

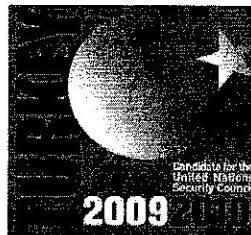


PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BAKİ İLKİN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE
UNITED NATIONS AT THE 62ND SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA ITEM 17: THE
SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

New York, 30 November 2007



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Mr. President,

Turkey has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, my remarks will be brief.

Mr. President,

After a long period of recrimination, tension and violence in the Middle East, today, we have an opportunity to reverse this adverse cycle. A ray of hope emerged regarding the question of Palestine, which lies at the very heart of all ills in the Middle East, with wide repercussions both in and beyond the region.

We, therefore, welcome the joint declaration of the Annapolis conference. We applaud the commitment of the both sides to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008 and to implement their respective obligations under the road map. It is highly encouraging to see the beginning of a serious engagement between Israel and Palestine with a clear objective of a two state solution, responding to the aspirations of the Palestinians for a homeland and those of Israel for security.

The period ahead will, undoubtedly, be of crucial importance. Both parties will inevitably encounter difficulties and have to make difficult sacrifices and decisions. Indeed, a deal may be as hard as ever to reach. Yet there can be no substitute for peace and the consequences of failure would be devastating for all.

In order to achieve the ultimate goal, it is essential that both Israelis and Palestinians should act with utmost restraint more than ever and try to build on mutual confidence. Thus, we call upon Israel to reconsider its policies which have not delivered the sense of security it rightfully seeks and deserves. It is evident that ending the settlement activities and easing the pressure of the occupation could change a lot on the ground.

We also remain concerned at the humanitarian issues affecting Palestinians, particularly in Gaza. The living conditions in the Gaza Strip has reached intolerable levels and started threatening even future generations. We agree with the Secretary General that punitive

measures which harm the well-being of the entire population are unacceptable. Such steps serve nothing but building up further resentment.

On the other hand, we believe that Palestinians should be steadfast in stepping up their efforts to remove radical elements from the scene. We welcome the commitment displayed by President Abbas at the Annapolis conference "to combat chaos, violence, terrorism, and to ensure security, order and the rule of law."

Mr. President,

After years of broken promises and bloodshed, it is crucial that Israelis and Palestinians this time agree on concrete steps that would show their people that life is changing for the better. These steps should, first and foremost, focus on economic and trade areas where the merits of cooperation can be felt in tangible terms. In this vein, we welcome the efforts of Mr. Blair, Quartet Representative, and hope that the forthcoming donors' conference in Paris could be successful in gathering sufficient support for the empowerment of Palestinians. This is essential for a viable peace prospect.

In the meantime, Turkey will continue to contribute to the process of confidence building and increased interaction between Israelis and Palestinians. The recent joint declaration regarding the establishment of an industrial zone in the West Bank which was issued in Ankara is a very encouraging step. When completed, this enterprise would generate a great number of jobs for Palestinians and thus constitute a security-provider for Israel too. It also responds to the objective of reinvigorating local private sector and attracting the interest of foreign capital. We sincerely hope that the spirit of cooperation and understanding displayed by the Leaders of Israel and Palestine during their visit to Ankara, which culminated in their unprecedented same day address to the Turkish Parliament, could have a positive impact on the future talks.

We must all support fully the leaders of Israel and Palestine, in their courageous endeavours to built safe and better future for their peoples, thus consolidating peace, cooperation and harmony in the region.

Mr. President,

The interwoven nature of the problems in the Middle East necessitates a holistic and comprehensive perspective and approach. Needless to say, without addressing the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, the picture can never be completed. As we are heartened by the Syrian participation in the Annapolis conference, we hope to see some progress on this track too, in the period ahead .

We have been following the developments in Lebanon with deep concern. We would like to see sense of national unity prevailing over factional, religious and ethnical considerations in this country. We will continue our efforts, including our contributions to UNIFIL, to assist in restoring stability in Lebanon. We hope and expect that the courage, determination and resilience of the people of Lebanon will enable them to overcome all their difficulties.

As for Iraq; we wish to emphasize, once again, that the integrity and unity of this country hold the key to not only regional but also global security and stability. Ensuring a dignified place within the international community for a territorially intact, nationally unified and democratic Iraq, at peace with itself and its neighbours, is always at the top of our endeavours.

Mr President,

Today, we have an opportunity to show that the Middle East is not condemned to eternal strife. We have an opportunity to show that the region, once the cradle of civilisations and economic heartland of the world, can indeed solve its problems and unleash a huge potential.

This opportunity must be seized. We are duty-bound for the future generations. Otherwise, another failed attempt would just sow more anger and despair in a region already drowning in both.

Thank you, Mr. President.