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**Eleventh meeting of the Accession Conference at Ministerial  
level with Croatia  
Brussels, 22 December 2010**

The eleventh meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference with Croatia at Ministerial level was held today in Brussels, following the start of the negotiations on 3 October 2005. The European Union delegation was headed by Steven Vanackere, Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Institutional Reforms. The Croatian delegation was led by Gordan Jandroković, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration.

The Conference, which is the fruit of extensive work over several months, dealt in total with eight chapters and represented a significant milestone in Croatia's accession process with the provisional closure of three significant chapters: Chapter 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security; Chapter 27 - Environment and Chapter 31 - Foreign, Security and Defence Policy.

In addition, the Conference confirmed at Ministerial level the provisional closure of Chapter 4 - Free Movement of Capital; Chapter 12 - Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy;

Chapter 14 - Transport Policy; Chapter 32 - Financial Control and Chapter 34 - Institutions.

On all these chapters the EU underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common positions with a view to ensuring Croatia's administrative capacity and its capacity to ensure proper implementation and enforcement of the relevant *acquis*. The EU will, if necessary, return to these chapters at an appropriate moment.

**P R E S S**

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Furthermore, the Conference considered a proposal for transitional arrangement in Chapter 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security on the Schengen Borders Code and the common border crossing points at Croatia's border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Conference also considered proposals for transitional arrangements under Chapter 27 - Environment concerning the areas of climate change, air quality, waste management, water quality, industrial pollution control and risk management, and chemicals.

Details on the chapters provisionally closed at the Conference are provided below:

#### Chapter 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security

The negotiations on Chapter 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security were opened on 2 October 2009 at an Accession Conference at Ministerial level. At this meeting of the Conference the EU noted that, in order for the chapter to be provisionally closed, Croatia would, *inter alia*, have to ensure access to fully functioning asylum procedures for all third country applicants wishing to apply for international protection; to demonstrate that it would be compliant at the date of accession with EU requirements for a uniform format for visas and on security features and biometric identifiers in passports and travel documents; to ensure the implementation and enforcement of EU and Schengen requirements in the areas of police cooperation, fight against organised crime as well as judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters; and to ensure the implementation of the Council Framework Decision on the European Arrest Warrant and align with the EU definition of terrorism.

At today's meeting, the EU highlighted that further work is still required in several important areas - such as migration, asylum, external borders and Schengen - to ensure sufficient administrative and institutional capacity and to continue developing a convincing track record. The EU therefore invited Croatia to step up its preparations in order to ensure full compliance with EU requirements by the date of accession. The EU will monitor this closely.

#### Chapter 27 - Environment

The negotiations on Chapter 27 - Environment were opened on 19 February 2010 at the Accession Conference at Deputy level. At this meeting of the Conference the EU noted that, in order for the chapter to be provisionally closed, Croatia would have, *inter alia*, to adapt legislation aimed at transposing the *acquis* in the respective fields of water quality, industrial pollution control and risk management, continue its alignment with the *acquis* and demonstrate that it would be fully prepared to ensure the implementation and enforcement of the EU requirements at the date of accession.

At today's meeting, the EU highlighted the need for Croatia to continue implementation of the *acquis* in important areas such as, horizontal legislation on environmental assessment and climate change, air quality and water quality, as well as the issue of administrative capacity, all with a view to ensuring full compliance with EU requirements by the date of accession. The EU will continue to monitor progress closely throughout the negotiations.

## Chapter 31 - Foreign, Security and Defence Policy

The negotiations on Chapter 31 - Foreign, Security and Defence Policy were opened on 30 June 2010 at an Accession Conference at Ministerial level. At this meeting of the Conference the EU noted that, in order for the chapter to be provisionally closed, Croatia would have to continue to further strengthen implementation and enforcement capacities as well as transparency of arms-related information and ensures that the National Strategy is in line with the EU strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

At today's meeting, and recalling point 13 of the Negotiating Framework, the EU noted Croatia's commitment to good neighbourly relations. Furthermore, the EU invited Croatia to continue working on finding mutually acceptable definitive solutions to all pending bilateral and regional issues with neighbouring countries, especially as regards border issues, and to pursue efforts aimed at reconciliation among citizens in the region.

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Since the start of negotiations 34 (out of 35) chapters have been opened for negotiations and 28 chapters have been provisionally closed.

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