



**COUNCIL OF  
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## **EU-Turkey Association Council**

The EU-Turkey Association Council held its 50th meeting on Friday, 22 June 2012. The meeting was chaired by Mr Egemen BAĞIŞ, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator of Turkey. Mr Nicolai WAMMEN, Minister for European Affairs of Denmark, led the European Union delegation on behalf of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Mr Štefan FÜLE, Commissioner responsible for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, represented the European Commission.

The Association Council meeting provided a timely opportunity to review EU-Turkey relations. In line with the Council conclusions of 5 December 2011, the EU noted progress made by Turkey in its preparations in the framework of the negotiating process. Overall, at this stage, out of 35 negotiating chapters, thirteen have been opened and one provisionally closed. As concerns chapters for which opening benchmarks have been set, the EU invited Turkey to address them accordingly, and to step up its efforts in meeting established conditions.

The EU reaffirmed that the pace of negotiations depends notably on Turkey's progress in addressing opening and closing benchmarks, in meeting the requirements of the Negotiating Framework, and in respecting its obligations towards the EU. The EU also recalled the crucial importance of implementing the priorities enshrined in the Accession Partnership.

In this context, the EU welcomed Turkey's continued commitment to the negotiation process and the political reform agenda, also reaffirmed by the establishment of the new Turkish EU Ministry. The EU also welcomed the launch of the positive agenda, covering a broad range of areas of common interest with Turkey, which should support the negotiation process, in line with the Negotiating Framework and the relevant Council conclusions.

Recalling the adoption by the Council on 21 June 2012 of conclusions on developing cooperation with Turkey in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs, the EU welcomed the subsequent initialling of the readmission agreement with Turkey.

# **P R E S S**

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Progress made by Turkey in meeting the Copenhagen political and economic criteria, as well as Turkey's efforts towards alignment with the *acquis communautaire*, was also reviewed. The EU welcomed the Turkish process towards constitutional reform, which should be implemented in line with European standards. The EU encouraged Turkey to further improve the observance of fundamental rights and freedoms in law and in practice, stressing in particular areas such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion, where substantial progress is needed.

The EU noted important developments with regard to civilian oversight of the security forces and implementation of the judicial reform strategy, but also that further progress is needed. Furthermore, the EU underlined that further efforts towards fully meeting the Copenhagen criteria are also required, *inter alia*, as regards property rights, trade union rights, rights of persons belonging to minorities, women's and children's rights, anti-discrimination and gender equality, and the fight against torture and ill-treatment. The EU also called on Turkey to enhance its efforts to implement all the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights.

Concerning the East and the Southeast, the EU called on Turkey to follow-up recent announcements to implement further measures in the context of the democratic opening. The EU strongly condemned all terrorist attacks and violence in the Turkish territory, and expressed its solidarity with the people of Turkey. The EU reiterated its support to Turkey in its fight against terrorism, which must be conducted with due regard for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In line with the Council conclusions of 5 December 2011, the EU recalled Turkey's obligation of full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement and the importance of progress in the normalisation of bilateral relations between Turkey and all Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus.

The EU regretted Turkey's statements about freezing its relations with the EU Presidency during the second half of 2012. In line with European Council conclusions of 9 December 2011, the EU expressed serious concerns and called for full respect of the role of the Presidency of the Council, a fundamental institutional feature of the EU which is provided for in the Treaty on the European Union.

Furthermore, the Association Council reviewed the state of bilateral relations. The EU recalled that with regard to the Association Agreement and the Customs Union, the EU remained committed to engaging constructively with Turkey to resolve outstanding disputes. Finally, the Association Council considered priorities for further work within the framework of the Association Agreement and the Customs Union.