



Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos at the Press Conference with Turkish Minister for EU Affairs Ömer Çelik

Ankara, 1 September 2016

Dear Minister Çelik,

Thank you first of all for your warm hospitality, and for our constructive discussions today.

The EU is a key partner of Turkey, and Turkey is a key partner for the EU. We are all committed to continue strengthening this partnership in all its aspects. Our meetings today are a reminder and proof of that.

What happened on 15 July was a deep shock for Europe and for the entire democratic world. It was not just an attack against the President, the government and the parliament. It was an attack against Turkish society, its freedom and democracy.

I am here to reiterate and express once again the European Union's support for the President and the government and to condemn the acts of violence.

The EU stands and continues to stand with Turkey, in solidarity with its people and its democratically elected institutions.

Let me be clear on a very important issue: the EU remains committed to keep up the momentum and dialogue on visa liberalisation. A lot has been achieved during the past months and we want to further build on these achievements.

Since March, Turkey has made considerable progress but there are still outstanding benchmarks to be met, and the EU is fully committed to help Turkey achieve those.

Turkey has been under considerable pressure when it comes to the threat of terrorism, and I want to use this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to the people of Turkey, following the recent terrorist attacks in Gaziantep and in Cizre.

Both the EU and Turkey face similar threats of terrorism. It is by uniting and joining our forces and our approach that we are both stronger to jointly fight our common enemy – and our fight should never be at the expense of the fundamental rights of our citizens.

But our joint efforts are wider: we are both committed to implement the EU-Turkey Statement which so far has demonstrated concrete results. I would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the Turkish authorities.

We need to continue this excellent cooperation and both partners must continue delivering equally on return and readmission, as well as resettlement.

Unfortunately, our shared neighbourhood continues to be unstable and is not expected to improve any time soon. Therefore, now more than ever, the EU and Turkey have to remain close partners in order to provide much-needed stability and prosperity.

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