



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT BY

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to the

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 61ST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 22 SEPTEMBER 2006

Madame President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by warmly congratulating you, Madame President. Although, the empowerment of women has long been a priority, it has been nearly forty years since a lady last held the Presidency. Thus, we are encouraged by your appointment. I wish you every success.

I also want to express my appreciation to the outgoing President, H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson. "The World Summit Outcome" addressing the challenges of our time is the joint product of our labors and his tireless endeavors. His sound guidance enabled us to move forward on the pressing issues of reform. "The Peace Building Commission," "The Human Rights Council," and "The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy" are the hallmarks of this effort.

It is my distinct pleasure to pay a heartfelt tribute to our distinguished Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan. His name will continue to inspire us whenever we think of dedication to global peace and stability as well as tireless effort for reform.

Madame President,

The hostilities and outright destruction in Lebanon tested the faith placed in the UN. At the end, the resolve of the Member States was manifested.

From the very start, Turkey has followed an active diplomacy, and took its place at the forefront of the international efforts to end the bloodshed. At the same time, we remained in close contact with all the parties to the conflict. Throughout, we have provided humanitarian aid to the people of Lebanon, and assisted in the rapid evacuation of some ten thousand foreign nationals.

We supported the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1701. It is a major step forward. Yet, given the many challenges that remain, it is only a first step towards bringing peace and stability to the region. We have decided to contribute to the implementation of this Resolution, which aims at restoring the political sovereignty of the Lebanese Government.

Indeed, we must try to seize the opportunity that Resolution 1701 represents. We hope its spirit will be translated into a larger political perspective for the entire region. The tragic events in Lebanon should have reconfirmed that unilateralism is not the answer and the use of force is not the solution.

Similarly, they have revealed for all to see that the question of Palestine continues to lie at the core of the problems in the Middle East. This issue is not simply a conflict between two countries. It is a problem for which everyone pays a heavy price, and which has huge ripple effects on a global scale. Indeed, the continuation of this problem is abused to justify extremism around the world. Therefore, progress towards a lasting peace in the Middle East will positively impact on many other problems.

We observe that everyone has drawn lessons from what took place in Lebanon. Now, in the aftermath of this tragedy, there is a different climate conducive for a renewed peace initiative.

Now is the time to revive efforts to put the Middle East Peace Process back on track.

We whole-heartedly appeal to all parties and the international community not to let this opportunity escape us. What we need now is strong and determined leadership which will resolutely pursue the road to peace.

We must also not forget, Madame President, that the growing sense of injustice associated with the Middle East problem also deepens the rift in cultural perceptions.

We cannot permit events in this region to undermine the prospects of cross cultural harmony that we are working so hard to achieve.

We believe that better understanding between cultures is indispensable for global harmony. This is exactly the reason why the Turkish and Spanish Prime Ministers have co-sponsored "The Alliance of Civilizations" initiative launched by the Secretary-General. The objective is to emphasize the elements that unite different societies in our common humanity.

"The Alliance of Civilizations High Level Group" will soon submit a comprehensive report to the Secretary-General. This report will contain concrete and practical measures to improve inter-cultural dialogue. Evidently, this is what the world needs now. Therefore, we hope that the initiative will receive the strong and sincere support of Member States.

Indeed, Madame President, regardless of where we are from, whether the East or the West, or whatever the faith we profess, and whichever tradition we represent, we must all act responsibly.

In this world where information travels at the speed of light, we must all refrain from acts and statements which can be misconstrued and strengthen the hand of extremists. Likewise, our reactions must demonstrate this sense of responsibility.

Thus, we call upon everyone to act with common sense, and keep the best interests of humanity at heart.

Madame President,

While we focus on the Middle East, we must not lose sight of Iraq. Building a democratic and prosperous Iraq, whole and free of ethnic and sectarian violence is an equally pressing issue. Let me remind that a staggering number of people lost their life as a result of violence.

We must all help the Iraqis achieve a national consensus and resolve their differences through dialogue and democratic processes. First and foremost, the Iraqis themselves must work towards this end.

Madame President,

Throughout last year, terrorism continued to claim innocent lives. There is a growing realism that no degree of leniency can be sustained towards acts of terror. There is no room for double standards, and we can make no distinction between terrorists. At the same time, we must

always keep in mind that terrorism, as an age-old method of coercion, has no deeper links to any culture or religion. Hence, we should be cautious not to associate any faith with terrorism.

Madame President,

By voting in favor of the UN Comprehensive Settlement Plan for Cyprus in the April 2004 referenda, the Turkish Cypriots responded positively to the expectations of the international community. Notwithstanding the intensive and sincere efforts of the Secretary-General, the Greek Cypriot side rejected this plan.

Despite this rejection, the Turkish side remains committed to a just, peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue, based on the well established parameters determined through the good offices mission of the Secretary-General.

Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus continue to strongly support this mission of the Secretary-General. Indeed, the UN is the only sound platform which could help deliver lasting peace, cooperation and prosperity to all inhabitants of the Island.

The Turkish side still maintains the hope that the Greek Cypriot leadership would adhere to the vision of founding a new partnership based on political equality with their Turkish Cypriot counterparts.

The Turkish Cypriot side has already given its support to the 8th of July agreement and its consent to the UN suggestions for its implementation in due course. The main thrust of this new process should be full fledged negotiations on substantial issues between the two leaders of the Island.

Our proposal of the 24th of January 2006 for the simultaneous lifting of all restrictions related to the Island remains on the table. In this day and age, living under unjustly imposed restrictions defies all reason. It is time for the Turkish Cypriots to start integrating with the global economy.

We appeal to the international community to heed the call of the Secretary-General to end the ongoing isolation of the Turkish Cypriots that has no legal or moral basis.

Madame President,

Turkey is located at the center stage of most of the issues that preoccupy and concern the international community. They naturally also figure prominently on the foreign policy agenda of my country.

In a nutshell, our objective is to attain the lasting conditions of peace, and enhance integrative cooperation in our greater region. In this context, our relations with our neighbors continue to diversify. In particular, we believe that our good-neighborly relations with Greece will enhance cooperation, stability and prosperity in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean.

In a similar vein, we have devised several regional initiatives.

We also take part in peacekeeping and police missions around the world. These greater objectives also help explain our active diplomacy primarily in regions such as the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus which surround Turkey.

In all such instances,

- we work towards averting outright conflict and consolidating stability;
- we try to put out the fires of discord, and cultivate instead reconciliation;
- we are committed to political processes and diplomatic solutions;
- we are in the forefront of post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, and assistance.

The Balkans, Madame President, is passing through a profound transformation. In order not to relive the pains and sufferings of the 1990s, we must vigilantly keep watch over peace. We must assist the process of building viable state structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We must also help a peaceful transition in Kosovo. We welcome Montenegro as the new member of our common home of the United Nations.

Frozen conflicts in the Caucasus, also demand our urgent attention. The resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, on the basis of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is of vital importance for peace and prosperity in the region. We would like to see this region become a zone of prosperity rising on cooperation.

We will continue to support the political process and reconstruction effort in Afghanistan. In addition to our strong presence in ISAF, Turkey is now establishing a Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Vardak province. Turkey in particular will continue to be active in the areas of health, education and development in Afghanistan.

On the Kashmir question; we must continue to encourage the concerned parties to work for a just and lasting solution to the problem through dialogue.

We advocate reform at a time when transparency, the rule of law, gender equality, good governance and all such common values can no longer be denied from the masses, especially in an age of globalized communications.

In fact, Madame President, these principles find their roots in the time-honored traditions of both the East and the West. They define our common heritage. Hence, they show the way for global harmony.

Turkey's efforts are not, of course, confined to its immediate vicinity. Having consolidated our place among the largest economies of the world, we want to enrich and improve our relations with the more distant regions: Our aim is to strengthen bilateral ties with Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, East Asia and the Pacific.

We are actively engaged in efforts to help redress the problems of the African Continent. In this pursuit, we have established local branches of the Turkish International Cooperation Agency in Addis Ababa and Khartoum which will help coordinate this larger effort across the Continent. More branches will follow. Turkey was recognized by the World Food Program as

one of the major donors for the food crisis in Africa. Turkey is also contributing to five different UN and two EU missions in Africa.

The fate of Africa is also our common destiny. Therefore, we cannot remain indifferent to the acute problems of the Continent. We must not let Africa down. We appeal to the more fortunate to help the Continent achieve its true potential.

Having reviewed our activities within the UN, we have selected a number of areas as a priority in our work within the UN. These are:

- Issues related to development;
- Peacekeeping operations and the strengthening of peace building activities;
- Humanitarian and relief operations;
- Combating terrorism in all its forms; and
- Enhancing global energy security through safe routes of transportation.

This new approach will enable Turkey to concentrate more effectively on a selected number of major causes that the UN is involved.

Turkey firmly believes in the need for international cooperation to achieve development in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. The developing nations that make up the majority of the membership look up to the UN for answers to their many problems. We must better cater to their needs, particularly in the field of poverty reduction; eliminating infectious diseases; reducing infant mortality rates, and improving maternal health. If we fail in creating equal opportunities for women and providing education for children, none of the above will ever be achieved.

I am pleased to say that Turkey is emerging as a major donor country. Turkish Official Development Assistance last year reached 600 million US Dollars. This figure does not reflect the share of the Turkish private sector, which is almost equivalent. In this regard, we will further increase our contributions to the various UN funds and programmes which serve the Least Developed Countries, Land Locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Madame President,

In the last two years we have been campaigning for a seat on the Security Council for the term of 2009-2010. Turkey has not served on this body since 1961. This is an anomaly. We believe that, in the spirit of equitable rotation, our turn to be represented is long overdue.

Turkey's membership will enrich the work of the Security Council in a singularly important manner. We will bring our unique attributes to bear on the work of the Council. Our membership will bring new insights and perspectives, at a time when we see the UN becoming increasingly relevant in realizing the rightful hopes of humanity.

Thank you.