



Cross - Party Group on Turkey in the Scottish Parliament

Convener: James Dornan MSP
Deputy Convener: Gordon MacDonald MSP
Deputy convener: Hanzala Malik MSP

Secretary: Sitki Nalci
Email: CPG-on-Turkey@outlook.com

MINUTES OF

Cross-Party Group Meeting on Turkey in the Scottish Parliament

Committee Room 5

Tuesday, 15 December 2015, 6pm

PRESENT

James Dornan MSP, Convener
Gordon MacDonald MSP, Deputy Convener
Hanzala Malik MSP, Deputy Convener
Sitki Nalci, Secretary
James Trolland
Murat Ozkok-Ohr
Durali Cengiz
Semih Lutfi Turgut: Turkish Consul General in Edinburgh
Ugur Yilmaz Consul, Turkish Consulate General
Omer Guler: Vice Consul, Turkish Consulate
Dr Feyza Sanver: The Scottish Salmon Company
Rafi Karagol: JCP Eurasia Rating
Norman Rouxel
Nazmi Okan; Speak Turkish
John Clifford: Austrian Consulate
Judy Ozkan: Speak Turkish

APOLOGIES:

Mehmet Mertcan, Can Ozkan, Serhat Sari, Atilla Boyla, Haydar Demir, Mehmet Akdeniz, Shelagh Demir, Dr Chris Ferrard

1. James Dornan MSP Convener of the Cross Party Group on Turkey welcomed all the members and asked those present to introduce themselves.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting were discussed and accepted unanimously, with the agreed proviso that there were to be minor amendments made. They will be sent round shortly).

3. Sub Groups

- I. Education and Culture Sub Group: Judy Ozkan from Speak Turkish provided a verbal report on developments in Speak Turkish. The organisation is seeking permanent premises to host two classes, one for children and the other for adults. Twenty to thirty people have expressed an interest in attend the classes. It was suggested that schools within Edinburgh could be used as suitable venues. However, schools present capacity issues and do not always lend themselves to hosting classes.
- II. Parliamentary Sub Group: Convener James Dornan MSP reported that the sub group suspended activities due to the two General Election campaigns that have been recently fought in Turkey. Consideration was given to renewing efforts to build up re4lationships between the two parliaments after the second election held which was held in November 2015.
- III. Business Sub Group: A written report had been submitted to the members of the Cross Party Group that gave rise to a discussion on increasing business activity between the UK and Turkey. Financial services were of particular interest given the size of that sector in Scotland. Micro financing was of particular relevance and consideration was given to what action could encourage UK and Scottish firms to invest in this field.

The Consul General initiated a short discussion to up-date the Group on Turkish Airlines who are now sponsors of Rugby Union.

The Consul General reported that the Scottish Chamber of Commerce had a successful visit to Turkey. This visit has resulted in a study concerning the development of business to business contact between Scottish and Turkish firms and exploring the possible utilisation of Istanbul as a strategic hub for business and cultural ties.

4. Guest Speaker Murat Ozkok-Ohr

Mr Ozkok-Ohr gave a presentation on the web company Skyscanner and the role of digital business sector and how it can further the relationship between Scotland and Turkey, particularly in developing tourism between the two countries.

Further to his contribution it was suggested by Deputy Convener Hanzala Malik MSP that the Group should explore how digital technology can be used to develop Scotland's infrastructure in rural parts of the country by asking question of the Scottish Government and establishing a liaison with Visit Scotland to explore this further.

Action: Convener James Dornan MSP to establish what steps are already being taken to develop Scotland's infrastructure in rural parts of the country.

The discussion moved onto visas and the difficulties and costs attached to gaining visas. It was recognised that this was out with the competence of the Scottish Parliament, however, it was agreed that the Convener write to the Cabinet Secretary asking for an update on any discussions taking place on this matter with the UK Government.

Action: The Convener to write to the Cabinet Secretary asking him for an update on any discussions taking place on this matter with the UK Government.

5. AOCB

Mr Clifford raised the recent talks in Paris concerning global warming and its impact on the Group's aims and objectives. The Convener stated that this was not within the Cross Party Group's remit.

Mr Clifford also raised the possibility of having future discussions surrounding Turkey's possible accession to the EU.

Mr Nalci reported that he had received emails from Positive Action in Housing that were highly critical of the Turkish response to the European refugee crisis and that they were promoting a mendacious view of Turkey's role in this crisis. The view was that this too is outside the remit of the Cross Party Group and that if members had concerns over the content of these communications then the recommended course of action would be for individuals to write to PAiH, engage the legal profession or make a formal approach through the Consul General to the authorities.

The Convener reported the future status of the Group during the period of dissolution. The process would begin with the Group's AGM at the next meeting in February 2016. The Group would cease to exist as of 00:01 hours on the 24th March 2016. All paperwork and finances have to be lodged with the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

Once Parliament is convened the Group would, if they wish to be re-registered, would have to meet and agree the aims and objectives of the Group and elect office bearers within the first 90 days of the new Parliament meeting. This would allow a formal representation to be made to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament for approval.

6. Close. Convener thanked everyone and the meeting is closed at 8 pm.