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EU-TURKEY ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

The EU-Turkey Association Council held its 51st meeting on Monday, 27 May 2013 in Brussels.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. Mr Eamon Gilmore, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, led the European Union delegation (on behalf of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton). Mr Štefan Füle, Commissioner responsible for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, represented the European Commission.

The Association Council meeting provided a timely opportunity to review EU-Turkey relations. In line with the Council conclusions of 11 December 2012, the EU reaffirmed the importance it attached to its relations with Turkey, a candidate country and a key partner for the European Union, considering its dynamic economy and strategic location. It was underlined that active and credible accession negotiations which respect the EU's commitments and established conditionality, along with all other dimensions of the EU-Turkey relationship, would enable this relationship to achieve its full potential. In this regard, the EU welcomed recent progress towards opening of Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments. The EU looked forward to progress on other negotiating chapters as well.

The EU noted that it was in the best interest of both parties that accession negotiations gain further momentum, and that Turkey would be able to accelerate the pace of negotiations by advancing in the fulfilment of benchmarks, meeting the requirements of the Negotiating Framework, and by respecting its contractual obligations towards the EU. In this context, recalling the Council conclusions of 11 December 2012, the EU noted with deep regret that Turkey, despite repeated calls, continued refusing to fulfil its obligation of full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement towards all Member States. The EU underlined that meeting this obligation could provide a significant boost to the negotiation process. The EU

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also noted that Turkey had not made progress towards the necessary normalisation of its relations with the Republic of Cyprus.

The EU noted with satisfaction the steps taken to implement the positive agenda in line with the Negotiating Framework and the relevant Council conclusions, and recalled that this initiative, which covers a broad range of areas of common interest with Turkey, should support the negotiation process.

The EU acknowledged the important regional role of Turkey and its active involvement in its wider neighbourhood and welcomed the intensification of the regular political dialogue between the EU and Turkey. In this context, the EU recognised Turkey's role on Syria, in particular with regard to support provided to Syrians fleeing violence across the border.

Progress made by Turkey in meeting the Copenhagen political and economic criteria, as well as Turkey's efforts towards alignment with the *acquis communautaire*, were also reviewed. The EU welcomed the Turkish process towards constitutional reform, which should be implemented in line with European standards.

The EU fully supported the on-going talks aimed at ending the terrorism and violence in South-East Turkey, welcomed important recent developments in this regard, as well as the broad public support in Turkey for this initiative. Encouraging all parties and civil society to work unremittingly to bring peace and prosperity for all citizens of Turkey, the EU underlined its readiness to help, including through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

The EU took good note of Turkey's commitment to the political reform agenda, and welcomed a number of positive developments in the area of democracy and the rule of law such as the establishment of an Ombudsman and a National Human Rights Institution, measures taken in the field of women's rights and gender equality, the adoption of the third and fourth judicial reform packages and civilian oversight of the security forces. At the same time, the EU stressed that further and sustained efforts towards fully meeting the Copenhagen criteria were required, inter alia, as regards freedom of expression, freedom of religion, property rights, trade union rights, rights of persons belonging to minorities, women's and children's rights, anti-discrimination and gender equality, and the fight against torture and ill-treatment.

In the area of justice, freedom and security, the EU welcomed Turkey's adoption of the Law on foreigners and international protection - a clear sign of Turkey's efforts to establish a sound legal and institutional framework for migration and asylum in line with EU and international standards, as well as the recent steps taken in the field of respect of human rights. The EU highlighted the importance it attached to the EU-Turkey readmission agreement and looked forward to its signature as soon as possible, in parallel with the initiation of the dialogue on visa liberalisation and the broader dialogue and cooperation framework on Justice and Home Affairs.

Furthermore, the Association Council reviewed the state of bilateral relations. The EU recalled that Turkey needed to address a number of outstanding commitments with regard to the Association Agreement and the Customs Union. Recognizing the importance of the issue of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), the EU noted that it had taken steps to encourage its FTA partners to conclude FTAs with Turkey and that it would continue supporting Turkey in this matter.