

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

52nd MEETING OF THE EU-TURKEY JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Izmir, 5-7 April 2004

JOINT STATEMENT

The Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 52nd meeting in Izmir on 6 and 7 April 2004. This meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Joost LAGENDIJK and his Turkish counterpart, Prof. Dr. Aydın DUMANOĞLU.

Discussions focused on the following subjects:

- EU-Turkey relations in the context of the enlargement process
 - Approaches inside the EU to Turkey's accession
 - Preparation of the 2004 Commission Progress Report
 - Financial co-operation
 - The Communication Strategy
- Advancement and implementation of the reforms in Turkey
- Cyprus

At the end of the meeting, the meeting adopted the following statement.

- Whereas the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 declared that Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States;
- Whereas the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 declared that the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay, if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria;
- Noting that the pre-accession strategy for Turkey is now being actively implemented;
- Recalling the recommendations of the JPC meeting of 5-6 June 2000, and the Declaration of the Co-chairmen at the end of the 50th meeting of the JPC.

The EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee

1. Reaffirmed that Turkey's process of accession to the EU has registered significant progress since Helsinki, and welcomed the fact that both sides are now working together to maintain the current momentum;
2. Underlined that the current developments in the international and regional arenas require closer relations between the EU and Turkey, in which both the EP and the TGNA have an important role to play;
3. Reaffirmed that Turkey has reached an important threshold regarding legislation in compliance with the political criteria, as confirmed by the Commission's 2003 Regular Report;

4. Welcomed the intention of the Turkish Government to introduce soon new legislative changes that will address the priorities pointed out in relevant EU documents and ensure further compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria;
5. Noted the adoption by the TGNA of a series of legislative packages constituting important steps towards complying with the Copenhagen political criteria and with the European standards regarding freedom of thought and expression;
6. Welcomed the political will demonstrated by the Turkish Government and by the great majority of the people's elected representatives with regard to making reforms that are revolutionary for Turkey, not only in order to meet the Copenhagen political criteria, but also to advance the economic, social and political conditions of the Turkish people; and pointed out that such reforms can only be judged on the basis of their actual implementation in terms of day-to-day practice at all levels of society;
7. Welcomed the abolition of the death penalty in Turkey;
8. Noted that participation in Community programmes and agencies is an important element of the pre-accession strategy and will help Turkey to further integrate with the Community policies in different fields; welcomed in this context the signature of the "Framework Agreement establishing the general principles of Turkey's participation in Community programmes", as well as the procedural and institutional steps that have been taken or are underway to enable Turkey to benefit from fourteen programmes and two agencies;
9. Acknowledged the new dynamic in the process of extending the customs union to services and public procurement, and invited both parties to the customs union to increase coordination and consultation, in particular when the EU is entering into new commitments with third countries which affect its external trade policy;
10. Stressed in this respect that it is particularly important that Turkey should enhance effective administrative structures at both central and local levels in order to address the new tasks, which form part of the partnership for accession;
11. Welcomed the results being achieved in the implementation of the Turkish Government's commitment to zero tolerance and eradication of torture, and encouraged further progress;
12. Welcomed Turkey's continued cooperation with its European partners in the fight against terrorism and organised crime; called for increased efforts to stop illegal migration;
13. Welcomed the commitment and the efforts of the Turkish Government towards promoting economic and social development in the most disadvantaged regions including the east and southeast of the country in order to reduce existing disparities and to ensure greater social cohesion;
14. Noted the problems faced by Turkish citizens in obtaining visas for the entry to the Schengen area; in this respect called on the relevant member states' authorities to take the necessary steps to ease the procedure for Turkish students, researchers and businessmen travelling to the Schengen area with academic or business motives;

15. Noted that one of the key objectives of the pre-accession strategy should be to improve knowledge between the EU and the Turkish civil societies and called on the European Commission, the European Parliament, the member states and Turkish authorities to explore possible ways and means of launching an effective public information campaign in order to help prepare public opinion in the EU and Turkey for the prospect of opening accession negotiations as well as the opportunities and obligations of the EU membership;

16. Welcomed the objectives of the proposals put forward by the UN Secretary General towards uniting Cyprus and looked forward to their acceptance by both communities so that a united Cyprus can join the EU on 1 May 2004.

17. Considered that the JPC will have a particularly important role in the next 5 years especially in view of the importance of the decision to be taken by the European Council in December 2004.