



PC.DEL/181/14
27 February 2014

EUROPEAN UNION

ENGLISH only

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 985
Vienna, 27 February 2014**

**EU Statement in Response to the Address by the Deputy
Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for
Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, H.E. Rashid Meredov**

Mr Foreign Minister,

The European Union would like to welcome you to the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and thank you for your intervention.

Mr Chairman, the European Union welcomes the strengthening of overall EU–Turkmenistan bilateral relations, in the areas of socio-economic development, energy, rule of law and human rights, as well as with regard to security issues in Central Asia.

The EU enjoys good cooperation with Turkmenistan on trade and energy security matters based on the Interim Trade Agreement on trade and trade-related matters and the Memorandum of Understanding in the field of energy, and looks forward to the successful completion of the negotiations for the Trans-Caspian Pipeline System. We look forward to upgrading the institutional framework of EU–Turkmenistan relations with a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that will allow intensification of the bilateral dialogue and further development of our cooperation.

The European Union welcomes the progress made in implementing the EU Strategy for Central Asia and encourages Turkmenistan to make full use of this important framework and to participate in all Strategy initiatives and the regional cooperation programmes.

We take note of the latest socio-economic reforms undertaken by the authorities, in particular in updating Turkmenistan's laws and regulations (amending the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Offences, Law on Youth Policy, Law on

Education) and supporting small and medium enterprises. We encourage Turkmenistan to persevere on the path of reform and implement effectively the new regulations, and to further strengthen the rule of law and good governance.

We have seen Turkmenistan making some progress in consolidating its legal framework for elections. And we have noted that parliamentary elections in December 2013 allowed candidates from two political parties, opening the way to a multi-party system in Turkmenistan. However, we call on Turkmenistan to take further measures to facilitate the registration of new political parties, including parties expressing dissenting opinions, in order to offer a wider range of alternatives to voters. Further progress needs to be made in bringing the legal framework in line with OSCE commitments for democratic elections and, crucially in its implementation. Real political competition and genuine political pluralism, which would provide for the functioning of a political opposition, are needed for a truly democratic political system.

We encourage the implementation of recently adopted laws and regulations, notably in simplifying the registration procedures of the NGOs and media and to limit undue restrictions and interference in their work. We also note the announcement made by the Majlis of Turkmenistan regarding adaptation of a law regulating internet media. We encourage the authorities to follow this up and to finalise and adopt the Draft National Action Plan on Human Rights.

We remain concerned with regard to the overall human rights situation in Turkmenistan. Following up on the Minister's support for regular exchanges of views on Human Dimension issues, we would welcome Turkmenistan's participation in the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We further encourage Turkmenistan to cooperate fully with international organisations with a view to improving the promotion and protection of human rights. We also encourage Turkmenistan to respond to recommendations made previously, in the UN Human Rights Council and in the OSCE Permanent Council, in relation to human rights concerns as well as to the recommendations made in the report of the fact finding mission after the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism in 2002.

We welcome the engagement of Turkmenistan in discussing human rights issues with the EU, in particular within the Human Rights Bilateral Dialogue (the latest of

which was held in May 2013). We reiterate that the European Union attaches great importance to the existence of a free and vibrant civil society and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including media freedom. Progress in this regard will impact favourably the development of EU-Turkmenistan relations.

We value Turkmenistan's efforts to develop ties with its neighbours and contribute to the stabilization process in the region, including on energy and water issues.

Turkmenistan and the EU share a common aim to promote a stable, secure and prosperous region particularly with a view to the forthcoming withdrawal of ISAF. We therefore value Turkmenistan's role in achieving this aim, including with regard to Afghanistan. In this context, we welcome the active participation of Turkmenistan in the first meeting of the High Level EU–Central Asia Security Dialogue in June 2013, as part of the regional political dialogue, and we look forward to Turkmenistan's further involvement in this framework. We would also want to thank you, Minister Meredov, for hosting the 11th Conference of the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) in Ashgabat in October 2013. The European Union attaches great importance to promoting a comprehensive and sustainable integrated border management approach in the region in order to improve border security and facilitate trade and movement of people as a way to promote economic development.

The European Union appreciates the increased cooperation between the Turkmen authorities and OSCE institutions and the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. We welcome the invitation from Turkmenistan to OSCE/ODIHR for the first time to assess the parliamentary elections, in compliance with the relevant OSCE commitments. We would also welcome enhanced cooperation with the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

The European Union also welcomes the improved cooperation between the Centre and the Turkmen authorities concerning the Politico-Military Dimension with regard to capacity building activities in the area of border security and combating drug trafficking, and to training activities on small arms and light weapons. We will continue to provide our support to the Centre's projects with regard to water management, combating corruption, and energy security. We also underscore our support for the Centre's activities with regard to promoting the rule

of law, legal education and the administration of justice. We encourage Turkmenistan to continue to step up its interaction with the Centre on these and other issues.

Mr Foreign Minister, we welcome your interest in the Helsinki+40 process and your belief that the comprehensive concept of security should underpin the process. We have listened carefully to the suggestions you have outlined across the three dimensions of the OSCE and look forward to continuing the dialogue during the next stages of the Helsinki+40 process.

The European Union reiterates its commitment to support Turkmenistan in its democratic and socio-economic reform process, including through bilateral and regional cooperation programmes and development cooperation, as well as giving new impetus to our political, trade and energy cooperation.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.