San Jose Dialog between the European Union and Central America

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OBJECTIVE: with a view to the meeting in March 1996 to renew the San José process, this communication assesses the areas and sectors where relations between the EU and Central America should be strengthened and adapted. SUBSTANCE: given the significant geo-political and strategic changes that have taken place in the world, the Community has constantly adapted its relations with third countries and the same is true for the countries of Central America. Relations were established with these countries in 1984 (San José process) to support in particular the emergence of new social and political forces, the spread of new technologies and the promotion of trade. This process also had a significant impact in terms of stabilising the political situation. The Commission is now proposing to reaffirm this commitment by renewing the San José process and particularly the following objectives: A) to reshape the basic aims of dialogue: - consolidating the rule of law, - stabilising society, including the reduction of inequalities and the protection of the environment, - helping the region to integrate into the world economy; B) to revise the substance of the cooperation process: - providing support for the consolidation and modernisation of the rule of law through measures promoting human rights and stronger democratic institutions and through measures to improve the operation of the state, - providing support for social policies through measures strengthening citizens' economic and social rights (land ownership and popular savings) with a view to improving systems in the fields of education, training and health (fight against drugs), - improving the ability of Central America to integrate into the international economy through measures to enhance regional integration, diversify exports and facilitate the role of private operators (industrial cooperation, AL-INVEST, ECIP); C) to introduce new methods of cooperation concerning: - coordination: specialisation by financial backers (particularly NGOs) and greater coordination, - multiannual programming broken down according to the Community resources available, - reorientation of projects: support for sectoral policies implemented by the beneficiaries themselves, which requires greater dialogue and commitments on the part of the beneficiaries, assurances on the part of the EU and better information on projects; D) to adapt to the mechanisms of the San José process: - plenary ministerial meetings (every two years) which are better prepared and more specific, - ad hoc ministerial meetings (Troïka convened to deal with significant problems) between the two-yearly meetings, - joint committee with an enhanced role in the areas of cooperation and trade relations (greater participation of civil society in the work of the Commission). In conclusion, the Commission calls for a solemn declaration to be signed at the Twelfth San José Ministerial Conference (March 1996, Italy) incorporating the new elements of the San José process as described above.