

EU/Caribbean relations: partnership for growth, stability and development

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PURPOSE: the presentation of an EU-Caribbean Partnership for growth, stability and development.

CONTENT: in preparing this Communication, the Commission points to the strong ties that the EU has traditionally held with the Caribbean. Not only through the French DOMs and the UK/Dutch OCT's but also through the Caribbean's prominent role within the ACP group of States and its inclusion in the Cotonou Agreement. The EU-Caribbean dimension is also strengthened by the wider EU-LAC strategic partnership which was forged between the EU, the Caribbean and the Latin American States in Rio, 1999.

The new strategy proposes the setting up of a mutually beneficial partnership for the benefit of development, democracy and security. A number of concrete actions are proposed by the Commission:

1. A political partnership based on shared values:

A political partnership, in which good governance and the rule of law is promoted, is key to the strengthening of democracy and human rights. Supporting good governance has the added advantage of improving gender equality, social cohesion, security, stability, conflict prevention, migration, drugs prevention and regional integration. In short – many of the challenges facing the Caribbean today. Within the context of a political partnership the EU will support key institutions on whom good governance depends – the judiciary, parliament and public financial managements systems. The fight against fraud and corruption will be an additional EU-Caribbean priority.

2. Addressing economic opportunities and vulnerabilities:

This heading focuses on the EU's development policy vis-à-vis the Caribbean. The EU's policy is based on the notion of encouraging developing countries to harness the globalisation process to their advantage. The EU will support regional integration efforts in the Caribbean. It will also seek to make the economies of the Caribbean more competitive, to help them diversify exports and to help support the establishment of regional markets.

3. Environment and natural resources.

The Caribbean States face many environmental challenges, all of which impact strongly on the region's economic capacity. In its partnership with the Caribbean, the EU will help contribute to increasing the region's "Natural Disaster Management" system. Emphasis will be given to risk reduction, preparedness, early warning, prevention and mitigation.

4. Promoting Social Cohesion and Combating Poverty.

The strategy will focus on relieving chronic poverty and seek to improve a sustainable livelihood for the Caribbean people. Co-ordination efforts to combat drug trafficking will also be given particular EU support. Lastly, providing a knowledge-based economy in the Caribbean will be a priority for EU initiatives in the Caribbean.

Next steps : based on a shared vision of the future, and through an enhanced political partnership and the support of actions to address the region's socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities and to

promote social cohesion and combat poverty, the EU will be a steadfast partner for the Caribbean in its efforts. The EU – Caribbean Troika meeting in the context of the EU-LAC Summit in May 2006 will mark the start of a renewed and broad political dialogue.