

# Press Release

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## Reforms on human rights will strengthen Turkey and Europe

Strasbourg, 10.02.2010 - "I have been reassured that human rights reform will continue, and that Turkey is committed to play its role in a new Europe", Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland said upon concluding his visit to Turkey on Tuesday.

During his visit, Thorbjørn Jagland met with Prime Minister Erdoğan to discuss future areas of cooperation and core human rights issues in Turkey. Mr. Erdoğan stressed that Turkey will follow up on judgements by the European Court of Human Rights, and will continue to take new measures to strengthen human rights and democratic institutions in Turkey. Creation of a human rights body, and a commission to fight discrimination, are among new proposals. "These steps show that Turkey continues to move forward on key human rights issues. But areas of concern still remain and the Council of Europe will support Turkey wherever needed" Jagland said.

The Secretary General also discussed with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu the importance of accession of the European Union to the ECHR in securing a single European legal space, including the European Union as a legal entity. Turkey's upcoming chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers was also on the agenda, and the Foreign Minister outlined an active agenda to put the Organisation back on the map focusing on political issues impeding European unity. "A special area of concern will be the rising challenges of a multicultural Europe and the Organisation's ability to make full use of pan-European values" Mr. Davutoğlu said.

"The political leadership of Turkey expresses a strong commitment to Europe, and support for developing the Council of Europe further. I have had fruitful discussion in Ankara, and look forward to the results of initiatives and renewed efforts to resolve outstanding human rights issues. Turkey will be crucial in promoting a stronger understanding of diversity based on respect for human rights and democracy. But I also take note of concerns raised by the human rights community in Turkey over the need for further improvement. We will work with Turkey to that end. I have noted a clear wish for a more visible and proactive Council of Europe to take on the challenges ahead of us, and I am confident that my programme for reform of the Council of Europe will provide for that" Secretary General Jagland said.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.