



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ADDRESS BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

TO THE

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OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. Joseph Deiss, on your assumption of the Presidency of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdusselam Treki for his able Presidency.

Mr. President,

The mission of the United Nations is to protect the dignity, security and well-being of all human beings. Therefore, peace, security, stability and welfare constitute the tenets of Turkey's work and action in the United Nations.

Since this esteemed body gave us an overwhelming mandate for Turkey's non-permanent seat at the Security Council, we have worked hard, sincerely, objectively and effectively to contribute to peace, security and welfare of the international community.

In these two years, we tried to offer our added value, in a fair and principled manner, for addressing various global and regional issues.

We sought to advance the discussions within the Council on an issue that we have always accorded high priority: peacekeeping and peace-building.

Indeed, this afternoon we will be holding a Security Council Summit session to exchange views and ideas on this matter at the highest political level.

Furthermore, next Monday, we will hold a thematic debate of the Security Council on counter-terrorism.

Terrorism indeed is a leading and most pressing challenge for the international community on the global scale. It cannot be countered without sincere, effective, cohesive and concrete international cooperation.

I would like to remind you that our struggle against terrorism is bound to fail, unless we fight all terrorist organizations irrespective of their so-called political, ideological, ethnic or religious aims.

One successful example of collective response to the one of the serious challenges of today is the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

Established by the initiative of Spain and Turkey, the Alliance, with its 122 members today, has become the second largest international platform after the UN itself. This is a clear indication for us that the international community prefers harmony, dialogue and cooperation to bigotry and confrontation.

Mr. President,

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the risks of our contemporary world. We cannot overcome this menace unless all member states, including nuclear ones, adopt a just and principled approach in their respective policies.

Establishing a credible global non-proliferation regime would not be achievable, while ignoring de facto existence of nuclear weapons of certain countries at the heart of most delicate regions.

In this context, I would like to call upon all member states to intensify their efforts in creating a "Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East" as was envisaged by the UN Security Council Resolution 687 of 1991 and as also repeatedly called for by the General Assembly.

We also support the calls at the New York NPT Review Conference of May 2010 for convening a conference on WMD Free Zone in the Middle East in 2012. I believe this initial step would be a sine qua non for all non-proliferation initiatives in the rest of the world.

In responding to those security challenges, we should keep in mind that global problems cannot be solved unilaterally, bilaterally or in small circles of like-minded nations. Therefore, it is important today, more than ever, that we adopt a multilateral approach to global problems.

One such problem is the current global economic crisis.

Though we are in a slow recovery, the impact of the crisis is still being felt today. We must draw the proper lessons from this global crisis in order to avoid the recurrence of similar shocks in the future.

This crisis was caused by the irresponsible acts of some financial institutions in the most developed markets. Ordinary people have paid the highest price for the mistakes of a few in the developed nations.

The current economic crisis unveiled, once again, the weaknesses and deficiencies of the existing global and national financial and economic architectures which lack efficient governance and regulation over those reckless financial institutions.

The Turkish economy, however, has managed to stay on course in spite of the world economic crisis, thanks to the comprehensive economic and financial measures taken before. Within the G-20, we strongly support the efforts in international fora aiming at restoring global growth and streamlining financial practices.

We believe that the G-20 should continue to play a central role in putting together the right policies and measures to that effect.

Mr. President,

The situation of the least developed countries (LDCs) has further worsened in the aftermath of the global crisis. Therefore, every effort should be made to integrate these countries into the global economy.

In that endeavor, we should act with the principles of free and fair trade, and avoid protectionist tendencies.

It is with these thoughts that we are looking forward to the "4th UN Conference on the LDCs" to be organized next year in Istanbul.

Mr. President,

During the last decade, Turkey's economic indicators improved. So did its development assistance. Our relatively increasing means enabled us to contribute more to the development of others.

Now, Turkey has evolved into an emerging donor. With the contribution of Turkey-based NGOs, our overall development assistance exceeds one and a half billion Dollars annually.

Through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), we allocate this amount to a diversity of projects in capacity building such as in the fields of health, education, agriculture as well as infrastructure.

Mr. President,

Developing nations are also more exposed than others to the gravest risks of four interconnected problems: global warming, climate change, epidemics and food security.

In recent years, tragedy struck many nations because of the adverse impacts of climate change around the world. We experience severe droughts in some parts of the world while some other parts of our planet are swept by devastating floods.

The current plights of Pakistan and Haiti are a reminder that this has become a pressing issue calling for urgent remedial action.

We must acknowledge that sustainable environment is an "indivisible global public good" for the humankind. Therefore, we must assume collective responsibility for preserving it. Not only the billions of lives today, but also the lives of the future generations will be depending on the actions we take today.

The global food crisis is another urgent concern. It poses a dismal challenge to incoming generations.

Those compelling economic, demographic, ecological and biological challenges oblige us to redefine the notion of security. These issues no longer fall into the category of soft risks, but rather pose a clear and present threat to the humankind.

In the face of these overwhelming threats, it is time to take global action under the framework of the UN.

To that end, I call upon the member states to explore the possibility of establishing a “Global Rapid Reaction Capability” to effectively tackle natural and ecological disasters, food shortages and epidemics.

This would also help maintain international peace and security by mitigating the threats stemming from weak governance, collapse of public order and domestic or inter-state conflicts over diminishing natural resources.

If we allocate a small fraction of our defense expenditures to the financing and establishment of this new capability, we would have more cost efficient results in maintaining peace and stability in the world.

Moreover, if we could pool some of our defense equipment that lost its effective utilization in military terms but are still relevant for disaster relief operations, we would swiftly build the said rapid reaction capability.

Of course, the existing regional capacities might be very instrumental in this global endeavor.

All these resources should be channeled directly to those in need and not eroded by excessive administrative costs.

Mr. President,

On the political side of our agenda, there is no shortage of enduring regional issues. Because of time constraints, I wish to briefly touch upon some of them here.

Permanent peace in the Middle East holds the key to a peaceful and stable future in the world. Unfortunately, the absence of peace there has had serious and adverse strategic consequences for the rest of the world.

Therefore, Turkey always supported all efforts to reach a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. With this understanding, we appreciate President Obama’s efforts and welcome the direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

We hope that this new engagement can take us closer to a viable and fair settlement.

On the other hand, it would be very difficult to make progress towards permanent peace unless we put an end to the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza.

In this context, the attack of the Israeli armed forces on the international humanitarian aid convoy in high seas last May resulted in grave civilian casualties and was an unacceptable act in clear violation of the international law.

In the light of international law, Turkey’s expectation is a formal apology and compensation for the aggrieved families of the victims and the injured people.

Therefore, we attach particular importance to the work of the Panel of Inquiry and the Fact-Finding Mission.

We are pleased to have yesterday's report of the Fact Finding Mission of UN Human Rights Council. The report offers a solid legal framework for establishing the facts about this incident. We also look forward to successful completion of the work of the Panel.

As for Iraq, the elections of March 7 marked a new period for the people of this country. Nevertheless, the post-election political stalemate aggravates the security situation and hinders the launch of a comprehensive reconstruction program.

We sincerely desire that the new government in Iraq will reflect the balance that emerged at the elections. The new government must be inclusive, effective and democratic.

In the aftermath of the withdrawal of foreign combat troops, we also urge all neighbors of Iraq to act responsibly and support the territorial integrity, political unity and sovereignty of Iraq.

We must all help the Iraqi people in their quest for a better future.

Our contributions to international efforts in the search for an urgent and peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue will also continue. Resolving this controversy can only be achieved in conformity with the IAEA norms and NPT obligations, respecting the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In this vein, the Tehran Declaration and the July gathering in Istanbul provide a window of opportunity to be seized. We believe there is no alternative to diplomacy.

As a Balkan country, Turkey attaches cardinal priority to the peace, stability and economic development of the Balkans. In recent years, we have actively engaged in result-oriented initiatives in the Balkans by intensifying our high level bilateral visits to Belgrade and Sarajevo.

Moreover, the launching of trilateral cooperation mechanisms with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia on one hand, and with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, on the other, was of historic significance. Through these mechanisms, we try to create a new atmosphere of mutual understanding and cooperation among those nations.

In Kosovo, on the other hand, we must join our efforts for a constructive dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Therefore, we welcomed the adoption of the General Assembly resolution co-sponsored by Serbia and the EU.

I believe that the integration of the Western Balkan countries with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures would be a decisive final step for the resolution of conflicts in the region.

Our commitment to the Balkans will continue unabated in the future. International community's firm engagement in the region will also be crucial.

The year 2010 has been a remarkable one in Turkish-Greek relations. We believe the "High Level Cooperation Council" mechanism, initiated with Greece this year, paved the ground for a structured and institutionalized phase in our relations, thus leading to a promising future.

Furthermore, we are determined to resolve our differences with Greece on all outstanding issues in the Aegean Sea by observing the mutual rights and legitimate interests of both countries in accordance with international law. The Aegean Sea should be a sea of friendship and cooperation between Turkey and Greece.

On the Cyprus issue, our long-standing commitment and full support to a just and lasting settlement remains unchanged.

We share the vision of the Secretary-General that a settlement would be within reach before the end of this year. But this process should not be open-ended.

Any positive outcome emerging from these negotiations would rapidly transform the Eastern Mediterranean into a pillar of peace, stability, cooperation and welfare within the European Union.

The Turkish Cypriot side has proven that they are in favor of a settlement, as clearly manifested in the 2004 referendum, but they continue to suffer unjustly from the absence of a settlement.

I would like to repeat the call made by the UN Secretary-General to the international community to take the necessary steps to eliminate the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and to enable their integration with the world.

As for the Caucasus, we remain committed to pursuing our efforts in search of a comprehensive and sustainable peace in the region while respecting the principle of territorial integrity.

In recent years, we all witnessed how frozen conflicts could easily turn into active clashes in the region. In this context, we attach particular importance to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Central Asia is a strategic region of Eurasia. Turkey is committed to contributing to the stability, peace and development in Central Asia. The recent events in Kyrgyzstan have been of special concern. We are implementing an action plan in order to strengthen the efforts for stability and reconciliation in Kyrgyzstan.

We believe it is our common responsibility to assist Kyrgyzstan during this transitional stage toward the establishment of a sound democratic system.

Building trust and a sense of solidarity is essential to successfully dealing with complex regional issues. In our view, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) can be an effective tool to that end. Our two-year term chairmanship of CICA, which started last June, will be guided by this conviction.

Mr. President,

Our failure in Afghanistan will certainly have unpredictable consequences for the international community. Therefore, Afghanistan deserves our close attention and sincere commitment.

Afghanistan is going through a historic process of transformation. As military operations continue, there must be a simultaneous and growing emphasis on civilian efforts.

Turkey's commitment to Afghanistan is open-ended. We will continue our assistance as long as the Afghans require it.

We firmly believe that an essential pillar of ensuring the irreversibility of the processes under way in Afghanistan is directly linked to ensuring better, result-oriented cooperation at the regional level, particularly between Afghanistan and its neighbors.

Supporting Pakistan's democracy is also of singular importance not only in itself but also for the stability of the region as a whole. In the wake of the terrible disaster caused by the floods, it is critically important to support the people and the democratic government of Pakistan to heal their wounds.

Mr. President,

In view of the growing economic and political significance of the Asia-Pacific region, Turkey has adopted a new approach in its relations with the countries of the region. Accordingly, we launched an action plan called "opening up to the South Asian, Far Eastern and the Pacific countries".

Turkey has recently taken a significant step towards deepening its cooperation with the regional countries. In the 43rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Turkey became a party to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. This is the first institutional tie between Turkey and ASEAN. This development paves the way for Turkey to improve its relations with both ASEAN and Member States.

Turkey also attaches importance to the security and stability of the Korean Peninsula. We are aware that instability in the Peninsula has ramifications beyond the region itself. Therefore, we call on all the relevant parties to settle the existing problems through peaceful means and refrain from actions or attitudes which might threaten the security of the region.

Turkey also is developing its ties with Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Islands. We are one of the Pacific Islands Countries-Development Partners.

This enhanced relationship will pave the way for Turkey to efficiently reach the Pacific countries, and promote the socio-economic well-being of the peoples of the Pacific region. To advance this goal, we maintain several aid programs through Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA).

Africa is another region that requires international community's collective responsibility and action. The burden of resolving the overwhelming problems of this continent cannot be placed on the shoulders of the Africans alone.

Turkey, within its means, is determined to contribute to international efforts to bring continent-wide peace and stability to Africa and will continue its support for economic and human development with concrete proposals and initiatives.

In this spirit, Turkey hosted the Istanbul Somalia Conference organized within the UN framework on 21-23 May 2010. The Conference provided an important support for the Djibouti Peace Process and the Transitional Federal Government. The Istanbul Declaration adopted during the Conference constitutes a road map for the settlement of the Somali issue.

Turkey places great value on deepening and expanding its relations with the Latin American and Caribbean region. The policy that Turkey has been pursuing for a number of years to open up to this region is gaining greater momentum with each passing year.

Turkey also aspires to strengthen its ties with the regional cooperation schemes in this area.

Within that context, Turkey enjoys permanent observer status in the Organization of American States and the Association of Caribbean States, and seeks to develop formal ties with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our view that the United Nations can and should play an even larger role in charting a better future for the humankind. It is up to us, Member States, to provide the United Nations with the necessary political support and the concrete tools so that it can fulfill that role.

I can assure you that for its part, Turkey will continue to lend its full support and cooperation to this august body in our quest to leave a much safer, more prosperous, cleaner and healthier world to our children.

Thank you.