

Athens, 27 March 2003

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JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING BETWEEN THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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1. Under the chairmanship of the Greek Presidency of the EU, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Andean Community and the European Union met in Athens on 27 March 2003 on the occasion of the XIth Institutionalised Ministerial Meeting between the European Union and the Rio Group.
2. At the meeting, the Andean Community and the European Union exchanged ideas and opinions on the political and economic situation in both regions, and on the state of and prospects for relations between them.
3. The Ministers reiterated their strong commitment to the respect of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and international humanitarian law. The EU Ministers expressed satisfaction with the Andean Community's commitments and developments attained with respect to democratic and regional institutions and supported the further implementation of the "Lima Commitment: Andean Charter for Peace and Security and the Limitation and Control of the Expenditure on Foreign Defence" as well as the "Andean Charter for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights" in the region. They supported the Andean initiative of establishing a sub-regional "Peace Zone". The EU Ministers welcomed the efforts of several Andean States to establish national dialogues aiming at creating a broad political consensus and fostering social cohesion in their countries.
4. Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in the dialogue on the fight against drugs and related crimes based on the principles of shared responsibility, inclusiveness, balance and multilateralism. In addition, they expressed their confidence that this joint effort would continue to seek tangible results, for which the VIth CAN-EU High Level Dialogue on Drugs, to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, on 27 and 28 May, as well as the next meeting to be set up on chemical precursors, would provide an excellent opportunity.

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5. Aware of the need to consolidate EU-Andean relations, Ministers agreed to reinforce the mechanisms supporting their relationship with a view to facing up to the new dynamics of international relations in a globalised and interdependent world.
6. Ministers expressed their satisfaction that negotiations will start on May 6, 2003 on a political dialogue and co-operation agreement that comprises dialogue at all levels and will intensify exchanges on matters of mutual interest, particularly those relating to the defence and strengthening of democratic principles, governance and institutions, fight against poverty, social justice, human rights, migration, sustainable development, conflict prevention and resolution, and the integration in both regions, as well as the fight against terrorism, corruption, the world-wide problem of drugs and organised transnational crime.
7. Ministers considered that the signing of such an agreement should mean a qualitative advance in the depth and range of CAN-EU relations, exploring new areas of interest for both parties such as trade related technical assistance. Ministers decided to explore ways and means to implement such a co-operation and to examine progress achieved in this area during the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
8. Ministers reaffirmed their conviction, as expressed by the Heads of State and Government of the Andean Community and the European Union at the Madrid Summit, that the achievement of the objectives of such an agreement, together with the strengthening of their co-operation, should establish conditions under which, building on the outcome of the Doha Work Programme which they have undertaken to conclude by the end of 2004 at the latest, a feasible and mutually beneficial Association Agreement, including a Free-Trade Area, could be negotiated between the two regions.

In this respect, Ministers emphasised the efforts that are being made to study the current state of and prospects for economic and trade relations between the Andean Community and the European Union.

9. In the framework of their political commitment to the fight against drugs based on shared responsibility and taking into account the efforts made by Andean countries in combating the world-wide problem of illegal drugs, Ministers recognised that the Generalised System of Preferences (Drugs GSP) had provided a significant instrument as part of the EU's overall response to development needs as well as a contribution to the strengthening of the formal and legal economy of Andean countries. In this respect, they agreed on the importance to ensure its full utilisation.
10. Lastly, Ministers expressed their willingness to continue to promote the strategic partnership between the two regions and to encourage the exchanges necessary to create the conditions for strengthened relations built on solid and mutually beneficial foundations.
11. Ministers expressed their thanks to the Government and the people of Greece for their warm hospitality and the excellent organisation, which contributed to making this Ministerial Meeting between the European Union and the Andean Community a complete success.