



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO UKRAINE

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Towards a new Era in EU – Ukraine Relations

During his two-day visit in Ukraine (11-12 September), EU-Commissioner Günter Verheugen stressed the new opportunities offered to Ukraine by the European Union following enlargement and especially within the EU's "*New Neighbourhood Policy*".

As a result of the accession of 10 new countries to the EU from 1 May 2004, Ukraine will become a direct neighbour of the EU. Therefore it is in the core interest of the EU to have an independent, politically stable and economically strong Ukraine as a neighbour. It is even a key condition for lasting peace and stability in Europe.

The New Neighbourhood Policy of the EU aims at creating an enlarged area of peace, stability and prosperity encompassing its neighbours to the East that do not have a prospect of EU membership within in a short-term perspective.

"To this purpose, the EU wishes to develop closest relationship with Ukraine based on shared values of freedom, democracy, the respect for human rights and the rule of law, the very principles on which the Union is founded" Mr Verheugen said.

This special relationship would have as the widest possible option the integration into the EU Single Market. It could also include Ukraine in some key policies of the EU like environment, research and development and Transeuropean Networks of Transport, Energy and Telecommunications. To this end, the European Union proposes to adopt, together with Ukraine, by Spring 2004 an **Action Plan** setting clear common objectives and a timetable. In exchange, Ukraine is expected to make substantial progress towards alignment with EU standards, including pursuing reforms to ensure a proper functioning of marked economy and a full-fledged democracy.

"This approach is reasonable and realistic," said Mr Verheugen. It allows us to make full use of our current contractual arrangements, namely the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), leaving all the options open as regards further developments in our bilateral relations" he added.

With regard to other neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe, Mr Verheugen stated:

"We encourage Ukraine to develop close neighbourly relations with all its neighbours including Russia while, at the same time, sticking firmly to the strategic partnership with the EU. I fully understand the need of Ukraine to maintain a high level of economic cooperation with its Eastern neighbours, but I have advised my interlocutors to be cautious at the same time and to ensure that the foreseen Single Economic Space is fully

compatible with its existing obligations and with its European integration aspirations. I think in particular about a possible Custom's Union.

We are ready to discuss the matter with Ukraine and I agreed with members of the government to have an informal consultation.”

Mr Verheugen also pointed to the fact that Ukraine is the first country that he visits in his new capacity as Commissioner in charge of implementing the new neighbouring policy of the European Union.

During his visit, Mr Verheugen met with the President of Ukraine L. Kuchma; K. Gryshchenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine; V. I. Khoroshkovskiy, Minister for Economy and European Integration; O. Lavrinovich, Minister of Justice, B. Tarasyuk, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Committee for European Integration; V. Lytvyn, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada and with other representatives of Ukraine's political parties: Y. Tymoshenko, O. Moroz. Also he gave a speech to students of the Institute of International Relations of the Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University.

All relevant information about the European Unions Wider Europe policy can be found on the Delegation's website: www.delukr.cec.eu.int.

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