Latvia: membership application and partnership, 13 October 1995

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OBJECTIVE: to present the 1998 regular report from the Commission on Latvia'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 Latvia 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); - the question of Latvia's capacity to assume the obligations of membership, (in particular, the Community acquis). In concluding its report, the Commission considers Latvia's results to be positive in political terms: considerable progress has been made to alleviate the weaknesses identified in the 1997 opinion and to integrate non-citizens. Continued attention needs to be paid to promoting the learning of the Latvian language by non-citizens, to the reform of public administration, to strengthening the judiciary and to fighting corruption. On the economic front, Latvia has continued to make progress in developing a market economy and is on the road, in the medium term, to being able to withstand competitive pressures and market forces in the Union. The country's macro-economic situation has improved significantly and the privatization process has gathered pace. The Latvian authorities should now focus on reviewing in depth the financial sector and maintaining the country's macro-economic stability. As far as legislative alignment is concerned, Latvia has made considerable progress in sectors such as competition, banking services, transport, standards and certification. It now needs to strengthen its implementing and control capacities. Furthermore, Latvia has broached in a satisfactory manner the majority of the short-term priorities of the pre-accession partnership. The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis is currently undergoing revision in order to place greater emphasis on the process of alignment with Community legislation. During 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.