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Agriculture and Fisheries

Luxembourg, 23 and 24 June 2008

**President Iztok JARC
Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food**

Cuba – Council conclusions (P. 26)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council:

The Council notes the changes undertaken so far by the Cuban Government. The Council supports liberalizing changes in Cuba and encourages the government to introduce them.

The Council called upon the Cuban Government to improve effectively the human rights situation by, inter alia, releasing unconditionally all political prisoners, including those who were detained and sentenced in 2003. This remains a key priority for the EU. It also calls on the Cuban Government to facilitate access of international humanitarian organizations to Cuban prisons. The Council further called upon the Cuban authorities to ratify and implement the recently signed International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and urged

again the Cuban Government to make real the commitment to human rights it has demonstrated through the signing of these two human rights covenants.

The Council confirmed its renewed commitment to and the relevance of the Common Position of 1996, and reaffirmed its determination to pursue a dialogue with the Cuban authorities as well as with representatives of civil society and democratic opposition, in accordance with EU policies, in order to promote respect for human rights and real progress towards a pluralist democracy. The Council underlined that the EU will continue to offer to all sectors of society practical support towards peaceful change in Cuba. The EU also reiterated its call on the Cuban Government to grant freedom of information and expression including access to the Internet and invited the Cuban Government to cooperate on this matter.

The EU reiterates the right of the Cuban citizens to decide independently about their future and remains ready to contribute positively to the future development of all sectors of Cuban society including through development cooperation instruments.

As stated in the Council Conclusions of 18 June 2007, the EU stands ready to resume a comprehensive and open dialogue with the Cuban authorities on all topics of mutual interest. Since June 2007, preliminary discussions on the possibility to launch such a dialogue have taken place at Ministerial level between the EU and Cuba and bilaterally. This process of dialogue should include the whole range of potential fields of cooperation including the political, human rights, economic, scientific and cultural spheres and should take place on a reciprocal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and result-oriented basis. Within the framework of this dialogue, the EU will outline to the Cuban Government its views on democracy, universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Council reaffirmed that its policy for EU contacts with the democratic opposition remains valid. During high level visits, human rights issues should always be addressed; when appropriate, meetings with the democratic opposition will be part of high level visits.

The Council therefore agreed to pursue the above mentioned comprehensive political dialogue with the Cuban Government. In this context, the Council agreed to the lifting of the already suspended 2003 measures as a means to facilitate the political dialogue process and enable the full use of the instruments of the 1996 Common Position.

On the occasion of the annual review of the Common Position, the Council will proceed in June 2009 to an evaluation of its relations with Cuba including the effectiveness of the political dialogue process. Following that date, the dialogue will continue if the Council decides that it has been effective, taking into account in particular the elements contained in paragraph 2 above".