

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0376/06

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to the Commission

Subject: State of EU-Mercosur negotiations following the WTO summit in Hong Kong

In September 2005, negotiations resumed between the European Union (EU) and Mercosur with a view to a free-trade agreement, the stated intention being to overcome differences of opinion and reach a compromise during the first half of 2006. Such an outcome, if achieved, would bring about the world's largest free-trade area, fostering political and cultural ties between the two regional blocs in addition to trade.

Ahead of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) summit in Hong Kong, however, negotiations made little progress. The summit, if successful, would have facilitated and indeed speeded up EU-Mercosur negotiations.

Admittedly, an interim agreement was reached in Hong Kong. Regrettably, it is most inadequate because, inter alia, of profound disagreements between the EU and Brazil on the issues of agriculture and services, on which EU-Mercosur negotiations are centred.

Does the Commission consider that the outcome of the WTO summit is likely to jeopardise the search for a future agreement between the EU and Mercosur?

What goals has it set itself ahead of the Vienna summit in May 2006? Should there be deadlock, on what points in the EU proposal might there be movement?