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EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S 2018 TURKEY REPORT AND SNAP ELECTIONS

A few hours before the Commission's presentation of its 20th Report on Turkey, a critical announcement paving the way for holding early elections was made in Turkey.



Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem NAS,
IKV Secretary General

It has been a long time since Reports on Turkey prepared by the European Commission created an excitement in the Turkish public. However, especially EU experts in Turkey and those who still believe in Turkey's EU perspective wait in anticipation of these reports. This year the 20th of these reports was published by the European Commission on 17 April 2018. A few hours before the Commission Vice-President and High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn presented the Enlargement Strategy and Country Reports for 2018, a critical announcement was made in Turkey by Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Action Party. In the regular party group meeting in the parliament, Bahçeli called for the holding of early elections in

August 2018. This call immediately captured the internal agenda in Turkey and opened the Pandora's box. Following Bahçeli's meeting with President Erdoğan, 24 June was set as the date for snap elections in the country.

The results of the elections coming at a time of economic instability and continuing loss of value of the Turkish lira against the dollar and the euro are quite unpredictable. The elections are also important in one other respect. 24 June elections will be the first following the referendum on the transition to an executive presidential regime in Turkey. Hence, the person, who is going to be elected as the President of Turkey, will be the first of the executive presidencies. Parliamentary elections are going to take place at the same time as the presidential elections and the

balance of votes in the parliament can make an important difference regarding the checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches.

At the moment several candidates are running for presidency: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Nationalist Action Party (MHP) alliance, Muharrem İnce from the Republican People's Party (CHP), Meral Akşener from Good Party (*İyi Parti*), Selahattin Demirtaş from People's Democratic Party (HDP), Temel Karamollaoğlu from Felicity Party (SP), Doğu Perinçek from Patriotic Party (*Vatan Partisi*). Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) issued a call for the postponement of the elections due to the problems associated with holding elections under a state of emergency.

Reading between the Lines of Commission's Report on Turkey

Returning to the Report on Turkey, it can be said that the Commission has been quite critical about Turkey's recent record in fulfilling the membership criteria. In addition to the decrees and measures adopted during the state of emergency, the report also noted "backsliding" in the following areas including political and economic criteria as well as some chapters of the *acquis*: rule of law, civil society, media freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, procedural rights, right to property, independence of the judiciary, civil service and human resources, market economy and business environment, social policy and employment, information society, audiovisual policy and external relations. The number and breadth

of the areas, where backsliding has been observed, are alarmingly varied and important. In order to rekindle the EU membership perspective, Turkey needs to rekindle the reform spirit and take action in order to regain the ground which has been lost in the last couple of years. The elections are also critical in this sense since we shall have to wait until after the elections in order to ascertain whether or not the new government and parliament that are going to take office will be enthusiastic about revitalising Turkey's EU membership perspective by reinstating political and economic reforms. A working checks and balances system between the executive, legislative and judicial branches, effective separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, respect for and protection of rights and freedoms will be traits that the EU will look for in the executive presidency system.



“WE EXPECT EU REPORTS TO GO BEYOND ASSESSING THE SITUATION AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE”

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu assessed the 20th report on Turkey published by the European Commission on 17 April 2018 and stated:

“Similar to the preceding 19 reports, the latest report evaluates Turkey’s compliance with the accession criteria. So far these reports have not been able to ensure the completion of the accession negotiations and Turkey’s EU membership. Therefore, beyond criticising Turkey, these reports should answer the questions such as ‘Why this process does not proceed?’ and ‘What can the EU do in order to win Turkey and contribute to the process’ success?. Although the Commission is not the decision-maker, it performs the tasks of carrying out the EU’s enlargement process and contributing to the development of the candidate countries during the pre-accession process. Commission President Juncker said that he is the guarantor of the negotiations. Confirmation of Turkey’s candidate status and emphasis on the objective of full membership in the report is important. In order to keep this word, we expect the Commission to the initiative of relaunching the negotiations and rejuvenating the process.”

Chairman Zeytinoğlu stated that the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and fundamental freedoms were the key areas where progress was required and continued: “In these matters, Turkey should not only meet the EU criteria, but also accelerate reforms for the welfare and development of the Turkish people. But above all, there are fundamental problems preventing progress in the relations. These have to do with efforts



by some Member States to undermine the process and the suspicion that Turkey will not be admitted to the EU even if it fulfils the criteria. This situation weakens faith in the EU accession process and hinders efforts to maintain the EU accession process.”

IKV Chairman referred to the 2025 perspective offered to the Western Balkan countries despite their problems concerning the rule of law and stated: “A clear date is pronounced to revive the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkan countries. The emphasis that the EU membership is a real and reachable goal in addition to the assurance that this process will not be blocked due to political reasons is necessary for Turkey as well.”

Emphasising that the report also identified the areas in which Turkey has been backsliding regarding the EU criteria, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu stated: “As the term ‘backsliding’ has entered the report’s vocabulary in 2014, it was stated that Turkey was

backsliding in the area of public procurement. In the report published in 2015, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and internet as well as freedom of assembly were included in the areas where backsliding was observed. In 2016 the list has grown to comprise public services and human resources management, independence of the judiciary, business environment, freedom of association and prevention of torture and ill-treatment. This year’s report reveals more areas in which Turkey has been backsliding in the alignment to the *acquis* namely; civil society, public service and human resources management, judiciary and fundamental rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, property rights, economic and business environment, information society, social policy and employment and external relations. Moreover along with political criteria, Turkey has been backsliding in some *acquis* chapters. Considering EU’s

importance in Turkey’s external trade and FDI, we should reverse this trend as soon as possible and focus on ensuring further alignment.”

IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu continued his assessment of the report as follows: “Differently from the previous report, this report describes FETÖ as ‘Gülen movement, designated by the Turkish authorities as a terror organisation’. Thus, EU’s approach to recognise Turkey’s sensitivities and concerns about this serious threat should be considered as a positive development.

In the report, the European Commission recognises the highly valuable contribution Turkey has made by hosting 3.5 million Syrians. It is also stated that Turkey is moderately prepared in Chapter 24 on Justice, Freedom and Security which covers border control, visa, external migration, and asylum; and confirms that Turkey has made good progress on migration and asylum policies. Turkey’s role in controlling irregular migration to the EU bears strategic significance. We expect the EU to realise the aim of ‘a visa-free Europe’ for Turkish citizens by moving forward on the issue of visa liberalisation.

We have to take the criticisms in the report on the rule of law and judicial independence seriously and take necessary steps to address these. In the report, it is stated that the recommendations made in 2016 on the judiciary and fundamental rights have not been carried out; therefore almost the same recommendations are repeated again. Yet again, it is expressed that the area, where most serious backsliding was observed, was related to the judiciary and fundamental rights. The opening of Chapters 23 and 24 is a request

we have been repeating. We expect the EU to demonstrate its sincerity and support for reforms in Turkey by opening these chapters. As recommended in the report, the move towards lifting the state of emergency would speed up the process.

Business environment is also one of the topics that is emphasised on the report. It is mentioned that especially the slowdown in structural reforms, macroeconomic imbalances and scepticism in the efficiency and independence of the judiciary adversely affect the business environment. We believe that the new incentives announced in March marked an important step towards improving business environment. In addition, taking steps towards lifting the state of emergency will produce an extremely positive effect, especially with regard to increasing FDI.

In the report, the Commission reiterates its positive opinion for starting negotiations for the modernisation of the Customs Union. We know that negotiations are hindered by some Member States. In this respect, we welcome the fact that the Commission has not submitted to political pressure and has maintained its position on the issue since 2016.”

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu completed his remarks by referring to Turkey’s role for EU’s security in the context of the Syrian crisis and said: “By assuming a great responsibility in Syria, Turkey contributes to European security. It is the only country in Syria that can communicate and cooperate with both Russia and Iran as well as with the US and the EU. Therefore, the EU should assess this role better and shape Turkey’s role in Europe’s future within the full membership perspective.”

IKV EU INFORMATION CENTRE BROUGHT TURKISH AND SYRIAN CHILDREN TOGETHER IN A FOOTBALL MATCH

IKV Istanbul EU Information Centre, in cooperation with the EU Delegation to Turkey, the Turkish Red Crescent and Galatasaray Football Club, carried out a civil society initiative with the participation of Turkish and Syrian children on 16 and 18 April 2018.

During the first event organised on 16 April, 12 Syrian refugee children came together with Galatasaray football players at the Florya Training Facility and took collective photographs with Coach Fatih Terim and the football players before training.

On 18 April, 100 children

watched the match played between Galatasaray and TM Akhisar Football Club in Istanbul. IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Mr. Gabriel Munuera-Vinals, Red Crescent Vice President İsmail Hakkı Turunç and Galatasaray 2nd President Ahmet Şenkal watched the match together. The children were given the opportunity to train together with Galatasaray players and Coach Fatih Terim which aimed to bring refugee and host community children together and to inspire them through sport.

IKV Chairman Ayhan



Zeytinoğlu expressed his views on the project in question with the following words: “We thank Galatasaray for giving these children one of the most

wonderful days of their lives. We saw that the children watched the match with great pleasure and have gotten the necessary motivation. As Istanbul

EU Information Centre, we will continue to work for these kind of civil society initiatives with our stakeholders.”

İKv AGENDA

"WE SHOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION EU STANDARDS IN NUCLEAR ENERGY"

İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu made the following remarks on the occasion of the ground-breaking ceremony of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant:

"With the construction of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, Turkey will join the group of countries that have nuclear power. This is an important development for Turkey to be able to diversify its energy resources. As it is known, nuclear energy is a highly critical source of energy, and within the EU, 30 percent of electricity is generated in nuclear plants. There are currently 130 nuclear reactors operating in 14 Member States. In the EU, it is up to the Member States to decide whether they would set up nuclear power plants or not. Although the EU does not intervene in this regard, EU standards play an important role, especially in terms of nuclear safety."



Chairman Zeytinoğlu underscored that the EU has developed a comprehensive set of rules concerning nuclear safety and added:

"Now nuclear safety in the EU necessitates the fulfilment of safety standards at all stages, starting with the installation of a nuclear power plant. In Turkey's accession negotiations under the chapter on Energy, which

unfortunately could not be opened because of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus' veto, there are various rules on nuclear energy and nuclear safety. In this respect, as long as EU standards are fully taken into account, I believe that Turkey's transition to nuclear energy would strengthen the EU in the energy field."

İKv SECRETARY GENERAL DELIVERED A SPEECH AT TUSIAD PANEL

On 26 April 2018, İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas delivered a speech at the panel entitled "Turkey-EU: Problems, Opportunities and Scenarios" organised by Boğaziçi University-TUSIAD Foreign Policy Forum.

Following opening speeches by TUSIAD Secretary General Bahadır Kaleağası and Undersecretary of the Ministry for EU Affairs Ambassador Selim Yenel, Ankara University lecturer Assoc. Prof. Özlem Kaygusuz shared the findings of her recent report on the possible future perspectives for Turkey-EU relations. During the panel session, which was moderated by Foreign Policy Forum Director Prof. Hakan Yılmaz, İKv Secretary General



Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Retired Ambassador Selim Kunalalp, Istanbul Kültür University lecturer General Assoc. Prof. Özge Zihnioğlu discussed the current status and the future of Turkey-EU relations.

In her speech, İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas underlined that Turkey should

preserve its EU membership goal. While stressing the need for Turkey to maintain its membership goal, Nas underlined the importance of membership in terms of both strategic interests and values, and highlighted the need to revive faith in EU membership in the public realm.

NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM İKv

Summary of European Court of Auditors' Report on Turkey

İKv experts prepared the Turkish summary of the European



Court of Auditors' Special Report on the EU pre-accession assistance to Turkey dated 14 March 2018.

An Alternative Method of Financing: Crowdfunding

İKv brief entitled "An Alternative Method of Financing: Crowdfunding" (in Turkish) prepared by Junior Researcher Emre Sakızlı sheds light on one of the recent developments or disruptions in the financial system. The study outlines why and how this new financial tool enhances financial equality by easing participation and breaking the monopolistic power of the pre-existing financial actors. The report explores different applications,

the state regulations with detailed examples and the standpoint of EU institutions regarding this new phenomenon.



TIMELINE APRIL 2018

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3	Turkish President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin attended the ground-breaking ceremony of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant.
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5	İKv published the Turkish summary of European Court of Auditors' Report on pre-accession assistance to Turkey.
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9	İKv brief entitled "An Alternative Method of Financing: Crowdfunding" was published.
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16	NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg paid an official visit to Turkey.
17	European Commission adopted the 2018 Enlargement Package consisting of the Enlargement Strategy and Country Reports.
18	İKv EU Information Centre brought Turkish and Syrian children together in a football match.
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21	İKv published a brief note on the sugar industry and the privatisation of sugar plants in Turkey.
22	Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu paid a visit to New York to participate in the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly.
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24	Prime Minister Yıldırım visited Spain to attend the 6 th Turkey-Spain Intergovernmental Summit.
25	77 th meeting of the Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee was held in Brussels.
26	İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas delivered a speech at the panel entitled "Turkey-EU: Problems, Opportunities and Scenarios".
27	Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu attended the EU-OIC high-level meeting and met with EU High Representative Mogherini.
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TURKEY ANNOUNCED AN INCENTIVE PACKAGE TO BOOST INVESTMENT



The Turkish government unveiled an incentive package that will provide over 33 billion dollars for 23 projects and 19 companies operating in the health, defence, metallurgy, electronics, automotive and agriculture sectors.

The details of the program were announced in an official ceremony in Ankara on 9 April 2018 by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım and Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci. Speaking at the ceremony, Erdoğan unveiled the content of the incentive package and highlighted the positive impacts of the projects on the Turkish economy.

The project-based incentive system was developed last year in cooperation between the public and private sectors. It is expected that the incentives granted to the projects will lead to an increase in Turkey's exports amounting to 6.3 billion dollars and will cut 12.3 billion dollars from the import bill, therefore reduce 19 billion dollars

from the current account deficit in the Turkish economy. The current account deficit exceeded 47 billion dollars in 2017. Moreover, it is estimated that the incentive package will support employment by creating 34,000 jobs directly and 134,000 jobs indirectly.

Within the scope of the incentive certificates, investors will be exempt from customs duty and value-added tax and will benefit from the reductions in corporate tax. The package provides support for social security premiums. Moreover the investment projects under the package will benefit from supports for energy consumption, half of which will be covered by the government incentive for up to 10 years.

EARLY ELECTIONS TO BE HELD ON 24 JUNE IN TURKEY

Turkish citizens are set to go to the polls on 24 June 2018 for presidential and parliamentary elections, 17 months earlier than initially foreseen.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, after a consultation with his cabinet and his ally MHP, expressed on 18 April 2018 their will towards an early parliamentary and presidential election on 24 June 2018. Supreme Election Board declared the election calendar and pointed to 24 June as the election date in the ongoing process.

During the press meeting, President Erdoğan asserted that the recent military operations in

Syria, regional developments and macroeconomic necessities created urgency for Turkey to immediately start the implementation of the executive presidential model instead of waiting for November 2019.

As a first reaction, some claims arguing Turkish politicians would not be allowed to carry out election campaign rallies within their countries echoed through policy circles in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. German Foreign

Minister Heiko Maas announced that Turkish politicians would not be authorised to campaign in Germany. Austria's right-wing coalition government's similar declaration followed their German counterparts' emphasis.

Monitoring Committee of PACE also issued a statement regarding the early election bid. The Monitoring Committee called Turkey to postpone the early election because of the continuing



state of emergency within the country. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım criticised PACE's request and

asserted that Turkey has already held hundreds of elections with turnout not below 85 percent.

EU-UN CONFERENCE ON SYRIA'S FUTURE TOOK PLACE IN BRUSSELS

One year after the first Brussels conference, the EU and the UN co-chaired the second Brussels conference on the future of Syria and the region on 24-25 April 2018. The aim of the conference was to maintain international engagement and encourage further support for the Syrian population, for refugees in the region and for their host communities. The conference also aimed to promote economic recovery in the region and to express support for the UN-led political process.

As the Syrian war enters its

eighth year, more than 13 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance and around a quarter of the population is displaced in neighbouring countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, according to the UN. In this manner, this year's conference succeeded in mobilising humanitarian aid to Syrians inside the country and in the neighbouring countries, including for hosting communities, through pledges totalling 3.5 billion euros for 2018, as well as multi-year pledges of 2.7 billion euros for 2019-2020. Furthermore, the co-chairs adopted

a joint declaration, including several annexes on supporting the resilience of host countries and refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis.

At the conference, Turkey was represented by Deputy Prime Minister Recep Akdağ. Akdağ delivered a speech on Turkey's aid efforts in Syria during the second day of the event. The representatives of the Turkish Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), Turkey Diyanet Foundation and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) also attended the two-day conference.



HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

A GLANCE INTO THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKISH-GREEK RELATIONS

Relations between two immediate neighbours Turkey and Greece have been highly tense in recent months. The case of eight Turkish ex-servicemen wanted by Ankara for their alleged role in 2016 coup attempt, who have requested asylum in Greece remains a deadlock situation between the two countries in the aftermaths of the decision of Greek courts indicating they would be at risk of not receiving a fair trial if returned to Turkey. In addition to this, the detention of two Greek soldiers on 2 March, for allegedly entering a Turkish military zone and on suspicion of attempted espionage, aggravated the already strained relations. While the two soldiers and Greek authorities claimed that soldiers accidentally strayed into Turkey because of bad weather conditions, such as heavy snowfall and fog, Turkey treats the case as a presumption of espionage. On 17 April 2018, MEPs adopted a resolution calling on Turkey to conclude the judicial process and release the two Greek soldiers detained since March.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the case of Greek soldiers is in judiciary noting that Turkey was still awaiting the return of eight Turkish soldiers who fled to Greece following the attempted coup in 2016. However, Greek authorities declared that the exchange of two Greek soldiers with eight Turkish soldiers currently seeking asylum in Greece was out of question. Moreover, Greek Justice Minister Stavros Kontonis announced on 16 April, that the eight Turkish servicemen will be released in May. "Turkey has not requested their trial in Greece, therefore, following the expiration of 18 months, there is no provision of extending their detention" he added. This statement from Greek side has sparked reactions by Turkish authorities. EU Affairs Minister and Chief Negotiator Ömer Çelik expressed his disappointment in the decision which according to Turkish authorities is a strong sign that Greece does not take Turkey's sensitivities into consideration in its pursuit of fighting terrorists.



STATE OF EMERGENCY EXTENDED FOR THE SEVENTH TIME

Turkish Parliament extended the ongoing state of emergency for another three months effective from 20 April 2018. As it is known, it is the seventh extension of the state of emergency. Turkey declared a state of emergency

for the first time on 20 July 2016, following a deadly coup attempt by Fetullah Terrorist Organisation (FETÖ). The failed coup attempt carried out on 15 July 2016 caused loss of 250 lives and injury of 2,200 people. According to the

Turkish Constitution, when the government foresees serious indications of widespread violence interfering with the democratic environment or basic constitutional rights and freedom of its citizens, state of emergency could be declared.

CYPRIOT LEADERS CAME TOGETHER AT AN INFORMAL DINNER

President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Mustafa Akıncı and Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades came together at an informal dinner on 16 April 2018. The informal dinner was much anticipated as the first meeting between the two leaders following the collapse of the talks in Crans-Montana last July. According to the statement made by the UN, the two leaders had a frank discussion during a two hour

tête-à-tête meeting and then proceeded to dinner with the Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar. Speaking to the press following the informal meeting, TRNC President Akıncı indicated that the meeting had been useful in seeing where the Greek Cypriot side stood concerning the efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus question. Akıncı stated that there was no visible

change in the Greek Cypriot side's position. TRNC President Akıncı underscored that the Turkish Cypriot side had no intention of trapping itself in the same old method as in the previous cases. Akıncı also stated that he had warned Anastasiades concerning the hydrocarbons and reiterated the view that a committee needs to be established to deal with this issue or that the Greek Cypriot side needs to suspend its activities.



TURKEY-EU WATCH

PRIME MINISTER YILDIRIM ATTENDED THE 6TH TURKEY-SPAIN INTERGOVERNMENTAL SUMMIT

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım visited Spain on 24 April 2018 on the occasion of the 6th Turkey-Spain Intergovernmental Summit. In the context of the visit, Prime Minister Yıldırım came together with his Spanish counterpart Mariano Rajoy, Congress of Deputies President Ana Pastor and King Felipe VI of Spain. During the visit, Prime Minister Yıldırım was accompanied by a delegation of ministers including Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Ömer Çelik. During the visit, Prime Minister Yıldırım also attended the *Nueva Economía Forum*, which is an important reference for politicians, business world and diplomats for exchanging views on how to enhance the economic and strategic partnership that the two countries have with their diplomatic counterparts.

The two countries are NATO allies, with Spain having Patriot missile batteries in Adana since 2015, whose

possible extension was discussed during the talks and also allies in the fight against terrorism. Prime Ministers Yıldırım and Rajoy both underlined the fact that since both countries suffered from terrorist attacks in their past, they have a better understanding of each other's situation. Turkish Prime Minister Yıldırım also declared his support for the constitutional union of Spain regarding the Catalan independence issue and thanked his counterpart for their support in Turkey's fight against FETÖ. Lastly, Yıldırım expressed Ankara's gratitude for Spain's declared support for Turkey's EU membership bid. Besides issues regarding regional and international security, both parties also focused on improving their bilateral trade relationship, where both countries present remarkable economic success with a bilateral trade increase of 19 percent in 2017 reaching 13 billion dollars.



FOREIGN MINISTER MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU'S NEW YORK CONTACTS



Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu paid a visit to New York on 21-24 April 2018 to participate in the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace and to have some bilateral meetings. On 23 April, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu came together with Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Didier Reynders with whom he exchanged views regarding the fight against terrorism and the latest developments in Syria. Subsequent to this meeting, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu participated

in the UN Security Council Meeting on Youth, Peace and Security. During his speech at the meeting, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu underscored the importance of the 23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day in Turkey to highlight the significance of protecting children from the abuse of terrorist organisations to ensure a securer future for the world. Within the scope of his New York contacts, Minister Çavuşoğlu had also the opportunity to conduct the first face-to-face meeting with Germany's new Foreign Minister Heiko Maas.

On the same day, Mevlüt

Çavuşoğlu attended the celebrations of the 23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day that were held at the Turkish Consulate General in New York. Afterwards, Minister Çavuşoğlu visited the construction site of the Turkish House which is located across the UN Headquarters. In company of Turkey's Permanent Representative to the UN Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Turkish Consul General in New York Ertan Yalçın and Turkey's Ambassador to the US Serdar Kılıç, Minister Çavuşoğlu obtained information regarding the construction of the Turkish House that is a candidate

to become one of New York's symbolic architectures. On 24 April, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with the UN Secretary-General António Guterres. Following this meeting during which Syria and Cyprus issues were touched upon, Minister Çavuşoğlu participated in the High-Level Meeting of the UNGA and delivered a speech. After having highlighted the significance of UN reform, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu reiterated Turkey's insistence on the need to make the UN more transparent for the purpose of ensuring international peace and security.

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU MET WITH EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE MOGHERINI AS OIC TERM PRESIDENT

On 27 April 2018, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu visited Brussels to attend the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting to assess the current international security environment and to prepare for the upcoming NATO Summit set to take place on 11-12 July 2018. At the margins of the meeting, in his capacity as the term President of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu, together with Yousef Al-Othaimen, Secretary

General of OIC and Riyad al-Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine came together with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini to discuss the recent decision of US to move their embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, which is expected to take place in mid-May marking the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the State of Israel.

During the OIC-EU high-level meeting, the parties reiterated

their support for a two-state solution in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and signalled their determination by declaring their will for hosting a joint forum this fall in Istanbul. The main idea of this forum, the first of which took place in 2002 following the 11 September 2001 attacks on US by al-Qaeda, is to discuss the increasing xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia and to highlight the peace and harmony between the Islamic and Christian world.



TURKEY-EU WATCH

TURKEY-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE MET IN BRUSSELS

The Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), which has not convened for three years, held its 77th meeting on 26 April 2018 in Brussels with İsmail Emrah Karayel and Manolis Kefalogiannis as Co-Chairs.

During the first session, Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı, Permanent Delegate of Turkey to the EU, Emilia Kraveva, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria on behalf of the EU Presidency, Maciej Popowski, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission and Javier Nino Perez on behalf of European External Action Service expressed their views on Turkey-

EU relations and state of play in the accession negotiations.

During the second and the third sessions of the meeting, parties exchanged views on Turkey-EU economic cooperation and security challenges. The Co-Chairs pointed out that the JPC will strive to make a genuine contribution to Turkey-EU relations by putting all their efforts to develop an open and constructive dialogue between EP and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. They also stated that cooperation on common challenges and shared priorities denote stability and prosperity for both Turkey and the EU and that they look forward to an intensified cooperation in the nearest future.



NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG VISITED TURKEY



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg paid an official visit to Turkey on 16 April 2018. In the context of the visit, Stoltenberg came together with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Minister of National Defence Nurettin Canikli.

During the visit, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg was first received by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. According to news reports, during the meeting between Stoltenberg and President Erdoğan, Turkey-NATO

relations and regional developments including Syria, were discussed and importance of NATO allies' solidarity in the fight against all kinds of terrorism was emphasised.

Following the meeting with President Erdoğan, Stoltenberg came together with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. Minister Çavuşoğlu and Secretary General Stoltenberg discussed preparations for the upcoming NATO Summit, the situation in Syria and other issues on the agenda of the Alliance. Çavuşoğlu also underlined Turkey's expectations for sincere

solidarity from its allies in the fight against terrorist organisations, including PKK/PYD/YPG, FETÖ and ISIL and expressed that decisions regarding enlargement policy should be taken.

Lastly, Stoltenberg met with Minister of National Defence Nurettin Canikli. During the meeting, Minister Canikli and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg discussed the cooperation in the fight against terrorism, the situation in Syria, Air and Missile Defence Systems and the issues related to the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence which will be held in June.

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU VISITED THE TRNC

Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu paid a visit to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on 20-21 April 2018. In the context of the visit, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu came together with TRNC President Mustafa Akıncı, Prime Minister Tufan Erhürman and leaders of the six political parties represented in the TRNC Assembly. According to the statement by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the meetings the current situation concerning the Cyprus question was assessed.



THE SYMBOL OF THE TURKEY-RUSSIA RAPPROCHEMENT: AKKUYU NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The ground-breaking ceremony of Akkuyu NPP has become the symbol of the Turkish-Russian relations flourishing in many areas ranging from the crisis in Syria to energy cooperation.

Çisel İLERİ,
IKV Research Director

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation attended the ground-breaking ceremony of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) via video conference on 3 April 2018. The ceremony was important for two main reasons: First, for taking concrete steps related to Turkey's nuclear ambitions which dated back to the 1950s and second as a sign of the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia whose relations have suffered from the aircraft incident in 2015.

During the ceremony, President Erdoğan pointed out that the launch of Akkuyu NPP in 2023 is going to mark the centennial anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. He commented that in 2023, Turkey will join the family of nations with their own nuclear power industry. Akkuyu NPP is expected to cover 10 percent of Turkey's entire power demand.

It is known that nuclear energy is a very controversial subject in Turkey, as it is in the whole world. On the one hand, nuclear energy is important for diversification of energy resources and the fight against climate change, on the other hand it is severely criticised because of the associated safety risks. The EU, which provides almost one-third of its electricity from nuclear energy, currently has a total of 130 plants operating in 14 Member States. Although the use of nuclear energy is left entirely to the discretion of the Member States, after the Fukushima disaster, which has deeply shaken the whole world, nuclear safety is being seriously inspected within the EU. With the revision of the Nuclear Safety Directive in 2014, nuclear security in the EU now necessitates the fulfilment of safety standards at all stages, starting with the establishment of a nuclear power plant, regular monitoring as well as ensuring transparency and sharing



information with the public. As an accession country to the EU, Turkey shall align its regulations in line with the EU energy *acquis*. Indeed, the European Commission's 2018 Report on Turkey underlined the need for the completion of the stress test report for the design of Akkuyu NPP.

Since Turkey's dependence on external energy has reached 75 percent, diversification of energy sources emerges as a natural and right choice. However, considering the 56 percent dependency rate to Russian gas, having nuclear energy dependent on a single supplier can create problems for Turkey, in case of deterioration of the good political relations.

Turkey and Russia's Widening and Deepening Relations

On 3-4 April the TurkStream Project, which would deepen the cooperation in the field of energy, was also discussed in the 7th meeting

of the High-Level Russian-Turkish Cooperation Council. The TurkStream Project, announced in 2014 by Russian President Putin during his visit to Ankara, will enable Russia to supply gas both to Turkish and European markets. The project aims to transmit 14 billion cubic metres of gas to Turkey and 49 billion cubic metres of gas to Europe. As it is known, Russian natural gas is mostly transmitted to Europe through Ukraine. Russia desires to complete the pipelines in the scope of the project in 2019, but for this to happen, Turkey has to give the necessary permissions for the land construction.

Aside from energy, another important component of the recently developing relations between Turkey and Russia is undoubtedly the situation in the Syria and defence. According to the agreement, which was signed between Turkey and Russia in the previous year, Turkey will buy the S-400 missile defence

system. As it is known, Turkey had been in need of an air defence system for a long time. The first move took place in 2013 and an agreement for tender worth 3.4 billion dollars was made with China. However, the tender was cancelled, taking into account the reactions from NATO and the USA during that period. After that, Turkey engaged in talks to buy a missile defence system with different countries, and finally announced that it was engaging in talks with Russia for the S-400 system in November 2016. Accordingly, Turkey will pay 2.5 billion dollars for the S-400 missile defence system, which will be branded by the Russian defence firm, Rostec, and the first delivery will be done by the first quarter of 2020.

Hereunder, Turkey will be the first NATO ally to own S-400 missile defence system. Thus, it is argued that the purchase of the S-400 by Turkey may bring some technical problems such as cost, quality, and

technology transfer as NATO has an integrated air defence system. On the other hand, in the political dimension, there is the concern that Turkey may redefine its relations with NATO. However, as NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg explained, NATO members decide for themselves which type of defence equipment they will obtain. Following the meeting between Turkey and Russia, the Undersecretary for Defence Industries İsmail Demir announced that the S-400 missile defence system will be delivered in July 2019, prior to projected date.

Another issue was the development of economic and commercial relations between Turkey and Russia. In the past year, the trade volume between the parties had increased by 40 percent and rose above 22 billion dollars. Nevertheless, it can be seen that bilateral trade is developing especially in favour of Russia and Turkey's foreign trade deficit with Russia was about 17 billion dollars in 2017. Turkey wishes to increase its bilateral trade volume with Russia to 100 billion dollars as indicated in the meeting and in that context negotiations on the Trade in Services and Investment Agreement were evaluated.

Lastly, perhaps the most important issue on the agenda, the situation in Syria, was addressed during the tripartite summit held on 4 April with the participation of the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani. In the joint declaration made following the summit, the leaders of the three countries reiterated their strong commitment to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, the claims of alleged use of chemical weapons in Eastern Ghouta pitted the US against Russia. As a matter of fact, while the US, the UK and France intervened in Syria with an operation launched on 13 April 2018, Turkey announced its support for the operation. It is very crucial for Turkey to establish strong relations and develop them with its neighbour, Russia, although it can be seen that it is not easy to escape from the shadow of political tensions unless there is a solution to the Syrian crisis.