

Opening remarks made by Robin Cook at the opening of accession negotiations with Cyprus (31 March 1998)

Caption: On 31 March 1998, Robin Cook, British Foreign Secretary and President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, outlines the framework in which the forthcoming accession negotiations with Cyprus will be conducted.

Source: Opening Remarks by Robin Cook, President of the Council, at the Opening of Accession Negotiations with Cyprus, 31st March 1998. [ON-LINE]. [Cyprus]: Office of the Chief Cyprus - European Union Negotiator, [s.d.]. Available on http://www.cyprus-eu.org.cy/eng/07_documents/document006.htm.

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Welcome on behalf of the European Union to Mr. Yiannis CASSOULIDES and his delegation. Yesterday we successfully launched the Accession Process. I am delighted that today we are meeting to open accession negotiations.

The Union has shown it can respond decisively and effectively to the transformation of Europe's political landscape and use the opportunities this offers to end the divisions of the past. These efforts are being matched by Cyprus which has made great strides on the path to accession.

We must now press ahead with the detailed business of the negotiations. I hope our work will make swift progress. I look forward to the day when I will see you across the Council table as fellow members of the EU.

You have the EU's position before you. I should like to highlight some of its elements.

The EU regrets that it has not been possible to achieve a political solution to the continuing division of Cyprus in time for the accession negotiations on which we embark today. The Union believes that Cyprus' accession to the EU should benefit all communities, including the Turkish Cypriot community, and help to bring about civil peace and reconciliation on the island. In that context, our objective remains a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation on the basis of a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions. A political settlement would allow the provisions of the Accession Treaty to be implemented throughout the island. Progress towards accession and towards a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem will naturally reinforce each other. The Union reaffirms its full support for the search for a solution which is now proceeding through talks under the aegis of the UN and hopes that negotiations will resume without delay.

The European Union welcomes the offer your Government has made to include Turkish Cypriot representatives in the team for negotiating the terms of Cyprus' accession to the EU. The European Union regrets that the Turkish Cypriot community has so far responded negatively to this offer. It reiterates the importance that it attaches to associating the Turkish Cypriots with the accession process, in accordance with the conclusions of the Luxembourg European Council. The Presidency and the Commission will pursue the necessary contacts.

Accession implies full acceptance of the actual and potential rights and obligations attaching to the Union system and its institutional framework, known as the «acquis» of the Union. This will include the Treaty of Amsterdam, once it enters into force, which represents the latest stage of European construction.

Accession also demands effective implementation of the «acquis», which requires in particular the establishment of an efficient, reliable public administration.

The negotiations with Cyprus will be conducted on the basis of the same principles and criteria as the negotiations with the other applicants. The pace of progress will depend upon Cyprus's individual situation.

Your acceptance of the rights and obligations resulting from membership may give rise exceptionally to transitional measures, to be defined during the accession negotiations. Any such measures must be limited in time and scope, and accompanied by a plan with clearly defined stages for application of the «acquis».

And enlargement must strengthen the process of continuous creation and integration in which the Union and its Member States are engaged. We need to make sure that the institutional structures of the Union are not weakened or diluted, or its powers of action reduced.

With that I would once again welcome your presence here today, and stress the Presidency's determination to make good progress in the opening stages of the negotiations.