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OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Letter dated 23 April 1997 from the representatives of the
Netherlands and Paraguay to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to bring to your attention the Noordwijk Declaration of the VIIth Institutionalized Ministerial Meeting Rio Group-European Union of 7 and 8 April 1997 (see annex).**

Among other things, the declaration underlines the need to promote sustainable development by consolidating both the needs of economic growth and the preservation of the environment.

As President of the Council of the European Union in New York and as Rio Group Coordinator in New York, respectively, we kindly request that the Noordwijk Declaration and the present letter be distributed as official United Nations documents in the context of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

(Signed) Nicolaas H. BIEGMAN
Permanent Representative of the
Kingdom of the Netherlands to the
United Nations

(Signed) Ramon A. DÍAZ-PEREIRA
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* A/S-19/1 (to be issued).

** The document is being circulated in the languages of submission only.

ANNEX

[Original: English and Spanish]

**VIIth INSTITUTIONALIZED MINISTERIAL MEETING
RIO GROUP – EUROPEAN UNION
7 and 8 April 1997**

Noordwijk Declaration

INTRODUCTION

1. The VIIth ministerial meeting of the Rio Group and the European Union, institutionalized in the Rome Declaration of 20 December 1990, was held in the city of Noordwijk on 7 and 8 April 1997, in accordance with the Declaration of the VIth ministerial meeting held in Cochabamba on 15 and 16 April 1996.

Political Dialogue

2. Ministers emphasized the considerable progress within the framework of the political dialogue between the two regions, as initiated by the Rome Declaration and consolidated by the ministerial meetings in Luxembourg, Santiago de Chile, Copenhagen, Sao Paulo, Paris and Cochabamba.
3. Ministers acknowledged the importance of the two regions' historical, cultural, political and economic relations and the shared values and ideals of respect for human rights and the rule of law which underpin the institutionalized political dialogue and direct the cooperation between both parties.
4. They reaffirmed their governments' commitment to the validity of representative democracy, political pluralism and full association of civil society in the political decision-making process and their firm determination to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

They reiterated their governments' commitment to good governance, to consolidate and strengthen public institutions as effective instruments of the rule of law and, in this context, they agreed to strengthen their cooperation.

In this context, they underlined the need to promote education for democracy thereby encouraging the development of a political culture which can help to strengthen the democratic principles and values on which our political systems are based. Ministers also reaffirmed their satisfaction with existing cooperation between the two regions in this field and expressed their willingness to step up cooperation and exchange of existing experience in this area as a fundamental contribution to the full consolidation and elaboration of democracy.

5. Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the dialogue recently established on confidence and security building measures between the Rio Group and the European Union. They stated that the seminars held in Punta del Este in 1995 and in Quito in November 1996 had served to intensify the exchange of views and further strengthen relations in this area.

Ministers agreed to continue to exchange information and experience in order to consolidate a climate of confidence which would make it possible to reduce the risks of conflicts and reinforce peace and security, respecting international law and treaties. They decided to hold a further seminar in Bolivia in the second half of 1997, which would submit specific proposals for cooperation in this field.

6. Ministers strongly condemned all acts of terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomsoever committed.

They underlined their joint commitment to fighting this scourge, which undermines peaceful co-existence and impairs the rule of law. They urged all States to ratify the relevant international conventions.

Ministers underlined the importance of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 51/210 and they stressed the need further to strengthen their cooperation, as well as with other States, in order to prevent, combat and eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

7. Ministers furthermore repeated their condemnation of all forms of racism and xenophobia, which constitute an assault on the dignity and the fundamental rights of the human being.
8. Ministers welcomed the signing of a Firm and Lasting Peace Accord in Guatemala on 29 December 1996 between the Government of Guatemala and the URNG guerrillas. They invited both parties to observe the substance of the commitments made in the Agreements signed. They expressed satisfaction at the results achieved at the meeting of the Consultative Group for Guatemala held in Brussels in January 1997.
9. Ministers emphasized the importance of the interparliamentary political dialogue between both regions and advocated intensifying it.

10. The European Union and the Rio Group have common views on many global issues. Recalling their agreement in Cochabamba to continue to develop the dialogue within the framework of the United Nations, Ministers agreed to explore at all levels the scope for bringing closer together the positions of the two regions and the possibilities for cooperation on matters of mutual interest in international fora.

Ministers agreed to meet in New York on the occasion of the 52nd United Nations General Assembly.

11. Ministers noted the progress achieved in the economic integration process and political cooperation, both in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Europe. This process should create a climate conducive to economic development and further rapprochement within each region.
12. Ministers welcomed the progress made between Latin America and the EU, in particular through the prompt implementation of the new agreements with Mercosur and Chile, as well as the work in progress towards a new agreement with Mexico, the institutionalization of the political dialogue between the EU and the Andean Community, and the positive outcome of the San José XIIIth Ministerial Conference between the EU and Central America and of the IVth High Level Economic and Commercial Meeting between the EU and the Rio Group.
13. Ministers reiterated their firm political will to continue to promote institutionalization of these processes of subregional and bilateral rapprochement and welcomed the implementation of the instruments and mechanisms provided for therein.
14. The Ministers expressed their interest in the proposals for a Summit of Heads of State and Government in order to strengthen relations between the two regions.

Sustainable Development

15. Ministers emphasized the necessity of promoting sustainable development which encompasses economic, social and technological as well as environmental dimensions and reconciles the needs of economic growth and preservation of the environment. In this regard, they recalled their perception of sustainable development, as reflected in the Cochabamba Declaration.

They stressed that sustainable development was a comprehensive concept, implying human empowerment, the reduction of social differences and poverty alleviation within a democratic framework. They also expressed concern at the continuing deterioration of the global environment, including worsening trends in environmental pollution and the degradation of natural resources.

16. Recalling the results of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Ministers stressed that the fight against poverty and social exclusion constitutes a basic objective of both regions. They expressed support for measures and actions aimed at improving conditions of less-favoured groups of society, including indigenous communities. They also underlined in this context their willingness to promote women's rights and equal participation in decision-making processes in accordance with the agreements adopted at the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing. In particular as regards the areas of health, education, housing and employment, Ministers agreed to encourage cooperation projects based on an integrated approach and directed towards sustainable development.
17. They emphasized the private sector's important contribution to the attainment of sustained economic growth and agreed on the importance of creating incentives for economic activities compatible with the strategy of sustainable development.
18. Reaffirming their support for the follow-up to the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, they expressed their confidence that the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in June 1997 will be an opportunity to restate the political will in favour of sustainable development and the fulfilment of the principles and commitments of the Earth Summit and Agenda 21. They expressed their satisfaction at the activities undertaken within the context of the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity, the Convention on Combating Desertification and the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances, as well as of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. In this regard, they agreed also to collaborate closely at the future Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly and to secure follow-up of the commitments made.
19. Ministers also underlined the importance of implementing the respective commitments made at the Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the World Food Summit in Rome in November 1996 and the Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul. They pointed, moreover, to the substantial contributions by the Summit of the Americas for Sustainable Development held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia) in December 1996 and its action plan.

In this connection, they underlined the need for support and cooperation at bilateral, multilateral, regional and subregional levels to make it possible to implement action in the abovementioned areas.

Ministers stressed that sustainable development should become a matter of long-term importance in the dialogue between the EU and the Rio Group. They agreed to strengthen their dialogue in this respect to facilitate closer collaboration in the appropriate international fora.

In this context, they welcomed the fact that a seminar on this subject was held in the Netherlands, in February 1997, under the Dutch Presidency, organized by IRELA. Ministers agreed that this seminar had been a good opportunity to exchange information and opinions and it may be repeated in the future.

Economy, trade and cooperation

20. Ministers emphasized their commitment to apply the principles of multilateralism in their trade relations; they expressed their resolve to strengthen the WTO as the appropriate forum for resolving trade disputes.

In that connection, Ministers reiterated their firm rejection of any unilateral measure, having extraterritorial effect contrary to international law and to established free trade rules. They agreed that such practices pose a great threat to multilateralism.

21. They expressed satisfaction at the positive cooperation established between both regions at the first World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Meeting held in Singapore in December 1996 and restated their willingness to implement all the commitments made during the Uruguay Round and the urgent need of successfully completing the remaining negotiations.

In this connection, they agreed that there should be consideration of the special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries as already established in the WTO Agreement.

22. Ministers acknowledged the fact that both regions agreed on the principles of open regionalism and multilateralism; they also emphasized that regional integration should be supported when it is a means of ensuring that developing countries are harmoniously and progressively brought into the global economy and that lasting growth is achieved.
23. As regards bi-regional trade relations, they noted with satisfaction the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean has emerged as one of the most dynamic markets for the European Union. The European Union likewise continues to be one of the most important markets for Latin America and the Caribbean. With regard to the trade deficit which Latin America has had with the European Union since 1993, they undertook to endeavour to analyze means by which trade exchanges could be increased.
24. Ministers stressed the results of the IVth High Level Economic and Commercial Meeting held in Brussels in November 1996, and confirmed the importance of this special forum for continuous dialogue in exchanging points of view on topics of interest to both regions.

Ministers accordingly agreed to convene the Vth High Level Economic and Commercial Meeting to take place in the second half of 1997.

25. Ministers pointed to the role played by investment in their mutual relations and repeated their undertaking to foster initiatives aimed at increasing investments, including the signing of bilateral double taxation agreements, as well as bilateral investment promotion and protection agreements. In this connection, the Ministers stressed the importance of the protection of intellectual property. They expressed satisfaction at the growing importance of the Latin American region as a magnet for direct foreign investment and pointed to the mutual advantage of increased European participation in the process.

They also noted the growth in foreign investment in the Latin American region, a trend which had been maintained in 1996, with the European Union being one of the major investors in the region.

26. Ministers expressed their support for the work on investments carried out by the World Trade Organization with the support of UNCTAD and for the setting up of working groups on investments and competition policy within the WTO.
27. Ministers welcomed the holding of the Seminar on the "Impact of non-regulated capital movement in the relations between the European Union and the Rio Group", held in Rome on 6 and 7 May 1996.
28. Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the projects carried out in Latin America by the European Investment Bank in the first three years, and at renewal of its mandate to continue its operations in the region.

In this connection they expressed their interest in the EIB increasing its activities in Latin America.

29. Ministers recognized the importance of the cooperation between the European Union and the Rio Group. The European Union is the main cooperation partner in Latin America and the Caribbean, and they agreed to strengthen and step up this cooperation, taking into account the special circumstances of each country and focusing on the needs of the poorest populations. In particular, they emphasized horizontal cooperation programmes, such as AL-INVEST, ECIP, AL-URE, URB-AL, as well as the ALFA academic and scientific exchange programme. They likewise expressed their confidence that the criteria for such cooperation would be accorded by both sides.
30. They again acknowledged the CEFIR programme in the field of regional integration, expressed satisfaction that the project had been prolonged for a further two years and stressed the relevance of establishing the mechanisms permitting it to continue and expand its work.
31. They emphasized that cooperation in science and technology is an important element in the dialogue between the two regions. In this respect, they agreed to step up their participation in the forthcoming Vth Framework Programme on Research and Development, taking into account reciprocal interests, to promote scientific cooperation of excellence, favouring the insertion of the Latin American countries in global economy and increasing the presence of European companies in Latin America. They welcomed the dialogue between the two regions started at the Madrid Conference in October 1995 and agreed that it should be continued, taking into account the priorities of the Rio Group and guaranteeing improved access to scientific and technical cooperation of excellence.

32. Ministers welcomed the progress achieved in Latin American and Caribbean energy integration and promised to step up efforts to enlarge energy cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the Rio Group with a view to fostering free trade and intra-regional investment.

Cooperation in the fight against drugs

33. Ministers considered that the principles of co-responsibility and international cooperation are essential in dealing effectively with problems with global implications such as the fight against drugs, organized crime and money-laundering. These problems require concerted solutions involving multilateral engagements and commitments by all the parties concerned.
34. Within the framework of the principle of co-responsibility accepted by both regions, Ministers underlined the importance of continuing to intensify the high level dialogue on drugs, including the specialized dialogue between the EU and the Andean Community, and their willingness to step up cooperation in this field, including by implementing the agreements already signed on chemical precursors. They took note with satisfaction of the conclusions of the Dublin European Council of 1996.
35. They welcomed the extraordinary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, to be held during 1998 with the objective of discussing the problem of illegal drugs; they stressed their commitment to work for a successful outcome to this meeting, with a view to reiterating the will of the international community, as set out in UN Resolution 51/64, to fight drugs including by implementing the existing global strategy, the UN global plan of action.
36. In order to intensify this cooperation, ministers agreed on the holding of a meeting of experts during 1997 within the framework of the EU-Rio Group dialogue.
37. Ministers expressed their gratitude to the people and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their hospitality and for the organization which had made a success of the VIIth Institutionalized Ministerial Meeting between the Rio Group and the European Union.
38. Ministers thanked the Government of Panama for its offer to host the VIIIth Institutionalized Ministerial Meeting between the Rio Group and the European Union on 12-13 February 1998.