Resolution on EU-Turkey relations

2007/2596(RSP) - 24/10/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on EU-Turkey relations, and pointed out that after a wave of reforms introduced between 2002 and 2004, the pace of reforms in Turkey has slowed down. Turkey has not yet fully implemented the provisions stemming from the EC-Turkey Association Agreement and its Additional Protocol. Parliament called on the Commission to identify in its regular report those subjects which have to be addressed by Turkey as a matter of priority, focusing on the achievement of the short-term and medium-term priorities set out in the Accession Partnership, and to pay particular attention to the subjects highlighted in this resolution. It expected the Commission to utilise all appropriate means to support the reform process efficiently, reminding Turkey that honouring its commitments within the timetable set by the Accession Partnership is of paramount importance to its credibility. Parliament congratulated Turkey on having held free and fair elections, and welcomed the election of a Turkish Grand National Assembly in which all the regions are represented and in which the participation of women has increased. It also welcomed the election of the new President as a sign of the strength of Turkish democracy, and called upon President Abdullah Gül to promote pluralism and the unity of the Turkish people in a secular state on its way to difficult but necessary reforms. Parliament expected the new Turkish Government to accelerate the process of reforms in order to fulfil the commitments defined in the Accession Partnership. Parliament welcomed the commitment of the new government to enhance the reform process in the coming months and years. All parties were asked to support an open and consensual constitutional process.

Parliament supported the opening of negotiations on the energy chapter as soon as technical preparations are completed, encouraging Turkey to join, as a full member, the European Energy Community, and thus to further strengthen energy cooperation between the EU and Turkey. It underlined the importance of Turkey as a transit hub for the diversification of gas supplies to the EU, and emphasised that energy projects involving Turkey in the South Caucasus should be open to all countries of that region, which are part of the EU's neighbourhood policy. Since Turkey's geo-strategic position in the region and its role in transportation and logistics will become more important in the coming years, the Commission was asked to issue a specific report on the latest developments and future challenges.

Members were concerned about the repeated interference by the Turkish armed forces in the political process. Further efforts are needed to ensure full civilian control over the military. There must be full parliamentary oversight of military and defence policy and all related expenditure. Parliament called, moreover, for parliamentary supervision over the country's secret services, gendarmerie and police. They underlined the importance of increased contacts between the civil societies in Turkey and the EU, and called on the new Turkish Government to involve Turkish civil society, an important promoter of democracy in Turkey, more intensively in the reform process.

Parliament urged the new Turkish Government to implement the provisions stemming from the EC-Turkey Association Agreement and its Additional Protocol, stating that the non-fulfilment of Turkey's commitments as referred to in the Accession Partnership will continue seriously to affect the process of negotiations. It deplored the fact that a number of people are still being prosecuted under Article 301 of the Penal Code, and strongly condemned the recent conviction of Saris Seropyan and Arat Dink under this article. Parliament urged the government and the newly elected parliament to make sure that all provisions of the Penal Code allowing for arbitrary restrictions on the expression of non-violent opinions are removed and that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are guaranteed. It regarded this as a top priority for the new government.

It expressed concern and suggested certain actions that address the current legal uncertainty regarding the status of religious minorities, and strongly condemned the murders of Hrant Dink, of the Christian priest Andrea Santoro, and of three Christians in Malatya, the terrorist attack in Ankara and all other acts of politically or religiously motivated violence. The Turkish authorities must bring all those responsible to justice. Parliament also stressed the importance of respecting full trade union rights, and promoting the accessibility of education, equal treatment and economic empowerment of women, which are keys to further economic growth and prosperity in Turkey. Violations of women's rights, and in particular so-called 'honour crimes', remain a matter of serious concern.

Parliament went on to point to the need for a comprehensive strategy for the socio-economic development of the south-east of Turkey, and asked the Commission to indicate how the Pre-Accession Instrument could in this regard, and to coordinate this assistance with that provided by other international financial institutions. It was concerned about the consequences of the problems of the Turkish South-eastern Anatolia Project, in which water barrage projects have a direct impact on the water supply of the neighbouring countries. The Commission must monitor closely the development of trans-boundary water cooperation in line with international conventions, nature and environmental protection directives and the Water Framework Directive, and promote the application of EU environmental standards to large scale mining and water barrage projects.

Moving on to the Kurdish issue, the new government was urged to launch a political initiative favouring a lasting settlement. Parliament strongly condemned the violence perpetrated by the Kurdistan Workers" Party (PKK) and other terrorist groups on Turkish soil. It expressed its solidarity with Turkey in its fight against terrorism and repeated its call on the PKK to declare an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. It was deeply concerned about the consequences of a possible cross-border military action by Turkish troops in Northern Iraq, and appealed to Turkey to refrain from engaging in any disproportionate military operations violating Iraq´s territory. Turkey and Iraq were asked to step up military and police cooperation to prevent terrorist activities from Northern Iraq in order to de-escalate the tense situation at the Turkish-Iraqi border. The Council must press for concrete cooperation between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, which should shoulder its responsibility to prevent terrorist attacks from northern Iraq.

Parliament repeated its expectation that Turkey end any economic blockade and border closure and refrain from threats or tension-prone military activities in relation to neighbouring countries. Turkey was asked to engage in serious efforts for the resolution of outstanding disputes with all its neighbours including a frank and open discussion on past events. The Turkish and Armenian Governments were called upon to start a process of reconciliation in respect of the present and the past. The Commission was asked to facilitate this while taking advantage of regional cooperation realised within the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Black Sea Synergy Policy.

Lastly, Parliament regretted that no substantial progress had been made in reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question. It reiterated its call on both parties to adopt a constructive attitude with a view to achieving a comprehensive settlement within the UN framework, based on the principles upon which the EU is founded. In this regard, it recalled its previous resolutions stating that the withdrawal of Turkish forces would facilitate the negotiation of a settlement.