

# EPP LEADERS MEET AHEAD OF HISTORICAL COUNCIL

***Copenhaguen, December 13, 2002***

EPP Leaders met yesterday in Copenhagen ahead of today's European Council, among whom Prime Ministers Jose Maria AZNAR of Spain, Jan-Peter BALKENENDE of the Netherlands, Silvio BERLUSCONI of Italy, Jose Manuel DURAO BARROSO of Portugal, Jan Claude JUNCKER of Luxembourg, Jean Pierre RAFFARIN of France, Wolfgang Schüssel of Austria, Kjell MAGne BONDEVIK of Norway, Mikulas DZURINDA of Slovak Republic, Edward FENECH ADAMI of Malta, as well as Deputy Prime Minister Bendt BENDSEN of Denmark, who hosted the meeting.

At a press conference held after the meeting, EPP President Wilfried MARTENS stressed the importance of the Copenhagen Summit. 'This Council is a historical event' he said to the media. 'The meeting will complete the membership of 10 Central and Eastern Europe countries. It is the time of the reunification and the reconciliation of Europe.'

Referring to the Turkey's issue, he said both the Prime Ministers and the opposition leaders attending the meeting accepted that the European Council of Helsinki of 1999 declared that Turkey was a candidate country to join the EU, 'on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states'.

Martens also referred to the 2002 Regular report on Turkey's progress towards accession produced by the European Commission.

The report admits that overall, Turkey has made noticeable progress towards meeting the Copenhagen political criteria since 1998. It also explains that the reforms adopted in August 2002 are particularly far-reaching, and that 'taken together, they provide much of ground work for strengthening democracy and the protection of human rights in Turkey'.

Nonetheless, EPP President underlined that, as the same report also explains, 'Turkey does not fully meet the political criteria'. Therefore 'we must now enter into a period of evaluation, into a period in which we will valuate in which measure Turkey meets the criteria'.

He added that it is now the task of the European Commission to submit a report on the issue to the European Council. 'It is obvious that during the evaluation period Turkey will have to convey with European political standards, with genuine democracy, the rule of law, the respect of the fundamental rights, as well as with the economic criteria'

At the same meeting, EPP leaders also approved a [resolution on maritime security](#), expressing their solidarity with the peoples and government of Spain, France and Portugal and their 'deep concern regarding the repercussions of the serious accident of the oil tanker 'Prestige'.

They also declared that 'a disaster of this nature must never reoccur within the European Union' and expressed their commitment to promote rigorous measures 'in order to protect Europe's citizens against this type of catastrophe'