

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF TURKEY FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE EU ACQUIS

I PREAMBLE

Forging a strong and prosperous modern and social state, for the information age, respectful to the human rights, 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 and the nationalism of Atatürk, is a historic and perennial responsibility towards past and future generations.

Turkey has always regarded modernization 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 which finds its most plain expression in the unitary state structure.

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 principle 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 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 universal standards and implementations.

Accession to the European Union is a national target, supported by our 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 ideal for the nation's integration with contemporary civilization.

Turkey has been a fundamental component of European political, economic and cultural geography throughout history. Turkey's 45 years of partnership with European Union has ushered in a new era of relations with the confirmation of its candidacy by the Helsinki European Council in 1999. The European Union, at the Copenhagen Summit held in 12-13 December 2002, committed itself to starting without delay accession negotiations, if Turkey fulfils, on the basis of European Commission's reports and recommendations, the Copenhagen political criteria by December 2004. Following that, The European Union, at the Brussels Summit held in 16-17 December 2004, affirmed the decisions which were taken by the 1999 Helsinki and 2002 Copenhagen Summits and decided that Turkey sufficiently fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria to open accession negotiations, and that the accession negotiations would start on 3 October 2005. Ali Babacan, State Minister in 59th Government, was appointed as Chief Negotiator to conduct the negotiations with European Union on 3 June 2005. The General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), which met in Luxembourg on 3 October 2005, accepted the negotiating framework based on the authorization from the Communiqué issued at the end of the Summit of EU Heads of State and Government in December 2004, the process of accession of Turkey into European Union has officially started. Concerning the implementation of the negotiations works, a "Committee of Monitoring and Orientation" has been established under the chairmanship of Chief Negotiator, composed of the General Secretary for the European Union Affairs, the Deputy Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry, the Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Undersecretary of the State Planning Agency and the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the European Union.

The accession process consists of holding explanatory and bilateral screening meetings on the harmonization of the Turkish legislation to the *acquis communautaire* in 33 chapters and of negotiating these chapters. The chapter of Science and Research, which is the first chapter screened, opened into negotiation and closed in the same day in the Intergovernmental Conference, held in Luxembourg on 12 June 2006. Utmost importance is given to include all relevant sections of the society into the accession process which continues in close cooperation with the European Union and this process is carried out through increasing coordination and cooperation between the relevant institutions. With regard to harmonization to the *acquis communautaire*, all relevant units of bureaucracy directly take place in the accession process within the sphere of their competence and have a voice in determining the steps and targets. The contribution of civil society into the accession process is of vital importance. In this context, NGOs are informed about the conclusions of the screening meetings. In addition, the views of NGOs concerning the chapters which will be opened into negotiations are taken into consideration during the preparations of negotiating position papers of our country.

Turkey is going through a dynamic process of legal, political and economic reforms on the road to the 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, 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, by adopting the Copenhagen criteria, has proven through the reforms and alignment work made to date that she has the will to achieve a more liberal, more participatory and modern democracy.

On the other hand, 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. In the context of our Customs Union obligations, the fact that Free Trade Agreements that cannot be signed due to the fact that Turkey does not have equal or similar conditions with EU cause serious problems in Turkish economy and trade. This issue has been brought to agenda at the Ministerial level and additionally has been highlighted to EU Commission several times. Various precaution mechanisms need to be evaluated and an outcome for the solution of the problem need to be achieved through implementing the relevant provisions mainly Article 16 and Article 58 of Decision No 1/95 of the EC-Turkey Association Council laying down the rules on the functioning of the customs union between parties in order to overcome the said problems.

Becoming a negotiating country with the European Union and approaching the target of full membership is strengthening the position of our country in the context of politics, strategy and security. Turkey is determined to complete the accession process successfully.

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. The achievement of Turkey's project of integration with the European Union is a historical turning point in respect of carrying out the goal of Alliance of Civilizations, proving the universality of European Union's values and securing the international peace and stability.

Turkey's foreign policy is based on Atatürk's principle of "Peace at home, peace in the world". In this framework in accordance with Turkey's efforts to develop its relations with its neighbours and adjacent regions on the basis of its peace loving foreign policy objectives, Turkey will continue to undertake initiatives and efforts for the development of the cooperation with Greece in various areas such as economy/trade, transportation, energy and for the settlement of bilateral problems with Greece through dialogue. Turkey's interlocutors should also be in the same constructive understanding.

Similarly as a part of an enhanced political dialogue with the EU, Turkey will support the efforts in order to reach a fair and permanent solution in Cyprus. Turkey will continue to support efforts of the United Nations Secretary General's Good Offices with a view to finding a mutually acceptable settlement standing on the realities of the island, based on the existence of two separate people and democracy, bi-zonal, political equality of both sides, equal status of both founding states and parameters of new partner state. Treaties of Guarantee and of Alliance will remain in force. Turkey supports the steps taken by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which will foster an environment of confidence and pave the way for a comprehensive settlement.

As is known, one of the three pillars of the accession process of Turkey to EU is civil society dialogue. The project "Promotion of the Civil Society Dialogue between European Union and Turkey" that aims to promote the image of Turkey within EU and the image of EU within Turkey and also to strengthen the links between societies, which is being implemented by the Secretariat General for EU Affairs has started in June 2008. In this context, 119 grant projects amounting to 19,3 million Euro are being implemented under the components of towns and municipalities, professional organisations, universities and youth initiatives for dialogue. At the following stages, the project will be extended and will cover all segments of the society.

The steps taken by Turkey on the path to the 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 fulfill its obligations in the accession process of the European Union. The points set out in the National Programme reflect the stance of the Turkish nation.