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Committee on Development

2006/2222(INI)

7.11.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

on the negotiating mandate for an Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States on the one part and Central America on the other part
(2006/2222(INI))

Draftsman: Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Points out that an association agreement between the EU and Central America must aim, among other things, to promote the sustainable - and ultimately complete - development of the countries of Central America, social cohesion and the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law and foster full respect for human, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights;
2. Reaffirms that the European Union should, in all its dealings with the countries of Central America, be guided by the global priorities which the Union has set for its cooperation policy, which is to say the fight to eradicate poverty, efforts to continue reducing what are currently gaping inequalities in all respects and, more immediately, to meet the Millennium Development Goals within the set deadline;
3. Emphasises the need to ensure that the agreement includes, in binding form, the clause on human rights and democracy as well as the social and environmental clauses, and that these benefit from mechanisms and instruments that will guarantee their positive implementation, with provision being made for an annual report to the European Parliament on the monitoring by the Commission of their implementation;
4. Requests that in the negotiations on the trade-related aspects of the association agreement the parties recognise the asymmetries which exist, as well as the existence of disparities not only between Central America and Europe but also within those regions; calls, therefore, for them to provide for a specific and differentiated approach which is flexible in the deadlines to be agreed, and for access to European markets for Central American products in competitive conditions;
5. Calls for concrete and binding arrangements to be established for the structured participation of national parliaments, the European Parliament and civil society at all stages of the discussion, negotiation and monitoring process in the three dimensions of the association agreement - political dialogue, cooperation and trade;
6. Emphasises the importance of integrating measures that help to foster a culture of peace and social justice, in stepping up EU support for development and social progress in Central American countries; this entails granting fundamental priority to actions in the field of education and health, in which the EU should, moreover, strive to coordinate its initiatives with those of other countries - and in particular Latin American partners - who already actively pursue solidarity policies of this type;
7. Point out that, at all stages of the negotiations, the economic and social rights of all citizens should be enhanced and respected, with particular attention being paid to social inclusion, particularly of citizens of indigenous origin;
8. Takes the view that EU cooperation should support small-scale producers and small- and medium-sized enterprises in general, and urges that investment be made in small businesses since the opening-up of the European markets will essentially benefit larger-

scale producers who are able to satisfy European sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS);

9. Emphasises the need for investment to be flanked with infrastructure, as one of the drivers of economic development, with due recognition for the priorities set out in paragraphs 2 and 6;
10. Advocates strongly that cooperation and the economic instruments should also be used to ensure conservation of the environment in the countries of Central America; emphasises that the development of sustainable agriculture should also be a focus of European cooperation and that fair trade and environmentally-friendly production should be promoted, for example, through the negotiation of a special Community customs tariff for fair trade and/or environmentally-friendly products;
11. Emphasises with reference to product access in the respective markets, that improving the traceability of such products would result not only in a raising of health and environmental quality standards, but also in a significant increase in fair trade;
12. Emphasises that tourism is the world's leading activity and is a lever for economic growth; calls on the Commission to pay special attention to projects for the development of sustainable tourism in the countries of Central America which, owing to their diffuseness, benefit as many of the population as possible;
13. Draws attention, nonetheless, to the fact that tourism is dependent on a wide range of external factors, such as terrorism or natural disasters, and is therefore not a reliable and stable growth factor;
14. Takes the view that the EU should work with the countries of Central America to support their efforts to counter the illegal production and trade in drugs; part of those activities should involve extending aid programmes to farmers for introducing alternative crops, the marketing of which the EU could help effectively to ensure;
15. Believes that part of these cooperation agreements should guarantee certain quotas for the channelling of legal and controlled immigration from Central America to the EU; also takes the view, in relation to illegal immigration that not only should repatriation agreements which obviate the 'pull effect' be established, but also full account should be taken of the discussions in which the international community is currently engaged, with a view to reducing and progressively putting a stop to illegal immigration;
16. Takes the view that once the association agreement has entered into force, three-way and bi-regional cooperation should also be promoted – especially with the Caribbean – and the policy of South-South cooperation encouraged.

PROCEDURE

Title	On the negotiating mandate for an Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States on the one part, and Central America on the other part
References	2006/2222(INI)
Committee responsible	AFET
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	DEVE 28.9.2006
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary	
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez 11.7.2006
Previous drafts(wo)man	
Discussed in committee	2.10.2006
Date adopted	6.11.2006
Result of final vote	+: 13 -: 1 0:
Members present for the final vote	Margrietus van den Berg, Danutė Budreikaitė, Marie-Arlette Carlotti, Hélène Goudin, Maria Martens, Luisa Morgantini, Horst Posdorf, Feleknas Uca, Anna Záborská
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	John Bowis, Fiona Hall, Alain Hutchinson, Jan Jerzy Kułakowski, Manolis Mavrommatis
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	
Comments (available in one language only)	...