

**Speech by Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, Head of the
Delegation of the European Union to Turkey**

**Transatlantic Trends 2013
(Ankara - September 18, 2013)**

- **Thanks to the German Marshall Fund for providing this opportunity to address such a distinguished audience and thank you to Özgür Ünlühisarcikli for his very interesting presentation.**

- **Today's geo-political landscape is shifting. We see it in global realignments all around us, and in the crises in this region and elsewhere. Modern diplomacy is a challenging task.**
- **Complex issues call for increasingly coherent and coordinated action, and explain why the EU and Turkey must step up their engagement. This is particularly true within multilateral fora like the UN and NATO, where most crisis management takes place, and in the G20 where global affairs are discussed.**
- **The 50th anniversary of the Ankara Agreement between Turkey and the EU passed last week without fanfare, but with a half century of treaty relations behind us, we have an opportunity to take stock of relations and to challenge those nay-sayers on Turkey/EU cooperation who struggle with economic and political reality.**
 - **No one should question the fact that the accession process has been, over the years - through the alignment on the EU acquis - the major driving force for reforms in Turkey,**

across the full range of political, economic and social issues.

- **Because of our Customs Union, today approximately 40% of Turkey's foreign trade is with the EU (the second largest partner, Russia, represents less than 10%). More than 70% of foreign direct investment in Turkey comes from the EU, and with it significant transfer of technology and know-how. More than 17000 Turkish companies exist because of EU investment. We understand and support Turkey's interest in the TTIP and in a parallel negotiation between Washington and Ankara.**
- **Because Turkey is a candidate for accession to the EU, every year around 50,000 student, scientist and academic exchanges take place. The same is true for the more than EUR 900m of financing to help modernise the country that the EU is providing in 2013 (apprx. 5 billion for the last MFF 2007-2013).**
- **Because of our increased integration, the EU Member states issue close to 600000 visas to Turkish citizens each year, and the EU has committed itself to work towards visa liberalisation (visa free) once Turkey signs the readmission agreement.**
- **In this respect, it is worth noting that the Trends shows that 54% of respondents in Turkey – against 44% in the EU – consider immigration "more of a problem than an opportunity" and that Turkish respondents estimate illegal immigrants to make up 21% of the population whereas the real figure is only 2%. Here there is an issue of perception that needs to be addressed by the Turkish authorities, in terms of burden and risk.**
- **Because Turkey is an increasingly important foreign policy actor, we are deeply engaged and committed to cooperate on foreign policy issues, ranging from regional crises to counter-terrorism. Recent weeks have seen a stronger than**

ever convergence on the ways and means to tackle the crisis in Syria and its overspill.

- **A pessimistic view is sometimes expressed of EU/Turkey relations. But the Transatlantic Trends survey reveals that 44 % of citizens of this country believe that membership in the EU would be positive (a small decrease from last year). Turkish business is overwhelmingly in favour. Despite the period of economic turmoil from which the EU is only now emerging.**
- **In fact, 2013 saw a first ever visit by the President of the European Council to Turkey and the decision in June to open a first negotiating chapter in three years.**
- **This is anything but a static relationship, but then Turkey itself is experiencing rapid change and the EU is anything but a static entity.**
- **It could be said on Turkey's accession, there is more to be done on public opinion in the EU than here, with public support at around 20% and 37% of Europeans ambivalent according to the survey results.**
- **It goes without saying that progress in the accession negotiations and progress in reforms in Turkey are two sides of the same coin. In any case, the leadership in Turkey should not underestimate the deep impact in the Member States of recent events and the reaction to these nor the impact of public comments critical of the EU.**
- **For the EU, the recent protests that took place across Turkey not only demonstrated the progress achieved in terms of democracy in the country but also the vibrant nature of civil society, which is requesting that it may freely and effectively benefit from fundamental rights that are guaranteed in the Constitution of this country governed by the rule of law.**

- They also underlined the need to take forward the EU accession process as a project that can and should receive cross-bench political support. And stressed the importance of engagement by the EU and Turkey to encourage further reforms in line with European standards.
- Turkey is, of course, not alone in facing challenges to traditional party politics, or demands for citizen participation in decision-making more often than every four years.
- Efforts to assert ownership of the democratic debate are in fact a natural consequence of a decade of broad reforms driven by the current government. They should not be perceived as a threat, nor met with confrontation other than in specific and well-defined instances of a threat to public order.
- In parallel, progress on a new constitution and in the process launched late last year to end terrorism and address Kurdish demands, which we applaud, would have a significant positive impact on European public support for Turkey's accession.

- I hear speculation in Turkey about the future of the EU. Perhaps this drives some of the questions we hear on EU/Turkey relations. But the reality is that the EU is more solid and has a far bigger political footprint today than in the past.
- Within the EU, our response to the global financial crisis has been determined. We fought back together, mobilising over EUR 700bn for the crisis. Contrary to speculation of the past years, the Eurozone will grow to have 18 participating countries in 2014. We are completing the Banking Union, speeding-up structural reforms and working to improve European competitiveness as we enter a period of economic recovery. And about this Turkey should be happy.
 - This year's GMF survey notes - within the EU - strong majorities favourably disposed to the Union (66%) and

wanting it to play a significant role in global affairs (71%). Rightly so, more citizens question the EU on economic governance issues as we enter new territory as a Union.

- With our partners outside the EU, the past three years have seen the EU establish its diplomatic service at the same time as we have all been confronted with rapid and unpredictable and change in our immediate neighbourhood.
- The creation of the European external action service has allowed us to build on the success of the EU's enlargement policy in 'healing history's deep scars' (as European Commission President Barroso stated in his 'State of the Union' speech last week), with Croatia our 28th Member state since July, negotiations set to open imminently with Serbia and dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina a direct reflection of their EU integration perspectives.
- Beyond the EU's immediate neighbourhood, we can only realistically expect to influence when we act together and act pragmatically. Despite the fact that the Trends survey shows increased support in Turkey for unilateral action, a growing number of people (39%) consider NATO "essential" (the highest level since 2006).
- I take note also of two additional positive trends: an increase in convergence between the EU and Turkey on matters ranging from economic sanctions on Iran to intervention in Syria – 72% are opposed to military operations, also the average EU figure - and a consistent trend of increased support for Turkey's alignment with the EU foreign policy, from 13% in 2010 to 19% in 2011 and 21% in 2013.
- It is not surprising, then, that "EU leadership in world affairs" is recognised as the most important by respondents from Turkey, before the US, Russia or China.
- The more we engage – and the less we indulge in megaphone diplomacy – the more evident is our convergence of interests.

We recognise the role that Turkey has been playing to provide vital humanitarian assistance to large numbers of Syrians fleeing their country. The EU, for its part, is the biggest humanitarian donor, having committed EUR 1.3bn to address the crisis and its overspill.

- **In closing, I would stress a message that is not new: the accession process is and remains an anchor of reforms in Turkey, from the Constitution to technical regulations. And in the midst of turmoil in the wider neighbourhood, more than ever foreign policy cooperation between Turkey and the EU should be stepped up.**