



Department for International Trade

Ranil Jayawardena MP
Minister for International Trade

King Charles Street
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AH

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E jayawardena.correspondence@trade.gov.uk
W gov.uk

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Mr Christos Karaolis
President
National Federation of Cypriots in the UK

By email: christos.karaolis@cypriotfederation.org.uk

30th September 2020

Dear Mr Karaolis, Ms Moskofian, Mr Ozcan and Mr Ragab,

Thank you for your correspondence of 2nd September, regarding trade negotiations between the United Kingdom and Turkey. The Prime Minister has asked me to reply, as this matter falls within my brief.

HM Government places a great deal of importance on our trading relationship with Turkey. Bilateral trade was worth over £18.6 billion in the year up to April 2020 and, as you note, Anglo-Turkish trade talks are underway to protect that trading relationship. Our priority this year is to seek to replicate the effects of existing EU trading arrangements with Turkey, as far as possible, into a bilateral arrangement between the United Kingdom and Turkey by the end of the Transition Period. It is important that we provide certainty for business, support both of our economies and protect jobs.

In equal step, the United Kingdom has a strong history of promoting our values globally and we are clear that trade does not have to come at the expense of our record in upholding rights and responsibilities. This will remain a core part of our foreign policy.

We take our export control responsibilities seriously too. We examine every application on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'), which provide a thorough risk assessment framework and require us to consider the possible impact of providing equipment and its capabilities. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria, including respect for rights and international humanitarian law. As with all countries, we keep our approach to Turkey under continual review.

We understand the importance and significance of hydrocarbon exploration to Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. I can assure you that we have urged Turkey and Greece to prioritise opportunities for dialogue and pursue de-escalation. We have encouraged both sides to enter into dialogue to resolve outstanding issues, and we have engaged our US and European partners in support of this. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas recently spoke to her Turkish, Greek and Cypriot counterparts on this matter, and the Defence Secretary has discussed tensions with the Turkish, Greek, French and German Defence Ministers in recent weeks also. British Ministerial engagement in support of a negotiated solution is continuing.

We made clear our opposition to Turkey's military intervention in north east Syria last October, including through the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on 15th October. We welcome the fact that the ceasefire there broadly continues to hold and support both Turkey's diplomatic efforts to maintain the ceasefire in Idlib – agreed with Russia on 5th March – and their generosity in hosting more than three million Syrian refugees.

We do not support Turkish or any other external military activity in Libya that risks aggravating the conflict and worsening regional tensions. We have expressed our concerns to the Turkish Government, as we have with other external actors whose activity continues to fuel the conflict. All parties to the Libyan conflict must de-escalate, commit to a ceasefire and return to UN-led political dialogue. The Foreign Secretary delivered this message to Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu during his visit to London on 8th July.

I hope the above will reassure you of the robustness of our policies on these important matters and our intention to continue to engage the Turkish Government on a range of issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ranil', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

RANIL JAYAWARDENA MP
Minister for International Trade