Cyprus: accession to the European Union and progress in negotiations

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The committee adopted the report by Jacques POOS (PES, L) on Cyprus' membership application to the EU. The report said that Cyprus fully met the political and economic criteria for joining the EU and had made significant progress in adopting the "acquis communautaire". It could therefore "expect to accede to the EU rapidly". However problems still remained over the division of the island. The committee stressed that the Nicosia government was negotiating on behalf of "all Cypriots" and that when those negotiations and the accession process had been completed all its citizens would legally be part of the EU. The accession process should serve as a catalyst for the peace effort aimed at achieving a political solution to the problem of partition of the island. There was support too for the conclusions of the Helsinki European Council whereby resolution of the Cyprus question was not a prerequisite for accession, and for Commissioner Verheugen's view that there was no possibility of separate negotiations with the two parts of the island, and no question either of accession for two Cypriot states or of accession of the northern part of the island upon Turkish accession. The report stressed that if Turkey were to carry out its threat to annex the north of Cyprus, it would put an end to its own ambitions of EU membership. The committee applauded UN efforts to reach a comprehensive and rapid solution and criticised the Turkish Cypriot leader Mr Denktash's withdrawal from UN-sponsored proximity talks. However there was support for the "enhanced political dialogue" between the EU and Turkey and the conclusion of accession partnerships with Cyprus and Turkey that "could provide a framework of resolution of the problem". There was a welcome too for contact at all levels between the two communities and for the support for EU membership among Turkish Cypriots, as evidenced in recent opinion polls. Other points taken up included the deterioration in the macro-economic stability of Cyprus and the special attention that needed to be paid to certain areas of the "acquis", such as the environment.