

Brussels, 25 May 2005

EU Troika and Latin America Ministers meet in Luxembourg, 26-27 May

EU Foreign Affairs Ministers will meet with Ministers from the 'Rio Group', a forum assembling all countries of Latin America, on 26 and 27 May 2005. At the same time, separate meetings will take place between the EU Troika and Mercosur¹, Central America², the Andean Community³, Chile and Mexico. Discussions will focus on preparations for the UN Summit in September 2005 and regional integration and co-operation. Other issues will include social cohesion and the creation of employment as a means for poverty eradication. Alongside European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU will be represented by the Luxembourg Foreign Minister, Jean Asselborn, and the High Representative, Javier Solana.

Progress and prospects of **regional integration** in both regions will be a central topic for these meetings. The EU is a strong supporter of the different sub-regional integration processes in Latin America, such as the Mercosur, the SICA (Central America Integration System) and the Andean Community. It also follows with interest recent new initiatives, such as the South American Community of Nations.

Inequality and social exclusion are severe obstacles to poverty reduction and economic performance in Latin America. **Social cohesion** was made a priority for EU-Latin America relations at last year's summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean in May 2004. In this context, Ministers of the EU and the Rio Group meeting in Luxembourg this week will exchange views on experiences on the creation of employment opportunities as a means of fighting poverty, a subject that is also at the heart of the EU's Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth.

The EU and Latin America also share a strong commitment to **multilateralism**. Therefore, preparations for the **UN Summit** in September 2005 will be a key issue for discussions with the Rio Group. The up-coming UN Summit will present a unique opportunity to strengthen the UN system and to give a boost to the commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, set in 2000 for the eradication of poverty in the world.

¹ Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

² Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

³ Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

The two days agenda will be distributed:

Thursday 26 May 2005

- 09h00 II Political Dialogue between EU-Chile
EU-Chile Association Council
- 13h00 EU-Central America Ministerial Troika, XXI Diálogo de San José
- 15h00 Political Dialogue between EU-Mexico
Joint Council between EU and Mexico
- 17h00 EU-Andean Community Ministerial Troika
- 20h30 EU-Mercosur Ministerial Troika

Friday 27 May 2005

- 9h30 EU-Grupo de Rio Ministerial Troika

Background

The Latin America Permanent Mechanism of Political Consultation and Coordination – the Rio Group - was created in 1986 in Rio de Janeiro. Today the members are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. The first Ministerial meeting between the EU and the Rio Group was in 1990. Since then Foreign Ministers of the two regions meet every two years, alternating with the years of the summits between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. The last meeting between the EU and the Rio Group took place in Vouliagmeni, Greece, in March 2003.

Further information on the EU's relations with Latin America

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/la/index.htm#1a