

**Address by Mr Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha
Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria
on the closure of the 3rd Information Conference on CAP**

16 March (11:30 hr)

Dear Mr Fischler,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to greet all the participants in the Third Information Conference on the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union.

I would like to express the gratitude of the Bulgarian Government for the possibility offered by the European Commission to host this high forum. The discussions of the past two days have been extremely interesting, and I trust they have also been very useful.

As you know, agriculture has always occupied an important place in European economy. At the same time, however, it has been one of the most sensitive sectors throughout the process of European enlargement, revealing different interests and ideas.

The CAP reform of July 2003 and the accession of ten new Member States in May this year present a huge challenge for the 15 present Member States, which will influence the future development of Europe.

Bulgaria is aware of this, and does not wish to create additional tension after its accession to the European Union.

The Bulgarian Government uses its best efforts to prepare this country in the best possible way as a creditable future member of the Union.

Bulgaria's membership in the European Union will create possibilities for investment in agriculture and in the processing industry, and will contribute to increasing the quality, competitiveness and standard of living of the Bulgarian citizens.

This is the leitmotiv of the Bulgarian Government in its desire to conclude negotiations on the agriculture chapter as soon as possible.

Bulgaria fully supports the new orientations in the development of the agriculture policy of United Europe, namely promoting the development of the rural areas, as this will contribute to raising the standard of living of the population in the conditions of sustainable development and of harmony with the environment.

Finally, I would like to thank once more the representatives of the European Commission and all the participants in the Third Information Conference on the Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union.

Thank you for the attention.