

Statement by Ulf Dinkelspiel on Sweden's negotiations on accession to the EU (1 April 1993)

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Statement to Parliament by the Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade concerning Sweden's negotiations on accession to the EC (1 April 1993)

It is now two months to the day since Sweden's negotiations on accession to the European Community opened in Brussels. I therefore consider it important to have this opportunity to report to Parliament on the progress made and on the negotiations that lie immediately ahead.

Since the official opening of the negotiations on 1 February, when I was able to set out Sweden's negotiating aims, two formal meetings have taken place at the level of ministers' representatives, i.e. between Sweden's chief negotiator Mr Frank Belfrage and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) in Brussels, headed by its chairman, Denmark's EC Ambassador Mr Gunnar Riberholdt. In addition, a series of meetings of experts have been held with the Commission to examine the *acquis communautaire* in certain areas covered by the negotiations. This technical review, necessary among other things in order to identify any problems and areas for which solutions will need to be negotiated, forms the basis for the negotiations proper, which are taking place with the EC member states in the framework of the intergovernmental conference set up for the purpose.

The technical examination of the *acquis*, which is being undertaken on a joint basis with all four applicant countries — Sweden, Finland, Austria and Norway — has been progressing on a broad front since February, covering numerous fields, such as agriculture, commercial policy, the four freedoms and so on. Thanks to the EEA negotiations, we are already familiar with large areas of EC legislation, which is greatly facilitating and speeding up this process. The wide-ranging work being done by the experts, who are drawn from several ministries and agencies, will continue up to the summer. On the basis of what has emerged so far, my assessment would be that the technical review has not revealed any unexpected difficulties.

The negotiations cover 29 areas, or 'chapters', of which three fall under the Maastricht Treaty — foreign and security policy, EMU and the 'third pillar', i.e. cooperation relating to home affairs and justice. At the second meeting of ministers' representatives on 12 March we were able to agree with the EC side to put eight chapters on one side as in principle unproblematic. The chapters concerned were covered in the EEA negotiations and we are therefore very familiar with them: free movement of services and the right of establishment; free movement of employees; free movement of capital; research and information technology; education; statistics; company law; and social issues (in so far as they are covered by the EEA Agreement).

At that meeting, however, we made a general reservation for the eventuality that the technical scrutiny of the legal acts concerned might highlight unexpected difficulties on individual points. In addition we made two specific reservations, concerning the acquisition of second residences and regarding the third Council Directive on life assurance. (The latter relates to the progressive reduction of holdings of housing bonds in life assurance companies' portfolios, for which we have requested a longer transitional period.)

At the meeting on 12 March, Sweden also outlined its negotiating aims relating to *regional policy*, including support for agriculture in northern Sweden and certain areas of the south, and concerning *commercial policy*. In these areas we took the opportunity to elaborate on Sweden's position and aims, on the basis of our opening statement of 1 February. The purpose was to secure understanding for our special circumstances and to point to feasible ways forward towards possible solutions. On regional policy, we described the situation in Sweden's sparsely populated areas and argued the case for a retention of our national regional policy, for participation in EC structural programmes on the basis of a division of the country under the NUTS system which would be acceptable to us, and for continued support for, among other things, northern Swedish agriculture.

We also reminded our opposite numbers that our goal as regards agriculture was to participate fully in the Common Agricultural Policy from the date of our accession to the Community.

Regarding the customs union and commercial policy, the EC welcomed our confirmation that we intended to participate fully as from our accession as a member state. This, as you know, is a prior condition for

unrestricted access to the frontier-free internal market for Swedish companies. The questions which we raised — and on which we are seeking special arrangements — mainly concerned our free trade agreements with the Baltic states and Sweden's aim of maintaining free trade in the clothing and textiles sector within the EC, with no restrictions on imports from non-member states. In general, the EC representatives were sympathetic as regards Sweden's policy towards the Baltic states, but more restrained when it came to our aspirations concerning free trade in textiles. The negotiations are continuing.

To sum up, the meeting of ministers' representatives constituted a clear step forward in the negotiating process — as regards both formally checking off sections of the *acquis communautaire* and the consideration of areas for negotiation raised during the meeting.

We reckon on being able to take the negotiating process another significant step forward at the next meeting with COREPER, which is expected to be held in the second half of April, and at our next ministerial meeting, which we hope will take place on 10 May. Of the 29 negotiating chapters, the next ones on the list — apart from commercial policy — are trade in goods, the environment, consumer protection, competition, transport policy, industrial policy and development assistance. The majority of these areas do not raise any problems, apart from environment-related issues in the field of goods, where our point of departure is that the highest existing standards should apply and where we consequently wish to maintain the solutions achieved in the EEA Agreement. It is still too early to say whether it will be possible to deal with all of these important areas at the negotiating sessions now planned, but our hope is that we will be able to put a further set of chapters — apart from the eight already mentioned — on one side as fundamentally unproblematic prior to the next ministerial meeting.

In a number of other areas, including Euratom, agriculture and the Community budget, preparations are continuing here at home on the basis of the negotiating demands formulated on 1 February, with a view to producing the necessary basic material for a more precise definition of our positions. Our aim is to define our negotiating positions on all issues relating to the Treaty of Rome within the coming month.

Sweden is of course anxious to accelerate the negotiating process, bearing in mind the timetable which we, the other candidate members and the EC have set for the negotiations and which has as its ultimate goal membership by 1995. Our own efforts are geared to this target date, but naturally we are also dependent on our opposite numbers. We hope that the EC side, too, will now finalize its organizational arrangements for the negotiations. It is also important for the Community, too, to formulate its negotiating positions without delay, to enable substantive negotiations to begin over as broad a field as possible. The as yet uncompleted ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the EC Commission's negotiating arrangements, and a certain lingering hesitation about enlargement in certain member states may have somewhat delayed the negotiations. I have every hope that it will be possible to step up the pace, so that by the summer break we will have dealt with substantial portions of the economic cooperation chapters falling under the Treaty of Rome and the Single Act.

In this context I would like to express my satisfaction at the fact that Norway will be officially opening its membership negotiations in the next few days. As I and other representatives of the Government have pointed out on numerous occasions, it is very much in Sweden's interests for the Nordic countries to go into the European Community together.