

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

A BROOKINGS CENTER ON THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE BRIEFING

TURKISH-U.S. RELATIONS: LOOKING AHEAD

Thursday, July 6, 2006

Falk Auditorium

Washington, D.C.

FEATURED SPEAKER:

**ABDULLAH GÜL**  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER and  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF TURKEY

\* \* \* \* \*

## PROCEEDINGS

MR. TALBOTT: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Strobe Talbott, and I want to welcome everyone here today. At Brookings, we are fortunate to have many distinguished visitors from important countries, but Turkey is in a special category. They have been a vital ally of the United States for decades, from the Korean conflict to standing with us on the front lines of the cold war. Turkey's aspiration to be full member of European Union enjoys widespread support in the United States, across party lines, and from one administration to the next. And I'm sure, as Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül will tell us, that theme figured in his very important conversations here in Washington already.

Because of the unique importance of Turkey and the U.S.-Turkish relationship, we have an active program devoted to Turkey here at the Brookings Institution under the direction of Omer Taspinar. It's been in existence for the past four years, and I think it's symbolically significant that the Turkey program is part of the Center on the United States and Europe, which is directed by my colleague, Phil Gordon, who joins us at the podium.

Phil and Carlos Pascual, our vice president and director of Foreign Policy Studies, and I just recently returned from a week in Ankara and Istanbul. Foreign Minister Gül was not there at the time — he was in Baku — but we were able to meet with a number of his foreign ministry colleagues and a range of others who helped us to understand the major issues in the Turkish domestic and foreign policy debate.

Several of those are here today. I want to particularly welcome and thank Ahmet Davutoglu, the chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister; and also Ambassador Apakan, who welcomed us at the ministry; and welcome back to the Brookings Institution Nabi Şensoy, the Ambassador of Turkey to the United States.

Some quick background on the Foreign Minister himself. He's an economist by training. He's been a Member of Parliament since the early 1990s. He was a founder of the Justice and Development Party, the AKP, which won a landslide victory in 2002 and formed the first single-party government in 15 years.

Here in Washington, the Foreign Minister has met with Secretary Rice yesterday, following up on some very important meetings that they had in Ankara. They agreed on a strategic vision document that will guide joint efforts to ease international disputes and reflect shared values.

We're all very grateful, Mr. Minister, that you would be willing to share with us your own strategic vision. And after the minister finishes his remarks, Phil Gordon will moderate a discussion with all of you.

Mr. Minister, the microphone is yours.

(Applause)

MINISTER GÜL: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to be here with you today. This institution has been at the forefront of groundbreaking research and intelligent thinking on world affairs. I see it as a distinct privilege to address this gathering of members and guests.

I would like to use this opportunity to share with you my thinking on why I believe that the relationship between the United States and Turkey will continue to gather new strength and force in the years ahead.

Turkey and the United States have been strong allies since decades past. And naturally, over the course of nearly 60 years, their ties have flourished in many areas, always containing an important defense component. This being so, it is rather what has been taking place at home in Turkey that leads me to this conviction:

I'm referring to the remarkable pace of reform that, during the last four years or so, brought Turkish democracy to European standards. In all respects, Turkish democracy has deepened thanks to wide-ranging legislative and administrative reforms that encompass almost every aspect of Turkish citizens' daily life.

This reform movement has two main dimensions. From the very start, we have recognized the need to couple political reform with economic reform. Indeed, in order to achieve overall success, these two should go hand in hand. If one lags behind, the other fades away soon after. In our case, the two, namely economic and political reforms, were successfully recoupled, each reinforcing the other.

More importantly, Turkey's success has ramifications beyond itself. After all, these reforms have been realized in a Muslim country, making a unique case so far.

This is a gift to the world because the Turkish experience shows that Islam is compatible with democracy and because it inspires other Muslim societies as well.

Indeed, it attracts the attention of the Islamic countries and societies who desire reform and good governance.

Given the heightened expectations in the Muslim world, the many positive effects of these reforms cannot be seen as confined to Turkey alone. As a matter of fact, I have been quite forthcoming and bold whenever I had the opportunity to address several Islamic platforms, like the Organization of the Islamic Conference and other meetings. I was quite vocal about problems of representation, accountability, transparency, gender equality, and more fair distribution of wealth.

Even before the Broader Middle East initiative, I had already been talking openly to the Islamic audiences about the need to put our house in order and adjust to the realities of our day. Simply put, the requirements of the modern age should not be allowed to evade us any longer. This is perceived as a sincere and credible message because we in the first place never shrunk from living up to it.

We have been talking a lot about common values that bind us together. My government did not treat them as mere words on paper but implemented them in day-to-day politics.

I can understand that there may be quarters who are somewhat worried about the implications of the changes that are taking place in Turkey, and, indeed, in the fabric of international relations. They seem to assume that as a result, there will arise a rift between Turkey and the United States. Yet, the case is rather the opposite.

Turkey, with stronger democratic attributes, would only be opening up the way for a healthier relationship, ensuring a more substantial and durable partnership in the longer term. It would also mean a more capable and self-confident partner. As Turkey transforms, it also develops better responses to the challenges of its neighborhood and the broader international community.

These responses in turn help us build soft power on the strength of Turkey's links, expanding into regions that are vital to global security. Turkey's growing soft power is a great asset for Turkey's friends and allies, foremost, the United States.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, this is why Turkey's democracy is the best guarantee for the future of our relationship. This is an age of profound change which compels everyone to reassess conventional wisdom and come up with new responses. In fact, we have all been trying to do that. Indeed, the difficulties that we have to undergo could well be seen as by-products of this adaptation process.

The challenge has been nothing less than this: how to remain aware of and loyal to the fundamental principles and values that have shaped our historic relationship. This is at a time when world politics passes through a difficult transformation that tests almost every other relationship in the world. Yet, the end result is more important than how we got there.

The document entitled "Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue to Advance the Turkish-American Strategic Partnership," which I concluded with Secretary Rice yesterday, attests to the fact that we have succeeded in settling into a course toward a

more robust and stronger relationship. As we start to substantiate in practice the many areas of cooperation listed in the said document, we will see our partnership grow.

Our shared vision covers a wide spectrum of cooperation, areas ranging from promoting peace and stability in the Broader Middle East through democracy; settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict; combating terrorism to energy security; and many other themes which are in fact the burning issues of our times.

One important feature of this document is the structured dialogue section, which incorporates mechanisms that include consultations between respective civil society organizations. I would, therefore, encourage that this esteemed institution also plays an active role in strengthening strategic cooperation between Turkey and the United States.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. GORDON: Thank you, Foreign Minister, for being with us and for sharing those thoughts on a wide range of issues.

The minister has kindly agreed to stay for questions, so I'll open the floor to those questions. I ask only that you state your name and tell us where you're from for the record. And with that, the floor is open.

QUESTION: Lambros Ravantanu (unclear). I work for the Cyprus Greek Daily.

Mr. Gül, I would like to ask you, did you discuss yesterday with Secretary Condoleezza Rice the issue of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul and Turkey, and are you planning to reopen finding the Theological School of Halki?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, first of all, we believe that religious freedom is the fundamental principle of democracy. We are proud that the reform process is continually going on in Turkey. We are solving all the problems. At least it is our good intention. We are trying to solve all the problems of not only the minorities but also the population's problems.

In this respect, we have prepared foundation law. They're going to pass this in the Parliament. It has been accepted in the committees, and soon when we start in the Parliament again, I'm sure it will be passed. There are so many problems of minorities; they complain.

With respect to the college at Halki, the problem is the constitution problem. All of the higher education is under the Higher Education Board. They have proposed some ways, and they said that the faculty can be open on the structure of Istanbul University or Marmara University, but so far I think it has not been accepted. Anyway, we have the intention, and because of the constitution, we're trying to solve the problem.

QUESTION: Did you discuss this specific issue with Condoleezza Rice during the talks yesterday?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, there was a sentence about this; yes, a few sentences.



QUESTION: Thank you. Zorian Emaddi (phonetic) from Syrian TV.

Mr. Foreign Minister, Syria has opened up to Turkey more than any other government before that. Syria and Turkey have probably not had good relations since Syria was a part of the Ultimate Empire.

Now Syria is having a problem, as you well know, with the pro-Israeli people here in this town. The public radio today and many professors at the very respected universities are complaining of the Israeli lobby here that is standing between the interest of America in that region on some of the issues that are addressed. Syria needs your help, of course, as a bridge between the Islamic and Arab world and the Western world.

I wonder what kind of steps Turkey can see itself taking in the future in order to overcome the Israeli lobby efforts to stop any improvement of relations between the United States and several Arab countries, including Syria. What steps have you taken so far in that respect?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, I've told you about our friendship with Syria. Syria is our neighbor. There are 800 kilometers of border, and families move about in some places. We cannot ignore each other. Naturally, we cannot ignore.

Since both of us are in the same region, the security, stability, and economic prosperity of the region is good for all of us. All of us should contribute to this cause to create a better climate there and to end hostile feelings. If we contribute to the solving of the problem, we will get the benefit.

There are, of course, problems; we cannot ignore this. But we should also recognize the realities that the modern age does not allow companies to be isolated — terror communications, threats, terrorism activities. The people are going and coming.

We hope that the values I have just mentioned flourish. We are doing a good job I think. We are facilitating solving the problems in the region. From time to time, we increase our efforts when there are requests from us, so we will continue to do this.

QUESTION: Mary Duff from (unclear) Daily. I wanted to know how has the growing anti-American, and especially anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic, sentiment in Turkey affected your own negotiations within the United States?

MINISTER GÜL: Anti-American and anti-Semitic, you said?

QUESTION: Yes.

MINISTER GÜL: Well, I think it's been exaggerated too much. In Turkey, I don't think that the Turkish people are anti-Semitic or anti-American. They may criticize the policies, which is something else. The policies are being debated here also. But they should not be seen as anti-Americans or anti-Semitic.

We have a Jewish population. We have non-Muslim population. In the past, we have more synagogues and churches in the same place. This is not our habit, you see. There's no habit in Turkey where the people are anti-Semitic.

Criticism is something different. People may not like the policies and may not like the politicians. This is something else.

QUESTION: Kate Nehapetian (phonetic) with the Armenian National Committee of America.

As a follow up, if you could explain, the New York Times reported that Mein Kampf is a best seller or was last year. You were just saying there isn't anti-Semitism.

But my question is, the European Parliament in September 2005, in their resolution to start negotiations with Turkey, stipulated that Turkey must recognize the Armenian genocide, considering it "to be a prerequisite for accession to the European Union." Yet, Turkey criminally prosecutes citizens who merely just speak about the Armenian genocide.

Will Turkey recognize the Armenian genocide and stop prosecuting citizens for speaking about it?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, first of all, that resolution doesn't bind the EU. It is the case that we have started accession negotiation, although that resolution was that. And also, the highest court in the EU decided that will not bind this process. It is just the opinion of some members of the EU Parliament; that's it.

As far as the so-called genocide is concerned, what is a genocide? Genocide is just to kill the people because of their race and because of their religion. The Turkish state, they were in war with three different enemies, and, unfortunately, some of its citizens revolted against the state and the state had to take some measures.

They were against the state at that time. But at the same time, there were Armenian ministers of (unclear) states. All the Armenian churches were open. They hold very important posts, like ministries, like their generals of important state departments. So how can you call this genocide?

Our proposal is so clear. We say let's form a group of scholars from Turkey and Armenia. They should work. You and the third country scholars can join in these communities. We open all archives, including the military archives. They can go. They can come up with a study. We are ready to phrase the result. So, therefore, this is a political issue.

MR. GORDON: Thank you very much.

We'll come to the second row here, and then after that, we'll go back to the second.

QUESTION: (Unclear), Italian news agency.

I wonder if the entrance in the European Union could be for Turkey a kind of economic for your economic role. What does it mean?

MINISTER GÜL: Sorry?

MR. GORDON: Whether EU entry for Turkey could possibly handicap Turkey's economic growth.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MINISTER GÜL: No. The EU process is — well, of course, because of its nature, there are the ups and downs there. It's quite normal. But the Turkish economy is performing very well. It became a success story for IMF.

I just mentioned about the reforms. Those reforms were not only in democratic lives, but economy, and we changed the structure of the Turkish economy. Now the Turkish economy is ready to receive all the shocks from outside and inside. It is real strong, so everything is transparent. All the international financial institutions are monitoring, and everything is opening their reports. Of course, the EU process is helping us.

QUESTION: I'm David Kathell (phonetic) of the Institute of Turkish Studies.

I believe it was last week that Ambassador Ross Wilson was quoted as saying that he was not particularly satisfied with the U.S. approach to solving the PKK problem. I was wondering, in your recent meetings, whether there had been any additional commitment on the part of the U.S. towards resolving the issue of the PKK.

MINISTER GÜL: Thank you.

Of course, we appreciate U.S. efforts. We don't forget that the U.S. is the first country to recognize PKK as a terrorist organization. And also, we don't forget how the U.S. helped us to get the leader of these organizations a few years before. But still our expectation is high. I think we have the right to expect this, so the Turkish people are expecting more.

Don't forget that the Iraq now, unfortunately, is a safe haven for PKK terrorists, and Iraq is a frantic country now. The regime over there is an open regime. So it's not the enemy regime that is sheltered there. So this cannot be understood. We are helping them. Coalition forces are there, and it will be based for the terrorist organizations.

So, therefore, we are expecting more, and I am sure that the United States will do more. The U.S. administration understands this, and they promise in fact. Of course, we have been doing many things together. We appreciate all these things. But we are expecting more, and they are well aware of this.

MR. GORDON: Minister, maybe I can take the prerogative of the chair to ask a question from up here, and then we'll come back for another round from the audience.

When you leave us in a few hours, you're going to go to Iran, and there are two aspects of that trip that I think would be of interest.

One is, you'll be meeting with Iraq's neighbors, and I'd be interested to hear how you see that meeting, whether this is a sign of support for the new Iraqi government, and whether you think that you and Iraq's neighbors see eye to eye on the future political path in Iraq.

The second aspect of that, and is of obvious interest here, is, of course, the fact that the United States and some of its allies are waiting for an answer from Iran on the proposal on the Iranian nuclear program that was put to Iran a couple of weeks ago.

Will you have a chance to raise that issue in Iran, and how do you see the nuclear issue playing out as well?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, first, we're going there for the neighbor countries meeting. I think the ninth time, they're coming together. Turkey initiated this platform, and it became a very useful platform to help Iraq. All the neighbors are coming together, and we are talking about the unity of Iraq and peace in Iraq.

So this is good I think. All the neighbors are focusing on the same target. At least, we are repeating this. This is good political support for them, and they appreciate the Iraqi government also joining this platform.

Yes, I will have some other meetings over there with respect to this nuclear issue. You know that we are involved in this issue intensively, and our allies and friends, and also Iranians, they want to ask to be active in this. I think they're facilitating the process there. As you know, Mr. Solana and Mr. Larijani together with the political directors are going to meet. They were supposed to meet today. I think it was postponed to tomorrow.

I see many reasons to be optimistic, and this opportunity should not be missed. The package is a good package, as we understand. And I think everyone is aware of this; I think there are some methodological problems over there. So I hope this is not missed and a solution will be reached there. This is our expectation of course.

It is not an easy issue, but it is not easy to reach the common position for P5+1 (phonetic). It was not easy. So the reach the common position, and then they handle

the package. I think Iranians there appreciate it also in spite of the package. I think the problem is a methodological problem. I hope it will get resolved.

MR. GORDON: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Hi. As you may know, the U.S. ambassador to one of your neighbors, Armenia, was just recalled for affirming their Armenian genocide. So my question is the following:

Did the Turkish government communicate any displeasure to the State Department for Ambassador John Evans' affirmation of the Armenian genocide?

MINISTER GÜL: I didn't get it.

MR. GORDON: Maybe you could very briefly state it again. Also tell us who you are and who you're with.

QUESTION: My name is Bob Kendoger (phonetic); and I'm from Horizon Media. My question was about the recent recall of Ambassador John Evans, U.S. ambassador to Armenia.

MR. GORDON: Recall of our ambassador to Armenia.

QUESTION: Right, for affirming the Armenian genocide.

My question is, did the Turkish government communicate any displeasure to the State Department for his affirmation of the Armenian genocide?

MINISTER GÜL: No, not to my knowledge. No.

QUESTION: Henri Barkey, Lehigh University.



Mr. Minister, if you could clarify two issues for us. One is, what is the relationship between the Turkish government and the Iraqi Defense Fund or the Turkoman funds, especially considering the diversities that the Turkoman's funds faced in the last elections in Iraq. They didn't do very well.

And number two, there is going to be a referendum in Kirkuk (unclear) at the end of next year. What's the Turkish position if that referendum results in the Kurds getting a majority of the votes in Kirkuk? What will you do?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, in Iraq there are different ethnicities — Arabs, Kurds, Turks — and also different sects. What we want is to see all of them happy on their land and peaceful. Of course, the Turkmen, Kurds, all that, they are our relatives. This is another fact.

We need to set a regime. Our Kurdish friends were operation over there. Not only them, but first the Turkmen were. Then we protected them. When there were chemical attacks on them, where did they go? They came to Turkey, in one night, 500,000 people. They came to Turkey, and they were our guests of course. They remained some years there. So when they needed it, we protected them.

Of course there is no dictatorship. We don't want other groups over there under pressure. We wish the Turkmen, Kurds, Arabs, (unclear) live together peacefully, and they work and they get their share. When I say share, legitimate shares. That's what we want.

Now, when there are problems over there, we help them. They are coming and they are getting training, and they've been helping them. They've been providing all the fundamental, necessary needs of Iraq's people irrespective of their ethnicities. They're being given (unclear), water, everything, and also security. Therefore, we wish also the Turkish Iraqis over there are happy.

As far as Turkey is concerned, there are again different groups over there. We believe that one group should not design the future of Turkey. It is wrong. And Turkey should not be the case for another ethnic struggle over there. So there should be consensus over there amongst the groups. The plan should be on the referendum, otherwise there will be a problem over there, and we don't want to see a problem over there.

The Iraqis suffered a lot. Now it's time they work for prosperity. They should strengthen their friendship and brotherhood, and they should work for their own country. That's it.

QUESTION: (Unclear). Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

Minister, I was wondering, how do you think the Turkish partnership will influence the security structure in the Black Sea region?

Also, I would like to follow up about the Armenian genocide question. I would like to ask about your experience in the process of solving these so-called genocide allegations.

What's the approach of Turkish Armenians and Armenia itself, and the Armenian Diaspora? What seems to be the problem with the Armenian Diaspora in being so non-cooperative?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, in the Black Sea, there's a Black Sea corporation organization. Also there are other organizations there. There's a Black Sea force. They're cooperating, and there is no security problem in the Black Sea.

The Armenians, they are our neighbors. We really feel that we don't have a relationship with them. You know the reason. The occupation of the Karabakh is still going on, and we've reached solutions with the Armenians, and I hope we will have a good relation with them.

Besides this, we don't have any strong or hostile feelings towards them. I will give you an example. You will not believe this.

There are at least 40,000 to 50,000 Armenian citizens, not our citizens, but these are Armenian citizens. They came to Turkey. They got jobs. They are working, they are saving, and they are sending their earnings to their parents and families in Armenia.

If we had hostile feelings, can we allow this? No. Unfortunately, they are spoiled since they are living very comfortable lives. They are creating problems and making everything difficult. I hope that the time will come in the region that we will have good neighborhoods with all of them.

MR. GORDON: Thank you.

The minister's being very generous with his time. I propose we take maybe three more.

Will that be okay?

MINISTER GÜL: Yes, no problem.

QUESTION: Dr. (unclear), from (unclear) Interfaith Dialogue.

How do you envision Turkey's contribution to Europe Union in terms of interfaith dialogue in the accession process?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, as you know, Turkey is a Muslim country, and although we are not a member of the EU yet but in the accession process, we are a Muslim country. First, this proves that the European Union is not the club of one religion. Also, this union proves that a Muslim country can be democratic and can fulfill the European style of democracy, and can be comfortable with the modern world. It's what we have been proving, and I think this is a big contribution.

Of course, when we share the values in EU, this religion, these ethnicities, this language — Europe is multi-religion, multi-language, multi-ethnicities, but the values are ones of democracy. So I think Turkey and the EU are proving that different religions and people that come from historical backgrounds can live together. I think this is very strategic.

QUESTION: My name is Arban Israel (phonetic), and I'm the counselor with the Embassy of Armenia here in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Minister, thank you very much for your opening statement and for all your answers to our questions.

One thing I want just to offer as a remark is, you said that the Turkish government has a good feeling toward Armenians and are ready to negotiate the all outstanding issue. When you mentioned the letter of Prime Minister Erdogan to Robert Kocharian, the only proposal there was to establish the Committee of Historians.

Again, when you say that history is a problem, are you, again, proposing to leave the history to historians? What if the historians could not come to one single conclusion? When you say you are ready to accept results, what if they do not arrive to a single solution?

The second thing is that right after the gaining of independence; the Armenian government has made a question of recognition of genocide by Turkey as a foreign policy priority, so it's not the issue of Diaspora only.

In response to the letter of Prime Minister Erdogan, our president has proposed the ways to negotiate all outstanding issues. You know that the Turkish-Armenian border is wide open from the Armenian side. You know that the Armenian government is the one who is proposing to establish diplomatic relations. In same way you are negotiating with the EU and telling them not to bring the Cyprus issue into the negotiations, but you are bringing the relations of Armenian-Azerbaijan into the Turkish-Armenian issues.

So my question is, what do you see as a way forward in Turkish-Armenian relations?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, this proposal, our proposal, I think it was a good proposal and very open-minded without any condition. If there's a positive response to that, of course, there may be some other alternative proposal from the other side. This can be all talked about. We are not dictating only one thing. We are just showing our good intention that we are ready to solve this problem.

Our intention is really good. When Armenia became independent, we recognized it. We are also one of the first who recognized Armenia. The Black Sea Corporation (unclear) in Istanbul, and we initiated this. Although Armenia doesn't have any cause to the Black Sea, we welcomed them to that organization and they became members. And we have permanent representative in Istanbul, and your flag is raised over there, although we are talking about the Black Sea.

So this shows that we have good intentions. We want to create good atmosphere in the region, and we are ready to call for it. This should not be used as blackmail to us.

Of course, we feel sad about what happened. Many Turks lost their lives, and Armenians. It was a war. There are many tragedies there. It was a war but it was not genocide. What is the genocide? It's clear cut. It's written in U.N. documents and other documents. It became a political issue.

There are some companies in Europe or in different places that are passing resolutions. When we asked them, when did it happen, what happened, what was the problem, they didn't know anything, but they decided something. This is not acceptable.

Let's have a good intention and solve the problems. This is our region, you see? This is our region.

MR. GORDON: Mr. Minister, you've been dealing with all of the difficult, challenging issues that a Turkish foreign minister is perfectly used to dealing with, with international audiences. But a bit to my surprise, you haven't yet been asked about Cyprus. I don't want to let you off the hook. You would probably be disappointed if you faced a multitude of people in Washington and weren't asked about Cyprus —

MINISTER GÜL: You can ask.

MR. GORDON: — so let me do it (laughter).

It seems to me that you or we collectively dodged a bullet a couple of weeks ago when the EU met on Turkey's accession negotiations, and there was considerable fear that the Republic of Cyprus would block those accession negotiations over the issue of the Customs Union and trade between Cyprus and Turkey.

That didn't happen and we escaped that, but we escaped it with a sense that it's going to come up again. The Republic of Cyprus seems to be saying that it is not prepared to see the accession talks go all the way to the end until Turkey recognizes it and

opens trade with it. But Turkey seems to be saying that it's not prepared to do that unless and until the isolation of the Turkish-Cyprus (unclear) is lifted.

Should we not be worried about this stalemate continuing and ultimately interfering with the very important process of Turkey's accession to the EU?

MINISTER GÜL: Well, this is one important issue in fact nowadays.

First of all, this problem is a chronic problem. There was a good chance to solve this problem in 2004. Kofi Annan prepared a plan, and this plan was supported by all the members of U.N., all the companies. So it was the plan of the U.N., and the European Union strongly complained in favor of this plan. But, unfortunately, this plan was rejected, and a great opportunity has been missed.

That is important because before that, the perception was this. They want to reunify the island but the Turks blocked this. This was the perception. But this referendum proved that it was not like that.

Now, the problem is this. One side rejected the plan, responded negatively to the call of EU-U.N, and they're joining the EU. They are being honored. The other side that responded positively to the call of EU-U.N. is being punished now. So this is the problem.

The strategy proposed is to remove the five from the U.N. to the EU platform, which is not acceptable. And, unfortunately, the EU is doing something wrong. They are saying that there's solidarity between the family. I understand the solidarity between the family, but if a member of the family is doing something wrong or against the



interest of the union, that member should be warned, and say what are you doing? You rejected our proposal. We complained. We asked; you rejected. Then, also, you are blocking our promise.

There was a referendum on the 24th, then there was a rejection. On the 26th, the council of EU decided to end the economic isolation of the Turk side, and asked the commission to take the necessary measures. The commission took measures, prepared two regulations, but now they're being blocked. So the EU's prestige is being damaged here.

Now, I don't think that there will be any more blackmail against us. Definitely we want to solve this and we are constructive. Since the referendum, there have been many gestures. The last thing was our action plan. We made a proposal in January. We said let's lift all the restrictions on the island at the same time. So there are embargoes we imposed on Greece it was? We closed our ports. They imposed embargoes on Turks.

Now, we offered, let's lift all of them together. This will create a new climate there. This will be a confidence measure. This will be another step. This will not be the comprehensive solution, but this will open the way. But they are telling us that, no, if you remove the embargo, we will continue. This is not acceptable, and this is against the principle of U.N., the secretary general's report, and also EU principles.

So this is the problem. I hope that this problem — we are constructive, as I said. They've been working hard. Kofi Annan is working hard. I hope that there will be some settlement.

MR. GORDON: Well, thank you.

MINISTER GÜL: Also, I want to add that our region is this. In the eastern Mediterranean, Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, we can be another pillar in EU. This region can be a basin for our corporation. We need this, and the EU needs this. But they should not think that Turkey is in the corner, we will use pressure on that, and they will accept something. This is not the way. This is not good behavior.

MR. GORDON: Thank you. That's an optimistic thought on which to end.

As I said, you've been very generous with your time, but we know you have yet another plane to catch. So I want to thank you. And I want to thank all of you for being here. These are all issues that we want to keep discussing and fostering this type of dialogue, so thank you all for coming.

If I could, I'd like to ask you to remain seated as the minister leaves so that we don't create a big log jam. But before I do that, I want to ask you to join me in thanking him for addressing us.

MINISTER GÜL: Thank you.

(Applause)

\* \* \* \* \*