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**JOINT
PRESS RELEASE
MINISTERIAL MEETING BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION,
THE MERCOSUR, CHILE AND BOLIVIA
23 February 2000
Vilamoura, Portugal**

1. On 23rd February 2000 a Ministerial Meeting of Political dialogue took place in Vilamoura, Portugal, between the MERCOSUR, Chile, Bolivia and the European Union.
2. The MERCOSUR delegation was headed by Mr. Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, on behalf of the MERCOSUR Pro-Tempore Presidency. The Chilean delegation was headed by Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés Soublette, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile. The Bolivian delegation was headed by Mr. Javier Murillo de la Rocha, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Bolivia. The EU delegation was headed by Mr. Jaime Gama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal and President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, assisted by Mr. Javier Solana Madariaga, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and Mr. Charles Josselin, Deputy Minister in charge of cooperation and francophony, France. The Commission of the European Union was represented by the Commissioner for Foreign Relations, Mr. Christopher Patten.
3. The Parties recalled that respect for the principles of constitutional democracy, political pluralism and human rights is the cornerstone of their political and economic relations. The Parties underlined the importance of this shared vision as an element that encourages the strengthening of the political dialogue between the two regions. The Ministers stressed the importance of ethical values as a basis for the political development of their own societies.

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4. With a view to developing interregional cooperation through concrete proposals, the Ministers of MERCOSUR, Chile and Bolivia presented the Declaration and Action Programme for Political Cooperation, in which they identified the main areas and appropriate actions for the implementation of interregional cooperation on, among others, Peace and Stability, Prevention of Conflicts and Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM), Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Democracy and the Rule of Law.

The EU Ministers received this proposal with interest and committed themselves to assess it and formulate their observations at the next Senior Officials Meeting.

5. The Ministers further discussed the future of the political dialogue. They underlined the need to reinforce the co-ordination between the EU and the Forum for Consultation and Political Co-ordination of MERCOSUR within the context of the United Nations System and to identify fora and subjects in which a convergence of positions is possible. In this respect they decided to instruct their representatives towards the United Nations to maintain shortly, before the next meeting of the General Assembly, working meetings with a view to bringing the respective positions closer together.
6. The Minister welcomed the progress of activities made in the context of the follow-up to the Rio Summit and the definition of priorities agreed upon in Tuusula. They agreed to contribute to the success of the concrete initiatives to be identified on the occasion of the Second Senior Officials Meeting of the Rio Group for the Follow up to the EU-LAC Summit that will take place on February 25th, 2000, in Vilamoura, Portugal.
7. In this context, Ministers stressed the importance to promote the exchange of information on their respective economic indicators as foreseen in the existing Framework Co-operation Agreements.
8. The importance of the contribution of new actors, partners and resources from civil society and the importance of encouraging mutual exchanges and co-operation of civil society between the parties were also reaffirmed.
9. The Ministers emphasized the need to step up cultural dialogue between the two regions as a way of helping to intensify political cooperation through greater mutual knowledge and understanding.
10. Concerning WTO, Ministers stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum towards the launch of a new comprehensive round based on a balanced agenda that adequately contemplates the interests of all members of the multilateral trading system. Such a round should aim at enhancing market access, without excluding any areas, and to develop and strengthen WTO rules and disciplines. They underlined that to successfully launch negotiations, a careful preparation will be required, including through the adoption, as a matter of urgency, of a number of measures aimed at promoting better integration of developing countries in the global trading system and improving the functioning of the WTO. They also noted the importance of the commitment by all members to constructive negotiations under the built in agenda, which includes agriculture and services.

11. The Ministers recalled the Joint Communiqué of the Heads of State and Government of the EU, MERCOSUR and Chile of June 28, 1999, through which they formally launched the negotiations with regard to Association Agreements between the EU and MERCOSUR, and between EU and Chile and they referred to the MERCOSUR Cooperation Council and EU-Chile Joint Council meetings of November 24, 1999, in which structure, methodology and calendar of the negotiations were agreed upon. In that regard, they underlined the importance of the first meetings of the EU-MERCOSUR and EU-Chile Negotiating Committees that will be held in the month of April, 2000 in Buenos Aires and in Santiago de Chile, emphasizing the need to achieve progress in these processes. The Ministers stated that these processes should be comprehensive, encompassing all areas of their political, economic, trade and co-operation relations, and that negotiations should be concluded at the earliest possible time.

12. The Ministers decided to convene a meeting of Senior Officials as soon as possible, to follow up the analysis of the political dialogue between MERCOSUR, Chile, Bolivia and the EU.
