

GREECE'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Greece is committed to embracing all those nations who strive for democracy within their frontiers, and peaceful cooperation beyond them, into the European family. Through the process of the ever past neighbouring war in the Balkans, Greece has managed to inspire in the international community the importance of a consistent, universal and unifying policy towards South-Eastern Europe. What South East Europe needs most is to achieve a climate of security, democracy, and peace. The EU's acceptance of Turkey's candidate status at Helsinki will no doubt move us closer to these goals. Bringing Turkey closer to Europe will bring greater security to the region.

There is no doubt that mankind will face unprecedented challenges in the 21st century. The globalisation of the economy, the increasing power of the media, rapid developments in information technology, communications and biotechnology, are just some of the challenges we will face. New challenges bring new ethical, cultural and social dilemmas. They also raise a fundamental question: how can we guarantee the democratic nature of global phenomena, when, by their very nature, they go beyond the control of the nation-state as we know it? How can we ensure that the global economy responds to emerging social needs, is sensitive to the demand for social justice, and helps reduce inequalities between rich and poor? While technological advances steadily increase the overall prosperity of humankind, they do not guarantee the equal distribution of this wealth.

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As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I feel a serious responsibility, not just to my country, but also to the wider region in which I live. I feel a responsibility to ensure that not only Greece and Hellenism worldwide, but also the entire region - the Balkans, the Mediterranean, and all of Europe - together create common strategies to meet these challenges. Greece's foreign policy objective is clear: to carry forward fundamental, dynamic initiatives in order to establish a framework of principles and rules, of justice and democracy, which will take effect throughout our region. Greece is, and will continue to be, a model of democracy, stability and cooperation for the region. Greece's regional policy is, in a sense, our answer to the new challenges of globalization.

The Greek government has chosen to seize these challenges as a unique opportunity. An opportunity to take bold initiatives, an opportunity for Hellenism to engage fully with the international community, and an opportunity to shape the political, social, and economic reality of the entire region. In order to meet these new responsibilities, we have learnt to apply new political practices. Perhaps most importantly, we have introduced the concept of citizen's diplomacy, which is entirely new for Greece. In keeping with global trends, we no longer rely solely on traditional diplomacy. We are democratizing our foreign policy. Citizen's diplomacy effectively means that our citizens themselves are actively involved in shaping foreign policy.

Greek citizens have discovered that they have an important role to play in relation to the citizens of other Balkan nations, the people of Turkey, and of Europe as a whole. The power of the people was confirmed by tragic events in our region. During the crisis in Kosovo, the Greek government actively supported the courageous efforts of Greek humanitarian non-

governmental organizations. After the recent earthquakes that struck both Turkey and Greece, through their independent initiatives our citizens effectively coined a new political term: 'seismic diplomacy'. Through their expression of solidarity, the people of Greece and Turkey sent a powerful message to their political leaders - a democratic demand for peaceful cooperation and reconciliation among neighbors. This was not only a historic breakthrough in Greek-Turkish relations. It also heralded a great victory for citizen's diplomacy.

The 2004 Olympic Games in Athens will provide a unique opportunity for cultivating Citizen's Diplomacy. In a gesture towards our cultural and democratic heritage, Greece has revived an ancient ideal: the Olympic Truce. Our dream is to bring about a global ceasefire, to coincide with the 2004 Athens Olympics. The institution of the Olympic Truce represents one more contribution of Hellenism to promoting world peace in the twenty first century. We are also introducing a Cultural Olympics – a cultural exchange that will bring together artists, performers, writers, and intellectuals from around the world. Greek values such as democracy, peace, and freedom will play an important role in this exchange of ideas. The 7-million strong Hellenic Diaspora will also contribute to this global cultural dialogue.

Dialogue between Civilizations can be just as effective as the Olympic Truce in establishing peace. It allows for development and promotion of common value prerequisites to be determined, values, which, within the context of a wider understanding, could be integrated into the universal values of mankind. In our quest for mutually accepted cultural values, the goal is that diversities lead to the creation of a spirit of broadened understanding and respect, rather than constitute a source of conflict. In other words, accepting other values and in peaceful coexistence. The

fundamental building blocks of the substratum upon which common values of civilization should be founded on include mutual understanding, mutual respect and honest communication.

Greece's inclusive foreign policy in the 21st century has economic, environmental, educational, and cultural dimensions, too. We are working to strengthen all kinds of civil diplomacy, by building a network of democratic institutions, both within Greece and throughout the region. Supporting such institutions and principles does not only protect our national interests, it also answers to deeper international needs. I strongly believe that the foremost political priority in the ever changing world of the 21st century should be the consolidation of cultural and educational diplomacy. Development diplomacy is equally important to Greece. Bilateral cooperation to further development, humanitarian aid, and the protection of human rights are key principles that guide our foreign policy.

Through the process of the ever past neighbouring war in the Balkans, Greece has managed to inspire in the international community the importance of a consistent, universal and unifying policy towards South-Eastern Europe. From Bosnia to Cyprus we have the same objectives: we want the countries in the region to be integral, peaceful and democratic, we want them to remain multi-cultural and we want them to join the European Union.

What South East Europe needs most is to achieve a climate of security, democracy, and peace. The EU's acceptance of Turkey's candidate status at Helsinki will no doubt move us closer to these goals. Bringing Turkey closer to Europe will bring greater security to the region. Helsinki opened up an historic opportunity for Turkey. If we want to make the most of this

opportunity, we must all be prepared to undertake difficult and consistent efforts. The role of the Greek government will be decisive, but so too will the involvement of Greek NGOs, the private sector, local government authorities, and individual citizens. This great opportunity allows Greece to play a constructive role in the European prospects of Turkey. Of course, it also provides an opportunity for the resolution of critical bilateral issues, such as Cyprus and the continental shelf.

Helsinki does not signal the end of Greece's efforts: on the contrary, it represents the starting point for new, and equally courageous, Greek initiatives. Helsinki marked a significant shift in bilateral relations with our neighbor. Nonetheless, the current positive climate is the result of persistent and often painful efforts, despite a number of both domestic and international obstacles and issues, which must be overcome.

Greece is playing a key role in bringing our neighbors closer to Europe. In the framework of the Balkan Stability Pact, Greece is taking important initiatives to promote regional stability, by creating networks of cooperation, and by taking steps to actualize regional reconstruction. Since I became Foreign Minister of Greece, I have consistently followed a policy of regional co-operation. Greece is committed to embracing all those nations who strive for democracy within their frontiers, and peaceful cooperation beyond them, into the European family. This policy applies to Turkey.

I believe that Greece and Turkey have no choice but to explore new avenues for co-operation. I believe our mutual interests can outweigh our political differences. We can and must resolve these differences through peaceful means, through the arbitration of the International Court of

Justice and other legal mechanisms. That is why Greece has initiated a process of constructive dialogue with Turkey - a process which began even before the Kosovo crisis and the earthquakes that shook both our countries. In short, Greece has attempted to turn a new page in Greek-Turkish relations. Out from under the rubble of last's year earthquakes a strong moving message from the people of both Turkey and Greece was voiced: 'We want to live in peace, in cooperation, working for our own mutual benefit'. It is up to the political leadership of our two countries, with the help of Europe, to make this a reality.

This policy of openness requires courage and determination. While Greek foreign policy is guided by a genuine commitment to regional stability and prosperity, we also have a duty to safeguard our national interests. Our European allies appreciate that Greece has both more to gain - and potentially more to lose - from Turkey's European prospects, than any other EU member state.

That is why Greece has created a window of opportunity for Turkey to move closer to Europe. The time has now come for Turkey to prove that her intentions towards Europe are serious. EU candidacy brings shared benefits, but also mutual responsibilities. If Turkey is willing to play by EU rules, we in Europe must back Turkey's candidacy both in substance and in process.

What does this mean in practice? We cannot condone double standards: the entry criteria set down in Copenhagen's European Summit apply equally to all candidate nations. In Turkey's case, this means greater political and religious freedom, independence of judiciaries, and free media. It means guarantees for the protection of human rights and minority rights.

It means the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, and respect for international law. We remain worried by Turkey's incessant violations of Greek airspace and its practice of placing restrictions on the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.

Turkey still has a long way to go before meeting EU entry criteria. Indeed, some of our partners in Europe believe that Turkey is not yet politically, economically, or socially stable enough to join Europe. I do not agree with this approach. Let Turkey prove her maturity by undertaking the necessary reforms. And let the EU provide a realistic framework and assistance for Turkey to undertake these reforms- a 'road map' of conditions, criteria and deadlines.

The accession partnership defines the priority areas which the EU considers that Turkey should focus on, in progressively complying with the Copenhagen criteria within the framework of the Helsinki conclusions. The importance the EU attaches to the Copenhagen criteria and the Helsinki conclusions in this context cannot be over-emphasized. The Copenhagen criteria of 1993 established political and economic criteria for accession as well as the ability to take on the obligations of membership. An institutional stability which guarantees democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect and protection of minorities' rights, as well as the existence of a functioning market economy and capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union are conditions for membership for all candidates.

We all, member-states of the EU, abide by the basic principle defined at Copenhagen, that compliance with the political criteria is a prerequisite for

the opening of accession negotiations and that compliance with all the criteria is the basis for accession to the Union.

Turkish candidacy is not a bilateral question for Greece, but an issue of Turkey adjusting to the principles of the EU. Equal responsibility lies with the EU: Turkey cannot and should not be expected to carry out painful reforms, unless the EU demonstrates an unequivocal commitment to Turkey's European future. Membership in the European Union is a binding contract. It is a contract that requires engagement both within and among countries. A contract that requires economic efficiency and the reduction of military expenditure, in exchange for participation in the greater security provided by the Union. It calls for the renunciation of unilateral action and submission to the multilateral arbitration of differences. Turkey must commit to these values, and Europe must be determined to uphold them and her commitments.

The Helsinki European Council stated that all countries aspiring to become EU members must share the values and objectives of the EU as set out in the treaties, particularly stressing the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter and international law. The European Council urged candidate States to make every effort to resolve any outstanding border disputes and other related issues. Failing this they should within a reasonable time bring the dispute to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. At the latest by the end of year 2004, the European Council will review the situation relating to any outstanding disputes, in particular concerning the repercussions on the accession process and in order to promote the settlement through the International Court of Justice.

Greece has built half the bridge that will draw Turkey closer to Europe. I call upon our European partners that they commit themselves to build the other half, so that we can cross the river together.

Greece advocates a real, and not a 'virtual' candidacy for Turkey. Neither the EU nor Turkey can be satisfied with empty gestures of goodwill. Turkey must now commit to concrete actions. And of course, we strive to reach a mutually acceptable political solution to end the division of Cyprus. The Helsinki summit in December 1999 was also a milestone for Cyprus, which is now firmly on the way to EU membership. Integration with European standards and principles is the surest way to bring about the unification and demilitarization of Cyprus.

EU membership is the best way to guarantee progress on the Cyprus issue. Entry into the European framework would increase the security, stability, and prosperity of both communities on Cyprus. Indeed, the Turkish Cypriot community, now isolated from the rest of the world, would benefit the most. Indeed we see them as brothers in our wider European family.