



29th meeting of the EU-Turkey
Joint Consultative Committee

Istanbul, 16 September 2011

JOINT DECLARATION

by

Mr Arno Metzler (co-chair) and Mr Mustafa Kumlu (co-chair)

at the 29th meeting of the

EU-TURKEY JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

held in Istanbul on 15 and 16 September 2011

1. The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) is a body that brings together representatives of organised civil society from the EU and Turkey. It complements the other bodies set up within the framework of the Association Agreement between the EU and Turkey and allows civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the accession negotiations and initiate debates on issues of common interest. Its members come from various economic and social interest groups.
2. The 29th meeting of the JCC was honoured by the presence of Mr Bağış, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Mr Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Mr Lewandowski, Deputy head of mission of the Embassy of Poland in Turkey, and Mr Varadi, Deputy head of the EU Delegation in Turkey.

Organised civil society and Turkey's accession process

3. The JCC hopes that the EU agenda will remain a top priority of the newly appointed government of the Republic of Turkey and that the accession process of Turkey will become a priority on the agenda of the EU. It welcomes the decision to transform the secretariat general for EU affairs into a full-fledged ministry and hopes this new structure will help bring Turkey closer to EU accession.
4. The JCC expresses its firm commitment to Turkey's accession to the EU in the foreseeable future. The JCC calls on the Turkish government to fully implement the Ankara Protocol and thereby facilitate the opening of eight chapters for which negotiations were suspended by the Council decision of 11 December 2006. The JCC also takes note of the decision of the Council of the EU of 22 January 2007 regarding the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot Community. The JCC calls on the Council of the EU to open negotiations on chapters where Turkey has met the technical requirements in order to speed up and facilitate the negotiation process.
5. The JCC stresses that Turkey EU membership will entail the sharing by Turkey of the EU acquis and of the core European values. The JCC insists on the necessity of the Turkish government and of the EU consulting with civil society organisations during the accession negotiations.
6. The JCC is pleased by the strong political role played by Turkey in the wider Mediterranean region. It welcomes that Turkey is inspiring many democratic movements in the ongoing Arab Spring. The JCC is pleased that Turkey will host and co-organise with the EESC on 16-18 November 2011 in Istanbul the Euromed Summit of Economic and Social Councils and Similar institutions.
7. With regard to the planned constitutional reform, the JCC calls on the Turkish government to conduct it in an open and transparent way. The JCC considers that the main political forces and

civil society organisations should be consulted at an early stage. The JCC hopes that this reform will lead to a decisive reinforcement of freedom of expression and freedom of the media and strengthen the independence of the judiciary. The JCC reasserts its view that the European integration process will anchor and stabilise democracy and freedom in Turkey.

8. The JCC regrets that, despite some improvements resulting from the constitutional amendments passed in September 2010, trade union rights are still seriously restricted and not in line with EU standards and ILO conventions, as was reiterated by the ILO conference in June 2011. The JCC will keep on reviewing the trade union rights in its next meeting.
9. With regard to freedom of expression and freedom of the media, the JCC encourages Turkish government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the media, public professional organisations and other professionals exercise their activities independently. It also urges the Turkish government to amend the Internet Act so that the blocking of websites by the administrative authorities is done along the lines of the EU *acquis* as regards freedom of expression.
10. With regard to women's rights and role in Turkey, the JCC welcomes the higher number of women elected as parliamentarians in the last general election. It encourages even more women to participate in public affairs, in its own JCC meetings, in the Turkish Economic and Social Council, and at all other levels. On this matter, it reiterates its call on the Turkish authorities to translate into reality the constitutional amendment that opened the possibility of introducing positive discrimination measures in Turkish legislation. The same policy should be implemented in the EU and its member States. The JCC reasserts that Turkish authorities must take strong measures in order to increase the employment rate of women and promote women's entrepreneurship.
11. The JCC is concerned about the violence against women and welcomes the recent announcement by the Turkish authorities that a thorough investigation has been launched on this issue. The JCC hopes that strong recommendations will come out of this investigation, followed by concrete and efficient measures to combat the phenomenon.
12. The JCC hopes that the restructuring of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies will in any case keep gender equality policies high on the government agenda. The JCC will keep on reviewing the situation of women's rights in its next meetings.

The economic and social benefits to the EU of Turkey's potential EU membership

13. The JCC commends Turkey for the resilience of its economy vis-à-vis the financial and economic crisis. It notes that Turkey achieved the highest growth rate in the OECD during the first and second quarters of 2011. It also welcomes the decline of the unemployment rate in the recent period and its hopes the economic growth will contribute further to the decline of unemployment..

14. The JCC welcomes this economic dynamism and calls on the Turkish authorities to make this growth beneficial to all social categories and to use it as an opportunity to reduce regional disparities. The JCC also invites the authorities to focus on increasing the employment rate, which is still very low, and in particular the female employment rate. It stresses that these efforts must be made in close cooperation with the social partners.
15. The JCC welcomes the growing interdependence of the EU and Turkish economies. It notes that the EU is Turkey's primary trade partner and that the EU's share in Turkey's annual exports has increased significantly, from 42.3% in the first quarter of 2010 to 46.8% in the first quarter of 2011. As far as the EU is concerned, the JCC notes with satisfaction that Turkey is an important trade partner, ranking seventh in terms of imports and fifth in terms of exports.
16. The JCC emphasises that the very strong trade relations between Turkey and the EU contribute significantly to the improvement of mutual understanding, not only at business level but also at civil society level between the two sides. The JCC stresses that trade relations also bring Turkey closer to the EU and should encourage Turkey to further align its legislation with the EU acquis.
17. In the current context of economic crisis in the EU, the JCC stresses that Turkey's dynamic economy and booming private consumption create many export opportunities for some EU businesses, thereby supporting employment in the EU and in Turkey. The JCC highlights that it is very likely that the accession of Turkey to the EU would reinforce those dynamics.

Towards low-carbon economies: the case of the energy sector

18. On the basis of the two reports presented by Mr Armin Duttine and Mr İlke Tanlay, the JCC takes note of the signature of the Nabucco Project Support Agreements, which will boost EU-Turkey cooperation on energy and improve security of supply for the EU. However, the JCC notes that our economies need to break their current dependence on fossil fuels and therefore proposes that the Nabucco project be coupled with a parallel cooperation on renewable energies.
19. The JCC is pleased that efforts are being made both in the EU and Turkey to limit global warming and thus take steps to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The JCC welcomes the ongoing preparation by Turkish authorities of a Climate Change National Action Plan and calls for proper consultation mechanisms to be set-up in this preparatory phase. It encourages Turkey to adopt targets by a fixed date in terms of final energy to be derived from renewables sources and increased energy efficiency. The JCC insists that the Member States and the relevant sectors must make efforts to comply with the 20% target of increased energy efficiency by 2020, as foreseen in the EU directive on Energy efficiency.
20. The JCC stresses that investing in renewable energies, increasing energy efficiency and developing green technologies in transport, industry and services are key targets in the move towards a low-carbon economy.

21. The JCC urges that, in the area of energy production, significant investments be made to improve storage capacities and networks, so as to allow for wider use of renewable energy. It also insists that in the construction sector, policy tools such as preferential interest rates be widened to improve the energy performance of new buildings. In the area of transport, the JCC recommends that both EU and Turkish authorities provide more financial support to technological innovation and promote rail instead of road freight. In relation to industry, the JCC highlights that some industries require the development of carbon capture technologies.
22. To further develop green technologies in the energy sector, the JCC proposes that stable frameworks be provided for investors and that encouragement be given to tax incentive schemes.

Visa issue

23. The JCC welcomes the finalisation of the negotiations on an EU-Turkey readmission agreement and calls on both parties to conclude and implement this agreement.
24. The JCC criticises vigorously the visa procedures that are imposed on Turkish citizens when travelling in the EU.
25. The JCC urges the Commission, the Member States and Turkey to intensify their cooperation on visas, in order to ease visa requirements for Turkish citizens in all Member States and stresses the need for Member States to implement the EU visa code in a harmonised way.

Next JCC meeting

26. The 30th meeting of the JCC will take place **in the EU** in 2012.
*This declaration has been sent to the Turkish authorities, the EU institutions, the representatives of Turkish and EU civil society organisations and the media. The EU-Turkey JCC working documents and any further information can be obtained by contacting the secretariats: **Mr Mustafa Bayburtlu**, Head of the EU Department, Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB). (Tel.: 00.90.312.218.23.80; email: mustafa.bayburtlu@tobb.org.tr) and **Mr Aurelien Juliard**, Administrator, Section for External Relations, European Economic and Social Committee (Tel.: 00.32.2-546.99.69; email: aurelien.juliard@eesc.europa.eu).*
More information on: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.eu-turkey-jcc>
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