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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**NOTE**

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from: General Secretariat of the Council  
to: Delegations

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Subject: Summary record of the plenary session of the European Parliament, held in  
Strasbourg on 6 February 2013  
**Dialogue for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey**  
*Council and Commission statements*  
**[2013/2523(RSP)]**

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Ms Lucinda Creighton, Irish Minister of State for European Affairs, speaking on behalf of the Council, delivered the speech set out in [Annex I](#).

The Commissioner for Enlargement, Štefan Füle, delivered the speech set out in [Annex II](#).

The following MEPs spoke on behalf of the political groups:

- Ms Oomen-Ruijten (EPP, NL) said that peace talks could succeed only if carried out discreetly and she therefore felt it was unwise to hold a debate in the European Parliament (EP). Nonetheless she hoped that the talks between the Turkish government and PKK leader Ocalan could lead to a sustainable solution to the Kurdish problem. She said that, to meet this objective, all the opposition parties had to be taken on board. If an agreement could be concluded, not only

would that represent the beginning of a new prosperity in the south-east of Turkey, but it would also be in the interests of all Turkish citizens.

- Mr Obiols (S&D, ES) expressed his support for the talks, on the grounds that all problems in Turkey had a Kurdish dimension. He hoped that the Kurds would put an end to violence and that Turkey would approve political reforms giving full rights to the Kurds.
- Mr Lambsdorff (ALDE, DE) took a different view from Ms Oomen-Ruijten and said that this was not an issue to be discussed behind closed doors. He recalled the massive repression against Kurds involved in local politics and added that the current debate was meant to send a number of clear messages: to continue the dialogue, to put an end to the repression on one side and terrorist violence on the other side, and take account of the regional dimension of the Kurdish issue.
- Ms Flautre (Greens/ALE, FR) said that the talks represented an historic process, very different from the previous attempts that had all failed. In her view, they were the means of re-launching the democratic process in Turkey. But she also highlighted the huge impact that they could have in terms of stabilising the region. She acknowledged that reconciliation could prove to be particularly difficult because of years of mistrust, hate and violence but, in her view, missing this opportunity would be an historic mistake. She noted that the Kurdish population supported the peace talks and she hoped that Mr Ocalan, as the leader of the Kurdish people and the interlocutor of the government, could be put in a position - despite his imprisonment - to dialogue with all factions of the Kurdish movement.
- Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) noted that the Kurdish issue represented the only insurgency conflict in the candidate countries. He reminded Members that Turkey's human rights record - notably with regard to the rights of minorities - was still questionable but he expressed his opposition to the idea of any Kurdish separate state as it would be a source of instability for the region.
- Mr Belder (EFD, NL) said that Kurdish aspirations had not materialised in recent years: although there had been a number of reforms benefiting the Kurds, they represented "one step forward and two steps back". He hoped that the peace talks could mean that the idea of a parallel Kurdish state within Turkey would be abandoned.
- Mr Klute (GUE/NGL, DE) pointed out that not all Kurds in Turkey supported separatism. He noted that, although they were important, the talks were only the first step towards a peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue. He called for all interested parties to be included in the talks and hoped that nobody would allow the process to be derailed.
- Mr Mølzer (NI, AT) spoke about the spillover effect of the Syrian conflict. He also spoke against Turkey's accession to the EU.

The MEPs speaking in their personal capacity overwhelmingly supported the peace talks and condemned any attempts to derail them. Many spoke of an historic opportunity. Mr Kacin (ALDE, SI) compared this process to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and hoped that the same could soon be said for the Cyprus issue. Only one Member, Mr Demesmaeker (Greens/ALE, BE), did not share the widespread optimism and instead expressed a degree of scepticism, saying that the current process was too little and too late.

Many MEPs stressed that Turkey had still a lot to do to fully respect the rights of minorities and human rights in general. Mr Howitt (S&D, UK) noted that Turkey's definition of minorities was different from that of the EU, and Turkey had still to understand that minorities did not represent a threat to the unity of the state.

A number of MEPs called for the EU to play a more active role in the process. Ms Vergiat (GUE/NGL, FR) said that the EU should not only offer its financial assistance - as envisaged by the Commissioner - but should put all its political weight behind facilitating a solution. Ms Jäättteenmaki (ALDE, FI) regretted the EU's passive attitude with regard to seeking and maintaining peace around the world, and called for more active involvement. Mr Cashman (S&D, UK) wanted the EU to be an "intermediary" in the peace talks; Mr Piotrowski (ECR, PL) called for EU "mediation" and Ms Yannakoudakis (ECR, UK) hoped the EU could "help" the process.

Ms Ludford (ALDE, UK) hoped that all the EU institutions, and not only the EP (as had been the case until now, she felt), would now support the peace process.

While many speakers called on the PKK to renounce violence and lay down its weapons, Ms Vergiat went further, asking the EU to withdraw the PKK from the list of terrorist organisations. However, Mr Stadler (NI, AT) rejected this suggestion.

A number of Members from the right-wing parties took advantage of this debate to reaffirm their opposition to Turkey's entry to the EU. These statements were challenged by Ms Vergiat (GUE/NGL, FR), who drew the attention of those concerned to the fact that the debate was not actually about Turkish accession to the EU but only about the peace process. However, the two elements were linked in statements by a number of MEPs: Mr Sophocleous (S&D, CY), for example, said that the peace dialogue would help Turkey to come closer to EU values and, in the end, to become a member of the EU.

Commissioner Füle welcomed the statement from the BDP party (Peace and Democracy Party) - whose representatives he had met the previous day - that it was committed to the peace process, and he called on all those involved to resist any provocation. He reassured MEPs that the Commission was monitoring Turkey's respect for minority rights in the framework of Turkish compliance with the Copenhagen criteria. He called for the Chapter 23 to be opened because of its transformative power. He reiterated the Commission's commitment to using financial assistance to support the post-conflict development.

Ms Lucinda Creighton, on behalf of the Council, closed the debate, welcoming the broad support in Parliament for the peace process. She expressed encouragement to the Turkish authorities for embarking on the path of dialogue. Lastly, she reaffirmed her preliminary remarks concerning the link between the Kurdish issue and Turkey's accession to the EU.

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## **Council Statements: Kurdish question**

President,  
Honourable Members,

This afternoon's debate on the Kurdish issue takes place only a few weeks after the terrible and brutal killings of three PKK activists in Paris last month. We share Parliament's profound shock at those killings. But they serve to underline to all of us the importance of settling the Kurdish issue. That is in the interests of all concerned. A settlement would play a vital role in helping ensure the security and stability of the region.

The Kurdish issue also has important implications for EU enlargement, which is a key policy of the European Union, and a particular priority for the Irish Presidency. It is important for Turkey's accession process, and is raised regularly in the context of the accession negotiations. As a candidate country, Turkey has to meet the Copenhagen political criteria, including the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. The Kurdish issue has implications in all these areas, but also extends to related areas, such as cultural rights and socio-economic considerations.

The EU's Accession Partnership with Turkey sets out a number of priorities with particular bearing on the situation in the East and Southeast. Of particular importance is the need for Turkey to develop a comprehensive approach to reducing regional disparities. This means improving the situation in the region so as to enhance the economic, social and cultural opportunities for all Turkish citizens, including those of Kurdish origin.

Clearly, the Kurdish issue constitutes a major and longstanding challenge for Turkey. The EU and its Member States strongly condemn terrorism in all forms and are working closely with Turkey to combat the terrorist threat. The PKK is listed by the EU as a terrorist organization. Within the EU, the PKK is involved mainly in fund raising, including through criminal activity. This has led to arrests in a number of European countries. The EU and its Member States are also active in cooperating with Turkey in combating terrorism and associated criminal activities via counter-terrorism training and information exchange. Whilst much of these activities are devoted specifically to addressing the PKK, we are also working closely with Turkey in tackling all forms of terrorism, including in the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum in which the EU and Turkey co-chair the working group on the Horn of Africa region.

Whilst the EU has consistently condemned PKK terrorism, it is clear that the wider Kurdish issue can only be addressed through a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable solution. It is a conflict which has claimed far too many victims over the course of three decades and which has created a climate of instability and profound mistrust.

Against this background, the EU is fully supportive of the on-going talks between the Turkish Government and the PKK aimed at ending the conflict. This is a significant new initiative which offers a positive perspective for the future. We welcome these moves, and call on both sides to use this opportunity to make real progress. We also welcome the fact that there is cross-party support,

and backing from civil society, for this initiative. This is a clear indication that there is a real desire for peace. We will continue to encourage an approach which is inclusive and broad-based. This is essential if it is to have a chance of success.

A successful outcome would also play a crucial role in Turkey's own reform process. It would help encourage further political and constitutional reform which is important for Turkey's EU accession.

President,  
Honourable Members,

This is a courageous initiative - and we need to recognize it as such. We are only at the start of what is likely to be a lengthy process. Not everyone is committed to it succeeding. Indeed there will always be some who attempt to de-rail such a process for their own misguided ends. The killings in Paris remind us tragically that there is strong opposition to any negotiations from some quarters. But such events cannot be allowed to de-rail negotiations - our own experience closer to home shows that any peace process requires both courage and commitment. We should therefore give our full and unequivocal support to this initiative - I am sure that Members here will join me in also offering their own support.

Thank you for your attention.

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**Štefan Füle**

European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

## **Dialogue for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey**

Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Plenary debate, European Parliament, Strasbourg  
**6 February 2013**

Dear President, Honourable members, Dear Minister,

Throughout the years, we have consistently underlined that finding a solution to the Kurdish issue and to all the problems in the South-East requires the widest possible contribution of all democratic forces, and an open and frank public discussion that should be conducted in the full respect of basic fundamental freedoms.

That is why the on-going discussions are of such historic importance for Turkey. They constitute a great window of opportunity for the ending of terrorism that would hopefully pave the way to an overall solution of the Kurdish issue.

The fact that the process has met the support of all stakeholders, notably the opposition, and has been welcomed by important parts of Turkish society gives us more reasons to be optimistic and to believe that the process is truly result oriented.

A successful outcome would not only put an end to a conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives over the past three decades. It would solve many outstanding problems in Turkey, and play a crucial role in fostering political and constitutional reforms; it would be a strong incentive for the adoption of the fourth judicial reform package, actually addressing the key problems related to freedom of expression and other fundamental rights and it would facilitate the redrafting of the constitution, with respect to the right of citizenship.

In this regard, a solution of this issue would have a strong impact on the accession process of Turkey as such, as it would further consolidate the role of the European Union as a benchmark for reforms in Turkey.

In turn, putting the accession negotiations back on the right track would also be a strong incentive for supporting a solution to this issue and to the reform process in general.

In the meantime, I welcome steps such as the recent adoption of the law allowing for the defence in Kurdish in Courts as an important confidence building measure in the context of the on-going talks.

Regarding the redrafting of the constitution, we have understood that it has entered a critical stage. While all parties are to be congratulated for the constructive attitude so far, now is the time for results in the spirit of compromise and I cannot underline enough the importance of keeping up the participatory process.

Finally a few words on the tragic events which occurred in Paris last month.

We are aware of the distress this triple murder has provoked. We are confident that the on-going investigations by the French authorities will shed full light on this crime. We encourage all parties involved not to let this horrible incident or other possible provocations in the future distract them from their goal to achieve peace.



Honourable members,

It is crucial that the European Union as a whole conveys its strong and clear support for these on-going efforts. It remains equally important that we coordinate our messages of support to Turkey.

The Commission stands ready to assist where it can, including on using our financial assistance under our Instrument for Pre-Accession to support a post conflict and reconciliation strategy and to expand further the socio economic development as well as the political and cultural rights of the citizens of Kurdish origin.

Thank you!

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