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***EU-TURKEY JOINT PARLAMENTARY COMMITTEE***

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**76<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**19-20 March 2015**

**Ankara**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Thursday, 19 March 2015**

***First working session***

**09:30-12:30** Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee chaired by **Mr Afif DEMİRKIRAN** and **Mr Manolis KEFALOGIANNIS**

**Opening remarks**

The meeting started with welcome remarks by **Mr Afif DEMİRKIRAN**. He welcomed the newly-elected members of the European Parliament who arrived to the meeting in Turkey for the first time. He underlined that for some Turkish deputies this was going to be the last meeting because of the upcoming elections in June and expressed hope that the newly-elected members would be in favour of the accession of Turkey to the EU. Mr Afif DEMİRKIRAN informed that this was going to be his last meeting as a Co-chair of the Turkey-EU JPC. He highlighted that Turkey will continue to be determined on its path to the EU regardless of the conditions and Chapters opened. He reminded that the negotiation process has started in 2005 however the level achieved is not being on the desirable level. In the last decade only 14 of 35 Chapters have been opened and only one Chapter was temporarily closed. He strongly emphasized that accession process is supposed to be a technical process, but in this case it is

completely politicised. It is expected that “Chapter 17 - Economic and Monetary Policy” and Chapter 24 “Justice, Freedom and Security” will be opened during the Latvian presidency. Additionally, he expressed his opinion that “Chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights” should be opened immediately. He said that Europe has had difficulties in terms of energy security since the crisis in Ukraine began, therefore Turkish contribution is essential in this matter and for this purpose it is important to open the “Chapter 15 - Energy”. He stated that the Rapporteur Kati PIRI is currently working on a resolution on 2014 Commission Progress Report on Turkey and stressed that the Government of Turkey has strict objectives in some parts of it but all in all the document is constructive and balanced. There are 442 amendments to it submitted by the MEPs, however, some of them are based on a disinformation that could have a damaging effect on the spirit of the Report and eliminate its positive effects. At the end of his speech, he called for the adoption of the agenda for the JPC meeting.

Then the meeting continued with the remarks by **Mr Manolis KEFALOGIANNIS**, Co-Chair of the EU-Turkey JPC. He mentioned the recent meeting with the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the GNAT, where all the hot issues concerning the relations between the EU and Turkey were discussed. He expressed hope that the 76<sup>th</sup> JPC would add to the overall progress.

**Mr Volkan BOZKIR**, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, on behalf of the Government of Turkey, underlined that since the very beginning the JPC is a platform for improving the relations and exchanging opinions. He stated that the EU accession is a strategic target for Turkey. He overviewed the social and economic changes in the country over the years, particularly since 1963 when Turkey became an associate member of the EEC. He stated that Turkey has better economic conditions than 22 of 28 countries of the EU and if it was a full member, would have been among only a few countries that fully met the Maastricht criteria. He expressed his regret that Turkey has not become a full member yet and characterised a few very important aspects for relations: Turkey as a big market for the EU; young and hard working population; strong military force; energy security; fight against radicalism and terrorism. He highlighted that negotiations for updating the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU were going to begin at the end of the year and the trade volume would reach 300 billion \$. He stressed that Turkey will continue working towards the EU accession.

**H.E. Mr Cemil ÇİÇEK**, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, highlighted the importance of the JPC for the EU-Turkey relations. He stressed that Turkey has been aiming for the EU membership for 52 years and stated that full accession of his country will bring numerous advantages. He said that Turkey is still determined to seek full membership and the JPC meeting confirms that. He continued with a statement that both sides should have looked at what missing is in the accession process and called for not losing more time and reviewing what has been done wrongly so far. He stated that the Chapters 17, 23, 24 should be opened as soon as possible. He overviewed the public support for the EU membership among the Turkish society over the years and noticed significant decrease currently. He stated that the cooperation in the field of security is a very important dimension in EU-Turkey relations and expressed his disappointment that Turkey was not invited to the meeting in Riga last year concerning this matter. Then, he said that many initiatives which took place in the EP in 2015 were not based on the historical facts and put barriers to the Turkish-Armenian friendship. He strongly emphasised that there is no legal consensus that the event of 1915 was genocide. He stressed that the EU should have encouraged Armenia to establish dialogue with Turkey in order to normalize the relations. Later on he discussed the situation in Syria and stated that the pressure on the regime for the political solution is the only way to stabilise the country. Furthermore, he put emphasis on working together with the USA to reinforce the Syrian opposition and ensured that Turkey supports the international coalition against DAESH. He insisted on condemning all the types of terrorism and called for improving the cooperation by sharing information about the terrorist groups. He strongly underlined that it is not acceptable to associate terrorism with any religious or ethnic group and stated that Islamophobia that have been recently observed in Europe is becoming a new dimension of racism. At the end of his speech, he said that the Cyprus issue has to be solved and expressed his hope that the EU would have positive contributions to the negotiation process in the resolution of Cyprus issue in 2015.

### **1. Adoption of the draft agenda**

The draft agenda was adopted.

### **2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the 75th Meeting of the Turkey-EU JPC, 11th November 2014, Brussels**

The draft minutes were adopted.

### **3. EU-Turkey Relations and State of Play of the Accession Negotiations**

**Mr Atis SJANĪTS**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Latvia to the Republic of Turkey, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, highlighted that Turkey is the EU's key partner and encouraged the country to work on the reforms. He discussed a number of positive developments between the EU and Turkey, namely the dialogue and cooperation on foreign policy issues, exchange of best practices preventing radicalism and terrorism, ratification of the Readmission Agreement and dialogue on visa liberalisation. He stressed the importance of Turkey's regional role and ensured that the EU will continue to support Turkey. Then, he stated that closer cooperation regarding ISIS should be developed. He shared his concerns over interference by the executive in the judiciary, respect for media freedom and corruption in the country. He praised the fact that the civil society in Turkey is growing.

Mr Takis HADJIGEORGIOU expressed his discontent because of the fact that Mr Cemil ÇİÇEK and Mr Volkan BOZKIR gave their speeches and left the JPC meeting. He emphasized that there was no possibility for dialogue with the representatives of the Government of Turkey and stated that there was no point in such a meeting. He said he had suggested postponing the meeting. The Chairman DEMIRKIRAN responded that there was no tradition for the Speaker to deliver opening remarks or answer questions. He said that President SCHULZ does not attend those meetings in Brussels or Strasburg to give opening remarks. He stressed that representatives of the party in power were still present.

**Mr Simon MORDUE**, Director for Strategy and Turkey, DG Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, on behalf of the European Commission, shared an assessment of the recent developments and presented the areas where the progress could be achieved in the near future. He praised the determination of both sides and stressed that Turkey is a key strategic partner to the EU. He highlighted the need of renewing the Turkish commitment for the accession process. One of the signs of this commitment is renewed technical cooperation between Turkey and the EC regarding the sub-committees. Their role is technical and aimed at creating a framework for exchanging information on policies and legislative developments between the Commission experts and civil servants from Turkey. After 3 years break, subcommittees are meeting again and reviewing the state of play across all the negotiating Chapters. He mentioned that there is a plenty of work regarding Chapter 17 "Economic and Monetary Policy" and stressed that the EC received a clear

mandate from the Council in December 2014 calling for progress in this area. He believed that it is possible to open this Chapter before summer. He highlighted that in parallel to the negotiating process, the high level cooperation in areas of joint interest such as trade, Customs Union, visa liberalisation, energy and foreign policy have been intensifying. This year the second Report on the implementation of the visa roadmap by Turkey will be adopted and then a series of assessment missions involving experts both from the EC and the Member States will be conducted. The report is expected to be published at the end of this year with clear recommendations that will provide very helpful and positive basis for Turkey to move forward. He stressed that developments in the area of rule of law and fundamental rights remain key areas for the EU. He concluded that one of the most effective ways to work together on these sensitive issues would be to open swiftly Chapter 23 and Chapter 24.

**Mr Engin SOYSAL**, Undersecretary of the Ministry for European Union Affairs, discussed 10 priorities for the accession of Turkey to the European Union. He enumerated (1) the result-oriented methodology in the accession process, (2) refreshment of the ongoing accession process especially in view of common challenges, (3) enhancement of the communication strategy, (4) the role of Turkey in a challenging neighbourhood, (5) reinforcement of the EU project by cooperating in key priorities such as a collective digital single market and a deeper internal market, (6) reflection of all the priorities in a common working agenda, (7) effectiveness of all working tools, (8) multiple platforms of interactions and dialogue at all levels, (9) setting-up the transformative power of European project by Turkey and the EU, (10) the year of 2015 should bring a new impetus in Turkey-EU relations.

**Members participating in the debate:** Costas MAVRIDES (MEP), Mesude Nursuna MEMECAN (MP), Ernest MARAGALL (MEP), Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR (MP), Georgios EPITIDEIOS (MEP), Yıldırım M. RAMAZANOĞLU (MP), Eleni THEOCHAROUS (MEP), Ali ŞAHİN (MP), Konstantinos PAPADAKIS (MEP), Mehmet S. TEKELİOĞLU (MP), Miltiadis KYRKOS (MEP), Halide İNCEKARA (MP), Laurențiu REBEGA (MEP), Faruk IŞIK (MP), Renate SOMMER (MEP), Takis HADJIGEORGIOU (MEP), Simon MORDUE (EC), Engin SOYSAL (Undersecretary of Ministry for European Union Affairs)

The subsequent discussion concentrated on the practical steps that have to be taken to move forward with the accession of Turkey to the EU. It was stressed that Turkey is a key strategic partner to the EU, therefore the full-fledged membership of the country will be mutually beneficial. However, the political criteria of the accession process are extremely important and Turkey has to respect the rules and values in order to enhance democracy and human rights. Among other things, it will encourage the EU Member States to support Turkey's accession, attract foreign investments and contribute to sustainable economic growth of the country. The importance of the opening of the Chapter 23 "Judiciary and fundamental rights" and Chapter 24 "Justice, freedom and security" was explicitly emphasized. Members of the GNAT stated that the reason for not opening the new Chapters is a political matter. Mr Simon MORDUE, on behalf of the European Commission, answered that the negotiations have taken place in the intergovernmental format and there is no consensus regarding the new openings among the EU Member States. Ms SOMMER, the shadow rapporteur for Turkey, reminded that the EU has been negotiating with Turkey for 10 years and it could have achieved more. Also, she expressed disappointment that some disturbing issues have been appearing in the resolutions constantly. The representatives of the Government of Turkey highlighted progress that the country has achieved over the last years and voiced disenchantment that the EU colleagues from the EU side have not noticed this fact. Then it was pointed out that deeper and closer cooperation in the field of energy, trade, economy and visa liberalisation is needed. If the EU wants to be a key global player, it needs to take action in the area of international security and Turkey might be a helpful partner in this matter.

#### **Thursday, 19 March 2015**

##### ***Second working session***

**15:00-18:00**

#### **4. Fight against racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and All Other Forms of Discrimination**

**Mr Ayhan Sefer ÜSTÜN**, Chair of the Committee on Human Rights Inquiry of GNAT gave general information on the committee chaired by him. He described the cases of attacks on Turkish citizens across Europe, notably in Germany, Austria, Belgium and Bulgaria. Above-mentioned assaults included multiple injuries, insults and attacks on mosques, burning of Koran, throwing Molotov-cocktails, burning of flats and writing offensive slogans on the

walls. Mr ÜSTÜN stated that most of the attacks targeted religious and identity choices and the authorities usually failed in identifying the offenders - 82% of cases in Germany were left unresolved and culprits could not be found. Furthermore, he expressed his concern about the European political parties in power which support xenophobia and Islamophobia. At the end of his speech, he discussed the proposals in order to solve the problems of increasing discrimination of Turkish citizens in Europe. He said that Islamophobic offences should be punished in the same way as the anti-Semitic acts. Moreover, the EU institutions and the UN should publish recommendations in order to establish monitoring mechanism that would ensure effective investigations and prosecutions in this matter. Also, it is equally important to give-up the harsh political discourse against immigrants and to abolish severe migration laws.

## **5. Combatting Terrorism**

**Ms Fatma Ceren YAZGAN**, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Director General for Security and Intelligence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, explained that terrorism tries to change the legal and political structure through violence. Turkey has been fighting against terrorist groups such as Asala, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Daesh and some other which operated on the Turkish territory. She stated that none of terroristic acts can be affiliated with particular ethnicity, race, religion or class. In her opinion, prevention is the first step in fighting terrorism. It is very important to ensure that terrorists do not find financial and political support. Moreover, all terrorist groups should be treated in the same way. She put emphasis on long term policies at the domestic and international level, legal framework, sharing of international intelligence and legal assistance in order to ensure more active cooperation in combating terrorism. She stressed that regular consultations with the EU External Action Service, operational collaboration between Turkey and the EU Member States are crucial in this process and the EU is still falling short of the expectations. She stressed that terrorism poses a collective risk to global security and it is not limited to any country.

The Co-Chair DEMİRKIRAN took the floor and stated that living in a liberal and democratic society demands fighting against discrimination and leaving no open doors to terrorism. He said that terroristic threat does not know borders and it is addressed to humanity, not to the one nation. He highlighted the need to ensure the media freedom, right to information and free sharing of findings with the society.

## **6. Freedom of Media**

Mr Selahaddin MENTEŞ, Deputy Undersecretary of Ministry of Justice, discussed Turkey's legislative framework related to media freedom as well as shared the problems and challenges regarding this issue. He stated that in democratic regimes the state should not prevent the dissemination of thoughts because of the fact that freedom of expression is one of the pillars of the democratic society. Then, he spoke about changes in the constitution related to the freedom of expression and protection of human rights in this field.

**Members participating in the debate:** Renate SOMMER (MEP), ALİ ŞAHİN (MP), Takis HADJIGEORGIOU (MEP), Ebubekir GİZLİGİDER (MP), Costas MAVRIDES (MEP), Mesude Nursuna MEMECAN (MP), Ernest MARAGALL (MEP), Miltiadis KYRKOS (MEP), Halide İNCEKARA (MP), Konstantinos PAPADAKIS (MEP), Selahaddin MENTEŞ (Deputy Undersecretary of Ministry of Justice), Jan ZHRADIL (MEP), Yıldırım Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU (MP), Faruk IŞIK (MP), Laurențiu REBEGA (MEP), Georgios EPITIDEIOS (MEP), , Fatma Ceren YAZGAN (Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Director General for Security and Intelligence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey), Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR (MP).

At the request of Ms Renate SOMMER, MEP, the items of the session were discussed in three rounds, straight after the presentations. In the first debate, concerns about the freedom of media and the freedom of expression in Turkey were expressed by MEPs. Blocking of websites, censorship, dismissals of journalists were given as examples. Members of the GNAT explained that all restrictions of Internet were introduced by the judiciary - independent courts, which are the only bodies that can ban the access to the websites. Also, they expressed readiness to improve the shortcomings in the field and called for working together with the EU towards better freedom of expression in the country. In the second debate, the key role of Turkey in combatting terrorism was stressed. On the other hand, Turkish deputies repeatedly stated that the EU should get much more involved in the fight against terrorism as it is a collective threat. The question about preventing the EU citizens from joining to Daesh and forces in Syria and Iraq was reiterated during the discussion. Sharing of information, deepening the intelligence cooperation as well as building confidence and comprehensive policy in the field of security were suggested as effective measures in jointly combatting terrorism. In the third round regarding fight against racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and all other forms of discrimination, the attention was drawn to the new law



adopted in Austria which is found antidemocratic and at odds with the rule of law by the Muslim community.

### **Friday, 20 March 2015**

#### ***Third working session***

#### **9.30 - 12.30**

The third working session started with remarks by the Chairman DEMIRKIRAN. He reminded that Turkey and the EU have been linked by the Customs Union agreement since 1995. He stressed that Turkey is still working on becoming a fully-fledged member of the EU. Also, he highlighted the necessity of revising and updating the Customs Union.

### **7. Turkey-EU Customs Union, Free Trade Agreements and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)**

**Mr Jean-Christophe FILORI**, Head of Unit, Strategy and Turkey, DG Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, on behalf of the European Commission, reminded that Turkey is the EU's 6th largest trading partner while the EU is Turkey's largest trading partner. He stated that the Customs Union is limited and covers only industrial goods - excludes services and public procurement. He discussed how to make the Customs Union more functional and described the steps that have to be taken to achieve it. He said that the next report on the functioning of the Customs Union will be addressed to the political authorities, then the impact assessments regarding the consequences of the broadening the Customs Union will be launched and afterwards the Council will be asked for the negotiating mandate in this matter.

**Mr Hüsnü DİLEMRE**, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, called for updating the framework of the Customs Union and informed that the Ministry is planning to make a presentation at the INTA Committee in the coming period. He spoke about the state of trade between Turkey and the EU and indicated issues related to the FTAs as well as the consequences of the TTIP for Turkey. The Turkish priorities included being part of the advisory and decision making mechanism when discussing issues related to the Customs Union, being part of the FTA negotiations and shaping decisions in creating a common trade policy with the EU. He called for abolishing road transportation quotas between Turkey and the EU and discussed the expansion of Customs Union for agriculture, services and public

procurements. He stated that Turkey should have a FTA parallel to the TTIP with US or be involved in the early stages in the TTIP negotiations. He expressed readiness for preparing deep and comprehensive FTA with the US that could bring a new trade investments opportunities.

**Members participating in the debate:** Mehmet S. TEKELİOĞLU (MP), Takis HADJIGEORGIOU (MEP), Ali ŞAHİN (MP), Eleni THEOCHAROUS (MEP), Georgios EPITIDEIOS (MEP), Ebubekir GİZLİGİDER (MP), Costas MAVRIDES (MEP), Ernest MARAGALL (MEP), Afif DEMIRKIRAN, Jean-Christophe FILORI (EC), Hüsni DİLEMRE (Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy).

The debate concentrated on the benefits of the Customs Union for Turkey and the need of renewing it. Members of the GNAT expressed disenchantment that the country is not a part of the TTIP negotiation process and asked the MEPs to voice Turkish demands at the EP in this matter. Also, they called for being part of the EU's negotiations or for parallel negotiations regarding TTIP with the USA. It was said that the High Level Consultative Committee between Turkey- and the USA is a proof that the US wants Turkey in TTIP negotiation process.

## **8. Turkey-EU Foreign Policy Cooperation**

**Mr Bela SZOMBATI**, *Chargé d'affaires* of the EU Delegation to Turkey, on behalf of the European External Action Service, said that Turkey is a partner of strategic importance to the EU because of the candidate status in the accession process, extensive trade volume and economic links as well as the geographic location. He highlighted that the EU and Turkey face the same challenges in the neighbourhood. He ensured that the EU supports the Kurdish peace process from the very beginning and continues its assistance through EU funds. He clearly identified Daesh, particularly present in Syria and Iraq, as the biggest security threat and stressed that Turkey is seen as the most valuable partner in countering extremist groups in the region. The EU provides assistance through IPA for capacity building in border management that is crucial in combating terrorism. He emphasised the importance of preventing the radical tendencies. Also, he called for further efforts on both sides to raise the efficiency of cooperation and said that the recent progress gives hopes to improve information sharing between Turkey and the EU. If Turkey adopts the data protection law in

line with *acquis communautaire*, the formal cooperation with Europol and Eurojust would be possible. Then he put emphasis on cooperating closely on Syria in the terms of political transformation of the country. He welcomed the continued positive engagement of Turkey in Iraq and highly commended the continued support of Turkish authorities for accepting the refugees from Syria and Iraq. Later on, he discussed the difficult situation in Ukraine and said that the EU counts on the engagement of Turkey in the common efforts to strengthen the Ukrainian economy and society. He described the situation of Tatars in the illegally annexed Crimea and shared the Turkish concerns about human rights violations. At the end of his speech, he highlighted that closer and deeper dialogue and collaboration between Turkey and the EU will promote the stability in the region and serve the mutual interests of parties.

**Mr Murat Salim ESENLI**, Ambassador, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, said that the EU promotes peace, welfare and democracy in neighbouring countries and is a global player in the security field. He mentioned the Juncker's priorities aiming at strengthening the leading role of the EU and ensured that Turkey is ready to assist in these efforts. He stressed that despite the political barriers Turkey has been implementing serious reforms and is going to continue its endeavours in striving for full membership in the EU. He called for reinforcing the dialogue in the areas of mutual interests. He stated that security cooperation is a crucial aspect in relations. He mentioned that ongoing situation in Ukraine shows the importance of close cooperation between Turkey and the EU and expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that Chapter 31 "Foreign, security and defence policy" has not been opened yet. He made an overview of Turkish contribution to the military missions conducted by the EU. He said that Turkey is willing to intensify dialogue in the field of energy with the EU and welcomed launching of the High Level Energy Dialogue. He discussed the Cyprus issue and ensured that Turkey will maintain the constructive approach in this matter. He said that there are no issues undiscussed between the two sides and at present the political will is needed to achieve a settlement. At the end of his speech, he stated that both Turkey and the EU need each other and he said that the country can contribute significantly in many fields of mutual interest.

**Members participating in the debate:** Mehmet S. TEKELİOĞLU (MP), Konstantinos PAPADAKIS, Yıldırım Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU (MP), Renate SOMMER (MEP), Mesude Nursuna MEMECAN (MP), Miltiadis KYRKOS (MEP), Afif DEMİRKIRAN (MP), Manolis KEFALOGIANNIS (MEP), Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR (MP), Martina MICHELS,

Georgios EPITIDEIOS (MEP), Bela SZOMBATI (*Chargé d'affaires* of the EU Delegation to Turkey) and Murat Salim ESENLI (Ambassador, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey).

The subsequent discussion was dominated by the Cyprus issue. Ms Renate SOMMER stated that all the problems could be solved if Turkey would have agreed to apply the Additional Protocol of the Ankara Agreement to Cyprus. Due to the failure of it, the eight Chapters - all related to trade - have been blocked. Ms Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR responded that if the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was accepted to the EU this problem would be solved automatically and some Members of the GNAT expressed disenchantment that Turkish Cypriots are not given an observer status in the EP. Also, some MEPs said that it is unacceptable to call the Republic of Cyprus, which is a full-fledged Member State of the EU, as Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. It was concluded that the Commission should come up with more constructive and creative solution regarding the Cyprus dispute.

It was stressed that since the beginning of Syrian crisis in 2011, Turkey is estimated to host over 1.5 million Syrians and the number of refugees is expected to rise this year. Therefore the EU should continue to work closely with the Government of Turkey to support protection measures and provide assistance as it is one of the highest priorities in the country's foreign policy.

It was said as well that cooperation regarding the Ukrainian crisis should be improved. Members of the GNAT called for keeping the sanctions against Russia and described the violations of human rights of Crimean Tatars.

### **Date and place of the next meeting**

**Brussels**