

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER ŠTEFAN FÜLE FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH EGEMEN BAĞIŞ TURKISH MINISTER FOR EU AFFAIRS AND CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

(9 November 2011)

The Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle has met with the Turkish Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bağış on Wednesday in Brussels. It was their first bilateral meeting after the European Commission had published the Progress Report 2011 on Turkey.

Commissioner Füle and Minister Bağış agreed that defining a positive agenda as set out in the Progress Report is the way forward to provide new momentum to EU-Turkey relations. They also concurred that this positive agenda is not to replace, but to complement the accession process. Mr Füle repeated that Turkey continues to be a key country for the EU and that the accession process remains the most effective tool to frame the relations of the European Union with Turkey.

In the talks with Minister Bağış, the Commissioner highlighted various elements of the positive agenda such as intensified dialogue and cooperation on political reforms, alignment with the EU acquis under negotiation chapters, visa, mobility and migration, as well as addressing important trade issues which should be discussed in more detail during the upcoming visit of himself and the Commissioner for Trade, Karel De Gucht, to Istanbul on 17 and 18 November. Both partners agreed that with political support of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament work should start to put the positive agenda into practice.

During the meeting, Commissioner Füle expressed his condolences to the people of Turkey following the earthquake that struck the Van province in Southeast Turkey, and expressed hope that the support from the European Union, including the supply of some 1.200 temporary housing units able to accommodate 6.000 persons, would contribute to offer relief. Minister Bağış thanked the European Commission for the swift response and solidarity.

As regards the constitutional reform in Turkey, Commissioner Füle praised the ongoing efforts to ensure an inclusive, participative process and encouraged its continuation.

In the course of the meeting, the Commissioner raised with Minister Bağış the concerns of the European Union about the recent tensions in relations between Turkey and Cyprus. As regards the talks on a comprehensive settlement for Cyprus, both parties welcomed the encouraging progress the Secretary-General of the United Nations reported during the recent meeting in New York of 30 and 31 October. Commissioner Füle also referred to the recent arrests of Turkish intellectuals, noting that both the Turkish anti-terror legislation and its interpretation raise concerns in the European Union. Minister Bağış explained the Turkish position on this matter. Commissioner Füle also stressed that the EU stands side by side with Turkey in its resolve to fight against terrorism, including acts perpetrated by the PKK, and that the EU remains committed to strengthen its cooperation with Turkey on this issue.