

- to provide an appropriate framework for the Slovak Republic's gradual integration into the Community. To this end, the Slovak Republic shall work towards fulfilling the necessary conditions,
- to promote cooperation in cultural matters.

TITLE I

POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Article 2

A regular political dialogue is established between the Parties which they intend to develop and intensify as an effective means to accompany and consolidate the rapprochement between the Community and the Slovak Republic, support the political and economic changes under way in that country and contribute to the establishment of lasting links of solidarity and new forms of cooperation. The political dialogue and cooperation, based on shared values and aspirations:

- will facilitate the Slovak Republic's full integration into the community of democratic nations and progressive rapprochement with the Community. The economic rapprochement provided for in this Agreement will lead to greater political convergence,
- will lead to an increasing convergence of positions on international issues, and in particular on those issues likely to have substantial effects on one or the other Party,
- will contribute to the rapprochement of the Parties' positions on security issues.

Article 3

At ministerial level, political dialogue shall take place within the Association Council. This shall have general responsibility for all matters which the Parties might wish to put to it.

Article 4

Other procedures and mechanisms for political dialogue shall be set up by the Parties, and in particular in the following forms:

- meetings as appropriate of the President of the Slovak Republic on the one hand, and the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission of the European Communities, on the other,

- meetings at senior official level (political directors) between officials of the Slovak Republic, on the one hand, and the Presidency of the Council of the European Communities and the Commission, on the other,
- taking full advantage of diplomatic channels,
- including the Slovak Republic in the group of countries receiving regular information on the issues dealt with by the European Political Cooperation as well as exchanging information with the view to achieving the objectives defined in Article 2,
- any other means which would make a useful contribution to consolidating, developing and stepping up this dialogue.

Article 5

Political dialogue at parliamentary level shall take place within the framework of the Parliamentary Association Committee.

TITLE II

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Article 6

Respect for the democratic principles and human rights established by the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a new Europe, as well as the principles of market economy, inspire the domestic and external policies of the Parties and constitute essential elements of the present association.

Article 7

1. The Association includes a transition period of a maximum duration of ten years divided into two successive stages, each in principle lasting five years. The first stage shall begin when this Agreement enters into force.
2. The Association Council shall proceed regularly to examine the application of this Agreement and the accomplishment of the Slovak Republic's economic reforms on the basis of the principles established in the preamble.
3. During the course of the 12 months preceding the expiration of the first stage, the Association Council shall meet to decide the transition to the second stage as well as any possible changes to be brought about as regards measures concerning the content of the provisions governing the second stage. In doing this, it will take into account the results of the examination mentioned in paragraph 2.
4. The two stages envisaged in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 do not apply to Title III.