Lithuania: membership application and partnership, 8 December 1995

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PURPOSE: to present the regular report from the Commission on Lithuania'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 Lithuania 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); - Lithuania'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 Lithuania's capacity to adopt the obligations of membership, that is, the acquis of the Union as expressed in the Treaty, the secondary legislation and the policies of the Union. The Commission assesses Lithuania's results in political terms as satisfactory: Lithuania's institutions operate correctly, although continued efforts are necessary to fight corruption. From an economic perspective, the introduction of reforms in Lithuania should enable the country to establish a viable market economy and to be able to face up to competitive pressures and market forces within the Union. Priority needs to be given to achieving structural reforms and the viability of the external accounts. As far as legislative alignment is concerned, Lithuania has had a low rate of success, in particular in the area of the internal market. However, in other areas (environment), transposition is taking place at a satisfactory pace. Nevertheless, considerable efforts need to be made in fields such as energy (in particular in the nuclear sector, including Ignalina), the economy, administrative capacity, the internal market (public procurement, competition, state aids), justice and home affairs (border management). The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis is currently in the course of revision to place greater stress on the process of alignment with Community legislation. The fact that it is included in the accession process should, moreover, help Lithuania to rise to the various challenges that it faces. During the second half of 1999, the Commission will present to the Council its position regarding the revised version of this programme at the time of the re-examination of the Accession Partnership.