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## Pope Agrees Islam is Religion of Peace

"I told the pope that Islam was a religion of peace and tolerance and he shared the same ideas," Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan told a press briefing after meeting Pope Benedict XVI at Ankara airport.

Erdogan and the pope talked for about 25 minutes at Esenboga Airport in the Turkish capital Ankara.

Erdogan gave a statement on his meeting with the pope just before his departure for Riga, Latvia to attend a NATO summit.

He said that the short meeting was about the Alliance of Civilizations and the interfaith dialogue.

Erdogan stated that the pope's visit to a predominantly Muslim country was very important and right on time with the declaration of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, which Erdogan co-chairs with his Spanish counterpart Zapatero.

Saying that the government did its best to welcome the pontiff in a hospitable manner, Erdogan expressed his wishes that the visit would be fruitful for world peace.

Asked about the pope's attitude on Turkey's EU membership, Erdogan replied: "I said that I expected his support on membership and the pope responded, 'We are not politicians but would like Turkey to join the EU.'"

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