

September 25, 2014

The Honourable John Baird, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, I would like to thank you for the Government of Canada's response to our report entitled "Building Bridges: Canada-Turkey Relations and Beyond."

The response confirms the government's recognition of the benefits that stand to be gained from stronger Canada-Turkey relations, and of the potential of many of our report's recommendations to contribute towards the realization of that objective. We believe, however, that our recommendations number four, five and six merit further consideration.

Recommendation 4 – That the Government of Canada undertake to enter into a youth mobility agreement with the Government of the Republic of Turkey, which could include young professional and international co-op experiences, and with reasonable quotas for each category.

Taking this recommendation under advisement, the government's response points to a number of new and existing programs promoting cooperation in youth education and work exchanges between Canada and Turkey.

Our committee acknowledges the existence and value of such programs. However, we maintain the view that a youth mobility agreement with the Republic of Turkey would

reinforce and give greater effect to existing initiatives by raising the profile of youth exchanges and bringing a measure of formality to the mutual desire for cooperation in this area.

Recommendation 5 – That the Government of Canada develop a foreign policy strategy that features a Canada Brand and profiles Canada’s advantages, notably in technology and education.

The government’s response notes that, “A broader national branding initiative was not assessed to be among the most effective tools for inclusion in the GMAP. However, the GMAP does improve and coordinate the branding and marketing of Canada abroad at the strategic level.” The response goes on to highlight several sector-specific branding initiatives underway, including the Canada Brand for education marketing.

Although it acknowledges the value of such sector-specific brands and welcomes efforts to build synergies between existing branding initiatives, the committee reiterates its view that a more inclusive “Canada Brand” could help generate recognition, particularly among business communities abroad, of Canada’s distinct advantages. This point was brought to the committee’s attention by Turkish businesses and business associations, which explained the difficulties they face in promoting partnerships with Canadian counterparts that remain relatively unknown in Turkey. Canadian businesses have raised similar concerns in testimony to the committee in the context of this and past studies on emerging economies.

We would also like to restate our specific emphasis on the need to strengthen branding of Canadian technology. The potential benefits of such an initiative are particularly pronounced with respect to Turkey, which is pursuing an ambitious development agenda but faces shortages of technological expertise in areas in which Canada is a world leader.

Recommendation 6 – That the Government of Canada consider memoranda of understanding with the Government of the Republic of Turkey in the areas of science and technology, mining and energy.

The government’s response notes that “the relationship between Canada and Turkish S&T organizations is still in initial stages and therefore the establishment of an S&T agreement is not yet warranted.”

The committee maintains the view that a memorandum of understanding in science and technology could propel the relationship between Canadian and Turkish science and technology organizations to the next level; waiting for those relationships to mature prior to entering an MOU risks missing the opportunities that stand to be gained from a clear articulation of Canada's intent at the highest-level.

We hope that these clarifications help underscore our committee's view of the opportunities that a stronger Canada-Turkey relationship presents, and that they serve to encourage continued Canadian initiative toward the fulfillment of that potential.

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable A. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator
Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade