

Joint Declaration following the EFTA-EC ministerial meeting (Brussels, 19 December 1989)

Caption: On 19 December 1989, in Brussels, the representatives of the Twelve and of the European Commission and those of the Member States of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) adopt a joint declaration regarding their decision to open negotiations in 1990 with a view to the establishment of a European Economic Space (EES), later to become the European Economic Area (EEA).

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1. The Ministers reaffirmed the very special importance of the privileged relations between the Community, its Member States and the EFTA countries, which are a fundamental factor, not only for each of them but also for the entire European continent: as heirs to the same values, committed to common principles and bound in a shared destiny, they contribute together to Europe's vitality and today are a model to all neighbouring countries.

They warmly welcomed the recent political and economic changes in other European countries. They reaffirmed their desire to encourage the movement of these countries towards pluralist democracy and to support the necessary economic reforms.

2. They recalled the important impetus given to EC/EFTA relations in 1984 by the Luxembourg Declaration and welcomed the considerable progress which this process has already made it possible to achieve towards the aim of creating a European Economic Space.

3. Convinced of the need to deepen these relations still further in order to achieve the European Economic Space and to give them a new dimension as part of a common European outlook, they agreed to seek jointly to define a more structured framework for cooperation between the EC and all of the EFTA countries together.

To this end, they decided to commence formal negotiations as soon as possible in the first half of 1990, with the aim of concluding them as rapidly as possible.

4. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the quality of the preparatory work carried out so far, in particular the "Results of the Commission/ EFTA High Level Steering Group Meeting" of 20 October 1989; they welcomed the fact that the talks held between the Commission and the EFTA countries, speaking with one voice, had led to broadly convergent analyses of the scope and content of a renewed framework for relations between the Community and all of the EFTA countries together.

They agreed that this work should continue in order to create the best possible conditions for entering into future negotiations.

5. In the light of the above discussions, they felt that this framework should ensure the greatest possible mutual interest for the parties concerned as well as the global and balanced character of their cooperation, and should in particular, on substance, fulfil the following objectives:

- to achieve the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons, on the basis of the relevant acquis communautaire, to be identified jointly; exceptions, justified by considerations of fundamental interests, as well as transitional arrangements, could be matter for negotiation; equal conditions of competition should be ensured;
- to strengthen and to broaden cooperation in the context of the Community's actions in other areas, education, working conditions and social welfare, consumer protection, programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises and tourism;
- to reduce economic and social disparities between their regions.

6. They take the view that this framework should inter alia respect in full the decision-making autonomy of the parties.

In accordance with this principle negotiations should permit provision for:

- procedures which effectively ensure that both Parties' views are taken into account, so as to facilitate the

reaching of a consensus in decisions relating to the European Economic Space;

- appropriate formulae to ensure the direct effect of common legislation, surveillance of its implementation as well as judicial monitoring and the proper functioning, in general, of the agreement.

7. The negotiations between the Community on the one hand and the EFTA countries acting as a single interlocutor on the other hand shall have as their aim the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement covering both the substantive and the legal and institutional aspects mentioned above.

8. They consider moreover that a political dialogue could be envisaged including at the ministerial level.