The impact of international developments on the Community's textile and clothing sector

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OBJECTIVE: to evaluate the impact of international developments on the Community's textile and clothing sector and to examine the possible consequences for the business strategy and industrial policy of the Member States and the EU. CONTENT: the main conclusions of the Commission's communication are as follows: - thanks to efforts made by enterprises, the European textile and clothing industry will continue to be of major economic importance to the European economy in the future; - the adjustment process set in motion by the sector in order to meet the challenges of the change in world markets and stiffer international competition should be pursued, even if this results in an additional drop in production and employment; - numerous factors will determine the fate of the industry: economic growth in the EU, changes in consumption and the cost of energy, labour and environmental protection, monetary developments, new technologies and preferential agreements between the EU and neighbouring countries; - the repercussions of the integration planned within the context of the Uruguay Round, insofar as they can be divorced from other factors, will not affect the general trends in the sector; - the job losses expected in the future are a crucial problem and therefore deserve special attention within the framework of the EU's employment policy; - the results of the Uruguay Round, combined with the effects of other factors, will have different effects, depending on the products and regions of the EU and account must be taken of this when developing EU policies; - at industrial level, enterprises must review their current strategies and adapt them to the worldwide development of new production and market structures expected between now and the year 2000. The debate on specific the means and methods to be adopted needs to be stepped up. A new political approach needs to be adopted which stimulates exports and satisfies the need of companies (especially SMEs) for qualified labour; - at Member State and Commission level, existing industrial support policy measures which can be applied to textiles should be adapted and strengthened. Absolute priority must be given to finalizing a new complete framework, in cooperation with the interested parties in the sector, which will guarantee efficient liberalization of third country markets. Similarly, specific export training programmes need to be developed and the efficiency of programmes to promote exports need to be re-evaluated from a European perspective. The Commission can act as a catalyst in all these initiatives. Finally, the fight against fraud, counterfeiting and unfair competition needs to be stepped up; - at Community level, additional or complementary measures will only be taken to deal with problems in the sector which cannot be resolved at national level or which would be better resolved at European level.