasis on these areas seek to cover the three dimensions of the strategic partership (political, economic, social) and to respond to the main challenges of the region. The proposed initiatives in those three priority areas form a coherent package designed to meet a common objective : to place human development and the civil society at the heart of the relationship between the two regions. In addition to the three initiatives, the Tuusula priority areas will continue to be dealt with through existing cooperation instruments, including decentralised horizontal programmes. 2) in the longer term, the Commission will ensure that the priorities identified in the Rio Action Plan and fine tuned in Tuusula are incorporated into the bilateral and sub-regional dialogues established. In principle, this does not require any special initiative, but rather a continuous and systematic approach covering all the three areas of the strategic partnership. The Commission will make sure that it does not look at each dimension in isolation. The three dimensions should reinforce one another. The Commission shall seek to ensure consistency and synergy between the political, economic and cooperation dialogue, notably in the pursuit of common goals such as promotion of environmental protection and sustainable development. Lastly, the test of this strategy will be in the tangible results by all the partners between now and the 2002 Summit.