



TURKISH INDUSTRIALISTS' AND BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION
WASHINGTON OFFICE

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TUSIAD: "Turkish business community welcomes the approval of the constitutional reforms by the Turkish Parliament"

Washington, DC: Turkish Parliament approved 34 of the 37 proposed amendments in the Constitution, which aims at improving democratic standards in Turkey, during its plenary session on October 3, 2001. The adoption of this constitutional reform package is an essential step towards compliance with the European Union (EU) Copenhagen political criteria, and the completion of Turkey's National Program, prerequisites to start EU membership negotiations.

The amendments include improvements in the areas such as freedom of thought and expression; freedom of association, and press; civic rights; individual liberties; and gender equality. Execution of death penalty is restricted to war crimes and acts of terrorism. Besides, restrictions on fundamental rights, and length of detainment periods were revisited in a bid to adjust Turkish legislation in line with the relevant provisions of the European Human Rights Convention.

Moreover, the package redefines the composition and the sphere of activity of the National Security Council in a manner to emphasize its advisory role and increase the number of its civilian members. The amendments revoked the "ban on the use of languages other than Turkish in broadcasting", eliminating the remaining restrictions on the social practice of the Kurdish language. The changes have made the closure of political parties more difficult, and have enhanced the rights of expatriates in Turkey.

The three rejected amendments were eligibility for being a deputy, parliamentary immunities, and supremacy of international agreements over national legislation in case of conflicting provisions. The government stressed that the last issue would have to be resolved before the final agreement on Turkey's EU membership.

Turkish business community acknowledges the historic significance of the adoption of these constitutional amendments for Turkey's further democratization and its EU membership. TUSIAD now calls for their rapid approval by the President, and urges for the enacting of the relevant changes in the related legislation. Turkish Parliament should speed up its continuing efforts to prepare the country for the EU accession.