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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES INITIAL AN AGREEMENT ON CUSTOMS COOPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN CUSTOMS MATTERS

Today November 7, 1996, an agreement on customs cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters between the United States and the European Union has been initialled in Washington by Mr. Alfred Browning, Assistant Commissioner of US Customs, and Mr. Douglas Komaz, Director, European Commission.

The objectives of this agreement are the following:

1. to establish cooperation between the United States and the European Union with a view to simplifying customs procedures and, in doing so, facilitating trade;
2. to establish mutual assistance, i.e. a mechanism of exchange of information between the customs authorities, with a view to fighting commercial fraud;
3. exchange of customs authorities to advance their understanding of each others customs techniques, procedures and computerized systems;
4. coordination in international organizations such as the Customs Cooperation Council;
5. technical assistance to third countries in the customs field.

A similar agreement was initialled with the Republic of Korea in July and negotiations are under way with Canada with the same purpose.

The conclusion of the negotiation of this agreement with the United States in 1996 was one of the objectives of the Europe-United States New Transatlantic Dialogue. Both parties have underlined, at the occasion of the initialling, the political importance of the agreement in the relations between the European Union and the United States.

Press Contacts: **Ella Krucoff**
Tel: (202) 862-9540

Maeve O'Beirne
Tel: (202) 862-9549