Bulgaria: membership application and partnership, 14 December 1995

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PURPOSE : to present the roadmaps to help Bulgaria and Romania on their way to EU membership. CONTENT : as it had proposed on 9 October in its Strategy Paper and as requested by the European Council in Brussels on 24-25 October, the European Commission today presented roadmaps for Bulgaria and Romania to support the efforts of these two candidate countries to achieve their objective of joining the European Union in 2007. The purpose of the roadmaps is to indicate the main steps that they need to take to be ready for membership. They identify in detail the tasks ahead, with a particular emphasis on administrative and judicial capacity necessary to implement the acquis and on economic reform. To support these efforts, the Commission is also proposing a considerable progressive increase in the European Union's financial assistance. The roadmaps will be submitted to the Council of Ministers and to the European Council in Copenhagen on 12-13 December. In the Strategy Paper 'Towards the Enlarged Union', of 9 October 2002, the Commission announced that it would propose, on the basis of the analysis in the 2002 Regular Reports, detailed roadmaps for Bulgaria and Romania before the Copenhagen European Council. In the Conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 24-25 October 2002, the Member States agreed with the Commission's evaluation of the progress achieved by Bulgaria and Romania. In the light of the inclusive and irreversible nature of the enlargement process, the Council and the Commission were invited to prepare, in close consultations with Bulgaria and Romania, the necessary decisions at the European Council in Copenhagen concerning detailed roadmaps and increased pre-accession assistance in order to advance the accession process with these countries. The European Council expressed its support for Bulgaria and Romania in their efforts to achieve the objective of membership in 2007. - A useful guide on the way to accession : The roadmaps for Bulgaria and Romania cover the period up to accession. Their purpose is to indicate in detail the main steps that they need to take to be ready for membership. They are based on the commitments made in the negotiations and on what needs to be done to fulfil the criteria for membership. They also follow the of principles that have guided the accession process from the outset, namely equality of treatment, own merits and differentiation, without introducing any new criteria or conditions. The roadmaps put a particular emphasis on administrative and judicial capacity necessary to implement the acquis and on economic reform. Short and medium term issues are identified in the roadmaps and will be further developed next year. The roadmaps will be updated periodically in view of developments in the countries and progress in negotiations. - Financial assistance : The Commission proposes a considerable and progressive increase in financial assistance for Bulgaria and Romania from the date of the first round of accessions. This increase will amount to an additional 20% in 2004, 30% in 2005 and 40% in 2006 compared to the average assistance received by the two countries in the period 2001-2003.Additional assistance will be conditional onmaking progress in line with the roadmaps and on improving significantly capacity to manage and use funds effectively. Bulgaria and Romania have begun to develop capacities to make improved use of existing funds. If preparations are continued and intensified they should be ready to receive and use additional funds effectively from 2004 onwards. - Observer status : Bulgaria and Romania already participate in a number of Community committees and agencies. As regards the situation after the signature of the Accession Treaty, the Commission proposes the same treatment for Bulgaria and Romania as for the other negotiating states. After the signature of the Accession Treaty, Bulgaria and Romania should therefore be given the possibility to further participate, wherever legally possible, as observers in all committees set up by the comitology procedure and all other committees. They should also be able to participate at least as observers in the relevant structures of all Community agencies. The general principles and details of this participation will be defined at a later stage. - Monitoring : Bulgaria and Romania have provisionally closed a considerable number of chapters on the basis of their own indicative date for membership of 1 January 2007. It is particularly important for the candidate countries and the EU to monitor closely the implementation of these commitments. The Europe Agreement structures, which are used to review

progress on all priorities and on the Action Plans on administrative and judicial capacity, should be used systematically for this purpose. Peer reviews have proved a useful mechanism in some areas and could be further developed. The Commission will continue to issue Regular Reports, until Bulgaria and Romania have fulfilled the criteria for accession. Future Regular Reports will include an assessment of the implementation of the roadmaps.