
MERKEL SEEKS 'GOOD RELATIONSHIP' WITH TURKEY

- 04.05.2017

Anadolu Agency (3 May 2017)

German Chancellor says Turkey remains an important ally for EU against terrorism, plus in dealing with Syria, Iraq.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday called for better relations between the EU and Turkey.

In an interview with German daily Kolner Stadt-Anzeiger, Merkel described Turkey as an important ally in the fight against terrorism and in efforts to end the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

Referring to European criticism of Turkish constitutional changes approved in the countrys April 16 referendum, Merkel did not back calls to suspend Turkeys EU membership talks or to end cooperation with Ankara.

We must be clear in our criticism, no doubt about that. But at the same time we must act in a smart way, because it is in our own interest to have good relationship with Turkey, she said.

More than 50 percent of Turkish citizens voted Yes for a presidential system in Turkey but several European institutions raised concerns, arguing such a change would weaken the independence of the judiciary plus other checks and balances necessary in a democratic system.

The German Chancellor said such concerns should be addressed in bilateral dialogue between the EU and Turkey.

However, she warned Turkeys potential move to reintroduce the death penalty would destroy the basis for EU membership talks. Capital punishment is banned in all EU nations.

Merkels remarks came after an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers in Malta on Friday, where they discussed future relationships with Turkey, among other issues.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, who also joined the meeting of EU member and candidate states in Malta, told reporters some European governments had admitted they had been wrong on Turkey.

Cavusoglu said a Turkey-EU summit was expected to be convened, but added no date had been decided.

European Council president Donald Tusk and EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker are set to meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of a NATO summit on May 24-25

in Brussels, to discuss recent tensions in relations and the possibility of reviving EU-Turkey cooperation.

President Erdogan continued his sharp criticism of the EU on Tuesday and said many chapters in Turkey's membership talks were blocked for domestic political reasons.

<http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/merkel-seeks-good-relationship-with-turkey/810584>

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