

EU-MERCOSUR, XXth BNC
Brussels, 14-18 March 2011
Press Release

Brussels, 18 March 2011

In the context of the XX Bi-Regional Negotiations Committee (XX BNC), MERCOSUR and the European Union held meetings in Brussels between March, 14 and March 18, 2011 for a round of negotiations on the future Association Agreement between both regions.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to negotiate a comprehensive, balanced and ambitious Association Agreement.

This was the fourth round since the official announcement of the relaunch of the bi-regional negotiations at the MERCOSUR-EU Summit in Madrid on May 17th, 2010.

Eleven Working Groups held meetings during the XX BNC. Discussions allowed progress in the normative part of several areas of the negotiations, including rules of origin, public procurement, services and investment, competition and dispute settlement, among others. It was also recognized that further intense work will be necessary in all negotiating areas.

Concerning the next steps in the negotiations, both sides will now continue their internal work to prepare improved market access offers. When this work is completed, they will then jointly decide on the date for a simultaneous exchange of offers.

Moreover it was also agreed that the next round of negotiations will be held on 2-6 May, 2011, in Asunción. Another round of negotiations will take place on 4-8 July 2011 in Brussels.

PRESS STATEMENT

The EU and MERCOSUR met from 14 to 18 March in Brussels to hold the 20th Round of negotiations for an EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement. The EU Delegation was composed by officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission. The MERCOSUR delegation was composed by officials from the four MERCOSUR State Parties, led by Paraguay as the region's current pro-tempore Presidency. EU Member States and Venezuela participated as observers. Negotiators of the Political and Cooperation chapters started their discussions on the basis of texts previously exchanged.

The negotiations of the Political Chapter were chaired on the EU side by EEAS Director for Latin America, Gustavo Martín Prada, and on the MERCOSUR's side by Ambassador Juan Esteban Aguirre of Paraguay. Discussions were constructive and both parties agreed that important progress was achieved in the preamble, objectives and political dialogue.

The negotiations of the Cooperation Chapter were chaired on the EU side by EEAS Head of the Mercosur Division, Ángel Carro Castrillo, and on the MERCOSUR's side by Ambassador Juan Esteban Aguirre of Paraguay. In a very positive and open atmosphere, constructive discussion took place and substantial steps forward were made on the scope of strategic cooperation, its institutional framework and economic and social cooperation.

The EU and MERCOSUR will hold the next round of negotiations for the Association Agreement in Asunción from 2 to 6 May 2011.

Background

The EU and MERCOSUR started negotiations for an Association Agreement in 1999. After 16 rounds the negotiations freezed. In 2010

the EU and MERCOSUR took the political decision to re-launch the negotiations with the view to conclude an ambitious and comprehensive Association Agreement to the benefit of the people of both regions. The Association Agreement has three chapters: Political, Trade and Cooperation.

Note: for information on the negotiations on the Trade chapter, please see Trade report.