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## French-German 'lack of vision' has not deterred Turkey in EU bid

The German and French leaders' recent denunciation of the idea of expanding the European Union indefinitely to include new members such as Turkey was met with a bitter and harsh response in Ankara yesterday, as President Abdullah Gül accused the two leaders of a lack of vision.



President Abdullah Gül (L) and his Portuguese counterpart, Anibal Cavaco Silva, review a guard of honor during a welcoming ceremony.

"Turkey has begun [membership] negotiations with the EU, and these negotiations were begun with unanimity. Most of the leaders who added their signatures for the launching of these negotiations are still in [charge in] Europe," Gül told reporters during a joint press conference following talks with his visiting Portuguese counterpart, Anibal Cavaco Silva.

His remarks came when reminded of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy's joint statement declaring that they have a common position regarding Turkey's accession to the EU, which is to offer a privileged partnership for Turkey, not full membership.

The president was also reminded that such statements have been contributing to a decline of support for EU membership among the Turkish public.

"What is binding for us is the legal situation. This is binding for all member countries; likewise it is binding for us. The [European] Commission, the [EU] Council, actually everybody, is aware of this. We will continue the negotiation process in a determined way. Various politicians come and go; they say some things on different occasions -- perhaps due to lack of vision -- but we will not be bothered at all with these [statements]. As a matter of fact, the commission must have already responded to those statements you have mentioned," Gül continued.

The remarks by Merkel and Sarkozy, underlining the two conservative leaders' well-known opposition to Turkish membership, came during a meeting on Sunday. The two met in Berlin in a mutual show of support ahead of the June 7 European Parliament elections. Sarkozy's visit marked the first time that a French president had campaigned in Germany in the run-up to an election. Merkel is scheduled to make a reciprocal trip to Paris at the end of this month.

## Turkish, Portuguese entrepreneurs discuss cooperation

Businessmen aiming to improve trade relations between Turkey and Portugal came together in Ankara yesterday, with the leaders of the national delegations, Faik Yavuz and Basilio Horta, stating at the meeting that important opportunities exist to develop bilateral economic relations.

Yavuz, the deputy chairman of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), stressed that Turkey and Portugal can work not as rivals but as

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Speaking at a gathering organized by her conservative Christian Democrats, Merkel, who has advocated having a vaguely defined partnership with Turkey said, "We cannot take in everyone in Europe as a full member." She added: "We have to talk about the borders of this Europe. It makes no sense if there are ever more members and we can't decide anything anymore." Merkel said, "It is right that we say to people in the European election campaign ... our common position is: a privileged partnership for Turkey, but no full membership."

French President Sarkozy, a longtime opponent of Turkish membership, last week advocated discussing a common economic and security forum with Turkey as an alternative. "When Angela Merkel says Europe must have borders, she is right -- because a Europe without borders would be a Europe without a will, without identity, without values," he said at Sunday's event, where he was a guest of honor as France's leading conservative.

**President Gül said:** "We will mind our own business and, as Turkey, we will do whatever needs to be done within this negotiation process by strongly continuing with our own reforms. Negotiation chapters will be opened and closed when we have the willpower to do so. When that day comes, official openings and closings will be so simple that they will not take more than five minutes."

Turkey entered EU membership talks in 2005, despite opposition voiced in Germany and France. Neither country, however, has blocked the talks. US President Barack Obama has also urged the EU to embrace Turkey as a full member.

Ankara rejects anything that falls short of full membership. On Friday, newly appointed Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Turkey was asking the EU to keep its promises because proposing alternatives to membership was "disrespectful not to us, but to European culture itself."

"We are ready to meet our commitments, but we are expecting our European friends to act in line with the basic moral principles of Europe," Davutoğlu said in Ankara.

complementary countries over a large area. Horta, the chairman of the Portuguese Business Development Agency (AICEP), on the other hand, drew attention to the fact that Portugal, and Turkey -- the 15th largest economy in the world -- can turn many business opportunities into reality together. "As there may be mutual economic relations, these may also be in the form of cooperation in different regions," he explained. "Our exports to and economic relations with Africa are expanding, and Turkey's good relations with its neighbors and the Central Asian countries present important opportunities. We want to improve the poor economic relations between our countries. The doors are open; let us invest for the best," Horta added.

Yavuz asserted that the visit of the Portuguese businessmen's delegation to Ankara was encouraging for new partnerships. He said exchanging views and getting acquainted with each other will bring significant opportunities for both in terms of trade and economic relations. He argued that the present poor relations between Turkey and Portugal, despite the former being the sixth largest economy in Europe and the latter being very successful in liberalization and privatization, are because of a lack of knowledge between the two about the market conditions of the other. **Ali Aslan Kılıç**  
*Ankara*

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