



For immediate use 15 December 2004

Press Release

SNP MEP backs Turkey talks but condemns secret ballot

"Parliament hardly setting an example"

SNP MEP Alyn Smith today welcomed the vote in the European Parliament to open talks with Turkey on possible Turkish accession to the EU. He also condemned the right wing in the Parliament for forcing through a decision to hold the final vote by a secret ballot.

Mr Smith voted to support the commencement of negotiations with Turkey, which was supported by the Parliament 407 votes to 262 with 29 abstentions. The European Council, the leaders of Europe's governments, will make the final decision on starting negotiations with Turkey on Friday.

Speaking after the vote Mr Smith said

"I am pleased that the Parliament was able to give such a decisive green light today, as I believe a no vote would have sent the worst possible signal to Turkey and the Islamic world. Turkey is not eligible for membership today, but to start talks is the only way to encourage the forces of progress within Turkey.

"Negotiating with Turkey does not mean automatic entry to the EU but offers a chance to further the cause of human rights and democracy in that country as well as the opportunity to improve the situation for the Kurds and resolve the situation in Cyprus. This is not an opportunity the EU should throw away "

"It is just such a shame that in all our debates about openness and transparency being lacking in Turkey, the right wing of the parliament then manages to force through a secret vote on the issue here. Hardly a good example."

ENDS

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