



Speech by Mr Jacques CHIRAC, President of the French Republic, at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean

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Second Round Table - Economic Issues and Social Cohesion

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Mr. President,
Heads of State and Government,

Latin America is making progress on the path to development and asserting itself as a major world region. Europe accordingly wishes to strengthen its economic ties and step up its cooperation with your countries, in order to foster sustainable development and shared progress.

Trade and investment growth must lie at the heart of the relationship between our two regions. The European Union, the leading trading partner of the Mercosur and Chile, is now also the leading investor in Latin America. This is an expression of our confidence in the future of that continent. Our companies want to support its development, based on the sovereign choices of each State and within a framework in which legal security and equity are fully ensured.

To make progress in this relationship we must reach new regional and multilateral trade agreements, on which negotiations must move forward to overcome the present stalemate.

In the Doha round, the European Union did its utmost, especially on agriculture, to arrive at an agreement. The time has come for the large emerging countries, particularly those in Latin America, to make a move in their turn on the main areas of the negotiations - industrial tariffs, services and intellectual property.

The time has also come to respond to the legitimate concerns of the poorest countries on cotton and preference erosion. On this basis we can, together, relaunch the WTO's momentum and achieve a global and balanced agreement that supports world growth and development.

Strengthened trade relations between Europe and Latin America within a bi-regional framework are the natural complement to multilateral efforts.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

France welcomes the fact that our Summit is initiating the opening of negotiations on an Association Agreement with the Central American Common Market, in accordance with the commitment made in Guadalajara. This political signal must also be understood as encouraging a speedy conclusion of the negotiations on the Mercosur Association Agreement.

Similarly, the European Union wishes to deepen its relations with the Caribbean through economic partnership agreements as provided for in the Cotonou Agreement. With these often fragile countries, trade considerations alone must not override the development objective. It is essential, as I see it, that the European Union lend greater support to the plans for restructuring the commodity industries, especially sugar and bananas, which remain crucial to the economic development of the Caribbean.

Beyond trade, our partnership must support our common determination to combat inequality and injustice. To overcome poverty and social exclusion, to combat drugs and organised crime and to fight illegal immigration, a common, ambitious effort must be made to build new interregional solidarity.

The European Union will do its part by increasing its official development assistance, as decided last year. I would like part of these new resources to be devoted to supporting the social cohesion policies of your governments. This is also the purpose of the EUROsocial programme implemented by France and Spain.

Lastly, we must join forces to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the international community is setting up new financing mechanisms aimed at eliminating poverty. From the start, the countries of your continent have played a key part in this endeavour and I wish especially to salute the impetus lent by Brazil and Chile.

Following the Paris Conference of 28 February, our goal is now to broaden the group of countries introducing the air-ticket solidarity levy and to create an International Drug Purchase Facility. The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS on 2 June in New York provides us with a special opportunity to make progress in implementing this project.

We must also increase our outreach to young people. In 1999 in Rio we created a Common Area of Higher Education in the fields of research and higher education. To give it more substance, let us provide it with further resources. I propose that the European Union contribute its share of the necessary funding. The Common Area of Higher Education that we are building will then become a reality symbolizing the strong cultural and historic ties that unite our two continents.

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