

ORAL QUESTION O-0068/02
pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure
by Luís Queiró, on behalf of the UEN Group
to the Council

Subject: MERCOSUR

The situation currently affecting a number of countries in Central and South America, in particular those which are members of MERCOSUR, is beginning to cause serious concern in the political, as well as the economic and social spheres.

Since the European Union and its Member States are this area's main trading partner and bearing in mind the agreements already concluded and the current negotiations for the new free-trade agreement between the two regions, including MERCOSUR, can the Council answer the following questions:

1. How does it rate the progress achieved in the current negotiations regarding the Association Agreement with MERCOSUR? Does it consider that the present crisis affecting a large proportion of the Latin American countries is an obstacle to the negotiation process? When does it envisage concluding the agreement?
2. Does it not consider it of great strategic importance to send the countries concerned a strong political signal that the European Union and its Member States are willing to take urgent steps to step up co-operation, in order to help them to solve the various serious problems confronting them? In particular, has the Council made provision for taking practical short-term measures to help to alleviate the economic and social problems caused by the crisis affecting those countries, without jeopardising the commitments already made?
3. Finally, does the Council intend that cooperation with the MERCOSUR countries and other Latin American countries should also focus, as a matter of priority, on adopting measures to help combat drug-trafficking, organised crime, terrorism and all related offences, by establishing a joint platform for action in this sphere?

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Deadline for reply: 10.10.2002