Romania: membership application and partnership, 22 June 1995

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OBJECTIVE: to present the regular report for 1998 on the progress made by Romania in preparation for EU accession. CONTENT: in line with the Agenda 2000 timetable and the direction given by the Cardiff European Council, the Commission presents its report in the form of an appraisal of the progress made by this country with regard to EU accession. The report examines: - the relations between Romania and the EU, particularly in the framework of the Europe Agreement; - the situation in respect of the political conditions set by the Copenhagen European Council (democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities); - Romania'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 Romania's capacity to adopt the obligations of membership (in particular, the Community acquis). In the conclusions of its report, the Commission considers Romania's results satisfactory in political terms, although progress still needs to be made in eradicating corruption, improving the operation of the judiciary and protecting individual civil liberties and the rights of the Roma people. On the economic front, Romania has made very little progress in establishing a market economy and its capacity to cope with market forces in the Union has deteriorated. Even if prices have been liberalized and inflation controlled, the reforms appear, overall, too timid and too slow. Furthermore, legal and administrative uncertainty are impeding the progress of reforms, thereby weakening the country's macroeconomic stability. For the Commission, Romania's economic situation is serious and needs to be accorded absolute priority on the part of the new Romanian government. The report advocates, in particular, an important privatization programme and the restructuring of companies. As far as legislative alignment is concerned, Romania has made notable progress in the transposition of certain areas of the acquis. However, the country still needs to make considerable efforts in terms of alignment and the implementation and effective application of legislation before it is able to assume the obligations that derive from accession. Certain essential priorities for the pre-accession partnership (combatting corruption, border controls, restructuring of the banking sector, public procurement, and the environment) have not received all the attention that they required. The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis is currently undergoing revision so as to place greater emphasis on the process of alignment with Community legislation. In the course of the second half of 1999, the Commission will present its position on the revised version of this programme to the Council of Ministers at the time when the pre-accession partnership is being re-examined.