Slovakia: membership application and partnership, 27 June 1995

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OBJECTIVE: to present the 1998 regular report on the progress made by Slovakia 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 Slovakia 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); - Slovakia'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 Slovakia's capacity to adopt the obligations of membership (in particular, the Community acquis). In the conclusions of its report, the Commission considers Slovakia's results relatively poor in political terms but nevertheless encouraging: between July 1997 and September 1998, the Slovak institutions lacked stability, as proven by their inability to elect a president. However, the parliamentary elections of September 1998 show that a new spirit is surfacing and that the country has greater democratic maturity. The new Slovak political climate should enable the new majority to remedy previous shortcomings. The Commission should, in this context, evaluate the results of the new government, as well as its capacity to respond to the Copenhagen political criteria. On the economic front, the assessment is mixed: the pattern of structural reforms continues to be weak and the country is far from having stabilized its macroeconomic imbalances. The privatization plan is sketchy, especially as regards the lack of transparency of the process engaged by the Slovak authorities. However, the Commission considers that this country should be in a position in the medium term to cope with competitive pressure and market forces in the Union. As far as legislative alignment is concerned, the pattern of transposition has slowed down and progress in the strengthening of implementing structures remains limited (e.g. internal market, environment and justice and home affairs). Apart from the adoption of legislation on intellectual and industrial property, the achievement of the short term priorities of the pre-accession partnership have been meagre. 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.