

STATEMENT BY H.E. EGEMEN BAĞIŞ
MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS AND CHIEF NEGOTIATOR
ON ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF THE VAN EARTHQUAKE
BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
(31 October 2011)

We are all deeply saddened by the major 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck Van on 23 September 2011. We have lost 549 persons and there are nearly 1300 persons that have been injured. The earthquake has leveled nearly 2500 buildings in Van and Erciş. Efforts to heal this wound are still underway.

European Union and its Member States have conveyed their deep regrets and condolences and have offered to provide assistance. We welcomed this spirit of solidarity by the EU and the Member States and we are pleased to see that the offer of assistance is happening today.

The European Commission has agreed to allocate 10 million TL (4 million euros) under the Turkey-EU Financial Assistance program for relief of the pain and destruction caused by the earthquake. The grant contract for the transfer of this amount to the Turkish Red Crescent Society is signed today. I believe that this aid will be of considerable benefit in meeting the urgent needs, especially for shelter, of our citizens who were affected by the earthquake.

I would like to thank the European Commission on behalf of our Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and our Government for this assistance. We hope that the solidarity demonstrated by our European friends on this matter may also be reflected to EU-Turkey relations.

Helping those in need is the character of the Turkish people. Turkey's membership in the EU will no doubt strengthen these values at the EU level and will contribute to the EU which is the most important peace project of humankind.

I believe that, whereas no new chapters have been opened for negotiation, we have actually opened a new Chapter on Solidarity. May God keep our country from suffering such a disaster again.

Kind Regards,