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EUROPEAN UNION SPELLS OUT CUBA POLICY

The European Union Council of Ministers yesterday spelled out its policy on Cuba and took the following concerted action called a "common position" following the Maastricht Treaty's provisions on foreign and security policy.

Last June the European Union said that further progress in EU/Cuban relations would depend on developments in the political situation there.

The European Union's common position follows:

1. The objective of the European Union in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a sustainable recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. A transition is most likely to be peaceful if the present regime were itself to initiate or permit such a process. It is not European Union policy to try to bring about change by coercive measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.
2. The European Union acknowledges the tentative economic opening undertaken in Cuba to date. It is its firm wish to be Cuba's partner in the progressive and irreversible opening of the Cuban economy. The European Union considers that full cooperation with Cuba will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom, as indicated by the European Council in Florence (June 1996).
3. In order to facilitate peaceful change in Cuba, the European Union
 - (a) will intensify the present dialogue with the Cuban authorities and with all sectors of Cuban society in order to promote respect for human rights and real progress towards pluralist democracy;
 - (b) will seek out opportunities - even more actively than heretofore - to remind the Cuban authorities, both publicly and privately, of fundamental responsibilities regarding human rights, in particular freedom of speech and association;
 - (c) will encourage the reform of internal legislation concerning political and civil rights, including the Cuban criminal code, and, consequently, the abolition of all political offences, the release of all political prisoners, and the ending of the harassment and punishment of dissidents;
 - (d) will evaluate developments in Cuban internal and foreign policies according to the same standards that apply to European Union relations with other countries, in particular the ratification and observance of international human rights conventions;

Office of Press and Public Affairs, European Commission Delegation

Washington: 2300 M Street NW Washington DC 20037 / Telephone (202) 862-9500 / Fax (202) 429-1766

New York: 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza 305 E 47th Street New York NY 10017 / Telephone (212) 371-3804 / Fax (212) 688-1013

- (e) will remain willing in the meantime, through the member states, to provide ad hoc humanitarian aid, subject to prior agreement regarding distribution; currently applicable measures to ensure distribution through non-governmental organizations, the churches and international organizations will be maintained and, where appropriate, reinforced. It is noted that the Commission is proceeding on the same basis;
- (f) will remain willing, through the member states, also to carry out focused economic cooperation actions in support of the economic opening being implemented. It is noted that the Commission is proceeding on the same basis.
4. As the Cuban authorities make progress towards democracy, the European Union will lend its support to that process and examine the appropriate use of the means at its disposal for that purpose, including;
- the intensification of a constructive, result-oriented political dialogue between the European Union and Cuba;
 - the intensification of cooperation and, in particular, economic cooperation;
 - the deepening of the dialogue with the Cuban authorities, through the appropriate instances in order to explore further the possibilities for future negotiation of a Cooperation Agreement with Cuba, on the basis of the relevant conclusions of the European Councils in Madrid and Florence.
5. The implementation of the Common Position will be monitored by the Council. An evaluation of this Common Position will be undertaken after six months.
6. The Common Position shall take effect on December 2, 1996.
7. This Common Position shall be published in the Official Journal.

Press Contact: Ella Krucoff
Tel: (202) 862-9640