Environment: Europe-Asia cooperation strategy

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OBJECTIVE : achieving more effective cooperation between Europe and Asia in the field of the environment and proposing key measures in this area to achieve long-term results. SUBSTANCE : The severity of the environmental problems in Asia have implications for Europe (particularly with regard to economic stability and business opportunities). It is therefore necessary to help the Asian countries protect their natural resources and prevent pollution. Europe has a great deal of experience in this field with nearly 60% of the world patents in environmental technology especially in the urban environment and in pollution reduction and prevention. There is currently no monitoring system covering all environmental cooperation measures taken by the Member States in Asia. The communication therefore proposes the introduction of a voluntary system of coordination involving all European undertakings cooperating or wishing to cooperate with Asia in this area. The strategy proposed by the Commission is based on three lines of action: 1) increasing environmental management capacity in Asia, encouraging more efficient and sustainable use of natural resources and supporting a more sustainable pattern of wealth creation; 2) facilitating market-based approaches to environmental protection with emphasis on pollution reduction and prevention and protection of natural resources; 3) developing, promoting and supporting Europe-Asia environmental R&D networks and facilitating the rise of environment awareness and training. In order to implement this strategy, the Commission proposes four criteria for pursuing cooperation activities: - mutual interest for Europe and Asia, - complementarity with Member States' activities, - synergy with international donors and lending agencies, - sustainability. The Community should develop with each Asian country or region concerned specific environmental priorities based on their needs. The Community strategy based on the three pillars should set out to identify the countries most serious problems and pursue a dialogue on environmental aspects of mutual interest with local beneficiaries. It should also endeavour to promote a participatory approach, increase awareness of the importance of the environment, improve capacity building programmes and assist European companies active in this area.