Turkey: membership application, 12 April 1987

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The committee adopted the report by Arie OOSTLANDER (EPP-ED, NL) on Turkey's application for EU membership. It welcomed the fact that Turkey had made good progress since October 2001 towards fulfilling the political criteria for membership but said that the conditions for the opening of accession negotiations were not yet in place. MEPs stressed the need for comprehensive state reform and called on the Turkish government to set up a new political and constitutional system which guarantees the principles of a secular system as well as civilian control over the military. The committee voiced concern over the army·s "excessive role" in Turkey, which was seen as slowing down its "development towards a democratic and pluralist system". They said the National Security Council should in the long term be abolished in its current form and position, while military representatives should withdraw from civilian bodies such as the high council on education and the audiovisual media. The Turkish parliament should have full control over the military budget. The report denied that the Judaeo-Christian and humanist culture of Europe was a prerequisite for EU membership but insisted on respect for Europe's "universal values of democracy, the rule of law, human and minority rights and freedoms of religions and conscience". It also called for a relaxed attitude to Islam and to religion in general. The committee said that a new Turkish constitution should be based on European democratic foundations, with proper respect for human rights and the rights of individuals and minorities. It therefore welcomed Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's intention to establish a new constitution. MEPs also said the electoral system should ensure that the parliament was fully representative. Turkey should respect minority languages and religions and it should, in particular, build a more relaxed and constructive relationship with its citizens of Kurdish origin. Going into more detail, the committee called for a fair retrial and the immediate release of MPs from the former DEP party, including Sakharov Prize winner Leyla Zana; for the revision of the decision by the Turkish Constitutional Court to ban HADEP; for genuine access to legal aid for all prisoners; and for energetic measures to eradicate torture and implement international standards for prisons. Effective access should be ensured for all citizens, irrespective of their origin, to radio and television broadcasting and education in Kurdish and other non-Turkish languages. Also, the Turkish authorities should facilitate the work of non-governmental organisations such as Caritas by granting them legal status. MEPs expressed deep concern over reports of women in detention, especially Kurdish women and political dissidents, being subject to frequent rape by state security agents. On external relations, MEPs urged Turkey to withdraw its troops from northern Cyprus, thus paving the way for the reunification of the island, and to promote good neighbourliness with Armenia. Turkey should also cooperate with its neighbouring countries Iran, Syria and Iraq in order to safeguard its borders while enabling citizens of Kurdish origin in the different countries to develop their human, cultural and economic relations.