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Top American Commander in Iraq Visits Turkey

A delegation led by Lloyd Austin, the U.S. Army General currently serving as commanding general of the United States forces in Iraq, held discussions in Ankara last Tuesday with Turkish Land Forces Commander Gen. Erdal Ceylanoğlu, Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Aslan Güner, Interior Minister Besir Atalay, and acting Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Selim Yenel. The talks focused on an action plan agreed to by Washington, Ankara, and Baghdad in April regarding northern Iraq. Turkey urged the United States to put pressure on northern Iraq's Kurdish administration to take action against members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, having grown dissatisfied with the regional government's efforts to combat the group. "What has been done so far has not satisfied us. The Kurdish administration has not been able to do what is necessary. We'll ask the Americans to put more pressure on the [KRG]," explained a Turkish diplomatic source. "This is our standing demand."

"We focused on the action plan and its implementation," Atalay told reporters after his meeting with the U.S. general. "Our complaint stems from the fact that the plan has not been able to be implemented. We have fair demands. I hope that after these meetings more serious steps will be taken." The minister was referring both to the lack of a government in Iraq, which he said constituted a vacuum, and complicated efforts to find a solution to the terrorism problem. "We have comprehensive studies. The most important dimension belongs to America and northern Iraq. Terrorism must come to an end," said Atalay. "We are implementing the action plan. We have not made it public. Terror cannot go from one neighboring country to the other. A neighboring country cannot harbor terrorists. This is also stated in the Iraqi constitution."

Turkey has recently intensified its diplomatic efforts to combat the PKK in coordination with Iraq, the United States, and other countries in the region, including Iran and Syria. Turkey's intelligence chief, Hakan Fidan, was in Washington recently and has plans to go to northern Iraq soon. Diplomatic sources said there was a positive atmosphere for a solution to the PKK problem, referring to Turkey's increasing diplomacy to convince the terrorist group to lay down its arms. "There is a positive climate that should continue but we want to see action, not only words," the source stated. Turkey's nonstop diplomacy aims to keep alive the ceasefire declared by the PKK, which was extended for another month last week. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek announced Monday that the soon-to-expire memorandum giving the military the authority to carry out cross-

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border operations in Iraq was being brought to Parliament's agenda for an extension.
/Hurriyet/

Turkey Extends Kabul Command for One Year

Ankara has decided to extend its Kabul Regional Command in Afghanistan on the eve of a visit to Turkey by the NATO Secretary General. "Due to the special position of Afghanistan for Turkey and the central role the Kabul Regional Command is playing, in order to achieve security and stability in Afghanistan, the Turkish Armed Forces [TSK] has decided to extend the command for one more year from November 1, 2010," the Foreign Ministry declared in a statement late Monday.

The statement came prior to the visit of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen to Turkey on Wednesday. Turkey has contributed troops to Afghanistan since 2001 and has assumed the command of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, twice - in 2002 and 2005. Turkey also took over NATO's Kabul Regional Command mission for eight months in 2007. Turkey assumed command of the Kabul Regional Command again for one year in 2009 and the number of Turkish soldiers in the country was increased to 1,800. Due to the success of the Turkish military and its close communications with the Afghans, Turkey was asked to extend its command, the statement said. /Hurriyet/

Ankara, Damascus Vow Cooperation in Region

Top Syrian and Turkish officials have come together to pledge to put a stop to all attempts to hamper a vision of strategic cooperation in the Middle East region, including terrorist activities staged by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The officials made this strong pledge on Sunday in the Syrian port city of Latakia, which hosted the second ministerial-level meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council between the two neighboring countries over the weekend. "There is a joint will and desire between the two countries as well as ongoing cooperation against terrorism. We are working on the diversification of this cooperation," Assistant Vice President Hassan Turkmani, who chaired the Syrian side during the ministerial meeting, told reporters on Sunday at a joint press conference with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. "In the past period, cooperation that pleased both sides was implemented and this cooperation is improving," Turkmani said, while noting that this cooperation would be expanded soon.

The two sides agreed that an already existing framework security cooperation arrangement, based on the Adana Protocol, will be expanded, diplomatic sources reported. The Adana Protocol, signed in 1998, paved the way for a quick improvement in bilateral relations between Ankara and Damascus. "There are two visions regarding the region. One vision is the mission of building welfare, peace, and stability between us through mechanisms such as the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council. The other vision is based on creating disputes and uneasiness," Davutoğlu stated at the same press conference. "The first vision will narrow the zone of the second vision. As regional cooperation improves, the positive agenda will become stronger. These cooperation mechanisms will also serve as pre-emptive measures against disputes. The understanding between Turkey and Syria is in full harmony, both in regards to vision and activity."

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In Latakia, Davutoğlu was accompanied by 11 members of the Cabinet, including Interior Minister Besir Atalay, Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül, and Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız. The meeting in Latakia was in a way a review of the developments since the October 2009 meeting, with both sides expressing their happiness over the results. The first joint Cabinet meeting of the council, as chaired by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, was held in December 2009 in Damascus. The next such joint Cabinet meeting will be held in Turkey in December, officials said, while noting that it would be probably held in an Anatolian city, not İstanbul or Ankara. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey, China Conduct Joint Military Exercises

The Turkish and Chinese militaries recently conducted a joint aerial exercise in central Anatolia, the first such exercise involving the two countries' air forces. The joint exercise was part of Turkey's Anatolian Eagle maneuvers, which have so far been carried out jointly with the U.S., Turkey's NATO allies, and Israel. It took place sometime this month in the central Anatolian province of Konya, the traditional location of the Anatolian Eagle exercise.

Turkish F-16s and Chinese SU-27s and Russian-made MIG-29s took part in the exercise, staging a mock dogfight in central Anatolian airspace. The exercise comes ahead of a planned visit by Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Turkey next month, which officials say will boost relations to a new level. During Wen's visit, the two sides are expected to sign several agreements on economic and cultural cooperation. /Turkish Press Review/

Erdoğan Visits Bulgaria to Boost Bilateral Ties

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited neighboring Bulgaria Monday for official talks in a bid to improve bilateral ties. During his one-day visit, Erdoğan met with his Bulgarian counterpart Boyko Borisov to discuss issues of mutual interest. On top of the agenda was Turkey's EU accession process. Nationalist parties in EU-member Bulgaria are against Turkey's EU accession and one such party has already collected 330,000 signatures to demand a referendum on Turkish membership. Borisov said the question of whether there will be a referendum or not will be decided when Turkey completes the accession talks. He said Turkey was a "good neighbor" and that Bulgaria supported Turkey's EU accession.

At a news conference, Erdoğan repeated criticism of the EU regarding cooperation against terrorism. "Unfortunately some countries shelter terrorists or provide financial assistance. This is sad and should never happen," he stated. Erdoğan has urged member states to step up efforts against the PKK. "If the EU declares the PKK a terrorist organization, then the fight [against them] should be carried out in cooperation. Unfortunately, this is not what some EU countries appear to be doing," said the prime minister, lamenting that some EU states refuse to extradite PKK members even though Turkey has presented all legal documents needed.

In their talks, Erdoğan and Borisov also discussed bilateral relations and the situation of Bulgaria's Turkish minority. "It is our shared desire that members of the Turkish minority

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in Bulgaria contribute to the development and prosperity of Bulgaria as equal citizens and thus further strengthen relations between Turkey and Bulgaria," Erdoğan explained. He called the election of a mufti for Muslims in Bulgaria an internal issue and expressed hope that the disputes as to how muftis should be chosen will soon be resolved in a democratic manner. The issue of the election of a mufti has been a problem over the past few months as a Bulgarian court assigned the post to Nedim Gendzhev in the place of the popularly elected Mustafa Hadzhi, a decision widely protested by the Bulgarian Muslim community.

The two prime ministers also discussed the Nabucco pipeline, which will transfer gas from the Caspian Sea and eastern suppliers to Europe via Turkey, and of the construction of the Bulgaria-Turkey pipeline connection. Authorities estimate that this pipeline will be ready by 2014, becoming the first operational section of Nabucco. Erdoğan said supply of gas to Bulgaria outside Nabucco was also under consideration. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey Seeks Reconciliation in Kyrgyzstan

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated on Saturday that Turkey hopes peace and stability will prevail in Kyrgyzstan, pledging more support in aid if deemed necessary for the small Central Asian country. Turkey initiated a reconciliatory conference over the weekend in the former Soviet republic's Issyk-kul resort to bring different ethnic groups together, where both Rosa Otunbayeva, the Kyrgyz leader, and Davutoğlu called on representatives of the groups to coexist peacefully as a catalyst for economic development and welfare in the strategically important country. "No country can develop without maintaining national peace... We lost sleep during the June incidents in Kyrgyzstan," Davutoğlu said, adding that Turkey has drafted plans to seek ways to address the issue. He highlighted that through state aid agencies, Turkey sent massive humanitarian aid and then announced \$21 million in aid to revamp ravaged southern Kyrgyzstan following the devastating ethnic clashes over the summer.

Speaking at the opening of the conference, Otunbayeva thanked Turkey for organizing the event and called Davutoğlu's attendance at the event as "heroic," considering his tight schedule. She said Davutoğlu's participation displayed how much importance Turkey attaches to restoring peace among the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. Acknowledging that the central authority fell short in averting June clashes, Otunbayeva refused to define the incidents as "ethnic." Noting that Kyrgyz and Uzbeks "speak close dialects of the same language" and share a common religion, Otunbayeva said every nation living in Kyrgyzstan has the same rights.

The Turkish foreign minister said Turkey's only wish is to see peace and unity among distinct ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. Davutoğlu also called on the leaders of ethnic communities to urge their compatriots to help establish peace and reconciliation. He also said this meeting is an important step taken before the crucial October 10 parliamentary elections and Turkey will support any government that is elected. Deputy Undersecretary Hakkı Akil, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) head Musa Kulaklıkaya, Foreign Ministry officials, Kyrgyz cabinet members, Kyrgyz foundation leaders, and Uzbek and Kyrgyz leaders, elders, and civil society representatives were among the participants of the key conference. /Today's Zaman/

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New York to Open Istanbul Investment Office

The Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, or ICOC, and the New York Governor's Office have met to discuss cooperation and increasing trade and investment relations between the United States and Turkey. A partnership between the ICOC and the New York Governor's Office aims to establish an investment and trade development office in Istanbul. Within the scope of the cooperation, the ICOC will host the office in Istanbul's World Trade Center.

Establishing such an office was first proposed during the New York Governor's Office delegation's visit to Turkey in 2009, said ICOC Board Chairman Murat Yalçintas at a press conference Monday. "The Istanbul office will be the New York Governor's Office's 17th investment office. For the first time, a U.S. state will have an office in Turkey." This investment office confirms Istanbul's growing profile in trade and finance, according to Yalçintas. The investment and trade office will be a great platform for Turkish businesspeople who want to cooperate with the U.S., Yalçintas said, adding that it will contribute to trade volume between the two nations which rose to \$16 billion at its peak before plummeting to the current \$11 billion. /Hurriyet/

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Rasmussen Focuses on NATO-EU Relations in Turkey Visit

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen arrived in Ankara on Thursday for a one-day official visit during which he held talks with both Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Referring to NATO-EU cooperation, which appeared to be at the center of the talks between the NATO chief and Turkish leaders, Davutoğlu said, "This cooperation is important for us," at a joint press conference following talks with Rasmussen late Thursday afternoon. "However, Turkey has serious concerns," Davutoğlu added, without elaborating. He noted that the Turkish side shared these concerns with Rasmussen.

Although the foreign minister didn't elaborate, he was apparently referring to problems stemming from the EU membership of the Cypriot administration, which is not recognized by Ankara. The Republic of Cyprus blocks Turkish participation in European defense institutions such as the European Defense Agency (EDA), the body set up to oversee EU defense policy. Turkey has responded by obstructing Cypriot use of NATO facilities and NATO cooperation with Cyprus on defense and security issues more generally. Ankara wants Brussels to persuade Cyprus to drop its veto of Ankara's bid to become an

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Selected News on Turkey

associate member of the EDA. It also wants to be consulted further regarding European security policy, arguing that it is already a major participant in EU-led military operations and that it supports the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP).

Rasmussen meanwhile expressed pleasure over Turkey's recent decision to continue its leadership of the Kabul Regional Command (RC) in Afghanistan for another year after the current term expires on October 31. "Turkey is making a very important contribution to regional peace and stability," Rasmussen said. While speaking to reporters earlier on Thursday upon his arrival in Ankara, Rasmussen underlined the need for more troops from NATO members who would provide training for Afghan forces. During his meeting with Erdoğan on Thursday, the NATO chief reportedly praised the Turkish schools and educational facilities operating in Afghanistan, saying that these schools have greatly contributed to efforts to increase the level of education in the country. Rasmussen expressed hopes that the Turkish schools in Afghanistan would continue their activities. /Sabah/

Chinese Premier Visits Turkey to Boost Bilateral Ties

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao held talks with Turkish leaders Friday to deepen economic and political cooperation between the two emerging economies. Wen, the first Chinese premier to visit Turkey in eight years, was greeted by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan outside his office before the two leaders went into a meeting that culminated in the signing of some 10 accords. "I sincerely hope that this visit will serve to strengthen bilateral political trust, deepen our cooperation based on mutual benefit... and turn over a new leaf in friendly Turkish-Chinese relations," Wen said in a written statement after his arrival in Ankara late Thursday.

Officials say the agreements signed Friday are in the areas of trade, transport, energy, telecommunications, and culture. Turkish Transport Minister Binali Yıldırım said one of the accords would entail cooperation in modernizing the country's railways, paving the way for the launch of eight projects covering some 4,500 kilometres (2,700 miles) of railroad. There are reports China also expressed an interest in grabbing a share in state infrastructure projects such as building metro systems and a third bridge over the Bosphorus Strait.

The Turkish side focused on ways to attract more direct Chinese investment and rectify the trade volume which is heavily in favor of China. China and Turkey intend to raise their trade to 50 billion dollars by 2015 from an expected 17 billion dollars this year, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said. "We set ourselves a timetable. We agreed to increase our trade volume to 50 billion dollars in 2015 and... to 100 billion dollars in 2020," Erdoğan told a joint press conference with the Chinese Premier. He said the two sides had also agreed to carry their trade in their national currencies.

However, the Chinese premier was also reportedly the target of a protest by some 100 Uighur expatriates, who gathered outside his hotel to protest China's treatment of the Muslim Turkish-speaking minority in its Xinjiang region. Police prevented the protestors from approaching the hotel and a shoe hurled by a demonstrator towards Wen's car missed the target. Turkey accepts China's sovereignty over Xinjiang, but last year Ankara

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heavily criticized the deadly violence in the region, which Erdogan described as "atrocities."

On Saturday, Wen met businessmen in Istanbul where he also held talks with President Abdullah Gul and toured historical sites before leaving the country. Last week, Chinese military planes took part in a training exercise at a Turkish air base in central Anatolia. Turkey's ambassador to China, Murat Salim Esenli, confirmed the exercise and said it was Ankara's sovereign right to hold such maneuvers with countries with which it has extensive technological cooperation. /Sabah/

Ashton Calls for Return to Positive Turkish-Israeli Relations

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton has voiced her strong expectation for the normalization of bilateral relations between EU candidate Turkey and Israel, while praising Turkey's proactive foreign policy and stating that such normalization would be favorable for the entire region. The statement came recently in response to a parliamentary question by a Greek member of the European Parliament. The Greek parliamentarian, Nikolaos Salavrakos, said that the recent crisis in relations between Israel and Turkey has been creating instability in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. "Essentially, Islamic fundamentalism and anti-western sentiment in the Muslim world increase when they see a western Muslim country, which is a prospective member of the EU and a member of NATO, criticizing western policy in the Middle East and Israel," Salavrakos suggested and then asked the European Commission's position on the Turkey-Israel crisis.

In her written response released early this week, Ashton stated, "Turkey has recently started to become more assertive in its foreign policy. This new approach presents a number of potential assets which could turn to the benefit of the EU in a number of areas such as: overall relations with the Muslim world, dialogue with a number of key actors in the Middle East, military capacity for security and peace-making, energy policy, a large and fast-growing market, industrial competitiveness, and innovative capabilities."

"In this context the EU has begun to look at ways in which the EU and Turkey can enhance cooperation. As regards Turkish-Israeli relations, in particular after the flotilla incident of May 31, 2010, the EU condemned the use of violence that has produced a high number of victims among the members of the flotilla and have demanded an immediate, full and impartial inquiry into these events and the circumstances surrounding them," Ashton recalled. "However, the Commission is of the opinion that it would benefit Turkey and the entire region if Turkey and Israel could return to their traditionally good relations as soon as possible," she concluded. /Today's Zaman/

Russian President Reassures Greek Cypriots on Turkey Ties

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev assured Greek Cypriot leaders on Thursday that his country's growing trade ties with common historic rival Turkey do not mean that Moscow will abandon their interests. On the first-ever visit to the Mediterranean island by a Russian head of state, Medvedev declared that Russia and the Republic of Cyprus remained bound by a shared Orthodox Christian religion and that Moscow would do all in

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its power to support Greek Cypriots in securing a just resolution of the island's 36-year division. "I will answer directly - this [closer ties with Turkey] does not threaten Cyprus with anything. The position on a Cyprus settlement remains unchanged," Medvedev said. "We will assist in settling this problem in every possible way."

Additionally, in an opinion piece published by the Cyprus daily Phileleftheros, Medvedev renewed Russian support for the Greek Cypriot position that no deadline should be set for UN-brokered reunification talks with the Turkish Cypriots and that there should be no outside arbitration. "We have consistently been in favor of the Cyprus problem being solved without outside pressure, with the agreement of both sides," the Russian president said. "It is obvious for us that attempts to impose here ready-made 'recipes' or an artificial schedule of inter-community negotiations and especially to establish terms for their completion and introduce outside arbitration are counterproductive."

The Greek Cypriot president paid tribute to Moscow's backing: "The Soviet Union and later the Russian Federation have always supported Cyprus, playing an active and decisive role in protecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of [Cyprus] at the UN Security Council."

15 accords between Russia and Cyprus were inked during Medvedev's visit. The visit also came a few days before reports that Cyprus cancelled planned military exercises for a third year in a row in a bid to boost reunification talks, and that the European Parliament is debating opening trade with the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. /Hurriyet/

Germany, Turkey Pledge to Work on Integration of Immigrants

Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan pledged Saturday to do more to improve the integration record of Germany's 2.5-million-strong Turkish minority. Germany plans to use celebrations next October of the 50th anniversary of a key immigration agreement on Gastarbeiter ("guest workers") between Germany and Turkey to "take stock," Merkel stated after talks with Erdogan. "We propose that everywhere in cities and towns where there are people of Turkish origin, we use this event as a way of taking stock and seeing where we are and what has to be done," Merkel told reporters. "There are clear problems still which we want to solve when it comes to integration."

Erdogan said he would attend events marking the anniversary of the 1961 agreement, which saw West Germany allow in large numbers of Turkish immigrants to provide workers for its postwar "economic miracle." Many stayed, and the size of the minority was made clear on Friday night in a football match between Germany and Turkey in Berlin attended by Erdogan and Merkel where half of the 74,000 fans were Turkey supporters. Erdogan reiterated controversial comments from a speech two years ago that assimilation, or a person being "forced" to abandon their culture and traditions, is a "crime against humanity." But he stressed that integration into another society is a different matter. "I am of course in favor of people of Turkish origin here in Germany integrating, for their own happiness, and for the happiness and future of German society," Erdogan argued. "And if they have been in Germany for 50 years, then this is obviously required, so that people can live together peacefully."

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Merkel also said she would visit Cyprus in January to offer Germany's help in resolving an impasse holding up security cooperation and Turkey joining the European Union. "This will be an opportunity for me to see if Germany can play a helpful role in resolving" the difficulties there, Merkel said after talks with Erdogan in Berlin. Erdogan said progress toward Turkey joining the EU "should not slow down," and he had asked Merkel for Germany's support. Merkel reiterated her position that the process has an "open end." The Cyprus situation is "important for us all, primarily in issues of security cooperation between NATO and the EU. Both sides have an interest in this, but of course there has to be movement on both sides," Merkel said. /Turkish Press Review/

Ankara Seeks Austrian Support for EU Bid

European Union candidate Turkey sought the Austrian government's help Thursday to enable the 27-nation bloc to keep its promises and also to convince a Turkey-skeptic European public of the worth of Turkey's accession to the bloc. "We consider Austria a neighbor over the Danube River, not a distant country. We expect friendship from neighboring countries," Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu declared at a press conference held with his Austrian counterpart, Michael Spindelegger. "We expect Austria to take the initiative, both at the level of EU member states to enable the EU to keep its promises to Turkey, and also at the level of public opinion by informing Europeans about the contributions of [Turkey's EU] process."

Austria is known to be opposed to Turkey joining the EU, and instead the Austrian proposal for Turkey is a "privileged partnership," falling short of full membership and strongly rejected by Ankara. Foreign Minister Spindelegger said his country had initially been suspicious about Turkey's EU accession bid but noted particular progress had been made on Austria's stance today. "We supported the EU decision to open accession talks with Turkey in 2005," he underscored. The visiting minister assured that his country was not blocking the opening of more chapters in Turkish-EU entry talks and was even putting a stop to the stiff opposition from some member states. "We are not focusing on the outcome [of negotiations] but on the process," stated Spindelegger. "What's being talked about is the outcome... The process is ongoing. Turkey and the EU will make their own decisions on the outcome once the process is over. Right now it is important to support the process."

Spindelegger said the way Turks generally lived in Austria was affecting the image of Turkey in his country. Davutoğlu said the distinction between assimilation and integration should be clearly made. "Integration is a social responsibility that helps multi-cultural societies live in respect and in a legal system," he said. "But assimilation means destroying a culture, something that cannot be accepted." Davutoğlu announced his plans to visit Austria next year, where he expects to attend a conference on integration with his Austrian counterpart. /Hurriyet/

First Turkish-Made Plane Set to Roll Out

Attending the Second Izmir Global Aviation, Space, and Offset conference Thursday, Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul said that test flights for the Turkish-made unmanned aerial vehicle Anka have been completed, and that the first Turkish-designed plane is soon due to roll off the production lines. On the Turkish defense industry's

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advances in recent years, Gonul stated, "Our defense industry reached \$2.3 billion annual turnover, with \$800 million in exports. Now the industry meets 45 percent of the Turkish Armed Forces' needs, and this is expected to hit 50 percent next year." Turkey's ready-to-use military vehicle imports have fallen 10 percent, he added.

In related news, a large proportion of the parts Turkey will produce under the joint production of F35 Fighter Jet engines will reportedly be supplied by the Aegean Free Zone. A joint venture set up by Turkey's Kale Group and US engine producer Pratt & Whitney will start the production of 300 such parts in early 2012. Investments under the F35 project are set to create nearly 1,000 medium-term jobs. /Turkish Press Review/

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Turkey, U.S. in Critical Talks over Fate of Missile Shield Plan

Top Turkish and U.S. officials held talks in Brussels on the sidelines of a NATO meeting Thursday, discussing Washington's plans to move forward with a missile defense system that Ankara insists should not intimidate its Middle Eastern neighbors. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul met with their U.S. counterparts - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates - a few hours after NATO's Secretary-General urged member states to endorse a proposed anti-missile system that would protect Europe and North America. NATO is proposing to expand an existing system of battlefield missile defense to cover the territory of all alliance members against ballistic missiles from nations such as Iran and North Korea.

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has proposed that Russia also join the project, thus creating a network that would stretch from "Vancouver to Vladivostok." "The threat is clear, the capability exists, and the costs are manageable," Rasmussen stated in his opening remarks at the rare joint meeting of defense and foreign ministers of the alliance. "Starting today, NATO is in the sprint to the summit. The decisions we take in the next two weeks will shape the future of the world's most successful alliance." The U.S. supports the missile defense proposal, but other governments have taken a dim view of it, citing high costs and saying it will not provide a robust nuclear deterrent.

For its part, Turkey has asserted it would approve such a plan only if it were convinced that there is a concrete threat, or at least a perceived threat, against all NATO members. Nonetheless, rather than broad-based support, Turkey is seeking a unanimous agreement over such plans. In addition to consensus, Ankara also wants any planned missile-defense system to protect its entire territory, not provide only partial protection. Turkey wants the system to have a "deterrent" characteristic and fiercely opposes

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naming any particular country as a threat against the alliance, the latter concern related to potential harm to its growing ties with neighbors such as Iran. /Anatolia.com, Inc./

Gulf States, Turkey Hold New Round of Partnership Talks

Foreign ministers of the energy-rich Gulf monarchies and Turkey held a new round of talks aimed at both boosting economic and political ties and working toward a free trade agreement. On Monday, Turkey and the Cooperation Council for The Arab States of the Gulf, or GCC, ratified a joint action plan covering 2011 and 2012 that envisages cooperation on trade, investments, agriculture, food safety, transportation, energy, culture, health, tourism, education, and the environment. The GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The ministers held their second meeting in Kuwait City, expressing their common views on regional and international issues and releasing a joint declaration at the end of the meeting. In their declaration, the foreign ministers expressed their determination to conclude a free trade agreement as soon as possible. They also underlined the importance of preservation of Iraq's independence, unity, and territorial integrity and expressed their hope that a national compromise government would be set up in the country.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Sunday the meeting's participants agreed to form working teams on economic and cultural sectors, including transport, education, and health. "The teams will jointly study cooperation plans," Davutoğlu told reporters. "The GCC and Turkey will be integrated in all economic aspects. We believe that Turkey and the GCC have the same objectives in many fields."

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad al-Sabah, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, said the meeting also discussed several political issues. A program to develop strategic ties between the two parties was also reached, he said, noting that GCC-Turkey trade had grown rapidly. Al-Sabah explained that trade between the GCC and Turkey grew from \$1.5 billion in 1999 to \$17.5 billion in 2008 and added that in the same year, GCC exports to Turkey rose five times over 2007 while imports from Ankara increased a massive 15-fold.

GCC Secretary-General Abdulrahman al-Attiyah told the meeting that although there was some progress in certain aspects of cooperation, obstacles to a free trade agreement still existed. Al-Attiyah reported that a joint economic cooperation committee was formed this year to implement a framework trade agreement signed in 2005 with the ultimate aim of striking a free trade accord. The two communities are also boosting security and counter-terrorism cooperation and discussing a proposal for a rail link between them, he said. /Hurriyet/

Parliament Debates Terrorism, Renewal of Cross-Border Mandate

In a closed session on terrorism yesterday, Interior Minister Besir Atalay briefed Parliament on the government's anti-terror measures and recent developments in this area. The Turkish Parliament was also set to renew the government's mandate to engage

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in military operations against the terrorist PKK in northern Iraq for another year. The motion, set to expire on Sunday, was first passed in 2007 and has been extended twice, in 2008 and 2009.

Bekir Bozdag, the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) parliamentary group deputy chairman, said he was hopeful that Parliament would reach a consensus on how to tackle the terrorism problem. "If the opposition is sincere, it could contribute to the process by actively engaging in the debate," he argued. "I also hope the government will take into account the concerns raised by other parties." An overwhelming majority of deputies, except those of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), favor the extension. Bozdag said extending the mandate would send a clear message that Turkey will consider military operations against PKK bases in northern Iraq if necessary. /Turkish Press Review/

Turkish PM Hails Pakistani-Turkish Ties

During an official visit to Pakistan Wednesday, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that Turkey is and will be in the flood-stricken South Asian country to offer constant support to strengthen the friendly country's infrastructure, not only during times of disaster. Erdoğan first landed in the Pakistani capital city of Islamabad on Wednesday morning to have talks with President Asif Ali Zardari. Accompanied by several ministers of his Cabinet, Erdoğan later flew to Multan, a city in Punjab province. "History unites us. We have a joint culture and joint values. We have marched together along centuries for the sake of this culture and these values. We are now here to fulfill our duty as required by the responsibility that rests on our shoulders," Erdoğan said in a speech delivered at the ceremony.

His Pakistani counterpart, Yousaf Raza Gilani, joined him as Erdoğan participated in a ceremony to hand over 1,600 prefabricated houses built by the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay). The floods, which began in late July, left more than 10 million people homeless and affected 20 million more. They devastated an economy that was already fragile before the floods, one of the country's worst natural disasters, struck. According to figures released by the Pakistani Ministry of Finance on Wednesday, Pakistan's recent floods inflicted \$9.5 billion in damage to property, crops and infrastructure.

Erdoğan, meanwhile, called on the Pakistani people to stand united and not let those who would like to see a weaker Pakistan prevail. He also stressed the significance of having unity in the Muslim world. In related news, Turkish diplomat Rauf Engin Soysal was recently appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to be the UN's new special envoy for assistance to Pakistan. Soysal is also Turkey's representative in the group of special representatives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and served as ambassador to Pakistan from January 2007 to July 2009. /Today's Zaman/

Turkish Cypriots Cancel Military Exercise amid Opening of New Border Gate

After consultations with mainland Turkey, Turkish Cypriot officials have decided to call off this year's planned Toros military exercise in an effort to improve the political climate during ongoing reunification talks, a senior Turkish Cypriot official reported Monday. The Turkish Peace Force in Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces Command take

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part in the annually scheduled Toros war games. The Greek Cypriot administration also canceled its annual Nikiforos exercise planned for this year. The Toros and Nikiforos war games were last carried out in 2007.

Despite the decision to scrap this year's maneuvers, Turkish Cypriot Presidency spokesman Osman Ertuğ expressed sorrow over remarks by Costas Papacostas, the defense minister of the Greek Cypriot administration, who said his government would continue to arm its military. Ertuğ described Papacostas' remark as "an act against the spirit of compromise sought through negotiations."

Meanwhile, Turkish Cypriot President Dervis Eroğlu and President of the Republic of Cyprus Dimitris Christofias met Monday as part of ongoing Cyprus talks at the buffer zone in Nicosia. The United Nations secretary-general's special advisor on Cyprus, Alexander Downer, and UN Special Representative in Cyprus Lisa Bittenheim also attend the meeting.

Eroğlu and Christofias held their last meeting last Wednesday before inaugurating the new Yesilirmak Border Gate crossing. The crossing is the first road to link the Greek Cypriot resort of Kato Pyrgos on the island's northwest coast and the adjacent Turkish Cypriot village of Yesilirmak since communal disturbances erupted in 1963, prompting the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops. /Hurriyet/

PACE President Urges Cooperation between Turkey and Russia

Turkey and Russia should focus on working together, Mevlut Cavusoglu, the Turkish parliamentarian currently serving as the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), said Thursday. "As you know, there are two main actors in the European sphere that are not EU members: Turkey and Russia... Turkey and Russia should cooperate to solve problems, particularly in the Balkans, Caucasus, and many other regions." He made his remarks at an international symposium on education in Europe in Moscow along with Sergei Mironov, the head of Russia's Federation Council, which co-organized the event with the Council of Europe.

Cavusoglu told reporters that Turkey "successfully carries out tasks it has assumed in both regional and international bodies, such as the United Nations and NATO. Our profile in the international arena as well as in decision-making bodies is rising because we're doing the right thing in working to promote stability and world peace." Cavusoglu said Turkey and Russia have good relations and working cooperation, highlighting that Russia is Turkey's top trade partner with an expected future annual trade volume of \$100 billion. /Turkish Press Review/

TUSIAD Highlights

The 2010 TUSIAD Bosphorus Prize for European Understanding will be awarded to Dr. Arend Oetker. Dr. Oetker serves as Chairman of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Chairman of the governing board for the Arend Oetker Holding Company, and Vice President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI). The TUSIAD Bosphorus Prize for European Understanding was established by TUSIAD in 2003 in order to

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recognize figures involved in overcoming the political, diplomatic, economic, social, and cultural obstacles encountered during the course of Turkey's integration with the EU. This foreign policy award is given to individuals or institutions who contribute to the mutual understanding, cooperation, and shared values of Turkey and the EU. The award will be presented on November 4 at a dinner ceremony to be held at Istanbul Esma Sultan Yali attended by Minister of State and Chief EU Negotiator Egemen Bagis.

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Bilateral Disputes, Cooperation Prospects under Review in Athens Talks

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met for two hours on Friday with his Greek counterpart, George Papandreou, discussing proposals to resolve long-standing territorial disputes in the Aegean that have brought the two neighbors to the brink of war in the past and to further improve economic ties. Erdoğan and Papandreou met on the sidelines of a Mediterranean conference on climate change. The one-day visit, the second Erdoğan has made to Athens in the past five months, is a sign of an increasing thaw in relations between the two traditional rivals, although the two leaders announced no breakthrough in areas of dispute. "It is pleasing that the political climate between the two countries is very positive," Erdoğan told a news conference with Papandreou after their talks. The two leaders also discussed cooperation against terrorism and illegal immigration as well as the situation in Cyprus, said Erdoğan, asserting that the two countries had the potential to boost their trade volume and work together in the area of tourism.

The Turkish government proposes a NATO role in monitoring Turkish and Greek military flights over the Aegean, a common source of tensions between the two countries. Greece frequently alleges that Turkish jet fighters violate its airspace. The Turkish government, which has earlier proposed mutual cuts in defense expenditures to Greece, is ready for a deal with the neighboring country under which both sides would submit advance information regarding the routes of their warships in the Aegean so as to prevent undesired confrontation. The Turkish government is convinced that cuts in arms spending will pave the way for the resolution of disputes over the airspace and territorial waters in the Aegean. In remarks to the Greek press earlier this week, Erdoğan also said Turkey and Greece could jointly explore oil and gas in the Aegean.

Speaking at the climate conference, Papandreou said Mediterranean countries were "particularly vulnerable" to global warming - facing more frequent droughts, heat waves and forest fires - and said he was encouraged by Erdoğan's presence at the conference. "This is proof that the two neighbors can place their differences aside to face common threats," Papandreou said in his opening remarks. "We have learned to cooperate under

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difficult circumstances, and Greece and Turkey are united on this major issue of climate change."

During a visit to Athens on Thursday, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that Greece and Turkey were showing a greater willingness to cooperate. "I appreciate very much the close contact, as I see it, that we are now witnessing between Ankara and Athens," the NATO chief said. "I think Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Athens ... is yet another testament to the improvement of relations; we appreciate that very much." /Today's Zaman/

U.S. Officials Press Turkey on Iran Sanctions

Robustly implementing sanctions against Iran is the best way to achieve a peaceful resolution of the problem stemming from the Islamic Republic's controversial nuclear program, a United States official stated Thursday. The comments by Stuart Levey, the U.S. Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, came after a senior Turkish government official expressed doubts about the usefulness of UN Security Council sanctions resolutions.

"We believe that implementing the resolutions and sanctions robustly is the best way to achieve a peaceful resolution of the entire problem. By sharpening the choices for Iran, they can see the advantage of choosing to go through the open door that the [U.S.] president and other leaders around the world have laid out for them," Levey told a small group of journalists following meetings in Istanbul with representatives of banks and financial institutions and in Ankara with senior government officials. "We're here in Turkey as part of that overall effort. Because Turkey of course plays an important role given its proximity to Iran as a neighbor. Implementation of the sanctions here is as important as it is everywhere... The purpose of this [visit] is to maximize our chances that the sanctions imposed on Iran are successful," Levey said, adding that he had traveled to many countries as part of a global campaign to bolster support.

During a visit to Washington on Thursday, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan argued the sanctions would make it difficult for Turkey to achieve its aim of tripling trade volume with Iran. "We don't believe in sanctions," he said. "We don't believe that will ultimately make the Iranians act as they are expected to act. So why would we do things in which we don't believe? That's the bottom line." However, Babacan noted that Turkish banks have become hesitant about dealing with Iran, adding: "Some of them [are] finding ways to do business, some of them may be pausing and trying to decide what to do, but there is obviously some hesitation."

When asked about Babacan's statement, Levey explained what was important to the United States was to see the sanctions implemented. "We very much appreciate and need the active partnership with Turkey on this issue," he said. "This is something we share very strongly with Turkey. Turkey is very much against having nuclear arms in Iran given its geographic location. We look forward to working closely with them to achieve this outcome." The U.S. official said he also wanted to clarify some misconceptions about the nature of the sanctions. "We are not here to seek a trade embargo on Iran or to complain about all trade between Turkey and Iran. We are not here to single out

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Turkey," he stated, adding that the sanctions that have been imposed by the Security Council are "not a trade embargo and ... not intended to be a trade embargo."

Levey said Turkish companies were taking these sanctions very seriously as they understood the potential challenges they would face if they continued doing business with listed Iranian companies. Washington sent a delegation to Turkey in August to urge both the government and private firms not to do business with certain Iranian banks and companies lest they be put on a black list observed by the United States and other Western nations. /Hurriyet/

Maliki Visits Turkey for Talks on Iraqi Government Crisis

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had talks with top Turkish officials on Thursday, discussing his bid to form a government in his first visit to Turkey since Iraq's parliamentary elections seven months ago. Maliki, who met with President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in İstanbul and Ankara, said upon his arrival that he was in Turkey for a "short but very significant" visit. Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh, accompanying Maliki, said the talks focused on ways to further improve Turkish-Iraqi relations. Turkey is the last stop of a tour of the region by Maliki, which earlier took him to Jordan, Iran, Syria and Egypt. Maliki, a Shiite, has recently won crucial support from Iran-backed, anti-US Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, but remains at odds with some Shiite groups and the secular, Sunni-backed al-Iraqiya bloc that won the most votes in the March elections.

Arab nations want Iraqiya to be part of the next government but Iraqiya itself has refused to join if Maliki is prime minister. Turkey also seems to be eager to see Iraqiya in government since it also includes Sunni groups. Ankara says any government should be broad-based and fears the exclusion of Sunnis from the government could undermine stability in the war-torn country.

Earlier last week, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu had talks with Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, a prominent Sunni leader and a frequent visitor to Turkey, during a visit to Qatar, discussing the internal political situation in Iraq. On Wednesday, Davutoğlu also spoke to Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani, reiterating during the conversation that the new government in Iraq should be broad-based. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey, U.S. Seek New Era in Bilateral Trade Ties

The first ministerial level meeting of the Framework for Turkish-US Strategic Economic and Trade Cooperation took place Tuesday in Washington. During the meeting - co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy Ali Babacan and State Minister for Foreign Trade Zafer Caglayan from Turkey, as well as U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk - a U.S.-Turkish Business Council, a forum for Turkish and U.S. businesspeople to meet regularly, was established.

Speaking at a joint press conference afterwards, Locke said relevant officials from both countries are seeking joint venture opportunities in such areas as energy, commerce and investment. He also called Turkey a friend, critical ally, and important partner for the

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Selected News on Turkey

U.S. Stating that Turkey has one of the world's fastest-growing economies, Kirk stressed the significant untapped trade potential between Turkey and the U.S. The current bilateral trade volume falls short of that potential, he said. For his part, Babacan said the two countries should have a busy slate of trade and investment cooperation, just like their intensified political cooperation. Babacan also said the second ministerial-level meeting is planned to take place in Turkey. Asked about Turkey improving trade ties with China, Babacan said Turkey has a multifaceted foreign trade policy, adding that signing trade deals with China poses no obstacle to the development of Turkish-U.S. trade ties.

Also speaking to reporters, Caglayan said Turkey and the U.S. turned a new page in bilateral trade ties with the first ministerial-level meeting. Echoing Kirk's remarks on the insufficient bilateral trade volume, Caglayan reported that they had reached an agreement during the meeting to boost this figure. Caglayan also said that they had discussed certain trade-related problems between the two countries, from the U.S. requiring visas of Turkish businesspeople to hurdles keeping Turkish agricultural products out of U.S. markets, as well as American concerns about Turkey's pharmaceutical sector and problems with U.S. genetically modified (GM) food reaching Turkish markets. Stressing Turkey's need to boost its trade ties worldwide, Caglayan underlined, "Turkey's share of U.S. imports, the world's biggest import market, is only two per thousand. We're not happy with this." During the meeting, a memorandum of understanding on direct foreign investments programs was also signed, with both sides pledging more efforts to develop cooperation between small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). /Turkish Press Review/

German President Focuses on Integration in Extensive Discussions in Turkey

Turkish President Abdullah Gül emphasized Tuesday that he was also the leader of the country's non-Muslim communities in remarks following the visiting German leader's earlier comments that "Islam is now a part of Germany." "We have non-Muslim citizens; we have Christian and Jewish citizens. I am also their president," Gül told a joint news conference with his German counterpart, Christian Wulff, whose five-day trip to Turkey is the first official visit in 10 years despite the strong economic and social ties between the two countries.

Wulff, was elected president in June and chose Turkey as one of his first international visits since coming to power, stirring up controversy in Germany when he said this month that Islam was part of Germany. After Wulff's comments, the Turkish president was asked similarly whether Christianity was part of Turkey. Gül said he read and appreciated Wulff's comments, hailing it as a "realist" analysis. "He is their [Muslims'] president as well... There are successful athletes, politicians and businessmen. There is nothing odd here," said Gül. "I can make a similar comment. We have non-Muslim citizens, we have Christian and Jewish citizens. I am also their president. There is no discrimination. We respect our citizens' religion and identity. I don't believe there is a problem here."

Wulff said he shared successful integration models with Gül, telling him about Germany's minister of Turkish origin, Aygöl Özkan. "Seeing her success has encouraged Turkish-descent citizens and they think they are being taken seriously. I am also their president," said Wulff. He also repeated the German government's well-known attitude toward Turkish-EU negotiations, saying that the process was "open-ended" but made clear that

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the principle of "pacta sunt servanda" (Latin for "agreements must be kept") should be observed. Wulff also said Turkey's negotiations should proceed fairly. Germany's president later addressed the Turkish legislature, becoming the first German president ever to do so and delivering important messages on religious, cultural, social, and foreign policy areas.

Wulff reiterated that German citizens of Turkish descent were a part of Germany. He added he was president of all including Turkish-Germans, urging them to actively participate in German society. He also warned, however, that some immigrants were resorting to extremism while others were unfairly receiving state aid. Moreover, crime rates among some immigrants are higher, he noted. "We can reach a successful integration through an open dialogue. Nobody has to give up on their cultural identity but they have to adhere to German society's rules," he said, urging immigrants to learn German. On religious freedom in Turkey, Wulff said Christians living in Islamic countries should enjoy the same rights with Muslims living in Europe. He said they should be able to raise their own clergymen and have their own churches. "Christianity too, undoubtedly, belongs to Turkey," he said, emphasizing that religious freedom, among European values, was very important. /Hurriyet/

Erdoğan Calls for EU Action in Wake of Cyprus Direct Trade Decision

Turkey expects EU to take steps in order to help end the impasse over direct trade with Turkish Cypriot part of the divided island, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Wednesday. Erdoğan's remarks came two days after the European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee decision that EU trade with the Turkish Cypriot part of Cyprus should be governed directly by EU single market and customs union rules, and not by the EU's rules for international trade. Possible trade with the northern part of Cyprus based on article 207 of the Lisbon Treaty on international trade would wrongly imply that it is not part of the EU, stated the Legal Affairs Committee on Monday night.

Erdoğan, who was in Finland on a formal visit, said that the committee decision was a non-binding decision for EU member states. He said the decision was not made by the EU. "Two commitments had been made to us when south Cyprus joined EU. One on free movement and the other on financial issues. Since then, no steps have been taken on these two issues," Erdoğan told a joint press conference with Finnish Prime Minister Mari Kiviniemi in Helsinki. Erdoğan said Finnish efforts during Finland's EU presidency on opening of Turkish Cypriot ports failed because EU had not displayed a positive stance. "Unfortunately, the issue has come to an impasse since EU had not shown a positive stance. If they want to put an end to this impasse, first, ports must be open," he said.

Meanwhile, the Turkish Cypriot Presidency said that European Parliament's decision on the legal ground of direct trade regulation was saddening for Turkish Cypriots. In a statement, the Presidency of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus said that the decision would cause a serious crisis of confidence between Turkish Cypriot community and the EU. "This decision proves that EU would not have a positive contribution to Cyprus [reunification] negotiations continuing under UN auspices," it stated. /Today's Zaman/

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Far-right Parties Endorse EU-wide Referendum on Turkey's Accession

Europe's far-right parties want an EU-wide referendum on Turkey's plans to join the current 27-nation bloc, the leader of Austria's populist Freedom Party, Heinz-Christian Strache, declared Saturday. Strache, who had invited right-wing parties from Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Slovakia and Sweden to a two-day meeting in the Austrian capital, told a news conference that the parties believed Turkey had no place in Europe and ordinary citizens should be given a say in the matter. Europe would be "straying down the completely wrong path" if it were to admit "non-European countries" into the European Union, the far-right party leader argued. "That would be the end of the European Union. It would be the beginning of a Euro-Asian-African Union, which goes completely against the project of peace in Europe and must therefore not be allowed," Strache said.

Under the EU's Lisbon Treaty, which came into effect in December 2009, a Europe-wide referendum can be held if a million people in a "substantial number of member countries" call for one. But it is not clearly defined what a "substantial number" would be, Strache pointed out.

Attending the two-day meeting were Fiorello Provera from Italy's Northern League, Morten Messerschmidt from the Danish People's Party, Bruno Valkeniers, head of Belgium's Flemish nationalist Vlaams Belang party as well as its founder Filip Dewinter, August Lang of the Slovak National Party, and Kent Ekeröth of the Sweden Democrats. Other far-right parties, such as France's National Front, the Dutch FVV party of Geert Wilders, Hungary's Jobbik, Bulgaria's Ataca and Greece's LAOS did not attend. The aim of the meeting was to develop new contacts, said Andreas Moelzer of Austria's Freedom Party or FPÖ. In municipal elections in Vienna on October 10, the FPÖ saw its support nearly double to 27 percent from 15 percent. /Hurriyet/

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