EC/Lebanon agreement: Euro-Mediterranean association agreement

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PURPOSE : proposal on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the EC and its Member States, and Lebanon. CONTENT : Lebanon's relations with the EC are presently covered by the Co-operation Agreement of 3 May 1997. The proposed Association Agreement will establish a new, closer relationship within the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership launched by the Barcelona Declaration. With eight of the nine non-candidate countries of the Partnership linked to the EU by an Association Agreement, the Barcelona Declaration project is close to reality. The EU-Lebanon Agreement is similar in content and pattern to the other association agreements in the region. It will have an unlimited duration and focuses on the following main elements: - a regular political dialogue; - economic, social and cultural dialogue; - a progressive establishment of a free-trade area between the EC and Lebanon over a maximum period of 12 years, in conformity with WTO rules; - for industrial products, the preferential regime accorded to Lebanese exports to the Community under the 1978 Co-operation Agreement is reconfirmed. Reciprocally, Lebanon will liberalise its import regime for Community products so that tariffs are reduced to zero by the end of the 12 year transition period after entry into force of the Agreement. - for processed agricultural products, specific reciprocal concessions are foreseen; - agricultural products from Lebanon to the EC will be liberalised, except for a list of sensitive products for which zero tariff quotas will apply. Products from the EC will enter Lebanon on a concessional basis. New reciprocal tariff concessions will be examined by both sides five years after entry into force of the Agreement. - provisions for enhanced regional co-operation, including the creation of a regional Euro-Mediterranean free trade area. - provisions on the movement of persons, the rights of establishment, the supply of services, payments, competition, the movement of capital, intellectual property protection, and public procurement; - provisions for economic and financial cooperation; - commitments and cooperation in the control of illegal immigration and in re-admission, drugs and organised crime and money laundering; - the establishment of an Association Council and an Association Committee; - the Association Council will take measures to promote cooperation between the European Parliament and the Lebanese Parliament. A proposed Interim Agreement will cover the trade-related elements of the Association Agreement.