Lithuania: membership application and partnership, 8 December 1995

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PURPOSE: AGENDA 2000: presentation of the Commission's opinion on Lithuania's request for membership (8 December 1995). 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 stability of 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 these criteria, it is emerges that : 1) in political terms, Lithuania 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, Lithuania has made considerable progress in the creation of a market economy but it would face serious difficulties in coping with the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; 3) with regard to its capacity to assume the obligations of membership, Lithuania has made considerable progress in transposing and implementing the acquis relating particularly to the single market. If it makes additional efforts it should become able to participate fully in the single market in the medium term. Particular efforts, including investment, are still needed in the environment, agriculture and energy sectors. Lastly, strengthening of the administrative structures is indispensable if Lithuania is to have the structures to apply and enforce the acquis effectively. In conclusion, the Commission considers that negotiations for accession cannot be opened with Lithuania until this country has made sufficient progress in satisfying the conditions for membership (mainly economic criteria). Meanwhile the pre-accession strategy should be strengthened in order to help this country to prepare itself rapidly for the obligations of membership.