



**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
PRIME MINISTRY
SECRETARIAT GENERAL FOR EU AFFAIRS**

**Press Statement
Conclusions of the 20th Reform Monitoring Group Meeting
Konya, 9 April 2010**

- The 20th Reform Monitoring Group Meeting (RMG) was held in Konya, under the auspices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of the Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, the Minister of Interior and high level officials from relevant public institutions.
- Political reform process undertaken to achieve modern standards in the area of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is one of the most important components of the EU accession process which is deemed as the most important modernisation project of Turkey since the establishment of the Republic.
- The recent constitutional amendment package submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) is an important turning point in our reform process. Taking into consideration our country's need for a new constitution in compliance with contemporary norms the package has been prepared with the objective of achieving progress in the areas of democratization and human rights.
- In fact, the amendments in this package will ensure significant progress with respect to political criteria to be fulfilled in the EU accession process. Secretariat General for EU Affairs has prepared a working document on the constitutional amendment package from the EU reform process perspective, which has been also distributed to the members of press.
- On 28 February 2010, the RMG met for the first time under the chairmanship of our Prime Minister since its establishment in 2003. Implementation of the decisions taken in the 19th RMG meeting is continuing with determination.
- The work to be carried out under Chapter 23 on "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights" and Chapter 24 on "Justice, Freedom, and Security" has been addressed in the 20th RMG meeting.
- The institutionalization in the area of human rights has been discussed in detail. "Draft Law on the Establishment of an Independent Human Rights Institution" has been submitted to the TGNA and the preparation of "Draft Law on the Establishment of Anti-discrimination and Equality Board" under the coordination of the Minister of Interior is at the final stage.
- Our main goal is to put into place the necessary monitoring and control mechanisms in all aspects of human rights at international standards, for which work is continuing with determination. It has been agreed that this work

will be closely monitored to ensure the harmonious and integrated functioning of these independent mechanisms without any overlapping of duties.

- The issues of our citizens of different faiths have been discussed in detail at this meeting with possible approaches to resolve those issues. We will continue to take the necessary to address them.
- Director General for Foundations gave a detailed presentation on the implementation of the Law on Foundations. The ongoing evaluation process on the applications made in accordance with Provisional Article 7 of this Law has been discussed comprehensively.
- Task Force on Anti-discrimination, established to closely monitor and coordinate the steps to be taken in the fight against discrimination has started its activities.
- A National Action Plan for Fundamental Rights is also being prepared under the coordination of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs, with the contribution of all relevant Ministries and institutions.
- The legislative amendments and measures required to ensure the full and timely implementation of the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights is one of the most important agenda items of the RMG. It has been decided to accelerate the work in this area.
- In the area of freedom of expression, it has been agreed to accelerate the comprehensive work carried out by the Ministry of Justice which has been ongoing in a transparent manner with the participation of all relevant parties. The objective is to identify and remove the remaining restrictions on the freedom of expression. In accordance with the conclusions of this study a new reform package in the area of freedom of expression may be prepared.
- It was also decided to follow the process on the reform package submitted to the TGNA on 10 November 2009 which contains legislative amendments on various issues such as the fight against illegal immigration and children's rights.
- "Draft Law on the Protection of Personal Data", "Draft Law on the Approval of Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT)" and "Draft Law on the Court of Accounts" which are currently on the agenda of the TGNA has been also discussed.
- Reform process is continuing also on Chapter 24 on "Justice, Freedom and Security" which covers important issues such as asylum, migration, border management and visas.
- Taking into consideration the current relations and legal commitments between Turkey and EU arising from the Ankara Agreement, the Additional Protocol and the Customs Union Decision, the studies carried out with a view to ensure visa exemption for our citizens was addressed. In this context, developments in the areas of the Readmission Agreement, Integrated Border

Management and electronic passports with biometric data have been discussed.

- With regard to the Integrated Border Management, it has been agreed to set up an Integrated Border Management Coordination Board by a Prime Ministry Circular, composed of the representatives of relevant institutions under the chairmanship of the Undersecretary or Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior.
- The political determination to establish a new civilian and specialized Border Security Organisation was reiterated and “Draft Protocol on Inter-agency Cooperation in Border Control” prepared by the Ministry of Interior to determine the principles on cooperation and coordination between institutions in charge of border control and surveillance was discussed.
- It is planned to finalize the work on the establishment of a new Passport Application, Issuance, Control and Distribution System and to initiate the use of electronic passports with biometric data in compliance with international standards by June 2010.
- Two Circulars on asylum and migration which regulate the effective fight against illegal immigration, data-sharing between relevant units, coordination and deportation procedures came into force on 19 March 2010 with the approval of the Minister of Interior. It has been pointed out that the swift implementation of these Circulars is one of the priorities of the RMG.
- “Law on Asylum”, “Law on Foreigners” and “Law on the Establishment of the Administration of Migration and Asylum”, which will significantly develop the system in the areas of migration and asylum, are being prepared. The RMG has decided that these draft proposals will be submitted to the Prime Ministry by the Ministry of Interior in June 2010.
- A draft proposal for the amendment of Law No 5683 on the “Residence and Travel of Foreigners in Turkey” has been prepared in light of the recent rulings of the European Court of Human Rights against Turkey. The RMG has decided to submit the draft proposal to the Council of Ministers and thereafter to the TGNA without delay.
- It has been decided to appoint Turkish National Police representatives who are proficient in foreign languages, to neighbouring countries, EU Member States and to EU institutions such as EUROPOL, OLAF AND FRONTEX in order to improve cooperation both with EU Member States and within the region in the areas of illegal immigration, organised crime and the fight against illegal drugs.
- Turkey will pursue its reform process with determination to achieve its objective to be a member of the EU. The priority of our Government has always been and will be to ensure the highest level of standards for our citizens which they deserve in all respects through the accession process.
- The 21st RMG meeting will be held in Erzurum in June 2009.