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

UN General Assembly, in its Resolution 78/65 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. Türkiye, having one of the longest coasts in the Mediterranean Sea, and being one of the cosponsors of the UNSC Resolution 78/65 in 2023, would like to see the Eastern Mediterranean as a region of cooperation and has always been in favour of dialogue.

For achieving this goal, Türkiye 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 are worsening the situation.

International Cooperation:

Türkiye 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. Türkiye 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, Türkiye 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 Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Being located in the intersection of major trade routes, Türkiye pays particular attention to the prevention of illicit arms transfers. To this end, Türkiye 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 Participating State of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and a country in the Eastern Mediterranean region, Türkiye highly values OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation Group. Türkiye keeps the Mediterranean-related issues high on the agenda of the Organization and supports increasing dialogue with its Mediterranean Partners in the relevant OSCE platforms.

Türkiye 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. As a candidate country to the EU, Türkiye 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.

Türkiye’s views on regional and topical issues are as follows:

Middle East: Türkiye is gravely concerned about the catastrophic situation unfolding in Gaza since October 7, 2023 and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including
East Jerusalem, and condemns the brutal, indiscriminate Israeli attacks on Gaza targeting civilians that killed more than 35 thousand Palestinian civilians and led to devastation of the entire infrastructure in Gaza including schools, hospitals, places of worship. Israel’s aggression in Gaza is risking regional peace and stability.

Türkiye calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, provision of unhindered, sustained and sufficient humanitarian and its safe distribution.

Unilateral policies altering the character and status of the occupied Palestinian territory continue to undermine the two state vision. Violations of sanctity of and the historical status quo in the holy sites further escalate the already fragile situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Türkiye is of the view that a lasting peace can be possible only through a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with international law, and on the basis of the two-state solution.

**North Africa:** The overall stability in North Africa is fragile owing to the ongoing political tensions since 2011 as well as economic and social challenges. The war between Russia and Ukraine exacerbated the fragility of food security in particular.

In the face of this unpromising scene, it is incumbent upon the international community to act in close coordination to consolidate the stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean Basin.

Further deterioration of stability in the Sahel region could have adverse spillover effects in the region, in a wide range of areas including terrorism, irregular migration, food and energy security. With this understanding, Türkiye aims at contributing to the stability and prosperity of the wider region and supports international efforts in this regard.

Libya constitutes a recent case in point. So far, Türkiye’s efforts have been instrumental in maintaining the calm on the ground, paving the way for efforts towards a lasting political solution, and putting the country on its path towards elections.

A strong, unified, inclusive and representative elected government is essential to tackle the multifold problems in Libya. For this, a solid and working dialogue should be established among the Libyan stakeholders, to overcome their mutual lack of trust and ensure consensus in the period leading to free, fair and credible presidential and parliamentary elections.

In this regard, Türkiye encourages the Libyan parties to engage in an on-going political dialogue, contributes to the Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process, as well as the UN’s endeavors to that end.

In the meantime, it is equally important to help Libya in its capacity-building endeavors and establish a full-fledged security architecture.”

**Cyprus Issue:** The Cyprus issue came to the international fora in 1963 when the Greek Cypriots expelled the Turkish Cypriots from the partnership state organs and institutions as well as from their homes by use of force, in violation of the Treaties of 1960 and all human rights norms. That is to say, the Republic of Cyprus, which was established in 1960, ceased to exist
in 1963 and since then, there is no single authority that represents the whole island. Today, it is a fact that there are two States and two peoples on the Island.

Given this background, Türkiye believes that a just, lasting, sustainable and mutually acceptable settlement to the Cyprus issue on the basis of the realities on the Island would contribute to strengthening stability and security in the Mediterranean region. In this sense, Türkiye maintains that only a negotiated settlement based on dialogue and diplomacy can be sustainable.

Türkiye is firmly convinced that persistent refusal to acknowledge the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Turkish Cypriots will perpetuate the instability and tension in the Mediterranean region. Türkiye therefore underlines the urgent need for the reaffirmation 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. Nevertheless, Türkiye believes that the hydrocarbon resources can also provide initiatives for cooperation among littoral states.

Türkiye’s policy towards the issues in the Eastern Mediterranean has two dimensions:

The 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. Such an agreement should be based on the principle of equal and just treatment to each party.

In line with that, Türkiye has always been ready to enter into negotiations for the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas based on international law and the principle of equity with all coastal states in the Eastern Mediterranean with which it has diplomatic relations.

The second dimension of Türkiye’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 within the decades-long UN processes. It is an utmost necessity to reach an understanding that could establish an equitable revenue sharing mechanism between the two peoples for the hydrocarbon resources around the island of Cyprus.

Türkiye 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. Türkiye 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 in 2020 and reiterated this proposal in 2022. The Conference could be an opportunity to generate an inclusive cooperation mechanism with the participation of all littoral states. Türkiye expects the EU and all parties in the Eastern Mediterranean to support this constructive and innovative proposal. So far, no concrete steps have been taken by the EU.
In addition to President Erdoğan’s proposal to convene a regional conference, Turkish Cypriots’ proposals to the Greek Cypriots (dated 2011, 2012, 2019 and 2022) could produce a long-standing solution in the region. The proposals of the Turkish Cypriots’ are built on equitable revenue sharing mechanism, which is similar to the Israeli-Lebanese Agreement of 27 October 2022, based on joint development through hydrocarbon companies without prejudice to the political and legal positions of the parties.

**Humanitarian Crisis:** Humanitarian crisis in Syria particularly in the northwest has become protracted and humanitarian needs have reached its highest level since the eruption of the conflict. The population in the northwest Syria is 5.1 million. Internally displaced people (IDP) constitute 3.4 million of the population in the northwest Syria. The devastating earthquakes that struck Türkiye on February 6th, 2023, also affected northwest Syria, compounding the already dire humanitarian situation. The sustainable solution and stability can only be achieved by Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

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. Following the non-renewal of the relevant UN Security Council mandate, Türkiye continues to support UN cross-border humanitarian aid operations implemented on the basis of the understanding reached between the UN and the Syrian regime. This is also important to avoid possible displacements to the countries in the Mediterranean basin.

As the largest refugee hosting country in the world since 2014, Türkiye continues to support almost 4 million people under its protection. Türkiye strictly complies with the principle of non-refoulement.

Türkiye continues her efforts to create proper and sustainable conditions for voluntary returns and expects international comunity to exert more efforts to create conditions for voluntary returns and also to focus on durable solutions for refugees.

On the other hand, the rise in conflicts as well as economic concerns led to a significance increase in migration flows. Unfortunately, pushbacks and cruel behavior towards irregular migrants push these people to try more dangerous ways in order to reach target countries. This results in more casualties, especially on the sea. International community should urge all countries to pursue a more dignified approach towards irregular migrants and to respect the basic human rights.