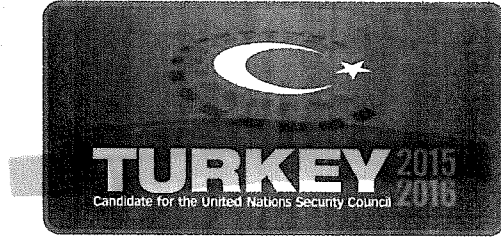


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ADDRESS

BY

H.E. MR. ABDULLAH GÜL

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

TO THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 24 SEPTEMBER 2013

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,

I wish to start by extending our sincere congratulations to you, Dr. John Ashe, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Sixty-Eighth Session of the UN General Assembly.

As we gathered here for this historic meeting, the news of terrorist attacks in Kenya, Iraq and Pakistan have deeply saddened us all. We condemn these attacks in the strongest possible terms. At this hour of grief and great sorrow, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the deceased.

At the dawn of the 21st century, we had every reason to be optimistic about the future.

We saw the end of Cold War hostilities, and the moral balance of the world shifted towards the pursuit of peace.

A lasting peace is far more than the mere absence of war. We, the international community, understood the imperative of working together for a stable world order.

We maintained our strong commitment to the universal principles of the United Nations system.

And, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, we developed effective international responses to the scourge of terrorism.

Yet, the most profound crises of our times are emerging from internal conflicts. Such conflicts have been increasing in both frequency and magnitude.

They are largely driven by the problem of political legitimacy, which leads the governed to withhold their consent, and limits the prospects for domestic order.

Leaders without political legitimacy share a common delusion: instead of reading the future and leading transformation, they believe they can buy time with irresponsible actions against their own people.

Eventually, these domestic conflicts escalate into civil wars, such as the tragedy we are witnessing in Syria.

The actions of these leaders thus have implications for peace and security beyond their own borders.

If some leaders insist on defining their security in a way that inflicts insecurity upon other nations, there can be no collective security.

Today, regional and international peace and security depend upon the maintenance of domestic order in each individual nation.

True domestic peace is the key to regional and international peace and stability.

This is a challenge that we will continue to face in the years ahead.

Mr. President,

We all know that no one holds a monopoly on righteousness.

Yet, I would like to touch upon the function of the whole UN system.

We all need a strong, efficient, and credible UN.

We need a UN fit for purpose in the face of current global realities.

The UN of which I speak should be a body capable of taking action to maintain international peace and security.

It should be able to safeguard security, justice, and people's fundamental rights and freedoms.

It should never forfeit its prime responsibility for the sake of power politics.

We must realize that inaction by the Security Council only emboldens aggressive regimes.

We need a UN capable of forcing the perpetrators of brutal actions to submit to justice and the rule of law.

Only through such a UN can we achieve the truly peaceful world envisioned by this institution's founders. Yet, as much as this remains a noble goal, it is also an urgent necessity.

Decisive action is the only way that the UN system will remain relevant and credible.

To face this new reality, we need a Security Council which is truly democratic, representative, effective, and accountable.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

No issue facing us is more pressing than the situation in Syria.

Let me be clear: Turkey welcomes and firmly supports the US-Russian agreement to eliminate Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons. That agreement has to be translated into a tangible UN Security Council resolution.

Once Syria comes clean about this arsenal, once and for all, it will be a relief for the Syrian people and the region.

As Syria's neighbor, Turkey will appreciate more than most the complete and verifiable destruction of these weapons.

Nevertheless, we cannot forget that chemical weapons were used against Syrian civilians only a month ago.

The perpetrators of this crime against humanity must be held accountable and be brought to justice.

I see this agreement on Syrian chemical weapons as an opportunity.

I hope it will be a first step in the formation of a security architecture to ensure the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Yet the recent approach to the situation in Syria also raises difficult questions:

Were it not for the use of chemical weapons, would the international community have continued to turn a blind eye to the deaths of more than a hundred thousand people?

For how long can we afford to evade our moral responsibility to the people being killed even as we speak?

This conflict neither began with the use of chemical weapons, nor will it end with an agreement to eliminate them.

We therefore bluntly reject any position that is not troubled by the killing of innocent people in itself, but only by the means of such killing. Such an approach is immoral and totally unacceptable.

The agreement to destroy Syria's chemical arsenal must not allow the regime to avoid responsibility for its other crimes.

Syria, a great country and a great nation, is consuming itself.

It is a disgrace that the United Nations Security Council has failed to uphold its primary responsibility in this case.

It is deeply regrettable that political differences, balance-of-power politics, and geopolitical considerations have prevailed over the imperative to end this tragedy.

Staying on this course cannot be an option.

When this tragedy began, we spoke of the killing of hundreds of people, then thousands, then tens-of-thousands, and now we speak of over a hundred thousand deaths.

If we cannot stop this conflict now, rest assured that we will be talking about twice that number next year.

I cannot emphasize this enough: Agreement on chemical weapons must not be allowed to substitute for a comprehensive political strategy to address the situation in Syria.

This conflict has evolved into a real threat to regional peace and security. Any recurrence of the proxy wars of the Cold War era will plunge Syria into further chaos.

The continuation of the refugee crisis will pose vital social, political, and economic risks for the host nations, as we have learned bitterly on many occasions.

We know that civil wars are among the most brutal. We also know how they foster radicalism and extremism.

Once extremist groups take root in a state, they form autonomous structures and become a real threat to security, not only at home but also abroad.

In the end, dissolving such organizations presents the greatest challenge to restoring security in a country.

We must be aware of this threat and realize that with each day we lose in indecision, the more remote the prospects for a peaceful Syria become.

After the Syrian people took to the streets against the regime, many international statements were made to support their cause, strong in their wording and promises.

For the Syrian people, these apparent commitments raised their hopes. Yet, many nations remained at a comfortable distance, disturbed only by the horrible images from Syria. Meanwhile, the Syrian people's cries for help went unheeded.

What could match the Syrian people's disappointment as they suffered the worst massacre of the twenty-first century as the international community simply looked on?

This brings me to the question of what needs to be done.

There has to be a sound strategy with well-defined and well-calculated objectives for a peaceful solution.

It has to aim to end Syria's civil war, ensuring the immediate safety and security of the Syrian people, and the country's stable transition.

The enforcement of such a strategy requires a fully determined, committed, and robust international engagement: exactly what has been missing since the beginning of the conflict.

In short, we cannot and shall not leave the Syrian people to their fate.

The burden of ending Syria's plight now rests on the shoulders of the international community.

Strong words of support must now be matched by real deeds.

We must be relentless in our search for a new, stable, intact, and secure Syria, at peace with its people and its neighbors.

To this end, we must devise and enforce a political strategy led by P5 and the neighboring countries.

Mr. President,

For the last three years, the Middle East has been experiencing a remarkable era of social and political change.

The process of transformation begun in 2010 marks the end of the century-old, region-wide status quo.

Of course, there have been and will be waves of reaction against the changes. Nevertheless, the advances in the region, including in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, are irreversible.

Arab people are equally capable of building pluralistic societies. Yet we should not expect the newly emerging political systems to transform into mature democracies overnight.

It is only through slow but steady democratic processes that societies come to understand the value of conciliation.

The noble cause of the Arab peoples deserves our full and unhesitating support.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

The continuation of the Palestinian question for more than half a century has inflicted colossal damage on the very concept of justice.

The denial of the right of the Palestinians to have a state of their own has no justification on any moral, political, or legal grounds.

Despite insistent calls by the international community, the continued expansion of the illegal settlements on Palestinian land undermines the prospects for a two-state solution.

The case for peace is self-evident.

We therefore welcome and strongly support the talks initiated between the parties under the auspices of the United States.

The success of future efforts mainly depends on the Israeli Government's acceptance of the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state. There is also a need for the presence of a reconciled and unified Palestinian front.

This brings us to another issue upon which our credibility rests: the question of Cyprus.

Repeated attempts towards a peaceful settlement have ended in failure, including by the rejection of the Annan Plan in 2004.

Turkey, as a guarantor, is fully and sincerely committed to finding a just and negotiated settlement.

We therefore expect the international community to urge the Greek Cypriots to reciprocate by engaging in result-oriented and time-framed negotiations in good faith.

Those who must solve this question are the Turks and Greeks of Cyprus. They must start negotiating as soon as next month with no ifs or buts.

The settlement of the Cyprus question is essential to a stable and peaceful Eastern Mediterranean.

Mr. President

Distinguished Delegates,

Frozen conflicts hinder effective regional cooperation. We strongly urge peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and achieve a sustainable peace in the Caucasus based on territorial integrity.

We have proposed a comprehensive strategy for regional economic cooperation and development combined with the gradual withdrawal from the occupied territories.

We believe this can serve as a solid basis for regional peace.

Another area where regional cooperation is in high demand is the Balkans.

In the last few years, Turkey has bolstered its efforts to build strong ties with all Balkan nations. Our objective is to create an atmosphere of dialogue, trust, mutual understanding, and conciliation.

We also have a dependable interest in a secure, prosperous, and peaceful Afghanistan.

Here too, regional cooperation and ownership is a must. For this reason, I have personally initiated and led the efforts to establish the Trilateral Summit Process between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey.

Since 2007, it has proven a real success, and I am confident that more success will follow.

Mr. President,

Another important issue that affects us all is terrorism.

It is real, extremely dangerous, a crime against humanity, and must be defeated.

We can only defeat it once we get rid of “my terrorist/your terrorist” distinctions. Effective international partnership against terrorism remains a key priority for Turkey.

Yet there is another issue that needs our attention. Unfortunately, Islamophobia has become a new form of racism. It aims to create an abstract, and an imaginary enemy from the millions of peace-loving Muslims all over the world.

It is essential to strike a balance between protecting freedom of expression and preserving respect for faith.

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,**

The current challenges of development are matters of global concern.

Turkey is now running a comprehensive assistance and direct investment package to the world's Least Developed Countries.

Humanitarian diplomacy is a key objective of Turkish foreign policy.

In fact, Turkey became the fourth-largest donor last year.

Including the contribution of the Turkish NGOs in the fields of health, education, and capacity building Turkey's total humanitarian assistance reaches 2 billion US dollars per year.

Our engagement in Somalia is an exemplary case. We have allocated 300 million US dollars so far.

Our approach to Africa is one of equal partnership, and is best captured in the African proverb which says: 'If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together.' For Turkey, relations with Africa remain a key priority.

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Turkey is candidate for a non-permanent member seat of the UN Security Council for the term 2015-2016.

If elected, Turkey will bring an independent voice to the Security Council; one that listens to all and tries to find comprehensive and lasting solutions through dialogue.

We expect the support of all members for our candidacy.

Excellencies,

I believe the new millennium is one in which democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and global welfare will continue to expand. I believe that an international peace shaped by freedom, justice, dignity, social progress, and economic welfare is within our reach.

We must join our strength to build an enduring international order worthy of the principles of the UN Charter.

A stable, secure, and prosperous world is the best way to secure and advance all our interests. Achieving such a world remains our fundamental responsibility to our nations.

Thank you.

