

Statement by Martti Ahtisaari at the signing of the Accession Treaty to the EU (Corfu, 24 June 1994)

Caption: On 24 June 1994, at the signing of Finland's Treaty of Accession to the European Union, Martti Ahtisaari, President of the Republic of Finland, places particular emphasis on the importance of the European Union for the citizens of Europe.

Source: Statement by the President of the Republic at the signing of accession treaty for new members of the European Union, Corfu, June 24, 1994. [ON-LINE]. [Helsinki]: The President of the Republic of Finland 1994-2000, mise à jour 18.02.2000[28.07.2003]. Available on http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/tpk/eng/speeches/speech_texts-1994.html.

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Statement by the President of the Republic at the signing of accession treaty for new members of the European Union, Corfu, June 24, 1994

It gives me a great pleasure to attend this historic signing ceremony. This is an important day not only for Finland and other applicant countries but for the history of Europe as a whole. We have today taken a major step forward in strengthening economic and political integration in our continent.

I should like to express the gratitude of the Finnish Government to you, Mr Prime Minister, for the determined efforts that the European Union has carried out under the Greek Presidency to bring Finland's accession negotiations to a successful conclusion.

I should also like to thank the other Member States of the Union, the Commission and the Council secretariat for the appreciation awarded to Finland during the negotiations.

We greatly appreciate the fact that the European Parliament approved Finnish accession with a wide majority.

The results of the negotiations provide a good foundation for Finnish membership of the European Union. To ensure that the changes brought about by membership in rural and remote regions of Finland can be dealt with without major problems, the Finnish Government has decided on national measures to alleviate the impact of the change and to facilitate adjustment in the long term.

There has been keen public debate in Finland on EU membership. Among the concerns expressed have been the citizens' right of participation, preservation of the Nordic way of life and environmental standards.

The European Union is a key factor in strengthening the security of our continent. Security grows out of social responsibility, interaction, respect for human rights and economic prosperity. In such a Europe there are no economic or social lines of division and all states are able to participate equally in the integration process. Enlargement of the Union promotes the enhancement of stability throughout the continent.

Finland supports the Union's economic and political objectives. Finnish membership would reinforce the northern dimension of the Union. I am convinced that this would give the Union additional economic and political strength.

It is important for the Union to respond to the needs of its citizens. This will be a major challenge for the further development of the European Union.

As a member of the European Union, Finland wants to contribute to this process. We see the future of the Union as a tolerant and secure community linking the nations and citizens of the continent, a community with which all citizens of the Union can identify themselves.