

**Speech by the Federal Minister of Justice
Brigitte Zypries, Member of the German
Bundestag, at the ceremony to deposit the
instrument of accession of the European
Community to the Hague Conference on 3
April 2007 in The Hague**

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Mr. Secretary General,
Madam Chair,
Madam Vice-President of the European
Parliament,
Dr. Hirsch Ballin,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, it is a great honour for me to deposit the instrument of accession of the European Community to the Hague Conference. I do this in my capacity as Chair of the Council of Justice Ministers of the European Union. This accession has been made possible because the Member States of the Hague Conference have decided today to admit the Community as a Member. I would like to thank you very

much for this decision, because it is an important step for Europe.

For over one hundred years, the Hague Conference has been providing its members with an outstanding forum in which to draw up treaties on private international law. The fact that all the Member States of the European Union are also Members of the Hague Conference demonstrates just how much the European Community values the Hague Conference. There is no doubt about its great success – the great number of Hague Conventions speaks for itself. Some of these Conventions have now been adopted on such a wide scale that they greatly influence legal relations among the states around the world. The Conventions on Child Abduction and on Adoption are just two examples.

For some years, the European Community has had the power to promote judicial co-operation in civil matters among its Member States. This means that the Community has the competence to adopt legal instruments in those areas in which the Hague Conference is also active. However, the aim is not to be a rival to the Hague Conference. Rather, the Member States of the European Union have the ability to make their legal relationship with one another even closer than is possible with a convention that is designed to apply around the world.

Our accession today shows that the European Community is open to co-operation with the other states outside of its own internal rules. It is very important to us to maintain our external

relations in the area of civil law with the non-EU states. The Conventions of the Hague Conference are an excellent basis for this. The European Community therefore welcomes the efforts of the Hague Conference to gain new members and I very much hope that these will be successful.

We will continue to strive as far as possible to co-ordinate the legal instruments of the Community with the Conventions from The Hague. Past experience has already shown that this is possible. Thus, for example, the so-called Brussels IIa Regulation concerning parental responsibility is based in large part on the provisions of the Hague Child Protection Convention. Likewise, the way the negotiations of the Hague Maintenance Project develop is extremely important for the

European Regulation on maintenance law that we are currently discussing in Brussels.

With today's accession, the European Community will be able to involve itself in the negotiations over future Hague Conventions. Perhaps this can help speed up negotiations here in The Hague, which would then also make our accession a gain for all those Member States of the Hague Conference that are not Members of the European Community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted that the European Community will now be a part of the Hague Conference. I would like to thank everybody who has made this accession possible, in particular Secretary General van Loon and his team.

You can be assured that the European

Community will be an active and committed
Member.

Thank you.