



**Speech by
Christian Wulff,
President of the Federal Republic of Germany,
before the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.
on 19 October 2010 in Ankara**

I offer my warmest greetings to you and the people of Turkey and wish you all the best from my fellow Germans. It is a great honour to be the first German Federal President to address the Grand National Assembly. The invitation you extended demonstrates how intensive and close the ties between our two nations are. I am particularly pleased that my third state visit in the first 110 days of my term in office has brought me to your country. This reflects the great importance of relations between Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Our ties have a long history and have enriched the development of our nations time and again. The dialogue between Orient and Occident inspired writers and artists very early on. Close partnerships were also formed in the fields of politics, science and technology. With the end of the First World War, our countries entered new eras and left behind the German and Ottoman Empires; in these eras, Parliament was to play a decisive and central role.

Yet the first German republic lasted no more than one and a half decades. It led to Hitler assuming power and the birth of a dictatorship. During the National Socialist regime many Germans who were persecuted because of their beliefs or their heritage took refuge in Turkey. The persecuted made their mark here. Examples include composer Paul Hindemith, legal scholar Ernst E. Hirsch, architect Bruno Taut and music professor Eduard Zuckmayer. Many found new positions at Turkey's universities. They were able to make a considerable contribution to the further development of academic

standards here. We are genuinely grateful to Turkey for its willingness to take in the persecuted.

Ernst Reuter, who later became one of the most influential Governing Mayors of Berlin, was also among the persecuted. It was no coincidence that his name was given in 2006 to an initiative aimed at further promoting intercultural dialogue between Germany and Turkey, the Ernst Reuter Initiative.

After the Second World War, relations between our countries developed more positively and intensively than ever before. This can be seen in many examples. For instance, no other country in Europe can claim more residents who are Turkish citizens or of Turkish descent than Germany. My country has long been Turkey's most important economic partner, ranking number one in exports and number two in imports. Many German companies are located in Turkey. They are successful and contribute to economic dynamism.

Turkey has already made two impressive appearances as partner country at the international trade show Hannover Messe and will take on this role again at next year's CeBIT trade show. This year's ITB Berlin travel trade show featured Turkey as its partner country and was a great success for both countries. Each year some 4.5 million Germans take a holiday in Turkey, which makes us the biggest group of foreign visitors. Germans enjoy Turkish hospitality, the country's natural beauty and fascinating cultural heritage.

These examples demonstrate that Germans and Turks in both countries have increasingly become guests and hosts, and ever more often friends and neighbours. Living together and learning from one another – this is part of the close partnership between our two nations. I am very much looking forward to laying the cornerstone of the German-Turkish University during my visit. This university will serve as a beacon of our relations and an important building block of German-Turkish academic cooperation. Here we are combining different academic traditions and enabling joint learning and action.

For decades, Germany and Turkey have enjoyed especially close ties within NATO. As partners in the Alliance, we support one another. During the Cold War, Turkey made considerable contributions over the decades to protecting freedom and security in Europe. It is also thanks to Turkey that my country is reunited in freedom and self-determination. This also deserves to be acknowledged. Today we are facing 21st century threats such as terrorism, asymmetric threats by militant extremist groups and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. To counter these challenges to world peace, close cooperation between Turkey and Germany is needed.

With nearly 1800 ISAF soldiers, your country is making a significant contribution to establishing a secure environment for

reconstruction in Afghanistan. With an eye to regional policy, Turkey is working harder than many within the Ankara Process to encourage cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are extremely appreciative of this. The disastrous floods in Pakistan have challenged us to provide an unheard of level of stronger, more extensive and faster assistance.

As Turkey's parliament, you constantly deal with the issue of Cyprus. We believe progress must be made in the Cyprus negotiations and the remaining knots must be untangled. Resolving the issue would not only provide the opportunity to boost the island's economic development, it would also have a positive effect on stability and good-neighbourly relations in the entire eastern Mediterranean.

With respect and strong support, Germany is observing the steps Turkey is taking to positively shape relations with all of its neighbours. The rapprochement between your country and Armenia has our full support. Normalization of relations would be a major step towards a common future – a future with an open border that would enable political, economic and cultural exchange, a future in which contentious issues are no longer swept under the rug. This would also be an important contribution to stabilizing the region. I would like to ask and encourage you to continue along this path.

After the Second World War the Federal Republic of Germany was given the unique opportunity by its former opponents to reconcile with them. The NATO allies stood by us as we established a free democratic social order and embraced our country in the network of European security and cooperation.

Our inclusion in NATO and European integration established the right conditions for beginning a process of reconciliation with our neighbours: first in the west, with France in particular, and then also with our neighbours Poland and the Czech Republic in the east. Courage and political will were essential. Overcoming historic differences is impossible without first facing up to one's own responsibility. In doing this, we Germans have learned that even if it is a slow and sometimes painful process, it is worth it! Only through reconciliation can a new foundation for trust emerge. It is the only way to find a path to the future.

Germany's history gives rise to certain responsibilities that I would also like to mention here. For us Germans, the State of Israel's right to exist and its security are non-negotiable. At the same time, we are also convinced that in the long term Israel's security can only be guaranteed through the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state – a state existing peacefully alongside Israel. We therefore support President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad bilaterally as well as within the framework of the European Union in establishing state institutions. We also have high hopes for the ongoing

peace talks. In this respect as well, Turkey has an increased responsibility due to its global standing. Both sides in the Middle East conflict must take difficult steps in order to help the negotiations succeed and we should all offer our constructive assistance.

Your country is particularly vulnerable to Iran's nuclear ambitions. Our doubts about the exclusively peaceful nature of that programme remain. We share your concern that this could lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East if we do not swiftly put a stop to it in time. We are actively working with our partners in the E3+3 group to find a diplomatic solution.

At the same time, we want to make clear that it is now up to Iran to show progress. UN Security Council Resolution 1929 rightly envisages tougher sanctions as long as Iran does not meet the demands of the international community. We have repeatedly stated that the offer of dialogue with Iran is still on the table, but that it should also be accepted.

You are probably expecting me to say a few words about our many fellow citizens of Turkish descent who constitute the largest group of immigrants in Germany. They are at home in both cultures, yours as well as ours. They are most welcome in Germany and they are part of our country.

In the 1960s the so-called "guest workers" made a decisive contribution to Germany's economic boom. They did excellent work, often under extremely difficult personal circumstances. Their contribution deserves only the highest recognition and we all owe them our sincere gratitude.

By now, many people of Turkish descent have made Germany their home, attended university, started businesses and created many valuable jobs. We could not imagine our country without them. Many of them have become German citizens. This is a good sign. I encourage everyone in my country to participate responsibly. There is hardly a family here in Turkey that does not have relatives in the Federal Republic of Germany. As President of everyone who lives in Germany, I call for all migrants to actively make an effort to become part of German society.

Immigrants, including those from your country, have made Germany more diverse, open and cosmopolitan. However, living together in diversity also presents a major challenge and duty for everyone involved. It is important to me that we discuss problems openly so that we can find a solution to them. Among these problems are prolonged dependency on the welfare state, the prevalence of crime, macho attitudes and a refusal to be educated or contribute to society. These are by no means problems that are caused by or limited to immigrants. Illusions of multiculturalism led to problems being

regularly underestimated. An open and respectful dialogue is essential for successful integration.

No one has to give up their cultural identity or deny their heritage. What is important is respecting and protecting the rules and laws for living together in each society. In Germany this includes our constitution and the values that are enshrined in it: first and foremost human dignity, freedom of expression, equal rights for men and women and a religiously and ideologically neutral state.

It is important to learn the German language, observe the law and familiarize oneself with the German way of life. Anyone who wants to live in our country must follow the rules and accept our way of life. We Germans are particularly grateful for the comments made by President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Minister for EU Affairs Bağış, who have all called for integration in recent weeks.

Islamic religion teachers educated in Germany and imams educated in Germany will contribute to successful integration in the future. They will help us counter fundamentalist trends. For neither Turkey nor Germany will tolerate extremism. As friends, we cannot allow ourselves to be forced into false confrontation, which appears to be the goal of some individuals.

Like Germany, Turkey has undergone major changes over the last few decades and especially in recent years. You have made key decisions to modernize your country's legislation and institutions. We have followed the most recent amendments to the constitution in particular with great interest. With these reforms, Turkey is taking more steps towards European standards. I would like to expressly encourage you to continue along this path.

Turkey has the opportunity to demonstrate that Islam and democracy, Islam and the rule of law, Islam and pluralism are not mutually exclusive. Your country has combined a modern understanding of the state with vibrant Islam. And Turkey is defined not least by the fact that it is open both to the west and the east. Your country enjoys cultural and economic ties with the Middle East that go back centuries. A Turkey anchored in the west that pursues an active, stability-oriented policy with its neighbours to the east, a Turkey that serves as a bridge between Occident and Orient is an asset for Europe.

As a country with a special interest in linking Turkey to the European Union, Germany hopes that you will continue along the way to Europe that was paved by the great Turkish statesman Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. We stand by the decision to conduct the accession negotiations in a fair and open-ended manner. At the same time, we expect that in return, Turkey will fulfil the requirements it agreed to.

Both of our countries have long been members of the Council of Europe. For many years, we have been bound by the principles of

human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights. This includes the protection of minorities as well as religious and cultural pluralism. Muslims in Germany are able to practice their faith in a dignified setting. The increasing number of new mosques is a clear sign of this.

We therefore expect Christians in Islamic countries to enjoy the same right to openly live their faith, educate their own clergy and build churches. In all countries, and especially in our two countries, people should enjoy the same rights and opportunities regardless of their religious beliefs.

Here in Turkey, there is a long tradition of Christianity. There is no doubt that Christianity is part of Turkey. I look forward to taking part in an ecumenical service this Thursday in Tarsus and I am very excited to hear that there are more and more voices in Turkey advocating that more churches be opened for religious services. I would like to strongly encourage such development. After all, religious freedom is part of our understanding of Europe as a community of shared values. We must enable religious minorities to practice their beliefs freely. This idea is not without its opponents, but is absolutely essential for the future of our world. The peaceful coexistence of different religions is one of the major challenges the world has to master in the 21st century. As overwhelming as this task may appear, with good will and respect for the dignity of each individual it is much more easily accomplished than many of the other issues we must address such as creating a new global financial system or countering climate change.

The German and the Turkish people want to live together and have mutual respect for one another. It is my personal goal to place ever greater emphasis on the German-Turkish partnership and friendship. Let us work together for an economically strong, innovative, humane world devoted to peace in the 21st century. In the words of the great Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: "Peace at home, peace in the world."
- "Yurtta barış, dünyada barış."