

Information Note
18th Meeting of the Reform Monitoring Group
Ankara, 19 December 2009

- The 18th meeting of the Reform Monitoring Group (RMG) was held at the Foreign Ministry, with the participation of the Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice, Minister of Interior and high level officials from relevant Ministries. This has been the fifth meeting held by the RMG in 2009.
- This meeting had special importance since it has been the first one held after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and following the EU Council of December 2009.
- In light of the accession process, our Government's foremost priority is to guarantee our citizens highest standards in all areas.
- It should be underlined that the real motive behind the political reforms, accelerated since 2000s and continued with determination, is to provide our citizens with a more liberal democracy and effectively functioning legal system and to ensure that our citizens have been provided with human rights at the highest standards, in light of the decisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights.
- In other words, the current and prospective political reforms are carried out for the stability of our country and for the welfare and happiness of our citizens.
- Political reforms are the most important component of the EU accession process which we perceive as the most important modernization project undertaken by Turkey since the establishment of the Republic.
- With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has overcome its long-standing institutional crisis, and consequently, a more suitable environment for enlargement has emerged. This is a positive development in terms of Turkey's accession process.
- Conclusions of General Affairs Council of December 8, which were endorsed by the EU Summit on December 11, reiterate that Turkey

is in the EU's forthcoming enlargement strategy and confirm the goal of accession. Despite the efforts of one Member State to introduce negative elements into the paragraph regarding Turkey, thanks to the Swedish Presidency and the majority of the Member States, which are aware of the strategic importance of our country, the Environment chapter will be opened at the Turkey-EU Intergovernmental Accession Conference on December 21.

At the 18th Meeting of the Reform Monitoring Group;

- Ministers discussed the work in progress, in light of important steps taken by the Government's "Democratic Opening", in particular the "National Solidarity and Brotherhood Project".
- Ministers elaborated on Turkey's EU accession negotiations and identified priorities for the short term.
- At the outset of the meeting, the Ministers were informed by the Secretary General for EU Affairs on the preparation work of Turkey's new EU strategy. Political reforms constitute one of the four platforms on which the new EU Strategy is based that will be finalised and publicly announced in January 2010.
- It was decided to establish the Political Affairs Sub-committee (SİYAK) under the auspices of the Reform Monitoring Group in order to speed up the work in the area of political reforms. SİYAK will be composed of high level bureaucrats of relevant bodies meeting under the coordination of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs.
- SİYAK, which is intended as a platform where new tasks and ideas in the area of political reforms will be presented to the Ministers, will be a dynamic structure that will also prepare the agenda and follow up on the decisions of the Reform Monitoring Group.
- SİYAK will be composed of high level officials of the relevant Ministries, representative of Mr. Cemil Çicek, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State, representative of the Undersecretariat of the Prime Ministry, and the President of the Prime Ministry Human Rights Presidency. Representatives from other related institutions will also be invited to SİYAK meetings depending on the issues on the agenda.

- Furthermore, to restore public enthusiasm on the EU accession process and to ensure effective participation of our citizens in this process, one Deputy Governor will be assigned in 81 provinces as EU Contact Points.
- The importance of the support of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in the EU accession process is undisputable. In order to increase and systematise this support, it was decided to propose a special legislation procedure for EU reforms at the Turkish Great National Assembly.
- Necessary amendments to the relevant legislation and in particular to the Constitution will be submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in the form of “reform packages” as it was done in the past.
- Chairman of relevant Committees of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (i.e. EU Integration, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Justice, Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Constitutional Committee) will be invited to Reform Monitoring Group meetings depending on the agenda.
- Reforms necessary to open negotiations on Chapter 23 “Justice and Fundamental Rights”, which includes the political criteria, and Chapter 24 “Justice, Freedom and Security” will be accelerated.
- Establishment of a National Human Rights Institution and an Anti-Discrimination Board and activating the newly established Law Enforcement Independent Complaint Mechanism will contribute to Turkey’s EU accession process in the context of political criteria.
- Ministry of Justice will closely monitor the implementation of the Action Plan of the Judicial Reform Strategy.
- Anti-Corruption Strategy, which was prepared under the coordination of the Prime Ministry Inspection Board, will be put into effect in January after its approval by the Government.
- The necessary work will be undertaken for the enactment of the Draft Law on the Approval of the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

- Reform Monitoring Group and Political Affairs Sub-Committee will continue to closely monitor the work carried out in the field of political criteria and will plan further steps.
- Next Reform Monitoring Group meeting will convene in Istanbul in February 2010.