

## EPP PRESIDENT ADDRESSES AKP CONGRESS

12-11-2006



On Saturday, November 11 2006, EPP President Wilfried Martens addressed the AKP Congress in Ankara. AKP joined the EPP in January 2005 and its Leader, **Recep Tayip Erdogan**, is Prime Minister of Turkey. Here is the full speech of President Martens:

*Dear Prime Minister,*

*It is a pleasure for me to be here with you and amongst our friends of the AK Party.*

*First of all I thank you Prime Minister, for AK Party's active and determined cooperation within the EPP, and in particular for your personal and your collaborators' such as Messrs Disli and Yakis' relentless efforts for dialogue and cooperation within our political family.*

*The EPP is the largest European political movement defending for more than 30 years the ideals of the founding fathers of Europe.*

*Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi and Jean Monnet strived for peace, reconciliation, cooperation and solidarity in Europe. The European People's Party was founded in 1976 as a federation of Christian Democratic parties and later it opened its doors to all the centrist, people's and conservative parties which share and support our values.*

*Our main goals are human dignity; the social market economy and European integration leading to a federal Europe on the basis of our member states. So we do not seek a European super State.*

*All our member parties have their own tradition, their history, and their name. They should keep these. But on the European level we are all united in the same political movement: the European political party of the center-right.*

*The large majority of our parties' citizens are believers. They belong to the various religions and dogmas: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish, Anglican, and others. In this sense, we are a pluralistic European party, united in our respect for the dignity of every human being.*

*Each human being depends on others. Because we are free, responsible and interdependent, we must take part in the building of society. Behind this commitment lies the belief that we are called on to contribute to God's work of creation and freedom.*

*Dear friends, in your program on 'Fundamental Rights and Freedoms' you consider "religion as one of the most important institutions of humanity and secularism as a pre-requisite of democracy, and a assurance of the freedom of religion and conscience".*

*That is the fundamental reason why I defended your accession to the EPP. I am happy to be here and that the AK Party belongs to our political family.*

*At this moment the negotiations between the EU and Turkey are complicated. However, amongst political friends we not only meet when the sun is shining, we also meet when there are clouds in the sky. It is therefore vital to seek a mutual understanding with the Finnish presidency of the European Union.*

*As no other government in Turkey, you have introduced reforms which have brought more respect for human rights, more democracy, rule of law and a steadily growing economy with innovation.*

*Knowing your determination and motivation, I am convinced that you will succeed in the necessary reforms.*

*Turkey is a big country and you are a great and courageous people. You can play a pivotal role. You are a pole of stability in your region. You can be a bridge builder between cultures and religions. With compromise, dialogue and understanding there is no risk for a clash of civilisations. This is essential for peace on the global level.*

*I agree with Carl Bildt, the new Foreign Minister of Sweden, when he recently stated: "A critical part of the soft power of Europe lies in the continued process of enlargement – a Europe that remains open to those in our part of the world wishing to share their sovereignty with us, accept the rule of law and commit to the building of open, secular and free societies together." On this basis Turkey and the Turkish people have a European future.*

*Thank you!*