

THE VISION FOR TURKEY ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

In sharing an overview about Turkey's role within the United Nations and specifically the Turkish candidature for the UN Security Council, the author states that Turkey will prioritize contributing to 'a just international order based on international law', fostering reconciliation and paying attention to the least developed countries. Pointing out that Turkey has increased its development assistance and participated actively in international peacekeeping missions, Göğüş labels Turkey as a team player.

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Turkey is passing through a very busy period in terms of diplomatic activity. We are simultaneously seeking to build important new ties with partners from Africa to the Caribbean, and to help resolve conflicts in neighboring regions from the Balkans to the Middle East and on to the Caucasus. In this process, Turkey has shown a strong determination to shake every hand that is not clenched into a fist.

The international community faces enormous challenges today; terrorism, instability, drug trafficking, poverty, epidemics, climate change and food security, inter alia. Each one of these challenges requires concerted action on part of the community of nations. The United Nations is the only truly global organization which could provide this cooperative framework. Turkey is one of the founding members of the United Nations. Turkey signed the UN Charter on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco and through the years became a member of almost all specialized agencies and other bodies of the UN system. Furthermore, Turkey has always been committed to the goals and principles of the UN Charter.

Within the UN, Turkey has consistently paid special attention to development issues, questions of peace and stability, UN's humanitarian and relief efforts, cultural dialogue and understanding, and measures against terrorism. Turkey has also sought to promote the effectiveness of the UN as a global body for collective action, through strong participation in its peacekeeping and humanitarian activities. We also support the on-going reform process at the UN which will render it more representative, fair and functional and thus better able to deal with the risks and challenges facing our world today.

As far as UN peacekeeping missions are concerned, UN figures available as of July 2008 suggest that Turkey ranks 27th among member states in terms of police and troop contributions, with a total of 668 personnel, comprising 288 police officers, 375 troops and military observers. These figures include 152 police officers in the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), 60 police officers in the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and 366 troops in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Turkey also has a strong track record of participation in international peacekeeping missions undertaken by NATO. For instance, Turkey led ISAF twice in the past and maintains a considerable military presence in Afghanistan with 725 troops, as well as a Provincial Reconstruction Team. Turkey also has 104 troops in

Operation Active Endeavour, 620 in the NATO Response Force, 565 in KFOR and smaller numbers in a host of other missions.

Peacekeeping alone cannot ensure stability and that lasting peace requires a degree of development and prosperity. Turkey has accordingly been providing an increasing amount of humanitarian and development assistance over the past few years, both bilaterally and through the specialized agencies of the UN. Turkey's official development assistance has ranged between 600 and 700 million dollars per annum over the past three years. When combined with private sector and NGO contributions, the total assistance over the past three years has ranged between 1.1 and 1.7 billion dollars per year. In an effort to address the needs of the Less Developed Countries (the LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs), Turkey has provided a special facility of 20 million dollars for specific projects in such countries in the field of development, health and education. As a result, Turkey is now recognized as an "emerging donor country" by the international community.

Turkey has declared its candidature for the UN Security Council for one of the two non-permanent seats allocated to the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) during the term 2009-2010. The other two contenders from the WEOG are Austria and Iceland. The elections for these seats will be held on 17 October 2008, during the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly. This candidature is particularly important for Turkey as the country has not had the opportunity to serve on the Security Council for nearly 50 years, despite its geographic proximity to many trouble-spots requiring Council attention. Turkey was last represented on the Security Council in 1961 when sharing a split term with Poland for one year.

Turkey has been running a fair and active campaign since 2003, when it declared its candidature. The Turkish candidature has so far received the support of a high number of countries.

If elected, Turkey will bear in mind that the United Nations requires team work; Turkey will therefore act as a team player, and remain especially sensitive to the needs of the small and poor countries which require international assistance the most.

In policy terms, Turkey will seize every opportunity to contribute to the international efforts to promote international peace and stability, to place special emphasis on development issues and to pay particular attention to the needs of the least developed countries. Turkey will also endeavour to achieve a just international order based on international law, to promote human rights and civil liberties, to achieve gender equality, including at the UN and to reform UN structures and procedures to obtain greater speed, transparency and accountability.

Owing to its geographic location and special position as a country with strong links both to the “West” and to the “East”, Turkey has also been deploying considerable efforts to promote both the peaceful resolution of some of the long-running conflicts in her immediate neighborhood, and to help foster an international climate of reconciliation and tolerance. With this capacity in hand, Turkey will bring, if elected, an added value to the work of the Security Council.

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative, which was launched by Spain and Turkey in 2005 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General is a case in point. The Alliance has since become a full-fledged UN initiative and embodies the wish of the overwhelming majority of the people living in every corner of the world to see cooperation and concord, rather than conflict and confrontation among different cultures.

The Alliance of Civilizations now enjoys almost universal support. The Alliance’s Group of Friends in New York includes 76 countries and 13 international organizations. Finally, Turkey will be hosting the Second Forum of the Alliance in Istanbul on the second and third of April 2009. This Forum will provide us all with an opportunity to outline our ideas on how best to manage our religious and cultural relations in the decades to come.

Turkey’s contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security, its provision of development and humanitarian aid and its conciliatory role as a bulwark of stability render it amply qualified to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council.