



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 24 January 2019
(OR. en)

8024/1/03
REV 1 DCL 1

PVD 26
ASIE 10
COHOM 15

DECLASSIFICATION

of document: 8024/1/03 REV 1 RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED

dated: 1 April 2003

new status: Public

Subject: Report of the Asia Oceania Working Group of 27 March 2003

Delegations will find attached the declassified version of the above document.

The text of this document is identical to the previous version.

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TRANSMISSION OF TEXT

from : Secretariat

Subject : Report of the Asia Oceania Working Group of 27 March 2003

Please find annexed the report of the Asia Oceania Working Group of 27 March 2003.

1. CHINA

- ADS agreement

The Commission presented two alternative options - a protocol and an exchange of letters - for the readmission clause currently contained in article 5 of the draft ADS Agreement (DS 34/03). Although all Member States were prepared to accept both options, some delegations felt that, from a political point of view, an exchange of letters would be more adequate especially if it is signed by the Chinese Minister of Public Security.

The Group agreed to authorise the Commission to use both alternatives, provided they were legally binding, as a fall-back position if the current readmission clause in article 5 proves totally unacceptable for the Chinese side. The drafting suggestions put forward by Finland will be incorporated.

The Commission will take into consideration Denmark's special situation in further negotiations.

The presidency pointed out that the debates on the ADS Agreement would continue at COASI. The SCIFA and Visa Working Groups will be kept informed and, if necessary, will be invited to forthcoming COASI meetings. The presidency intends to circulate a new text of the Agreement two weeks ahead of the next COASI.

HoMs in Beijing are asked to report on specific consular and administrative problems that could arise in the implementation of the ADS Agreement.

2. SRI LANKA DONOR CONFERENCE

The Group agreed to accept the Japanese invitation to the EU to co-host the Tokyo conference. The presidency, together with the Commission and The Netherlands will prepare a draft EU statement for the conference, to be circulated by coreu.

3. Commission's proposal on election priorities

Delegations exchanged views on the basis of the Commission's proposals on the matter.

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The Group confirmed its agreement to send EU observers to the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Cambodia, as well as to general elections in Nepal if convened for 2003. There was also a consensus on the need for EU observation for elections in Afghanistan, which should be convened for 2004 in accordance with the Bonn Agreement.

As for the other priorities suggested by the Commission (Nepal if in 2004, Indonesia, Fiji, Sri Lanka), delegations were invited to share their views by coreu until 4 April.

4. ASEM

- *Economic Aspects including the high-level ASEM Task Force*

The Commission briefed on the high-level Task Force, indicating that the Asian countries had nominated nine representatives. The Task Force would now have to hold their first meeting and plan their work, most likely starting in May. Japan's wish to host the first meeting on March 26 had not proved possible. Therefore it was probable that the Task Force would aim to draw up an interim report for the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in July next. The Institute ELCANO at Madrid, Spain would act as the contact point for distributing papers for the European members of the Task Force.

The French delegation stressed the need for COASI to agree formally on an EU position for the reform of the economic pillar of ASEM in good time with a view to the SOMTI meeting on June 4/5 next in Paris.

The Commission drew attention to the importance of discussions in COASI on April 10 on enlargement of ASEM and on the consultation mechanism with a view to the ASEM SOM on May 12 and the Asians' meeting on April 25.
