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REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
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TURKEY'S NEW EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY

Determination in the Political Reform Process
Continuity in Socio-Economic Transformation
Effectiveness in Communication

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Turkey's over half a century long European Union (EU) process is the most important modernisation project after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, as President Erdoğan has indicated. The Turkish Government is strongly committed to the EU process and to the transformation of Turkey. Our determined and consistent policy for EU membership will continue, as recently emphasized in the Programme of the 62nd Government. In line with this objective, it has become essential to develop an EU strategy featuring concrete steps and an intensive interaction network. Turkey and the EU are encountering common challenges that underline the importance of Turkey's accession process in shaping the EU project.

While the globalisation dynamics deepened gradually and multidimensionally in recent decades, the Eurozone was the most affected by the 2008 global economic crisis. The political and social problems caused by the economic crisis compelled the EU Member States to pursue protectionist policies, impeding European integration. Furthermore, the claim that the EU has suffered from "enlargement fatigue" following the largest enlargement wave in 2004 also marginalised this most important foreign policy instrument of the EU and slowed down Turkey's accession negotiations.

However, the EU maintains its long-term strategic objectives despite unfavourable political and economic circumstances. In fact, the Enlargement Strategy Paper, annually published by the European Commission, underlines the significance of the enlargement policy for the EU in terms of stability and security as well as increasing welfare and growth. Strengthening the global role of the EU is among the ten priorities mentioned in the Programme of Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission for 2014-2019. Accordingly, Turkey

is still an important strategic partner for the EU despite the problems encountered during the negotiation process. Moreover, the strategic importance of Turkey-EU relations has increased for both sides in parallel with the rapid changes in international and regional relations. The recent dramatic changes, from Syria to Ukraine and the Middle East to North Africa, require Turkey and the EU to act jointly against global and regional threats. In this respect, we believe that the EU will adopt a vision that suits its global power rather than inward-facing policies, while furthering enlargement negotiations and pursuing a harmonious neighbourhood policy. Turkey will continue to progress and determinedly pursue its objective of membership in a period that affirms our "Strong Turkey, Strong EU" perspective.

While the EU Member States are struggling with political and economic problems, Turkey is passing through a restructuring period characterised by three important pillars. Turkey has been experiencing a spectacular transformation process in the last twelve years thanks to further democratisation, improvements in freedoms, an economic restoration in tune with the global economy and an active foreign policy. During this period, millions of citizens have moved up to the middle class and begun to demand modern standards in all areas of social life. Accordingly, improved economic conditions have led Turkish citizens to ask for a stronger democracy. Despite the difficulties, the Turkish Government has taken noteworthy steps to include all segments of society in the democratisation and development process. The EU accession process has been an important means for the Government to this end. Thus, the process retains its significance for Turkey despite being prolonged for more than half a century, the belief that there are double standards for Turkey, the visa obstacles faced by Turkish citizens and the on-going political problems such as the Cyprus issue.

The essential dynamics of Turkey's EU policy are enhancing democracy and human rights, institutionalizing a free market economy and promoting modern living standards in all areas. Turkey has experienced a substantial transformation and become a much stronger country, thanks to the political, economic and social reforms implemented in line with the EU acquis.

Ongoing accession negotiations with the EU make Turkey unique in its region. With substantial improvements in terms of democratization and human rights thanks to the EU accession process, Turkey has adopted a "citizen-oriented" approach based on rights and freedoms. Therefore, the EU process is one of the essential dynamics of Turkey's domestic and foreign policy vision.

Turkey-EU relations are strong and sustainable as they are based on a "win-win" strategy. Turkey and the EU share mutual benefits in many areas, ranging from foreign policy, economic and trade relations, energy supply and security to border management, employment and migration policies. Civil wars and conflicts in our region attest that Turkey is key for EU's political and economic stability, and that the EU membership is significant to Turkey's stability. Turkey will in turn contribute to the EU in various areas thanks to its socio-economic transformation, dynamic social structure, growing economy and regional power. Consequently, the increasing co-dependency mandates the construction of a common future.

The successful philosophy of the European Union is adopting an integrative approach to overcome the common challenges and mobilising fact-based action mechanisms. This philosophy remains as our guide while projecting the future and implementing the EU Strategy with a refreshed motivation. Turkey will add greater value to a stronger Union that attaches importance to its interests. Having a strong national identity based on its history and geography, an important global position, a power of initiative and, most importantly, a committed stance that prioritizes human dignity, Turkey wishes to see the European Project overcome the challenges of the twenty-first century and extend its influence across all regions. Turkey can make an authentic contribution to this end. Turkey's European Strategy will be driven by the progress in all areas and the country's immense potential.

As underlined in the Programme of the 62nd Government, Turkey's EU accession is a strategic goal that is being pursued with determination. This process has gained even greater strategic significance with a New Turkey perspective, country's

global status and the confidence Turkey has inspired through its human-oriented policies in wider regions. The accession negotiations cannot proceed at the preferred pace due to the political stance of certain EU Member States. However, Turkey is still steadfastly committed to achieving the EU standards. The vision of a New Turkey depicts a stronger, more prosperous, respected and democratic country, which is used as a role model in the region for its economy, science and technology, politics and social and cultural policies. The EU accession process is undeniably an indispensable part of this goal.

Turkey-EU relations have multiple aspects, such as accession negotiations, a political reform process, Customs Union, Community Programmes, Financial Cooperation, institution building, visa liberalisation and a civil society dialogue. The "EU Strategy" will boost this spectrum of relations and help eliminate the obstacles on Turkey's path to EU membership. By prioritising Turkey's interests and benefits to the citizens, both the reform process will gain momentum and new communication channels will be established between Turkey and the EU, thus confronting common challenges.

The ***"European Union Strategy"*** will be the first step towards the concrete commitment declared in the Programme of the 62nd Government. The ***"European Union Strategy"*** consists of the following parts:

I. Political Reform Process
II. Socio-Economic Transformation in the Accession Process
III. EU Communication Strategy

The strategy mainly aims at achieving the EU standards in all areas through an accelerated reform process, determining the priority issues related to the negotiation chapters, and implementing a powerful communication plan that features the significance and potential of the Turkey-EU cooperation in constructing a European architecture in the midst of harsh regional and global challenges. The "European Union Strategy" will become operational upon adoption of the "National Action Plan for the

EU Accession" and "European Union Communication Strategy" in November 2014.

The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis was prepared in 2008 vis a vis the Accession Partnership Document for Turkey, and has been an important road map in terms of adopting the EU acquis. After six years, it needs to be updated. Therefore, a "National Action Plan for the EU Accession" is being prepared in collaboration with all ministries and public institutions under the coordination of the Ministry for European Union Affairs. The objective of this plan is to steer the EU harmonisation efforts and to accelerate the work in all chapters, whether politically blocked or not.

The "National Action Plan for the EU Accession" will be implemented in two phases: the first phase will be complete by 2015 and the second stage will be between 2015 and 2019.

Adopting an accession-oriented approach, the Action Plan focuses on key priorities, including the opening and closing of benchmarks, and aims to strengthen the administrative capacity for implementation. Accordingly, it will be an updated roadmap for EU harmonisation work and will help determine the priorities in various areas. Determining the concrete and priority steps required in each negotiation chapter, the Action Plan consists of three pillars: "Harmonisation of Primary Legislation," "Harmonisation of Secondary Legislation," and "Institution Building and Others".

The EU Communication Strategy will help inform the public on the efforts related to first two pillars. This strategy will be addressing the public both at home and abroad. It will be a follow-up to the European Union Communication Strategy, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers and has been implemented since 2010. Target groups, methods and instruments will be updated in this new strategy focusing both on Turkish and European public opinion.

I. POLITICAL REFORM PROCESS

The political reform process will be based on advancing the reforms of the last twelve years in rule of law, democratisation, human rights, civilisation, freedom and security, as well as consolidating related gains.

The EU membership objective has been a significant motivation in accelerating the political reforms, which served to further improve the living standards of the citizens and deepened the rule of law as well as democratisation. Constitutional arrangements, judicial reforms and legal amendments introduced to align with the EU acquis have helped to strengthen the Turkish democracy. The Turkish Grand National Assembly adopted eight EU Harmonisation Packages between 2002 and 2004, and three comprehensive Constitutional Amendment Packages in 2001, 2004 and 2010.

Several legal arrangements, notably the recently adopted democratisation package and six previous judicial reform packages, are concrete indicators of the work determinedly being carried out to align with the EU acquis.

These reforms have strengthened the status of the international agreements in our legal system, extended the scope of freedom of thought and expression, and eliminated acts of torture and ill-treatment in line with the adopted "zero tolerance" principle. The reforms also accelerated institutionalization in human rights. The acquisition and disposal of property by non-Muslim community foundations were also facilitated. Moreover, important efforts were made to improve gender equality and remove impediments to the activities of associations and foundations. Significant steps have been taken to ensure that Turkish citizens are able to use their traditional languages and dialects in the public sphere.

The developments in international law necessitate a dynamic process of harmonisation regarding the political criteria. Turkey had fulfilled the political criteria to a great extent before the start of the accession negotiations. Steps taken in Chapter 23 on Judicial and Fundamental Rights and Chapter 24 on Justice, Freedom and Security, constitute the backbone of the efforts

towards political reforms and harmonisation with the political criteria. Although many reforms have been implemented, these chapters remain politically blocked in contradiction with the basic values of the EU.

Removing the Imprints of the Military Coup of 12 September

The political reform process will continue, by taking international norms, the "zeitgeist", the "requirements of the period" and social demands as reference, in line with Turkey's objective of a pluralistic, liberal, participatory democracy. The priority of this process is to guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens, and to remove all limitations on the use of these rights and freedoms without discrimination. Although fundamental laws and legislation have already been repealed or amended, all legislation bearing the imprints of the military coup of 12 September will be reviewed in detail during the work for a new constitution.

The new constitution will pave the way for the initiatives that Turkey needs, by expanding the scope of politics and removing the imprints of the military tutelage. Hence, the systemic problems stemming from the current constitution; which pose obstacles to a stronger democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms and rule of law; and namely to the construction of the New Turkey; will be eliminated.

Continuation of the Reform Process in line with the EU acquis

Although the relevant screening reports have not been conveyed to Turkey, we will steadfastly continue a comprehensive reform agenda on all areas covered by the political criteria and by Chapters 23 and 24, such as freedom of expression, institutionalisation in human rights, border management, organized crime and migration management.

The upcoming reform efforts will involve many significant steps: particularly, the acceleration of the approval process of the international agreements signed by Turkey, updating the

Judicial Reform Strategy, and implementation of the Action Plan on the Prevention of ECHR Violations. Efforts in judiciary and fundamental rights will also contribute to the positive image of Turkey in the international fora.

The European Convention on Human Rights, the Case-Law of the European Court of Human Rights and the EU acquis will continue to serve as references for the political reform agenda.

The Reform Monitoring Group (RMG), which was established in 2003 to monitor the political reforms implemented within the scope of Turkey's EU accession process, holds its meetings with the participation of the Minister for European Union Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Minister of Justice, Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The RMG takes decisions on the priorities of the political reform process and presents these decisions to the Council of Ministers for approval. In addition, the Political Affairs Subcommittee (SIYAK), composed of high-level bureaucrats of the relevant ministries, was established under the RMG in order to monitor the decisions taken and to make proposals on legislative changes and their implementation. The work of the RMG and SIYAK will be intensified in the upcoming period to prepare for the next reform packages. Furthermore, within the framework of the EU acquis and best practices, work with all relevant stakeholders carried out in order to establish a sound basis for the political reforms.

Increasing Importance of the Balance between Freedom and Security

Significant transformation has been observed in all areas due to redefined threats and developments triggered by technology. Hence, the importance of the balance between freedom and security has increased in the definition of the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of citizens. Without compromising freedoms but yet ensuring the security of its citizens, Turkey continues to implement important political reforms. Considering the dynamic character of the international legal norms in this field,

it is essential to collaborate with the EU on the basis of mutual trust.

Implementation of legal arrangements in security; the fight against terrorism and organized crime; and migration, asylum and border management are among the primary objectives for ensuring the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. In line with these objectives, the Visa Liberalisation Dialogue, initiated following the signature of the Readmission Agreement with the EU on 16 December 2013, will eliminate the visa obstacles faced by Turkish citizens and bring Turkey closer to the EU Member States. All necessary steps will be taken for the successful conclusion of the visa liberalisation process.

Political Reforms Strengthening the Foundations of Democracy

The steps taken in regards to the democratisation packages will be further advanced. Necessary work will be undertaken to develop the established human rights institutions and to promote their effectiveness. New mechanisms will also be formed as necessary. Work on enhancing the rights of women, children and the disabled will continue. Freedom of organisation and the right to peaceful assembly will be further improved by considering the related decisions of the ECtHR.

Thanks to the liberal discussion climate that emerged in Turkey over the past twelve years, civil society is free to express its opinion. The continuation of this free and transparent discussion climate facilitates the social integration and solution process, which will help strengthen the pluralistic democracy that is based on the principle of non-discriminative citizenship. This process will pave the way for internalisation of the achievements that political reforms brought about, by all segments of society, without any discrimination.

The next wave of political reforms will reinforce the foundation of democracy. Thus, all citizens will feel more confident and responsible in terms of having a say in the construction of the New Turkey.

II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE ACCESSION PROCESS

Thanks to a remarkable move in the last twelve years, Turkey has tripled its national income and become one of the strongest economies in Europe with its sound public finance and private sector. During this period, millions of citizens have moved up to the middle class and begun to demand modern standards in all areas of social life. Accordingly, improved economic conditions have led Turkish citizens to ask for a stronger democracy. Despite the difficulties, the Turkish Government has taken important steps to include all segments of society in the democratisation and development process. The EU accession process has been an important means to this end for the Government.

The EU accession process is a significant reform project that facilitates the adoption of global standards and best practices in Turkey. The process requires fundamental changes in all areas of daily life: from production to consumption, justice to security, health to education, agriculture to industry, and energy to environment. Each political, judicial, economic or social reform implemented on the path to the EU accession upgrades the living standards of our citizens and increases the economic power, democratic prestige and security of our country on a global scale. The importance of the EU accession process for Turkey is that it will establish modern standards in all areas of life, and improve the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens with the impetus created. Turkey's EU accession process is a socio-economic transformation project that has fundamental effects on the current and future lives of its citizens.

The EU accession process not only contributes to the socio-economic transformation but also redefines the relationship between the state and citizens of Turkey. The citizenship concept, which was previously identified with responsibilities to the state, is now being redefined based on the rights of individuals, thanks to the EU accession process. The reforms have sealed the indispensable aspects of democracy such as transparency, accountability and participation as a part of daily life.

Turkey began to transpose the EU legislation as of 1996 after the agreement on a Customs Union. However, a systematic harmonisation process with its rules and institutions emerged with the beginning of the accession negotiations. Turkey's

accession negotiations started with the adoption of the Negotiating Framework on 3 October 2005. Currently, 14 chapters have been opened to negotiations, while one chapter has been provisionally closed. Although 17 chapters remain blocked due to the political obstacles introduced by the Council of the European Union and some Member States, Turkey maintains its harmonisation efforts in all chapters regardless of the opening of chapters, suspensions or blockages. In the last twelve years, Turkey has adopted 326 primary and 1730 secondary legislations to ensure alignment with the EU acquis.

The sustainability and consolidation of this great change in Turkey require not only proper implementation of the reformed legislation, but also an accompanied change in mentality. The occupational accidents that recently took place in Turkey point to the importance that implementation, inspection and mentality be in line with the related EU legislation. Today, Turkey has aligned its legislation to a large extent, especially with regards to the Customs Union; however, it still exhibits major shortcomings in terms of implementation and related administrative capacity. Adopting legislation is not sufficient to harmonise with the EU. Effective implementation of the legislation requires a change in mentality both in the public and private sector; only then will the adopted legislation serve the objectives. Accordingly, upcoming reforms will not only focus on new legal arrangements but also on enhancing the implementation capacity.

Established in accordance with the EU Regional Policy to reduce inter-and intra-regional disparities enabling the use of EU funds for regional development, the Development Agencies will assume an important role. These agencies serve as important actors of transformation, contributing to regional economic and social development by interacting with the citizens at a local level.

A "National Action Plan for the EU Accession" will address Turkey's priorities in continuing and enhancing socio-economic change and identify the legislation to be harmonised in addition to the areas of action required to improve administrative structures during proper implementation. Turkey's EU Strategy will be based on a socio-economic transformation, which is the sine qua non of a powerful democracy.

III. EUROPEAN UNION COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

At the end of the accession process, the people of Turkey and the EU will decide on Turkey's membership. Therefore, it is of great importance to support the political and socioeconomic reforms that have changed Turkey's outlook using tailored communication efforts. A successful communication strategy does not only assist the internalisation of the reforms by the society, but also serves to close the gap between the perception regarding Turkey and the facts.

Hence, the communication strategy has two dimensions: The first is ***communication at home*** which aims to solidify the domestic perception of the EU process as a modernisation project that improves the living standards of our people. Such a perception will certainly ensure the support of all segments of society of the adoption and proper implementation of reforms. The second dimension of the strategy addresses the ***international community*** and provides facts on Turkey to help shape a more accurate perception among the EU public. This dimension will help establish trust in terms of Turkey's commitment and self-confidence in the EU process.

Both dimensions of the communication strategy will take into account the opinions elicited from all segments of the society, such as the Parliament, public institutions, civil society organizations, universities, businesses, and local administrations. It will also be implemented using a participatory approach. The initiatives to be taken in scope of the strategy will not be reactive, but proactive and perception-oriented.

In the first period of the European Union Communication Strategy (EUCS), which began to be implemented after its approval by the Council of Ministers in 2010, several successful activities have been conducted both at home and abroad. In the framework of the domestic dimension of EUCS, EU Coordination Units have been established within 81 Provincial Governorships to support EU-related work at the local level.

Various programmes and projects have been implemented in the provinces to this end. Civil society organizations have been supported in hundreds of projects promoting Turkey-EU Civil Society Dialogue, and town-twinning programmes have been implemented as well, enabling joint projects between Turkish local administrations and their EU counterparts. Turkey has the highest number of applications for the EU education and youth programme Erasmus+, previously named the Lifelong Learning Programme. This clearly indicates that the achievements in the first period of the communication strategy have aroused enthusiasm and excitement about the EU in all segments of society.

The process now includes new actors and priorities. Therefore, a participatory and proactive strategy will be implemented with the support by modern modes of communication and tailored communication methods.

The main objective of the domestic dimension of the Communication Strategy is to increase public support, as it is the major impetus behind the reform efforts. It is also aimed to strengthen public opinion that the EU is a modernisation and democratisation project for Turkey that has a positive impact on every aspect of life. It is mainly the civil society that will benefit most from the EU accession process. In line with this notion, participation of all societal actors such as civil society organizations, think-tanks, local/regional/national media, businesses, academicians and the local administrations in the process will be promoted based on their fields of interest, expectations, concerns, and information needs. The Development Agencies principally engaged in improving cooperation among public institutions, the private sector, local administrations, universities and civil society organisations, will play an important role not only in the socio-economic transformation but also in the implementation of a Communication Strategy.

The centre of gravity of the new Communication Strategy is located in its foreign dimension. In this context, the major

activities will be oriented towards the Member States that remain reluctant about Turkey's membership and that are also influential in shaping the EU's public opinion. The foreign dimension of the Communication Strategy will be based on a flexible and participatory approach that is sustainable, has a measurable impact and can be rapidly updated when necessary. This strategy aims to build permanent bridges between the two communities as opposed to one-off activities. The most important feature of the foreign dimension of the strategy will be its proactive and perception-oriented approach. It is vital to shaping public opinion about Turkey's sincerity and determination towards EU membership. In addressing various segments of EU citizens, activities of civilian actors such as domestic and foreign civil society organisations, universities and business organizations will be prioritized. In addition to the conventional communication methods, that are insufficient in the global age, the new Communication Strategy will effectively make use of social media and digital technologies, which enable interactive access and allow personalised and organised collaboration.

The European Project will be streamlined on a platform, with the willingness to integrate vision with pragmatism and to reinforce the wish to collaborate. Threats such as extremism, xenophobia, hate speeches and Islamophobia have been rising in Europe recently. Thus, the initiatives pioneered by Turkey and adopted in international fora, such as intercultural dialogue and alliance of civilisations, have become increasingly important. The geo-strategic location and political structure of Turkey may help to eliminate misconceptions between the EU and its neighbours, and to maintain the core philosophy of the EU Project. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero promoted the "Alliance of Civilisations Initiative" in 2005 under the auspices of the UN to counter the threat of polarisation. The EU Communication Strategy will support similar initiatives within the EU.

Today, the EU is encountering serious challenges within itself and at the regional and global level. In such a period, the European Union Strategy is prepared to determine the steps that strongly emphasize the meaning and significance of Turkey's EU membership. It is vital that this strategy is adopted by all relevant stakeholders. President Erdoğan declared 2014 as the European Year and the 62nd Government has reiterated its commitment to the EU accession process. However, as the EU accession concerns all areas of social life, it is the civil society and not the Government that will benefit most from Turkey's EU membership. Therefore, Turkey's accession process can only be completed with the participation and contribution of the people. This strategy may only reach its targets to the extent that it is internalized by all the public institutions, civil societies, business organisations, universities and other stakeholders.