



**Government Response to the House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee Report of Session 2010-12:**

**UK-TURKEY RELATIONS AND TURKEY'S REGIONAL ROLE**

**RESPONSE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH  
AFFAIRS**

Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs  
by Command of Her Majesty

June 2012

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## **TWELFTH REPORT FROM THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF SESSION 2010-12**

### **UK-TURKEY RELATIONS AND TURKEY'S REGIONAL ROLE**

#### **RESPONSE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS**

1. The Command Paper sets out the response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report of 4<sup>th</sup> April into UK-Turkey relations and Turkey's regional role.
2. We welcome the Committee's recognition of the efforts that this Government is making to deepen our already strong bilateral relationship, described by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan as having entered a "golden age". Last year's successful State Visit was a sign of the priority we ascribe to working with Europe's only emerging economy. As we look for ways to strengthen the relationship further, we very much welcome the Committee's analysis and suggestions. We will continue to welcome scrutiny from Parliament and to seek feedback from the media, civil society, business and other institutions.
3. As the Committee has recognised in its report, with its vibrant economy and young population, Turkey is an increasingly vital trading partner. Our commercial relationship continues to strengthen and we are particularly pleased to note the latest figures showing continued strong growth in UK exports. Turkey remains a strong NATO ally and a key leader in the region, offering a unique meeting point between East and West. We are working more closely than ever on our shared foreign policy priorities, including Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iran.
4. The Committee's recommendations are set out in bold in the text below, followed by the Government's response. Unless otherwise indicated, references are to paragraphs in the Foreign Affairs Committee Report (HC 1567).

#### Recommendation 1

5. **We welcome the fact that the FCO is expanding its diplomatic presence in Turkey. We believe that this will signal to Turkey and others the seriousness of the Government's intent to develop the UK's relationship with Turkey, as well as help to deliver enhanced co-operation in key policy areas. (Paragraph 21)**
6. **The effectiveness of UK diplomatic staff posted overseas is reduced if they cannot speak the language of their host country. We welcome the FCO's decision to require Turkish language skills of those taking up the new UK-based staff positions in its Turkey network. Although we want to see country experts shaping FCO policy-making in London, we are perturbed that so many of the department's Turkish speakers are deployed outside Turkey, and we regard this as symptomatic of the drawbacks of the FCO's current system for filling staff positions. We recommend that the FCO reform its recruitment system so that it can actively manage the language expertise it has at its disposal, to ensure that such expertise is deployed effectively and on an ongoing basis in the service of UK diplomatic objectives. (Paragraph 22)**

7. The Government notes the Committee's comments about the recent reinforcement of its posts in Turkey; the extent to which language skills are considered in the FCO's appointments policies; and, more specifically, about the deployment of Turkish speakers in the FCO network.
8. There are currently 22 FCO UK-based staff in the British Embassy, Ankara and 24 in the Consulate General, Istanbul. The FCO's recent 'network shift' process, moving resources to reinforce the front line in top priority Posts, has already added two additional UK-based positions, one in Ankara and one in Istanbul; and another UK-based officer will arrive in Istanbul in September.
9. The Government agrees with the Committee on the importance of the effective deployment of officers with relevant language skills across the FCO's network of overseas posts. The FCO's current system for advertising appointments internally makes clear the level of language skills required for specific jobs. Where a particular level in a language is required for a job, selection panels will take language skills into account when interviewing candidates. If a successful candidate does not already speak the language to the required level, the officer will normally be given pre-posting language training. The FCO tries to ensure that all appointments with a language requirement are advertised with sufficient time for the selected candidate to undertake the required amount of training. If, for operational reasons, an appointee does not have enough time to receive the full prescribed length of training, they are expected to continue their language training on arrival in post. Funding is allocated for them to take the requisite number of hours to reach the language level they need.
10. The Government notes the Committee's view that more of the FCO's Turkish speakers should be deployed, where possible, at Posts in Turkey. Operational considerations (for example, the relatively small numbers of jobs available at different grades in Turkish posts; the timing of vacancies; and the need for officers to obtain a range of experience in different jobs to develop their careers) mean that members of the FCO's Turkish speaking cadre may not be available to apply for jobs in Turkey when they fall vacant. But the FCO is deploying existing speakers regularly to Turkish posts: for example, the Deputy Head of Mission in Ankara, appointed last year, and the new Deputy Consul General, reinforcing Istanbul as part of the "network shift", are both Turkish speakers.
11. Turkish will continue to be a high priority for the language training on offer, including as optional 'developmental' training for staff with no previous knowledge of the language, or for those who want to develop their existing skills. In May, the FCO launched Turkish language training for FCO officers with existing expertise, designed to refresh and develop their skills. In addition, we have recently appointed an officer in Ankara to be 'Turkish Champion', with the aim of promoting the continued learning and use of Turkish by speakers both at Posts in Turkey and across the FCO network. The FCO will continue to monitor carefully the impact of these policies on its requirements. The FCO continues to work under its Diplomatic Excellence programme to ensure that opportunities to acquire or maintain language and other skills are made available to all staff and are seen to be worthwhile in terms of securing appointments.

## Recommendation 2

- 12. We conclude that the operation of the UK's visa regime for Turkish nationals is undermining the credibility of the Government's wish for a "strategic partnership" with Turkey, as well as being a significant practical and psychological obstacle to intensified relations. We welcome the fact that the FCO appears to recognise this and is taking steps to try to ease the UK regime. We recommend that the FCO start discussions with the UK Border Agency and the main academic, cultural and trade bodies engaged in the effort to build UK-Turkey relations on possibilities for: reducing visa fees; reducing the quantity of information required with visa applications, certainly for frequent visitors; introducing a 'fast-track' service for certain categories of applicants; and opening more centres in Turkey for the submission of biometric data and the collection of returned documents. (Paragraph 30)**
- 13. The Government believes that ensuring a strong visa operation is important both for integrated border control and for competitiveness as a destination for travel, trade, migration and investment.**
- 14. The UK Border Agency provides customers with a first class service. The UK Border Agency has five visa application centres across Turkey which matches the level of demand. Approximately 100,000 applications for UK visas were made in Turkey in 2011 of which 90% were successful, an increase of 9% on 2010. Of non-settlement applications, 94% were processed within our service standards of 15 working days.**
- 15. The FCO and the UK Border Agency have jointly explored the impact of the UK visa regime on UK-Turkey relations. Since the Committee visited Turkey, the UK Border Agency has taken a number of steps on a pilot basis designed to facilitate legitimate travel. These steps are:**
- A new system, "The Business Bridge", which builds on the previous fast track arrangements for business, simplifying the paperwork requirements for UKTI approved business visitors and offering a range of chargeable Premium Services for those who wish to obtain their visas more quickly;**
  - A new "Government Gateway" to simplify the visa process for Governors, Deputy Governors and the Mayors of major Turkish cities, who can play an important part in decisions affecting UK political, business and consular interests;**
  - A new "Knowledge Pathway" for senior academic visitors, supporting the Knowledge Partnership signed last year to promote scientific contacts and educational services; and**
  - A new student agent membership scheme will ensure that genuine students are processed quickly.**

16. In November 2010, the UK Border Agency launched a User Panel in Istanbul which enables representatives from the business, education and tourism sectors to give feedback on the visa operation and make suggestions on how it can be improved. The Agency is also seeking user feedback in the operation of the pilot schemes listed above.

### Recommendation 3

- 17. We are concerned that the cut to the FCO grant to the BBC World Service which was made under the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review has caused the World Service to discontinue radio broadcasts in Turkish, losing the Service a radio audience of 450,000 (a fifth of its total audience in Turkey). In line with our overall view on the cuts to the World Service, we question whether the savings made are proportionate to the resulting loss of UK influence. (Paragraph 33)**
- 18. We conclude that the Government's ambitions for a new "special relationship" between the UK and Turkey appear to find little popular resonance, but that this may be due to what appears to be Turkey's relatively low visibility in the UK, and that the situation may therefore be capable of being improved. (Paragraph 38)**
- 19. We recommend that the British Council in Turkey should guard against any risk of becoming 'just' an English language-learning organisation. We recommend that the British Council should use the vital contact which it is building up with Turkish young people through its English language work to further their awareness of the UK; and that it should ensure that the wider promotion of awareness of the UK in Turkey and Turkey in the UK is a central part of its role. The FCO and the British Council should take advantage of Turkey's embrace of 'soft power' and cultural diplomacy to welcome and assist efforts by their Turkish partners, such as the new Yunus Emre Turkish Culture Centre in London, to improve understanding of contemporary Turkey in the UK. (Paragraph 42)**
- 20. The BBC World Service, with its operational, editorial and managerial independence, has to reflect the changing habits of its audiences. Over the last decade, the radio audience has declined, while the television audience has grown. TV viewing in urban Turkey is high with almost 100% of Turkish nationals watching on a daily basis. At the same time, internet penetration in Turkey has grown to over 45% of the population. The BBC World Service in Turkey has already changed its output to reflect these growth areas. Its TV programme has made a strong impact with 1,700,000 weekly viewers, and its online offer is successful, thanks to extended partnerships, in reaching 500,000 unique users each week.**
- 21. The British Council is fully committed to the Government's mission as the UK's international cultural relations body. Wherever the British Council operates around the world - including Turkey – it offers a balanced portfolio of work in English, the arts and education and society.**

22. The Committee has noted the opportunity English Language Teaching provides for raising awareness of the UK in Turkey. As the Committee is aware, English Language Teaching is at the heart of what the British Council does, as one of the charitable objectives set out in its Charter. There are plenty of English Language Teaching providers in Turkey that operate purely for profit. The British Council offer is distinct, reflecting the British Council's charitable objectives. Where the British Council's customers have the economic means to pay for their services in English language, the Council is able to achieve its objectives at no cost to the UK tax payer and additionally to generate surpluses which can be reinvested in services for customers unable to pay fees. The English language programmes, whether paid for or delivered free of charge, are designed not only to teach the language but also to develop cultural understanding of the UK. The British Council promotes greater awareness of the UK through its Learn English websites, reaching 200,000 learners in the first three months of this year; and *Word on the Street*, a joint BBC-British Council English Language Teaching programme broadcast on Turkish national television which features young people in a variety of UK locations showcasing UK youth culture.
23. The Government is pleased that the Committee has given consideration to UK attitudes towards Turkey. The British Council is working with UK and Turkish partners in an 18 month programme of literary exchanges which will bring many talented writers from Turkey to the UK for the first time. The British Council is also launching a joint prize which will recognise excellence in UK and Turkish literary translation; and supporting an exhibition of young Turkish artists which will introduce new UK audiences to their work through events in London and Manchester.
24. The Government welcomes the opening of the new Yunus Emre centre in London and is working closely with counterparts on collaborative programmes in the arts. The British Council has also been sharing experiences of cultural relations work with the Yunus Emre Institute headquarters in Ankara, and supporting teaching training so that the 700 students taking courses with the British Council in London are taught to recognised UK standards.
25. The Government notes the Committee's recommendation to utilise Turkey's embrace of 'soft power', via initiatives such as the FCO supported Tatli Dil Conference. The Tatli Dil ("Sweet conversation" in Turkish) brings together a broad range of UK and Turkish experts in the fields of politics, media, academia and business to discuss issues relevant to both countries such as economic growth; EU relations; energy security and constitutional reform. The first Tatli Dil meeting was held at Ditchley Park in October 2011. The next meeting is due to be held in Istanbul later this year.
26. The Government also notes that institutions such as Wilton Park and Chatham House have regular conferences with Turkish participants and in Turkey, making a valuable contribution to the bilateral dialogue.

#### Recommendation 4

- 27. There must be a doubt over the extent to which locally-engaged staff, however enthusiastic, can represent the UK to the British Council's host countries if they have had little exposure to the UK themselves. The concomitant of the cost savings achieved by making increased use of locally-engaged staff must be that the British Council commits to bringing such staff on visits to the UK on a regular basis. We recommend that in response to this Report the British Council should set out its practice and plans with respect to ensuring that its locally-engaged staff are regularly exposed to the UK. (Paragraph 44)**
- 28. The Government's work in cultural relations requires a deep understanding both of the UK and the host country in which the British Council is working. To achieve this, wherever the British Council works overseas, it seeks to strike the right balance between UK and locally engaged staff. The right mix ensures that UK staff are better able to understand the local context, while creating opportunities for locally-engaged staff to gain a greater understanding of the UK. Cost is a consideration in how the global network is resourced but it is the nature of relationships that is key. The British Council places a premium on the local knowledge and expertise of national staff to help target its resources most effectively and successfully engage with audiences.**
- 29. International experience is an essential requirement for local applicants for posts with the British Council overseas. In Turkey, all locally engaged staff have advanced English language skills and experience of working in an international context prior to their appointment.**
- 30. The British Council recognises the importance of exposure to the UK by its representatives overseas. Country Directors are trained to ensure that all their staff, whether from the UK or locally-engaged, have the skills and experience needed to fulfil their responsibilities, including being able to represent the UK effectively. Country Directors are encouraged to take advantage of any opportunities to bring staff to the UK. In the last six months 72% of the Programmes Team based in Turkey have come to the UK for professional development.**
- 31. A Cultural Relations Leaders' Programme is run in the UK three times a year for staff in the British Council's global network, including senior, locally-engaged managers. Visits to the UK are supplemented by digital resources and teleconferencing which bring together UK and overseas staff on a regular basis. The British Council is also considering the potential for longer term secondment opportunities for staff engaged locally overseas to work in its UK offices to offer a deeper, more immersive experience of UK culture and values.**

#### Recommendation 5

- 32. We recommend that the British Council and FCO should exploit the fact that Turkey is bidding for the 2020 Summer Olympics to use the public diplomacy programmes associated with the 2012 London Games to promote the UK in Turkey in a particularly intensive way. However, we**

**further recommend that the British Council should not allow the Olympics 'brand' to take over the broader promotion of UK identity and culture in Turkey. We recommend that the FCO and British Council should report to us after the 2012 London Games on the Olympics-related work which they have conducted in Turkey and its impact on Turkish attitudes towards the UK. (Paragraph 47)**

33. The Government agrees with this recommendation, and is already engaged in this way. A visit to the Olympic site was an element in the programme of President Gül during the State Visit in November, on which he was accompanied by senior members of the Turkish team planning the Istanbul bid. The FCO network and the British Council have organised a range of events in Turkey since the beginning of the year to promote the 2012 London Games. These have included:

- An event on 18 April to mark 100 days until the start of the 2012 London Games, with the Ambassador and staff hosting a series of 100m races in Istanbul's central square in which members of Embassy staff ran alongside Turkish members of the public and an ex-Turkish 100m champion. The event attracted widespread television and newspaper coverage, as did an article by the Prime Minister carried by Turkey's largest circulation newspaper on the same day;
- a presentation by a senior British diplomat to Turkey's leading sports journalists, followed by a televised debate with the head of the Istanbul 2020 bid team;
- events staged with the Turkish Olympic and Paralympic Committees to promote the Games;
- involvement in "International Inspiration. Turkey is one of 20 countries taking part in "International Inspiration", a project the British Council are delivering with partners that is using the power of sport to enrich the lives of over 12 million children and young people of all abilities, in schools and communities across the world, through high quality and inclusive physical education, sport and play. The success of the programme, which is based on best UK practice, has encouraged the Turkish government to promote it nationwide to all schools in Turkey. Exchange visits with 15 schools in Scotland, and an event involving the Ambassador and Turkish Ministers in Ankara, have attracted widespread coverage in the Turkish media.

34. The Turkey network has also been engaged in the Turkish segment of a wider government exercise to invite Heads of State and Government, Ministers and business leaders to attend the Olympics and related business events.

35. Separately from the Olympic dimension, the Government has recently developed a UK-Turkey Knowledge Partnership programme drawing together university, research agency, and industry partners across priority sectors in support of the UK's prosperity agenda. In the last year, a further 22 new university and industry partnerships have been added to take the current number we have successfully brokered to over 100. In April 2012, an action plan to expand bilateral and scientific co-operation was agreed during a visit by the UK Minister for

Universities and Sciences who was accompanied by the largest delegation of UK university Vice Chancellors ever to visit Turkey.

36. The British Council is also bringing two major exhibitions of contemporary British art to new audiences in Ankara and Istanbul and building theatre links between the UK and Turkey through a programme of performance and visits by the Young Vic theatre company; RADA; and leading theatre directors from Cardiff, Edinburgh and Leeds.

#### Recommendation 6

**37. We recommend that in its response to this Report the FCO should set out its rationale for pursuing, its key objectives for, and its plans for securing, a new UK-Turkey cultural agreement to update that concluded in 1956. (Paragraph 49)**

38. A new agreement is currently under negotiation to introduce reciprocal arrangements for the British Council and Yunus Emre that would enable closer working and open up new ways of engaging audiences for both the UK and Turkey.

#### Recommendation 7

**39. We have encountered little evidence that the AKP government is seeking to 'Islamicise' the Turkish state. We conclude that the AKP is best seen as akin to a socially conservative Christian Democrat party, continuing to govern within a secular state. However, some among Turkey's secular population are uneasy lest the effort to make Turkish public life more welcoming to openly devout Muslims comes to tip into disadvantage for secular citizens. We recommend that the FCO should remain vigilant on issues of religious freedom and discrimination and should ensure that its Turkish partners are clear about its stance in this respect. (Paragraph 57)**

40. The Government notes the Committee's conclusion about the nature of the Turkish state. The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation that it should remain vigilant about freedom of religion and belief and discrimination in Turkey. The 2011 EU Progress Report called Turkey's approach to minority rights "restrictive". British diplomats in Turkey monitor internal developments closely and have regular contact with relevant government agencies, religious minority community representatives, NGOs and human rights organisations. The Government notes that some progress has been made, including legislation amending the February 2008 Law on Foundations which improved property rights for religious minority groups.

#### Recommendation 8

**41. We recommend that the FCO should ensure that its Turkish partners are in no doubt that the shortcomings in the Turkish justice system are damaging Turkey's international reputation and leading to human rights abuses, in ways that make it harder to advocate, or imagine the realisation of, close**

**UK-Turkey relations and Turkey's EU membership. We further recommend that the FCO should offer support to the package of reforms announced by the Turkish Justice Minister in January 2012 and should let its Turkish partners know that it would welcome the opportunity to assist in its further development and in further reforms in the justice system as they may request, involving also the Home Office and Ministry of Justice as appropriate. (Paragraph 68)**

42. The Government agrees – as does the Turkish Government, which has introduced a series of reform packages – that the Turkish justice system suffers from a number of issues which hinder timely and effective access to, and delivery of, justice. The FCO values its close relationship with the Turkish Ministry of Justice and welcomes the package of reforms announced by the Justice Minister in early 2012 designed to address shortcomings which have caused concern inside and outside Turkey. We further welcome the large number of measures in the judicial reform strategy adopted by the Ministry of Justice in August 2009, such as increasing the breadth of representation on the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors. The Government agrees that further reform is needed, especially relating to long periods of pre-trial detention and will continue to work closely with the Turkish government on the improvements required. Through bilateral technical assistance, the FCO has already sought to assist the Turkish Ministry of Justice in addressing a wide range of issues including: the creation of an impartial appraisal system for judges; introducing UK best practice on mediation and alternative dispute resolution into the Turkish judicial system; and study visits to the UK to better understand the UK's comprehensive ombudsman system.

#### Recommendation 9

43. **Turkey has made welcome improvements in human rights standards in many areas over the last decade, but there is the appearance of a reversal in some respects. Many of the most potentially worrying developments concern legal proceedings, so it is often hard to form an assessment in the absence of firm public information about the relevant evidence, but we are clear that the current climate in Turkey is limiting freedom of expression and the media. This is despite the release on bail of four prominent journalists in March 2012, which we welcome. We conclude that Turkey's human rights record remains a problem for the "strategic partnership" with the UK which we support, and for Turkey's EU accession prospects. We recommend that the FCO should suggest that the Turkish government encourage prosecutors and judges to exercise restraint in the use of arrest and pre-trial detention, pending more thorough-going reform of the justice system. We further recommend that the FCO should seek every opportunity to help Turkey in practical ways to achieve further improvements in its human rights practices, including as regards freedom of expression and the media. (Paragraph 76)**
44. The Government agrees that there have been significant improvements in human rights standards in recent years, and notes the importance of the EU accession process in encouraging these reforms. The Government monitors the pre-trial

detention of journalists, politicians, officials and others and shares the concerns of our EU partners over excessive pre-trial detentions in Turkey. The Government welcomes recent steps taken by the Turkish Ministry of Justice to address some of the issues, including shortening maximum limits for pre-trial detention. In its discussions with the Turkish government, the Government continues to urge reform in this area. In particular, we will continue to push for urgent progress on the issue of pre-trial detention, which is a serious concern and risks damaging Turkey's international reputation.

45. The Government is a committed supporter of the right to freedom of expression, and media freedom around the world. We welcome the Committee's recommendation. We note the Turkish government's position that actions undertaken by the judiciary are independent of government. Nevertheless, we share the concerns expressed by the European Commission, Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe and others over deteriorating freedom of expression in Turkey. Through bilateral technical assistance the FCO has supported several projects that promote freedom of expression, including an evaluation of legal and regulatory measures concerning freedom of expression on the internet to assess Turkey's compliance with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. British diplomats in Turkey are in close and regular contact with Turkish journalists and human rights NGOs, and regularly emphasise the importance of freedom of expression with the Turkish authorities.

#### Recommendation 10

46. Prospects for peaceful steps towards reconciliation between Kurds in the south-east and the Turkish state appear to be receding and in the process of being replaced by a return to confrontation and armed conflict. We are concerned about the civilian casualties both inside and outside Turkey which are being caused by the upsurge in the use of violence by both the PKK and the Turkish state. We recommend that the FCO should urge the Turkish government to make clear that the peaceful participation of representatives of the Kurdish community in Turkish public life remains welcome. We further recommend that the FCO should urge representatives of the Kurdish minority to condemn PKK violence and clearly spell out their wishes for enhanced cultural rights and sub-national government within Turkey. We further recommend that the FCO should offer the parties assistance, on the basis of the UK experience with Northern Irish terrorism and UK devolution, in exploring practical steps that could be taken now towards ending violence and achieving an accommodation between the Turkish state and Turkey's Kurdish minority. (Paragraph 85)

47. The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation to condemn PKK terrorist violence. The PKK has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK, EU and UN, and the Government is strongly committed to helping resist terrorist activity by the PKK, and by any other groups which pursue their objectives through terrorism. The Government supports a peaceful, political solution to the Kurdish problem. A vital element of such a solution must include the permanent cessation of terrorist acts. The Government has made this position clear to political parties in Turkey, including the BDP and in public

statements. We have worked hard to combat PKK activity in the UK. In recent years, we have reduced PKK fund-raising in the UK by over 50%. We will continue to work with the Turkish government in its fight against terrorism, and greatly regret the loss of life and other damage resulting from terrorist actions.

48. The Government encourages all parties in Turkey to explore options for a peaceful solution, which promotes and protects the human rights of all Turkey's citizens' dignity and security, and welcomes the very significant steps the Turkish government has taken in recent years with regard to use of language and broadcasting within Turkey. The Government, while very aware that the situation in every country is bound to be different, has shared its experience in Northern Ireland with the Turkish authorities. It will continue to do so, and to support NGOs who can also contribute in this area.

#### Recommendation 11

49. **We conclude that a new constitution could be a unique opportunity to advance democratic, liberalising and pluralistic reform in Turkey and signal both at home and abroad a decisive break with the country's more authoritarian past. We welcome the Turkish government's ambitions in this respect, but we are concerned lest the constitutional momentum is lost amid renewed confrontation between government and opposition and Kurds and the Turkish state. We are further concerned in case the new constitution raises fresh risks to the independence of the judiciary. We recommend that the FCO should continue to remind its Turkish partners of the international importance that would attach to a successful constitutional reform effort. (Paragraph 90)**
50. The Government welcomes the recommendation of the Committee highlighting the significance of a new constitution for Turkey. In its discussions on this subject with Turkish interlocutors, the Government has emphasised the importance of an open and consultative process and has noted the international importance of a successful constitutional reform effort. We welcome the fact that all major political parties are represented in the Constitutional Commission of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and that non-government organisations and individuals have been able to contribute to the public debate.
51. The Turkish government has indicated that it is also studying the constitutions of several EU countries to inform its own reform. The Government would strongly support any request by the Turkish government to enlist the expert advice of international organisations, such as the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, or the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in finalising its proposed constitutional document.

#### Recommendation 12

52. **We conclude that the fact that Turkey has experienced foreign policy setbacks, and may not wield as much influence as is sometimes thought, should not disqualify it as a foreign policy partner for the UK. Ankara has been addressing longstanding issues and conflicts that continue to**

**challenge many other powers, including the UK. We recommend that the FCO should approach foreign policy co-operation with Turkey positively and in a spirit of realism. (Paragraph 125)**

53. Turkey is an important strategic partner for the UK. Our bilateral relationship with Turkey is based on an understanding of our common values and interests, which were clearly elaborated in the 2010 Strategic Partnership. The Government regards Turkey as a vital foreign policy partner, not least because of our work together in international and regional organisations such as NATO and the G20, and because of the value of Turkey's network of relationships in the Middle East and North Africa, Afghanistan-Pakistan and the Balkans. We have frequent and intensive bilateral contacts at all levels from the Prime Minister down.
54. The Government believes that Turkey has played an important role in galvanising the international response to international and regional security challenges, for example, stabilising Somalia and responding to the Arab Spring. This is evident in Turkey's recent hosting of international conferences, for example the Friends of Syria meeting, the Iran nuclear negotiations that took place in Istanbul in April and the Somalia conference in June.
55. The Government will continue to work closely with Turkey on a broad range of common foreign policy priorities. On Syria, we will liaise closely with the Turkish government to support the Annan Plan through the UN process. We will continue to work with Turkey to press Iran to engage seriously in the E3+3 negotiations on the nuclear issue. We look forward to working closely together at the G20 Summit in June.

#### Recommendation 13

56. **With respect to Turkey's potential influence on democratising states in North Africa and the Middle East, we conclude that the FCO is correct to treat Turkey as an 'inspiration' in broad terms, rather than as a specific 'model'. We agree with the FCO that Turkey has welcome influence as an example of a predominantly Muslim secular democracy, albeit one that remains 'work in progress'. We recommend that the FCO should make clear to Turkey that it would be able to support Turkey's ' inspirational' role more strongly were Turkey to improve its democratic and human rights practices, and, above all, to resume progress towards an accommodation with its Kurds. (Paragraph 134)**
57. The Government continues to take the view, shared by the Committee, that Turkey's secular and representative democracy in a Muslim-majority country, and its extraordinary economic success, offer inspiration to those seeking to establish and strengthen democracy in the Middle East and North Africa. We are working with Turkey in the context of the G8's Deauville Partnership, which aims to support political and economic transitions in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia. The FCO will include the Deauville Partnership in its political dialogue with Turkey on support for countries affected by the Arab Spring.
58. The Government agrees with the Committee's assessment that progress by Turkey on specific human rights issues, including freedom of expression and the

rights of minorities, and of communities such as the Kurds, would reinforce its ability to present its values to others. The drafting of a new constitution offers an opportunity to consolidate and codify progress on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Working closely with the EU Commission and other parties, we have been providing technical assistance to human rights reform through a programme of projects and will continue to do so.

#### Recommendation 14

- 59. We conclude that the Government is correct to have identified Turkey as a rising regional economic power. We recommend that the Government should not allow any short-term setbacks to Turkey's economic performance to cause it to weaken its efforts to intensify UK-Turkey economic ties over the longer term, which must remain its focus. (Paragraph 149)**
60. The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation of maintaining our focus on strengthening UK-Turkey economic ties over the longer term. With an economy that has been growing approximately five times faster than the Eurozone average, Turkey is identified as one of the 20 high growth priority markets in UK Trade & Investment's strategy.
61. Economic growth in Turkey will be affected by the slowdown in the global economy. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that GDP growth in Turkey will slow from 8.5 per cent in 2011 to 2.3 per cent in 2012, before rising steadily again from 2013.
62. We expect Turkey to continue to provide significant trade and commercial opportunities for UK businesses, just as the UK will continue to be an excellent market for Turkish companies. Currently, over 2,200 UK businesses actively operate in Turkey.

#### Recommendation 15

- 63. We conclude that the Government is correct to have identified significant potential to expand UK commercial relations with Turkey, although the competitiveness of the market should not be underestimated. While we welcome the galvanising effect of the Prime Minister's target of doubling bilateral trade from 2009 to 2015, we recommend that the Government and its partners should bear in mind the need to build much longer-term relationships if the UK is to strengthen significantly its commercial presence in Turkey. The FCO needs to be clear about the balance between the trade and the investment potential of specific sectors in Turkey, and about the lessons that the UK may learn from the relative success in Turkey of other countries such as Italy. We further recommend that in its response to this Report the FCO should update us on the Government's activities aimed at increasing Turkey's visibility to the UK business community. (Paragraph 159)**

64. The Government acknowledges the Committee's comments regarding the progress being made to double bilateral trade with Turkey by 2015, and notes that the increase of over 35% since 2009 represents good progress towards that target. The UK/Turkey commercial relationship is thriving, particularly since the signing of the UK/Turkey Strategic Partnership agreement by the respective Prime Ministers in July 2010. UK exports to Turkey for 2011 increased by 20% on 2010 (£3.7 billion in 2011, up from £3.1 billion in 2010) and Turkey ranked the UK's 20<sup>th</sup> largest export market in 2011, up from 22<sup>nd</sup> in 2010.
65. Prime Minister Erdoan visited the UK in March 2011 to launch the UK/Turkey CEO Forum. The State visit of President G  l to the UK took place in November 2011, with commercial interests a central feature of the programme. In September 2011, the UK Business Secretary visited Turkey (the first visit of a Business Secretary for a decade); and in April, the Trade Minister and the Director General of the CBI jointly led the first such overseas mission exclusively for UK mid-sized businesses. We have also set up the UK/Turkey Knowledge Partnership to strengthen our longer term relations around science, innovation and research and development. These activities will help the Government to continue to strengthen our relations with Turkey and to enhance our commercial footprint.
66. UK Trade & Investment's strategy for Turkey gives priority to sectors such as energy and the environment, information and communications technology, infrastructure, financial and professional services, education services, life sciences and defence and security technology as offering the best export and high value opportunities for UK business and inward investment projects. UK Trade & Investment regularly analyses the potential of these and other sectors within the Turkish market, specifically targeting resources to add the greatest value to UK economic growth. The annual UK/Turkey ministerial trade talks (JETCO) provide strategic direction on priority sectors and high level lobbying opportunities on market access issues affecting UK companies in Turkey. UK Trade & Investment are currently assessing trade and commercial success in Turkey of other countries and exploring ways to access other commercial sectors of mutual interest.
67. To increase Turkey's visibility to the UK business community, UK Trade & Investment has created a network of Turkey champions across the UK to promote Turkey as an export destination. In addition, a new network of Business Honorary Consuls in Turkey, working exclusively on the Trade and Investment agenda, will help bolster this initiative inside Turkey.

#### Recommendation 16

- 68. We conclude that the EU-Turkey Customs Union is not working as effectively as it should to liberalise trade, partly because the lack of movement in Turkey's EU accession process appears to be contributing to Turkey's unwillingness to implement fully its Customs Union obligations. We further conclude that the Customs Union is anyway unsatisfactory because it excludes the services sector, including legal services. Given the UK's comparative advantage in the sector, we recommend that the Government should explore any options open to it on a bilateral basis to**

**encourage Turkey to liberalise access to its market for UK services, particularly lawyers and legal services firms. (Paragraph 165)**

69. The Government agrees with this recommendation and is carrying out work to encourage Turkey to liberalise its services market, including lawyers and legal services firms. Turkey has been identified by the UK's legal services sector as one of its priority markets. As part of the joint Ministry of Justice/UK Trade & Investment "Plan for Growth: Promoting the UK Legal Services Sector", the Government is working closely with its industry partners, including the Law Society, Bar Council and TheCityUK to promote the UK's expertise in legal services, and emphasise the potential benefits of market liberalisation for Turkey. This work has included: ensuring that the issue of legal services is raised in a range of relevant bilateral meetings at Ministerial and official level between the UK and Turkey; supporting a number of high profile networking events between UK and Turkish law firms; the Lord Mayor's visit to Turkey earlier this year; and publicising the Rolls Building for resolving international disputes, which recently opened in London, to Turkish partners. The Government will continue to work to address barriers to the wider services market in Turkey including through bilateral engagement and in coordination with the European Commission.

**Recommendation 17**

**70. We conclude that the Government is correct to continue to support Turkey's accession to the EU, subject to Turkey meeting the accession criteria. Turkish accession would be likely to boost the EU's economic growth and international weight. We further conclude that the Government's continuing support for Turkey's EU membership provides a strong basis on which to develop enhanced UK-Turkey bilateral relations. (Paragraph 173). Although the UK would not be expected to hold a referendum on any EU Accession Treaty with Turkey, we recommend that the Government should seek to foster popular support for Turkish accession as part of its broader efforts to enhance Turkey's standing with the British people. (Paragraph 175)**

71. The Government welcomes this recommendation. In the context of its broader support for EU enlargement, the Government has consistently made the case for Turkish accession, for example during last year's State Visit to the UK by President Gül. In his statement after meeting the President, the Prime Minister said "Britain is a champion of full Turkish membership of the European Union". The Government has consistently underlined the potential benefits to the prosperity and security of the UK, and to the rest of the EU and to Turkey, that would flow from Turkish accession. We continue to work closely with the Turkish Government on helping Turkey make progress towards meeting the standard conditions to qualify for EU membership. The FCO continues to engage with France and Germany to advocate the benefits of Turkey's full accession to the EU, and is in regular dialogue with other member states that support Turkish accession.

## Recommendation 18

72. We conclude that the Government is correct to be planning to impose restrictions on the right to free movement from Turkey to the UK following any accession to the EU by Turkey (although it is by no means certain that Turkey's accession negotiations will reach this stage before the next UK General Election). We recommend that the FCO should if necessary take steps to mitigate the risk that the Government's stance on this issue might damage the UK's standing among Turkey's population. (Paragraph 179)
73. The Government believes that Turkish accession to the EU would be greatly beneficial for the UK, EU and Turkey. A frequently-stated concern is over migration, and this Government is committed to controlling migration to the UK. Turkey is not expected to complete the long and complex EU accession process imminently, so any assessment of the impact of Turkish accession to the EU on migration levels would need to take into account economic, social and political conditions prevailing at the time of accession. Turkey's economy is currently one of the fastest growing in the world and it is difficult to predict future migration flows, either into or out of Turkey, as a result of accession.

## Recommendation 19

74. We recommend that, if and when it is required again to consider the possible incorporation of the new intergovernmental 'fiscal compact' into the EU Treaties, the Government should bear in mind the implications of EU Treaty change of this sort for possible future accession countries such as Turkey. (Paragraph 183)
75. The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation to keep in mind the possible impact on Accession States of incorporation of the "Fiscal Compact" into the Treaties, and is mindful of the implications of the 'Fiscal Compact' on new Member States.
76. The Government has said it could consider the Fiscal Compact Treaty being folded into the EU Treaties but only if there are the necessary safeguards to properly protect the interests of all 27 Member States. Incorporation of the Fiscal Compact into the EU Treaties would make membership of the euro more onerous for potential Accession States would need to take account of the balanced budget requirements and the possible sanctions that might flow from failure to meet them.

## Recommendation 20

77. We recommend that the Government should offer every assistance to UN Secretary-General Ban and Special Adviser Downer that they might feel would contribute to the securing of a Cyprus settlement by mid-2012. We further recommend that if this effort fails and there is still no settlement on Cyprus once Cyprus's period as President of the EU Council is completed at the end of 2012, the Government should consider whether any alternative approach to the Cyprus situation, by itself and the international community,

**might be more likely than previous efforts to yield a settlement. We further recommend that the FCO should support the use of prospective revenues from possible gas reserves off Cyprus to facilitate a settlement on the island. (Paragraph 200)**

78. The Government is committed to supporting the UN led process to achieve a settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality as defined by the relevant Security Council resolutions. The UN is currently negotiating the way forward with the two leaders and hopes to reach agreement on how the talks should be handled in the future. This is a Cypriot-owned and Cypriot-led process and as such it is not for the UK to propose an alternative approach.
79. The Government recognises the Republic of Cyprus' sovereign right to exploit its Exclusive Economic Zone, welcomed the announcement by President Christofias that any revenue from that exploitation would be for the benefit of all Cypriots and urges all sides to ensure that this pledge becomes a reality. It is the Government's hope that a settlement can be achieved before such revenues are realised.

#### Recommendation 21

80. **We recommend that the Government should encourage EU personnel and institutions, including High Representative Ashton, to explore with Turkey ways of developing a partnership outside—but not prejudicial to—its EU accession process, which we continue to regard as having key strategic value. (Paragraph 205)**
81. The Government welcomes the Committee's recommendation, and has been staunch in its support for Enlargement Commissioner Fule's 'positive agenda' for EU-Turkey relations designed to complement and support the accession process. This includes plans for intensified dialogue and co-operation on political reforms, energy, counter-terrorism, migration and economic co-operation. The Government has also supported the efforts of High Representative Ashton to intensify the EU's foreign policy dialogue with Turkey with a particular focus on the historic changes currently underway in the Middle East and North Africa. The Government welcomes Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's recent attendance at the EU Foreign Affairs Council and will continue to work to involve Turkey in dialogue in key issues.







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