EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue

The European Union and Turkmenistan held the sixth round of their Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels today.

The Turkmen delegation was led by Mr Vepa Hajiyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and included senior officials from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior and the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, and the chairperson of the parliamentary committee on the protection of human rights. The EU delegation was led by Ms Elisabeth Tison, Head of the Human Rights Strategy and Policy Implementation Division in the European External Action Service.

The dialogue was held in a constructive atmosphere, with exchanges on a wide range of issues, including conditions in detention, freedom of expression, women's rights and cooperation in international organisations. The EU welcomed some positive legislative reforms, and encouraged Turkmenistan to move forward with the adoption of a National Human Rights Action Plan that includes the recommendations made during Turkmenistan's appearance before the UPR process at the UN Human Rights Council in 2013.
The EU raised serious concerns about continued reports of grave human rights violations in Turkmenistan, including the torture and mistreatment of detainees, enforced disappearances, censorship of the press and the blocking of websites, excessive restrictions on civil society and violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Individual human rights cases were raised during the meeting.

The next round of the EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue is expected to take place in Ashgabat in 2015.