Outermost regions: implementation of Article 299 (2) of the EC Treaty. Report

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In the perspective of the Seville European Council, the European Commission presents this document on the implementation of the sustainable development strategy for the outermost regions (Art.299 (2) of the EC Treaty). It should be stated that the sustainable development strategy for the outermost regions, presented in the Commission report of 14 March 2000 (COM(2000)147 final), is gradually taking shape, as this new version of the report on the Commission programme relating to implementation of Article 299 (2) shows. It will enable the Seville European Council - as the previous versions of this document have done for the European Councils at Santa Maria da Feira, Nice, Gothenburg and Laeken - to examine the current status of the measures already launched and of those planned for the near future. These measures include some innovative features. One example is the use of the INTERREG programmes to relaunch cooperation of the outermost regions with their respective geographical areas. Anothher in the field of international environment, is the preparation of an impact study for the outermost regions. A further example is the initiatives taken in the fields of the information society and research and development, as well as transport and energy, with a view to the diversification and modernisation of the economy of the outermost regions. In many cases, these initiatives will receive support from the Structural Funds, now more effective and better targeted, thanks to the derogations adopted. More generally, the tax and customs arrangements for the Canaries (AIEM) and those being examined for the French overseas departments (dock dues) should boost economic activity in these regions. This does not prevent the continuation of Community support for the traditional products of the outermost region, which remain an essential element of their economy. The revision of the agricultural regulations has now been implemented, and for the fisheries sector, preparations are being made to renew the arrangements for offsetting the extra costs incurred in selling produce. In addition, some tax support has been maintained for traditional rum from the French overseas departments and certain rums, liqueurs and spirits from Madeira and the Azores. Action in this field has been marked by a dynamic partnership between the regions, the Member States and the Community. The Commission will strive to ensure that this continues.