Turkey: membership application, 12 April 1987

2000/2014(COS) - 05/06/2003 - Interim resolution adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted a resolution welcomes the reforms made by Turkey since October 2001. The rapporteur was Arie OOSTLANDER (EPP-ED, NL). These reforms have been perceived by the Turkish population as a major improvement and are important signals of Turkey's willingness to make further progress towards fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. There is concern, however, about the army's central position in the Turkish state and society. This slows down Turkey's development towards a democratic and pluralist system. There must be a new political and constitutional system, which guarantees the principles of a secular system without military supremacy above civil institutions, so that the traditional power of the bureaucracy and the army (the 'deep State') can resume the forms which are customary in the Member States. Parliament noted that, in the light of the Copenhagen decision (December 2002), the conditions for the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey have not been satisfied. Those conditions will be met if the Turkish government pursues with constancy and determination the necessary ongoing reforms. The two financial aid programmes adopted by the Commission in 2002 must be spent, as a priority, on compliance with the political criteria. With regard to the specifics of reform, Parliament felt that Turkey must abolish the National Security Council in its current form in order to align civilian control of the military with the common practice in EU Member States. Military representatives should withdraw from civilian bodies such as the high councils on education and the audio-visual media, in order to ensure that these institutions are fully independent. There must be full Parliamentary control over the military budget as a part of the national budget. Parliament welcomed Prime Minister Erdogan's intention to establish a new Constitution emphasising the rule of law and a pluralist, participatory democracy. The Turkish concept of the nation and the secular state has to be based on tolerance and non-discrimination of religious communities and minority groups. A new Constitution must facilitate the implementation of these principles. Parliament stated that the political values of the European Union are chiefly based on the Judaeo-Christian and humanist culture of Europe, but that no-one has a monopoly on the universal values of democracy, the rule of law, human and minority rights and freedoms of religion and conscience. These values which can perfectly well be accepted and defended by a country where the majority of the population is Muslim. Therefore, there are no objections of principle to Turkey's membership of the EU. On matters relating to the rule of law and democracy, Parliament called upon Turkey to accede to the statutes of the International Criminal Court. This is a fundamental element in the relations between Turkey and the EU. Turkey is the only member of the Council of Europe who has not yet signed this statute. Parliament welcomed the reopening of the trial against European Parliament Sakharov Prize winner Leyla Zana and three other MPs of the former Democracy Party (DEP), imprisoned for more than 9 years. Parliament stressed the importance of an independent and competent judiciary. It went on to call for the electoral system to ensure that the composition of the parliament fully reflected the principle ofrepresentative democracy, especially with regard to the representation of Kurdish population and other minorities. Turkey must take further steps- within the context of the country's territorial integrity- to comply with the legitimate interests of the Kurdish population and members of other minorities in Turkey and to ensure their participation in political life. Parliament expressed its concern by the recent directives of the Turkish Ministry of Education demanding that primary and secondary schools in the country take part in a denial campaign concerning the oppression of minorities during Turkish history, in particular in relation to the Armenian community. Turkish authorities at all levels (national, regional, local) must ensure an immediate halt to any discriminatory activities which cause difficulties for the lives of religious minorities in Turkey, including in the field of ownership of property, donations, building and maintenance of churches and freedom of action for school boards. Parliament condemned the decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court to ban HADEP, and noted with concern that torture practices still continue, despite promises of zero tolerance for torture. It also expressed concern about reports of women in detention being subjected to frequent sexual violence and rape committed by state security agents. Women of Kurdish origin and women holding political beliefs, which are unacceptable to the military, are particularly at risk of such

violence. On Turkey's international relations, Parliament urged Turkey to be fully committed to its status of candidate country and to withdraw its troops from northern Cyprus so as to pave the way for the reunification of the island and facilitate the resumption of talks. Turkey must also cooperate with its neighbours Iran, Syria and Iraq in order to respect the borders while enabling their respective citizens of Kurdish origin to develop their human, cultural and economic relations. The Turkish Government should continue to respect the territorial integrity of Iraq and the competence of Iraq in rearranging its own administrative organisations. Finally, on the important question of water resources, Parliament recommended that Turkey arrive at a settlement, based on the findings of the UN General Assembly's International Law Commission, of the disputes with its neighbours, Iraq and Syria, concerning water.