

**DPM/FM Venizelos-Draft opening statement at the EU-Turkey Association Council's Press Conference, Monday, 23 June 2014**

Welcome everybody,

1. Today, during the 52nd meeting of the EU-Turkey Association Council, together with Minister Çavuşoğlu and Commissioner Fuelle, we had the opportunity to conduct a constructive dialogue and review the overall relations between the European Union and Turkey.
2. So today, we reaffirmed the significance the EU attaches to its relations with Turkey, as a country negotiating accession to the EU and a key foreign policy and trade partner.
3. First of all, we underlined the importance of continuing the EU-TR foreign policy dialogue, since we believe that cooperation on foreign policy can be mutually beneficial.

We discussed several issues of common interest:

Syria, Iraq, the ongoing negotiations on Iran, the developments in the Arab world, and the situation in Ukraine.

4. In this respect, we strongly believe that credible accession negotiations which respect the EU's commitments and conditions, like the Copenhagen political criteria and the alignment with the *acquis*, will enable us to achieve more concrete results.
5. Both sides welcomed the opening, last November, of Chapter 22 on regional policy and coordination of structural instruments.
6. We also noted with satisfaction the clear statement that Turkey has made of its commitment to the accession process.
7. In this respect, we explained also the clear position of the EU as regards the Additional Protocol. Full non-discriminatory implementation towards all EU Member States is an obligation and as such must be honoured.
8. In this respect, we reiterated to Turkey our call for progress and we underlined that this could provide a significant boost to the negotiation process.
9. Furthermore, the EU has underlined the importance of progress in the normalisation of relations between Turkey and all Member States.
10. The EU also welcomed the resumption in Cyprus of the fully-fledged settlement talks between the leaders of both communities under the auspices of the UN.
11. Turkey's commitment and contribution in concrete terms to such a comprehensive settlement remains crucial.

12. The EU also reiterated its position on good neighbourly relations and stressed again that maintaining good neighbourly relations is an essential part of the accession process.
13. The EU welcomed some progress on reforms that has been made in Turkey. The EU's concern is always focused on the independence of the judiciary, on the separation of powers, and on the freedom of expression and press, including the Internet.
14. During our meeting we discussed also illegal migration, which remains a crucial issue for the EU as well as a priority for our Presidency.
15. We welcomed the signature of the EU-Turkey readmission agreement last December and the launch of the visa liberalization dialogue which represent landmark developments.
16. We are looking forward to the swift ratification of the Agreement by Turkey and its entry into force without delay.
17. We also underlined that we expect the full and effective implementation by Turkey of the readmission agreement vis-à-vis all Member States, and we reiterated the crucial importance of the adequate implementation of the bilateral readmission agreements.
18. Fifteen years after the Helsinki European Council, which opened the European path for Turkey, I would like to underline that the EU and the Hellenic Presidency hold high expectations that Turkey, after the upcoming Presidential elections, will return to the reform process with a new, decisive dynamic that will enable the accession negotiations regain momentum and pave the way for Turkey's European future.
19. This is our sincere wish, because we are convinced of the benefits that this process will bring to the people of Turkey, to EU-Turkey relations, and to the stability of our region.

Thank you.