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ESAME DI INTERPRETAZIONE CONSECUTIVA INGLESE-ITALIANO - 18/10/2002

351 - 01-1191 B con 3

TESTO 2: Speech by the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mr Poul Nyrup Rasmussen
Prague, 23 August

1191/B

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.

The Czech Republic has undergone an impressive development over the last decade. Through ambitious reforms great progress has been achieved in preparing your country for membership of the EU. Soon the Czech Republic will be ready. I believe EU membership will provide the best possible conditions for enabling the Czech Republic as well as all other candidate countries to build up the modern welfare societies for which their populations have longed.

And I look forward to see you as an active partner during the next Intergovernmental Conference where we in practice shall decide our common Europe for the future.

During the last six months we have witnessed great progress in the accession negotiations. We have now entered a phase where difficult and sensitive issues must be solved. The will to compromise must be present both in candidate countries and Member States. I believe this to be the case. With the proper determination we will succeed.

The Summit in Gothenburg in June confirmed the ambition to finalise negotiations with the best-prepared candidate countries by the end of 2002. This Danish EU Presidency is therefore crucial. We are ready to take on this responsibility - in order to create a stable and unified Europe for the generations to come. To finalize the historical circle - from Copenhagen 1993 to Copenhagen 2002 - and welcome the first new members including the Czech Republic.

Not only the enlargement of the EU is important for security and stability in Europe. This is evidently also the case for NATO enlargement. Our discussions at the informal NATO Summit in Brussels in June this year were very fruitful. I particularly welcome the fact that all 19 allies now agree that NATO will issue new invitations at the Prague Summit in November 2002 - during the Danish EU Presidency. I have noticed with great pleasure similar ambitions on the part of the Czech Republic.

Denmark will work hard for an ambitious enlargement decision in Prague. We are of the firm opinion that NATO has a moral and political obligation to continue the enlargement process. The Alliance should be open for all European democracies that are willing and able to share the responsibilities that membership of NATO brings. History or geographical location should have no

bearing on membership of the Alliance. The question of enlargement is up to the Alliance and aspiring countries alone. It is of the utmost importance – not least to the three Baltic States – that we adhere to these very fundamental principles.

We have to make sure that every European country understands NATO's sincere and peaceful intentions. Wherever possible, co-operation and dialogue with non-NATO members should be further enhanced. NATO must be prepared to explore new areas of co-operation together with any European country – including Russia – that share our concern for the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area.

NATO enlargement should be seen in parallel with the EU enlargement process. Countries with the perspective of EU membership should also be offered the option of being firmly anchored within the Alliance, if they so wish. The EU and NATO enlargement processes are mutually reinforcing, creating vital synergy for all participating countries. In my view, it is therefore very symbolic and very logic that the NATO Summit in Prague will take place just three weeks before the EU Summit in Copenhagen. Denmark will make every effort to ensure that these three weeks will become a decisive leap forward for European integration. Let us unite our efforts to obtain a historical result in Prague.