Resolution on the 2009 progress report on Turkey

2009/2769(RSP) - 10/02/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on Turkey.

It welcomes the broad public debate on a range of traditionally sensitive issues such as the role of the judiciary, the rights of citizens of Kurdish origin, the rights of the Alevi community, and the role of the military. However, Parliament notes that **progress in terms of concrete reforms remained limited in 2009**, and encourages the Government to translate its political initiatives into concrete amendments to legislation and their subsequent implementation. It regrets the fact that, where legislation relevant to the Copenhagen political criteria is in place, its implementation continues to be insufficient. Implementation should be strengthened especially in the areas of women's rights, non-discrimination, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, zero tolerance of torture and the fight against corruption.

Copenhagen political criteria

Democracy and the rule of law: Parliament draws attention once again to the crucial importance of a comprehensive reform of the Constitution which would place the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the core of the Turkish State and society. It goes on to discuss the reforms required with special reference to the electoral system, reform of the judiciary, and the establishment of the Ombudsman's office. In addition, Parliament deeply regrets two recent decisions of the Constitutional Court:

- to close the Democratic Society Party (DTP) and ban a number of its democratically elected representatives from political activity, and the recent arrests of DTP members;

- to annul the legislation limiting the jurisdiction of military courts. This is a a serious setback in Turkey's reform efforts, and Parliament calls on the Turkish Grand National Assembly to establish a consensus in favour of constitutional reform. Parliament is concerned about the continuing involvement of the military in Turkish politics and foreign policy. The Turkish Grand National Assembly is asked to enhance its oversight of the military budget and expenditure and to engage in the development of security and defence policies.

Human rights: Parliament welcomes the initiatives taken by the Turkish Government to enable every citizen, irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, to enjoy equal rights and play an active role in Turkish society. It is aware that this is a historic debate, but strongly urges the Government to translate its political initiative into concrete reforms. Parliament also welcomes the adoption of legislation removing all restrictions on broadcasting in the Kurdish language. It condemns the continuing violence perpetrated by the PKK and other terrorist groups on Turkish soil, and urges the PKK to respond to the political initiative of the Turkish Government by laying down its arms and putting an end to violence.

The resolution deplores the fact that the Turkish Government continues to have reservations concerning the rights of minorities, as enshrined in international law, and that the legal framework does not provide sufficient guarantees regarding freedom of expression and religion. It expresses concern about the obstacles faced by the Ecumenical Patriarchate concerning its legal status, the recognition of Cem houses as Alevi places of worship, the difficulties encountered by Syriacs in relation to their property ownership; and the lack of progress regarding the Greek population of the islands Gökçeada (Imvros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos), which continues to encounter problems with property rights and education. Parliament is also concerned about continued restrictions on press freedom, particularly on reporting on the investigations

into the Ergenekon network. In addition, further effort is required with regard to implementation of the policy of zero tolerance of torture, eradicating corruption, translating gender equality into practice, and trade union rights.

Ability to take on the obligations of membership: Parliament deplores the fact that, for the fourth consecutive year, the Additional Protocol to the EC-Turkey Association Agreement has not been implemented by Turkey. It calls on the Turkish Government to implement it fully without delay, in a non-discriminatory way, and recalls that failure to do so may further seriously affect the negotiating process.

Commitment to good-neighbourly relations: Parliament underlines Turkey's undertaking together with all other parties to support the efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem and to resolve any outstanding border disputes with neighbouring countries. The Turkish Government and all parties concerned are called upon actively to support the ongoing negotiations, and to contribute in concrete terms to the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue, based on a bizonal, bicommunal federation. Turkey is asked to facilitate a suitable climate for negotiations by immediately starting to withdraw its forces from Cyprus, by addressing the issue of the settlement of Turkish citizens on the island and also by enabling the return of the sealed-off section of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants in compliance with UNSC Resolution 550(1984). Members commend the diplomatic efforts made to normalise relations with Armenia, asking for the relevant protocols to be ratified, and they welcome the continued improvement of relations with Iraq and with the Kurdish regional government.

Deepening EU-Turkey cooperation: Parliament notes the start of negotiations on Turkey's accession to the Energy Community. It welcomes Turkey's signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Nabucco gas pipeline, the implementation of which remains one of the EU's highest energy security priorities, and calls for opening of the energy chapter in the accession negotiations. Members note Turkey's increasingly active foreign policy and acknowledge Turkey's role as an important partner of the EU with a view to the realisation of EU foreign policy goals in the Black Sea region, Central Asia and the broader Middle East. Parliament calls on the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to analyse synergies between the EU's and Turkey's foreign policies and to make more intensive use of them in order to contribute to security and stability in the world.

It urges Turkey to act pragmatically and do its utmost to ensure the success of negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, which are now reaching a critical stage, noting that this is possibly the last opportunity to settle the long-running division of the island. A settlement of the Cyprus question will bring greater prosperity and security to the Eastern Mediterranean and allow a rapid improvement in EU-NATO relations as well as unblocking Turkey's own accession process to the EU.