

## Statements made following the EFTA-EC ministerial meeting (Brussels, 19 December 1989)

**Caption:** On 19 December 1989, Roland Dumas, French Foreign Minister and President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and current Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Anita Gradin, Swedish Minister for Foreign Trade and Chairman of the EFTA Council of Ministers in the first half of 1990, Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Alois Mock, Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pertti Paasio, Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Kjell Magne Bondevik, Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, comment on the joint declaration adopted following the EFTA-EC ministerial meeting held in Brussels.

**Source:** EFTA Bulletin. October 1989-March 1990, No 4-1; Volume XXX-XXXI. Geneva.

**Copyright:** Reproduction of original articles from the EFTA Bulletin is authorised provided the source "EFTA Bulletin" is acknowledged.

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statements\\_made\\_following\\_the\\_efta\\_ec\\_ministerial\\_meeting\\_brussels\\_19\\_december\\_1989-en-139f4fa6-5229-41f4-b7be-6266e4d0d541.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statements_made_following_the_efta_ec_ministerial_meeting_brussels_19_december_1989-en-139f4fa6-5229-41f4-b7be-6266e4d0d541.html)

**Publication date:** 22/10/2012

## Statements made following the EFTA-EC ministerial meeting (Brussels, 19 December 1989)

**Roland Dumas**, Minister of State, Foreign Minister of France, President-in-Office of the EC Council

I am particularly pleased to welcome the chairman of the EFTA Ministerial Council, our colleagues from the EFTA countries and EFTA's Secretary-General.

At our meeting held here on March 20, 1989 we had planned to meet again before the end of the year to review the work that had been initiated at that time and to see how, on this basis, we could make further headway towards increased co-operation in the framework of an 18-member European Economic Space.

At that time, last March, we were of course unable to foresee the upheavals our continent was to experience. At the Strasbourg meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Community emphasized that the new balance would be more secure if EFTA's role were to be developed at the same time and in relation to the Community. This is indicative of the full political importance of today's meeting.

The progress that has been made in nine months is impressive indeed:

- first, the preparatory work carried out between the Commission and the EFTA countries has been fruitful and should enable us today to decide to enter into negotiations on a clear basis; I shall come back to this in a moment;
- second, the Community has taken decisions which will speed up the strengthening of the Community and its progress towards European Union;
- at the ministerial meeting held on December 11-12, the EFTA countries for their part manifested their will to continue along the road chosen at the Oslo Summit, viz., strengthening their organization's structures and deepening their relations with the Community;
- finally, developments in Central and Eastern Europe have led us to extend our co-operation to new fields. In the context of the mission with which the Commission was charged at the Paris (l'Arche) Summit we coordinated our efforts, and the meeting of 24 countries held on December 13 took stock of Western aid and gave it a new impetus.

The Twelve have also taken the initiative of creating specific instruments: the Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Training Foundation; we would like these to be primarily European instruments and hope we will meet together in those forums.

This new task is not diverting our attention from the closer relations we have been initiating with EFTA. On the contrary, it is imparting an additional meaning to co-operation between these two pillars of European democracy: the EEC on the one hand and EFTA on the other.

A very specific relationship has been forged between us. Since 1972 this has been based on the identity of our economic systems and on the fact that we are very important economic partners for each other. Since 1984 this relationship has been further enhanced with the launching of the Luxembourg process. The two agreements we have just signed, one on the opening of COMETT II and the other on technical regulations, testify to the vitality of this process.

The work done since last March has been very productive, as the Commission will confirm in a moment.

This exploratory work has enabled us to arrive at a broadly convergent joint analysis of the scope and content of the new framework to be given to our relations.

The objectives we set ourselves are now very clear:

- we have to achieve, as soon as possible, the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons on the basis of the relevant Community acquis;
- our objective is to strengthen and extend co-operation in other fields such as working conditions and social protection, research and development, the environment, education, consumer protection, programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises, and tourism. The fact that this co-operation is carried out in the framework of Community activities should not of course in any way constitute a restriction of our joint ambitions;
- finally, our aim is to reduce economic and social disparities between our regions: in this respect I would point out that for the Community the quest for economic and social cohesion goes hand in hand with the completion of its Single Internal Market.

We are aware that there will be more difficult questions which we will have to solve without jeopardising the overall, balanced character of our co-operation:

- we need to conceive machinery that will ensure the direct application of common legislation and monitor the execution thereof;
- we also need above all to find approaches which will allow us to reach together a consensus in decisions relating to the European Economic Space, while respecting each other's decision-making autonomy.

Our co-operation has always been characterized by great pragmatism: I am confident that this pragmatism will once again enable us to overcome any legal and institutional difficulties that might arise. We will also have to avoid the pitfall of setting up structures that would be too cumbersome or too complex to function properly and intelligently.

A great deal has been done, but there is still work to do. The Community is convinced that we have now reached a stage which should enable us to enter into negotiations without delay with a view to concluding an overall agreement. The Community proposes that you take such a decision today and hopes these negotiations, which should start as soon as possible during the first half of 1990, will be completed in the shortest possible time.

I would stress that our co-operation should be exemplary and that we must show that the European States have enough imagination and political will to work in a group of 18, so as to act as the driving force in the construction of a new Europe.

**Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, EFTA ministerial chairman during the second half of 1989

It is with great expectations that I as chairman of the EFTA Council address you on behalf of all the EFTA countries on this important occasion for the creation of a more structured relationship between the European Community and its Member States and the EFTA States. In what I am saying here now I am of course presenting the EFTA point of view. Concerning Iceland's position let me only say that it has been carefully explained and presented in the High Level Steering Group and its Working Groups as part and parcel of the EFTA position. My colleagues from the EFTA countries will certainly later on make their own contributions to our discussions today.

Although I will concentrate my intervention on our joint efforts to continue the process we launched together at our last meeting on 20 March, we have in the meantime experienced a development in Europe which was unimaginable at that time. I am indeed proud of the fact that both the EC and EFTA countries have responded promptly to the need for assisting our neighbours in Eastern Europe, individually as well as

within the Group of 24 countries, in carrying out their important and complex process of change. The development in this part of Europe is - and this has also been expressed in many political comments on the EC side - an additional reason to speed up the process of integration within the EC, as well as our joint efforts to create an efficient and dynamic EES.

In this respect I would like to draw your attention to the joint statement of EFTA Ministers of 12 December which represents a clear signal of our preparedness, within the framework of EFTA, to develop our co-operation with East European countries. In that statement we took note with interest of the initiative of the European Council with regard to financial support to Eastern Europe and expressed our preparedness to engage in a constructive discussion of these proposals.

Turning to our agenda of today, Mr Chairman, I would in particular like to express our appreciation of the priority given by the French presidency to our joint efforts to prepare for the negotiations on a more structured partnership. I believe that the visit of President Mitterrand to Iceland on 7 November was a timely token of the political significance France attaches to our common future relationship and the creation of the EES. The direct contacts with many of my colleagues around this table have also been extremely useful in preparing for this meeting.

I personally have appreciated the direct contacts both with President Delors and with Vice-President Andriessen. I would also like to express our satisfaction to the EC Commission at the efforts made at all levels during these months.

Mr Chairman, the high-level examination undertaken by the EFTA countries and the Commission in the search for a more structured partnership with common decision-making and administrative institutions was concluded on 20 October with an agreement on a set of common conclusions.

Already a week later, on 27 October, at an informal ministerial meeting, EFTA Ministers, in making their preliminary assessment of the results, agreed that sufficient common ground had been identified and we committed ourselves to continuing the process without losing momentum.

We have noted with satisfaction that the Commission, in its communication to the EC Council, came to the same conclusion and envisaged the start of negotiations on a comprehensive EFTA-EC agreement. The subsequent positive reaction to the Commission's communication by the EC Council on 27 November has paved the way for the positive further steps we want to see emerge from this meeting. In this respect we appreciate the conclusions of the European Council in Strasbourg, which endorsed the idea of reaching a comprehensive agreement strengthening the co-operation between the EC and EFTA countries in the framework of a European Economic Space of eighteen States.

At our Ministerial Council meeting in Geneva last week EFTA Ministers thus expressed the expectation that our meeting today would give a clear political signal to open negotiations on a comprehensive EES agreement in early 1990. Until then exploratory talks should be conducted. The aim should be to have an outline of an agreement around the middle of 1990 and to conclude the negotiations within the year. This would be necessary for a possible entry into force by 1 January 1993.

As has been clearly demonstrated during our joint examination the EFTA States have met the challenge put to us by President Delors last January. We are thus envisaging an agreement providing for the fullest possible realization of the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons as well as extended co-operation in flanking and horizontal policies, such as education, environment, research and development, and the social dimension.

We have also agreed that the relevant Community acquis, to be identified jointly with the Community, should in one way or another be integrated into the agreement as the common legal basis. Certain exceptions justified by considerations of fundamental interests, as well as transitional arrangements, will have to be negotiated. This fact has also been recognized in the conclusions of the High-Level Steering Group of 20 October. I recall furthermore that both sides have noted that there exist areas where the EFTA countries have

more elaborate rules relating in particular to health, safety, consumer protection and environment. It is of importance to the EFTA countries that our future co-operation relating to these areas be based on high standards of protection.

As to the legal questions, we believe that the examination undertaken has indicated alternative solutions for the establishment of independent, effective and reliable mechanisms for the surveillance of EES rules, and for a joint judicial body for the settlement of disputes and uniform interpretation of these rules.

The positive reactions by EFTA Heads of Government in Oslo to the initiative by President Delors were based on the understanding that we should "look for a new, more structured partnership with common decision-making and administrative institutions to make our activities more effective". We have indeed accepted to base our negotiations on the relevant Community acquis with regard to the common rules to govern the EES. Having said this I want, however, to underline that the good functioning of the agreement will make it essential that the dynamic further development of our relationship provide for joint shaping and making of future EES rules. The establishment of a genuine joint decision-making mechanism in substance and form is a basic prerequisite for the political acceptability and the legal effectiveness of an agreement, and would be justified by the envisaged scope of the agreement.

Mr Chairman, it has been stated on various occasions that the EFTA ambitions in this regard would not call into question the Community's institutional system and the autonomy of the Community's decision-making. Yet, while respecting this autonomy, we must seek solutions that will provide for genuine joint decision-making within an equal partnership reflecting the vast scope of our prospective agreement and our commitment to preserve the homogeneity of the EES in parallel with relevant EC developments.

Mr Chairman, the EFTA countries are taking important steps to strengthen their organization and the Secretariat. We have spoken throughout this process so far with one voice, presenting common positions. It is indeed our intention to continue to do so. In that spirit I certainly have all EFTA countries behind me in the call for the start of formal negotiations in early 1990, and that until then we should conduct exploratory talks to clarify further certain important aspects in order not to lose any momentum. Already by the middle of 1990 we should, in our view, be in a position to have clear conceptions of the outline of an agreement.

We do understand the magnitude of the task confronting us. But we strongly believe that we, the pluralistic market-oriented democracies of Western Europe must, as quickly as possible, put our mutual relationship on a firm and forward-looking basis, since that would improve our ability to face together the challenge of supporting our neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe to continue on their path of reform and democratization. It is therefore our aim to conclude the negotiations by the end of 1990.

Mr Chairman, we feel confident that at this very crucial stage for Europe as a whole you on the EC side also agree to give this important political signal that will benefit all of Europe.

**Anita Gradin**, Minister for Foreign Trade of Sweden, EFTA ministerial chairman during the first half of 1990

EFTA is speaking with one voice and I can associate myself fully with what has just been said by our EFTA chairman, the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Let me underline a few points. Since we last met on the 20th of March, the Swedish Parliament has reconfirmed the broad European mandate we received already last year. My government thus welcomes the opportunity to negotiate next year a comprehensive agreement between the EC and the EFTA states. The agreement should be based on a balance between rights and obligations.

We are attracted by the concept of European cooperation covering not only trade and finance and other freedoms but also important flanking policies such as environment, research, labour market, education and social aspects.

As politicians, we must be able to convince our voters that the planned EES integration will benefit their daily lives and improve their standard of living.

I believe that Sweden can make a positive contribution to the construction of a new Europe built on stability, prosperity and social justice.

In common we can take on the urgent task of supporting the reforming countries of Eastern Europe in rebuilding their societies and in adapting their economies to the needs of the 21st century.

Being in the chair of EFTA as of January 1 next year, I would like to highlight the readiness of EFTA countries to move fast. We take it that negotiations will start early next year. We should aim at finalizing them by the end of the year.

We would like to see some kind of conceptual breakthrough before the summer recess. By then we should seek to have before us a blueprint covering in broad terms:

- First, the scope and structure of an agreement
- Secondly, derogations and transitions due to fundamental national interests - hopefully there will not be too many
- And thirdly, legal and institutional principles for our future cooperation.

We fully respect the internal decision-making autonomy of the Community. What we aim at is a genuine participation in a *joint* EES decision process. In our view this would be compatible with a two-pillar approach.

To achieve this, we should seek suitable and pragmatic arrangements for institutional cooperation. Joint consultations between the EC and the EFTA states, as appropriate, and common political guidance at ministerial level, should facilitate the process of reaching common decisions on EES matters.

Genuine participation in a joint EES decision process is of crucial importance for the political acceptability of a wide-reaching EC/EFTA integration treaty.

In this context we will consider how best to adapt our own EFTA institutions to the new EC/EFTA partnership.

We stand before a challenge of historic magnitude. The economic and social integration of Europe is now within reach. Yesterday's vision of Jean Monnet is becoming today's reality. On the Swedish side we feel confident that the Community and EFTA will jointly work out a dynamic European Economic Space well within the 1992 timetable. The political will shown by both sides is to me a most encouraging sign of our joint resolve and determination to reach our EES objectives.

**Jean-Pascal Delamuraz**, Minister of Public Economy of Switzerland, President of the Swiss Confederation for 1989

The European drama is unfolding at an astonishing pace. In the West we are witnessing an acceleration in the construction of the European Community and the new dialogue between the Community and the EFTA countries, all of which have been accomplished in the space of a few months. In the East we have seen this spectacular opening to freedom and democracy which is restoring Europe, a continent characterized first and foremost by its millennial and inalienable values of civilization, to its former dimension.

These two sequences of events are closely inter-connected. They justify, even more so than last spring, the

desire for the Community and the EFTA countries to establish together a coherent and effective European Economic Space (EES).

The progress achieved in 1989 in the context of this plan was remarkable. But the bulk of the work remains to be done: negotiation of the treaty initiating future co-operation between the Community and the EFTA countries in equal partnership, without the creation of any *de facto* satellite states or any systematically unilateral dependence.

Switzerland is fully committed to the process of preparing such a treaty.

She has noted that the discussions held in recent months have revealed many *substantive* convergences and similarities between the Community and the EFTA States. The conclusions of October 20 constitute our common starting point.

This capital fact now makes it possible to start work in greater depth. This will involve an exploratory stage, concerned more particularly with two fields.

The first field is joint identification of the proportion of the Community *acquis* which can be included in the future treaty and of that which will either have to be exempted or lead to transitional arrangements. Let me be quite clear: there can be no question of publishing a voluminous catalogue of exceptions. On the contrary, a large proportion of the relevant Community *acquis* has been accepted from the outset. Such an approach will enable us to guarantee the main feature. The main feature is a broad scope of the four freedoms. And it means broader co-operation in the accompanying policies; particularly environmental protection and research and development.

The second field of exploration is that of the institutions and procedures of a treaty on the EES. Let us be clear and state openly from the outset that there will be no new forms of co-operation between the European Community and the EFTA States unless there exists the machinery to prepare and take decisions jointly. In other words, intra-Community procedures and those of the EES will be interdependent, without one interfering in the other. We wish to create an EES with joint bodies, not one which will be a mere juxtaposition of two pillars.

In our most recent discussions much was said about the decision-making autonomy that each party would retain in future co-operation. This autonomy will have to be defined very carefully together, for:

- • either it will be a mere reminder of the principle of non-interference in the other party's procedures - and we naturally agree with this traditional principle;
- 
- • or the words "full decision-making autonomy of the parties" would imply that each party would be free to go back unilaterally on EES decisions - and such acceptance would break the conventional link we are working to create.

It will be up to our negotiators to find a precise definition of this autonomy.

In our work all of us - who represent states and institutions that are deeply attached to parliamentary democracy - must ensure that the future institutional structure of the EES assigns a fitting role to the parliamentary element.

In conclusion:

We will play an active part in negotiating this new treaty which both the Community countries and the EFTA States wish to draw up.

To negotiate means to seek - sometimes tenaciously - common ground for agreement and forms of reciprocity, without ambiguity.

To negotiate means building together and not consenting unilaterally or at any price.

To negotiate means that both sides must make a contribution to the autonomy and efficiency of Europe.

**Alois Mock**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria

I would like to thank you for your invitation to attend this second ministerial meeting of the Member States of the European Communities and the European Free Trade Association. We hope it will give a substantial political impetus to the creation of a European Economic Space comprising our 18 countries.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the significant progress achieved in the building of Europe under the French presidency. As a candidate for membership of the European Communities, Austria can but welcome the qualitative enhancement of the European task of integration and peace. My country affirms its deep-seated attachment to the ideals which inspired the treaties establishing the European Communities.

My thanks are also due to Mr Hannibalsson, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Iceland, for the efficient and dedicated manner in which he presided over our work within EFTA.

In the course of our joint exploratory work we noted a fairly broad convergence of views on participation by the EFTA countries in the Single Internal Market. However, we did not achieve a consensus on full implementation of the four freedoms in the future Economic Space comprising our 18 countries.

For Austria, a country aspiring to become a member of the European Communities, there can be no doubt that our goal is full participation in European integration. This implies both full implementation of the four freedoms and full-fledged participation in horizontal policies such as research, technological development, education, the environment and consumer protection, without forgetting social policy and social cohesion.

In the course of our preparatory work, we made progress particularly on the free movement of services, capital, workers and the self-employed. I am confident that appropriate solutions will be found to solve the specific problems facing some of the EFTA countries.

However, there are fields of fundamental importance for a market without internal borders which hitherto have remained excluded from the European Economic Space. I am thinking above all of the free movement of goods, which will not be achieved if we refuse to envisage the creation of a customs union and participation by the EFTA countries in the common agricultural market. In this connection I would like to mention that the sector covered by the ECSC Treaty, which is of particular importance for my country, has not figured in our deliberations.

And let us not forget that our citizens expect from what they call European integration the ability to travel freely, without any border formalities, from one country to another in their Europe.

However, the key issue for the success of the Oslo-Brussels process is institutional in nature. I am referring to the role of the EFTA countries in the decision-shaping and decision-making of the European Economic Space.

It is obvious that European integration will not cease with the completion of the Single Internal Market. There will be a continual process of decision-shaping and decision-making. It is imperative that the EFTA countries should be entitled to participate in both the preparation and the taking of decisions concerning future integration - participation that corresponds to our countries' interdependence, to the EFTA countries' contribution to integration and to their commitment to this process, which we all regard - and rightly - as irreversible. Nevertheless I am convinced that in our mutual interests we will find satisfactory compromise solutions for all parties.



I am confident that our undertaking can be successfully completed and that it will represent a great step forward if we succeed in finding an adequate institutional solution. A European Economic Space in which the Community and EFTA Member States work together on an equal footing will produce for the 18 countries the beneficial effects we are all expecting in the interest of our nations and economies.

Mr Chairman, I would also like to stress the necessity of continuing our co-operation within the framework of the follow-up to Luxembourg in parallel with the Oslo-Brussels process. There is a whole series of fields in which work is very far advanced and in which we could reach mutual agreement in a short time. I am thinking in particular of technical standards and mutual recognition of certificates of conformity as well as full participation by the EFTA countries in the European Environment Agency and in Community programmes in the fields of education, research and technological development. The joint establishment, from the outset, of the European Environment Agency could provide visible proof of our political will to assume new responsibilities together, not only in words but in practical deeds.

**Pertti Paasio**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

The Finnish Government gives strong and unqualified support to the negotiations now to be launched for the creation of a European Economic Space comprising the EFTA countries and the European Community. For Finland, a neutral Nordic country situated at the crossroads of East and West in Europe and highly dependent on its relations with Europe, this enterprise is the logical continuation of a line consistently followed since the Second World War. In trade and economic terms this line has meant close ties with our neighbours, participation in European integration through free trade as well as an active role in the global organisations for trade and finance.

The wind of change now sweeps across our continent. We face the unprecedented task of building a new structure for Europe - based on mutual interest and cooperation and not on division. The task is political and economic and both dimensions call for solutions at the same time.

The consolidation of the EFTA/Community partnership must be set in the framework of the profound change that is now in motion. Fortunately, the relationship between the European Community and the EFTA countries is mature - economically, socially and politically. Our long co-existence in this continent has brought us together in a way which is quite unique. The intensity of our economic relations, for example, is not matched anywhere in the world. This will certainly help us find our way forward. We support fully the positions put forward in the statement of the EFTA Chairman.

Following its recent communication to Parliament on European integration and a very lively debate in Parliament, my Government now has clear-cut support for its line of action. We therefore approach the task ahead with confidence and with the determination to play our full part in the negotiations ahead.

Let me, however, single out a few issues which are crucial for the success of our great endeavour. The EFTA countries undertake to negotiate on the basis of the Community's legislative and administrative achievements of the past 30 years. We are under no illusion as to the magnitude of this undertaking. We are, in a sense, invited to share the past with the Community. But sharing the past — in the shaping of which we have played no part - must be matched by a common readiness to shape the future together. I think that we all recognize that this is a focal point of our negotiations. I cannot therefore overstate the importance of finding ways and means which give the EFTA countries real influence in the European Economic Space. This is of decisive importance for the political acceptability and good functioning of the future treaty. If these expectations are met then it is both meaningful and necessary to strengthen the common action of EFTA so that we may live up to the requirements of our future Treaty.

We, as all of us, will naturally seek to secure our fundamental interests in the negotiations ahead. In the declaration that we are going to adopt today, a specific mention is made of that.

The European Community and the EFTA countries represent stability and prosperity in Europe. Moreover, their mutual relationship is uniquely stable. It is now also mature for a new dimension to be given to it. This is in our mutual and enlightened self-interest. However, there is that additional task of which we have all become aware this autumn: the need to help the countries of Eastern Europe in their own efforts to restructure their societies and their economies in an orderly manner and in socially acceptable conditions. To meet this new and highly demanding challenge we must pool all human and material resources in Western Europe.

The speed of change in Europe gives added weight and urgency to the great endeavour on which we are now jointly embarking. The work ahead is immense. We must therefore tackle the task without delay, start negotiations promptly, work out a blueprint of the treaty by the summer and bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion by the end of next year. That timetable is exceptionally ambitious, but then we are living in exceptional times.

**Kjell Magne Bondevik**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway

It is with great satisfaction that we have witnessed the considerable progress of the Oslo-Brussels process since the last meeting of EFTA-EC Ministers on 20 March. Our efforts are indeed a reflection of the fundamental interests that we share in developing a European Economic Space of our 18 countries. But it is also evidence of the encouraging cooperation climate that is now present in European relations.

During the fact-finding phase which was concluded on 20 October, the High Level Steering Group identified considerable common ground for entering into negotiations. Their joint conclusions should be seen as a fair and balanced point of departure for future negotiations.

This meeting will address the future path of the Oslo-Brussels process. In this context I would like to underline the significance of our joint effort in a broader European perspective. Since EFTA-EC Ministers last met, we have witnessed a historical process of change in Eastern Europe. It is the responsibility of and indeed a unique opportunity for our nations to contribute to a European integration process that can be extended to involve new democracies in the east. A network of cooperation across old dividing lines could be a new guarantee for European stability.

1989 has been an eventful year in EFTA-EC cooperation. During the past years it became clear to all of us that the Luxembourg process could not alone provide sufficient basis for a more structured cooperation between our countries.

You, President Delors, by your speech to the European Parliament in January, made an important contribution to launching the new phase in our cooperation. Two months later, the EFTA countries gave a positive response at their Oslo summit. Against this background we launched together the Oslo-Brussels process at the Ministerial meeting on 20 March.

On the basis of the joint conclusions from the High Level Steering Group, the Norwegian Government has concluded that there is a solid common ground for entering into negotiation. A debate in our Parliament early this month confirmed that there is broad political support for the Government's view.

In their report of 20 October, the High Level Steering Group pointed at the vast potential for enlarged cooperation. Such a cooperation would aim at the fullest possible realization of free movement of goods, services, capital and persons. In this respect I would like to refer to the Oslo declaration adopted by the EFTA Heads of Government in March, and to the statement just made by the Chairman of the EFTA Council, Foreign Minister Hannibalsson. We have also agreed to extend our cooperation to areas going beyond the internal market programme. In this context I would like to emphasize the importance of the broader overall dimension of environment in society and the need for sustainable development.

It is my view, Mr Chairman, that the joint declaration from today's meeting reflects the ambitions of the

Oslo declaration as well as the conclusions of the High Level Steering Group. The EES that we can now envisage will establish a relationship between the EFTA countries and the Community of a unique character. For us, it is essential that an EES agreement also provides for institutional arrangements and procedures in order to secure efficient and equitable common decision-making.

Our future relationship will have a political dimension. This dimension should by nature be related to questions relevant to the EES. As a member of NATO, Norway puts particular emphasis on the political consultations within the Alliance.

Furthermore we want to maintain and develop our special dialogue in the framework of European Political Cooperation.

In our future efforts we should be able to reach a result which meets the fundamental objectives of an EES - an EES which functions effectively, based on common rules efficiently implemented also at national levels, respecting the fundamental interests and legal systems of the Community as well as the EFTA countries.

Mr Chairman, on behalf of the Norwegian Government I am pleased to give the green light for entering into negotiations early in 1990 with the aim of concluding them before the end of the year.

The road upon which we are embarking is not only a question of our mutual EFTA-EC relationship. A strong EES will be the best basis for meeting the challenges of development in Eastern Europe in a constructive way. Let us in our common endeavour also be open to envisaging a broader European cooperation that can bring together countries belonging to the same historic and cultural community.