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TURKEY ESTABLISHED AN EU COORDINATION BOARD

The establishment of the EU Coordination Board is an important step towards accelerating the efforts aimed at alignment with the EU *acquis*.



As stated in the Circular, the Board is set to meet at least once a year and the secretariat services will be carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs. In addition, if deemed necessary, the Board will establish working groups for different aspects of Turkey-EU relations, including negotiation chapters.

Considering the fact that on 14 October 2019 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs organised another meeting bringing together relevant stakeholders in order to revive the efforts to carry out Turkey's EU Communication Strategy, one can say that there is a stir in the EU process on the Turkish side. However, in order to overcome the current stagnation in Turkey-EU relations, Turkey should take more concrete steps and get back to the reform agenda. Having an EU Coordination Board, planning the harmonisation efforts to the EU *acquis*, making the necessary references to the *acquis* in legislative processes will certainly contribute to Turkey's accession process. Moreover, Turkey's EU Communication Strategy will be instrumental provided that it is translated into action and supported by concrete steps. In European Commission's latest Turkey Report, the term "backsliding" was used 14 times in six fundamental areas. According to the report, Turkey made good progress only in six *acquis* chapters, whereas in the remaining *acquis* chapters progress was either limited or non-existent. Although Turkey's determination to join the EU is underlined on every occasion by the decision-makers, it is time for action.

Turkey established an EU Coordination Board through Presidential Circular No. 2019/22 which entered into force upon its publication in the Official Gazette No. 30921 of 17 October 2019. The Board aims at conducting the work related to the EU in a coordinated manner. The Board, which will be composed of deputy ministers of the relevant ministries and senior executives of the competent institutions, will be chaired by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs.

In the Circular, it was stated that the political, economic and social reforms within the scope of Turkey's EU membership goal

contributed to a drastic change in the country and enabled Turkey to become a powerful actor in its region as well as in international fora. Moreover, the efforts for alignment with the EU *acquis*, which affects every aspect of the social life, played an important role in improving life standards in Turkey. Therefore, in the Circular it was stressed that Turkey continued to pursue EU harmonisation efforts with determination.

Moreover, public institutions and organisations will conduct their related duties and responsibilities according to a program to be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs within

the framework of the main objectives, principles and goals set by the President and in line with the development plan and other programs. Furthermore, the principles to be followed in the draft legislation aiming at alignment with the EU *acquis* and the procedures regarding the references to EU legislation will be prepared taking into consideration the guidelines to be published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs. Moreover, as stated in the Circular, public institutions and organisations should inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs about their correspondence, meetings, consultations and high-

level meetings with EU institutions and officials.

In the Circular, the main responsibilities of the EU Coordination Board are stated as determining the priority areas and work to be done for alignment with the EU *acquis*; directing, monitoring and evaluating the work of the public institutions and organisations on the harmonisation and implementation of the EU *acquis*; examining the proposals from the public institutions and organisations, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and universities on harmonisation and implementation efforts related to the EU *acquis*.



TURKEY-EU JCC MEMBERS CONVEYED THEIR SUPPORT MESSAGE FOR OPERATION PEACE SPRING TO PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN

Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) Turkey Wing, which is comprised of HAK-İŞ Trade Unions Confederation, Civil Servant Unions Confederation (MEMUR-SEN), Turkey Tradesmen and Artisans Confederation (TESK), Turkey Labour Unions Confederation (TURK-İŞ), Turkey Employers' Unions Confederation (TİSK), Turkey Public Workers Unions Confederation (KAMU-SEN), Turkey Retirees Association, The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and Turkey Union of Chambers of Agriculture (TZOB), following their meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 15 October 2019, once again voiced their support for Operation Peace Spring.



In a joint statement, the non-governmental and professional organisations representing Turkey's workers, civil servants, artisans, farmers, retirees and employers reiterated their support for Operation Peace Spring initiated by the government

against terrorist organisations nesting in northern Syria. It was stated that the organisations had taken action to inform the international public correctly and to counter social perception operations against Turkey. Moreover, each

organisation had started working with their counterparts abroad and in international organisations in which they were members to convey Turkey's rightful position.

The statement recalled that the Turkey-EU JCC Turkey Wing members

addressed the world public and said that the operation was legitimate and in accordance with international law. It was emphasised that Turkey had used its rights emanating from international law and that Operation Peace Spring was initiated within the framework of the UN Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism and Article 51 of the UN Charter on self-defence. Moreover, Syria's territorial integrity, sovereignty and political unity were respected and utmost attention was paid to the protection of civilians and innocents. It was reminded that Turkey was combating terrorism and its perpetrators with its ongoing operation as well as the previous Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations. The statement emphasised that Turkey must raise its voice united as a nation.

TOBB PRESIDENT HİSARCIKLIOĞLU RE-ELECTED AS EUROCHAMBRES VICE PRESIDENT



TOBB President and the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES) Vice President M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu attended EUROCHAMBRES General Council in Rome on 9 October 2019. Hisarcıklioğlu was re-elected as the Vice President of EUROCHAMBRES for the 2020-

2021 term during the elections held at the General Assembly.

After EUROCHAMBRES General Assembly, TOBB and the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the establishment of the Turkey-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Forum.

IKV CHAIRMAN ZEYTİNOĞLU EVALUATED EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON TURKEY

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented on the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions condemning Turkey. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu criticised the EU for its failure to take into consideration security threats originating from Syria currently faced by Turkey and ignoring Turkey's legitimate rights both in Syria and Cyprus. Stating that the negligence in the relations has played a role in getting to the current point, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu made the following remarks:

"The EU has adopted conclusions adding another set of restrictive measures to its conclusions of July 2019 concerning Turkey's hydrocarbon exploration activities around Cyprus and condemning Turkey because of the peace operation in Syria while noting the halt in arms exports by some Member States. In the conclusions, which state that Turkey is a key ally, Turkey is urged to solve the problem through political and diplomatic means. However, it is obvious that the war in Syria has been going on with no political solution at sight. Likewise, the international community has failed to come up with a comprehensive solution. Therefore, Turkey should not be expected to remain insensitive to what is happening at the south of its borders. Turkey has launched Operation Peace Spring in accordance with the right of self-defence recognised in the



UN Charter. The sad part here is that, the international community has left Turkey alone. Moreover, the US has adopted sanctions targeting ministers. Particularly, EU's conclusions condemning Turkey are extremely worrying. It is clear that the threats Turkey has been facing for nine years due to the Syria crisis and the burden it has had to bear for hosting around 4 million refugees have not been taken into account, nor have those been duly evaluated. In the European Council meeting to convene on 17 October, these conclusions will be addressed and there is a possibility that more serious measures will be adopted. The gap between the situation in Turkey and the world's perspective on Turkey is growing. This situation could have extremely critical consequences. It

is clear that the EU's approach to Turkey has its flaws. However, the fact that we, as Turkey, have not been able to explain our arguments adequately and have neglected our relations with the EU due to internal issues has also played a role in this. We should speed up the reform process by taking steps aimed at revitalising the EU process and strengthening our economy. The Judicial Reform Strategy, which has been presented to the TGNA General Assembly, should be rapidly adopted and put into practice. Furthermore, we welcome the establishment of the EU Coordination Board with the Presidential Circular dated 16 October 2019. This will contribute to the acceleration of the work aimed at alignment with the EU *acquis* and the accession process."

IKV AGENDA

“THE EP RESOLUTION IGNORES THE REALITY IN SYRIA AND TURKEY’S HUMANITARIAN ROLE”

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu evaluated the EP resolution dated 24 October 2019 condemning Turkey’s Operation Peace Spring. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu said that the decision was difficult to apprehend and stressed that such attitude towards a country hosting close to 4 million Syrian refugees and that suffered the most from the Syrian war was unacceptable. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu made the following remarks:

“Yesterday, EP adopted a resolution against Turkey. The EP resolution condemns Operation Peace Spring and indicates that the operation has damaged the security of the region and it calls Turkey to withdraw its forces from Syria. While MEPs welcome the establishment of a possible safe zone under UN supervision, they are sceptical of Turkey’s efforts to create a safe zone. Therefore, they describe the initiative as an invasion. The resolution, which was drafted under the impression that the operation has been conducted against the Kurdish population, also shares the EP’s concerns that ISIS would strengthen again.

The statement also claims that Turkey has used the refugees as ‘a weapon’ and ‘a blackmail tool’.



Ultimately, the EP calls on the Council to impose sanctions on Turkey, and adopt a host of restrictive measures including a visa ban against Turkish officials and economic sanctions that could lead to the suspension of the Customs Union. The EP resolution calling for sanctions of this extent also reveals the dire situation where Turkey-EU relations have come. The fact that the EU has caused deterioration in the relations, and the stalling of Turkey’s EU accession process by vetoes has brought the relations to this stage. Moreover, there is also strong bias in the EU, particularly in some far-right circles, that prevents facts from being analysed as they should be.”

Indicating that the issue was distorted, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu pointed out that the EU failed to fulfil its responsibilities regarding the ongoing process in Syria but rather chose to place the blame on Turkey: “Turkey is the country that has been most affected by the war in Syria and has been involved in diplomatic efforts to bring the process under control. Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring because international actors, including the EU, have not taken steps to halt the ongoing conflict since 2011 and bring stability to Syria. It should not be forgotten that Turkey is the country hosting the largest population of Syrian refugees. It is also an unfair criticism to say that Turkey uses the refugees as a weapon.”

IKV LAUNCHED THE INFL(EU)NCE PROJECT UNDER CSSP II

On 8 October 2019, IKV organised an event to introduce its project entitled “Improving the Influence Capacity of Civil Society Sector in EU Accession Process-INFL(EU)NCE” funded under Grant Scheme for Civil Society Support II (CSSP II). The project, which brings together 40 civil society representatives from four different Turkish provinces namely; Adana, Ankara, Istanbul and Trabzon, aims to enhance their policy influencing capacity and legislative knowledge in regard to Turkey’s EU accession negotiations. Along with the 40 pre-selected participants, the event was also attended by representatives from the academia, grassroots CSOs and the general public.

Delivering the opening speech in the event, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu introduced IKV’s work on civil society. Laura Fallavollita, Head of Fundamental Rights and Civil Society Programme at the



EU Delegation to Turkey, and Bülent Özcan, Acting Director-General for Financial Cooperation and Project Implementation at Directorate for EU Affairs of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced respectively the efforts undertaken by the EU and Turkey for strengthening the capacity of the civil society.

The second session of the meeting continued with a panel to expand the discussion on the role of civil society in Turkey’s EU

accession process. Prof. Erhan Doğan, Deputy Head of the Political Science and International Relations Department at Marmara University, Asst. Prof. Büke Boşnak from Istanbul Bilgi University Department of International Relations and Demir Murat Seyrek, Senior Advisor to the European Foundation for Democracy, shared their views on the subject during the panel moderated by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas.

TIMELINE OCTOBER 2019

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2	IKV Secretary General Nas participated in the Jean Monnet Network kick-off conference in Ankara.
3	German Interior Minister Seehofer and European Commissioner for Migration Avramopoulos paid a joint visit to Turkey.
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7	IKV organised a launch event for the EU-funded INFL(EU)NCE Project.
8	Spanish MEP Nacho Sánchez Amor was appointed as EP Rapporteur on Turkey.
9	TOBB President Hisarcıkloğlu was re-elected as the Vice President of EUROCHAMBRES.
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11	NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg visited Turkey.
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14	EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted conclusions on Turkey.
15	Turkey-EU JCC Turkey Wing members were received by President Erdoğan.
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17	IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu assessed the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Turkey.
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21	IKV attended the Hungarian National Day reception.
22	IKV participated in TRT World Forum 2019.
23	IKV Secretary General Nas spoke at the “Regional Studies in Turkey” workshop.
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25	IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu commented on the EP resolution on Turkey’s Operation Peace Spring.
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30	The 4th panel under IKV’s “New Perspectives in Turkey-EU Relations” project was held at Yalova University.
31	

IKV PARTICIPATED IN TRT WORLD FORUM 2019



IKV participated in TRT World Forum 2019 held in Istanbul on 21-22 October 2019 with the theme "Globalisation in Retreat: Risks and Opportunities". The third annual international TRT World Forum brought together opinion leaders from all around the world with the aim of finding global solutions to world's political, economic, cultural and social challenges.

At the Forum, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the audience as the Guest of Honour and shared his reflections on the world order and globalisation in retreat. Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, National Defence Minister Hulusi Akar, Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak and former Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and former Prime Minister Binali

Yıldırım also delivered speeches at the event.

IKV Vice-Chair Prof. Haluk Kabaalioglu, spoke at the closed session on the "Future of Turkey-EU Relations". Former Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator and Turkey's current Ambassador in Prague Egemen Bağış, Deputy-Foreign Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı, First Deputy-Secretary General in the Organisation for Black Sea Economic Cooperation Ambassador Selim Yonel, President of the German-Turkish Chamber of Industry Marcus Slevogt also delivered speeches at the session. The closed session was also attended by IKV Strategy and Business Development Director M. Gökhan Kilit, IKV Press Officer and Istanbul EU Information Centre Coordinator Mehmet Poyrazlı, IKV Senior Researcher Yeliz Şahin, and Junior Researchers Merve Özcan and Melis Bostanoğlu.

IKV HELD A PANEL UNDER NEW PERSPECTIVES IN TURKEY-EU RELATIONS PROJECT

The fourth panel under the "New Perspectives in Turkey-EU Relations" project was held at Yalova University on 31 October 2019 with the financial support of Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF). The opening speech of the panel was delivered by IKV Vice Chairman Prof. Haluk Kabaalioglu. Prof. Erhan Doğan from Marmara University, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Asst. Prof. Ebru Turhan from Turkish-German University participated in the panel which was moderated by IKV Research Director Çisel İleri.



IKV ATTENDED THE 5TH SUSTAINABLE FOOD SUMMIT

The Sustainable Food Summit, which was jointly organised by Sustainability Academy and Turkish Food and Beverage Industry Employers Association with the support of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), was held on 17 October 2019 in Istanbul.

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas moderated the panel entitled "Turkish Agriculture and the Position of Food in the Customs Union" while IKV Strategy and Business Development Director



M. Gökhan Kilit talked about the modernisation of the Customs

Union and its possible implications for the Turkish agriculture sector.

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL SPOKE AT THE BREXIT WORKSHOP IN MANCHESTER



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the workshop entitled "Citizens of Brexit" organised by University of Manchester's School of Social Sciences on 22 October 2019. At the workshop, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas

gave a speech on the impact of Brexit on the rights of Turkish citizens living in the UK. In the workshop, the effects of Brexit on British nationals living in the EU as well as on EU and third country nationals living in the UK were discussed.



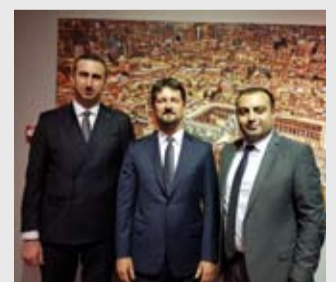
IKV SECRETARY GENERAL PARTICIPATED IN REGIONAL STUDIES WORKSHOP

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas delivered a speech on European studies in Turkey at the workshop jointly organised by Istanbul Kültür University's Global Political Trends Center (GPoT) and Marmara University's Research Center for International Relations (MURCIR) on 23 October 2019. Within the scope of the workshop entitled "Regional Studies in Turkey", many experts specialising on regional studies from different universities in Turkey

made presentations. The opening speeches of the workshop were delivered by GPoT Director Prof. Mensur Akgün and the Deputy-Dean of Marmara University's Political Science Department Assoc. Prof. Zuhâl Mert Uzuner and emeritus Professor Faruk Sönmezoğlu. In her speech, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas highlighted that despite the problems in Turkey-EU relations, there was still need for developing cultural, political, economic expertise on Europe and European countries.

IKV ATTENDED THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION

On the occasion of Hungarian National Day celebrations, a reception was organised in the Cultural Centre of Hungary in Istanbul on 21 October 2019. Hungarian Ambassador to Turkey Viktor Mátis, Consul General of Hungary László Keller, Deputy Governor of Istanbul Cemalettin Özdemir, IKV Strategy and Business Development Director M. Gökhan Kilit and IKV Press Officer and EU Information Centre Coordinator Mehmet Poyrazlı, as well as representatives of other diplomatic missions in Istanbul participated in



the event. Pointing out the long-lasting close cooperation between Turkey and Hungary, Ambassador Matis shared his views for enhancing this cooperation during his address.

EU FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON TURKEY CAUSED TENSION

EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Turkey's East Med hydrocarbon drilling activities and north-east Syria sparked reaction from Turkey.

EU Foreign Ministers, who came together in Luxembourg on 14 October 2019, discussed Turkey's East Med hydrocarbon drilling activities as well as its counter-terror military operation in north-east Syria. EU Foreign Ministers adopted scandalous conclusions condemning Turkey's military operation in north-east Syria and agreeing on a framework regime of restrictive measures targeting natural and legal persons involved in hydrocarbon drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On north-east Syria, claiming that Turkey's military operation undermined the stability and security in the region, EU Foreign Ministers called on Turkey to cease Operation Peace Spring and withdraw its forces from the region. Noting Turkey's role as a key EU partner and a critically important actor in the region, EU Foreign Ministers urged Turkey to address its security concerns through political and diplomatic means. Moreover, the Foreign Affairs Council noted the decision by some Member States to halt arms export licensing to Turkey. EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions were later endorsed by the European Council which convened on 17-18 October 2019.



EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions sparked a strong reaction from Ankara. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement rejecting and condemning

the conclusions related to Turkey. The ministry stated that Turkey's ongoing counter-terror operation Peace Spring in northern Syria was being carried out in accordance with

the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter and the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions on the fight against terrorism. Moreover, in the statement the EU was criticised

for displaying a protective approach towards terrorist elements in the face of threats to Turkey's national security and Syria's territorial integrity by terrorist organisation PKK's Syria branch PYD/YPG. Indicating that Turkey hosted the largest refugee population in the world, the ministry stated that Turkey would continue its resolute fight against terrorist groups that threaten its security especially the PYD/YPG and ISIS. It was stated that the operation would provide a safe zone on the Turkey-Syria border and enable the return of the area to its rightful owners while facilitating the voluntary return of displaced Syrians to their lands.

Concerning the conclusions on Turkey's East Med hydrocarbon drilling activities, the ministry rejected the EU's claims for being contrary to international law. The ministry criticised the EU for its failure to mention the Turkish Cypriots, and for siding with the Greek Cypriots and becoming hostage to the Greek Cypriot claims regarding the Cyprus issue. Moreover, it was stated that Turkey would resolutely carry on with its hydrocarbon exploration activities. Lastly, it was stated that Turkey would seriously reconsider its cooperation with the EU in certain areas due to the Union's unlawful and biased stance.

SPANISH SOCIAL DEMOCRAT APPOINTED AS EP'S TURKEY RAPPORTEUR

Spanish social democrat MEP Nacho Sánchez Amor has been appointed as EP's new Rapporteur on Turkey.



On 8 October 2019, Spanish social democrat MEP Nacho Sánchez Amor was appointed as European Parliament's new Rapporteur on Turkey. The 59 year-old member of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party has been elected to the EP in the May 2019 elections. A member of EP's Foreign Affairs Committee, Human Rights Subcommittee and the Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary

Committee, Nacho Sánchez Amor is set to serve as the EP Rapporteur on Turkey during the 9th parliamentary term covering the period from 2019 to 2024.

Nacho Sánchez Amor has replaced Dutch social democrat MEP Kati Piri whose reports on Turkey invoked a strong reaction from Ankara. As it might be recalled, the 2018 Report on Turkey drafted by

Piri included a call for a suspension of Turkey's EU accession negotiations. Having previously participated in OSCE election observation missions in Turkey, Sánchez Amor has extensive knowledge of Turkey. Moreover, coming from a Mediterranean country facing similar challenges to Turkey, Nacho Sánchez Amor is regarded as a more balanced choice than his predecessor Piri.

TURKEY MOVED 10 PLACES UP IN EASE OF DOING BUSINESS INDEX

The World Bank released the Doing Business 2020 Report on 23 October 2019. The report assesses the regulations which enhance efficiency and openness of the business environment in 190 countries in a comparative manner. It covers a 12-month period taking into account of 12 different areas of business environment.

According to the Doing Business 2020 Report, Turkey has jumped up 10 places to be 33rd among 190 nations in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index. Moreover, over the last 15 years, Turkey has climbed up a total of 60 places in the index, boosted by the efforts of the economic administration, multiple amendments and regulations and reforms have led to an improvement in the business environment in the country, leading it to jump in the rankings. Turkey ranked 69th in 2017, 60th in 2018, and 43rd in the 2019 editions of the report.

Commenting on the report, Vice President Fuat Oktay



underscored that Turkey made important progress in the field of economy thanks to the reforms implemented, achievements in the macroeconomic field and improvements in the investment climate which lead to the productivity in business life and the reduction of costs and processing

times. Vice President Oktay stated that Turkey's primary goal has been to rank in the top-20 of the index.

Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, in a written statement, hailed the work done by the Ease of Doing Business Reform Workgroup led by the ministry and said that Turkey would proceed

with the continuous reform process and pursue its activities to improve the investment climate in the fields of company establishment, tax payments, and foreign trade. Minister Albayrak added that in particular, by further reducing costs and increasing productivity in business life, investment climate in

Turkey will be raised to the highest level.

TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu stated that the report would serve as a reference point for foreign investors. TOBB President Hisarcıklioğlu said that the breakthrough in the economic conditions was an indicator showing that Turkey continued to make the necessary reforms to boost investments and employment.

Also commenting on the report, Investment Office President Arda Ermut hailed the report as a reference point for Turkey's investment potential. Ermut pointed out to the link between economic development and the importance of FDI. He specified that supporting inward investments through successful economic reforms; having strong market fundamentals; being an international hub for key sectors; benefiting from a young and educated population as the reasons for investing in Turkey.



TURKEY'S NEW MEDIUM TERM FISCAL PLAN WAS ANNOUNCED

Turkey's Medium Term Fiscal Plan for 2020-2022, prepared by the Treasury and Finance Ministry and the Presidency's Strategy and Budget Office, was published in the Official Gazette on 10 October 2019. The main goals of Turkey's new Medium Term Fiscal Plan are to preserve and improve the progress made over the year on price stability, financial stability and current account balance while achieving economic transformation focused on production and

efficiency, sustainable development and fair sharing.

One of the main targets under the new Medium Term Fiscal Plan is to decrease gradually the central government budget deficit-to-GDP ratio until 2022, by keeping the ratio at 2.9 percent during the next two years and bringing it down to 2.6 percent in 2022. The three-year plan foresees a central government budget deficit of 138.87 billion Turkish liras (23.8 billion dollars) for 2020, 157.6 billion liras (27 billion

dollars) for 2021 and 160.15 billion liras (27.44 billion dollars) for 2022. Another target under the Medium Term Fiscal Plan is the government debt-to-GDP ratio which is envisaged to be 33.2 percent in 2020, 32.5 percent in 2021 and 32.3 percent in 2022. The primary surplus is expected to be 1.9 billion liras in 2021 and 16.3 billion liras in 2022. The primary surplus to GDP ratio is estimated to be 0.0 percent for 2020 and 2021, and 0.3 percent for 2022.



NEW JUDICIAL REFORM PACKAGE PUBLISHED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE

First package of judicial reforms within the scope of the Judicial Reform Strategy was published in the Official Gazette on 24 October 2019. The package mainly contains headings concerning the judicial process in order to strengthen the rule of law.

Under the reforms, the pre-sentencing detention period for crimes not due to face a heavy penalty court will not exceed six months, and for more serious offenses, the period will be a maximum of one year. In addition, lawyers, who have been registered with the bar association for 15 years, will be eligible for special green passports that facilitate getting visas

and eliminate visa requirements for some countries. The reforms also lay out procedures for people who were dismissed from government service under Emergency Decrees but were later acquitted to be issued passports after a check by the Interior Ministry.

Lastly, the scope of rulings that can be appealed by the criminal courts of the regional court of justice has also been expanded. The Law Profession Entrance Exam will be required in lawyer internship and notary public internship applications. In family courts, the Ministry of Justice will assign the courthouse psychologists, pedagogues and social workers.

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN ATTENDED THE 7TH TURKIC COUNCIL SUMMIT IN BAKU



The 7th Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States took place on 15 October 2019 in Baku. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called this year's summit of which one of the four founders is Turkey, "historic" because of the growing influence of Turkic states around the world. Alongside President Erdoğan, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev, Kazakhstan's founding President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov,

and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev attended the Summit. Moreover, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister Purlı Agamuradov participated in the Turkic Council Summit as observers.

In a joint declaration, Turkic countries expressed strong support for Operation Peace Spring that Turkey launched on 9 October 2019 in a bid to secure its borders and ensure Syria's territorial integrity. As an organisation dedicated to

strengthening peace and stability and promoting wide-ranging cooperation since its establishment in 2009, the Turkic Council prompts comprehensive cooperation among Turkic speaking states. Furthermore, the commitment to the purpose and principles of the UN Charter and other universally recognised principles and norms of international law is underlined in the Nakhchivan Agreement which led to the establishment of the Council.

NATO SECRETARY GENERAL STOLTENBERG VISITED TURKEY

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Turkey on 11 October 2019 to discuss the preparations for the NATO leaders' meeting, which will be held in London in November, marking the 70th anniversary of the Alliance. In the context of his visit to Turkey, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg was received by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. During the meeting, the Alliance's continued adaptation and the security situation in the region was discussed.

NATO Secretary General came together with Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. During the meeting, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu emphasised that with the Peace Spring Operation Turkey aimed at eliminating the threat of terrorism across its national borders which also constitutes NATO's south eastern frontier. Moreover, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu indicated that the allies should show solidarity with Turkey in



the fight against terrorism. Speaking at the joint press conference, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg while acknowledging Turkey's legitimate security concerns, invited Turkey to act with restraint. Stating that Turkey was a strong member of NATO, Stoltenberg reiterated NATO's strong commitment to Turkey's security. In the context of his visit to Turkey, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also met with National Defence Minister Hulusi Akar.

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER MAAS PAID A VISIT TO TURKEY

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas paid a working visit to Turkey and met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Ankara on 26 October 2019. Prior to the visit, on 25 October 2019, German Foreign Minister expressed his criticism regarding Operation Peace Spring before the German *Bundestag* while stressing the importance of an established dialogue between Ankara and Berlin. German Foreign Minister Maas, during his *Bundestag* address, pointed out that it has always been better to talk to each other instead of talking about each other therefore he would be travelling to Ankara.

Operation Peace Spring and the Syrian crisis were the primary issues on Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu and his German counterpart's agenda. Both foreign ministers touched upon the proposal coming from German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer mainly asserting an international safe zone in the north-eastern Syria. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu rejected the plan while his German counterpart Maas also approached it cautiously.

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu expressed his complaints regarding the tone of criticism that came from the German side while mentioning that their trust has been shaken due to the extremely negative reactions



echoed in the German public, political parties and the media. Çavuşoğlu expressed Ankara's expectation that Berlin should act in accordance with the spirit of their alliance and show solidarity in Turkey's fight against terrorism.

Speaking to the reporters, German Foreign Minister Maas pointed out that they recently met within the UN framework in New York and discussed Syria very intensively. Maas added that Turkey and Germany needed a serious dialogue and as Germany, they intended to continue it. Maas drew attention to the fact that Turkey was an important NATO ally, and expressed his concerns about the fight against ISIS stressing that ISIS was not totally eliminated. Maas concluded his remarks highlighting the importance of the continuation and extension of the ceasefire agreement in Sochi.

GERMAN INTERIOR MINISTER SEEHOFER AND COMMISSIONER AVRAMOPOULOS VISITED TURKEY

On 3 October 2019, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer and European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos paid a two-day joint visit to Turkey to discuss cooperation on migration management. French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner, who had also been expected to join the visit, had to cancel due to the attack on the French police. Therefore, French Ambassador to Turkey Charles Fries represented the country throughout the meetings held within the scope of the visit. In the context of their Turkey visit, Seehofer and Avramopoulos came together with Vice President Fuat Oktay, Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu in Ankara.

Syrian refugees in Turkey, their voluntary and safe return as well as the Turkey-EU refugee deal were the main issues on the agenda



of the meeting held between Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu and his counterparts. Speaking to the reporters after the meeting, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu underlined Turkey's high compliance with the requirements of the refugee deal in contrast with the unwillingness of the EU side. Apart from migration, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu drew attention to Ankara's expectations from the EU concerning accession negotiations, modernisation of

the Turkey-EU Customs Union and the visa liberalisation dialogue. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu touched upon the 1:1 mechanism which foresees a special arrangement based on the resettlement of a Syrian from Turkey to the Member States for every Syrian returning from Greek islands to Turkey. Within this framework, Minister Çavuşoğlu shared the recent figures of Syrians settled in the EU countries.

ANATOMY OF THE OPERATION PEACE SPRING: ON THE BRINK OF THE RUBICON

With the start of Turkey's Operation Peace Spring, players on the field have come to the very edge of the Rubicon River for some time with solid differences in understanding.

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Long-lasting proxy wars in the region, controversies regarding the east of Euphrates, power games in Idlib and many other vital determinants have already left the key players in midst of a crisis in Syria. Yet, Turkey's counter-terrorism operation, "Operation Peace Spring", which started in the night of 9 October 2019, has changed the whole picture once and for all.

What's at Stake?

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the ultimate goal of the operation via its press release dated 11 October as "ensuring security of the external borders, neutralising the terrorists in the region and saving the Syrian population from the oppression of terrorists." In addition, the press release refers to the Article 51 (the self-defence clause) of the UN Charter and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions on combating terrorism as the legal basis and the source of international legitimacy of the operation.

In that sense, during his UN General Assembly speech, two weeks prior to the operation, on 24 September 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan shared the highlights of what was about to happen with a map showing the border area between Turkey and Syria. Turkish authorities, along the Syrian side of the border, for a long time have aimed to create a 32 km deep, 480 km long safe zone to push back PKK (and its Syrian branch PYD/YPG), which is legally regarded as a terrorist organisation by both the EU and the US, prevent a terror corridor; and lastly to establish conditions necessary for the safe return of Syrians in Turkey to the designated zone.

According to Turkey's Vice President Fuat Oktay, 365 thousand refugees have already returned voluntarily and safely to the areas secured with the two previous



operations, Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch. However, Turkey's current initiative has not been embraced by some of its key NATO allies. And at that very moment, "ride towards the Rubicon River" just began.

Conflicts and Compromises

Various players on the field have kept a close eye on Turkey throughout the military operation; especially the US and EU Member States. The primary reason behind US' keen interest is that since his 2016 presidential campaign, the US President Donald Trump has been sending messages claiming to withdraw most of the US troops from the region. Both the US President and other branches of the US government are extremely cautious regarding the post-withdrawal balance of power in Syria especially after Turkey secured two strategic operational points, namely; Tal Abyad and Ras al Ain within the first five days of the operation. Ideally, the US side intends to leave these areas, which have been under its control, to the oversight and control of its proxies. But the *realpolitik* has emerged differently.

Many Transatlanticists see the withdrawal decision as a game changer. It opened up more space for Astana Process Guarantors namely; Russia, Turkey, Iran and weakened the

US proxies in the region. The Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) Director Sinan Ülgen's food for thought is well worth the attention in that regard. In his New York Times op-ed, Ülgen tells that "the US and Europe are erroneously banking on sanctions on Turkey to contain the fallout." If this really is the case, then it once again proves that the post-truth politics is all over the air.

Revisiting the Sanctions Politics

On 13 October 2019, US President Trump gave a green light to the withdrawal process. Meanwhile, Syrian regime forces headed towards the zone to deploy troops within the withdrawal region where a close contact with Turkey was almost possible. Also Russia and Iran were closely monitoring the area. Therefore, it turned into a "Mexican standoff".

Apart from the tension on the field, the US and the EU Member States were openly voicing sanction threats against Turkey since the beginning of the operation. On 14 October 2019, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control took action and publicly announced the sanctions. Yet, the sanctions did not last long. Turkey and the US have agreed on a ceasefire in north-east Syria and on lifting the sanctions

after the US Vice President Mike Pence's immediate Ankara visit on 17 October 2019. During that time, also some European NATO allies including France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy have imposed arms exports restrictions and bans on Turkey. The EU Foreign Affairs Council convening on 14 October has condemned Turkey for its operation. This is exactly why; post-truth politics has been mentioned in the previous section.

From one stand point, Turkey claims to have started a "war on terror" in Syrian part of its external borders with a reference to the Article 51 and international customary law on self-defence against the terrorist organisation PKK -which has since July 2015, claimed the lives of 490 civilians according to the International Crisis Group figures- and its Syria extensions. Furthermore, as various competent Turkish authorities elaborated, a safe zone is planned to be established for the Syrian population that desire to return home. On the other hand, many of Turkey's NATO allies do not share the same view despite the collective defence clause as stipulated in the famous Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty which says that an attack on one member of NATO, is an attack on all. What is more, a considerable amount of EU Member States and MEPs

started to call for EU-wide sanctions against Turkey, a candidate country that has been involved with European integration since Ankara Agreement or in another words, since 1959.

The Rubicon

As of now, tensions between Turkey and the US seem to have subsided thanks to the high level bilateral diplomacy... at least for now. And, after the meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi on 22 October 2019, the ceasefire was extended, both sides agreed on joint military patrols in north-east Syria and Turkish Defence Minister declared that at this stage there was no further need to carry out a new operation.

On the other hand, things are not really going well in Turkey-EU relations. The relations have always been chequered with many ups and downs. But recently, the rhetoric got more dangerous than ever. In this very decade, both Turkey and the EU have made many policy mistakes both in regard to the Syria crisis and other policy areas. But it is time to end the blame game, and remember why this long-lasting accession process and cooperation is extremely important for both sides.

When Operation Peace Spring started, both sides came to the very edge of the Rubicon River with solid differences in understanding as well as extremely harsh statements. When Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC, a civil war was triggered and nothing stayed the same in the region. This analogy is used for many other global issues. But now, it fits the Turkey-EU relations really well. Both sides have to understand that there are many success stories in Turkey-EU relations even until very recent times including the Turkey-EU refugee deal. So, there is an obvious risk that crossing the Rubicon could erase all past achievements. Therefore, to bandage the wounds, determining what constitutes the Rubicon in Turkey-EU relations would be a good start.