



INTERNATIONAL, ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS

PRESIDENT KUCHMA DEFINES TOP DIPLOMATIC PRIORITIES

Kyiv, July 1996... In a Foreign Ministry address, President Kuchma said that Ukraine's three top diplomatic priorities are accelerating free trade negotiations with the EU, obtaining special status with NATO, and gaining associate membership in the Western European Union, the emerging defence arm of the EU. But while integration with European structures would remain the country's paramount goal, relations with Russia and other ex-soviet states should be greatly expanded both within and outside the framework of the CIS. Kuchma asked the ministry to focus on finalizing the Ukrainian-Russian framework treaty and the terms of the Russian fleet's use of Ukrainian port facilities as top priorities in the aftermath of Russia's presidential election. The president also urged Ukrainian diplomats to pursue establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone encompassing Ukraine and Central Europe. (INFOBANK/Eastern Economist)

CANADA APPOINTS FIRST PERMANENT MEMBER TO COUNCIL OF EUROPE

August 1996... Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy appointed Réjean Frenette, Canada's Ambassador to Switzerland, as Canada's first Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe (COE).

"Having a permanent observer will enable

Newsbriefs are compiled by Monitor staff with materials from newspapers and news services, including: Ukrainian News, Ukrainian Weekly, Ukrainian Voice, Homin Ukrainy, Ukraine and World, Eastern Economist (EE), Kiev Post, Ukrinform, UCIS, INFOBANK, OMRI, Reuters, United Press International, ITAR-TASS, Update on Ukraine (Council of Advisors to the Presidium of the Parliament of Ukraine), and various INTERNET sources.

Canada to strengthen its relations with the Council in all areas, ranging from human rights and legal affairs to culture, education, environment, public health, social issues and sports," said Mr. Axworthy.

Observer status allows Canada to appoint a permanent observer to attend meetings of ministers' representatives, and as well to send observers to committees of experts and to conferences of specialized ministers. The Council's membership comprises almost all European countries, including Ukraine which was admitted as the 37th member in November 1995. Observer status has been granted only to Canada and the U.S.

Canada has established close links with the Council of Europe over the years. For example, Canadian government representatives regularly attend meetings concerning COE programs for cooperation and assistance in Central and Eastern Europe. The COE performs various roles, such as bringing together the 15 members of the European Union with other democratic countries (including their parliamentarians), providing a forum for protection of human rights and freedoms, a framework for intergovernmental activities, and forum for closer cooperation between Eastern, Central and Western Europe. The main COE instruments are their Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the European Commission of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights.

"The Council of Europe is a vital part of the European political structure, and Canada is proud to have received acknowledgement from the 39 member states of its deep-rooted commitment to security, democracy and human rights in Europe," concluded Mr. Axworthy.

UKRAINE GATT/WTO MEMBER IN 1997?

July 1996... Ukraine may join the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as early as 1997, said Andrew Stoler, U.S. trade representative in Geneva who heads a working commission on Ukraine's membership in GATT/WTO. This would mean Ukraine would join just after the Baltic States.

During his visit, Stoler discussed Ukraine's readiness for the third round of membership commission session in Geneva June 24-25, with Foreign Economic Relations and Trade Minister Serhiy Osyka. Stoler said Ukraine

has a relatively stable legislature today, which facilitates the talks with GATT/WTO member states and investors.

"I consider Ukraine's membership in GATT/WTO a good insurance policy, a guarantee of economic success", he added.

Following the Geneva talks, a group of GATT/WTO experts approved Ukraine's proposed tax reform, which will facilitate talks between Ukraine and WTO member states on mutual tax concessions that will open markets of member states to each other.

(INFOBANK)

UKRAINE OFFICIALLY JOINS CENTRAL EUROPE INITIATIVE

June 1996... Ukraine officially became a full member of the Central European Initiative (CEI) in Vienna, together with Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria and Romania.

Speaking at the conference Ukraine's Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udoenko stressed that full membership will expand the cooperation of Ukraine with other states in the region in areas of transport, communications, science and technology, agriculture, statistics, environmental protection and safety. The CEI was set up in 1989 by Italy, Hungary, Austria and Yugoslavia, and at present includes ten countries. In addition to the abovementioned, they are Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Macedonia and Bosnia.

Currently the Central European Initiative is engaged in 43 political and economic projects in the Central European region.

Among these is the improvement of navigation on the Danube and the construction of a Trans-European highway connecting Trieste with Budapest and Kyiv.

(INFOBANK)

NATO AND UKRAINE

• PRESIDENT ADDRESSES WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

In June, President Kuchma told the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU) in Paris that Ukraine is not opposed to NATO's gradual expansion but is against the deployment of nuclear weapons in neighbouring countries that might join the alliance. Kuchma reiterated that Ukraine's neutral status precludes it from joining any