

Brussels, 9 October 2002

Statement by Pat COX on the Commission report on the progress made towards enlargement

It is now clear that ten states are ready. It is an illusion that a treaty designed to accommodate five more members is adequate for Europe's future tasks. The importance of ratifying the Nice Treaty, with its necessary institutional changes, is underlined and confirmed by today's report.

Our countries must now individually and collectively summon up the necessary political will to overcome the last remaining obstacles: the winning post is in sight, beyond it the prize is unparalleled peace, freedom, prosperity and security across our continent.

I would like to thank the Commission and the negotiators of the candidate states for their steadfast commitment and for all their detailed work. Today we move away from the technical preparations and embrace the political challenge of the final, hard and historic decisions which will be taken under the Danish Presidency in Copenhagen in just over two months' time.

We are committed to this process because we are convinced that enlargement serves the fundamental, long-term interests of the people we were elected to represent - we must make a success of this historic opportunity.