

Statement made by Valdas Adamkus at the Copenhagen European Council (12 December 2002)

Caption: On 12 December 2002, at the Copenhagen European Council, Valdas Admakus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, welcomes the success of the negotiations for his country's accession to the European Union.

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Statement by the President of Lithuania at the European Council in Copenhagen, 12 December 2002

Excellences,

First of all, I would like to applaud the successful conclusion of the accession negotiations. After all these months of working through thorny issues, the candidates and the Community have succeeded in striking a truly historic deal. Symbolically, the process started in Copenhagen also ends here.

Today, we are witnesses of a new process gaining momentum on the European continent. Borders and contrasts are disappearing in an area, which has long suffered from deeply imbedded structural differences. We do believe that this process will not end until other candidates, not invited today, join the Union.

Our countries hoped that the accession negotiations will boost our convergence with the rest of the continent. Actually, we have succeeded in many fields. The Union members have shown solidarity and understanding of the issues specific to Lithuania and other candidates, and this is a really great experience.

However, I must admit that not all results have met our initial expectations. Large groups of our society are still asking us WHETHER and WHY they will be treated differently than the Union's old members. This is a challenge we must cope with. Concerns of these people, especially farmers, must be addressed. After all, our goal is a Union that is close to its citizens.

But tonight I want to thank all of you for being pro-active, open-minded and forward-looking all this time. This enlargement makes history mainly because of its predominant focus on long-term strategic objectives. We are building a Europe that is strong, cohesive and open to a world swept by the ever-growing momentum of globalization.

Lithuania is determined to be an active member of the European Union. First, because we are well aware of the important and challenging task of ensuring security of the EU's external borders after our accession.

We also look forward to sharing our experience gathered in cooperation with the EU's future neighbors and thus helping to consolidate the idea of Wider Europe.

And as my very last word I would like to say how much we have appreciated the effective and skillful leadership of the Danish Presidency during this semester. You have been so innovative and have combined successfully this great quality with communitarian practices! I believe that our Union will be exactly as we envision it: sharing and protecting the interests of its all members.

Thank you.

H.E. Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania