

THE EC CALLS FOR VETO OF THE CUBAN DEMOCRACY ACT

The European Community and its member states are urging the US President to veto the Cuban Democracy Act which is included in the Defense Authorization Bill (HR 5006), submitted by Congress to the President for signature on October 6, 1992. An official demarche was made yesterday pointing out that the extension of the US trade embargo against Cuba has the potential to cause grave damage to the transatlantic relationship.

The Cuban Democracy Act seeks to speed up the transition to democracy in Cuba through the imposition of a reinforced trade embargo under which US and Cuban trading partners would have to comply with US prohibitions for economic and trade operations outside the jurisdiction of the United States. Until now the trade boycott with Cuba allowed some flexibility.

The European Community and its member states are seriously concerned about the reinforcement by the US Congress of the trade embargo against Cuba. Furthermore, the Act's proposed sanctions for vessels that enter a port in Cuba would be in conflict with long standing rules on comity and international law, and adversely affect international shipping as well as the European Community's trade with the United States.

Until now, through a licensing regime, EC-based subsidiaries of US companies were allowed to carry on commercial operations with Cuba. The Cuban Democracy Act implies that EC based companies would be facing US civil and criminal penalties if they trade with Cuba.

The EC has persistently voiced its opposition to the unilateral extension by the US of the reach of trade measures implementing US foreign or national security policies.

During the last two years, the European Community has been on record with other nations such as Canada in opposing legislative initiatives to further tighten the US trade embargo upon Cuba. Such actions would have to be applied extraterritorially of the US jurisdiction - this in violation of the general principles of international law and the sovereignty of independent nations.

Although the EC is fully supportive of a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba, it cannot accept that the US unilaterally determines and restricts EC economic and commercial relations with any foreign nation which has not been collectively determined by the United Nations Security Council as a threat to peace or order in the world of nations.

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