

## **Press release**

**Oct 8, 2009**

# **CFT hosts exhibition stand, holds fringe meeting, signs 150 members at crucial Conservative Party Conference**



Conservative Party held its 126<sup>th</sup> annual conference in Manchester this year, between Monday 5<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October. 12,500 delegates and 2,000 journalists attended the conference, which was the last before the general election. It was widely covered by the world media, as the Conservatives, the leading party in the polls for a long time, disclosed many new policy initiatives. There were 371 policy related “fringe meetings” in total.

CFT had an exhibition stand throughout the conference, featuring up-to-date information about Turkey as well as Turkish delight, coffee and wine for the delegates to sample. Many senior politicians visited the stand, including Party Chairman Eric Pickles, Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague MP, Shadow Europe Minister Mark Francois MP, Shadow International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell MP and Shadow Justice Minister David Burrowes MP. Prominent Members of the European Parliament Dan Hannan, Geoffrey Van Orden and Syed Kamall were also among the visitors. The stand was popular among delegates as well - around 150 new members signed up and pledged support, including many parliamentary candidates and senior party activists from around the UK. CFT also used the stand to promote the parliamentary candidate Andrew Charalambous, who was recently selected to contest the Edmonton seat in London at the general election.

This year CFT has initiated joint projects with other parliamentary groups in order to further improve its standing within the Party. Part of CFT's exhibition stand at the conference was given over to the European Azerbaijan Society to raise awareness on a number of issues including Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. CFT also hosted a joint fringe meeting with Conservative Friends of Poland focusing on future visions of the EU.



In her opening speech at the fringe meeting, Conservative Friends of Poland chairman Teresa Potocka reminded the audience that the friendship between Poland and Turkey goes back to declaration of Eternal Peace in 1533, and noted Poland's continued strong support for Turkey's EU membership. Keynote speakers were Mark Francois MP and Geoffrey Van Orden MEP, who expressed their pleasure in seeing the two groups working together and compared the EU accession paths of Turkey and Poland. A founder member of CFT, Van Orden pointed out that Turkey had been “looking Westward for the last 90 years” and that Europe had a responsibility to recognise this. But he also warned against backward steps Turkey might take and said “the law against freedom of speech (article 301) has no place in modern Turkey”.

CFT's presence at the final party conference before the general election and its success in attracting new members has cemented its position within the Conservative Party. The group will continue its work to provide information on and raise awareness about Turkey and also support Conservative parliamentary candidates in the run-up to the election.

**About the Conservative Friends of Turkey (CFT):**

CFT promotes strong ties between Turkey and the Conservative Party at all levels. CFT regularly communicates with its broad membership base, acting as an impartial source of information on many topics concerning Turkey. CFT has more than 400 members, including 21 Members of Parliament, 2 peers from the House of Lords, 3 Members of the European Parliament, many Tory activists and representatives from business and civil society organisations.

[www.cfot.org.uk](http://www.cfot.org.uk)