

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY
VOLKAN VURAL
AMBASSADOR OF TURKEY TO SPAIN
AT THE
THIRD PAN-EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
BILGI UNIVERSITY 22 SEPTEMBER 2006
(EUROPEAN CONSORTIUM FOR POLITICAL RESEARCH
STANDING GROUP ON EU POLITICS)

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE AND HONOR FOR ME TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY AND DISCUSS THE PROSPECT OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE EU. I THANK OUR HOST, THE BILGI UNIVERSITY AND IN PARTICULAR THE DEAN AND VICE DEAN OF THIS REMARKABLE ACADEMIC INSTITUTION FOR PROVIDING ME THIS OPPORTUNITY.

ALMOST FOUR DECADES AGO I JOINED OUR FOREIGN SERVICE AS A CAREER DIPLOMAT. I WAS ASSIGNED TO A DESK THAT DEALT WITH (RCD) REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION LAUNCHED BY THE HEADS OF STATES OF TURKEY, IRAN AND PAKISTAN. I RECALL LAVISH ENTERTAINMENT, COUNTLESS MEETINGS, AND ENDLESS DISCUSSIONS ON FORMING JOINT PROJECTS FROM PULP AND PAPER TO LIGHT BULBS, FROM JOINT MARITIME COMPANIES TO JOINT AIR SERVICES, FROM JOINT BANKS TO COMMON INSURANCE COMPANIES.

I WAS THE ENVY OF MY COLLEAGUES SITTING IN AN OFFICE NEXT DOOR WHO WERE PAINSTAKINGLY DISCUSSING WITH THE COMMON MARKET OFFICIALS ON HOW MANY TONS OF TOMATO OR DRIED FRUITS WE COULD EXPORT TO THE COMMON MARKET. THE YEAR WAS 1964 AND WE HAD JUST SIGNED THE ANKARA AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING TURKEY'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE COMMON MARKET. AT THAT TIME THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL ELITE HAD NO HESITATION OR DOUBTS AS TO THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY OF TURKEY. THE MAIN CONSTRAINT WAS THE HUGE GAP BETWEEN THE INCOME LEVELS IN TURKEY AND IN THE COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES AND OF COURSE THE LEVELS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THAT IS WHY THE ANKARA AGREEMENT HAD FORESEEN LONG YEARS OF PREPARATORY AND TRANSITIONAL STAGES, WHICH WOULD CULMINATE IN A CUSTOMS UNION. THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT THE PURPOSE OF THIS WHOLE EXERCISE WAS TO BRING IN TURKEY AS A MEMBER, ALTHOUGH ADMITTEDLY THIS OBJECTIVE WAS COUCHED IN A DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE.

WHILE THE PROJECTS INITIATED UNDER THE (RCD) REMAINED LARGELY ON PAPER AND REGIONAL COOPERATION REMAINED ELUSIVE, THE COMMON MARKET PROSPERED AND TRANSFORMED ITSELF INTO A VERY SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UNION. THE STRIKING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE

FAILURE OF THE ONE AND THE SUCCESS OF THE OTHER COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO MANY REASONS AND BE RESEARCHED BY THE ACADEMICIANS. BUT FOR ME WHAT MADE THE EU PROJECT A SUCCESS STORY LIES IN SHARED VALUES.

I ALSO RECALL THAT MY COLLEAGUES WHO DEALT WITH THE COMMON MARKET HAD MORE DIFFICULTY WITH THE TURKISH BUREAUCRACY THAN WITH THEIR EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS. THE MAIN OPPOSITION TO OUR RELATIONS WITH THE COMMON MARKET CAME FROM THE STATE PLANNING ORGANIZATION HEADED BY A DISTINGUISHED BUREAUCRAT WITH ISLAMIC LEANINGS WHO, APART FROM ECONOMIC CONCERNS FOUND THIS RELATIONSHIP AS CULTURALLY DISTURBING. IT IS HIGHLY IRONIC THAT THIS SAME PERSON, SOME DECADES LATER AS PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC FORMALLY APPLIED FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THROUGHOUT HIS REFORMIST POLITICAL CAREER CONTRIBUTED PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER LEADER IN BRINGING TURKEY CLOSER TO THE UNION.

BUT FOR A CAREFUL STUDENT OF TURKISH SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY, THIS SHOULD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE.

TURKEY'S ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION IS NOT ONLY A POLITICAL OR STRATEGIC CHOICE BUT ALSO THE NATURAL OUTCOME OF OUR VALUES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY. THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, THE PREDECESSOR OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC, WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST A EUROPEAN POWER, PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE BALANCES OF POWER OF THE CONTINENT. WHILE OSTENSIBLY AN ISLAMIC STATE, IT WAS ABLE TO HOLD TOGETHER DIFFERENT CULTURES, RELIGIONS AND ETHNICITIES THROUGH A COMPLEX WEB OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUMENTS OF HIGHLY SECULAR CHARACTER. RESPECT FOR THE "OTHER" WAS EVIDENT IN THEIR POLICIES AND APPROACH. WHEN IT WENT INTO DECLINE, IT WAS REFERRED TO AS THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE.

THE TURKISH REPUBLIC, FROM ITS VERY INCEPTION, IDENTIFIED EUROPEANIZATION AS THE EQUIVALENT OF MODERNIZATION. THERE IS NO NEED I AM SURE, TO REMIND YOU OF THE HUGE REFORMS ACHIEVED BY ATATURK. WHILE BEING INSPIRED BY THE IDEAS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND POSITIVISM, HE ALSO HAD THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE FAILURE AND FRUSTRATION OF THE REFORM EFFORTS OF THE EMPIRE.

IN LINE WITH THE FOUNDING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE REPUBLIC, IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT TURKEY HAS COME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH EVERY EUROPEAN INSTITUTION. OUR MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE FROM ITS VERY BEGINNING WAS A CLEAR CHOICE OF WHERE WE STOOD IN TERMS OF COMMON DESTINY AND VALUES. DEMOCRACY, THE RULE OF LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION OR CONSCIENCE AND GENDER EQUALITY WERE NOT THE VALUES ARTIFICIALLY TRANSPLANTED IN TURKEY BUT THE CULMINATION OF A LONG, PAINFUL AND CERTAINLY UNFINISHED PROCESS OF FINDING A BETTER GOVERNANCE AND DIGNIFIED EXISTENCE.

WHEN THERE WAS A CHOICE OF JOINING ONE OF THE TWO QUITE DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF COOPERATION IN EUROPE, TURKEY OPTED FOR THE COMMON MARKET INSTEAD OF THE "EFTA". THE REASONS WERE OBVIOUS. THE CONCEPT OF THE COMMON MARKET HAD A BROADER AGENDA WITH A POLITICAL UNION IN ITS DISTANT HORIZON. THIS PROSPECT WAS MORE APPEALING AND WAS IN TUNE WITH TURKEY'S OWN VISION OF THE CONTINENT. BUT A CERTAIN SENSE OF OBJECTIVITY AND REALISM MUST BE INJECTED HERE. WHEN I SAY TURKEY, IT WAS THEN A HANDFUL OF BUREAUCRATS, A FEW ACADEMICIANS AND ONLY A PART OF THE POLITICAL ELITE. MANY SEGMENTS OF THE TURKISH INTELLIGENTSIA AND LARGE MASSES WERE EITHER UNINTERESTED OR FOR DIFFERENT REASONS OPPOSED TO THIS PROCESS. IN ANY CASE DOMESTIC POLITICAL INSTABILITY, RECURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS AND MILITARY COUPS WERE NOT CONDUCIVE TO PURSUING A CONSISTENT EU POLICY.

IT IS THEREFORE NATURAL THAT OUR RE-INVOLVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS STARTED IN MID 80'S WHEN TURKEY RETURNED TO DEMOCRACY. BUT UNLIKE THE PAST, OUR RECEPTION WAS NOT ENTIRELY A WARM ONE. EACH MEMBER OF THE ENLARGED UNION HAD A DIFFERENT TURKISH AGENDA. SOME, LIKE THE NORDIC COUNTRIES, RIGHTLY SO, HAD A HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA. OTHERS FEARED IMMIGRATION AND THE BURDEN OF THE ECONOMIC COST. SOME OTHERS HAD SPECIFIC ISSUES SUCH AS BORDERS OR CYPRUS. ALTHOUGH UNPRONOUNCED UNTIL LATELY, SOME OBVIOUSLY HAD THE CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS DIVIDE IN MIND.

IT IS WITH THESE INGREDIENTS THAT OUR COMMON JOURNEY WITH THE EU WAS ALWAYS A BUMPY ROAD. EVERY EU SUMMIT HAD ITS MOMENTS OF DRAMA, LEAVING BEHIND A BITTER-SWEET TASTE. I DO NOT THINK THAT SINCE THE BRITISH ENTRY INTO EU ANY OTHER CANDIDATE HAS BEEN ABLE TO AROUSE SO

MUCH PASSIONATE DEBATE AND CONTROVERSY. YET AS THEY SAY IN TURKISH THE CARAVAN KEPT MARCHING ON.

TWO CRUCIAL INTERSECTIONS HAVE BEEN PASSED. IN 1995 WHEN THE CUSTOMS UNION PROTOCOL WAS EITHER TO BE SIGNED OR POSTPONED PERHAPS INDEFINITELY, TURKEY, AS USUAL WAS CONFRONTED WITH A DILEMMA. APART FROM THE FIERCE OPPOSITION OF SOME IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF OUR DOMESTIC INDUSTRY, OUR FRIENDS IN THE EU HAD ADDED THE CYPRUS CLAUSE INTO THE PROTOCOL. IRRESPECTIVE OF THESE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES THE TURKISH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CONCLUDED THE CUSTOMS UNION. BEING PART OF THE TURKISH TEAM AS CHIEF ADVISOR TO THE THEN TURKISH PRIME MINISTER, WE WERE ALL AWARE OF THE HISTORIC DIMENSION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THIS ACT.

DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF THE CUSTOMS UNION, IT WAS AGAIN NOT EASY FOR TURKEY TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A CANDIDATE FOR MEMBERSHIP. AT THE LUXEMBOURG SUMMIT AT 1997 THE DOORS WERE CLOSED TO TURKEY AND RELATIONS WERE PUT INTO A DEEP FREEZE. THE BREAKTHROUGH CAME AT THE HELSINKI SUMMIT IN DECEMBER 1999. THE ELEMENT OF DRAMA, WHICH MARKED THIS EVENT, WAS COMPLEMENTED BY A THRILLER IN THE FORM OF A MIDNIGHT TRIP BY THE FINNISH PRESIDENT TO ANKARA TO CONVINCED AND ASSURE THE TURKISH LEADERSHIP THAT OUR CANDIDACY WOULD NOT BE CONDITIONED TO THE CYPRUS ISSUE.

THE 1999 HELSINKI DECISION WAS A MILESTONE IN OUR QUEST TO JOIN THE EU. PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY A BROAD CONSENSUS EMERGED IN TURKEY IN FAVOR OF EU INTEGRATION. MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU BECAME A TOP PRIORITY OF OUR POLITICAL AGENDA.

IT WAS IN THIS MOOD THAT I ARRIVED IN ANKARA BEING TASKED BY OUR COALITION GOVERNMENT TO FORM A NEW ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE PRIME MINISTER TO PREPARE AND COORDINATE OUR EFFORTS FOR MEMBERSHIP. WE DEVELOPED THE FIRST NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR ADOPTION OF THE ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE AND EMBARKED UPON A WIDE RANGING REFORM PROCESS. WITHIN A FEW YEARS TIME TURKEY ACCOMPLISHED UNPRECEDENTED REFORMS BY CHANGING ALMOST ONE THIRD OF ITS CONSTITUTION AND ADOPTING NEW CIVIL AND PENAL CODES. DURING THIS PROCESS HUNDREDS OF PIECES OF LEGISLATION WERE ENACTED. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY WE STARTED TO ADDRESS OUR TABOOS AND CHECK OUR PRECONCEIVED IDEAS. THOSE WHO

WENT TO JAIL ONLY A FEW YEARS BACK BY UTTERING THE WORD "KURD" NOW HAD INSTRUCTION, TV AND RADIO BROADCASTS IN THAT LANGUAGE.

FOLLOWING THE EXTRAORDINARY PARLIAMENTARY SESSION HELD IN AUGUST 2002 WHICH ELIMINATED THE DEATH PENALTY AND RECOGNIZED CULTURAL RIGHTS, A JOURNALIST ASKED MY INTERPRETATION OF THESE REFORMS. I BELIEVE I WAS THE FIRST TO SAY ON RECORD, THAT THESE REFORMS AMOUNTED TO A "SILENT REVOLUTION".

THIS DESCRIPTION, WHICH BECAME POPULAR LATER ON, REFLECTS OUR CAPACITY FOR TRANSFORMATION. THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE REFORMS WAS ALWAYS PRESENT IN TURKEY BUT PERHAPS REQUIRED A TRIGGER FOR ACTION. THE EU PROCESS DID NOT IMPOSE THESE REFORMS ON TURKEY BUT SERVED AS A CATALYST FOR THEIR REALIZATION. THE REFORMS ACCOMPLISHED REPRESENT MORE THAN CHANGES IN PIECES OF LEGISLATION. THEY USHERED IN A NEW MENTALITY AND A MIND SET. THE COALITION GOVERNMENT THAT LED THESE REFORMS, ALBEIT THROUGH PAINFUL DISCUSSIONS AND POLITICAL SHOWDOWNS, DESERVES A CREDIT.

THE NOVEMBER 2002 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN TURKEY SWEEPED THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY INTO POWER WITH AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. TO THE SURPRISE OF SOME, THE NEW GOVERNMENT EMBRACED EU MEMBERSHIP AS ITS KEY OBJECTIVE AND DEMONSTRATED ITS POLITICAL WILL AND COMMITMENT FOR THE ACCESSION PROCESS. WITHOUT WAITING TO BE ELECTED TO THE PARLIAMENT AND ASSUMING THE GOVERNMENTAL TASK, MR. ERDOGAN, AS THE LEADER OF THE PARTY, EMBARKED UPON A TOUR OF ALL EU CAPITALS TO ADVANCE THE START OF NEGOTIATIONS. AT HOME THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED THE REFORM AGENDA WITH GREATER VIGOR AND CONSISTENCY. DESPITE SOME CRITICISMS LEVELED AT THE GOVERNMENT LATELY, FOR THE SLOWDOWN OF THE REFORM PROCESS WE ARE WITNESSING AGAIN THEIR COMMITMENT IN CONVENING OUR PARLIAMENT FOR EXTRAORDINARY SESSIONS TO ENACT THE NINTH REFORM PACKAGE. I THINK THERE IS NO DEVIATION IN OUR EU ORIENTATION. HOWEVER, IT IS TRUE THAT CERTAIN EXTERNAL FACTORS COUPLED WITH GROWING NATIONALISM AND FRUSTRATIONS AT HOME CONTRIBUTED TO THE EROSION OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN AND SUPPORT FOR THE EU PROCESS.

SLOWING OF ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE PRESSURE OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION, THE ENLARGEMENT FATIGUE AND THE CULTURAL DIVIDE SYNDROME FOLLOWING THE BARBARIC ACTS OF SEPTEMBER ELEVEN AND LATER ON BOMBINGS IN MADRID, LONDON AND ISTANBUL HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED TO XENOPHOBIA AND MUSLIM BASHING IN SOME EU COUNTRIES. THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS WAS NOT THE CAUSE BUT THE VICTIM OF THIS UNHEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU WAS AND STILL IS SEEN AS A VOTE CATCHING TARGET BY SOME POLITICIANS. IF OUR MEMBERSHIP, IN SOME DISTANT FUTURE, WHICH IN ANY CASE HAS TO GO THROUGH REFERENDUMS OR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVALS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES IS BROUGHT TO THE AGENDA OF NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN FRANCE FOR INSTANCE THIS CAN NOT BE EXPLAINED AWAY AS AN INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE. FOR ME IT IS PURE POPULISM.

SUCH ATTITUDES, TAKEN TOGETHER WITH INCREASINGLY DEMANDING AND NEW CONDITIONS SUCH AS THE ABSORPTION CAPACITY OR UNDUE EMPHASIS ON THE OPEN ENDED NATURE OF THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS, ARE ERODING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE TURKISH PUBLIC TO EU COMMITMENTS AND PROVIDING AMPLE MATERIAL FOR ANTI EU SENTIMENTS.

IRRESPECTIVE OF THIS SHADY POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, THE PROCESS OF EU MEMBERSHIP HAS GAINED MOMENTUM WITH THE OPENING OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS. THE SCREENING PROCESS IS PROCEEDING SUCCESSFULLY. ANOTHER CRITICAL THRESHOLD WAS PASSED WITH THE OPENING AND PROVISIONAL CLOSURE OF NEGOTIATIONS IN THE SCIENCE AND RESEARCH CHAPTER. UNDER THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY WE HOPE TO CONCLUDE A FEW MORE CHAPTERS. SO FAR, DETAILED SCREENING OF 25 CHAPTERS HAS BEEN COMPLETED. THE AIM IS TO COMPLETE THE WHOLE SCREENING PROCESS BY THE END OF OCTOBER. AS WE GO ALONG, WE ARE IDENTIFYING IN A MORE FOCUSED FASHION OUR PRIORITY AREAS AS REGARDS LEGISLATIVE ALIGNMENT AND DEVELOPING OUR ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION.

WE ARE ALL AWARE OF THE ARGUMENTS AND PREDICTIONS THAT A TRAIN CRASH IN TURKISH-EU RELATIONS IS BOUND TO HAPPEN THIS FALL. WHILE THE SEVERITY OF THIS CRASH IS DEBATED, ITS INEVITABILITY IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED. THE QUESTION OF CYPRUS IS CITED AS THE CAUSE OF THIS CRASH.

IF THIS PROVES TO BE THE CASE I CANNOT IMAGINE A BIGGER INJUSTICE DONE TO TURKEY THAT HAS REVERSED THE TRADITIONAL CYPRUS POLICY AND ACTED IN GREAT FAITH WITH THE CULTURE OF COMPROMISE. THE EXPLOITATION OF THE CYPRUS ISSUE AGAINST OUR ACCESSION PROCESS IS NOT ONLY UNFAIR BUT COULD PROVE TO BE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE. THE PLATFORM FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM IS THE UN. WHAT IS URGENTLY NEEDED IN CYPRUS IS THE RESUMPTION BY THE TWO PARTIES OF EFFORTS TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT WITHIN THE UN PLATFORM. TURKEY AND THE TURKISH CYPRIOTS REMAIN COMMITTED TO A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. PENDING THIS, OUR PROPOSAL FOR THE SIMULTANEOUS LIFTING OF ALL RESTRICTIONS BY ALL PARTIES SHOULD OFFER A REALISTIC WAY OUT FOR THE CURRENT DILEMMA.

IT IS CLEAR THAT OUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EU WILL CONTINUE TO BE A DIFFICULT AND A PROLONGED PROCESS, NOT PERHAPS IN A TECHNICAL SENSE BUT MOSTLY DUE TO THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE. WE ARE ALSO AWARE THAT THE PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EU MEMBER STATES WILL BE A DETERMINING FACTOR IN OUR ACCESSION.

THE BENEFITS OF ENLARGEMENT IN GENERAL AND THE ADVANTAGES OF TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP IN PARTICULAR MUST BE SHARED WITH AND EXPLAINED TO THE EU PUBLIC WITHOUT ANY INHIBITION.

THOSE WHO LEGITIMATELY FEAR TURKEY'S ACCESSION MUST BE INFORMED OF THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTIONS THAT TURKEY WILL BRING TO THE UNION. THEY MUST BE ASSURED THAT FAR FROM BEING A BURDEN, TURKEY WILL BE AN IMPORTANT ASSET IN ENHANCING THE GLOBAL REACH OF THE UNION. THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL DIVIDE COULD BE BETTER MET THROUGH THIS UNION. THEY MUST ALSO BE REMINDED THAT IT WILL NOT BE THE PRESENT DAY TURKEY BUT THE ONE THAT HAS GENUINELY MET ALL COPENHAGEN AND MAASTRICHT CRITERIA THAT WILL BE JOINING THE EU.

THEY MUST BE MADE AWARE THAT THE WAY THE UNION CHOOSES TO DEAL WITH TURKEY WILL DO MUCH TO DETERMINE ITS FUTURE CHARACTER.

OUR OWN EFFORTS AND RESOURCES ALONE CANNOT ACHIEVE THIS HUGE COMMUNICATION TASK. EUROPEAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND ELITES MUST BE ENGAGED FULLY.

ON THE OTHER HAND WE SHOULD ALSO CONTINUE TO DO OUR HOMEWORK AT HOME. WE CAN NOT TAKE COMFORT BY SIMPLY AMENDING OR PASSING NEW LEGISLATION IN OUR PARLIAMENT. WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE IMPLEMENTED FULLY. WE HAVE TO RESTRAIN OUR SOMETIMES VERY NARROW NATIONALISTIC REFLEXES AND CURB OUR ENTHUSIASM FOR CONSPIRACY THEORIES. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY CAN ONLY BE COMPATIBLE IN A SECULAR ENVIRONMENT. ANY ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE THE SECULAR INSTITUTIONS WILL ALSO BE A BACKWARD STEP FROM THE EU GOAL.

WE SHOULD ALSO STREAMLINE OUR NEGOTIATION STRUCTURE, PLACE A NEW EMPHASIS ON COMMUNICATION WITH OUR PUBLIC, ALLOW FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND ENSURE TRANSPARENCY.

TO CONCLUDE I WANT TO LEAVE WITH YOU THE FOLLOWING MESSAGES:

ONE: TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU IS VITAL FOR BOTH SIDES. ANY MISCALCULATION COULD LEAD TO IRREPARABLE DAMAGES.

TWO: THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED IN A FAIR AND OBJECTIVE MANNER. THERE SHOULD BE NO HIDDEN AGENDA.

THREE: AS WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE GENUINE FEARS AND CONCERNS OF OUR EU PARTNERS AND TRY TO ACCOMMODATE THEM, OUR EUROPEAN FRIENDS MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THEY ARE DEALING WITH A STATE THAT HAS A DEEP SENSE OF HISTORY AND IDENTITY WHERE HONOR AND DIGNITY ARE NOT MERE WORDS BUT THE ESSENCE OF BEING. WE MUST LIVE UP TO OUR MUTUAL COMMITMENTS AND CONTINUE TO BUILD CONFIDENCE. OUR ENGAGEMENT SHOULD HAVE A CONSTRUCTIVE AGENDA.

FOUR: IT IS BECOMING EVIDENT THAT THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY WILL BE MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE PAST. WE CANNOT COPE WITH THESE CHALLENGES ALONE AND WITH THE SAME INSTRUMENTS OF THE PAST. THE EU MUST LOOK FORWARD AND BE PREPARED TO BE A GLOBAL ACTOR. OUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNION SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A SIMPLE ENLARGEMENT BUT IN TERMS OF THE DEMANDS OF THE NEW

CHALLENGES. THE DECISION THE EU WILL TAKE WILL ALSO BE A DECISION ON ITS FUTURE IDENTITY AND ROLE IN THE WORLD.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE COMMON SENSE, COMMON VALUES AND COMMON INTERESTS THAT BIND TURKEY AND THE EU WILL PREVAIL.

I AM ALSO CONFIDENT THAT THE CARAVAN WILL REACH ITS FINAL DESTINATION.

THANK YOU.