

PRESIDENT MARTENS MEETS GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER DORA BAKOYANNIS

23-07-2007



The President of the European People's Party (EPP) **Wilfried Martens** met this morning at the EPP headquarters Greek Foreign Minister **Dora Bakoyannis** (ND) and discussed recent political developments as well as Sunday's election results in Turkey and the situation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

At the end of their meeting, President Martens and Minister Bakoyannis made the following joint statement (also available in [Greek](#), [English](#), and [French](#) at the website of the Greek Foreign Ministry):

On the occasion of welcoming the positive results of the Turkish parliamentary elections and the re-election of the AK party, an observer-member of the European People's Party (EPP):

- We note with satisfaction the efforts for reforms that have been undertaken in Turkey - we hope these efforts will be continued with greater zeal by the re-elected government of the AK party. We wish that the democratic rule of law will be fully established and observed without deviations.

- Recalling that the EU opened accession negotiations with Turkey, we stress that Turkey should conform to the institutional, political, and economic acquis of the EU. Respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including minority rights, constitute fundamental components of this process.

With regard to the Ecumenical Patriarchate:

- We deplore the recent decision by the Turkish Court of Cassation (Yargitay), which passes a ruling, inter alia, on the Ecumenical role of the Orthodox Patriarchate, its legal personality and its internal election process. This decision intervenes in issues of purely religious nature and, in an attempt to minimize the religious role of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate, rules on the ecclesiastical title of the Ecumenical Patriarch, who has been the head of the Orthodox Church worldwide since the 6th century AD.

- We urge Turkey to accept the international status and ecclesiastic succession of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by recognizing its legal status as well as the right to train clergy of all nationalities. The property rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate should be reaffirmed and the reopening of the Halki Seminary addressed.

- We express the hope that the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide, will be let free to exercise its religious duties and accomplish its mission, in line with the letter and spirit of article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of the Human Rights.

- In view of the on-going European efforts for bolstering the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we strongly support the continuation and expansion of the 'Orthodox Dialogue between the European People's Party and the Ecumenical Patriarchate,' an internationally acclaimed action with manifold positive results.

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