



IKV MONTHLY



ISSUE: 71 APRIL 2021

www.ikv.org.tr / contact: ikv@ikv.org.tr

TURKEY-EU RELATIONS IN THE WAKE OF THE MARCH EUROPEAN COUNCIL: TOWARDS A POSITIVE AGENDA?

A revitalisation of Turkey-EU relations is urgently needed for both parties and will entail both de-escalation in the foreign policy domain and building of cooperation and trust as well as progress in the human rights, democracy and rule of law situation in Turkey.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem NAS
IKV Secretary General

Turkey-EU relations have followed a bumpy path since 2016. The year 2020 was especially challenging because of rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean in addition to the dire effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Seismic explorations for hydrocarbons off the coast of Cyprus and in the Aegean exposed flashpoints in the region emanating from the unsettled Cyprus question and bilateral disputes between Turkey and Greece. Moreover, Turkey's assertive foreign policy and operations regarding Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts clashed with EU and its Member State interests. Such developments increased the EU's threat assessment vis-à-vis Turkey while it led Turkey to question the EU's support for its security. The growing rift between Turkey and the EU created a paradoxical situation in the relations: Will Turkey continue as a candidate to join the EU or will a different sort of relationship emerge which will be more conflictual than cooperative?

The EU mostly led by Germany and facilitated by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell aimed to prevent the further deterioration in Turkey-EU relations through the proposition of a positive agenda. The positive agenda included further cooperation on mutual interests such as trade facilitation, modernisation of the Customs Union, restarting high level dialogue meetings, refugee cooperation and people-to-people contacts. Turkey's first reaction to the positive agenda was lukewarm however, the Turkish government took care not to antagonize the relationship further by moderating its approach to the Eastern Mediterranean tensions and improving its bilateral relations with EU Member States such as Greece and France. While an exchange of letters was followed by a phone



conversation between Turkish and French Presidents, exploratory talks between Turkey and Greece restarted after five years. Germany's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas' visit to Turkey took place in an amicable atmosphere as did Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's visit to Brussels. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reiterated Turkey's strategic goal of EU membership noting that accepting Turkey as a Member State would be an ontological choice for the EU. These overtures were followed by an intensifying discourse on reform culminating in President Erdoğan's declaration of a Human Rights Action Plan and an Economic Reform Package. What proved to be quite problematic was the discrepancy between the proclaimed aim of reforming the political and economic situation in the direction of democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance and the actual turn of events.

Three developments took place in Turkey right before the critical 25-26 March European Council. The EU leaders had postponed a lengthier debate on Turkey-EU relations to the March Summit. These developments were Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention on fighting violence against women, the decision to replace the Central Bank

governor who was an internationally renowned technocrat with a more controversial figure and the opening of the closure case against the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the lifting of immunity for yet another one of its members of Parliament. While the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention had a symbolic significance regarding the Turkish government's adherence to women's rights and gender equality, coupled with the disregard for the European Court of Human Rights decisions and delay in the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement it also attests to a falling out with multilateralism and global norms. The sudden change in the Central Bank raises questions about economic governance in an extremely fragile economic situation adding to the worries of international investors about the soundness of the management of Turkish economy. The closure case against HDP, the third largest party in terms of the votes it received in the last elections and a member of the "Millet" coalition was viewed from Europe as an undemocratic move induced by the government not an act against terrorism initiated by an independent judiciary. Despite these developments which led to a questioning of the government's determination to revitalize the EU accession perspective, the 25 March

Statement of the Members of the European Council did not include a harsh criticism regarding these developments and accorded the 8th place to the rule of law and fundamental rights question among a total of 11 points (point 16 under the title of "Eastern Mediterranean" starting with point 9). Moreover, the debate about Turkey-EU relations was under the title of the "Eastern Mediterranean" giving pundits an idea about the lenses through which the EU has been eyeing Turkey lately.

The EU Leaders' Statement noted "the EU's strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey", and welcomed "the recent de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean through the discontinuation of illegal drilling activities, the resumption of bilateral talks between Greece and Turkey and the forthcoming talks on the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the United Nations". Hence, it may be evaluated that the recent change in Turkey's policy in the Eastern Mediterranean pleased the EU and tilted the balance in favour of positive measures to revitalize Turkey-EU relations. The leaders also added that the situation in the region was still fragile and more time was needed in order to reach a definitive view on the implementation of the positive measures. The EU put forth three positive measures in order to trigger cooperation with Turkey "in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner": economic cooperation and talks regarding the current problems in the Customs Union and starting work on a mandate for the modernisation of the Customs Union; restarting high level dialogues with Turkey on issues such as public health, climate, counter-terrorism and regional issues; and engaging in cooperation regarding mobility and people-to-people contacts.

The European Council underlined that if Turkey's actions in Eastern Mediterranean threatened

EU and Member State interests again, then it would use "the instruments and options at its disposal to defend its interests...". Such instruments that could be used against Turkey were not elaborated in the statement. However, the report titled "State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations" prepared by the European Commission and High Representative Borrell detailed the possible sanctions that could be employed against Turkey such as adoption of additional listings for restrictive measures, restrictions on economic cooperation, sectoral measures such as prohibition to supply of tourism services, and additional measures in energy and related sectors such as import/export bans on goods and technologies. The implementation of such sanctions, which would go beyond the framework of Turkey-EU relations but would target the already fragile Turkish economy, could have drastic effects on stability in Turkey. Hence, while the focus of the European Council is on rewarding the recent de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean and kick off a more amicable relationship based on mutual interests, the sanctions toolkit is developed behind the scenes in order to be availed in case of a return to tension and crises in the region.

In a nutshell, Turkey-EU relations are at a crossroads. Although Turkey is still a candidate country to the EU, it is no longer regarded as a genuine candidate by the EU and its Member States. An alternative relationship based on a strategic partnership is being formulated in this process. However, any new relationship between Turkey and the EU would definitely be considered as a downgrading from the status of candidate and acceding country. Based on the current conditions, a revitalisation of Turkey-EU relations is urgently needed for both parties and will entail both de-escalation in the foreign policy domain and building of cooperation and trust as well as progress in the human rights, democracy and rule of law situation in Turkey.



“WE RECEIVE THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS WITH CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM”

On 25 March 2021, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented on the European Council conclusions under the heading “Eastern Mediterranean” regarding relations with Turkey. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu indicated that EU’s willingness to revive relations with Turkey was positive. Chairman Zeytinoğlu also emphasized the importance of advancing the relations with the EU, which is designing its future around European Green Deal principles, and stated that the perspective of full membership preserves its importance; thus, it is crucial for Turkey not to give up on the reform process. Chairman Zeytinoğlu continued as follows:



However, the realisation of these recommendations is made conditional upon the continuation of tranquility in the Eastern Mediterranean. Stating that cooperation will be progressive, proportionate and reversible, attention is drawn to progress in the following areas: economic cooperation, mandating the

Commission to resolve the problems in the Turkey-EU Customs Union and initiating the modernisation process and a high level dialogue including on topics such as climate and public health, progress in people-to-people contacts and mobility, and continuation of cooperation on refugees.

It is stated that the European Council to be held in June will revert to the issue and the developments concerning the Eastern Mediterranean will be monitored closely till then. Particularly, the fact that the modernisation of the Customs Union is brought to the agenda is a positive development. Moreover, initiating a high level dialogue and proposing new topics for discussion such as climate and public health will also be beneficial for addressing and coordinating the issues on the EU agenda together. Concerning people-to-people contacts and mobility, the concept of visa liberalisation is not mentioned.

However, it was mentioned in the report prepared by Borrell. The rapid fulfilment of the six remaining benchmarks for visa liberalisation will accelerate the process. Cooperation on refugees should be resumed swiftly. In this respect, the European Council mentions the significance of Turkey’s continued cooperation in readmission and control of irregular migration within the scope of the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement. However, while emphasizing cooperation on refugees, the failure to mention crucial issues included in the 18 March Statement such as the revitalisation of accession negotiations, realisation of visa liberalisation as well as the resettlement of Syrians from Turkey into the EU can be interpreted as double standards. The fact that democracy, human rights and rule of law are declared as an integral part of Turkey-EU relations is worth mentioning particularly for the candidacy perspective. Focusing

on reforms in the field of economy and politics in Turkey until June will pave the way for a revitalisation of relations with the EU. The European Council requested to advance the work for the Eastern Mediterranean Conference also proposed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Moreover, a solution in Cyprus within the framework of the UN is mentioned and it is stated that the EU will participate in the upcoming talks in April as an observer and provide support. Keeping the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean problems in a moderate framework with such diplomatic initiatives will be beneficial for peace and security in the region. Turkey and EU moving closer is of utmost importance for post-COVID-19 normalisation, economic recovery, increasing foreign investments and revival of trade. We support close coordination and cooperation and coherent progress with Turkey on issues which are high on the EU agenda namely; the Green Deal and digitalisation.”

“TURKEY IS INDISPENSABLE FOR THE EU, JUST AS THE EU IS INDISPENSABLE FOR TURKEY”

In a statement issued ahead of the 25-26 March European Council meeting, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu underlined Turkey’s goal of EU membership and said that Turkey-EU relations should not be taken out of that context and off the route to accession. Chairman Zeytinoğlu made the following remarks:



“The 25-26 March EU Summit is crucial for the future of Turkey-EU relations. The discussion on Turkey-EU relations during the December Summit had been postponed to March and EU High Representative Borrell was tasked with preparing a report on the issue. Borrell’s report draws attention to the positive developments in relation to the de-escalation of tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean but states that more time is needed to fully assess the situation and that the EU’s approach towards Turkey will take better shape after the June Summit. Borrell puts forward a roadmap consisting of two alternative routes. It is suggested in the report that Turkey should pay attention to the EU’s priorities on the topics of the Eastern Mediterranean and foreign policy and reinvigorate relations in a positive direction by displaying

an approach that aims to reduce tensions. If that is not the case, the report proposes a number of phased sanctions. It is very upsetting to see that the sanctions are still on the agenda. Looking back at the history and comprehensive nature of Turkey-EU relations, the fact is that the relations should have been at a higher level than they are today. We hope that the EU re-evaluates its Turkey policy, taking into consideration the accession process. As a first step, the modernisation of the Customs Union needs to begin shortly. High level dialogues and close cooperation should start with special attention being paid

to issues relating to the Green Deal and digitalisation. In the meantime, Turkey should take concrete actions to activate the Human Rights Action Plan and the Economic Reform Package and take advantage of the positive dynamic created by doing so. Turkey also needs to speed up efforts to meet the six remaining benchmarks for visa liberalisation. Turkey should also, in line with its international commitments, initiate the approval process for the Paris Climate Agreement and cancel its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, the formation of which Turkey contributed to.

In the report, reference is made to positive steps that need to be taken as a continuation of a more moderate atmosphere in the Eastern Mediterranean and as part of the positive agenda proposed after the October and December Summits. In this regard, it is envisaged that migration management and economic ties are strengthened, high level dialogues launched and people-to-people contacts enhanced. With respect to migration management, it is stated that Turkey should accept 1,450 returnees from the Greek islands. In return, the EU should begin resettling Syrian

refugees, starting with the most vulnerable groups into Member States. But no number is mentioned in this regard. On the one hand, the report mentions modernisation and expansion of the Turkey-EU Customs Union as a means of strengthening the economic ties. However, on the other hand, it is mentioned that the Council needs to authorise the Commission to begin the negotiations with Turkey. Yet for this to happen, a precondition is put forth; that Turkey should resolve the issues damaging trade with the EU. The fact that no mention has been made pertaining to transportation quotas and Turkey being left out of the FTAs the EU signs with other parties is a major shortcoming. High level dialogues were suspended by the EU in 2019. Now it is proposed that high level dialogues should be relaunched in the areas of economy, transport, political developments, foreign affairs and security policies. High level dialogues on issues of Green Deal which initiated the transformation of the EU economy are especially crucial as it is very relevant for Turkey. Finally, under the people-to-people contacts heading, Turkey’s participation in the new generation EU programmes is

encouraged and a reference is made to visa liberalisation. It is stated that the Commission is willing to advise on the benchmarks which Turkey has not yet fulfilled. It would have been more constructive if emphasis were put on how fulfilling these benchmarks would lead the way to visa liberalisation. Borrell’s report also mentions the possibility of phased sanctions in case the tensions rise in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this respect, the proposal includes a set of phased sanctions: additional listings of individuals to be targeted with sanctions as proposed at the December Summit but has not been implemented, extending the scope of sanctions to include legal persons, limiting the economic cooperation and operations of the EIB and other financial institutions, applying pressure on certain sectors of the economy through issuing warnings against tourism and travel to Turkey and to apply additional sanctions in the form of import and export bans of certain products and technologies in the energy sector as well as other relevant sectors. We hope that there will not be a need for these sanctions and that Turkey-EU relations will develop based on a constructive and win-win formula.”

İKv AGENDA

İKv HOSTED A WEBINAR ENTITLED "5TH YEAR OF THE TURKEY-EU DEAL: EXPERIENCES AND PREDICTIONS"

İKv and Research Centre on Asylum and Migration Academy (IGAM Academy) jointly organised a webinar entitled "5th Year of the Turkey-EU Deal: Experiences and Predictions" on 18 March 2021. İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu delivered the first opening speech of the webinar which was moderated by İKv Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit and IGAM Academy Coordinator Dr. Nihal Eminoğlu. İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu emphasized that Turkey, hosting over 4 million refugees has substantially eased the EU's burden and that the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement included provisions on revitalisation of the accession process, Customs Union modernisation and visa liberalisation in addition to cooperation on migration, which are yet to materialize. Delivering the second opening speech, IGAM President Metin Çorabatır discussed the development of the asylum reception system in Turkey after the 18 March Statement. Giving the last opening speech, Head of the Political Affairs Section of the EU Delegation to Turkey Eva Horelová



talked about the delivery of commitments under the Turkey-EU Statement and highlighted the need for rebuilding mutual trust.

Delivering the keynote address at the webinar, Turkey's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı emphasized that the vast majority of the provisions in the 18 March Statement were related to the fundamental dimensions of Turkey-EU relations. Stressing the importance of Turkey's EU accession perspective, Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Kaymakcı outlined

Turkey's main expectations from an updated Turkey-EU Statement.

In the panel session, Prof. Howard Duncan from Carleton University, Founding Chairman of the European Stability Initiative Gerald Knaus, Secretary General of EP EU-Turkey Forum Laura Batalla Adam, IGAM Academy Vice-President Prof. Kemal Kirişçi, IGAM Academy President Prof. M. Murat Erdoğan and İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas held an in-depth discussion on the past, present and future of the Turkey-EU Statement.

İKv CHAIRMAN MET WITH CONSUL GENERAL OF CROATIA, BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS

On 12 March 2021, the Consul General of Croatia in Istanbul Ivana Zerec paid a courtesy visit to İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu. During the meeting, the latest developments in Turkey-EU relations, İKv's activity areas and possible cooperation opportunities were discussed. Moreover, the impact of the pandemic on economic relations between countries was assessed and an exchange of views was held on the development of economic relations between Turkey and Croatia.

On the same day, the Consul General of Belgium in Istanbul Serge Dickschen visited İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu. The recent developments in Turkey-EU relations and the reform process in the EU were discussed during the meeting. The economic relations between Turkey and Belgium, how to improve these relations and the projects that can be developed to this end were among the other topics covered. Emphasis was put on cooperation



between the institutions and keeping the communication channels open at all times in order to maintain the relations active between the institutions.

On 23 March, İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu visited the Consul General of the Netherlands in Istanbul Bart van Bolhuis. İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu provided information about recent activities carried out by İKv and expressed his expectations for the 25-26 March

European Council meeting regarding Turkey-EU relations. Stressing the importance of a multidimensional relationship between Turkey and the EU, Zeytinoğlu and Bolhuis said that reviving Turkey-EU relations would also be beneficial for the relations between Turkey and the Netherlands. The meeting was also attended by İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas and Trade Counselor of the Dutch Embassy in Ankara Helene Rekkers.

TIMELINE MARCH 2021

President Erdoğan presented the Human Rights Action Plan.	1	
	2	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu issued a statement on the Human Rights Action Plan.
NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg hailed Turkey's importance for European security.	3	
	4	İKv Secretary General Nas participated in the webinar on "Water Awareness and Efficiency in the EU and Turkey".
EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Borrell visited Cyprus.	5	
	6	
Senior Turkish and European officials issued statements on the occasion of International Women's Day.	7	
	8	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu released a statement on the occasion of International Women's Day. İKv, TEPAV and IPC issued a joint statement calling for Turkey's alignment with the Green Deal. İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu chaired a session in the "EU-Turkey High Level Business Dialogue".
The 10 th anniversary of the Turkey-EU Civil Society Dialogue was celebrated.	9	
	10	İKv hosted a webinar on "Gender Equality in the EU Process and Feminist Foreign Policy".
President Erdoğan unveiled the Economic Reform Package.	11	
	12	Croatian Consul General Zerec and Belgian Consul General Dickschen visited İKv.
	13	
Slovakia's Foreign and European Affairs Minister Korčok visited Turkey.	14	
62 nd round of consultative talks between Turkey and Greece was held in Athens.	15	İKv published a policy brief (in Turkish) on the EU's new trade strategy.
	16	
	17	
EU issued a statement on recent developments concerning HDP.	18	İKv organised a webinar entitled "5 th Year of the Turkey-EU Deal: Experiences & Predictions" in cooperation with IGAM Academy.
President Erdoğan held a video call with Presidents of the European Commission and European Council.	19	
European officials issued statements on Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.	20	
	21	
Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu met with EU High Representative Borrell in Brussels.	22	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu visited the Consul General of the Netherlands Bart van Bolhuis.
Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu attended the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting.	23	
	24	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu issued a statement ahead of the European Council meeting.
EU leaders discussed relations with Turkey on the basis of the report by EU High Representative Borrell.	25	
	26	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu evaluated the outcome of the European Council meeting in a statement.
	27	İKv Secretary General Nas discussed the European Council meeting on Deep Dive Politics. İKv Secretary General Nas participated in the <i>Kanal Ekonomi</i> Instagram live cast.
	28	İKv Secretary General Nas spoke at the online seminar on "European Council and Beyond".
The EU and UN co-chaired the 5 th Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region.	29	
	30	İKv Secretary General Nas took part at the webinar hosted by Kadir Has University.
	31	

IKV CHAIRMAN ZEYTİNOĞLU'S 8 MARCH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MESSAGE

In a statement issued on the occasion of 8 March International Women's Day, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and underscored the themes of women's rights and gender equality. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu reminded that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, saw improving the status of women in the society and ensuring their participation in all areas of life as one of the most important priorities and has made a breakthrough in women's rights. Emphasizing that despite this, there are important problems regarding the situation of women and gender equality, Chairman Zeytinoğlu made the following remarks:

"8 March is a day when issues of women's rights and gender equality come to the fore in Turkey, as in the whole world. First of all, I congratulate all women and the whole society on



International Women's Day. Women, who make up half of society, produce much more than half when it comes to labour. However, when it comes to equal pay, equal rights and freedoms, we unfortunately see that the balances turn against women. We observe a very dangerous and worrying increase in violence against women in recent years. This situation is unacceptable. Steps should be taken to ensure women's equal participation in business, public and political life. All forms of violence against women should be punished in the most severe way, without any penalty reduction."

Indicating the significance IKV attributes to positive discrimination towards women in its recruitment approach and equal representation in events, Chairman Zeytinoğlu also stressed the importance of women's rights and gender equality for the EU membership goal and recalled that

Turkey was among the first signatories of the Istanbul Convention. He concluded by saying:

"As Turkey, we are a candidate country for EU membership and do not accept any alternative other than full membership. The EU is a union of countries founded on common values, the most important of which are ensuring gender equality and the prohibition of gender-based discrimination. The EU has not fully achieved these objectives. However, ensuring gender equality is at the forefront in EU's policy priorities. Last year, the EU published a gender equality strategy aimed at addressing existing inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic has made women's situation even more difficult and adversely affected gender equality. As Turkey, we support improving women's wages and working conditions, provision of institutional support in child and elderly care and ensuring women's equal representation in all areas as important objectives."

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EU PROCESS AND FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSED AT IKV WEBINAR



IKV organised a webinar entitled "Gender Equality in the EU Process and Feminist Foreign Policy" on 11 March 2021. Delivering the opening speech at the webinar, which was moderated by IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu underscored the importance of ensuring gender equality and pointed to the EU accession process as a driving force in Turkey's efforts in this field.

During the panel session, Sweden's Consul General in Istanbul Peter Ericson provided detailed information on Sweden's feminist foreign policy while Dean of the Faculty of Business and

Management Sciences at Okan University and co-founder of Women in Foreign Policy Initiative Prof. Zeynep Alemdar talked about the negative impact of the pandemic on gender equality. Academic Assoc. Prof. Sevgi Uçan Çubukçu emphasized the significance of the Istanbul Convention as a legally binding instrument for all contracting states. Head of TED University Center for Gender Studies Prof. Zuhâl Yeşilyurt Gündüz explained key concepts such as gender stratification and human security. Finally, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas focused on women's participation in labour force and politics.

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN ONLINE EVENTS

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the webinar on the Turkey-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) organised by TOBB on 11 March 2021. TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu and the British Ambassador to Turkey Sir Dominick Chilcott gave the opening speeches which were followed by a panel where bureaucrats from the Ministry of Trade and the British Embassy shared detailed information about the agreement. In her speech, mentioning the basic principles of the Turkey-UK FTA, IKV Secretary General Nas indicated that Turkey and the UK are expected to begin negotiations for a more comprehensive trade agreement in two years' time.

During the month, IKV Secretary General Nas discussed various dimensions of Turkey-EU relations in online events. On 4 March, Nas delivered a speech at the webinar on "Water Awareness and Efficiency" jointly organised by the Kocaeli Chamber of Industry, Kocaeli EU Information Center and Kocaeli Municipality Directorate General for Water and Sanitation where she focused on water policies in the context of EU's environmental policies. Participating in the online seminar entitled "A Year of the Pandemic: Vaccine, Psychology and Governance" hosted by IPC within the scope of "Pandemic and Society" webinar series on 9 March, Nas evaluated the steps taken by the EU since the outbreak of the pandemic. Moreover, Nas spoke on the modernisation of the Turkey-EU Customs Union at the Turkey Chemical Industry Council held on 12-13 March 2021.



On 16 March, IKV Secretary General Nas took part in the online seminar organised by IPC on "Turkey-EU Relations and Green Deal" during which the joint statement issued by IKV, IPC and TEPAV was discussed. In the joint statement dated 9 March, the three institutions urged Turkey to align with the Green Deal priorities and proposed a number of steps to this end. Furthermore, Nas discussed the importance of Turkey's compliance with the green transformation in the programme called "What kind of a world? What kind of Turkey?" hosted by IPC and broadcast on Medyascope on 25 March.

On 24 March, Nas analysed Turkey-EU relations ahead of European Council meeting on the "Dünya ve Biz" programme presented by Aydın Selcen on *Artı TV*. On 26 March, Nas was Fulya Şirin Erensoy's guest in "This Week in Turkey" where she discussed Turkey-EU relations in light of the positive steps agreed at the 25-26 March European Council meeting. On 28 March, she evaluated the European Council meeting on Deep Dive Politics

and on the Instagram live cast of *Kanal Ekonomi* a day later. On 30 March, Nas discussed the outcome of the European Council meeting at the webinar entitled "European Council and Beyond" organised by IPC under the "Pandemic and Society" webinar series. On 31 March, Nas spoke at the webinar on "Turkey as a Partner and a Challenge for European Security" hosted by Kadir Has University Center for International and European Studies.

IKV Secretary General Nas also co-authored a policy brief on Turkey-EU relations ahead of the European Council meeting. In the policy brief titled "Turkey-EU Relations before the March Summit: The Way Forward?" jointly published by IKV, IPC and TEPAV on 24 March, IKV Secretary General Nas, IPC Director Prof. Fuat Keyman, IPC Academic Research Coordinator Prof. Senem Aydın-Düzcit, IPC Senior Researcher Prof. Atila Eralp and TEPAV EU Studies Centre Director Nilgün Arisan-Eralp, stressed the importance of reviving Turkey-EU relations on the basis of common values and mutual interests.

IKV CHAIRMAN ZEYTİNOĞLU ATTENDED THE TOBB CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL MEETING



IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended the TOBB Chemical Industry Council meeting on 26 March 2021. Opening the meeting in his capacity as TOBB Vice President, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu touched upon the current developments in the chemical industry, the effects of COVID-19 and the

European Green Deal. IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas gave a presentation on the European Green Deal and its potential effects on Turkey. Stating that the Green Deal will lead to a significant transformation in various sectors including the chemical industry, Nas highlighted the importance of adapting to this transformation.

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN PRESENTED THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN AND THE ECONOMIC REFORM PACKAGE

While the Human Rights Action Plan aspires to strengthen the understanding of rule of law based on human rights, the Economic Reform Package aims at ensuring sustainable and quality growth.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan unveiled the key points of the Human Rights Action Plan on 2 March 2021. The action plan, which is set to be carried out over a two-year period, includes ambitious principles embedded in 9 goals, 50 objectives and 393 actions. President Erdoğan indicated that the aim of the action plan was to further strengthen the understanding of rule of law based on human rights through regularly reviewing the legislation and implementation in this regard and taking the necessary measures. Moreover, President Erdoğan stated that the ultimate goal of the plan was a new constitution. Protecting and strengthening freedom of expression, association and religion, legal foreseeability and transparency, strengthening individual freedoms and security, independence of the



judiciary and strengthening the right to a fair trial are some of the main principles foreseen under the new Human Rights Action Plan. President Erdoğan noted that they would focus more on the EU, especially with respect to the visa liberalisation dialogue and aim to enhance the effectiveness of the individual application system to the Constitutional Court.

Following the Human Rights Action Plan, President Erdoğan presented the Economic Reform Package

on 12 March 2021. The new package aims to increase investment, production, jobs, and exports, raising Turkey's growth potential through boosting production. President Erdoğan underscored that the government was determined to defeat the pandemic in 2021, while preparing to enter a period of quality growth in the medium term. Creating sustainable, strong, and quality growth that will conform to the post-pandemic economic

structure is the main objective of the reform package. Under the new Economic Reform Package, all policies will be implemented with a transparent and foreseeable governance approach which will strengthen macroeconomic stability and support efficiency-based competitive investments and production.

The Economic Reform Package is based on macroeconomic and structural policies focusing on public finance, inflation, the financial sector, current account deficit, and employment as part of macroeconomic stability. Measures to encourage investment, strengthen the institutional structure, facilitate domestic trade, competition policies, and market surveillance and checks are included in the reform package as part of structural policies.

NATO SECRETARY GENERAL STOLTENBERG STRESSED TURKEY'S IMPORTANCE FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, in a lecture he delivered at the College of Europe in Bruges on 4 March 2021, underscored the vital role non-EU NATO allies including Turkey have been playing in ensuring the security of Europe. Referring to EU's recent defence initiatives, which have gained impetus following the UK's decision to leave the EU and Trump's election as US President, and the debate on "strategic autonomy" as championed by French President Emmanuel Macron, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said that while an EU that spent more on defence, invested more in capabilities and reduced the fragmentation in the defence industry would be good not only for European security but also for transatlantic security, the EU was in no position to defend Europe on its own.

Stressing that the defence of Europe would be unthinkable without the non-EU NATO allies, Stoltenberg pointed



out to the crucial role and functions assumed by non-EU allies. In this regard, Stoltenberg stated that Turkey bordering Syria and Iraq secured the southern flank of the Alliance, while Iceland and Norway acted as the gates opening up to the Arctic, and in the west, the US, Canada and the UK linked the two sides of the Atlantic. Speaking to the press, Stoltenberg reiterated Turkey's importance for Euro-Atlantic security and hailed

Turkey's vital role in fighting international terrorism particularly ISIS.

NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg's remarks were warmly received by Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan thanked Stoltenberg for his objective evaluations on Euro-Atlantic security and defence matters, on social media and expressed Turkey's determination to continue to fulfil its responsibilities as a NATO ally and serve global peace and stability.

In March, also EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell made some observations regarding Turkey in his book titled "European Foreign Policy in Times of COVID-19". Stressing the importance of maintaining dialogue with Turkey on outstanding issues in the Eastern Mediterranean, Borrell also indicated that Turkey-EU relations could not be a one-way street and emphasized that the EU needed to show Turkey that it would be welcomed as a family member if it met its part of the deal.

IKV CHAIRMAN ZEYTİNOĞLU PARTICIPATED IN THE EU-TURKEY HIGH LEVEL BUSINESS DIALOGUE



IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu participated in the "EU-Turkey High Level Business Dialogue on EU Green Deal" which was organised by EUROCHAMBERS within the scope of the Turkey-EU Business Dialogue (TEBD) on 10-11 March 2021.

IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu chaired the first session titled "EU-Turkey Economic and Trade Relations and Common Challenges in View of the Green Deal".

The speakers in the first session were IKV Vice-Chair

Zeynep Bodur Okyay, Head of Trade Relations with the Southern Neighbours, Middle East, Turkey, Russia and Central Asia at European Commission's DG Trade, Nele Eichhorn; Member of the Executive Board of TÜSİAD, Dr. Fatih Kemal Ebiçlioğlu; Deputy Director General of Business Europe, Luisa Santos; Director for Central and South Eastern Europe in the European Investment Bank, Anita Fürstenberg-Lucius; and Deputy Chairman of TIM, Başaran Bayrak.

THE 10TH YEAR OF TURKEY-EU CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE WAS CELEBRATED



The 10th anniversary of the "Civil Society Dialogue between Turkey and the EU Programme", implemented by Turkish Foreign Ministry Directorate for EU Affairs as one of the most established EU grant programmes for the civil society was celebrated on 9 March 2021 with the "10 Years of Dialogue" online and live cast event.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director

for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı, Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, Chair of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund and former Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Stefano Manservigi and TOBB and IKV Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray participated in the "Dialogue Square" panel which was moderated by journalist Mirgün Cabas.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO TURKEY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

On 20 March 2021, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention through a presidential decree published on the Official Gazette. The Istanbul Convention, with its full name the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, is a human rights treaty which was opened for signature in Istanbul on 11 May 2011. Turkey was the first country to ratify the Convention which entered into force in August 2014. The Istanbul Convention has been signed by 45 countries and the EU, and it was ratified by 33 countries between 2013 and 2019. It is the first legally binding global convention put into practice to protect women from violence. Today, the Istanbul Convention has become more important than ever in an environment where all forms of gender-based violence have been on the rise.

Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention was met with concern and drew numerous reactions both domestically and internationally. Secretary General



of the Council of Europe Marija Pejčinović Burić, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and the German Foreign Office evaluated Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention as a backsliding in women's rights. In a similar vein, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell called on Turkey to return to the Convention since the withdrawal decision could not only endanger the situation of women and girls in Turkey, but also cause the rise of an undesirable global movement. Parallel concerns over Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention were

raised on the other side of the Atlantic. US President Joe Biden, in a written statement, emphasized the significance of cooperation for ending violence against women and depicted Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention as a discouraging step backwards.

Subsequent to these international reactions, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement indicating that some components and practices of the Istanbul Convention have resulted in sensitivities among the Turkish society similar to some other countries in the Council of Europe which oppose and divert from the Istanbul Convention. The Ministry avoided possible misunderstandings by underlining Turkey's determination to enhance its efforts in fighting gender-based violence. Lastly, in the statement it was reiterated that women's rights would continue to be protected at the highest level by Turkey's national legislation prepared with the approach of zero tolerance towards violence against women.

EU AND UN CO-CHAIR THE 5TH BRUSSELS CONFERENCE ON SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF SYRIA

On 29 and 30 March 2021, the EU and the UN co-hosted the 5th Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. At the end of the two-day virtual conference, the international community pledged 6.4 billion dollars in aid and consensus was reached on the instalment process. Pursuant to this, 4.4 billion dollars have been allocated to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2021 within the framework of the response to the Syrian crisis. The financial aid is intended to assist the affected communities in meeting their basic and urgent needs. Furthermore, securing quality education for children, providing livelihood opportunities for refugees and affected groups and fostering public services as well as economic growth are among the objectives of the aid. 2 billion dollars will be in circulation in 2022 within the same targets applicable for 2021. The international community's multi-year undertakings for Syria and neighbouring countries in the region bear a significance portraying a joint attempt for sustainable support for the people



affected by the crisis.

Turkey's Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sedat Önal and Yavuz Selim Kiran addressed the meeting. Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Önal highlighted that the international community has a shared responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people which requires a concerted and multidimensional effort that addresses the root causes of the crisis. Meanwhile, Deputy Foreign Minister Kiran pointed out that Turkey has provided 1.1 billion dollars in humanitarian aid to refugees in northern Syria and added that with 4 million forcibly displaced people 3.7 million of which are Syrians, Turkey is hosting the largest refugee population in the world.

TURKISH SCIENTISTS BEHIND THE COVID-19 VACCINE AWARDED GERMANY'S HIGHEST ORDER



On 19 March 2021, the Turkish-German inventors of the COVID-19 vaccine, Dr. Özlem Türeci and Prof. Uğur Şahin received the Order of Merit from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier for their outstanding performance in developing the first COVID-19 vaccine approved in the EU, at a ceremony also attended by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The BioNTech founders were awarded the Knight Commander's Cross of the Federal Order of Merit which

is one of the highest awards in Germany. During the ceremony, German President Steinmeier congratulated the two scientists for their achievement and emphasized their decisive contribution in containing the pandemic. Moreover, Steinmeier stressed that Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci are known as an impressive couple, researchers, heroes and even saviours in the world. He also added that although people tried to put a tag on their vaccine work, it has no nationality.

Stressing that the virus variant which is causing a third wave is more difficult to control, Dr. Türeci underlined in her acceptance speech that the world will have to join forces again and not be demoralized by this third wave, which will probably last longer. For his part, Prof. Şahin expressed that he was grateful to his team and international partners for helping the development of the vaccine and highlighted that there was still work to be done.

EU STATEMENT ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN TURKEY



The EU issued press statements following recent developments in Turkey regarding Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) members of Grand National Assembly and discussions on the political party's closure. On 23 February 2021, the European External Action Service (EEAS) expressed its concern over increasing pressure on HDP, as its local and national politicians are facing terrorism-related charges, while calling on Turkey to implement the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights on the release of former party co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş. Following the latest developments regarding Turkey's second largest opposition party, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Neighbourhood and Enlargement Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi released a joint statement on 18

March, criticising the decision to strip the parliamentary status of HDP member Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu and the lawsuit initiated by the Court of Cassation's prosecutor for the dissolution of the HDP. Borrell and Várhelyi stressed that these were reflecting a regression in fundamental rights in the country.

On the same day, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a press release to respond to EU's concerns emphasizing that the mentioned processes were being implemented in line with the Constitution and the Law on Political Parties. Asking the parties to wait for the decision of the Constitutional Court about the HDP, the Foreign Ministry underlined the independence of the Turkish judiciary and ensured that final decisions would reflect Turkey's commitment to democratic values and rule of law.

INTENSE DIPLOMATIC TRAFFIC BETWEEN TURKEY AND EU AHEAD OF CRUCIAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING

Diplomatic traffic between Ankara and Brussels intensified ahead of the crucial 25-26 March European Council meeting in which EU leaders were set to discuss the future of Turkey-EU relations on the basis of the report to be submitted by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell as tasked by the European Council on 10-11 December 2019. It started off with a video conference call between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel on 19 March 2021. The follow up to the December European Council, Turkey-EU relations and regional issues including Cyprus settlement talks and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean were among the topics discussed during the call. While President Erdoğan said that the report on Turkey-EU relations should reflect objective, constructive views on the future of Turkey-EU ties and that Turkey expected concrete results for the improvement of the relations from the European Council



meeting, the EU side emphasized the importance of de-escalation and a more positive Turkey-EU agenda.

Having spoken to the President of Slovenia Borut Pahor on the 10th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between the two countries on 20 March and expressing his wish to see an even greater improvement in the relations during the Slovenian EU Presidency beginning in July, President Erdoğan also had a phone call with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi on 23 March. Congratulating Draghi for becoming Prime Minister, Erdoğan underscored the importance of full EU membership as Turkey's strategic goal and stressed the fact that Turkey

is after peace and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean. During the video conference call with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the same day, President Erdoğan praised Merkel for her efforts in maintaining the dialogue with Turkey and the positive outcomes obtained as a result and reiterated Turkey's expectations with respect to Turkey-EU relations and for cooperation, stability and peace in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Earlier in the month, after a positive exchange of letters between them to normalise their bitter relations in January, President Erdoğan also had a video conference call with French President

Emmanuel Macron and emphasized that cooperation between the two countries had "very serious potential", both making a reference to counter-terrorism as one area for collaboration.

For his part in the last diplomatic interactions, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with the EU High Representative Borrell on 22 March in Brussels where he was visiting to participate in the 23-24 March NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting which, among others, has the NATO 2030 reflection process, aimed at strengthening the alliance's political role, on its agenda. While discussing bilateral ties and regional issues with Borrell, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stressed the need for more cooperation on issues such as the modernisation of the Customs Union, visa liberalisation, irregular migration and the fight against terrorism, and put the emphasis on continuing to work on the positive agenda. Borrell said that the EU wants to establish best relations with Turkey "as a candidate country,

a neighbour and an important country" while defending the interests of the Member States and the EU. According to Borrell, migration and the renewal of the 2016 Turkey-EU Statement to stem irregular flows of migrants to Europe and to improve the conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey will be among the topics addressed in the report to be submitted to the European Council since the deal created tangible results.

On the same day, Turkey's Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan held a video conference call with European Commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni. Turkey-EU economic and trade relations, the proposed positive agenda, the modernisation of the Customs Union, the European Green Deal and cooperation on customs procedures were discussed during the video conference call and agreement was reached on digitalisation of the customs procedures, mutual recognition of authorised staff and establishment of a closer dialogue between the parties.

EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE BORRELL VISITED CYPRUS AHEAD OF CRUCIAL 5+UN MEETING



On 5 March 2021, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell visited Cyprus and held contacts on both sides of the Green Line to offer the EU's support ahead of the crucial 5+UN informal meeting set to convene on 27-29 April in Geneva. In the context of the visit, Borrell held separate meetings with Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders and came together with senior UN officials.

The meeting between High Representative Borrell and President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Ersin Tatar, which was held in a constructive and sincere atmosphere and lasted for two hours, focused on the Cyprus issue, EU's policy vis-à-vis the Turkish Cypriot community, the export of Turkish Cypriot produce

to the EU and the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to a written statement issued following the meeting, TRNC President Tatar urged the EU to approach the two sides in the light of the current realities on the island and underscored that the sovereign equality and equal international status of the Turkish Cypriots must be respected. Tatar shared the Turkish Cypriot side's vision for a settlement based on the sovereign equality of two states with equal international status which would also be brought to the table in the upcoming 5+UN meeting in Geneva. Regarding the EU's request to participate in the 5+UN meeting as an observer, Tatar indicated that as Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration were EU members, it would not be realistic to expect the

EU to remain neutral in the talks and thus, the EU's participation was only acceptable in a bilateral format.

In a statement evaluating his exchanges with the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders, EU High Representative Borrell expressed his belief that although the path ahead would not be easy, finding solutions was possible. Indicating that he encouraged the parties to seize the opportunity and come to the 5+UN meeting in Geneva prepared to compromise, Borrell voiced the EU's firm support for the resumption of the UN-led settlement process as soon as possible.

Moreover, in a blog post published on 7 March, Borrell indicated that despite the rocky path ahead, he was encouraged by the readiness of both sides to engage with the UN to find a common ground on the way forward, and expressed the EU's willingness to assist the process in any way the parties or the UN deemed useful. Borrell also highlighted that progress in the Cyprus settlement process was crucial for broader Turkey-EU relations as well as for stability and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean.

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU HAD CONTACTS WITH HIS EUROPEAN AND US COUNTERPARTS



Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu came together with his European and US counterparts in the second half of March. On 16 March 2021, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with the Foreign and European Affairs Minister of Slovakia Ivan Korčok in Ankara with whom he discussed bilateral and Turkey-EU relations. Both parties committed to increasing the bilateral trade volume to 5 billion dollars.

On 22-24 March, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu travelled to Brussels to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting. On the side lines of the meeting, Minister Çavuşoğlu came together with his European counterparts from Montenegro, France, the UK, and the Netherlands. Foreign Minister

Çavuşoğlu also met with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. During the meeting, both parties stated that they would work together to maintain a positive agenda.

The NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting provided for the first in-person meeting between Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu and the new US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, appointed under the Biden administration. Minister Çavuşoğlu had a constructive meeting with his US counterpart Blinken in which they discussed all aspects of bilateral relations and regional issues such as the situation in Afghanistan, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Cyprus issue, Syria, Iraq, and Libya, as well as the fight against terrorism.

MISJUDGEMENTS OF THE WEST IN CYPRUS HELPED THE TURKS CONSTITUTE A FULLY FLEDGED DEMOCRATIC STATE

Ambassador (R) Şakir FAKILI

With the London and Zurich Agreements a "functional federation" was founded in Cyprus in 1960 between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Despite the fact that this new state was not bizonal, it had balanced constitutional powers between the two peoples living on the island. Both motherlands, Turkey and Greece, as well as Britain, the former colonial power that owned two bases on the island, became the guarantors of the new state. The Greek Cypriot side was not happy with this new state of affairs and started immediately to work with all its might to turn this new state into a Greek Cypriot entity, drive the Turks out of the island and unite Cyprus with Greece. What the whole world witnessed thereafter is well known: Organized Greek Cypriot militant gangs waged a ruthless massacre called "Bloody Christmas" against the Turkish people starting on 21 December 1963. Hundreds of Turks were murdered in cold blood, thousands were forced to flee, 105 Turkish villages were evacuated. Until 1974 the Turkish people had to survive in an area less than 5% of the territory of Cyprus.

What was the reaction of the Western world while all such developments were happening? The West disappointed all by only watching the genocidal acts in which the mainland Greek army officials also took part. The perpetrators of this savage criminal campaign have so far neither been brought into any court nor to any international tribunal. Not even an official voice was heard in the West calling for a fair trial. The Turks were even asked to establish partnership with the people who allowed the perpetrators walk freely among themselves. The Western world also connived when the Turks were being forcefully thrown out at gun point from all government organs, which left them literally without a state and converted the Republic of Cyprus of 1960 into a Greek-only administration. Although fully aware of what was happening in the island, those countries, who kept their eyes closed, formulated and endorsed this *fait accompli* at the UN on 4 March 1964 with the notorious Security Council resolution no. 186, which allowed the newly formed UN Peace Force to function under the suzerainty of the Greek Cypriot Administration. In addition to such misjudgements, the West left Turkey to act alone during the Sampson coup attempt perpetrated by the Greek Cypriots in 1974 aimed to annex the island to Greece. Thus, Turkey had to realize the intervention of 20 July 1974 alone. Finally, those Western countries, though seeing quite openly that the Republic of Cyprus had now turned into a Greek Cypriot entity and that were perfectly aware that what is being done was flagrantly violating the provisions of the London and Zurich Agreements, accepted as full member to the EU a state which was still party to an international conflict and "did not have full sovereignty over its territory". Thus, the West has deliberately enhanced the Greek presence in the EU from one into two states.

While engaged with all these critical attempts and decisions, the West has totally ignored the injustices and the desperate situation of isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. This was not the final unfortunate step of the West; all through the talks intended to solve

the Cyprus conflict, which have not brought forward any conclusions for the last fifty years, the said powers obliged the Turkish side to join the talks as "The Turkish Cypriot Community", while allowing the Greek Cypriot side to take part as the internationally recognized legitimate representative of the island. Hence, from the very beginning, they chose to look over the unequal treatment which provided the Greek Cypriot side an unfair backing and comfort. Of course, this support in effect made the West helpers of the Greek Cypriots in their ambition to become the master of the whole island. After so much support lent to them, the Greek Cypriots do not see any more a need to reach a mutually agreeable settlement. Their one and only aim now remains to keep the negotiation desk intact, free of any risk of being overturned. Therefore, the idea of federation has become a Greek Cypriot fantasy in Cyprus, which could as well be labelled as a "dogma".

Simply, Who is the West ?

We normally identify the West with enlightenment, science and reason, though for the rest of the world it also means a long history of colonialism, as well as orientalism.

Let us take a short look at history. In 1915 Britain, which had taken Cyprus from the Ottomans back in 1878, offered the island to King Constantine of Greece as an inducement to enter the First World War. Towards the end of the War, the victorious powers, i.e. the USA, Great Britain and France were unanimously convinced that "The barbarous Turkish race should be cleared out of Europe." Discussion on the future of Cyprus was therefore a main topic at the Paris Conference which convened in January 1919. The well-known Grecophiles and proponents of Greek claims, Lloyd George and Lord Curzon, who allowed Greece to invade Izmir in May 1919, proposed at the Conference to drive the Turks out of Istanbul, move the Turkish capital to Bursa, leave the Sultan as Caliph in Istanbul under a Vatican-style status and, just like Izmir, hand over Istanbul to the Greeks. Clemenceau of France also supported the idea of taking Istanbul from the Turks and leaving them outside of Europe (*From Paris to Sévres*, 1974, Paul C. Helmreich, Ohio State University Press).

This pro-Greek British mentality was the same during the Bloody Christmas events in Cyprus. Britain did not move a finger to bring the perpetrators to justice. On the contrary, it continued to favour and act together with the emerging Greek Cypriot entity as though nothing had happened. As soon as the Greek Cypriot attacks had started, Britain, not falling short of Makarios, who was already doing his part to wipe the Turks off the island, came up with a proposal to transfer the Turkish population to the Rhodes island at the Aegean and to hand over that island to Turkey (*The Destruction of A Republic and its Aftermath*, Salahi S. Sonyel, 2003). Obviously, the British, who were in early century readying themselves to offer Izmir and Istanbul to the Greek, also considered Cyprus in their hearts and minds as a gift suitable to be given readily to the aggressor in the 1960s.

Again, it was the British who actively took part in drafting the UN Security Council resolution 186 that poured oil into the Cyprus fire. This very resolution later in 2004 was taken as a pretext when the Greek Cypriots were being admitted unlawfully as a full member to the EU. During the same year, the British were also a full participant in outlining and designing the eleven-thousand-page

Annan Plan. This Plan's vague wording was called "constructive ambiguity", a peculiar invention of the British diplomacy. Moreover, the British enviously kept for themselves the Akrotiri and Dhekhelia bases, which they labelled as the "Sovereign Areas" and tried to cautiously keep these regions away from all settlement plans. They are still quite keen on not transferring them to anyone. While emphatically using the word "sovereign" for the bases, the British authorities refrained from using this term for none of the administrations established by the Turkish Cypriots after 1963, when they were left out of the state apparatus in 1963. The British intentions did not change after Brexit either. It would not as well be so hard to guess that Britain might not be helpful to any attempts to increase the influence of the EU in Cyprus. The continuation of the present state of affairs in the island is for the British lesser of two evils.

Federation Now Becomes a Greek Cypriot Plot

Normally, in order to have a viable federation, experts say it is essential for the parties to have mutual trust, respect and dependence, as well as strong common interests and a culture of sharing things in critical matters. Do these qualities exist in Cyprus? As said before, Greek Cypriot atrocities committed between 1963 and 1974 have neither been brought into daylight, nor the criminals punished. There still exists a Greek Cypriot entity from which the Turks were left out by force of arms and which the international community sees no trouble in continuing to recognize as the only representative of the whole island. The confidence building measures proposed so far by the Turkish side and its good will steps like opening the border gates with the South have not been found satisfactory by the other side. It should also not be forgotten that 75% of the Greek Cypriot side voted no to the Annan Plan, which envisaged a model of federation.

With regard to the discussions on federation, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan made this realistic diagnosis at his report dated 28 May 2004 on the situation in the island: "The Greek Cypriots do not want to share authority or prosperity with the Turkish Cypriots at an equal condition/status." No other statement could explain so unquestionably the plain truth that federation is not the right thing for the island.

Federation as a model has now become the name of the *status quo* in which the Turks are being isolated and forced to live under embargoes. It has virtually turned into an instrument of letting the unfair circumstances in favour of the Greeks last forever, while keeping the Turks chained to the negotiation table. Federation has obviously turned into a sinister game used by the Hellenistic rulers of Greece and the Greek Cypriot side along with the philhellenic states tied to them with adoration, with the aim of cornering the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, along with a strong desire to drive the Turkish army out of the island by destroying the Guaranteeship system, which is definitely the last sanctuary of the island Turks. Therefore, it has now become crystal clear that the Greek side will never say yes to any agreement before they have a "settlement model" which would let them seize the whole island.

Turkish Cypriots Have a State of Their Own

Cyprus was never ruled in history by the

Greeks. In 1960 Turkish and Greek Cypriots took part as equal founding partners in the formation of the *sui generis* Republic of Cyprus, whose independence was secured by three guarantor powers (Turkey, Greece and Britain). Turkish Cypriots subsequently constituted their own autonomous administrations following the attacks that left them out of the state in 1963 and proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983. The TRNC has all the prerequisites a modern state should possess. It is perhaps the only country in the world which, although greatly suffering embargoes and acts of isolation, attributes great value to human rights and basic freedoms and implements an exemplary democracy. It is diplomatically recognized by the Republic of Turkey, a significant power of the Eastern Mediterranean and the region.

It is not so hard to understand that the intention of the Greek Cypriot side is to make the Turkish side "beggar for a solution", fastened to the process of intercommunal talks, left with no other options. Nevertheless, the situation is quite the other way around. There exist in effect in Cyprus two different territories, two different states, two different democracies, two different nations and two different cultures, each exercising full sovereignty at its own region. On the island, the plain and time-tested reality which should not be expected to change easily in close future is that these two states live and will continue to live side by side. Taking all these facts into consideration, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side, frustrated by the endless talks on federation, have put forward the formula of "two state" solution, which means that the existing peace and stability, successfully maintained in Cyprus by the Turkish army since 1974, depends on the separation of two peoples and their countries. Defenders of federation oppose this idea by claiming that two states cannot exist in a small island. This is not true, because there are divided islands in other parts of the world like Timor or Hispaniola. Moreover, one should then question why we have two British bases which total 254 km² in an island which is too tiny to divide. If two different administrations have managed perfectly well to live together for 48 years without having any serious conflict, uniting them by a push from outside would be beyond any doubt be a futile effort, if not a bad intention.

In Cyprus the Relationship Between the Two States Will Be Like That of Any Two States

Bilateral relations among neighbouring states are normally organized according to international law. The TRNC and the Greek Cypriot Administration could as well arrange their relationship on the principles of non-interference in internal affairs, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. What, then, will happen to the issues like property, territory, free circulation of people or EU membership, which have taken years of lengthy discussions at the negotiation table? These matters will have to be seen as the new agenda items that could be solved only if there is a will between the two sovereign states of Cyprus. The issue of territory, for instance, will turn into a bilateral matter consisting only of border adjustments. The border will not change as long as the sides do not agree. The issue of property, by taking into account the Turkish properties left in the South, may be taken up by a committee like the "Joint Property Commission" that in the past was formed to

tackle the issue of the title deeds of lands left reciprocally in Turkey and Syria. Free circulation of people is an issue regulated according to the visa regimes of countries. As for the membership of the TRNC to the EU, the rational solution will be joining the Union simultaneously with Turkey, since any other formula means the assimilation of the Turkish Cypriots within the EU and Turkey losing her rights in Cyprus. It is important to remember the words of the late founding President of the TRNC, Rauf Denktaş, who said "Without Turkey I wouldn't even go to heaven." Regarding the continuity of the presence of the Turkish army, a joint defence cooperation agreement might be enacted.

In 1997 Ecevit, also a Well Known Expert on Cyprus, Had the Wisdom to See the Situation Today

Bülent Ecevit, the late Turkish statesman who most courageously took all the important decisions and diplomatic initiatives during the intervention of Turkey in Cyprus in 1974, had made a momentous speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 21 January 1997 that touched upon vital issues on Cyprus and still carries important messages for today.

In his speech, Ecevit said that it was understood clearly that the Greek Cypriot side did not want to share powers in a federation, therefore it was time Turkey must ask friendly nations to "acknowledge" the TRNC. He advised that through an autonomy agreement with the Turkish Cypriots, Turkey's support should be arranged in foreign affairs and defence matters. He emphasized that the TRNC is a significant security assurance for Turkey just like Turkey being a security assurance for the TRNC. He added that the security of the Mersin and Iskenderun sea ports of Turkey, as well as the region's oil pipelines or any future gas and oil pipelines to be constructed in the Eastern Mediterranean area all depend on such assurances, therefore Turkish troops must remain in Northern Cyprus forever.

Conclusion

It is believed that the adoption of the two state model in Cyprus by Turkey and the TRNC is a significant step, taken at the right moment. It is also relevant in the sense that it is necessitated by the national interests of both countries. It is presumed that only by insisting on this certain model would it be possible to avert the initiatives of the Greek Cypriot side backed by the EU, USA and Britain to create a Greek dominated entity.

Past experiences have amply proven that other ideas, mainly the insistence on a federal solution that are expected to be put forward during the upcoming talks in Geneva are openly aimed at reducing the Turkish Cypriots into a minority under a Greek Cypriot state. Turkish Cypriot people do not want to live again the sorrows and the savagery they had after 1963 and do not want to be migrants for a third time at their own country. Perpetrators of the Bloody Christmas and the murders committed before 1974 still await to be brought to justice and account. The UN Security Council resolution no. 186, which has made a tremendous injustice to the Turks by presenting the Greek Cypriots as the sole representative of the island has not yet been corrected.

There remains no other option in Cyprus other than making the Turkish Cypriot state live.