

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

BRUSSELS EUROPEAN COUNCIL

12 DECEMBER 2003

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III. ENLARGEMENT

30. The European Council welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Commission contained in its Comprehensive Monitoring Reports, the Strategy Paper and the Regular Reports presented on 5 November 2003.

New Member States

31. The Union looks forward to welcoming the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia as full members of the Union on 1 May 2004. Integrating the new Member States into the European family will fulfil the aspirations of European citizens throughout our continent.

32. The European Council invites the new Member States in the run-up to accession to intensify and complete their final preparations for membership. The European Council endorses the Council conclusions of 17 November 2003 on monitoring their state of preparedness for EU membership. In this context, it notes the Commission's determination to take, wherever necessary, all appropriate measures to safeguard the smooth functioning of all EU policies in the enlarged Union.

33. The European Council also notes with satisfaction the advanced state of the ongoing process of ratification of the Accession Treaty and looks forward to its timely completion.

Bulgaria and Romania

34. The European Council underscores the continuity and irreversibility of the ongoing enlargement process of which Bulgaria and Romania form an integral part. Over the past year, these countries have significantly brought forward their preparations for membership, which is reflected in the well-advanced state of their accession negotiations.

35. Welcoming Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007 as members of the Union, if they are ready, is the common objective of the Union of 25. Negotiations will be concluded on the same basis and principles applied to the ten acceding States. Bulgaria and Romania should continue energetically their preparations and make further progress on the ground, so that the accession negotiations can be brought to a successful conclusion in 2004 on the basis of own merits, and the Accession Treaty can be signed as soon as possible in 2005. The European

Council underlines the determination of the Union to facilitate this time line. To this end, it is crucial for both countries to bring their administrative and judicial capacity up to the required level.

36. Furthermore, the European Council encourages Bulgaria and Romania to continue on the path of economic and structural reform in order to take full advantage of the benefits offered by the accession process. Close monitoring by the Union of the commitments undertaken and of the effective implementation of the *acquis* will continue to guide Bulgaria and Romania in their membership preparations.

37. Regarding the financial framework for Bulgaria and Romania, the Commission is invited to submit its proposal at the beginning of 2004, so as to enable the Council to give the necessary guidance for the Commission to present draft Common Positions on the relevant negotiating chapters in Spring 2004. In this context, the European Council takes note of the Commission's intention to base its proposal on the principles and methodology developed for the negotiations with the ten acceding States. The European Council restates its resolve that discussions or agreement on future policy reforms, or the new financial perspective, will neither impede the pursuit and conclusion of accession negotiations nor be prejudged by the outcome of those negotiations.

Turkey

38. The European Council welcomes the considerable and determined efforts by the Turkish government to accelerate the pace of reforms, many of which are significant in political and legal terms. The legislative packages so far adopted, the first important steps taken to ensure effective implementation, as well as the progress in addressing many priorities under the Copenhagen political criteria and in the revised Accession Partnership have brought Turkey closer to the Union. Turkey has also made significant progress in meeting the Copenhagen economic criteria. However, further sustained efforts are needed, in particular as regards strengthening the independence and functioning of the judiciary, the overall framework for the exercise of fundamental freedoms (association, expression and religion), the further alignment of civil-military relations with European practice, the situation in the Southeast of the country and cultural rights. Turkey also has to overcome macro-economic imbalances and structural shortcomings.

39. The European Council underlines the importance of Turkey's expression of political will to settle the Cyprus problem. In this respect a settlement of the Cyprus problem, based on the principles set out in section IV. below, would greatly facilitate Turkey's membership aspirations.

40. The European Council encourages Turkey to build on the substantial progress achieved so far in its preparations for launching accession negotiations and underlines its commitment to working towards full implementation of the pre-accession strategy with Turkey, including the revised Accession Partnership, in view of the decision to be taken by the European Council in December 2004 on the basis of the report and recommendations of the Commission.

IV. CYPRUS

41. In line with its relevant conclusions, the European Council reiterates its preference for a reunited Cyprus to join the Union on 1 May 2004, in order to allow all Cypriots to enjoy a secure and prosperous future and the benefits of EU accession. It considers that there is a good prospect of reaching a just, viable and functional settlement by 1 May 2004, consistent with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The European Council therefore again urges all parties concerned, and in particular Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership, to strongly support the UN Secretary General's efforts and, in this context, calls for an immediate resumption of the talks on the basis of his proposals. The Union reiterates its willingness to accommodate the terms of a settlement in line with the principles on which the EU is founded. In this context, the European Council welcomes the Commission's willingness to offer assistance for a speedy solution within the framework of the acquis. Following a settlement, the Union is ready to provide financial assistance for the development of the northern part of Cyprus and the Commission would be called upon to prepare all necessary steps for lifting the suspension of the acquis, in accordance with Protocol 10 to the Act of Accession.

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