

**Remarks by Ambassador Ömür Orhun,
Permanent Representative of Turkey to the OSCE,
in Response to the Statement by Mr. Dick Roche, T.D.,
Minister of State for European Affairs of Ireland**

(Permanent Council, 22 January 2004)

I also welcome Minister Roche to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive statement that outlined so eloquently the perception of the Irish Presidency of the European Union. We share Ireland's vision and support their priorities in pursuit of our common interests and values.

We fully agree that, in the face of risks and challenges that exist in Europe as a whole, the goals of continued promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law and institution building, as well as of sustainable development and human security require, more than ever, strengthened cooperation among European institutions both at policy and operational levels.

In this respect, we also believe that there is room for more effective and complementary roles for the OSCE and the European Union in areas of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

On the other hand, the achievements we will record in Europe will no doubt set positive models for adjacent areas, whose security, stability and prosperity have a direct bearing on European security and well being.

Europe is now going through a historic evolution shaped by the enlargement processes of major European institutions. As pointed out by Minister Roche, 2004 is prone to stage major developments in the enlargement agenda of the European Union.

This is an important year in terms of Turkish-EU relationship as well. We expect that the European Union, at the end of 2004, based on the report and recommendations of the European Commission, will decide to start accession negotiations with Turkey.

In a considerably short period of time, Turkey has accomplished an unprecedented political and administrative reform process upgrading and enhancing its democratic standards in a broad range from fundamental rights and freedoms to civilian-military relations, from the abolition of death penalty to full transparency and accountability in public domain and from religious to cultural rights. This process is coupled by a similar restructuring process in the economic sphere. The political will displayed in carrying out these reforms in fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria also testifies to Turkey's resolve in ensuring their effective and uniform implementation.

We now expect that the European Union will display the same determination by taking a landmark decision at the EU Council in December. As Mr. Prodi recently stated during his visit to our country, Turkey's membership will bring important benefits to the European Union and as a strong democracy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey has a vital role to play in a region bordering the reunified Europe.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Minister Roche for being with us this morning and wish Ireland all the best during their EU Presidency.