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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P9\_TA(2020)0230**

#### **Preparation of the Special European Council, focusing on the dangerous escalation and the role of Turkey in the Eastern-Mediterranean**

**European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the preparation of the special European Council summit focusing on the dangerous escalation and the role of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean (2020/2774(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Turkey, in particular those of 24 November 2016 on EU-Turkey relations<sup>1</sup>, of 27 October 2016 on the situation of journalists in Turkey<sup>2</sup>, of 8 February 2018 on the current human rights situation in Turkey<sup>3</sup>, of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey<sup>4</sup>, of 19 September 2019 on situation in Turkey, notably the removal of elected mayors<sup>5</sup>, and of 13 November 2014 on Turkish actions creating tensions in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to its debate of 9 July 2020 on stability and security in Eastern Mediterranean and the negative role of Turkey,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 May 2019 on EU enlargement policy (COM(2019)0260), and its accompanying staff working document (SWD(2019)0220),
- having regard to previous statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on the drilling activities of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean, in particular to that of 16 August 2020 on renewed drilling activities by Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean; having regard to the remarks made at the press conference following his meeting with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Çavuşoğlu on 6 July 2020, the remarks made after his meeting with Greek Minister of Defence Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos on 25 June 2020 and the remarks made after his meeting with Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Christodoulides on 26 June 2020,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 463, 21.12.2018, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2019)0200.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2019)0017.

<sup>6</sup> OJ C 285, 5.8.2016, p. 11.

- having regard to the relevant Council and European Council conclusions on Turkey, and in particular to the to the European Council conclusions of 19 August 2020 on the Eastern Mediterranean, to the Council conclusions of 27 February 2020 on Turkey’s illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, and to the Council conclusions of 17-18 October 2019 concerning Turkey’s illegal drilling activities in Cyprus’ exclusive economic zone,
  - having regard to the statements of the EU foreign affairs ministers of 15 May 2020 and 14 August 2020 on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean,
  - having regard to the outcome of the informal meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers (Gymnich) of 28 August 2020,
  - having regard to the NATO Treaty of 1949 and to the statement by the NATO Secretary General on 3 September 2020,
  - having regard to the Ajaccio declaration after the seventh Summit of the Southern countries of the Union (MED7) of 10 September 2020,
  - having regard to relevant customary international law and to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to which Greece and Cyprus, as well as the European Union, are parties, and to the UN Charter,
  - having regard to the Rome Statute and the founding documents of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and to the precedents set by its jurisprudence,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Eastern Mediterranean, an area of strategic importance for the EU and a key area for the peace and stability of the entire Mediterranean and Middle East regions, is blighted by a long-standing, multi-layered set of disputes of political, economic and geostrategic natures; whereas escalating tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean are fuelled by unilateral steps by Turkey, including military action, the lack of inclusive diplomatic dialogue and the regrettable failure of efforts to mediate the conflict;
- B. whereas since the discovery of offshore natural gas reserves in the early 2000s, Turkey has challenged its neighbours with regard to international law and the delimitation of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs); whereas the discoveries of significant gas reserves in the Mediterranean, including the discovery of the Leviathan field in 2010, followed by the Zohr gas field, the largest ever natural gas discovery in the Mediterranean Sea, off Egypt in 2015, sparked interest in the region and led to further exploration and drilling in 2018 and 2019;
- C. whereas Turkey has not signed the UNCLOS to which Greece and Cyprus are parties, due to the ongoing maritime dispute over the delimitation of an EEZ; whereas the developing Law of the Sea, inherently complex, is interpreted differently by Greece and Turkey; whereas there are mutual claims that the interpretation of maritime law by the other side is against international law and that the activities of the other side are illegal; whereas the above mentioned dispute over the delimitation of EEZs and continental shelf between Turkey on the one side and Greece on the other side has remained unresolved since November 1973;

- D. whereas Turkey is a candidate country and an important partner of the EU and is expected, as a candidate country, to uphold the highest standards of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, including in its compliance with international conventions; whereas the EU is clear and determined in defending the European Union's interests, demonstrating its unwavering support and solidarity with Greece and Cyprus and upholding international law;
- E. whereas the illegal exploration and drilling activities by Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean are resulting in an intense and dangerous militarisation of the Eastern Mediterranean, thus posing a serious threat to peace and security of the whole region; whereas to support Greece and Cyprus, France deployed two naval vessels and fighter jets on 12 August 2020 in the area, and took part in military exercises together with Greece, Cyprus and Italy on 26 August 2020;
- F. whereas on 10 June 2020 a French naval vessel was met with an extremely hostile reaction by Turkish warships when it was, in the framework of the Sea Guardian NATO mission, requesting to inspect a Turkish vessel suspected of violating the UN arms embargo on Libya; whereas Greece has recorded over 600 violations of its air space by the Turkish Air Force since January 2020; whereas these activities by Turkey are accompanied by increasingly hostile rhetoric against both Greece and Cyprus, other EU Member States and the EU itself;
- G. whereas exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey have been stalled since March 2016; whereas a positive push for bilateral relations was given by both the Greek Prime Minister and the Turkish President after their meeting in September 2019 at the UN General Assembly, and in December to resume political dialogue, following which high officials met in Ankara in January 2020, and confidence building measures were discussed in Athens in February 2020;
- H. whereas in January 2019, the governments of Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority established the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, a multinational body tasked with developing a regional gas market and a mechanism for resource development; whereas this has been criticised by Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which claims that it seeks to exclude Ankara from regional cooperation and coordination on the gas market;
- I. whereas Turkey and the Libyan Government of National Accord signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in November 2019 determining a new maritime delimitation between the two countries, despite having no adjacent or opposite coasts; whereas the Turkey-Libya MoU on the delimitation of maritime jurisdictions in the Mediterranean Sea infringes the sovereign rights of third countries, does not comply with the Law of the Sea and cannot produce any legal consequences for third countries; whereas, if applied, this MoU would effectively draw a dividing line between the eastern and the western parts of the Mediterranean and thus threaten maritime security;
- J. whereas on 20 April 2020, Turkey sent the drill ship *Yavuz*, accompanied by a Turkish navy vessel, into Cyprus's EEZ; whereas on 30 July 2020, Turkey sent the seismic research vessel *Barbaros*, accompanied by a Turkish warship and a second support ship, into Cyprus's EEZ; whereas on 10 August 2020, Turkey sent the *Oruç Reis* research vessel accompanied by 17 naval vessels into Greek waters to map out sea territory for possible oil and gas drilling in an area where Turkey also claims jurisdiction; whereas

Greece responded by dispatching its own warships to track the Turkish vessels, one of which collided with a Greek ship; whereas on 31 August 2020 Turkey again extended its exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean by the *Oruç Reis* until 12 September 2020; whereas Turkey's naval alert (Navtex) concerns an area that is within Greece's continental shelf; whereas these activities by Turkey have led to a significant deterioration in relations between Greece and Turkey;

- K. whereas, after the expiry of the Navtex for the waters between Turkey, Cyprus, and Crete, issued on 10 August 2020, Turkey's seismic research vessel *Oruç Reis* returned on 13 September 2020 to waters near the southern province of Antalya following multiple negotiation efforts, a move that could contribute to easing tensions between Ankara and Athens;
- L. whereas a framework for restrictive measures in response to Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean was set up in November 2019 after the Council had repeatedly expressed its concerns and strongly condemned the drilling activities in various sets of conclusions, including the European Council conclusions of 22 March 2018 and 20 June 2019; whereas on 27 February 2020 the Council put two executives of the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) on the EU sanctions list, imposing a travel ban and an asset freeze, following Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean; whereas on 28 August 2020 the informal Council (Gymnich) meeting called for further targeted sanctions against Turkey in the event that it does not de-escalate tensions in the region; whereas these restrictive measures would be discussed at the special European Council summit on 24 and 25 September 2020; whereas on 10 September 2020, national leaders at the Med7 Summit of Mediterranean states expressed full support for and solidarity with Greece and expressed regret that Turkey had not responded to the EU's repeated calls to end its unilateral and illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean;
- M. whereas the VP/HR Borrell, who has deployed an intense activity in the region, together with the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, has been looking for solutions through dialogue between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus; whereas in order to allow the dialogue to advance, Turkey has to refrain from unilateral actions; whereas mediation attempts led by the German Council Presidency over the months of July and August regrettably failed; whereas, while negotiations were ongoing, Egypt and Greece concluded a bilateral maritime agreement on 6 August 2020, demarcating an EEZ for oil and gas drilling rights, following 15 years of negotiations with Turkey and Cyprus on the matter;
- N. whereas NATO has also proposed various initiatives for dialogue between Greece and Turkey and brokered talks between them; whereas Article 1 of the NATO Treaty provides that the parties thereto undertake to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations;
- O. whereas the UN Charter provides that states must undertake to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations;

1. Is highly concerned by the ongoing dispute and related risk of further military escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean between EU Member States and an EU candidate country; is firmly convinced that a sustainable conflict resolution can only be found through dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiations in a spirit of good will and in line with international law;
2. Condemns Turkey's illegal activities in the continental shelf/EEZ of Greece and Cyprus, which violate the sovereign rights of EU Member States and expresses its full solidarity with Greece and Cyprus; urges Turkey to engage in the peaceful settlement of disputes and to refrain from any unilateral and illegal action or threat, as that could have a negative impact on good neighbourly relations;
3. Welcomes Turkey's decision on 12 September 2020 to withdraw its seismic research vessel *Oruç Reis*, thus taking a first step to easing the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean; condemns Turkey's decision of 15 September 2020 to issue a new Navtex to extend the term of duty of the Yavuz drilling ship until 12 October 2020; urges Turkey to show restraint, and to proactively contribute to de-escalating the situation, including by respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all of its neighbours, by immediately ending any further illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, by refraining from violating Greek airspace and Greek and Cypriot territorial waters and by distancing itself from nationalistic warmongering rhetoric; rejects the use of threats and abusive language towards Member States and the EU as unacceptable and unseemly for an EU candidate country;
4. Expresses the need to find a solution by diplomatic means, mediation and international law and strongly supports the return to the dialogue between the parties; calls on all actors involved, especially Turkey, to commit to an urgent de-escalation by withdrawing their military presence in the region in order to enable dialogue and effective cooperation;
5. Calls on Turkey, as an EU candidate country, to fully respect the law of the sea and the sovereignty of the EU Member States Greece and Cyprus over their territorial seas, as well as all their sovereign rights in their maritime zones; reiterates its call on the Turkish Government to sign and ratify the UNCLOS and recalls that even though Turkey is not a signatory, customary law provides for EEZs even for uninhabited islands;
6. Deplores the fact that the increasing escalation of tension undermines prospects for the resumption of direct talks on the comprehensive resolution of the Cyprus issue, while this remains the most effective path with regard to prospects for the delimitation of the EEZs between Cyprus and Turkey; urges all parties concerned to actively support the negotiations for a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement of the Cyprus issue within the UN framework, as defined by the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in accordance with international law, the EU acquis and on the basis of respect for the principles on which the Union is founded;
7. Welcomes the invitation from the Governments of Cyprus and Greece to Turkey to negotiate in good faith the maritime delimitation between their respective coasts; urges the parties to bring the relevant disputes to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague or to resort to international arbitration in the event a settlement cannot be reached through mediation;
8. Welcomes the efforts made by the EU, most notably by VP/HR Borrell and the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and other international institutions such

as NATO, to contribute to finding a solution through dialogue and diplomacy; calls on all sides in a genuine collective engagement to negotiate the delimitation of EEZs and the continental shelf in good faith, fully respecting international law and the principle of good relations between neighbours; supports the proposal for a multilateral conference on the Eastern Mediterranean with the participation of all actors involved, to provide a platform to settle disputes through dialogue;

9. Calls on the Commission and all Member States to pursue a broader, inclusive dialogue with Turkey and a comprehensive and strategic security architecture and energy cooperation for the Mediterranean; calls on the Commission and the Member States to remain firmly committed in this dialogue to the fundamental values and principles of the Union, including respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the principle of solidarity;
10. Urgently calls for a comprehensive environmental risk assessment of any drilling activity, considering the multitude of risks associated with offshore gas exploration for the environment, the workforce and local populations; calls upon all parties involved to invest in renewable energy and a sustainable climate friendly future, and calls on the EU to support the development of such a Green Deal for the Mediterranean, which would include plans for investment in renewable energy in the wider region in order to avoid disputes over limited fossil resources that are harmful to our climate and environment;
11. Expresses serious concerns about the current state of EU-Turkey relations, mainly regarding the dire human rights situation in Turkey and the erosion of democracy and the rule of law; underlines the past and present negative impacts of Turkey's unilateral foreign policy initiatives in the wider region and that Turkey's illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean further add to the deterioration of EU-Turkey relations in general; calls for Turkey and the EU Member States to come together in supporting the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the political dialogue in Libya and to adhere to the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council; deplores the negative impact that current Turkish foreign policy and other actions in the Mediterranean have on the stability of the region; reiterates its position as expressed in its resolution of 24 October 2019 on the Turkish military operation in northeast Syria and its consequences<sup>1</sup>;
12. Calls on the appropriate forums within NATO, and especially the High-Level Task Force on Conventional Arms Control, to discuss arms control in the Eastern Mediterranean as a matter of urgency;
13. Reiterates that the parliamentary dialogue between the EU and Turkey is an important element of the dialogue and de-escalation efforts; deeply deplores the continuous refusal of the Turkish Grand Assembly to reinstate bilateral meetings of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC); calls for the immediate continuation of these sessions;
14. Insists that further sanctions can only be avoided through dialogue, sincere cooperation and concrete progress on the ground; calls on the Council to stand ready to develop a list of further restrictive measures in the absence of any significant progress in engaging with Turkey; proposes that such measures should be sectoral and targeted; takes the firm stance

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2019)0049.

that these sanctions should not have an adverse impact on the people of Turkey, on our support to Turkey's independent civil society, or on the refugees residing within Turkey;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General of NATO, the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Turkey, and the EU Member States.