



Joint statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn on the Venice Commission's Opinion on the amendments to the Constitution of Turkey and recent events

Brussels, 13 March 2017

We have taken good note of the Venice Commission's Opinion on the amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 21 January 2017.

As highlighted by the Venice Commission's Opinion, Turkey has the sovereign right to decide over its system of governance. We acknowledge the fact that the country is going through challenging times and stand by it in its fight against the scourge of terrorism. We will continue to support the country's hospitality to refugees from war-torn areas in its close vicinity.

We appreciate that Turkey has announced actions to address the Council of Europe's recommendations regarding the State of Emergency and bring the measures taken in line with European standards.

However, the Venice Commission's comments on the proposed Constitutional amendments raise serious concerns at the excessive concentration of powers in one office, with serious effect on the necessary checks and balances and on the independence of the judiciary. It is also of concern that this process of constitutional change is taking place under the state of emergency.

The proposed amendments, if approved at the referendum of 16 April, and especially their practical implementation, will be assessed in light of Turkey's obligations as an EU candidate country and as a member of the Council of Europe.

We encourage Turkey to pursue and further deepen its close cooperation with the Council of Europe and its bodies, and to address their concerns and recommendations.

Following the tensions of these last days between Turkey and some EU Member States, it is essential to avoid further escalation and find ways to calm down the situation. Decisions with regard to the holding of meetings and rallies in Member States are a matter for the Member State concerned, in accordance with the applicable provisions of international and national law.

The European Union calls on Turkey to refrain from excessive statements and actions that risk further exacerbating the situation. Matters of concern can only be resolved through open and direct communication channels. We will continue to provide our good offices in the interest of EU-Turkey relations.

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