



EMBASSY OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

Turkish Grand National Assembly
Chairman

2 December 2002

Dear Chairman,

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Turkish Parliament in the new legislative year, I am happy and privileged to confirm that the strong support accorded to Turkey's EU vocation by the government and opposition parties is wholeheartedly embraced by an overwhelming majority of our citizens as well.

For over 40 years, Turkey has been resolutely trodding the path of EU membership with devotion and determination.

Our people believe that, their country deserves the EU membership.

Since October 2001, the Turkish Parliament, in its bid to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria, has accomplished a very important task by enacting three successive reform packages which brought about comprehensive legislative changes and constitutional amendments.

The new Turkish Civil Code which came into force in January 2002, has been a milestone in reflecting the foregoing constitutional amendments.

Through these all-encompassing reforms, scope of individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and conscience has been expanded, death penalty has been lifted, detention periods have been shortened in conformity with the EU norms, so as to eliminate allegations of torture, all relevant laws concerning political parties, press and associations as well as laws relating to the organization of meetings and demonstrations have been amended, right of education and broadcasting in ethnic languages have been recognized, rights of the religious minority foundations for acquisition and disposition of property and immovables as recognized by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (i.e. Orthodox Greeks, Sephardic Jews and Armenians) have also been broadened.

H.E. Ivar Hansen
Chairman of the Danish Parliament

In this context, the last vestiges of the emergency rule in Diyarbakır and Şırnak provinces have also been lifted as of late November 2002.

In its new legislative year, the Turkish parliament is determined not only to solidify and implement the steps thus taken, but also enact rapidly new reform packages to fully and unequivocally comply with the *acquis communautaire*.

Having elicited the unanimous approval and support of both the government and opposition parties for the EU membership, I am confident that these reforms will be fully carried out in the nearest future.

I believe that it is our right to expect both the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EU member countries to give Turkey a more resolute support during the Copenhagen EU Summit of 12 December.

However, I am concerned about the prospect that if the positive expectations and aspirations of the majority of Turkish people concerning a date for the start of the accession negotiations are not satisfied, it may lead to a serious setback and deterioration in EU-Turkey relations.

If, on the other hand, Turkey is given a date for the start of the accession talks on 12 December, EU will thus have attained a more pivotal role to help shape and influence the world politics.

Turkey's integration with Europe will act as a catalyzer for the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Middle East and Caspian basin countries to bring about a more positive and constructive set of relations with the EU.

Turkey's EU membership will also contribute to peace, security, stability, economic welfare and social justice in these regions.

I would like to assure you Chairman that not only the Turkish citizens, but people in the Middle East, Caucasia and Central Asia are also eagerly waiting for the decision of the EU Council.

With my best wishes and respects.

Bülent Arınç

Chairman of the
Turkish Grand National
Assembly