



∴ Ljubljana, Slovenya,  
1 Aralık 2004

**H**onorable Rector of the University of Ljubljana,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
I wish to thank the University of Ljubljana for  
their warm welcome. It is a great pleasure for me  
to join you today. I am grateful to Prof. Jezernik  
for giving me the opportunity to address such a  
distinguished audience.

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I would like to begin by congratulating the Slovenian people on their  
successful entry to the EU and NATO.

Turkey welcomed and supported the friendly nation of Slovenia in this  
process. As an ally and partner, we have happily observed that the  
transition periods towards the EU and the NATO membership have been  
successfully fulfilled by Slovenia.

The Slovenian peoples' achievement in establishing a full democracy and a  
dynamic economy in a short period of time is most admirable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The dynamic nature of the EU makes it a continuous center of focus for all  
Europeans who share the ideals the Union stands for:

Europe: A zone of sustained peace and stability,

- continent where everyone can enjoy the benefits of democracy, the  
rule of law, human rights and market economy,
- and a union where welfare is shared by all.

Only five decades ago, this might have seemed like a dream. But today, the project of a Europe whole and free is closer to reality than ever before.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turkey's political, cultural and economic engagement with Europe has a background of more than two centuries. And, from its inception about eighty years ago, the Turkish Republic has pursued a policy of integration with Western institutions.

Turkey has been part of the Council of Europe and NATO from the beginning. Therefore, it was not surprising that Turkey asked to join the then European Economic Community only eighteen months after it came into being.

The Association Agreement of 1963 resulted from this accession request. Article 28 of this Agreement envisioned that Turkey would one day join the Community. The ties that link Turkey and the EU have continued to grow.

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From an economic point of view, traditionally, the EU is our major trade partner and foreign investor. In the words of the EU Commission, Turkey has a high absorption capacity when compared to the other candidates.

I would like to underline this point to express my confidence in the dynamism of the Turkish economy. With the successful economic reforms of the recent years, we achieved stability, growth and confidence.

We are determined and confident that by the time of EU membership, Turkey's economy will grow strong enough to be a source of dynamism to the EU.

Another aspect of Turkish economic presence is the Turkish businessmen in Europe: With more than 80 thousand businesses they own, Turkish businessmen in the EU are already creating jobs for tens of thousands of people. Turkish businessmen have proven themselves in several other markets. They will have a much broader job-creation potential with Turkey's full-membership.

On the other hand, geography has placed Turkey at the crossroads of current and future energy, transportation and communication networks that link the EU to the East and vice versa.

On the geo-political front, during this period Turkey expanded its cultural, political and trade relations with the Balkan, Black Sea, and Caucasian countries. Today, Russia is among our largest trade partners.

Thanks to our existing linguistic and cultural ties with the Central Asian Republics, we have easy access to the region.

In the Middle East, Turkey is a country in which both the Israelis and the Palestinians place their trust.

My Government had initiated a neighbours forum to support the settlement of the problems in Iraq. This forum proved to be an asset in the efforts to establish a peaceful Iraq. UN Secretary General appreciated and contributed to this initiative. Finally, last week this forum came together with the G-8 countries, EU, OIC and Arab League to help secure the political process in Iraq.

We continue to encourage reform and transformation for political and economic development in the Middle East.

Turkey is a capable actor in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

We have gained experience in peace-keeping operations including in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, the Middle East and Georgia. We took over the command of ISAF II in Afghanistan and successfully carried out this difficult task. We will assume this mission once again in February next year.

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All of these issues and regions are of priority for the EU as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, ethnic, cultural and religious prejudices are unfortunately more widespread than ever before. These are both fed by and generate political and socio-economic problems like migration, poverty, organized crime and terrorism.

The important task of overcoming these obstacles is a common challenge we face together. To this end, one of our objectives should be to bridge the differences of all kind through solidarity, understanding, dialogue and harmony.

In this context, the EU, as a community of values and a variety of cultural, ethnic and religious communities, has proven its value.

Turkey-EU relations and the course they will take in the coming months will have important implications for regional and global harmony.

The EU should be a progressive force, able to deliver policy objectives on a global scale. We have always believed that enlargement will serve this purpose.

In that sense, I am happy to see that, the European statesmen, politician, intellectuals and businessmen with a global vision, look at Turkey's goal of integration with Europe through the perspective of identical strategic interests.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The internal dynamics of my country have always been ready and quick in adapting to new conditions. This is particularly relevant to the EU which is itself a grand project of transformation.

In the recent years, we have recorded tremendous progress in meeting EU standards in many areas.

The Turkish Parliament, upon the proposal of My Government, adopted eight political reform packages. These were designed to further upgrade our already modern standards of democracy to the EU norms and acquis.

Thus, the fundamental rights, among them the freedom of expression, the right to association and peaceful assembly, cultural and religious rights were further consolidated.

The civilian nature of our democracy and civil society was reinforced.

We have enhanced anti-corruption laws and have become party to the basic conventions in the field.

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Laws and by-laws on accountability of civil servants and transparency in administration have been adopted.

A reform project has been devised for a more decentralized and streamlined public administration.

The Right to Information Act was put into force, providing a comprehensive framework for public transparency.

All these far-reaching changes have been reflected in the Commission's report and recommendation published on October 6th.

In the words of the EU officials, we have realized a "silent revolution". Accordingly, the Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations.

This is a development of historic significance.

Our efforts to further improve our standards and implementation will continue in the future. We see this as a continuous task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the December European Council draws nearer, the issue of Turkey's accession has generated a public debate in some EU countries. I find such a debate natural and useful.

However, I find it unfortunate and unfair that this debate is mostly focused on Turkey's "full" membership although we are yet at a very early stage. In that sense, we must not lose sight of the true meaning of the anticipated

decision on December 17th. If the negotiations are started, we shall open a new phase in our relations that will extend over years.

Turkey's performance will determine how long that phase will last.

When we imagine Turkey as a member of the EU, we need to reflect on a different frame of reference than that of today. We should think of the point where Turkey will have met all requirements for membership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In about two weeks from now, the EU will be making an important decision on Turkey.

In this connection, I believe it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Turkey's process of accession has never been a zero-sum game.

Turkey, the EU and all its individual Member States stand to gain from our full membership, as the impact study prepared by the Commission indicates. And this is a major factor that has so far bound and will continue to bind Turkey and the EU together.

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I would also like to respond those who propose that Turkey be given not a membership perspective, but a "special partner" status. Let us not forget that Turkey already has extensive and special relations with the EU.

Our Customs Union is functioning for eight years now. Efforts are already underway to deepen it. Means of cooperation in ESDP structures have been established. The pre-accession strategy is fully operational with extensive political and macro-economic dialogue and financial cooperation. Talks are going on for the liberalization of services and public procurement.

In short, there can be no substitute for a future full membership.

The suggestions of a special status carry the risk of changing the perspectives of future for all the parties and therefore are unacceptable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our expectation that the EU Summit will take a clear and unconditional decision next month to start the accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005 without delay.

It is of utmost importance that this decision be fair, equitable and objective.

It would be most unfortunate, if short-term concerns or domestic policy issues of individual member-states are permitted to shadow or undermine such a great project related to the future of all of us.

## YENİ YÜZYILDA TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASININ UFUKLARI

It is also essential that the Summit decision should not contradict the principles the EU is based upon. To make the accession negotiation process sustainable and predictable is a priority for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia and Turkey are two countries pursuing a common European vocation.

We share the same goals on many foreign policy issues.

We consider Slovenia an important partner in the region, with its long cultural and industrial tradition, its geographic position as a gateway to Central and Eastern Europe, and established communication and transport infrastructures.

I believe that we should enhance our bilateral cooperation to extend effectively beyond our own countries, particularly in the economic revitalization of Southeastern Europe.

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Turkey's close ties with the Caucasus and Central Asian countries can also provide new avenues of cooperation. Slovenian companies can benefit from the opportunities that facilitated access to these regions offer.

We believe that, Slovenia, like us, recognizes that further new avenues for cooperation to serve our mutual interests will unfold before us, as Turkey is given a strong perspective for accession.

I thank you for your attention.