

TURKEY / "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region"

UN General Assembly, in its resolution 75/86 encouraged all of the Mediterranean countries to work together based on a spirit of multilateral partnership in order to overcome challenges in the region towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity. Turkey, having one of the longest coasts in the Mediterranean Sea, and being one of the co-sponsors of the UNSC Resolution 75/86 in 2020, would like to see the Eastern Mediterranean as a region of cooperation and has always been in favour of dialogue.

For achieving this goal, Turkey acknowledges the importance of cooperation among the states in the region on the basis of equal rights. Today the Mediterranean Sea is a region of potential conflict rather than cooperation due to continuous geopolitical and geo-economic competition among various actors. Unfortunately, unilateral actions of certain countries is worsening the situation.

International Cooperation:

Turkey attaches particular importance to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts as they contribute to stability. Given the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including their acquisition by terrorists, these efforts are critical enablers for not only regional, but also global peace and security. Turkey desires to see all countries unanimously sharing the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation, and collectively working towards a safer and more stable environment in the Mediterranean Region. To this end, Turkey is party to the major international disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and regimes, and supports establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone.

Being located in the intersection of major trade routes, Turkey pays particular attention to the prevention of illicit arms transfers. To this end, Turkey is also party to all export control regimes for conventional weapons and dual-use equipment and technologies, namely the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Zangger Committee, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Australia Group.

As a member of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and a country in the Eastern Mediterranean region, Turkey highly values OSCE Mediterranean

Partnership. Turkey keeps the Mediterranean-related issues high on the agenda of the Organization and supports increasing cooperation of the Organization with its Mediterranean Partners in the relevant OSCE platforms.

In addition, as a NATO Ally Turkey attaches significant importance to Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue as Turkey shares the Dialogue's aim "to contribute towards regional security and stability through stronger practical cooperation, including by enhancing the existing political dialogue, achieving interoperability, developing defence reform and contributing to the fight against terrorism".

Turkey as a littoral state has a keen interest and responsibility in supporting the efforts to turn the Mediterranean into an area of peace, democracy and prosperity and is actively supporting the strengthening of cooperation in the Mediterranean. A candidate country to the EU, Turkey is also a member of and a contributor to the work of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Anna Lindh Foundation, which bring regional countries together.

Middle East:

Turkey considers that the international community should accelerate its efforts towards finding a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution and established UN parameters in order to prevent recurrence of escalation, violence and suffering in the Middle East.

Cyprus Issue:

Turkey believes that a just, lasting and sustainable settlement to the Cyprus issue would contribute to strengthening stability and security in the Mediterranean region. In this sense, Turkey maintains that only a negotiated settlement based on dialogue and diplomacy can be sustainable.

Turkey is firmly convinced that persistent ignorance of the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Turkish Cypriots will perpetuate the instability and tension in the Mediterranean region. Turkey therefore underlines the urgent need for the recognition of the inherent sovereign equality and equal international status of the Turkish Cypriot people.

Hydrocarbon Resources:

Discovery of hydrocarbon resources have exacerbated the situation in the Mediterranean. However, Turkey believes that the hydrocarbon resources can also provide initiatives for cooperation among littoral states.

Turkey's policy towards the issues in the Eastern Mediterranean has two dimensions:

First dimension is related to the maritime boundary delimitation in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to international law, coastal states should enter into negotiations in order to reach an agreement on maritime boundaries. This agreement should be based on the principle of equal and just treatment to each party.

In line with that, Turkey has always been ready to enter into negotiations with all coastal states in the Eastern Mediterranean with which it has diplomatic relations.

The second dimension of Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean policy concerns the protection of the rights of the Turkish Cypriots over the offshore resources.

The Turkish Cypriots as the co-owners of the Island have equal rights along with the Greek Cypriots over the offshore resources. This is also an established principle agreed by the decades-long UN process.

Turkey has been continuously inviting the countries in the region to delimit maritime jurisdiction areas based on international law and the principle of equity. Recently, our calls have echoed in Libya. The Memorandum of Understanding on delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean was signed between Turkey and Libya.

Following the delimitation concluded with Libya, Turkey submitted to the United Nations the outer limits of its maritime jurisdiction areas, where it exercises ipso facto and ab initio legal and sovereign rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey emphasizes that it stands ready to give its full support to ensure a just, equitable and peaceful solution to all pending issues, including the equitable delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas with all relevant coastal States in accordance with international law, in order to further contribute to the stability and prosperity of the entire Mediterranean basin. Turkey believes that building peace and stability in the Mediterranean will be possible only through dialogue and cooperation.

To this end, President Erdoğan has called for a regional conference on the Eastern Mediterranean that could be an opportunity to generate an inclusive cooperation mechanism with the participation of all littoral states. Turkey expects all parties in the Eastern Mediterranean to support this constructive and innovative proposal.

Humanitarian Crisis:

Humanitarian crisis in Syria particularly in the northwest has become protracted and the humanitarian needs have increased. The population in the northwest Syria is 4.2 million. Internally displaced people (IDP) constitute 2.7 million of the population in the northwest Syria. COVID-19 has been compounding already dire humanitarian situation.

In that regard, addressing the needs of these people in an uninterrupted and sustainable manner is of vital importance for the security of the wider Mediterranean region. Turkey in cooperation with the UN cross-border mechanism provides vital aid to northwest Syria, thus avoiding further displacement also to the countries in the Mediterranean basin.

As the largest refugee hosting country in the world for 7 years, Turkey continues to support 4 million people under its protection. Turkey sees it as a moral responsibility of saving lives of migrants and asylum-seekers. Due to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, it is more urgent and essential than ever to protect and uphold the rights of migrants and asylum seekers in vulnerable situations. International law should be upheld while managing external borders.

Several reports of the respectable international organizations pointed out severe human rights violations at the sea borders, including ill-treatment, verbal and physical abuse, confiscation of personal belongings and push-backs. UNHCR and IOM also published official statements urging to investigate such reports of pushbacks and to put an end to this practice.