

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Government of Canada should explore ways to facilitate further contacts with Turkey both at the official level and through private sector, civil society, educational and cultural connections. Consideration should be given to inviting Prime Minister Recep Erdogan to visit Canada and to address Parliament on, among other matters, strengthening ties with countries of the Muslim world.

A broad spectrum of constructive official and private contacts between Canada and Turkey continues apace. On May 29, 2003 Canada and Turkey signed a Framework Memorandum of Understanding establishing a structured basis on which to enhance bilateral relations across-the-board during a visit of the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs to Ankara.

Governmental contacts regularly occur at all levels. Prime Minister Martin met Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan during the June 2004 G8 Summit at Sea Island, Georgia. He also met with Turkish Energy Minister, Hilmi Guler, during a refuelling stop in Ankara on January 15, 2005 on his way to the tsunami affected states of southeast Asia, to discuss the strengthening of bilateral relations particularly in the commercial energy and mining sectors. The Commander of the Canadian Maritime Forces visited Turkey in April 2004 at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart. In September 2004 senior Turkish officials were in Ottawa and Montreal to complete negotiations on a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Social Security payments that took effect on January 1, 2005. Earlier in May 2003, the Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East) Gar Knutson led a trade mission to Turkey of 24 companies from across Canada to investigate trade and investment opportunities that was well received in Turkey. Foreign Affairs Minister Pettigrew met initially with his Turkish colleague, Abdullah Gul on December 9, 2004 on the margins of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels. In addition both the Governor General and the Speaker of the House of Commons have been invited to visit Turkey when mutually convenient arrangements can be made. A full range of other high-level visit is currently being considered.

The Canadian Turkish Business Council was created in June 2002 to enhance commercial links between the private sectors in Canada and Turkey. In May 2005, it is organizing a major joint trade promotion and investment Conference in Istanbul with the Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board followed by a trade mission visit to Ankara. In 2003, the Canadian Embassy organized a festival of Canadian films in Istanbul and Ankara and regularly promotes the showing of Canadian movies including those for children, at Turkish film festivals. It also supported the October 2004 publication and distribution of the first Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Authors in Turkish, subtitled "Beyond the 49th Parallel", to stimulate Turkish interest in modern Canadian literature. In addition, in 2004, the Canadian Embassy assisted Gazi University in Ankara to establish a Centre for Canadian Studies and is continuing to expand its interactive e-mail network of "Canadianists" working in Turkish Universities.