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'Do not wait on EU for further cooperation'

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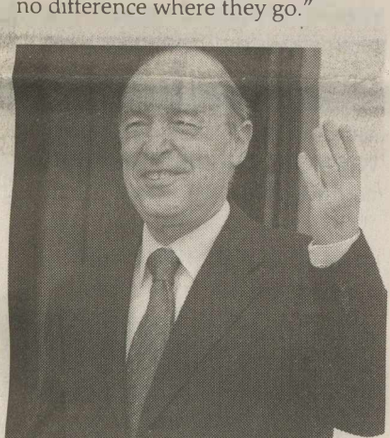
Turkey and Greece should use exploratory talks to find a solution to their bilateral problems, a former Greek premier said at a conference organized by Bilgi University in Istanbul on Monday.

Former Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis criticized the tendency to wait for Turkey's entry into the European Union before solving bilateral issues, saying both sides were wasting time with this stance. "For me, waiting for an indefinite time is a waste of time for more cooperation, a waste of time for more wealth," he said, implying that Turkey's entry to the 27-nation bloc could take years.

Continental shelf

Simitis said the disagreement between Turkey and Greece concerns the delimitation of the continental shelf on the Aegean. "If they cannot find a solution by exploratory talks, we are ready to go to the International Court of Justice," he said, adding, "but I believe we should not wait for years. We should begin discussions in good faith now. I believe a solution will provide a win-win case for both sides."

When asked about resentment in Greek public opinion about Greece not being included in the travel plans of U.S President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Simitis said: "We have progressed from the times when if a U.S. official visited Turkey, he had to go to Greece, or if he went to Greece, he then had to go to Turkey. What we expect from the U.S. is to do its job well. It makes no difference where they go."



AP photo

CONFLICT: Former Greek PM Simitis says problems stem from the delimitation of the continental shelf on the Aegean.