TESTO 1: Speech by the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mr Poul Nyup Rasmussen
Prague, 23 August

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you on the first day of our visit to your beautiful capital,
Prague, in the heart of Europe.

I intend to focus my intervention on the future new Europe I would like to see.

Europe is a key issue for both the Czech Republic and Denmark. Being small nations, dependent on
the outside world, we have much in common. We know the value of working together with other
countries. And we face the same challenges. Allow me therefore to share with you my visions for
tomorrow’s Europe.

We stand today on the threshold of creating a new and better Europe. Since the breakdown of the
Berlin Wall and the upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe we have witnessed a transition process
of historic dimensions on this continent. We now have the possibility of uniting Europe, which for
more than half a century suffered from an artificial partition. This is a historic opportunity, which
we must grab. And we must all make an effort to ensure that we will succeed.

Building a new and better Europe is the responsibility of present and future Members of the EU
working together. I am under no illusion that this will be an easy task. The challenges are
tremendous and numerous but not insurmountable.

The EU has proven to be a great success. It has offered peace, stability and prosperity to its
members. It has turned old age rivalry into friendship and partnership. And the EU has served as an
efficient tool enabling Member States to find common solutions to common problems. This is why
we need the EU. It is up to us – present and new Member States – to build on this long and fruitful
tradition.

The debate on the future of Europe, which was initiated in Nice last year, is important and
fundamental. For me it is important that this debate not only focuses on institutional changes. Our
focus should be on goals and substance rather than on theoretical institutional discussions, which
are out of touch with the European reality. In my view we should start by asking: what are the
future tasks we want our common Europe to handle? Only then can we pose the question: which
institutions do we need, and what should they look like.

The new Europe I want to see is:

- A whole Europe where the EU continues the enlargement process
- An active Europe acting as a progressive driving force in globalisation,
- A better Europe that deals with issues important to the citizens, and is more transparent,
democratic and efficient.

The enlargement of the EU with the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe is our most
important task at the beginning of the 21st Century. We are facing a historic window of opportunity to reunite our formerly divided continent and to create a stronger and more stable Europe. A European Union with more than twice as many members will be the best sign of solidarity we can send.

The perspective of enlargement should not only encompass the 12 countries with which the EU is presently negotiating. Every European nation that fulfils fundamental rights such as freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights can become members of the EU when they fulfil the economic and political criteria set out in Copenhagen in 1993.

The enlargement of the European Union is well on track. The present stage in the enlargement process has only been reached through political courage and foresight – both in the candidate countries and in the EU.

The transition from totalitarian regimes to democratic structures and market economies in the Central and Eastern European countries has not been easy. Reforms in almost every part of the societies have been necessary. The populations have met these great challenges with admirable courage and patience. There is no doubt that the prospect of EU membership has helped maintain momentum in the reform process. The collapse of the totalitarian regimes could have led to regional and ethnic tensions in Central and Eastern Europe. We have been witnessing violent conflicts in the Balkans during the last decade and nobody can guarantee that unrest could not have happened in Central and Eastern Europe – had the new governments and parliaments not had a clear incentive to settle them in a peaceful manner. The prospect of EU membership provided this incentive. Thus, already at this stage the EU accession process itself has significantly contributed to enhancing security, stability and welfare in Europe.