Poland: membership application and partnership, 8 April 1994

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OBJECTIVE: to present the regular 1998 report from the Commission on Poland's progress towards accession. CONTENT: in line with the timetable of Agenda 2000 and the direction given by the European Council in Cardiff, the Commission presents a report in the form of an appraisal of the progress made by this country with regard to accession. The report examines: - the relations between Poland and the EU, particularly in the framework of the Europe Agreement; - the situation in respect of the political conditions set by the European Council (democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities); - Poland's situation and prospects in respect of the economic conditions mentioned by the European Council (functioning market economy, capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union); - the question of Poland's capacity to adopt the obligations of membership (in particular Community acquis). In concluding its report, the Commission considers Poland's results to be satisfactory in economic and political terms: Polish institutions operate smoothly and Poland can be considered as a viable market economy, capable of coping with market forces in the Union. However, the rate of economic restructuring needs to quicken and commercial policy should be strengthened. Priority now needs to be given to privatizing publicly owned companies, modernizing agriculture and developing public finances. In addition, the access of SMEs to financial markets needs to be improved. The pattern of transposition remains, on the other hand, quite uneven and there are considerable gaps in administrative capacity (environment, standardization and state aid controls). The process of adopting legislation relating to the internal market has not taken place satisfactorily and efforts still need to be made in the control of public aid. The policies which still have shortcomings are in environment, where progress is very limited, and agriculture, which is well behind European standards. Although Poland has in part responded to the short-term priorities laid down in the Accession Partnership in the economic and industrial area (radical reform of the coal and steel sectors) and regional development, insufficient account has been taken of the priorities set in the area of agriculture, environment and institutional and administrative capacity. In terms of administrative capacity to apply the acquis, Poland experienced difficulties in implementing the planned reforms. Poland's National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis is currently undergoing revision so as to place greater emphasis on the country's programme of alignment with Community legislation. In the second half of 1999, the Commission will present its position on the revised version of this programme to the Council at the time when the accession partnership is being re-examined.