Communication from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (21 February 1995)

Caption: As a reply to Recommendation 1247 (1994) of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopts on 21 February 1995 a communication in which it reaffirms the organisation's priority to conclude and consolidate the enlargement process regarding those European States freed from communism, according to the pace of their democratic development.

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Communication from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (3 March 1995)

Reply to Recommendation 1247 (1994) on the enlargement of the Council of Europe

1. The Committee of Ministers has examined with particular attention Recommendation 1247 (1994) on the enlargement of the Council of Europe. It decided to bring it to the attention of the governments of member states, as well as to include it in the files for the Committee of Ministers' 95th Session (10 November 1994), at which the enlargement and future role of the Council of Europe was discussed. The ideas and principles contained in the recommendation have served a most useful role in stimulating the discussion on that occasion, taking account of the position established at the Vienna Summit of Heads of State and Government (October 1993) and subsequent ministerial meetings.

2. Acting in conformity with the Vienna Summit Declaration which identified the accession to the Council of Europe of the democracies of Europe, freed from communist oppression, as a central factor in the process of European construction, the Committee of Ministers is concentrating especially on the seven candidate countries (Albania, Belarus, Croatia, Moldova, Russia, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine). It has decided, with the aim of enabling these countries to join the Organisation as soon as possible according to the pace of their democratic development, to intensify political dialogue and co-operation programmes, precisely targeting — before and after accession — the most important reforms. Priority should be given to the conclusion and the consolidation of this enlargement process.

3. Future candidatures will be examined on their own merits and on the same basis as the states in the preceding paragraph. In particular, the three Transcaucasian countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are known to want closer links with the Council of Europe. The Committee of Ministers recalls the conclusions of the Chair of the special meeting held in Istanbul in September 1992 which concluded that a closer relationship "would demand not only the implementation of substantial democratic reforms, but also their commitment to resolve conflicts by peaceful means". In parallel with the procedure initiated by the Assembly with a view to granting the parliaments of these three countries special guest status, the Committee envisages instructing the Secretariat to develop its contacts in the region, in order to enable it to open in the best conditions a constructive political dialogue with the governments concerned.

4. Where the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) (paragraph 6 of the Assembly's recommendation) is concerned, the Committee of Ministers recalls the terms of its declaration (on Yugoslavia) of 8 October 1991, by which it decided to suspend its co-operation with the authorities in Belgrade, "whilst reminding all bodies concerned that, when the time comes, it maintains at their disposal its experience in the legal and constitutional fields, especially concerning minorities". Subsequently, the Committee of Ministers has reaffirmed on many occasions, notably in the declaration adopted on 11 September 1992, its intention "to continue to work for the respect for the values and principles upheld by the Council of Europe throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia, as well as the restoration of confidence between the populations affected by this conflict".

5. On the other hand, the Committee of Ministers, firmly hoping that a political solution will be found to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is ready to continue the political dialogue with the government of that country and to promote co-operation as far as possible under the prevailing circumstances. Accordingly, Bosnia-Herzegovina, upon an invitation from the Committee of Ministers, has, on 29 December 1994, become a party to several Council of Europe conventions and agreements, including the European Cultural Convention.