



*Delegation for relations with Mercosur
Delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil*

DMER_PV(2017)1214_1

MINUTES
of the meeting of 14 December 2017, 10.45-12.00
Strasbourg

The meeting opened at 10.45 on Thursday, 14 December 2017, with **Francisco Assis** (S&D, Portugal) and **Fernando Ruas** (PPE, Portugal) in the chair.

1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE596.543)

The agenda was adopted as shown in these minutes.

2. State of play in EU-Mercosur negotiations on the future association agreement

Mr Adrianus Koetsenruijter, Head of Division, South America, European External Action Service, gave an analysis of the state of play in negotiations on the EU-Mercosur association agreement. Although no agreement had yet been reached, a number of important chapters on political dialogue and cooperation were about to be closed, with the exception of the issues of non-proliferation and disarmament, migration, cooperation in tax matters and consular protection amongst others.

One of the most important issues was the article on civil society and an agreement had been reached on its wording, which marked a major step forward. The role of civil society in the implementation of the agreement had been bolstered: a Domestic Advisory Group would be established and the Civil Society Forum would hold annual meetings in parallel with meetings of the Association Council. The negotiations had also confirmed the agreement that had already existed for some years on the roles of the European Parliament and the Mercosur Parliament.

Although some issues were not straightforward, it was hoped that an agreement could be reached in early 2018, also taking into account the elections set to be held that year in Brazil and Paraguay.

The Mercosur countries had vowed to make every effort to reach an agreement as soon as possible, as had the European Union, and there was a hope that negotiations could be concluded by early 2018 at the latest.

Ms Lorella de la Cruz Iglesias, Deputy Head of Unit, Trade Relations with Latin America, DG Trade, European Commission, focusing on the trade part of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, reported that a negotiating round had been held in Brussels from 29 November to 8 December at which intensive work had been undertaken in all areas, thanks to which significant progress had been made.

After this round, meetings had been held in Buenos Aires for the purpose of bringing the state of play in the negotiations to a ministerial level. The Commission had invested considerable effort and had carried out intensive work. An initial meeting had taken place between the Commissioners and Mercosur ministers on the Sunday, followed by a second meeting on the Thursday, with the aim of reviewing the talks and reaffirming the commitment to conclude negotiations as soon as possible. The negotiations were now entering the most difficult phase, in which the most sensitive issues would be addressed.

Ms de la Cruz concluded that there had been significant progress in the negotiations and that work would continue with the clear aim of closing a number of gaps, in the conviction that, given the clear commitment shown by both parties and the progress achieved so far, an agreement could be concluded very soon.

Mr José Ignacio Salafranca, European Parliament rapporteur, began by thanking the European External Action Service and the Commission for the information they had provided. He expressed his disappointment with the failure to achieve a result at the negotiations in Buenos Aires, given the expectations placed in the efforts made to conclude the long negotiating process in these talks. According to available information, Mercosur had been asked by the Commission and its Commissioners at the ministerial level meetings to provide a further 1% liberalisation on processed agricultural products, with the assurance that negotiations could be closed in Buenos Aires if this offer was made. However, despite Mercosur complying with the Commission's request, negotiations had not been concluded.

Hopes of finalising the process had been frustrated and this had led to a loss of trust on the part of our Mercosur partners. If progress in the talks had been stalled due to the European Union's failure to put forward a credible offer that met our commitments in the areas of meat and biofuels, somebody should take political responsibility for this lack of engagement. Mr Salafranca reiterated his disappointment that the EU had been unable to improve its offer on meat, as this issue would be key to resolving the current impasse in negotiations.

Time was of the utmost importance for concluding the talks on schedule and for Parliament to have the opportunity to ratify the final agreement within its current term. Any delay would reduce, or even remove altogether, the possibility of moving ahead to ratification.

Mr Salafranca ended by proposing that the Chair of the Delegation convene an extraordinary meeting with the Committee on International Trade at which the two Commissioners involved in the negotiations would report on the talks held in Buenos Aires.

The Chair, Mr Francisco Assis, expressed his concern and frustration that not enough progress had been made to conclude the negotiating process. There had been high expectations that an agreement would be finalised by the end of the year, and bearing in mind the political situation in Brazil, which would be holding elections in 2018, only a relatively short timeframe remained. He emphasised the considerable efforts made by the South American contingent and the lack of reciprocity from the EU.

Mr Assis announced that in the preceding week he and the Co-President of EuroLat, Mr Jáuregui, had written to the Commissioner for Agriculture asking whether the EU had plans to improve its offer on meat.

Considering the optimism that an agreement would be reached in early 2018, he asked whether the EU would finally take the necessary steps for achieving this outcome.

In response to questions put by members of the delegations, **Ms Lorella de la Cruz Iglesias** spoke of the difficulty in striking the right balance in the trade part of the agreement. Despite the advances made by Mercosur, this balance had not yet been struck that would allow for the negotiations to be concluded and for the EU to make a further step itself. There were still expectations that the EU had clearly communicated to Mercosur and that needed to be met, but these had not yet been delivered upon. The Commission was optimistic and an agreement was within reach. Substantial work had been carried out and significant progress had been made. A date had not yet been set for January but conversations would of course continue. All parties were committed and had a clear interest in striking this balance and concluding the agreement.

Speakers: Francisco Assis (S&D, Portugal), Fernando Ruas (PPE, Portugal), Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, Portugal), José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE, Spain)

3. Report on the DMER and D-BR visit to Brazil (30 October to 2 November 2017) (PE596.542)

The Chair reported to members on the outcome of the joint DMER and D-BR visit to Brazil. Negotiations on the EU-Mercosur association agreement and bilateral relations with Brazil had been the main focus of the agenda for the meetings. During the visit, emphasis had been placed on the need for a body specialising in relations with the European Union to be established within the Brazilian Congress, as well as the need to conclude the negotiations with Mercosur.

The European Union was aware of the important role played by Brazil, and there were hopes that Brazil could contribute to an agreement finally being reached.

Despite a few last-minute hitches during the visit, the delegations had succeeded in keeping to the planned agenda and achieving the aims of the mission. He mentioned Brazil's security problems, especially those in Rio de Janeiro, which had caused some organisational disruption.

He finished by thanking the Brazilian institutions and organisations for their sincere efforts and commitment to making the visit a success, and acknowledged the work of the staff translators, thanking them for their great efficiency.

Members of the delegations in turn discussed the visit to Brazil and acknowledged the European Parliament's contribution to the negotiations and to concluding the agreement. As could be seen during the visit, there was a clear desire across Brazil's civil society, its corporate structures and its government for an agreement to be reached.

Speakers: Fernando Ruas (PPE, Portugal), Francisco Assis (S&D, Portugal), Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, Portugal)

4. Other business

The Chair said that the Spanish and Portuguese translations of the report on the visit to Brazil were not yet available. For this reason, the report would be voted on at the following meeting in Brussels.

5. Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Delegation for relations with Mercosur would take place on 19 February 2018, from 16.45 to 18.00, in Brussels.

The next meeting of the Delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil would take place on 1 March 2018, from 14.00 to 15.30, in Brussels.

Given the stage reached in the negotiations and the key dates ahead, several members suggested bringing forward the date of the DMER meeting or holding an extraordinary meeting as early as possible in January 2018, so that the delegation could evaluate the state of play with the Commissioners and assess whether an agreement could be concluded within the desired timeframe.

In response to this proposal, the Chair confirmed that the dates of the next meetings referred to ordinary meetings and that, due to the urgent nature of the issue, preparations would be made for an extraordinary meeting to be held.

The meeting closed at 11.25.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNÍH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRŠ/DALYVIŲ SĄRAŠAS/
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DMER: Francisco Assis (P) D-BR: Fernando Ruas (P), António Marinho e Pinto (1st VP), Carlos Zorrinho (2nd VP)
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Evelyne Gebhardt

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José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra
53 (8) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Točka dnevnog reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkės punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Agenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

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Via videoconference: Adrianus Koetsenruijter (EEAS); Lorella de la Cruz Iglesias (DG Comércio - CE)

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nöukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Vijeće/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)
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PPE	Olivier de Saëc, Juan Salafranca
S&D	Isabel Jubete, Christos Skarparis (trainee)
ECR	
ALDE	
Verts/ALE	Gaby Küppers,
GUE/NGL	
EFDD	
ENF	Alekandra Lopez Kujacic
NI	

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Javier Fernández-Fernández, Helmut Weixler	
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