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REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: CAN TURKEY CONTRIBUTE?

The Conference on the Future of Europe process can be best served by the formal or informal inclusion of voices and ideas from not only Member States of the EU but all European countries.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem NAS
IKV Secretary General

At long last, the Conference on the Future of Europe (CFE) took off on 9 May 2021 with a ceremony held at the European Parliament (EP). The Conference is expected to reach a conclusion in spring of 2022. Citizens' participation in the proceedings of the Conference is prioritized as well as securing institutional contributions. The proposals for the future of Europe, which will be gathered during the CFE, will then be presented to the EU bodies and decision-makers. The CFE will concentrate on the following issues with regards to the debate on the future of Europe: climate change and environment, health, economy, social justice and employment, the EU in the world, values and rights, rule of law and security, digital transformation, European democracy, migration, education, culture, youth and sports, other issues. The CFE will operate at multiple levels. While the hub of the CFE is the multilingual digital platform, other levels and dimensions will consist of decentralized events, European Citizens' Panels and Conference Plenaries.

The major institutions of the EU, namely the Council, European Commission and the EP represented by their Presidents will be responsible for governing the CFE. The Joint Presidency is aided by an Executive Board, which is co-chaired by the three institutions. The EP will be represented by Guy Verhofstadt, the Council will be represented by Ana Paula Zacarias, Secretary of State for EU Affairs for the Portuguese Council Presidency and the European Commission



by Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography. It reports on a regular basis to the Joint Presidency. The Executive Board is responsible for securing the general progression of the Conference activities, taking decisions on all aspects of the Conference by consensus, and preparing the meetings of the Conference Plenary. As the Council Presidency passes over to Slovenia in July 2021 and to France in January 2022, they will take over from the Portuguese Presidency regarding the Council's representation in the Joint Presidency of the CFE.

Significance of the CFE and Turkey's Role

The EU representing the utmost integration movement on the

continent of Europe stands at a critical junction of its current history. It is a Union of 27 Member States following the withdrawal of Britain from membership. Turkey and Western Balkan countries are waiting to join the Union as candidates and potential candidates. Although candidate countries are not invited to participate in the deliberations of the CFE, this does not preclude CSOs and other interested actors in the candidate countries from voicing their ideas about the Future of Europe debate and if possible engaging with their counterparts in the EU to contribute to concrete proposals to be presented to the CFE. Turkish CSOs and universities are also interested in the CFE and aim to make their contribution to the debate for the Future of Europe. After all, the Conference concerns the future of not just the EU, but

Europe as a whole.

The topics to be debated during the CFE also concern the candidate countries, countries in the neighbourhood of the EU, and those countries such as the members of the European Economic Area which are European countries but not members of the EU. Especially climate change, the Green Deal, digital agenda, migration and health issues are among the top priorities regarding the future of Europe. An effective and extensive cooperation in these issues including the EU and neighbouring countries is vital for the success of the EU policies. The Green Deal for instance aims to transform Europe to become the world's first climate-neutral continent, a target that can only be achieved if candidate countries such as Turkey and also neighbouring countries such as Ukraine are

brought into the fold.

The same can be said for migration and digitalisation agendas. Regarding migration, Turkey has been a valuable partner for the EU especially following the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement on collaboration regarding Syrian refugees and revitalization of accession process. While Turkey has been hosting nearly 4 million refugees, mostly Syrians but also including other nationalities, the EU contributed funding amounting to 6 billion euros for projects under the FRIT programme (EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey). The financial assistance is set to continue to aid Syrian refugees in Turkey and also Lebanon and Jordan. It would be quite absurd to discuss the migration issue in the CFE without taking into account Turkey's role and its viewpoint.

Similarly, Turkey in addition to being a candidate country is a customs union partner since 1996 in accordance with the terms of the Ankara Agreement. It is the only sizeable country –other than San Marino and Andorra- which entered into the customs union prior to membership of the EU. Thus, Turkish industry was included in European value chains thanks to extensive trade linkages –exports to the EU amounted to 41.3% of total exports in 2020-and also direct investments from European countries which make up around 62% of the total FDI in Turkey. The adaptation of Turkish industry to the requirements of the Green Deal, circular economy action plan and the digital market are vitally important due to Turkey's role in production cycles. The CFE process can be best served by the formal or informal inclusion of voices and ideas from not only Member States of the EU but all European countries.





TOBB HELD ITS 76TH-77TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY ONLINE

The 76th-77th General Assembly of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) was held online on 28 May 2021 due to COVID-19 measures.

TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu posted on his social media account after the General

Assembly: "I would like to thank all our delegates from 81 provinces and districts. There's a lot of work to be done! Together with our Chambers and Exchanges, we will continue to follow-up the problems of our members, relay them and come up with solutions."

TOBB President Hisarcıklioğlu, as a part of TOBB's 76th-77th General Assembly, visited Anıtkabir with the members of the TOBB General Assembly Council and the TOBB Board of Directors to pay their respects in the presence of Atatürk.



TOBB PRESIDENT HİSARCIKLIOĞLU RE-ELECTED AS ICCIA BOARD MEMBER

TOBB President and Vice President of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIA) M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu, attended the 37th ICCIA General Assembly held via video conference on 20 May 2021. TOBB President Hisarcıklioğlu was elected as a member of the ICCIA Board of Directors at the meeting where

the ICCIA Board of Directors to serve for the 2021-2025 term was designated.

In accordance with the ICCIA Regulation, the Board of Directors will meet in the coming days to elect the Vice Presidents. TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu is currently the acting President of the Islamic Chamber.



"TURKEY AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE" DISCUSSED AT IKV WEBINAR

IKV, in collaboration with the Kocaeli Chamber of Industry (KCI), organised an online meeting entitled "Turkey and the Future of Europe" on 8 May 2021 on the occasion of Europe Day.

IKV and KCI Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu delivered the opening speech of the meeting which was moderated by KCI Assembly Chairman H. Tahsin Tuğrul. The speakers of the meeting were Deputy Minister

of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı and Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut. The meeting concluded with a question and answer session.



IKV CHAIRMAN ZEYTİNOĞLU SPOKE AT THE SEMINAR HOSTED BY THE TURKISH-FRENCH TRADE ASSOCIATION

On 26 May 2021, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu participated in the online seminar entitled "France-Turkey-EU Relations: New Expectations for a Positive Agenda" hosted by the Turkish-French Trade Association. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu made the opening speech at the seminar in which Turkey's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı delivered an honorary address. The seminar was also

attended by Deputy Chairman of Turkish-French Trade Association Franck Mereyde, Turkey's Ambassador to France Refik Ali Onaner and France's Ambassador to Turkey Hervé Magro.

The speakers discussed the relations between Turkey and France while assessing the ways to improve economic relations between the two countries and exchanged views on Turkey-EU relations and the modernisation of Customs Union.

İKv AGENDA



İKv ORGANISED A WEBINAR WITH 29 MAYIS UNIVERSITY AND ISTANBUL CONSULAR CORPS

On 5 May 2021, İKV organised a webinar entitled “The European Union as a Global Player” in association with the Jean Monnet Chair of Istanbul 29 Mayıs University and Istanbul Consular Corps led by the Consulate General of Croatia. Following the opening speeches by İKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu, Jean Monnet Chair holder Prof. Özgür Ünal Eriş and Consul General of Croatia Dr. Ivana Zerec, former

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı and Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut delivered speeches at the webinar.

İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas moderated the second panel session

which focused on EU’s global effectiveness as well as its policies towards neighbouring regions and Turkey-EU relations. Speakers of the panel were Amanda Paul from the European Policy Centre, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission’s Turkey Desk Katarzyna Marzec, Kadir Has University faculty member Dimitrios Triantaphyllou and Dr. Seda Gürkan from *Universite Libre d’Bruxelles*.

TURKEY-EU JCC MEMBERS REACTED TO ISRAELI ATTACKS IN GAZA AND MASJID AL-AQSA

Members of the Turkey wing of the Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) issued a joint statement on 11 May 2021 regarding the attacks carried out by Israeli security forces in Gaza and Masjid al-Aqsa. The statement jointly issued by Hak-İş Trade Union Confederation (HAK-İŞ), Confederation of Civil Servants’ Unions (MEMUR-SEN), Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen of Turkey (TESK), Confederation of Trade Unions of Turkey (TÜRK-İŞ), Confederation of Employers’ Unions of Turkey (TİSK), Confederation of Public Employees’ Unions of Turkey (Turkey KAMU-SEN), the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and Union of Agricultural Chambers of Turkey (TZOB) stated the following:

“We are trade unions and professional organizations representing Turkey’s workers, farmers, employers, civil servants, tradesmen, merchants, industrialists and producers.

The unjust and unlawful attacks carried out by the Israeli security



forces despite all the calls of the international community, against Gaza and Masjid al-Aqsa and the Palestinians who worship there, the attacks in Gaza that killed many innocent people, including children, and the forced removal of settlements from Palestinians are inhumane and crimes against humanity.

We strongly condemn the aggressive actions against the civilian and vulnerable Palestinian people; these attacks must stop immediately. Necessary measures should be taken to prevent Israeli racist groups from entering the Haram al-Sharif.

Within the framework of UN General Assembly resolutions, Palestinian civilians should be placed under international protection.

Palestinian civilians should be guaranteed freedom of worship.

The status of the Haram al-Sharif must be maintained.

The whole world should see that Israel is responsible for the occupation and violence in Palestine.

Israel must be held internationally responsible for its actions.

Everyone should stop this persecution and reckless lawlessness.

To not object to this and to remain silent is to be a partner in this crime.”

TIMELINE MAY 2021

1	İKv and Marmara University Institute of European Studies hosted a webinar on “Current Developments in Turkey-EU Relations”.
2	Turkey’s perspective on European security was discussed at İKV webinar.
3	İKv held webinars on “The EU as a Global Player” and the modernisation of the Customs Union.
4	İKv Secretary General Nas spoke at Marmara University’s Europe Week event and the webinar hosted by Özyeğin University.
5	İKv and KCI hosted a webinar on “Turkey and the Future of Europe”.
6	İKv published a policy brief on the challenges awaiting the EU after Brexit (in Turkish).
7	The policy brief titled “The Future of Single-Use Plastics in Turkey and the EU” was published by İKV Brief Series.
8	İKv Secretary General Nas discussed the Green Deal at Antalya EU Information Center webinar.
9	İKv published the unofficial Turkish translation of the 2019-2020 EP Report on Turkey.
10	İKv Secretary General Nas spoke at the webinar hosted by Galatasaray University.
11	İKv organised a webinar entitled “International Tax Cooperation and Turkey-EU Relations”.
12	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu spoke at the event hosted by Turkish-French Trade Association.
13	İKv Secretary General Nas participated in the international conference titled “The European Union in International Affairs”.
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IKV AGENDA


IKV CELEBRATED EUROPE DAY WITH A WEEK-LONG WEBINAR SERIES

IKV celebrated 9 May Europe Day with a series of online events organised in association with Marmara University Institute of European Studies throughout the week of 3-9 May 2021. The Europe Week event series commenced with a webinar entitled "Current Developments in Turkey-EU Relations" held with the participation of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakci on 3 May. The opening speech of the webinar, which was moderated by IKV Vice Chairman and Marmara University Institute of European Studies Founding Director Haluk Kabaalioglu and IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gokhan Kilit, was delivered by the Rector of Marmara University Prof. Erol Ozvar. Referring to the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 and the origins of Europe Week, Rector Ozvar provided a historical perspective of Turkey's EU membership vision. Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Kaymakci discussed extensively all dimensions of Turkey-EU relations in light of the steps agreed under the "positive agenda" at the European

Council meeting in March. Evaluating the future prospects for Turkey-EU relations, Deputy Foreign Minister Kaymakci highlighted that Turkey's EU membership would be the most momentous enlargement of the EU.

The second in the series of Europe Week events was a webinar on "Turkey's Perspective on the Design of Europe around the Concept of Comprehensive and Cooperative Security" held on 4 May. In the event moderated by Marmara University Institute of European Studies Director Prof. Muzaffer Dartan, Ambassador Rauf Engin Soysal analysed the concept of European security with particular emphasis on the OSCE, and focused on Turkey's contributions to European security.

The IKV and Marmara University Europe Week event series concluded on 5 May with a webinar titled "Modernising the Turkey-EU Customs Union: Challenges and Opportunities". Following the opening remarks by Director of Marmara University Institute of European Studies Prof. Muzaffer Dartan, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Austrian Trade

Attaché Mag. Georg Karabaczek discussed the modernisation of the Customs Union from a business perspective at the panel session moderated by Head of Marmara University's Department of European Economics and Management Assoc. Prof. Mesut Eren.

Sharing information on Turkey-EU trade relations, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu touched upon the problems concerning the current functioning of the Customs Union and stressed the need to launch the Customs Union modernisation process without further delay. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu also brought up the problems associated with the visa requirement and underscored the need to finalise the visa liberalisation process. For his part, indicating that the trade volume between Turkey and Austria has almost increased sevenfold since 1995 and reached 3 billion euros in 2020, Austrian Trade Attaché Mag. Karabaczek said that according to a recent survey they conducted, 76% of the Austrian companies active in Turkey were in favour of the modernisation of the Customs Union.

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS EVALUATED TURKEY-EU RELATIONS IN ONLINE EVENTS

In May, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Cigdem Nas discussed Turkey-EU relations and the European Green Deal in online events. On 7 May 2021, IKV Secretary General Nas delivered a presentation on the "European Green Deal and Climate Action" at the Europe Week event organised by Marmara University Jean Monnet Chair (EUMULTI) held by Prof. Emel Parlar Dal. On the same day, IKV Secretary General Nas discussed the same theme at the webinar hosted by Özyeğin University's Diplomacy Club. Assoc. Prof. Nas delivered a presentation on the Green Deal and its effects on Turkey at the webinar hosted by the Antalya EU Information Center on 20 May. Participating in the webinar titled



"Governing Precarity through EU-Turkey Relations" hosted by the Istanbul Policy Center and Stiftung Mercator on the same day, Nas analysed the Green Deal's objectives and significance for Turkey. On 25 May, Nas evaluated the European Green Deal

at the webinar hosted by Galatasaray University "European Horizons" student club. Nas discussed the role of emotions in Turkey-EU relations at the international conference on "The European Union in International Affairs" held virtually on 26-28 May.



"INTERNATIONAL TAX COOPERATION AND TURKEY-EU RELATIONS" DISCUSSED AT IKV WEBINAR

IKV organised a webinar on international tax cooperation and its implications for Turkey-EU relations on 26 May 2021. During the webinar, moderated by IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gokhan Kilit, IKV Chairman and TOBB Vice President Ayhan Zeytinoğlu delivered an opening speech.

In the panel session, Dean of Altınbaş University Faculty of Law Prof. Leyla Ateş gave a

presentation on the international dimension of automated information exchange and tax cooperation while IKV and TOBB Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray analysed tax cooperation between Turkey and the EU. Delivering the closing speech at the webinar, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Cigdem Nas evaluated the latest developments in Turkey-EU relations.



IKV VICE CHAIRMAN PROF. KABAALIOĞLU ATTENDED THE WEBINAR HOSTED BY YAŞAR UNIVERSITY

IKV Vice Chairman Prof. Haluk Kabaalioglu and Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Cigdem Nas participated in the webinar organised by Yaşar University Faculty of Law on 4 May 2021. The webinar titled "Turkey-EU Relations from Past to Present" which commenced with the opening speech by Prof. Işıl Özkan from Yaşar University continued with a panel session moderated by IKV Vice Chairman Prof. Kabaalioglu. In the panel session, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas delivered a presentation titled "New Quests in Turkey-EU Relations".

Referring to proposals such as privileged partnership, strategic partnership or continental partnership which came to the agenda as alternatives to Turkey's EU membership, Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasized that none of those models could replace the goal of full EU membership. In addition, Nas drew attention to the need to accelerate the reform steps and diplomatic initiatives to make the goal of full membership operational. In the panel, Prof. Haluk Günöğür and Prof. Sanem Baykal gave presentations titled "Suspended Membership" and "Discussions on the Future of the EU and Turkey".

9 MAY EUROPE DAY CELEBRATED ACROSS TURKEY

The 71st anniversary of the Schuman Declaration laying the foundations of the European project was celebrated in Turkey with various events and high-level statements.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan issued a statement on the occasion of Europe Day noting that the announcement of the Schuman Declaration, which laid the foundations of European integration, has also been celebrated as "Europe Day" in the country since the confirmation of Turkey's candidacy for EU membership in 1999. Referring to the numerous challenges the EU was currently facing namely; the refugee crisis, the phenomena of Islamophobia and xenophobia, financial and fiscal fragilities, UK's withdrawal from EU membership and the coronavirus pandemic, President Erdoğan underscored that overcoming those would depend on solidarity, cooperation and regaining a brave and inclusive perspective. President Erdoğan indicated that although the Conference on the Future of Europe, formally launched on the same day, has started off with a right assessment, it narrowed down the



debate by excluding the candidate countries.

President Erdoğan stressed that Turkey, as a part of Europe in terms of historical, geographical and human aspects, was ready to do its part in addressing the challenges that the EU was facing and increasing the effectiveness of the Union. President Erdoğan concluded by saying "we wish that the EU will demonstrate its ability to develop its relations with Turkey based on mutual respect and trust, with a strategic point of view and

common sense."

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı issued a message pointing out that 9 May is the symbol of peace, stability, building together and integration. The Directorate of EU Affairs marked Europe Day with numerous online and physical events organised within the scope of the EU Communication Strategy.

Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut congratulated

Europe Day and Ramadan and drew attention to the importance of values such as respect, tolerance, solidarity, and working and living together. Highlighting the notion of "hope" as this year's theme, Ambassador Meyer-Landrut said: "I would like to thank those here in Turkey and Europe who worked so hard to bring us through this crisis; health workers, those who do the deliveries and basic services to ensure our security."

The EU Delegation to Turkey celebrated Europe Day with a special programme featuring leading writers, artists, and musicians which was streamed online on social media channels and on a TV channel.

Just like the last few years, this year also the Europe Day coincided with Ramadan. The spirit of togetherness, tolerance and solidarity on the occasion of Ramadan and Europe Day were celebrated together. The EU

Delegation to Turkey, in partnership with its Network of EU Information Centres, delivered food packages up to 20 cities, reaching out to thousands of families across Turkey with the spirit of solidarity and hope which became especially more important this year because of the pandemic. Since the beginning of Ramadan, network of EU Information Centres including İstanbul IKV EU Information Centre, delivered food packages in 19 cities, reaching out to more than 50 thousand families across the country. Head of the EU Delegation Ambassador Meyer-Landrut, said on the occasion: "Ramadan is a key month for the Islamic world in which everyone should go the extra mile to help those most in need."

Moreover, TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu celebrated 9 May Europe Day with his social media message and TOBB Twin Towers in Ankara were lighted up in colours of the EU flag on Europe Day.

EP REPORT ON TURKEY MET WITH MIXED REACTIONS IN TURKEY

The 2019-2020 EP Report, prepared by EP Rapporteur on Turkey Nacho Sánchez Amor, was voted in the EP plenary on 19 May 2021. The non-binding report, emphasizing that Turkey-EU relations were at a historical low point, was adopted by 480 votes in favour, 64 against, and 150 abstentions. Indicating that Turkey-EU relations were characterized by regression in three main areas namely; a backsliding in fundamental rights, regressive institutional reforms, and an assertive foreign policy with an increasingly anti-EU narrative, the report argued that the existing relationship framework based on the accession perspective cannot be sustained unless these trends were reversed and called for the suspension of accession talks. Moreover, urging Turkey to recognise the Armenian allegations concerning the 1915 events, the report took a highly critical stance on Turkey's foreign policy towards Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration as well as on Ankara's involvement in conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Libya, and Syria.

On the same day, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release to respond to the assessments in the 2019-2020 EP Report. Rejecting the non-objective and biased assessments in the non-binding report, the Turkish Foreign Ministry indicated that Turkey's foreign policy cannot be described as nothing but "solution-oriented and humanitarian". Stating that criticisms concerning rule of law and the political system in Turkey were false allegations, the press release also emphasized that Turkey cannot accept any other form than the accession negotiations for the future of the Turkey-EU relationship. Reaffirming Turkey's strategic goal to become an EU member, the press release stressed that accession negotiations were at a standstill not because of Turkey's



lack of will for reforms, but mostly due to political blockages on the EU's part since the beginning of the accession process. In addition, it was emphasized that even though Turkey has fulfilled all its commitments under the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement, the EU has failed to deliver its part of the deal.

Moreover, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an additional statement regarding the call mentioned in the 2019-2020 EP Report to examine the possibility of adding the Grey Wolves to the EU terrorist list and indicated that the suggestion was "prejudiced". Emphasizing that the Grey Wolves' associations are linked to the long-established Nationalist Movement Party in Turkey and completely legal, the statement criticised the EU's stance tolerating the operations of PKK/PYD/YPG and FETÖ affiliated associations under freedom of expression and demonstration. Questioning this double standard, it was stressed that the call for adding the Grey Wolves to the terrorist list was an act falling far from the EU's fundamental values.



TURKEY DENOUNCED LATVIAN PARLIAMENT'S DECLARATION ON 1915 EVENTS

On 6 May 2021, the Latvian Parliament (*Saeima*) adopted a declaration recognising the Armenian allegations regarding the 1915 events. The controversial declaration labelling the 1915 events as "genocide" caused a strong reaction from Turkey. In a statement issued in the wake of the declaration, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected and strongly denounced the decision as a null and void attempt at rewriting history with political motives.

The statement pointed out that in the case of the 1915 events, none of the conditions required for the use of the term "genocide" as strictly defined by international law were present. Moreover, it was stated that the decision by the *Saeima* was in violation of both the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and

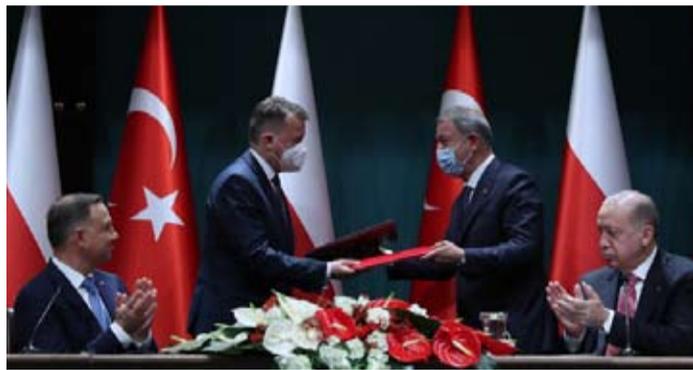
Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the 2013 and 2015 rulings by the European Court of Human Rights stressing the controversial nature of the 1915 events. The statement recalled that the decision also contradicted with the statement that Latvia had issued regarding the 80th anniversary of its occupation as well as with the principle of approaching historical events with honesty and fairness as a precondition of international relations, and thus presented a double standard. Therefore, the statement called on the Latvian Parliament to reverse this unfair decision and to reinforce the amelioration of relations between Turkish and Armenian nations.

Similar rejections of the Latvian Parliament's declaration on the 1915 events were issued by Turkey's Ministry of National Defence, on the same day.

POLAND BECAME THE FIRST EUROPEAN NATO ALLY TO PROCURE TURKISH DRONES

Poland has purchased 24 "Bayraktar Tactical Block 2" (TB2) type armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and thus became the first NATO ally and EU Member State to acquire Turkish-made drones. The agreement formalising the sale of Turkish UAVs to Poland was signed in Ankara on 24 May 2021 during the three-day official visit by Polish President Andrzej Duda to Turkey. The two countries also signed agreements in the areas of tourism, agriculture and sports.

Speaking at the joint press conference following his one on one meeting with Polish President Duda, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hailed Turkey's position as a leading producer of UAVs and said that Turkey was among the world's top three or four nations in this area. Moreover, President Erdoğan highlighted the success of the Turkish defence industry stating that Turkey was one of the ten countries



capable of designing, building and maintaining its own warships and that seven Turkish defence companies were ranked among the world's top 100. Indicating that Turkey was pleased to share its experience and capability with a fellow NATO ally, President Erdoğan underlined that the agreement will be a boost to the Turkish defence sector. According to reports, under the deal, Poland is set to receive 24 UAVs, ground control stations and data terminals next year.

The Bayraktar TB2 drones produced by a private company, have been used in numerous cross-border counter-terrorism operations including Euphrates Shield, Olive Branch and Spring Shield since their entry in Turkey's inventory in 2014. The cutting-edge drones have also been exported to Ukraine, Qatar and Azerbaijan. The Bayraktar TB2 drones are believed to have played a decisive role in Azerbaijan's victory over Armenia during the recent flare up of tension in Nagorno-Karabakh last year.

EU FOOD AND VETERINARY OFFICE APPROVED TURKEY'S POULTRY MEAT CONTROLLING SYSTEM

As reported in Agence Europe on 4 May 2021, the EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) issued a report indicating that Turkey's poultry meat controlling system preventing diseases was in line with the relevant EU regulations. The FVO report presents a crucial development concerning Turkey-EU trade relations concerning poultry meat export since Turkey is not able to export to the EU due to the lack of alignment with animal health standards. Even though nine companies were compatible with the EU regulations, in recent years Turkey exported a limited quantity of poultry commodities. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health, Turkey notified 41 outbreaks of "new castle" disease in 2019 while in 2020 the number of confirmed outbreaks counted 15. Accordingly, in 2020 Turkey only exported no other product categorised under poultry



commodities but class B eggs to the EU.

In 2020, Turkey produced 2.14 million tons (MT) of chicken meat while projections estimate that the production in 2021 will reach 2.16 MT. Latest developments including the COVID-19 pandemic, devaluation of the Turkish lira, rise in feed prices, and Iraq's import restrictions have caused a decrease in production. Despite problems, Turkey aspires to export its products to EU countries and gives importance to increasing its alignment with the EU's regulations on poultry meat.

TURKEY APPLIED TO JOIN PESCO MILITARY MOBILITY PROJECT

According to reports, Turkey formally declared its intention to participate in the Dutch-led Military Mobility project which is among the 46 projects under the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). On 6 May 2021, the US, Canada and Norway have become the first third countries officially invited to join the Military Mobility project under PESCO. The project coordinated by the Netherlands, which aims at easing and standardising the bureaucratic procedures for cross-border mobility of military personnel and equipment, is seen vital for EU-NATO cooperation. The Spokesperson for the Dutch Defence Ministry confirmed that they had received a formal request from Turkey to participate in the project.

Enabling deeper defence cooperation through joint defence investments and capability development among willing and capable Member States, PESCO is seen as a form of differentiated integration in defence matters. Once famously referred to as the "Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty", PESCO was formally launched by 25 EU Member States in December 2017 and has taken centre stage in the EU's efforts to achieve strategic autonomy. Conditions for third country participation in PESCO projects, which took nearly three years of tough negotiations largely because of Greek and Greek Cypriot objections concerning Turkey's potential participation, were finalised on 5 November 2020. The Council decision states that a third country, which



could add value to a PESCO project, could be invited to participate on a case-by-case basis provided that it meets the specified political, substantive and legal conditions. Accordingly, it is stated that the third country is expected to share the values on which the EU is built upon, not contravene the defence and security interests of the EU and its Member States, and have an agreement on sharing classified information with the EU along with an administrative arrangement with the European Defence Agency. Turkish officials have voiced concern that if it creates new fault lines, PESCO has effectively no chance to be successful or to contribute to the transatlantic security architecture.

According to the procedure, after the third country applies to participate in a PESCO project, acting by unanimity, the project members shall agree whether the country in question meets the relevant conditions and notify the High

Representative and the Council. The Council has the final say over deciding whether the third country meets the necessary conditions again by unanimity, this time among the 25 Member States participating in PESCO. If the outcome is positive, then an administrative arrangement setting out the start and end date as well as stages of participation will need to be negotiated between project members and the third country, and a review mechanism will be set up.

Turkey's participation in the Military Mobility project is expected to further contribute to improving NATO-EU cooperation. However, it is likely that it could be hindered by Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration which are among the participants of the project. It remains to be seen whether PESCO could provide new impetus to Turkey-EU relations or become the latest casualty to the foreign policy preferences of the Greek and Greek Cypriot duo.

TURKEY BANNED IMPORTS OF WASTES MADE OF POLYETHYLENE



On 17 May 2021, Greenpeace UK published a report entitled "How the UK is Still Dumping Plastic Waste on the Rest of the World" stating that Turkey has become the top destination for UK plastic waste and criticised the UK government's decision to export waste to Turkey, which has the lowest recycling rate in the OECD. According to the report, exports from the UK to Turkey have increased 18 times from 2016 to 2020 and Turkey received almost 40% of the UK's plastic waste exports in 2020. The report also mentioned that half of the waste exported to Turkey was mixed plastic waste, which is nearly impossible to recycle. The dispute on this issue started in 2020, when the BBC shared a video based on an investigation that showed plastic waste imported from the UK was dumped by the roadsides and incinerated in Turkey.

Turkey's Environment and Urbanisation Minister Murat Kurum issued a statement after the Greenpeace report made headlines in Turkey. Minister Kurum stressed that unlike claimed in the report, Turkey has never imported "trash" and only imported high-quality and clean waste required by the Turkish industry with proper documentation. Minister Kurum announced that Turkey will no longer import plastic packaging wastes made of polyethylene, which are known for becoming non-recyclable after one month. Moreover, Minister Kurum also assured that Turkey will do the waste controls and inspections in customs simultaneously and will follow these wastes via a mobile application called MoTAT after the customs.

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU VISITED SLOVENIA, GERMANY AND GREECE

In May, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu paid working visits to Slovenia, Germany and Greece.

On 4 May 2021, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu visited Slovenia to hold bilateral talks. In the context of his visit to Ljubljana, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu was received by Slovenian President Borut Pahor and held meetings with Prime Minister Janez Janša and Foreign Minister Anže Logar. Speaking at the joint press conference with his Slovenian counterpart, Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that Turkish-Slovenian relations were developing in every area and that the two countries would work together for stability and prosperity in the Balkans during Slovenia's upcoming EU Presidency. For his part, Slovenian Foreign Minister Logar pledged to play a constructive role in improving Turkey-EU relations and making progress on some concrete issues such as the modernisation of the Customs Union and visa liberalisation. Both ministers also celebrated the 10th year of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between Turkey and Slovenia.

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu paid a working visit to Germany on 5 and 6 May to discuss bilateral relations and regional issues. In the context of the two-day visit, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu was received



by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and came together with numerous senior German officials including Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, former Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and Federal Government Commissioner for Tourism Thomas Bareiss. Turkish-German relations, the situation of the Turkish community in Germany on the 60th anniversary of the migration agreement, Turkey's safe tourism plan, the fight against terrorism and irregular migration were the main issues Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu discussed with his German interlocutors.

During the joint press conference with his German counterpart Maas, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu pointed out that the bilateral trade volume between Turkey and Germany would surpass 40 billion dollars despite the pandemic. Indicating that Germany contributed constructively to Turkey-EU relations, Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that Turkey expected some concrete steps from the EU including on visa liberalisation.

For his part, Maas reconfirmed Berlin's support for dialogue between Turkey and the EU and said that prospects for Turkey-EU relations looked better this year.

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu visited Greece on 30 and 31 May. In the context of the two-day visit, Çavuşoğlu first held exchanges with members of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace where he underlined Turkey's resolute support for their rights. On the second day of the visit, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu came together with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias and exchanged views on bilateral and regional issues. Commenting on the meetings, Çavuşoğlu stressed Turkey's readiness for dialogue to improve bilateral ties with Greece and stated that they agreed to resolve their differences on the basis of good neighbourly relations and international law. During the visit, Athens and Ankara reached an agreement on mutual recognition of COVID-19 vaccine certificates.

VIOLENT CLASHES BROKE OUT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE ONCE AGAIN



Turkey intensified its diplomatic efforts in the wake of the escalation triggered by the latest episode of Israeli aggression against Palestinians. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed his solidarity with the Palestinians stressing that since the beginning of Israeli attacks, Turkey has carried out intense diplomatic initiatives both at the level of leaders and international organisations. Things must be done immediately to resolve the conflict, if not, then it would be inevitable to face the dire consequences of the picture, Erdoğan stressed. Attending the online meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Emergency Executive Committee, which convened on 16 May 2021 upon the call of Turkey, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu conveyed that Israel is solely responsible for the atrocities in the Palestinian territories and that Turkey will continue to lead all efforts in international platforms for the protection of Palestinians while sustaining to be the voice of conscience and justice in the world.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) convened to discuss the grave situation in Palestine on 20 May. In his opening speech, UNGA President Ambassador Volkan Bozkır pointed out that Israel must abide by international law and attacks must stop. Addressing the UNGA, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu expressed the view that Israel's aggressive actions constitute a war crime. In the same vein, UN Secretary General António Guterres expressed his deep shock at the air bombardment by the Israeli defence forces which claimed

the lives of over 200 civilians nearly 60 of them children with the words "if there is a hell on earth it is the lives of the children in Gaza, the conflict must stop immediately." Subject to some divisions on the issue, the EU foreign ministers came together at an informal video conference meeting to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian dispute on 18 May. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell while acknowledging Israel's right self-defence, stressed that its actions must be proportionate and with highly limited use of force. He added that only a genuine political solution could bring peace and highlighted the need to re-establish a smooth political horizon, in this regard. The EU was unable to agree on a joint statement calling for a ceasefire as Hungary, which is among Israel's closest allies in the EU, refused to support the statement.

In mid-April, from the beginning of Ramadan, Israeli police placed barriers at the Damascus Gate to prevent Palestinians from visiting or gathering. Tensions arose between Palestinians protesting against the situation and were fuelled by the subsequent forced resettlement of some Palestinian families. The increasing number of Palestinian civilians dying from Israeli attacks in Gaza and Israeli casualties stemming from steady rockets fired by Hamas raised the alarm internationally. On 21 May, after the 11-day attacks between Israel and Hamas, which claimed the lives of 250 people mostly Palestinians, a ceasefire agreement reached under the mediation of Egypt came into effect.

EUROPEAN HOME AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER JOHANSSON PAID A VISIT TO TURKEY

European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson paid a working visit to Turkey on 7 May 2021. In the context of her visit to Ankara, which was a follow up to the visit by European Commission and Council Presidents in April, Commissioner Johansson was received by Vice President Fuat Oktay and met with Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu to discuss all dimensions of the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement known as the "refugee deal". Vice President Oktay pointed out that fulfilling all its obligations in tackling the refugee crisis, Turkey displayed an exemplary approach to the world in terms of Syrian crisis while the EU by focusing only on the refugee issue ignored the fundamental aspects of the Turkey-EU Statement. In his meeting with Commissioner Johansson, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu highlighted the importance Turkey attached to maintaining a positive agenda with the EU and stressed



that Ankara expected concrete steps from the EU in the areas of migration, visa liberalisation and the fight against terrorism. Commenting on her meetings with senior Turkish officials on social media, Commissioner Johansson hailed the positive atmosphere in the relations said that she had important and frank exchanges with her Turkish interlocutors.

A week before the visit by the Commissioner, the European Commission adopted the first EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration. Within the framework

of the strategy, the EU takes into account the individual needs of returnees that will come to their own countries. It also aims to support the successful reintegration of the returnees into the society they will rejoin. Additionally, the strategy sets out practical measures to strengthen the legal and operational framework for voluntary returns from Europe and transit countries, to improve the quality of return and integration programmes, to establish better links with initiatives and to strengthen cooperation with partner countries.

WITH THE TOURISM SEASON LOOMING TURKEY STEPS UP THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Turkey has intensified the fight against COVID-19 on multiple fronts ahead of the summer season. The steady decline in the number of cases as a result of the full lockdown, has shone a ray of hope for the tourism sector.

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Heading into summer months when travel and tourism usually starts picking up, the situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic has become especially important for countries relying heavily on the income from the tourism sector. Turkey is one of those countries. Having been hit hard with the domestic and international travel restrictions and lockdowns, the Turkish tourism suffered a 69.14% decline in the number of tourists visiting Turkey, down from 51,747,189 in 2019 to 15,971,201 in 2020. This decline in the number of tourists resulted in a tourism income of only 12.1 billion dollars in 2020, reflecting a 65.1% decrease compared to that in 2019.

Situation Regarding COVID-19

As these numbers show, Turkey would benefit from an increase in the number of tourists visiting this summer, as is the case for all the other Mediterranean countries Turkey competes with in attracting tourists. The most important factor in this respect is the situation regarding COVID-19. After a steady increase in the number of confirmed daily COVID-19 cases reaching the peak of 63,082 on 17 April and daily number of deaths at 297 on 16 April 2021, Turkish government, in preparation for the tourism season, announced a full lockdown from 29 April to 17 May. On 17 May, the number of daily cases was recorded to be 10,512. Since then the numbers have continued to fall and as of 3 June, the daily number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are at 6,602. The rate of vaccination is as critical as the number of cases and in Turkey, the total number of doses administered, as of 4 June 2021, is registered as 29,852,702 with 17,051,757 people having had their first dose and 12,800,945 people having received both doses. Recently, Health Minister Dr. Fahrettin Koca



has announced that an agreement has been signed with BioNTech for 30 million doses monthly vaccine deliveries over the next four months starting from June, bringing the total of BioNTech vaccines Turkey will receive to 120 million by the end of September.

Safe Tourism Certification Programme

Among the most vital measures taken to enable the normalisation of tourism by Turkey is the comprehensive Safe Tourism Certification Programme which has been initiated under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It has been developed with the contributions of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in cooperation with all the stakeholders in the industry as of 1 June 2020.

The safe tourism concept is based on four main pillars; health and safety of passengers; health and safety of employees; measures at the facilities and measures in transportation vehicles. The Safe Tourism Certification Programme is therefore an application certifying the safe tourism by covering the whole course of travel of domestic and foreign tourists from their arrival at any airport in Turkey until their departure from Turkey. It applies to all

cities in Turkey, particularly the most popular tourist destinations including İstanbul, Muğla, İzmir, Antalya, and Nevşehir. The main objectives of the programme are to ensure continuous application of hygiene measures and to control the tourist facilities from hotels and restaurants to vehicles transporting them, making it possible for tourists to travel comfortably and safely. The certification process of tourist facilities is carried out by international audit companies that have been authorised by the Ministry. For more than 9,800 facilities that obtained safe tourism certificate so far this year, there will be QR codes on all logos and through these QR codes, everyone will have access to facility's inspection data.

Turkey's Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy has announced that the tourism season will open on 1 June 2021 with the "Safe Tourism is even Safer Now" slogan this year. The Safe Tourism Certification Programme has become compulsory for the accommodation facilities with 30 and more rooms as of 1 January 2021. Establishments that wish to apply for this programme will have to be certified for the period they are in operation and the certification criteria for accommodation facilities have been made even more stringent by the authorities; the number of

criteria to qualify for the certificate have been increased from 136 to 171 this year. Certificates will be valid for a month during which the facilities will be inspected four times: they will have to undergo two scheduled and two on-the-spot inspections every month by independent companies from Germany, the UK, France, and Turkey, compared to last year when there were only two inspections. Tourists are offered "Tourist Protection and Support Insurance with COVID-19 coverage" and "Extra Accommodation Cost Guarantee" within the scheme.

Other Measures Taken

In a news conference in Berlin with his German counterpart Heiko Maas in the beginning of May, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced, as yet another measure, Turkey's decision to vaccinate all the people employed in the tourism sector by the end of the month. Apart from these, PCR tests and temperature scans which will be carried out at airports, hotels, and hospitals, increased safety and hygiene measures in tourism hubs such as Muğla, Antalya, and İzmir and exempting foreign tourists from a number of restrictions the locals were being subjected to, like being able to go out during curfew times since November, are among the other measures taken to promote tourism under COVID-19 conditions.

Having done their part, the tourism sector is now ready and excited for the new tourism season, waiting for the number of COVID-19 cases to go down and countries like Russia, Germany and the UK to promote Turkey as a tourist destination for the reservations to start coming in.

Global Health Summit

In the meantime, as COVID-19 pandemic still continues to impact all aspects of life including travel and tourism, Italy and the European Commission hosted the Global Health Summit on 21 May in Rome where G20 countries came together for the first time to specifically discuss health.

Turkey also took part in the summit where President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan focused on the need for equal access to vaccines and the "central role of the WHO" in strengthening the global health system and expressed his support for its reform process. Regarding COVID-19 restrictions, he said that "control measures should be coordinated and proportional, should respect the delicate balance between health and economy". Warning against the use of "vaccine passports" as a discriminatory measure between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated people, President Erdoğan said international travel and tourism should be made possible by ensuring adequate health and hygiene conditions.

At the end of the summit, the Rome Declaration was signed by all G20 countries who agreed on common principles to overcome COVID-19 and to prevent and prepare for future pandemics. The importance of the Summit lies in the fact that it emphasized once again how critical it is to take a multilateral approach, reject health nationalism and work to achieve equitable access to vaccines for all in the face of a global health threat. The countries committed to promote and work towards achieving the 16 principles of the Rome Declaration, mentioning the G20 Summit in October and the World Health Assembly as platforms to further these objectives. Some of the concrete outcomes of the summit are the pledge of 1,3 billion doses of vaccines in 2021 to low-income countries at production-cost and middle-income countries at low cost by BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson; the donation of 100 million doses of vaccines to low and middle income countries and an investment of 1 billion euros by Team Europe from the EU budget and EU financial institutions to develop vaccine production and manufacturing capacity with African partners in Africa together in the long term and the commitment to carry out work on the issue of intellectual property rights in relation to vaccines.