EC/Central America agreement: political dialogue and cooperation agreement

2003/0266(NLE) - 10/11/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present the conclusion of a Political dialogue and Cooperation agreement between the EC and its Member States, and Costa Rica, el Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. PROPOSED ACTS : Council Decision. CONTENT : this proposal constitutes the legal instrument for the conclusion of a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part and the above-mentioned republics. The EU and Central America enjoy a comprehensive relationship that encompasses political dialogue, a broad cooperation framework and a favourable trade regime. The San Jose Dialogue forms the cornerstone of EU-Central American relations. It was initiated in Costa Rica in 1984 and renewed in Florence (1996) and in Madrid (2002). It can claim a notable historical success in that it was the key instrument in bringing about peace and re-establishing democracy in the region in the early 1990s. Cooperation with Central America is currently carried out in the context of the 1993 Framework Cooperation Agreement. Historically, this cooperation has focused on human rights and democracy, integrated rural development, disaster prevention and reconstruction, social development and regional integration. The sub-region has traditionally received the largest share in both absolute and per capita terms of EC cooperation with the Latin American region. Trade relations between the European Union and Central America are dominated by the 'Drugs Regime' of the Generalised System of Preferences. Central America has underlined its desire to achieve greater stability and predictability in EU-Central America economic and commercial relations. The new EU-Central America Agreement focuses solely on political dialogue and cooperation and does not contain a trade component. The main objectives of the Agreement are to: - strengthen EU-Central American relations by developing political dialogue and reinforcing cooperation, and - create the conditions under which, building on the outcome of the Doha Work Programme, a feasible and mutually beneficial Association Agreement, including a free trade agreement, could be negotiated between the parties. The Political Dialogue Title institutionalises and strengthens the San Jose Dialogue process. The Cooperation Title will comprehend current cooperation and include new areas such as human rights, migration and counter-terrorism. Special emphasis is placed on cooperation in support of the process of regional integration in Central America. The Agreement will replace the existing 1993 Framework Cooperation Agreement between the two regions. The Member States must approve the Agreement according to their internal procedures.