Poland: membership application and partnership, 8 April 1994

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OBJECTIVE: AGENDA 2000: presentation of the Commission's opinion on Poland's request for membership (5 April 1994). CONTENT: All the requests for membership were assessed using a single method based on the criteria established at the Copenhagen European Council (June 1993). These criteria are as follows: - political criteria: the candidate countries must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, human rights and respect for minorities, - economic criteria: these countries must have a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union, - criteria relating to the ability of the countries to take on the obligations of membership (in particular integration of the acquis, to a greater or lesser extent, and respect for the criteria concerning economic and monetary union). With regard to all these criteria, it emerges that: 1) in political terms, Poland presents the characteristics of a democracy, with stable institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; 2) in economic terms, Poland can be regarded as a functioning market economy and should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; 3) with regard to the capacity to take on the obligations of membership, Poland must continue the transposition and implementation of the acquis. Poland should be able to implement the acquis in particular as regards the single market. Nevertheless, particular efforts are needed in investment and in sectors such as agriculture, environment and transport. In social terms, the pension and social security systems require substantial reform, financial services are under-developed and the banking sector needs further reform. The large state-owned companies must continue to restructure. Poland must also continue its work on public procurement, data protection, competition, liberalization of capital movements and legislative adaptation of technical rules and standards. Considerable effort is also needed with regard to telecommunications, fisheries, consumer protection and frontier checks (problems of drugs and organized crime). In general, continuing administrative reform is indispensable if the country is to have the structures to apply and enforce the acquis effectively. In conclusion: the Commission considers that negotiations for accession can be opened with Poland. The pre-accession strategy will help this country to prepare rapidly for the obligations of membership by concentrating on dealing with the shortcomings.