

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY
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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
AT THE 74th SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Honorable Mr. President,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Honorable Mr. Secretary General,
Esteemed Delegates,

I salute you all with utmost respect on my own behalf and the Turkish nation.

I would like to thank H.E. Ms. ESPINOSA for her successful work over the past year.

I also wholeheartedly congratulate H.E. Mr. MOHAMMAD BANDE, who has taken over the Presidency of the General Assembly for the 74th session.

I hope that the 74th session of the General Assembly will bring peace and prosperity to the whole world and humanity.

Esteemed Delegates,

Our world today faces many challenges and sufferings resulting from injustice at global scale.

The great scholar of our civilization Mevlana has once defined justice as “sharing amongst the people the rights and obligations appropriately and allocating them what they are entitled to”.

It is obvious that today neither the rights nor the responsibilities are shared appropriately.

In the meantime, injustice generates instability, power struggles, crises and extravagancy.

Yet, the Organization where we are gathered today was established in the aftermath of World War II with the purpose of eradicating injustice.

Indeed the international community is gradually losing its ability to find lasting solutions to challenges such as terrorism, hunger, misery and climate change, which threatens its own future.

There is no doubt that the General Assembly has a fitting theme for the 74th session; "galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion".

But, what really matters is what we can achieve together.

It is unacceptable that one part of the world lives in luxury and enjoys benefits of prosperity while people in other parts suffer from poverty, misery and illiteracy.

It is painful to see that while a fortunate minority in the world is discussing issues such as digital technology, robotics, artificial intelligence and obesity, more than two billion people live under the poverty line and close to one billion people suffer from hunger.

We cannot turn our back to the reality that unless each one of us is safe, none of us will be safe.

For many years, I have been saying from this rostrum that we cannot leave the fate of humanity to the discretion of a handful of countries.

Today I emphasize once again that the WORLD IS BIGGER THAN FIVE.

The change that we need to make in our current mentality, institutions and rules is long overdue

The inequality between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states is alone enough to undermine global balances.

It bothers us like everyone else that the weapons of mass destruction are used as leverage in every crisis, instead of their total elimination.

The possession of nuclear power should either be forbidden for all or permissible for all.

For the sake of a peaceful future for all humanity, let us solve this problem as soon as possible on the basis of justice.

Honorable Delegates,

At a time when thirteen people lose their lives every minute due to air pollution and global warming threatens our own future, we cannot afford to remain indifferent.

First and foremost, we need to strengthen the United Nations' capacity and efficiency.

We should carry out at once the much-needed fundamental reforms in line with the principles of justice and equity, in particular at the Security Council.

With its enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy, Turkey embraces the whole world and humanity and strives to find just solutions to problems.

It is not without a reason that Turkey has earned the titles of the most generous country in terms of humanitarian aid as well as the country hosting the largest number of displaced persons in the world.

The 3rd African Union-Turkey Partnership Summit to be organized in Turkey in 2020 constitutes another concrete example of our enterprising and humanitarian policy.

I invite all the countries present in this Hall to support our policies and initiatives which we have formulated on the basis of justice, ethics and conscience.

Esteemed Delegates,

Today Syria has become a geography that hurts the collective conscience of humanity, as well as a symbol of global injustice.

Since 2011, the regime and the terrorist organizations in this country as well as the forces encouraging them insistently pursue a policy of perpetual crisis.

It is now time to put an end to the crisis in Syria which has caused the death of nearly one million people, displaced more than twelve million people and forced half of them to leave the country.

Turkey is the country most affected by the threat of DAESH.

This terrorist organization has harassed our borders and targeted the very heart of our cities with suicide bombings which have killed hundreds of Turkish citizens.

Turkey is the country who has inflicted the first and the heaviest blow to the DAESH presence in Syria.

With Operation Euphrates Shield, we have paved the way for the process of collapse of DAESH in Syria by having neutralized approximately 3,500 terrorists.

We are also at the forefront of international efforts to identify terrorists from all over the world who intend to join DAESH through imposition of entry bans to and deportations from our country.

On the other hand, today Turkey is the most generous country in terms of humanitarian aid, taking into consideration the ratio of Turkish official humanitarian assistance to its gross domestic product.

We are hosting five million asylum seekers fleeing conflict, starvation and persecution.

In other words, there are more asylum seekers in Turkey than the population of 29 states in the United States.

3 million 650 thousand of the asylum seekers in our country are from Syria.

In other words, the number of Syrian brothers and sisters that we are hosting on our soil reaches half of New York City's population.

We have spent 40 billion Dollars for asylum seekers in the last eight years.

365,000 of the asylum seekers who came to our country returned to the areas we have secured in Syria.

Nearly half of Syrian asylum seekers are under the age of 18.

The number of Syrian children born in our territory has reached half a million.

We provide them not only housing, but also essential services, especially in the areas of education and health.

Unfortunately, the world was too quick to forget the millions of victims whose journeys for survival ended either in the dark waters of the Mediterranean Sea or against the security fences stretched to borders.

But we have not forgotten and will never forget the memories of babies like Aylan whose lifeless bodies washed ashore.

In the first eight months of this year alone we have saved 32,000 irregular migrants from drowning at sea.

Also during the first eight months of this year, we have sent 58,000 irregular migrants, except Syrians, back to their countries.

Yet, together with those fleeing from other parts of the world, Turkey hosts five million oppressed people in its territory.

Unfortunately, we were left alone in our self-giving efforts towards asylum seekers.

In Syria, there has been no genuine return to the regions controlled by the regime and the terrorist organizations PKK-YPG and DAESH.

The parts liberated and secured by Turkey are the only places of return for the Syrians who fled their country for their lives.

Today, we face three important issues that we need to focus carefully on in order to solve the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

The first is the efficient and productive functioning of the Constitutional Committee, which we see as a critical process for the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria.

At the Ankara Summit held beginning of last week, together with Russia and Iran, we have reached a very successful outcome.

When a permanent political solution is reached in Syria, the territorial integrity of this country will be established by itself.

The second important issue is to prevent a possible massacre in Idlib and a potential wave of migration of about four million people.

Despite some setbacks, the agreement we reached with Russia in Sochi on this issue remains valid.

Turkey has neither the patience nor the means to handle another wave of migration.

For this reason, we expect all countries to support Turkey's efforts to ensure security and stability in Idlib.

The third important issue is the elimination of PKK-YPG terrorist structure in the East of the Euphrates, which occupies a quarter of Syria and tries to legitimize itself under the name of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces.

We will not be able to find a permanent solution to the issue of Syria if we fail to deal with all terrorist organizations in this country from the same angle.

Our talks with the United States with a view to establishing a safe zone in Syria continue.

We intend to establish initially a PEACE CORRIDOR with a depth of thirty kilometers and a length of 480 kilometers and enable the settlement of two million Syrians there with the support of the international community.

If we could extend the depth of this region until Deir ez zor-Raqqa line, we can increase the number of Syrians who will return from Turkey, Europe and other parts of the world to their lands in Syria up to three million.

As we are determined on this matter, we have already started necessary preparations.

We are also planning to lead a process for an international conference to be held with the participation of Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.

We likewise attach great importance to the success of the Global Refugee Forum to be held in Geneva in December and co-chaired by Turkey.

We are of the opinion that a donor conference can be organized under the leadership of the United Nations to support returns to safe areas.

There is also need for effective implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees adopted last year at the United Nations.

If we succeed to establish an environment of trust and stability on the basis of the principles of legitimacy and justice in Syria, we will also help neighboring Iraq relief from its troubles related with both DEASH and PKK.

I call upon the entire UN family from this Hall to take initiatives as well as to support our ongoing efforts to stop the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Esteemed Delegates,

The Mediterranean basin, in addition to the tragedies triggered by the Syrian crisis such as illegal migration, faces further problems due to developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Despite negotiations of more than 50 years, the Cyprus issue has not been resolved due to the uncompromising position of the Greek Cypriot side.

The Greek Cypriot side pursues an inequitable and unjust policy of imposition which refuses to share the political power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriots.

Turkey is the international treaty-based guarantor of the Turkish Cypriot people, with whom it has deep historical and cultural bonds.

It is clear that those who claim to solve the Cyprus problem under the condition of "zero security, zero guarantee" have ill-intentions from the beginning.

Turkey, on the other hand, will continue its efforts until a solution that guarantees the security and rights of the Turkish Cypriot people is found.

We believe that the energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean constitute an important opportunity for cooperation if we all adopt a "win-win" approach.

Unfortunately, despite our reasonable approach, some countries in the region, through unilateral steps, are trying to turn the issue of energy resources into an area of conflict.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, we will protect the legitimate rights and interests of both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot people until the very end.

Yet, we will continue to be open-minded to all proposals based on cooperation and equitable sharing.

In Libya, another critical area of the Mediterranean, we endeavor to ensure security and stability in the country through the establishment of a democratic administration based on the free will of the people.

The political and economic empowerment of Libya will be a relief for both North Africa and Europe.

The solution in this country can be found by respecting the choices of the Libyan people.

Interventions in Yemen and Qatar have had serious consequences in both humanitarian and economic terms.

We should all seek an immediate solution to the crisis in the region which re-emerged due to the attacks on oil production facilities.

The journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was brutally slaughtered last year and Egypt's first democratically elected President, Mohamed Morsi, who lost his life in a court room in a suspicious way this year have become symbols of the real need for justice and equity in the region.

We also hope that the discussions about Iran's activities as well as related threats to this country will be resolved in a rational framework.

Esteemed Delegates,

Today, the Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation have become one of the places where injustice prevails the most.

If the images of an innocent Palestinian woman who was murdered heinously by Israeli security forces on the street just a few days ago cannot awake the global conscience, then we are at a point where words fail.

In addition to these murders, the current Israeli administration disregards all human values beyond international and humanitarian law through acts of aggression such as the inhuman blockade in Gaza, the illegal settlements and the attacks against the historical and legal status of Jerusalem.

We, as Turkey, have a clear stance on this issue.

The immediate establishment of an independent Palestinian state with homogeneous territories on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital is the solution.

Any other peace plan apart from this has no chance of being fair, accepted and implemented.

Now, I am asking from the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly:

Where are the borders of the State of Israel?

Is it the 1948 borders, the 1967 borders, or is there any other border?

How can the Golan Heights and the West Bank settlements be seized, just like other occupied Palestinian territories, before the eyes of the world if they are not within the borders of this State?

Is the aim of the initiative presented as the "Deal of the Century", to entirely eliminate the presence of the State and People of Palestine?

All actors of the international community, in particular the United Nations, should provide concrete support to the Palestinian people beyond mere promises.

In this regard, it is very important for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to continue its activities effectively.

Turkey will continue to stand by the oppressed people of Palestine as it has always been until today.

It is also important for a fair and peaceful future that the South Caucasus ceases to be one of the areas of conflict in the world.

It is unacceptable that Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding areas, which are Azerbaijani territories, are still occupied despite all the resolutions adopted on this issue.

One of the problems to which the international community still does not devote enough attention is the Kashmir conflict, which awaits a solution for 72 years.

The stability and prosperity of South Asia cannot be separated from the Kashmir issue.

In order for the Kashmiri people to look at a safe future together with their Pakistani and Indian neighbors, it is imperative to solve the problem through dialogue and on the basis of justice and equity, and not through collision.

Another issue to which the world is indifferent is the humanitarian tragedy faced by Rohingya Muslims.

The Independent Commission of Inquiry established under the United Nations has recorded the existence of a "genocidal intent" behind the events perpetrated in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Turkey will continue to carry out its initiatives for ensuring the security and fundamental rights of Rohingyas as well as the humanitarian relief activities it has undertaken since the first day.

The invasions, conflicts and terrorist activities that continued uninterruptedly for almost 40 years in Afghanistan have also raised challenges at the global level.

It is high time for this ancient geography to reach peace and security.

To this end, as the international community, we should all assume our responsibilities and make an extra effort.

Esteemed Delegates,

Today, one of the biggest threats to global peace and tranquility is the rise in racist, xenophobic, discriminatory and anti-Islamic tendencies.

Muslims are at the top place among those subjected to hate speech, discrimination and insult against their sacred values.

The most striking example is the terrorist attack perpetrated last March in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Just as the terrorist attack targeting Muslims in New Zealand is wrong, the acts of terrorism targeting Christians in Sri Lanka and Jews in the United States are equally wrong.

Many are responsible for turning this disease almost into an insanity.

In this regard, the populist politicians seeking for votes by provoking these tendencies as well as the communities that normalize hate speech under the pretext of freedom of expression are in the leading spots.

The prejudice, ignorance and bigotry as well as attempts of marginalization towards the migrants, particularly the Muslims, paves the way for the rising of these morbid tendencies.

This scourge can only be defeated by common will and efforts.

It is the fundamental duty of any statesman or stateswoman to adopt an inclusive and tolerant public discourse as well as take concrete steps while expressing his or her reactions.

The Honorable UN Secretary General has recently introduced an "Action Plan for Safeguarding Religious Sites" developed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, a UN initiative in the establishment of which Turkey has shown political leadership.

We hope that this Action Plan will help raise awareness on this issue.

And I hereby request the designation of March 15th by the United Nations, the day when the Christchurch attack was carried out, as the "International Day for Solidarity against Islamophobia".

I also invite the Islamic world to start a thorough assessment of all the issues, particularly the Sunni-Shia divide, which have provided so far the ground for its internal conflicts as well as served as the political instruments for power struggles.

Esteemed Delegates,

Turkey is a rightful successor to the collective heritage of both Eastern and Western civilizations owing to its geographical location at the center of the ancient world.

Hence, we are obliged to follow closely the latest developments in both worlds, assume responsibility and take initiative.

We will continue to fulfill our responsibilities towards humanity as the country affected directly or indirectly by all the crises that I could only point out some today.

A United Nations, and in particular a Security Council, reformed on the basis of justice, moral values and conscience, will give hope to humanity once again.

Turkey stands ready to promote and support every step to be taken towards this direction.

With this understanding, we are willing to assume the Presidency of the 75th United Nations General Assembly.

We have nominated for this important post Ambassador Volkan Bozkır, Former Minister of European Union and current Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

We have full confidence that Mr. Bozkır, an experienced diplomat and politician, will shoulder this responsibility successfully.

And I believe that you will not spare your support to him.

Istanbul, the biggest city in Turkey, currently hosts various UN regional presences, and we would like to turn Istanbul into a bigger regional and global hub for the United Nations.

The United Nations Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries entered into service last year in the vicinity of Istanbul.

We also appreciate the positive and encouraging reactions that we have received so far to our proposal to host a United Nations Youth Center in Istanbul, which I have announced last year from this very rostrum.

The members to the UN Group of Friends of Mediation that we co-chair have reached 59.

We have carried this UN initiative also into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

I believe that it is within our reach to find fair, equitable and conscientious solutions to all global challenges that we face.

I would like to conclude my remarks with the following wishes.

FREEDOM FOR ALL

PEACE FOR ALL

PROSPERITY FOR ALL

JUSTICE FOR ALL

A PEACEFUL AND SAFE FUTURE FOR ALL

I wish the work of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly to be successful.

I greet you all with utmost respect on my own behalf and my country.