



**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
PRIME MINISTRY
SECRETARIAT GENERAL FOR EU AFFAIRS**

**22nd Reform Monitoring Group Meeting
Press Statement
İstanbul, 17 September 2010**

- The 22nd meeting of Reform Monitoring Group (RMG) which was established in 2003 was hosted in Istanbul by Egemen Bagis, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, with the participation of Sadullah Ergin, Minister of Justice, Beşir Atalay, Minister of Interior, and Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs on behalf of Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- Chairmen of the EU Harmonization Committee and Human Rights Inquiry Committee of the Parliament, co-chair of Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee, Undersecretary of Prime Ministry Efan Ala and high-level officials from the Prime Ministry, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Presidency have also participated in this meeting.
- The political reforms, undertaken to protect human rights in all areas, strengthen democracy and the principle of the rule of law, are one of the most important components of the EU accession process, which has been a priority for Turkey. Each step taken for this purpose strengthens peace and harmony in our country, enhances the prosperity of our citizens and increases Turkey's international prestige.
- Turkey has passed a turning point with the approval of the Constitutional amendment package in the referendum held on 12 September 2010. This amendment has given Turkey a stronger position in the accession negotiations.
- Following the approval of the constitutional amendment package, we will carry out the necessary legislative work to attain a more prosperous and democratic Turkey and totally remove anti-democratic traces of the past periods.

- This first RMG meeting held following the referendum has a special importance. 17 September is the anniversary of the death of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, one of the most important figures in the history of Turkish democracy. It is very meaningful to commemorate the late Menderes in such a time when we have left difficult times behind.
- Today, with the participation of Prime Minister Erdoğan we have visited the memorials of the late Menderes and the late President Turgut Özal, who served their country to strengthen freedoms, pluralism and free market economy.
- In line with the preference of our people, decisive steps will be taken following the referendum to introduce important changes in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms and to accelerate the political reforms. Therefore, the decisions of the 22nd RMG meeting will shape future reforms. We strongly believe that our efforts will be reflected positively in the 2010 Progress Report on Turkey.
- The amendments foreseen in the Constitutional package are of the nature that will ensure significant progress in the EU accession process. In fact, the constitutional amendments have been prepared in light of the Copenhagen political criteria.
- While many amendments in the Constitutional amendment package enable our citizens to benefit fully from fundamental rights in a more democratic system by lifting the restrictions of the military regime, these amendments also include arrangements, which in particular strengthen Turkey's position on Chapter 23 on "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights".
- In the meeting today, following approval of the Constitutional reform package, the RMG has discussed the next steps for the preparation of the necessary legislation. In this regard, an Action Plan will be prepared under the coordination of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs covering the legislative changes required by the Constitutional amendment package. The Action Plan will be submitted to the next Council of Ministers meeting and will be shared with the public.
- The legal amendments envisaged by the Constitutional amendment package also cover issues other than political reforms. Therefore, in its meeting of 22 September 2010, the Internal Coordination and Harmonisation Committee (IHC) will address

the legislative amendments to be made within the respective areas of competence of public institutions and organisations.

- It was also decided to complete the necessary legislative work towards the preparation of the Law on the Ombudsman, in line with the Constitutional amendment package.
- The ongoing institutionalisation efforts in the area of human rights have also been addressed. Within this framework, the importance of the Anti-discrimination and Equality Board of which a draft law has been submitted to the Prime Ministry, and Turkish Human Rights Institution of which the draft law has been submitted to the Parliament has been discussed. Furthermore, the control mechanism foreseen in the Draft Law on the Approval of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and the establishment of the Supervisory Commission on Law Enforcement Officers are of great importance.
- The work on the draft National Action Plan for Fundamental Rights, which has been prepared under the coordination of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs, is underway.
- It is foreseen that the Regional Courts of Appeal will start functioning by the end of 2010.
- The necessary amendments to the legislation and implementation to comply with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) have also been addressed in detail.
- With regard to the European Court of Human Rights' ruling on the Dink case of 14 September 2010, our Government decided not to appeal to the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR. It has been decided at this RMG meeting that all necessary measures will be taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future.
- Following the amendments approved in the referendum held on 12 September 2010, national mechanisms and measures that will effectively protect human rights and provide remedies prior to making an application to the ECtHR as a final recourse, will be introduced.
- In Turkey, there is considerable progress in terms of strengthening the climate of tolerance and mutual understanding. An apparent example has been the religious ceremony held on 15 August 2010

in Maçka, Trabzon, in the historical Sümela Monastery which has been closed for 88 years. The religious ceremony was received positively in Turkey and abroad. As this religious ceremony was held during Ramadan, it conveyed messages of peace and harmony.

- A religious ceremony will also be held on 19 September 2010 for the first time in Surp Haç Armenian Church on Akdamar Island in Van. This also serves to our ideal of attaining a more democratic Turkey, in which all of our citizens live as equal individuals.
- In order to eliminate discriminatory remarks in schoolbooks, the Ministry of Education has been reviewing schoolbooks.
- An international seminar will be held in December 2010 with the participation of representatives from civil society and experts from EU countries under the coordination of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs addressing the issues of our Roman citizens, in light of the Roman Opening initiated by our Government.
- Work is ongoing on Chapter 24 on “Justice, Freedom, and Security”, which comprises the areas of asylum, migration and visa policy.
- Taking into consideration the legal commitments between Turkey as a negotiating country and EU, arising from the Ankara Agreement, the Additional Protocol and the Customs Union Decision, in order to initiate the process for visa exemption by the EU for Turkish citizens, the technical work that needs to be carried out by Turkey following the mandate to be given to the European Commission by Member States has been addressed in detail.
- It has been underlined that the process for completing the Readmission Agreement, which has reached its final stage, will be carried out in parallel with the mandate to be given to the European Commission by member states to carry out the work on the liberalization of the visa regime for Turkish citizens.
- Work is ongoing on integrated border management, which will enable more effective protection, control, and management of land and sea borders.
- Work is ongoing on “Law on Asylum”, “Law on Foreigners”, “Law on the Fight Against Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims”

and “Law on the Establishment of the Administration of Asylum and Migration”, which will redefine basic policies and significantly develop the system in the areas of asylum and migration. These laws will also introduce new arrangements on matters referred to in the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the areas of migration and asylum. The draft laws will be shared by the stakeholders in order to obtain the views of relevant international organisations, civil society organisations and academicians.

- Turkey will progress with determination to achieve its objective to be a member of the EU. The priority of our Government through the accession process has always been and will be to ensure the highest level of standards for our citizens. In this regard, the support of the opposition parties and civil society bear great importance.
- The 23rd RMG meeting will be hosted by the Minister of Interior in November 2010.