

I- PREAMBLE

Forging a strong and prosperous modern state for the information age, united as a nation based on the principles of the rule of law, democracy and secularism, and firmly founded upon the basic tenets of the Republic, is a historic responsibility towards future generations.

Turkey has always regarded progress as its fundamental principle. Since the foundation of the Republic, Turkey has always been a part of renewal movements in politics, economics and law. This inclination has been given substance through progress and visionary reforms, and has been driven by the principle of secularism based on freedom of conscience, and a compact of citizenship that transcends language, religion, race or gender, in such a way as to reinforce the territorial integrity and political unity of the Turkish Republic.

Turkey is determined to continue its development until it reaches the ultimate stage of civilization. Turkey is making efforts to become a capable and creative 21st Century state, with world class production, a just distribution of wealth, human rights guarantees, the rule of law, participatory democracy, secularism, and the freedom of religion and conscience.

Accession to the European Union is the principal project that will carry Turkey to its goal of prosperity. Turkey's aim of integration with the European Union is a social reform project that will affect both the present and the future of every citizen. It is a great reform movement that will bring universal standards and practices to all areas of daily life, from production to consumption, from health to education, from agriculture to industry, from energy to environment, from justice to security. Every political, legal, economic or social reform on the path to membership, whilst increasing the living standards of the individual, also increases international economic influence, democratic respectability, and the security of the country, in line with international standards.

Accession to the European Union is a national target, which is supported by and reflects the common purpose of the vast majority of the people. This aim, which is also an integral part of Turkey's strategic vision, fully corresponds to the founding philosophy of the Republic and Atatürk's vision for the nation's integration with contemporary civilization.

Turkey has been a fundamental component of European political, economic and cultural geography throughout history. The confirmation of Turkey's candidacy by the Helsinki European Council in 1999 has ushered in a new era of relations after forty years of association with the European Union. The developments since the Helsinki Council have brought Turkey closer than ever to membership. The European Union, at the Copenhagen Council of 12-13 December 2002, committed itself to starting accession negotiations without delay if it determines, on the basis of European Commission's reports and recommendations, that Turkey has fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria by December 2004.

Turkey is going through a dynamic process of legal, political and economic reforms on the road to European Union membership. The purpose of this process is to guarantee the functioning of the democratic system with all its rules and institutions. Participatory democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are not only universal values, but are also the most reliable bases for political and economic stability and development. Turkey has adopted the Copenhagen value system and proven through the reforms and alignment work made to date that it has the will to achieve a more liberal, more participatory, more modern democracy.

In addition, Turkey has a stable functioning market economy, which is reinforced by the economic programme under implementation. The Customs Union has demonstrated Turkey's capacity to cope with the competitive pressures and market forces within the European Union.

A Turkey that has completed its grand social project and is a focus of democratic power in the 21st Century offers a priceless opportunity for the establishment of regional and international peace and stability, as well as a singular source of inspiration for those who, in our turbulent region and beyond, seek progress.

In international relations, Turkey's EU candidacy advances its position in strategic, security and political terms. Turkey shall continue to develop its relations with its neighbours and adjacent regions in accordance with its peace loving foreign policy objectives. In the same vein, Turkey will continue to undertake initiatives and efforts for the settlement of bilateral problems with Greece through dialogue. As a part of the enhanced political dialogue, Turkey will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General in his good

offices mission aimed at a mutually acceptable settlement, with a view to establishing a new partnership in Cyprus, based on the sovereign equality of the two parties and the realities on the island. Turkey supports the steps taken by the Turkish Cypriot side, which will foster an environment of confidence and pave the way for a comprehensive settlement.

The steps taken by Turkey on the path to European Union membership are measures that directly accelerate the raising of economic and social standards and ensure a society with high democratic and legal norms. For this purpose, with an approach that preserves the founding principals of the Republic and Atatürk's legacy, Turkey has the resolution and determination to rapidly fulfil its obligations in order to start accession negotiations at the earliest time and participate in the European Union's enlargement dynamics. The responsibilities set out in the National Programme reflect the stance of the Turkish nation.