

Statement made by Bronislaw Geremek on the opening of the negotiations for Poland's accession to the EU (Brussels, 31 March 1998)

Caption: On 31 March 1998, in Brussels, at the opening of the negotiations for Poland's accession to the European Union, Bronislaw Geremek, Polish Foreign Minister, outlines the position adopted by his country with regard to the forthcoming negotiations.

Source: Wystąpienie ministra spraw zagranicznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Bronisława Geremka na otwarciu negocjacji Polski o członkostwo w Unii Europejskiej, Bruksela, 31 marca 1998. Statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Bronislaw Geremek on Opening of Poland's Negotiations on Membership in the European Union, Brussels, March 31, 1998. Zbiór Dokumentów, 1998, nr 1. [EN LIGNE]. [Warszawa]: Akademia Dyplomatyczna MSZ, [08.06.2005]. Disponible sur <http://www.zbiordokumentow.pl/1998/1/2.html>.

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Statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Bronisław Geremek on Opening of Poland's Negotiations on Membership in the European Union (Brussels, March 31, 1998)

Part I

The Government of the Republic of Poland has welcomed with great satisfaction the decision by the European Council in Luxembourg to invite Poland to negotiations on membership in the European Union. Negotiations starting today are of historic significance, since they begin the decisive phase of the process leading to final elimination of the effects of the division of Europe.

Poland is starting the negotiations with a conviction that membership in the European Union is the best choice from the point of view of the security of the state, the stability of democratic order, the consolidation of the foundations of rapid and sustainable economic development and the construction of a modern civic society. We make this choice as a sovereign state, on the basis of unanimity of political forces and a broad acceptance by the Polish people, and with a conviction that Poland's accession to the Union lies in the interest of Europe as a whole.

Poland's invitation to membership negotiations has been the result of consistent actions of successive governments and efforts of the entire Polish society. Over the period of nine years Poland has transformed itself from a country governed in a non-democratic way and suffering deep economic crisis into a state based on the rule of law and registering one of the highest economic growth rates in Europe. Membership in the European Union will enhance the consolidation of reforms implemented since 1989. The perspective of close integration into the Union will accelerate the completion of transformation. It will allow Poland to enter the 21st century as a modern country, capable of competing on world markets. Membership in the Union will enable Poland to take her share of responsibility for shaping European and World politics in a more efficient way than until now. In consequence Poland will more effectively promote stability in the region and principles of good neighbourly relations and co-operation in Europe and world-wide.

Membership in the European Union is an opportunity and a challenge for Poland. We are aware of the magnitude of the tasks ahead. The same time, we are convinced that we will be able to meet the challenge. Poland's effective participation in European integration depends on successful completion of reforms. This is why the Government of the Republic of Poland will continue the country's adjustment by implementing policies of restructuring, modernisation, re-privatisation, the implementation of the reform of health services, the system of social insurance and administrative reforms.

Poland fully shares the values, which constitute the basis of the unity of the European Union. We believe that democratic rule, respect for human rights, a society built on the principles of openness and pluralism and the market economy constitute the best way to organise the State. We share with the Union values based on the common foundations of Christian heritage and a conviction that principles of equality, solidarity and subsidiarity are the backbone of European integration. The objective of the European Union has always been to enhance the opportunities of harmonious development of the member states, regions and social groups.

We have been following with attention the increasing role of the principle of subsidiarity in the functioning of the Union. This principle guarantees respect for national sovereignty, protects the competence of regional and local authorities, and offers possibilities of active participation of local communities in the economic and social life of the member states. In our understanding, it is linked with the quest for greater transparency and democratisation of the European Union what should encourage citizens to take more active part in European integration.

Poland also wishes to contribute to cultural co-operation. We believe that preservation of identity and diversity of the European culture should be one of the tasks realised within the European Union. We also believe that European integration offers an opportunity for our nations to get to know each other better and, through dialogue, to overcome the heritage of artificial political divisions. Poland will actively participate in all initiatives serving this end.

Poland fully shares the objectives and principles of European integration, which were formulated half a century ago in the European treaties. We also wish to realise the objectives of those treaties, which have been worked out in the course of deepening European integration. The most important steps along this road were the Single European Act, The Maastricht Treaty, and the Amsterdam Treaty. We are ready to fulfil Poland's obligations stemming from them.

Part II

Poland's preparation for participation in European integration started in parallel with the beginning of the systemic transformation. The first International legal act along this road was the signing of an Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation with the European Communities in September 1989. It was followed by the "Association Agreement between the Republic of Poland on one Hand and European Communities and their Member State on the Other" signed on December 16, 1991. At Poland's initiative its preamble contained the provision that "Poland's final objective is membership in the Communities and in the opinion of the Parties the association will help Poland to attain this goal." As a result of the association, Poland developed a close relationship with the Communities in the political and economic spheres. The European Union has become the largest direct investor in Poland, we are also the fourth importer from the Union which accounts for some 2/3 of Polish trade turnover.

Since the European Council in Copenhagen, the enlargement of the Union to the Central and Eastern European countries has also become the objective of the European Union. The European Council formulated membership criteria for Poland and other associated countries. A further step along the road to membership was Poland's membership application on April 8, 1994. In Essen in December 1994, the European Council formulated the pre-accession strategy, which contained a set of measures aimed at the preparation of associated countries for membership. Adoption of the White Paper on the Internal Market in Cannes in June 1995 by the European Council also played an important role. In response, the Government of the Republic of Poland prepared a programme of adjustment of Polish law to the *acquis communautaire*, with a particular consideration given to legal acts listed in the White Paper. In January 1997, the Government adopted the National Strategy for Integration, which defined the general political, economic and legal framework concerning Poland's preparation for membership. In 1997, the Government of the Republic of Poland also commenced the detailed preparation for the negotiations of Union membership.

On July 16, 1997 the European Commission presented an Opinion of the application submitted by the Government of the Republic of Poland for European Union membership. The Commission stated that Poland had attained stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and the respect and protection of minorities. The Commission also stressed that a free market economy was already in operation in Poland, which in a medium-term perspective would be able to cope with competition and market forces in the Union. In the medium-term perspective, Poland will also be able to assume the obligations resulting from membership, including the implementation of the objectives of political, economic and monetary union. A positive opinion of the Commission constituted the basis for the decision of the European Council in Luxembourg on the beginning of accession negotiations with Poland and five other associated countries.

Poland welcomed with satisfaction decisions of the European Council in Luxembourg concerning the process of enlargement and accession, including the European Conference, the reinforced pre-accession strategy and the accession negotiations. Poland fully supports the idea of the European Conference as the forum for a political dialogue with all the countries aspiring for membership. The Accession Partnership is an important instrument of support for the transformation and adjustment processes. We expect that the reorientation of PHARE and the pre-accession funds will facilitate and accelerate the continuation of structural changes in the period preceding accession. The Programme for the Preparation of Membership presented by Poland will constitute the basis for their implementation and will be a logical continuation of earlier actions on the adoption of the *acquis* and on structural adjustment. Poland declares its readiness to actively participate in those Union programmes in which participation is feasible in the pre-accession period.

Part III

Poland's sovereign decision on its participation in the process of European integration is intended to end finally the division of the continent, imposed against the will of the nations affected, and gives Poland the chance to make up at least partially for the losses suffered as a consequence of Yalta. Poland contributed to the end of the Communist system and to the construction of a new Europe. Having tragically experienced the effects of political division of the continent for so many years, our country has the right to a secure tomorrow. European integration has been always beneficial to all parties involved. We believe that the same will apply to us. Poland's valuable contribution to the European Union is its young, educated and dynamic society, desirous to make up quickly for the delay in development. The Polish economy, growing at a rate almost three times that of the Union, a market of 40 million consumers with a rapidly growing purchase power, good political and economic relations with Eastern markets, will provide the Union with a valuable development potential and will help it to meet the challenges of other economic competitors in the world. Poland will enrich the Union with its traditions and culture and will consolidate its historic dedication to democracy and human rights. And finally the EU membership of our country, in combination with membership in NATO, will be conducive to the consolidation of the democratic order and security in this part of the continent.

Part IV

European Community

Full participation in the Internal Market should bring Poland the consolidation of the basis for long-term economic development, leading to an increase in the competitiveness of Polish enterprises and creation of new jobs. Our objective is to integrate into all areas and policies of the Single Market. In this way Poland and all its partners in the Union will be able to draw benefits from membership in the European Union and jointly face challenges connected with globalisation of the economy. In a medium-term perspective, after the completion of the reform of public finances and restructuring of the economy, we will also seek to participate in Economic and Monetary Union. EMU convergence criteria remain an important point of reference for the Polish strategy of economic and social development.

Common Foreign and Security Policy

Poland's integration into the European and the Euro-Atlantic institutions is the first priority of Polish foreign policy. Poland fully shares the objectives and means of foreign and security policy of the European Union and wishes to participate actively in the implementation and further development of this policy within the framework outlined in the Maastricht Treaty and the Amsterdam Treaty. It is our conviction that Poland's membership in the European Union is beneficial from the point of view of security and stability on the continent. Developing further the already good relations with all its neighbours and regional co-operation, Poland will stabilise security and democracy in the whole region. Poland's participation in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, conceived in this way, will enhance the EU policy towards its Eastern neighbours, contributing to the development of open and partner-like relations with countries remaining outside the enlarged Union.

Justice and Internal Affairs

Co-operation in the area of justice and internal affairs is of key importance for Poland. As a country whose border will be one of the longest sections of the continental frontier of the Union, we perceive the implications of threats of organised crime for the security and well-being of the nationals of Poland and other member states. We fully accept obligations resulting from the inclusion of the problems of border protection, visa, asylum and immigration policy as well as co-operation of courts in civil affairs. Co-operation with other member states in the fight against illegal immigration, drug trafficking, money laundering and other forms of organised crime will be one of our top priorities. We support the idea of concluding a pre-accession pact to fight against it. Effective control as Poland's Eastern border will be an important part of this policy. Poland has already undertaken measures in this direction. We count on further

pre-accession supported by the Union for the construction of appropriate border infrastructure. Closed to organised crime, trafficking and illegal migration, however, our border must remain open for economic and cultural co-operation and for the development of relations between peoples. Poland simultaneously promotes an active cross-border co-operation policy in the area of the future external frontier of the Union.

Poland declares its intention to actively co-operate within the I, II and III pillars of the European Union in the pre-accession period and expects a similar attitude on the part of the Union's institutions and of the member states.

Part V

Poland aims at quick membership in the European Union convinced that it will be an important factor to accelerate the development of our country. The objective, which we will endeavour to realise in the course of negotiations, is Poland's participation in all the domains of integration, with all obligations and rights resulting from membership. Poland will accept the entire *acquis communautaire*, understood as a set of legal acts and institutions ensuring their effective implementation. Transitional solutions should be applied selectively and their application should not disturb the operation of the Single Market. Poland will evaluate their applicability against the criterion of their positive impact on the growth of economy.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Poland, I wish now to present the opening position of Poland on certain key elements of the *acquis*.

Single Market

The basis of the negotiating position with regard to the Single Market is the need to find solutions, which will not adversely affect the effectiveness of its operation. Any temporary measures, if their adoption should be found to be indispensable, will not cover areas important from this point of view nor will they lead to distortion of the rules of competition. One of the elements of adopting the *acquis* by Poland in relation to the Single Market will be the fulfilment of obligations resulting from the provisions of the Europe Agreement.

With regard to the free movement of goods, our negotiation goal is a full elimination of the customer border between Poland and other countries of the European Union upon the entry into force of the accession treaty. This means a full liberalisation of trade in all commodity groups, including agricultural and food products. We will strive to eliminate ahead of the date of accession all remaining technical barriers, in particular those related to technical norms and standards.

In the area of the freedom of supply of services and establishment of enterprises, we will seek full liberalisation of the rules of mutual access to the market. As far as Poland is concerned, transitional arrangements, if any, could apply only to certain parts of the services sector, whose competitiveness may remain threatened, in spite of the acceleration of privatisation, demonopolisation and restructuring planned for the coming years.

Capital flows have been considerably liberalised in Poland. We have reached a stage where we can start the phase of the liberalisation of flows connected with short-term transactions. We believe that experience gained during its implementation will be lasting and positive; and that there will be no difficulties with the application of the principle of free movement of capital from the first day of accession.

Another problem requiring particular attention during our negotiations and linked to the free flow of capital will be the acquisition and trading of all types of assets. As regards trade in land and real estate, there is a need for a solution to avoid an uncontrolled, speculative trade in these assets.

Poland regards the free movement of workers as a fundamental component of economic co-operation and social policy of the European Union. As we see it, if all the benefits of the Single Market are to be reaped in full, the underlying four freedoms should be treated integrally. That is why Poland is going to seek inclusion of its citizens in the free movement of workers from the first day of accession.

Common Commercial Policy

Poland declares its readiness to fully assume its obligations resulting from the common commercial policy. The process of customs harmonisation and harmonisation of trade instruments is significantly advanced. In relations with third countries, Poland develops an active commercial policy aimed at harmonisation with the treaties in force in relations between these countries and the European Union. Poland's commitments within the framework of WTO and OECD are consistent with the requirements of membership in the European Union.

Common Agricultural Policy

The development of the Common Agricultural Policy will be one of the most important instruments of a balanced development of an enlarged European Union. We believe that it is possible to find solutions allowing for a full participation of Polish agriculture in the right and obligations resulting from the Common Agricultural Policy, including the access of Polish farmers to price, income and structural instruments. Bearing in mind the scope of necessary adjustments and the common long-term interests, we believe it is important to increase the assistance of the European Union for modernising the agriculture and the food-processing sector, restructuring of rural areas and rural infrastructure, during the pre-accession period. We also believe that the setting of production quotas for agricultural products covered by quantitative limitations, should take into consideration the potential and the path of adjustment of Polish agriculture.

Common Fisheries Policy

Poland attaches great importance to the sustainable development of fisheries, taking into consideration the social aspects. We believe it will be possible to find solutions, which will enable Poland to fully participate in the Common Fisheries Policy.

Structural Policy

Poland attaches great importance to participation in the structural policy of the Union. We believe that it is an important instrument of the implementation of the principle of solidarity, subsidiarity, and the social dimension of economic integration. Poland, similarly to the European Union also strives to eliminate differences in regional development, to actively fight unemployment, to restructure the industrial areas and to offer new development rural areas. Assistance within the framework of the reformed structural policy of the Union based on the principle of solidarity and governed by the rights similar to those applied to other member states, shall be an important element of this policy.

Social Policy

Poland welcomes the increasing importance of social policy in European Union's policy design. Active measures to fight unemployment, improving the quality of the work environment and dialogue with social partners, are major components of this policy. Poland has taken basically the same approach. We are determined to get social partners involved as broadly as possible in integration efforts, to ensure that the accession treaty and subsequent membership accommodate to the highest possible degree the interests of different social groups. Poland has accomplished several changes in her social policy. Along with adjusting its legislation, which is now in line with International standards, Poland has created efficient labour market institutions, which are now capable of joining in the Community labour market machinery.

Infrastructure

The efficient operation and development of the national infrastructure networks integrated in the Trans-European transport, energy, telecommunication and information infrastructure Networks (TENs) is a priority matter for Poland. Establishment of the conditions, which will lead to a high degree of infrastructure development lies in the common interest of both Poland and the European Union. Taking into consideration

the costs and the joint interest, we would hope for support from the Union.

Environmental Protection

Poland fully shares the objectives of the policy pursued by the Union with regard to environment protection and will seek to implement the existing Union standards. Since 1989, we have been consistently implementing the strategy of balanced and sustainable economic development. Thanks to this policy, we have managed to achieve considerable improvement in the state of the natural environment and the enhancement of social awareness in this respect. Poland has partly adopted the Union legislation. Many other acts in force in the Union will also be included in a new law on environment protection. However, the cost of the implementation of a number of norms in a medium-term perspective would by far exceed the possibilities of the budget and of Polish enterprises. It may be necessary to work out temporary transitional solutions in these domains, whose scope will depend on the possibilities of the Polish economy and financial and technical assistance on the part of the Union.

Restructuring

The objective of the Government of the Republic of Poland is to prepare as soon as possible all sectors of the economy for effective operation within the framework of the Single Market. Restructuring, development and privatisation programmes underway and in preparation serve this end. As in the Union, the programmes will not be realised by way of simple limits on production but will ensure that restructured enterprises are able to effectively compete on the Union and on the global market. Poland will seek to complete the implementation of these programmes in the pre-accession period, although in certain sectors the scope of the required adjustment processes and the related socio-economic costs indicated in the avis, may require special consideration in the accession treaty. The possibilities to meet socio-economic costs connected with the implementation of adjustment processes should be increased by the specification of the form and volume of public assistance both in the pre-accession period and through support extended by the Union within the framework of structural policy. .

Budget

The scope and significance of the temporary measures to be adopted in this respect, depend not only on the Polish side but also on the assistance on the part of the European Union. A timetable of changes and a detailed restructuring plan worked out jointly in the course of negotiations should be the basis of such assistance.

Institutions

We expect that the criteria for Poland's representation in the institutions of the European Union will be in accordance with those applied to the current member states. This rule should also apply to planned institutional reforms, indispensable for the effective operation of the Union and agreed at the intergovernmental Conference referred to in the Amsterdam Treaty.

Negotiations ahead of us cover about 30 different chapters of *acquis communautaire*. In my statement, I have focused on those elements of the negotiating position, which are the most important for us and for our partners in terms of the effective participation of Poland in the European Union. Of course, during the negotiations we will have to analyse carefully also all other areas, which I have not mentioned today.

We believe that swift progress of negotiations and a common elaboration of possible transitional solutions reduced to an absolute minimum require the specification of a working deadline for the completion of negotiations. Recognising the principle of the individual approach to each candidate for membership, we declare our willingness to co-operate with the other candidates and to reinforce our relations with them.

In view of our prospective membership, Poland would like to be able to participate in discussions on reform of institutions, the Common Agricultural Policy, structural policy and finance of the Union, the

implementation of which is a prerequisite for the appropriate functioning of the expanded Union. We support the process of the deepening of the Union, which should be concurrent with the process of enlargement. A Union that is strong, efficient, democratic, solid and developing new forms of co-operation in economic, foreign, internal affairs and justice is in the interest of Poland.

Poland enters the membership negotiations convinced that the process of European integration is irreversible. We are facing a great opportunity to make a decisive step in the building of the new European order. This opportunity cannot be wasted. The Government of the Republic of Poland is convinced, that mutual co-operation based on the awareness that we are working jointly for the benefit of our nations and of the entire European continent, will allow us to agree the accession treaty quickly, a treaty which will contain mutually satisfactory solutions in all negotiating domains.

Source: Archives of "Zbiór Dokumentów."