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24. Notes that progress in the agricultural sector has been uneven, with the situation in the areas of quality policy and organic farming being well advanced while the capacity to absorb rural development funds needs to be improved; stresses that increased administrative capacity and reform of the agricultural support systems are necessary in order to achieve a smooth transition to the EU Common Agricultural Policy regime and to minimise the social impact of such a transition;

25. Invites the Croatian authorities to show good absorption of EU pre-accession funds and to prepare at all levels – central, regional and local – the structures and know-how required for the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds;

Regional Cooperation

26. Deeply regrets that accession negotiations have been effectively blocked for a considerable time because of bilateral issues;

27. Underlines that bilateral issues should not be an obstacle to progress in accession negotiations, provided these negotiations are not used to pre-empt the final settlement of such issues; urges, nevertheless, the Croatian Government and the governments of the neighbouring countries to solve expeditiously all their outstanding issues;

28. Stresses that good neighbourly relations remain a key element of the European integration process, and invites Croatia and its neighbours actively to promote cooperation in the region and to invest more in cross-border cooperation projects;

29. Recalls the informal agreement reached on 26 August 2007 by the Prime Ministers of Croatia and Slovenia on the submission of their border dispute to an international body; welcomes the readiness of Croatia and Slovenia to accept the mediation offer made by the Commission and takes the view that this mediation should be based on international law; in this context, looks forward to a rapid advancement of the accession negotiations;

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30. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Government and Parliament of Croatia.

Turkey: progress report 2008

P6_TA(2009)0134

European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2009 on Turkey's progress report 2008

(2010/C 87 E/28)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Turkey 2008 Progress Report published by the Commission on 5 November 2008 (SEC(2008)2699),
- having regard to its previous resolutions of 27 September 2006 on Turkey's progress towards accession ⁽¹⁾, of 24 October 2007 on EU-Turkey relations ⁽²⁾ and of 21 May 2008 on Turkey's 2007 progress report ⁽³⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 306 E, 15.12.2006, p. 284.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 263 E, 16.10.2008, p. 452.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0224.

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- having regard to the Negotiating Framework for Turkey, approved on 3 October 2005,

- having regard to Council Decision 2008/157/EC of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey⁽¹⁾ (‘the Accession Partnership’), as well as to the previous Council decisions on the Accession Partnership of 2001, 2003 and 2006,

- having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas accession negotiations with Turkey were opened on 3 October 2005 after approval by the Council of the Negotiating Framework, and whereas the opening of those negotiations was the starting-point for a long-lasting and open-ended process,

- B. whereas Turkey has committed itself to reforms, good neighbourly relations and progressive alignment with the EU, and whereas these efforts should be viewed as an opportunity for Turkey itself to further modernise,

- C. whereas full compliance with all the Copenhagen criteria and EU integration capacity, in accordance with the conclusions of the December 2006 European Council meeting, remain the basis for accession to the EU, which is a community based on shared values,

- D. whereas the Commission concluded that 2008 had been marked by strong political tensions, and that the Turkish government had not, despite its strong mandate, put forward a consistent and comprehensive programme of political reforms,

- E. whereas Turkey has still not implemented the provisions stemming from the EC-Turkey Association Agreement and the Additional Protocol thereto,

- F. whereas four negotiating chapters were opened in 2008,
 1. Is concerned to see in Turkey, for the third consecutive year, a continuous slowdown of the reform process, and calls on the Turkish government to prove its political will to continue the reform process to which it committed itself in 2005; stresses that such modernisation is first and foremost in Turkey’s own interest and for the benefit of Turkish society as a whole;

 2. Is concerned by the ongoing polarisation within Turkish society and between the main political parties, which has deepened in the course of 2008 and has negatively affected the functioning of the political institutions and the process of reforms;

 3. Stresses that political reforms are at the heart of the reform process, and welcomes the fact that the Turkish government prepared and approved the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis;

 4. Urges the leaders of the political parties to seriously seek dialogue and to agree, in a spirit of compromise, on a reform agenda for the modernisation of Turkey towards a stable, democratic, pluralist, secular and prosperous society, guided by respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and based on the rule of law;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 51, 26.02.2008, p. 4.

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I. Fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria

Democracy and the rule of law

5. Regrets that the initial effort to reform comprehensively the constitution resulted in dispute over the headscarf issue and generated further polarisation of society; calls on the Turkish government to resume its work on a new, civilian constitution which would place the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at its core, and urges the government to ensure that political parties and civil society, as well as ethnic and religious minorities, are closely involved in this constitutive process;
6. Is concerned by the closure cases opened in 2008 against two parliamentary parties, especially the case still pending against the Democratic Society Party (DTP); emphasises the need to amend, as a matter of priority, the legislation on political parties so as to bring it fully into line with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission;
7. Calls on the Turkish authorities to take all necessary steps to allow all parties taking part in elections to be represented within the electoral commission;
8. Regrets that no progress has been made on establishing full systematic civilian supervisory functions over the military and on strengthening the parliamentary oversight of military and defence policy;
9. Notes the progress made with regard to the development of a judicial reform strategy; points out, however, the urgent need for further systematic efforts to enhance the impartiality and professionalism of the judiciary, and to ensure that members of the judiciary refrain from interfering in political debate and that they respect the standards of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR);
10. Regrets that no progress has been made on establishing the Ombudsman's office; takes note of the negative decision of the Constitutional Court on the Ombudsman Law, and urges the Turkish government to reintroduce as soon as possible the necessary legislation to establish this office, as supported by both the government and the parliament in the past;
11. Regrets that the Turkish government has not presented any comprehensive anti-corruption strategy; underlines the need to strengthen parliamentary oversight over public expenditure and the need for new legislation in respect of the Court of Auditors;
12. Welcomes the beginning of the trial against those accused of being members of the Ergenekon criminal organisation; encourages the authorities to continue investigations and to fully uncover the organisation's networks which reach into the state structures; is concerned about reports regarding the treatment of defendants in this case; urges the Turkish authorities to provide them with a fair trial and to adhere strictly to the principles of the rule of law;

Human rights and respect for, and protection of, minorities

13. Regrets that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are still not fully protected in Turkey; is of the view that freedom of the press in a democratic, pluralistic society is served neither by frequent website bans nor by pressures on and lawsuits against critical press; is also of the opinion that the amendment to Article 301 of the Penal Code, adopted in April 2008, was not sufficient, as people continue to be prosecuted for expressing non-violent opinions on the basis of this as well as of other articles of the Penal Code, the Anti-Terror Law or the Press Law, such as the 1995 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought laureate Leyla Zana; reiterates that the repeal of Article 301 as well as a fundamental reform of the Penal Code and of other laws used to arbitrarily restrict non-violent opinions is needed, so as to ensure that freedom of expression is fully respected in line with ECHR standards;

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14. Welcomes the apologies offered by the Minister of Justice, Mehmet Ali Sahin, on behalf of the government to the family of Engin Ceber, who died in prison as a consequence of abuse; joins the Human Rights Committee of the Turkish Parliament in its concern over the failure of the judiciary to prosecute cases of torture and ill-treatment, the number of which is growing; calls on the Turkish government to undertake further systematic efforts to eliminate torture and ill-treatment, inside and outside official places of detention, and to end the culture of impunity; stresses in this regard that ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention against Torture would increase considerably the credibility of these efforts; is also concerned about excessive use of police force in dealing with public demonstrations;

15. Welcomes the work done by the Human Rights Investigation Committee of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in its investigation of torture and ill-treatment in prisons and of the murder of journalist Hrant Dink; urges the Turkish authorities to follow up fully the findings of the Committee's reports, as well as the findings of the report of the Prime Ministerial Inspection Board; also takes the view that the hypothesis of Ergenekon's involvement should be taken more seriously when considering other unsolved cases, such as the murder of Hrant Dink;

16. Welcomes the adoption in February 2008 of the Law on Foundations and appreciates the Commission's assessment that the Law on Foundations addresses a number of outstanding property-related issues concerning non-Muslim communities; urges the Turkish government to ensure that the law is implemented in line with ECtHR case-law, and to tackle the so far unresolved issue of properties seized and sold to third parties as well as that of properties of foundations fused before the adoption of the new legislation;

17. Reiterates that a legal framework developed in line with ECtHR case-law is still needed so as to enable all religious communities to function without undue constraints, in particular as regards their legal status, training of clergy, election of their hierarchy, religious education and the construction of places of worship; encourages Turkish authorities, all political parties, civil society and the communities concerned to engage in creating an environment conducive to full respect for freedom of religion in practice; reiterates its call for the immediate re-opening of the Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary and the public use of the ecclesiastical title of the Ecumenical Patriarch; welcomes the recent initiatives by the government and its ongoing talks between the government and Alevi leaders on long-standing issues, such as Alevi places of worship and the setting-up of a memorial commemorating the Sivas massacre, and calls on the Turkish government to address their concerns without delay and to make state-run courses on religion non-compulsory; regrets the planned expropriation of the Syriac Orthodox Monastery of St Gabriel in Tur Abdin and the court procedures against representatives of the monastery;

18. Calls on the Turkish government to launch as a matter of priority a political initiative favouring a lasting settlement of the Kurdish issue, which initiative needs to address the economic and social opportunities of citizens of Kurdish origin, and to tangibly improve their cultural rights, including real possibilities to learn Kurdish within the public and private schooling system and to use it in broadcasting and in access to public services, and to allow elected officials to use a second language apart from Turkish in communicating with their constituents; welcomes the start of a 24-hour public television channel in the Kurdish language from 1 January 2009;

19. Condemns the violence perpetrated by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and other terrorist groups on Turkish soil; reiterates its solidarity with Turkey in the fight against terrorism and once again calls on the PKK to declare and respect an immediate and unconditional ceasefire;

20. Urges the DTP and all its elected members to distance themselves clearly from the terrorist PKK and from its use of violence, and appeals to all parties to contribute to a solution that enhances the stability, prosperity and integrity of the Turkish state;

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21. Notes that the Turkish government has decided to complete the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) for the development of the south-east of Turkey; points, however, to its social, ecological, cultural and geopolitical consequences, including those on the water supplies of the neighbouring countries, Iraq and Syria, and calls on the government to take these issues fully into consideration, to protect the rights of the population affected and to ensure close cooperation with local and regional authorities as it continues its work on the plan; calls on the Commission to present a study on the GAP and its consequences;

22. Reiterates that European values of pluralism and diversity incorporate respect for a far wider definition of minorities, on the basis of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), than that adopted by Turkey; is concerned about continuing hostility and violence against minorities; is concerned that Turkey has made no progress on ensuring cultural diversity and promoting respect for, and protection of, minorities in accordance with ECHR standards; urges the Turkish government to start the overdue dialogue with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities on issues such as the participation of minorities in public life and broadcasting in minority languages;

23. Calls on the Turkish government to take action against organisations and groups which stir up hostility against minorities and to protect all those who are threatened and fear for their lives, while making sustained efforts to create an environment conducive to full respect of fundamental human rights and freedoms;

24. Calls on the Turkish government to seek solutions to preserve the bicultural character of the Turkish islands Gökçeada (Imvros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos), and to address the problems encountered by members of the Greek minority with regard to their education and property rights;

25. Welcomes the establishment of the 'Women-Men Equal Opportunities Commission' in the Turkish Parliament; welcomes the Commission's assessment that the legal framework guaranteeing women's rights and gender equality is broadly in place; urges, however, the Turkish government to ensure that it is implemented so as to have a positive effect on the situation of women in Turkey; points to upcoming local elections as an opportunity to remedy the low representation of women in politics;

26. Is concerned that the number of reported so-called 'honour killings' is increasing in Turkey, and calls on the Turkish authorities and civil society to intensify their efforts to prevent these killings, domestic violence and forced marriages; welcomes the increase in the number of shelters, but calls urgently for effective and sustainable policies on budgetary and staffing matters, and for support for women and their children after they leave the shelters; asks the Turkish government to combat the trafficking of women in close cooperation with the Member States;

27. Welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court of Appeals not to uphold the decision banning the interest group Lambda Istanbul; urges the government to ensure that equality regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation is guaranteed;

Existence of a functioning market economy

28. Welcomes the Commission's assessment classifying Turkey as a functioning market economy;

29. Notes that although economic growth in Turkey slowed in 2008, its overall economic performance demonstrated that the foundations and resilience of the Turkish economy are substantially stronger than some years ago; notes that the impact of the global financial crisis on the Turkish banking system has remained limited so far, but is concerned about the effect of the crisis on economic growth; asks the Commission to report specifically on the consequences of the crisis for the Turkish economy; encourages the Turkish government to continue its close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and other international and European financial institutions;

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Ability to take on the obligations of membership

30. Regrets that a number of commitments made by Turkey within the EC-Turkey customs union remain unfulfilled, distorting bilateral trade relations;

31. Notes that the customs union obliges Turkey to negotiate and conclude free trade agreements (FTAs) with third countries with which the EU has concluded FTAs; calls on the Council and the Commission to include Turkey in the impact assessment studies of prospective FTAs between the EU and third countries and to further strengthen the transmission of information on the EU's position and the state of play of the FTA negotiations;

32. Regrets that the EC-Turkey Association Agreement and the Additional Protocol thereto have not yet been implemented fully by the Turkish government; recalls that the non-fulfilment of Turkey's commitments by December 2009 may further seriously affect the process of negotiations; invites the Council to continue to follow up and review progress made on the issues covered by the declaration of the Community and its Member States of 21 September 2005 in accordance with its conclusions of 11 December 2006;

33. Commends Turkey on its progress in the field of education and culture; reiterates that providing access to education for all is not just a good strategy for the inclusion of minorities but also the basis for a prosperous and modern society; views the plan to open departments for Armenian and Kurdish studies at Turkish universities as a sign of goodwill that needs to be followed up by concrete action;

II. Enhancing prosperity

Enhancing social cohesion and prosperity

34. Points out that a socially oriented market economy is the basis for a socially coherent society and one of the keys to stability and prosperity; welcomes in this regard the adoption of the Social Insurance and General Health Insurance Law as a contribution to strengthening the social cohesion of Turkish society;

35. Also welcomes the adoption of the employment package in May 2008 by the Turkish Parliament, aimed at promoting job opportunities for women, young people and people with disabilities; is concerned, however, about the ongoing weakness of the employment market, which engages only 43 % of the working-age population, and is particularly worried about the decreasing overall rate of employment of women; encourages the Turkish government to take further action to tackle the problem of the informal economy;

36. Reiterates its calls for the Turkish government to take further tangible steps to empower women in the political, economic and social sector, through, for instance, temporary measures to increase their active involvement in politics; points out the need to take effective measures to increase women's access to education, which regrettably still remains the lowest among OECD countries;

37. Takes note of the progress made in the area of health protection; is concerned, however, that no progress can be reported on mental health; urges the Turkish authorities to make more resources available for mental health care, and to find a solution to the problem of inadequate general medical care and treatment of people with mental disabilities in mental health hospitals and rehabilitation centres; calls for the treatment of children and adults with disabilities in institutions to fully respect their rights;

38. Regrets that no progress has been made on amending the legislation on trade union rights, and calls on the Turkish Parliament to adopt a new law on trade unions that is in line with the International Labour Organization conventions; regrets that, despite the fact that regulations on union formation and membership were eased in 2004, trade union activities remain subject to constraints; calls on the Turkish authorities to find a solution, together with the trade unions, that enables peaceful demonstrations to take place on 1 May on Taksim Square in Istanbul, respecting the freedom of association;

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39. Points, once again, to the need to address the problem of development disparities among Turkish regions and between rural and urban areas, which is a major obstacle to the prosperity of Turkish society; regrets, therefore, that no comprehensive strategy has so far been presented by the Turkish government to tackle this problem, and is disappointed that the Commission has not presented any information about the EU's contribution under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to this strategic planning, as requested by Parliament in its above-mentioned resolution of 21 May 2008;

III. Building good neighbourly relations

40. Stresses the need for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question based on UN Security Council resolutions and on the principles on which the European Union is founded; welcomes the renewed commitment of both political leaders on both sides to a negotiated solution and supports the ongoing direct negotiations by the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus and will accept any agreement reached by them provided that it is in conformity with the principles on which the EU is founded, including the four fundamental freedoms, except for temporary transitional derogations, and that it is accepted after a referendum; calls on Turkey to facilitate a suitable climate for negotiations by withdrawing Turkish forces and allowing the two leaders to negotiate freely their country's future;

41. Calls on Turkey to comply with its obligations under international law, the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on the Fourth Interstate Application by Cyprus against Turkey regarding investigations into the fate of missing persons; urges all the EU Member States to call on Turkey to take appropriate action on what is mainly a humanitarian issue;

42. Encourages greater trans-border cooperation between local authorities, business people and other local partners with the neighbouring EU members Greece and Bulgaria;

43. Welcomes the communication and cooperation developed over the last year between Turkish and Iraqi authorities, including the contacts between Turkey and the Kurdish regional government in Northern Iraq; encourages those authorities to further intensify their cooperation, so as to ensure that terrorist attacks from Iraqi territory are prevented under Iraqi responsibility, to guarantee stability and to contribute to the economic development of the whole Turkish-Iraqi neighbourhood area; recalls its earlier appeals to the Turkish government to respect, when conducting anti-terrorist operations, Iraq's territorial integrity, human rights and the rule of law, and to make sure that civilian casualties are avoided;

44. Welcomes the visit of President Gül to Armenia in September 2008 following an invitation from President Sarkisian, and hopes that it will indeed foster a climate favourable to the normalisation of relations between their countries; calls on the Turkish government to re-open its border with Armenia and to restore full economic and political relations with Armenia; once again calls on the Turkish and Armenian governments to start a process of reconciliation, in respect of the present and the past, allowing for a frank and open discussion of past events; calls on the Commission to facilitate this reconciliation process;

45. Appreciates the continued efforts of the Turkish and Greek governments to improve bilateral relations; reiterates that the repeal of the *casus belli* declared by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1995 would provide important impetus for further improvement of those relations; recalls that Turkey has committed itself to good neighbourly relations and calls on the Turkish government to make serious and intensive efforts to resolve any outstanding dispute peacefully and in accordance with the UN Charter, other relevant international conventions and bilateral agreements and obligations;

IV. Strengthening EU-Turkey bilateral cooperation

46. Calls upon the Council to consider making progress on opening of negotiations on chapters in which Turkey, according to the Commission's assessment, has fulfilled the conditions for opening;

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47. Recognises Turkey's ambition of becoming a Eurasian energy hub and the role it can play in contributing to Europe's energy security; commends the progress achieved by Turkey in the field of energy; recalls its above-mentioned resolution of 24 October 2007 supporting the opening of negotiations on this chapter and regrets that no agreement has been reached on this in the Council; encourages Turkey to join the European Energy Community as a full member, so as to strengthen energy cooperation between the EU and Turkey, which can benefit all parties involved; calls on Turkey to fully support the Nabucco pipeline project, which is a European priority project, and expects that an inter-governmental agreement aimed at bringing the pipeline into operation will be concluded soon;

48. Takes note of the progress made in the area of migration and asylum; regrets, however, that Turkey has not, since December 2006, resumed the negotiations on a readmission agreement with the EC, the signing of which is a condition for a visa facilitation agreement; and calls on the Turkish government to intensify its cooperation with the EU on migration management, including through proper implementation of the existing bilateral readmission agreements and protocols with Member States; notes that no development can be reported on alignment with EU visa lists; calls on the Commission and the Turkish government to start negotiations on a visa facilitation agreement; urges the Member States to ease visa restrictions for bona fide travellers such as students, academics or businesspeople; calls for full respect of the human rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, including open and unrestricted access to all detention centres by the UN High Commission for Refugees;

49. Welcomes the launch in September 2008 of a new generation of projects aimed at enhancing the dialogue between civil society in Turkey and in the EU; asks the Commission to report on activities carried out within the framework of the EU-Turkey Civil Society Dialogue; reiterates its call on the Turkish government to involve civil society more closely in the reform process;

50. Notes that the Commission intends to provide impact assessments on only certain policy areas⁽¹⁾; urges the Commission to issue a more comprehensive impact study as a follow-up to the one presented in 2004, and to present it to Parliament without delay;

51. Asks the Turkish government and judicial authorities to cooperate better with EU Member States and authorities in criminal cases in which EU citizens and residents have been the victims of fraud, as in the case of the so-called 'Green Funds' (Islamic investment funds based in Turkey) and in the case of 'Deniz Feneri', a charity based in Germany;

Cooperation on international and global issues

52. Appreciates Turkey's efforts to contribute to a solution for many of the world's crisis regions, in particular in the Middle East and the South Caucasus, and also with regard to relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan; in particular, welcomes Turkey's active and constructive involvement, following the conflict between Russia and Georgia, aimed at promoting peace and stability in the South Caucasus, notably through its proposal for a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform; calls on the Council and the Commission to intensify cooperation with Turkey and to look for synergies in the EU's and Turkey's approach to these regions;

53. Congratulates Turkey on its election to the UN Security Council, and encourages the Turkish government to adopt an approach within the UN that is closely coordinated with the EU's position;

54. Welcomes the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the Turkish parliament;

⁽¹⁾ European Commission: Action taken on Parliament's non-legislative resolutions – May II 2008.

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55. Welcomes Turkey's continuous contribution to European Security and Defence Policy and NATO operations; regrets, however, that the NATO-EU strategic cooperation extending beyond the 'Berlin Plus' arrangements continues to be blocked by Turkey's objections, which has negative consequences for the protection of the EU personnel deployed, and urges Turkey to set aside these objections as soon as possible; calls on the Council to consult Turkey, as one of the biggest suppliers of troops, in the planning and decision-making stages of the European Security and Defence Policy;

56. Calls on the Turkish government to sign and submit for ratification the Statute of the International Criminal Court, thus further increasing Turkey's contribution to, and engagement in, the global multilateral system;

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57. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Turkey.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: progress report 2008

P6_TA(2009)0135

European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2009 on the 2008 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

(2010/C 87 E/29)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003, at which the promise was made to all Western Balkan states that they would join the European Union,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/817 of 7 April 1993 and S/RES/845 of 18 June 1993,
- having regard to the European Council decision of 16 December 2005 to grant the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the status of candidate country for EU membership and to the Presidency Conclusions of the European Councils of 15-16 June 2006 and 14-15 December 2006,
- having regard to the 1995 interim agreement between the Hellenic Republic and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
- having regard to the EU/Western Balkans Declaration, which was unanimously approved by the Foreign Ministers of all the EU Member States and by the Foreign Ministers of the Western Balkan states in Salzburg on 11 March 2006,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Fourth Meeting of the EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Stabilisation and Association Council of 24 July 2007,