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The Evolving Security Environment and Turkey's Strategic Role in Eurasia

Turkey is a country at the center of the intersection of three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa; with 72 million inhabitants from different cultures and religions, a very young population, and a very fast growing economy. To give you just a few numbers in this regard, five years ago Turkey had the 22nd biggest economy in the world. According to the latest census, last year it grew to be the 17th largest economy, and this year we expect to rank 13th.

Turkey also has the second-largest armed forces in NATO after the U.S.A.; it is a secular and democratic state despite its Muslim character, and a country taking the famous words of its founder Atatürk—"Peace at home, peace in the world"—as its principal in its foreign policy. This makes Turkey an island of peace and stability in its geographical region, with good relationships not only with its neighboring countries, but also with its international ties.

At this point, I also think it's important to give some information on the defense cooperation issues and relations between the Ministry of National Defense of Turkey and the U.S. Ministry of Defense. The ministerial relations and the military personnel relations are at their highest level. Turkey and the U.S. cooperate and support each other in all the international meetings. In the last two decades, the volume of the defense industry cooperation between our countries has reached a total of \$13 billion, of which \$11.5 billion worth of projects have been accomplished and close to \$3 billion worth of projects are still running.

Talking about the "evolving security environment," in today's globalized world, we can't speak of any economic or political development in one region of the world in isolation from the developments in other regions. Interaction is taking place on an unprecedented scale among the world's nations, cities and even villages.

As we all know, the world is going through a transformation process. The threats and challenges we face today cover a wide range of issues such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, organized crime and illegal mass migration. So we are in greater need of international solidarity and friendship today than ever before.

In this context Turkey's relations with the United States have always have been one of the fundamental pillars of Turkish foreign policy and cannot be compared to our relationship with any other nation. It is only the Turkish population who can

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understand the U.S. population's sufferings from the terrorist attacks of the September 11, as Turkey herself has been leading a fight against terrorism for almost 20 years with a total loss of 32,000 civilians and government officials. These are only a few of the reasons we are continually looking to further enhance our relations and our solidarity based on common values and democracy.

This relationship entails a shared vision and an awareness of common long-term interests that rise above short-term considerations or differences. I would also like to point out that the United States and Turkey not only share the same vision, but are also similar in having a multicultural heritage, with a mosaic of different races and religions living together in harmony. As you may know, in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, which reached from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean and from Ukraine to Sudan, peoples of different cultures and beliefs lived alongside each other in harmony and peace for almost six centuries, in an atmosphere of honesty and tolerance. Therefore, we should not forget that an honest and comprehensive dialogue is imperative for a truly strategic partnership.

At this point, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give you Turkey's view regarding NATO and transatlantic relations. Turkish-American military strategic cooperation dates back for a period of more than half a century based on both countries' membership in NATO, the most successful international security and defense organization that mankind ever

experienced. Within this organization our relations cover all the important dimensions of strategic cooperation.

With the end of the Second World War and in the wake of its destructive effect on the global economy, Turkey along with Europe was exposed to the

Maghreb to the Persian Gulf. Turkey's existence in an environment where it is exposed to threats such as terror, ethnic nationalism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and mass migrations has changed it from a "flank country" within the Alliance during the Cold War era to a "front country."

the purpose of providing training in various areas to the commanders of the PfP member states. So far, 6,149 military personnel from 58 countries have attended various courses and seminars held at this Training Center, among which are 19 generals and ambassadors. Having signed military training and cooperation agreements with 43 states, Turkey has become a country that is producing security rather than one that consumes other nations' security resources.

With the new NATO command structure, Turkey was appointed as the host nation responsible for the Air Component Command Headquarters, the air defense of the southern sector of NATO. Besides, the Turkish Army has assigned its Third Army Corps as one of the six High Readiness Force Commands of NATO. Also, under the new structure, the newly-established Center of Excellence for the Fight Against Terrorism became operational in Ankara in 2005.

Moreover, Turkey not only supports NATO's own peacekeeping activities and operations, but also contributes to the reinforcement of NATO's effectiveness through its regional initiatives such as the Multi-National Balkan Peace Force, and the Black Sea Cooperation Task Force and Operation Black Sea Harmony in the Black Sea.

Another area where Turkey and the U.S. often take a common position within NATO concerns what are deemed as "out of area" operations—that is, operations that take place beyond the borders of NATO member countries. The U.S. perception is that the security of the West transcends NATO's geographical boundaries. Therefore, while the U.S. expects Europeans to accept greater responsibility for defending the West, Western European countries—referred to by some as the "Old Europe"—have criticized unilateral U.S. initiatives.

Turkey and the U.S. are also among



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threat of Communism. Turkey was able to resist this global threat only with the help of the Marshall Plan implemented by the United States to revive the economy of the "Old World." And with the establishment of NATO, the western world was able, for four decades of the Cold War, to stop the expansion of the U.S.S.R. and the threat this posed to democracy.

In this period you can imagine the Turkish burden—it had the longest border with the Warsaw Pact. We all know the developments that took place in our geographical environment following the end of the Cold War. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO has considered Turkey to be a buffer state in an unstable region extending from the

the Brussels Summit in 1994, has succeeded remarkably, due in no small part to the contributions made by Turkey. Turkey has also been influential in helping to shape NATO's enlargement process, which has been under discussion since 1995, through the constructive critiques it has offered.

By supporting the transformation process that NATO has undertaken in every area, Turkey has also participated in developing a broader understanding of security. Cooperation with the new independent states that have emerged in Central and Eastern Europe has a significant place in Turkey's general foreign policy as well as its NATO policy. Within this framework, the PfP Training Center was established in Ankara in 1998, for

the leading countries that attach the utmost importance to non-proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction. Turkey, as a NATO ally, is in a frontline position to face any missile threat that might develop in the Middle East. On May 2, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush proclaimed his "National Missile Defense System" defense

the consequences of conflict terrifying to contemplate. The unfortunate events that we are now seeing both confirm our fears and reaffirm our commitment to seek even more support for the cause of promoting understanding among cultures.

The world's greatest religions all call upon people to live in peace, tolerance and amity and to respect others' ideas and beliefs. The Koran, the Old and the New Testament alike give us the same messages. The Holy Koran shows respect to all religious beliefs and recognizes the holy books that preceded it, as well as all of the old prophets, including Moses and Jesus, and the Virgin Mary.

Because of this common religious heritage and Islam's respect for its predecessors, peoples belonging to different faiths coexisted for centuries in peace and security in the Ottoman Empire.

Building on this tradition, the Republic of Turkey has, since its founding in 1923, always contributed to conciliation between cultures and civilizations, and thus to peace, by promoting closer political and economic ties. This is, in part, the result of Turkey's adherence to secularism, the absence of the clergy system in Islam, and the absence of religious leaders in political roles.

Turkey, being conscious of the responsibility arising out of its history and unique location at the crossroads between East and West, continues to contribute to peace throughout the Eurasia region. The primary objective of Turkish foreign policy is to help secure and cultivate a peaceful, stable, prosperous and cooperative regional and international environment that is conducive to human progress and well-being both within its own borders and throughout its extended neighborhood.

Turkey employs a multidimensional foreign policy that is operational on all

continents. In this framework, we are a member of a wide range of leading international and regional organizations.

As a nation bordering the Black Sea, our country is also a member of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). And, of course, as a part of Europe, Turkey is also a member of leading European institutions such as NATO, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and the Customs Union with the European Union. And Turkey also plays an active role through its membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Turkey has always contributed to European politics, economic stability and security, over the past centuries as well as during more recent periods. Last year on 3 October 2005, Turkey and the EU initiated the negotiations for Turkey's full membership into the EU as scheduled. In the near future, Turkey's membership to the EU will be the symbol of the convergence of historic trends, embracing aspirations for the harmonious coexistence of cultures, and enriching the spiritual fabric of the EU.

Turkey's membership process also highlights the possibility of harmony, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among different cultures, and sends a strong message to those who believe that an unbridgeable fault-line divides faiths and cultures. In this respect, the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative launched by the U.N. Secretary General, which we co-sponsored, with Spain—another country with a rich multicultural past—is a particular case in point.

Recent developments, which have revealed the existence of an unfortunate lack of dialogue between different communities in a world already beset by numerous challenges, proves the wisdom

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and security doctrine. In it the countries perceived as a threat by the U.S. are mostly the neighboring countries to Turkey. It is natural for Turkey and the U.S. to formulate common policies within the framework of NATO regarding this issue.

The expansion of NATO through an increase in the number of members has been one of the issues agreed upon by Turkey and the U.S. It is likely that the cooperation between Turkey and U.S. regarding the transformation of NATO will continue in the coming years.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is a saying, "trading countries never fight." In my opinion, this saying does not express the entire truth of the matter. As far as I'm concerned, trade can only temporarily bring people of different cultures to understand and tolerate each other's values, beliefs and cultures. Unfortunately, we are today seeing that even the strictest laws, security measures or even international institutions are not sufficient to ensure global peace—peace that we now need more than ever, in an age when technological developments have made

and timeliness of this initiative. Turkey strongly believes that at this critical juncture in world history, it is the collective responsibility of all nations to work towards dispelling the misperceptions and mistrust that may exist between different cultures and religions.

Turkey pursues this objective by following a principled and proactive foreign policy that employs a broad spectrum of peaceful means. These entail, inter alia, taking the lead in regional cooperation initiatives, promoting good neighborly relations and economic cooperation, extending humanitarian aid and assistance to the less fortunate, participating in peacekeeping operations and contributing to post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction.

In addition to its participation in many peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, such as those in Somalia, Turkey currently contributes to the EU-led ALTHEA operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina with 392 personnel and approximately \$200 million worth of financial support; the NATO HQ's in Albania with personnel and other logistic support; the NATO-led KFOR in Kosovo with 386 personnel at a battalion and company level, including the financial cost for the Azerbaijani and Georgian Platoon Forces; the NATO HQ and EU-led PROXYMA operation in Macedonia with personnel, and the NATO-led Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean with one frigate, one Corvette and a total of 570 personnel. Turkey has twice assumed the command of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) for 14 month durations and supported this operation in 2005 with 1,716 personnel. Turkey's commitment to peacekeeping across the globe continues through its participation in, and support for, various U.N., NATO and EU led missions.

In the remaining portion of my time,

I would like to briefly outline Turkish policies regarding the regions Turkey is particularly active in: the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. These policies, moreover, have ramifications that extend far beyond Turkey's own interests, as these regions have great importance in terms of world peace and security.

To start first with our close neighbor, Iraq, I'm sure you'll remember that Turkey was the first country to employ an embargo on Iraq after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

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And for the second time in 2003, with the start of the U.S.-led Coalition Forces war, against the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein to bring democracy and freedom to Iraq, Turkey has supported the U.S. led operation since its beginning by opening its airspace with a governmental decision on the 20 of March 2003. Since then, the Coalition forces used the Turkish Airspace with more than 4900 sorties, and made use of Incirlik Air Base. In addition, the Turkish Parliament sent Turkish Armed Forces to Iraq to participate in the operation led by the international coalition forces.

Within the Middle East, Iraq is obviously of great concern to everyone with a stake in the region. Turkey will continue to support the Iraqi people throughout the remaining phases of the democratic process and help them rebuild their country and create a brighter and more prosperous future.

Turkey's economic and trade relations with Iraq have almost tripled since 2003. Today, we provide 50 percent of Iraq's requirement for processed petroleum. For the year 2006, we'll provide one fourth of Iraq's total electricity requirement, and the total amount of ground transportation in 2005, to cover our neighbor's needs for food, potable water, medicine and construction material, reached 518,000 truck loads. Since the beginning of this humanitarian assistance aid to Iraq, 100 Turkish truck drivers have been killed because of the insufficient security environment, especially in the northern part of Iraq. Despite this fact, we are continuing to support and help Iraq.

In addition to the economic support, Turkey has designed education programs particularly for Iraqi political groups. This, and our contribution to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, are a few of the solid examples of our supportive approach to Iraq's reconstruction.

As I mentioned to you at the beginning of my speech, with the basic understanding of the Turkish foreign policy "Peace at Home, Peace In The World," Turkey supports the peace process in Iraq and gives special importance to the integrity of Iraqi territory. Due to the presence of different ethnic groups in the country, it is of the utmost importance to preserve the unity of the country. [Unrest] may spread to other regions in the area and could infect a wide range of disputes and endanger the peace process in the Middle East. Therefore, the Turkish public views the irresponsible and separatist behavior of the Kurdish population with great concern. Furthermore, we strongly support the idea that all the natural resources of the country belong to all Iraqi people. This is contrary to the current application—as the northern population imply possession to the natural resources in their region and the

southern population imply the same for the petroleum in their region.

With the elections in Iraq, a big step towards democracy has been taken. The certified results of December's elections, released on February 10, marked the beginning of a new phase in the political process of Iraq.

Among our neighbors, the one with whom we share the longest land border is Syria. In the past, we experienced very serious problems with Syria. They supported terrorism in every possible way. However, we managed to overcome these problems to a certain extent. Today our relations with Syria are increasing in various areas. At a time when our bilateral relations have been progressing, Syria has come under international pressure due to its posture regarding various regional problems. We have constantly advised the Syrians to take concrete and visible steps regarding Lebanon, Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For instance, we urged them to cooperate fully with the U.N. Commission investigating the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Turkey maintains very strong and special relations with both Israel and Palestine. Turkey was the first Islamic country that recognized Israel after its establishment. Turkey is the only country in the region keeping good relations with Israel in terms of economic, cultural, political and military cooperation. I believe that it's worth mentioning that the Ministry of Defense of Turkey is cur-

rently cooperating in eleven big defense industry projects, among which are the modernization of the Turkish Air Force F-4 and F-5 aircraft and the modernization of the Turkish Army M-60 tanks, in total worth \$2 billion.

Turkey is also providing concrete support to the Palestinians on a formal

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basis. Moreover, the Turkish Union of Chambers of Commerce has undertaken a project aimed at revitalizing the Palestinian Industrial Zone in the Gaza Strip. Last month, Turkey concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with both sides in order to launch the project.

To help the parties strengthen the existing dialogue, we have established the Ankara Forum, in cooperation with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, in which both parties are represented. In our contacts with both parties, we have strongly encouraged and urged them to pursue the way of dialogue and negotiations. But we have no relations with the Palestinian side.

The recent Palestinian Legislative Council election results indicate the preference of the Palestinian people. The results should not be interpreted as an

endorsement of the advocacy of violence and terror. We believe that the desire of the majority of the Palestinian people for a negotiated solution to the conflict remains unchanged.

Before concluding, I would like to once more underline my belief, both at the personal level and as a representative of the government of the Republic of Turkey, in the importance of the coexistence of different cultures and beliefs, also their potential to enrich, teach and complement each other, which find expression in "the Alliance of Civilizations." I believe that we have to bear in mind what Israeli President Weizman once said: "Making peace is harder than making war." To gain a better and more peaceful global future, we shall have to struggle.

According to the Book of Genesis—a part of the holy scriptures of both Judaism and Christianity, and as such, respected by Islam as well—during the construction of the tower of Babel humankind was torn apart into groups speaking different tongues, with no common language in which they could communicate. Yet, as a citizen of a country heir to a long and rich tradition of multiculturalism, it is my dream and belief that we in the 21st century can build a new "Wonder of the World," an advent of peace as a common language for coming generations of all faiths and all nations to inherit.

I invite all of you to share my faith in this dream. I thank you for your kind attention.

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