

**-CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY-**

**-UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION-**

**ADDRESS OF H.E. MR. MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
AT THE 12<sup>TH</sup> AMBASSADORS CONFERENCE  
NOVEMBER 10, 2020,**

**ONLINE**

Esteemed Ambassadors,

Dear Colleagues,

I am very glad to address you as Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the occasion of the 12th Ambassadors Conference.

Yesterday, we had the opportunity to receive, firsthand, instructions from our President. I would like to reiterate once again our gratitude to His Excellency on behalf of all of us. As always, we will continue working with enthusiasm and devotion and follow his instructions.

Today is November 10. We commemorate Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of our Republic, with respect and gratitude.

May the souls of Atatürk and all our ancestors who founded our Republic be blessed.

This year, we celebrate the centenary of our National Sovereignty. In three years, we will celebrate the centenary of our Republic with enthusiasm and pride. This year also marks the centenary of “Hariciye Vekaleti”, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We are endowed with a diplomatic tradition that is more than 5 centuries old, dating back to the establishment of the Office of Reis-ül Küttab.

This is why we have determined the theme for this year's Conference as "Turkish Diplomacy at the Centenary of National Sovereignty: From Tradition to the Future".

We are proud of our traditions. We swiftly implement transformations that would help us look into the future with confidence.

We are determined to move forward towards our 2023 goals under the astute and strong leadership of our President.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry is working day and night to robustly implement our homegrown, national, enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy on the ground and at the table.

Esteemed colleagues,

Turkey has one of the **five** largest global diplomatic and consular networks in the world.

Currently, we have 152 Turkish Ambassadors stationed abroad, they are with us in front of their screens, and 116 at the headquarters. We have Embassies, Consulates General or Trade Offices almost in every time zone.

Right now, it is 5 o'clock in the morning for our westernmost Embassy in Mexico. Whereas, it is midnight in our easternmost Embassy in Wellington. This essentially shows the range of the work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry has an organization and work format that operates around the clock.

**While one mission is experiencing the sunset, another one observes the sunrise.**

What does this mean?

To begin with, it means that one of the 5<sup>th</sup> largest data collection, analysis and demarche network is at our disposal.

Specially trained and experienced staff from 248 missions feed Ankara with information and assessments every day to support the decision makers. They also fulfil the resulting instructions in the countries where they are stationed.

It is important to operate this gigantic mechanism in the most efficient way. With great opportunity comes great responsibility.

Change and transformation are the constant facts of life. The one who cannot adapt to change would only vanish.

Yesterday we received a detailed briefing about the digital agenda of Turkey. We extend our thanks to Digital Transformation Office. I am proud to say that Turkey is now going through a transformation, in fact a great transformation in digital technologies that drive change.

(We have adopted a more agile governance approach with the Presidential system.) Within this framework, our Ministry displays a dynamism at global scale as well.

In fact, our Ministry has always been a pioneer in the field of e-government applications. As with all public administration, the principle of diplomacy is to “**keep pedaling while you are sitting on a saddle**”.

Last year, again at this platform, we announced our **Digital Diplomacy** initiative well before the pandemic. We set the course towards this direction in international processes such as mediation that we spearhead. The pandemic has underlined the accuracy of our foresight.

**This year, during the Istanbul Mediation Conference we organized using greenbox technology and which reached 22.000 people, we discussed the importance of digital technologies for peace efforts for the third time. As you may know, last year, in New York we co-chaired a Ministerial meeting in this regard.**

Likewise, we had set the theme of the **Antalya Diplomacy Forum** as “Diplomacy in Digital Age” long before the pandemic.

In consequence, when the pandemic obliged the whole world to stay at home, we were able to quickly accommodate to diplomacy in the digital environment.

- During the pandemic, I attended a total of 61 diplomatic videoconferences, 11 of which with our President.
- Our esteemed Deputy Ministers, Directors General and other colleagues held similar meetings.
- We benefited from videoconferencing within the Ministry. We organized meetings with our Ambassadors and Consuls General. This is how we monitored the situation and practices in other countries with regard to the pandemic.
- We brought the Antalya Diplomacy Forum to life by using digital means. We have transformed it from an idea into a platform to shape ideas. In this way, we contributed also to the formation of ideas on prominent topics on the global diplomatic agenda.

**In sum, we are acting with the goal of being among the ones who lead the digital age, not the ones who try to catch up with it.**

We rank 7th in the G20 Digital Diplomacy Index. In terms of social media interaction, we moved up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Our Digital Diplomacy initiative also contributes to the **executive** capacity of our Ministry. It transforms our capabilities in line with the needs of the current age. We will continue our **efforts to**

## **make use of technology in foreign policy and to provide more efficient services with the help of technology.**

You know that I care deeply about the quality of our services provided to our citizens abroad. Throughout this process, not only our citizens abroad and their relatives in our country, but the whole world has witnessed how sensitive you are on the matter, too. Therefore, I would like to tell you that your awareness is much appreciated. Our greatest responsibility is to serve them well and protect their rights. We are about to launch a new online service called “HIZIR” that answers our citizens’ calls and questions around the clock by using artificial intelligence.

By means of our expanding diplomatic network and digital capacity, we keep improving all together the quality of the services we offer.

It is essential to upskill our diplomats of all levels in line with the requirements of our times. Therefore, we are already working on trainings to develop digital skills.

Together, we will benefit more from digital technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence in areas like public diplomacy, consular services, strategic foresight and foreign policy analysis.

When it comes remote working, we distribute modern devices to our headquarters and overseas missions. We set-up **the necessary** infrastructure to meet the growing needs for high-speed internet connection and hardware in our Ministry, and we keep building it up.

We also started the required infrastructure and personnel planning to make use of big data engineering.

We exchange ideas and cooperate with other countries and institutions about the impacts of digitalization on diplomacy.

**We are deriving our strength from our traditions. At the same time, our Ministry is embracing the future.**

**In its essence, diplomacy is communication and negotiation by various means between the people who represent their countries. This is the tradition and the future as far as we can foresee.**

Naturally, diplomacy methods must adapt to the technology and features of the current age.

Thus, we maintained our face-to-face diplomacy without pacing down despite several travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

**As per the beautiful saying of Ibn Arabi, “*The essence of being lies in action.*”** Hence, the visits have never stopped. I have **paid 24 visits abroad** since the beginning of the pandemic. We have received 19 Heads of State or Government, and 18 Foreign Ministers. Last week we hosted the Foreign Ministerial Meeting of the South-East European Cooperation Process. We supported these visits with phone calls and online meetings. His Excellency President Erdoğan has made 205 phone calls and 11 videoconferences meanwhile I have made 251 phone calls and 50 videoconferences. Not to mention instant phone calls and messages. In other words, we diversified our means and maintained communication and negotiation with our interlocutors.

Since the very beginning of the pandemic, the Turkish diplomacy has kept providing services without any interruption.

During this period, we coordinated **the most extensive repatriation operation of the history of the Republic via our Center for Coordination and Support established within the Ministry.**

Yesterday, His Excellency President Erdoğan shared the relevant figures again and expressed his appreciation for your work. **I also would like to thank our Center for Coordination and Support, our Embassies and Consulate Generals and all my colleagues who contributed to these efforts.**

We also extended a helping hand to the entire world at a time when most countries have turned inwards. Again, the figures were shared yesterday with you and the public opinion by His Excellency President Erdoğan:

Hence, we take pride in being the leader in humanitarian affairs during the pandemic too.

While performing these services appreciated by everyone, we had many examples showing us that public service means serving the people. Sometimes they made us smile, sometimes we were moved to tears.

- Our Ambassador took little Eren who was born in Thailand and his mother Ms. Nilay to the repatriation flight. I wish Eren and his parents many years of good health and happiness!
- Our daughter Ela, a girl with a chronic disease, could not find her medication in Switzerland. Our Consulate General found it in Germany and delivered it to her family. We wish a speedy recovery to little Ela!
- Not only through land, we also carried out repatriations from the sea. We brought 48 fishermen who were fishing off Mauritania in the Atlantic back to our country. We delivered medication to our sailor near the Strait of Malacca who ran out of medication while navigating towards the Indian Ocean. May you have fair winds!

Those are only a few examples among many others that I share with you.

We delivered direct assistance to our citizens in almost all regions, from Latin America to Asia, from North America to Africa. We have touched their lives. Turkey, as a “**Compassionate Power**”, gives a perfect account on behalf of all humanity.

We do not want these experiences to be forgotten. Therefore, we are mobilized to prepare a “**Compassionate Power**” **documentary by the next Ambassadors Conference**. The documentary will convey the story of the 21st Century Turkish diplomacy to the present and future generations, covering our services that range from repatriations to our experiences in crisis zones.

### **Distinguished Ambassadors,**

The pandemic could not stop us, but it deeply affected the whole world.

It is impossible to see the future. However, **we have a folkloric saying: When it is Wednesday, we know that Thursday is next!**

At the very beginning of the outbreak, we conducted strategic foresight studies regarding the future awaiting the humanity. **We concluded that the pandemic would accelerate the already existing trends.** In the meantime, we are proved right in our initial assessments.

In addition, our Center for Strategic Research and the Antalya Diplomacy Forum prepared, which you sent to all Foreign Ministers later, two of the first studies worldwide in this regard.

To begin with, the pandemic has demonstrated the inadequacy of existing global institutions once again.

- International organizations continued to suffer a loss of power and reputation. It took the United Nations Security Council 100 days to put the pandemic on its agenda. The



need for reform, which we emphasize with the motto of “The World is Bigger than Five”, has surfaced clearly.

Secondly, the pandemic has further increased the fragilities in the world.

- As the conflicts continued, humanitarian aids, peacekeeping operations and mediation efforts in the field were disrupted.
- Fragility and political risks are increasing not only in the developing countries, but even in the most developed economies of the world.
- The importance of effective governance and state capacity have been reconfirmed.

Thirdly, the pandemic has also affected global power balances.

- Geopolitical rivalry between the Great Powers has gained momentum. Tension has increased and deepened.
- Indeed all states, big or small, are engaged in an increasing rivalry.
- Major powers in terms of population and economy have also faced serious challenges.
- International solidarity has been severely damaged. For instance, there was a fierce competition in the procurement of medical supplies.

On the other hand, the pandemic has thoroughly accelerated technological transformation and digitalization.

- We saw that digitalization is inevitable and can make a difference in a variety of areas. We are almost rehearsing the future.

These are all findings that will affect our foreign policy.

**We see that the issues I have emphasized in my previous speeches became even more apparent during the pandemic.**

Last year, I emphasized that the world was not a rose garden.

We are on duty in places where there are wars, coups, failed states, suffering and persecution, bloodshed are experienced and underdevelopment turns into cruelty for humanity.

Turkish diplomats in these tough regions continue to altruistically protect our citizens and national interests, build friendship bridges and trade channels.

**In other words, the need for an enterprising and innovative diplomacy to be effective on the ground, at the table, and in the intellectual field is not diminishing. To the contrary, it is strengthening.**

We will have to continue using different elements of power wisely since **the basic logic of international relations** will continue to be based on struggle.

Each day we take steps that will serve global and regional peace and prosperity in line with the fundamental objective of "*Peace at Home, Peace in the World*".

**Peace and prosperity require being strong and enterprising.** Accordingly, we are building our steps in our foreign policy not by "burying our heads in the sand" but by "**having the upper hand**".

The international system is **experiencing the pangs of change**. We have various problems in our region. Sometimes you have to set the scene. Sometimes it is necessary to **disrupt, in** a timely manner, **the plots designed** for our region by different power groups in order to protect our legitimate interests.

In either case, we do not abstain from being enterprising. Statehood experience extending back centuries teaches us that diplomacy is most often a struggle without weapons. We exhibit and will exhibit our indigenous national strength both on the ground and at the table.

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Cyprus is our national cause. On this issue too, the party who blocks the path to a solution is obvious. There is a problematic mindset that does not see the Turkish community on the Island as their equal. The EU made this mentality a member and crashed the hopes for a solution. On top of that, it extends its support, at last in words, to the attempts to “grab” common resources.

But, what is the source of the arrogance and illusion that lead them to assume that we will let them do so?

They did not accept political equality so far. If there is no political equality, there must be and will be sovereign equality. The Turkish Cypriots will no longer sit at the table for the sake of negotiation. They gave this message very clearly at the last elections.

When it comes to the Eastern Mediterranean, the issue is about equitable sharing of resources. **Those who create instability in the region are the ones who suppose that they can hijack the rights of Turks.**

No one should expect Turkey, the country with the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, to accept a confinement to its own shores and give up the resources to which it is entitled. Initiatives that exclude or even contradict us have no chance of success.

Even in the smallest of matters, one neighbour needs the other. Our President’s message in the aftermath of the latest earthquake in İzmir has eloquently illustrated this point of view. We want to solve the problems with Greece through dialogue.

We do not close the door to unconditional dialogue and diplomacy.

While the Prime Minister of Greece tried to convince third countries' public opinions by writing articles for newspapers in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, I wrote an article for a Greek newspaper and addressed the Greek people directly.

We said, we can live with tension and escalation if that is what you wish, or we can choose diplomacy, dialogue and cooperation instead: the choice belongs to Greece. **Turkey is capable of going either way!**

We are also offering them all kinds of reasonable diplomatic options: all concrete proposals on exploratory talks, involving revenue sharing, and regional conference were put forward by our side.

Our President has suggested the convening of an Eastern Mediterranean Conference in order to address these issues with not only Greece but all littoral countries.

We propose cooperation with all relevant actors in order to bring equity, peace and cooperation to our fragile region, through diplomacy.

Dear Colleagues,

Turkey closely monitors and steers the developments **in Syria** from the perspective of national security and regional stability. Eradicating terrorism in this neighbouring country which has been in turbulence for 10 years, finding a political solution which will meet the expectations of its people and ensuring the return of refugees are our first and foremost goals.

With this understanding, we have successfully carried out operations against the threat posed by PKK/PYD/YPG and DAESH terrorist organizations.

**We did not give permission to those who tried to create a terror corridor at our border.** We stand against the PKK/PYD/YPG's separatist agenda and its attempts to participate in the political process. We will not allow anyone, whomever they may be, to legitimize terror in our region.

We maintain our engagement decisively to safeguard the ceasefire in Idlib. We are determined to protect innocent civilians in the region.

On the other hand, in order to find a permanent solution to the conflict, the political process must be accelerated. We are leading international efforts in this direction.

We have keep our doors open to the ones who have fled the conflict in Syria. Now we ensure their safe return. We have enabled 411,000 Syrians to safely return to the areas that we have cleared from terrorism in Syria.

Dear Ambassadors,

**The situation in Libya** has been among the issues at the top of our agenda this year. From the outset, we have argued that the crisis can only be solved through political dialogue. However, in view of our deep-rooted ties with this country, we did not have an option of confining ourselves to expressions of support and leaving developments to their course. Taking the initiative, we took action to prevent chaos and preserve international legitimacy.

Turkey's **training and advisory support** for the UN-recognised Government of National Accord has prevented the country from further being dragged into civil war. It also paved the way for the UN-led political process.

The Memorandum of Understanding on the **delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas** represented an important step

towards the protection of our legitimate interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

We have maintained our close contacts with the Government of National Accord and with His Excellency Mr. Sarraj, the Head of the Presidential Council.

We continue our efforts in coordination with all parties, especially the UN, to establish a sustainable ceasefire on the ground and to advance an inclusive political process while supporting the work of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum.

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Turkey is at the intersection of multiple problematic regions. Unfortunately, the disputes in these regions are not being resolved. For instance, issues of Crimea and Donbass in Ukraine, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and Transnistria in Moldova are awaiting solutions.

The term “frozen conflict” is delusive. These are “conflicts with frozen solutions”. The latest example of this is the Nagorno-Karabakh.

Naturally, Azerbaijan is not just any country for us. It is a country with which we are connected with the understanding of “one nation, two states”. They are “flesh and blood” to us.

We support Azerbaijan not solely because they are our brothers and sisters, but also because they are right from the perspective of international law. Because Turkey is always on the side of the legitimate and the rightful.

Hence, we launched an intense diplomatic mobilization right after Armenia's attack on September 27. To begin with our President, we all explained to our interlocutors Azerbaijan's rightfulness according to international law.

You all work side by side with your Azerbaijani colleagues abroad. You defend their righteous cause in the places where they are not represented.

In our contacts, we expose that Armenia is deliberately attacking civilians, committing war crime, carrying out black propaganda against our country to cover up its aggression, and we will continue to do so. We also convey that this country deploys PKK/YPG terrorists and many foreign fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Our joint efforts before multiple international organizations have echoed from the UN Security Council to Non-Aligned Movement, from the OSCE to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

At the current stage, Azerbaijan's success on the ground showed that the 30-year-long occupation is no longer sustainable. After all, as of yesterday midnight, the ending of the invasion of Ağdam, Laçın and Kelbeçer, has been agreed to in accordance with a calendar. As you know, the gallant army of Azerbaijan has actually captured the four out of seven rayons, I just referred to the other three, by successful operations on the ground. In fact, it is 1+2, while it used to be 5+2 before, only Ağdam had remained and Azerbaijan has now taken control over a considerable part of it. In the past, there was the 5+2 formula, and now all the 7 rayons under occupation will have been conceded back to Azerbaijan by December the 1<sup>st</sup>. We continue to work towards that goal.

We will keep defending Azerbaijan's rights in every possible platform, in contact with all the relevant actors. As Turkey and Turkish nation, we are "one nation, two states" in this process just like before. It is our duty to serve the well-being of brotherly Azerbaijan and its people.

We hope that Armenia has drawn the necessary conclusions, because until now there have been 3 ceasefires and all were broken by Armenia. We appeal to the international community:

Let's resolve this conflict, as we always argued, in accordance to UN Security Council resolutions, on the basis of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We hope that the recent agreement will also serve this goal as well as the permanent stability that the whole region needs. Distinguished Ambassadors,

We are faced with the clear scene.

Our Allies fail to put Alliance solidarity above all considerations. For instance, they call it "EU solidarity." So where is NATO solidarity?

This being said, none of them can be safe outside NATO.

What is the explanation for this contradiction?

The position of our Allies regarding the issues of FETO, PKK-PYD, and the Eastern Mediterranean is saddening.

However, we know that today, as in the past, the circles that show teeth and talk against Turkey, ask for help from Turkey sooner or later.

A story involving Atatürk comes to my mind:

In 1933, a question about "traditional friendship" in the Ankara Boys' High School exam intrigues Atatürk. Historian Kemal Arıburnu responds: "...French writers refer to common acts as traditional friendship". Atatürk explains: **"Turkey has no traditional friends. When there are common interests, Europeans immediately call it traditional friendship."**

Turkey contributes to security and stability in more than one basin in the vast geography around us.

We are among the top 5 contributors to NATO operations.



In the reflection process regarding the future of NATO, we believe that **intra-Alliance solidarity must be registered as the paramount consideration.**

Dear Friends,

We attach importance to the role of the United States in consolidating transatlantic ties and advancing NATO reform in a way that would give confidence to Allies.

In this period, we expect steps to be taken to eliminate the factors contaminating our bilateral relations:

- S-400 missile defence system is purchased, it is done. Because we could not procure its alternative from the US and our NATO Allies when we needed.
- Our exclusion from the F-35 program will negatively affect NATO's South-eastern flank and even its Eastern strategy.
- What would be the contribution of any sanctions and a threatening discourse to the strength of the Alliance? What interest the US might have in this? The US needs to reflect thoroughly about this.
- The fact that they provided weapons to an enemy terrorist organization created a really serious crisis of confidence between us.
- Likewise, our expectation concerning the ringleader of the putchist FETO network is clear.

As the current global balances are shaken to the foundation, new opportunities arise in our bilateral relations.

Turkey has a fundamental interest and role in finding lasting solutions that support the regional peace and stability in crises such as Syria and Libya.

In the light of this fact, we can open new pages in terms of our political, security and economic cooperation in the period ahead.

Distinguished Ambassadors,

The European Union, like Turkey, is neighbouring a region which has not been able to find its balance for the past 100 years. One of our main objectives in our foreign policy is to create intertwined zones of sustainable peace and development around us. Therefore, Turkey and the European Union have a common interest in ending fragility and conflict.

Our accession process to the European Union means **negotiating a security, prosperity, peace and cooperation agreement for the whole of Europe**, including us.

Looking at the matter through the lens of cultural and religious antagonism, instead of common interests and principles, is a defect that Europe cannot escape.

In our relations with the EU, some members are particularly creating tension. So, let me point to them: Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration and, lately France are carrying their bilateral problems with our country to the EU platform. They abuse membership solidarity against us.

Others watch the situation, puzzled and daunted. A **silent majority** among the EU members are aware of the importance of dialogue with Turkey for Europe's own future.

We do not have a short-term agenda characterized by contextual problems and crises for our relations with the countries in Europe, which we are part of. We endeavour to revitalize institutional mechanisms with a holistic perspective.

It is possible to revive, on a positive agenda, a beneficial framework for our relationship by preserving our accession process. There are concrete opportunities, such as updating the Customs Union or the visa liberalization. The issue of migration

is also a common concern. The March 18 Agreement must be updated with this understanding.

Dear Ambassadors,

The past year has also been difficult for our other neighbour, **Iraq**. In the early days of 2020, the reckoning of foreign forces over Iraq brought the entire region to the brink of war. I have also visited Baghdad in the early days of the crisis upon our President's instruction. I stressed that we are against projecting various feuds to Iraq. We underlined that Iraq should not be a competition field between various powers.

In line with our goal of reaching out to all segments of Iraq, we opened our Consulate Generals in Mossoul and Basra last year. Our work to open new Consulates in **Najaf** and **Kirkuk**, two cities with which we have special historical and social ties, continue.

In the past year, we have continued our fight against the **PKK presence in Iraq without interruption**. As a result of our operations "**Claw**", terrorist infiltration into our country has been reduced. We will continue to do so within and beyond our borders until the PKK is completely eradicated. PKK is now attacking the Kurdish people in Iraq. Haven't we always said that PKK is essentially a threat against our Kurdish brothers and sisters?

Our support for the Iraqi Turkmen people will persist and our contacts with the **KRG** continue, of course by upholding the principles of unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. Our hope is that our Iraqi brothers and sisters will reach the stability and prosperity they deserve as soon as possible.

Also, the "contactless trade" mechanism that we introduced to reduce the impact of the pandemic to our bilateral trade has also been a success.

**We conduct our relations with Iran through regular contacts and regional consultations at all levels.** We will pursue our engagement with Iran, which is going through a difficult period

due to sanctions and the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to contribute to both the common interests of our peoples and to the regional peace and stability.

The Palestinian issue, which has been impaired recently, remains at the heart of the problems in the Middle East. Ignoring the Palestinian cause would only deepen the legitimacy crisis in the region.

We will continue with our endeavours in support of Palestine against attempts to eliminate the perspective of a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We will pursue our efforts to facilitate **intra-Palestinian reconciliation** to increase the number of countries that recognize the State of Palestine and to strengthen cooperation of Palestine with international organizations.

We have not been silent against the so-called US peace deal, Israel's annexation plans, steps to disrupt Al-Quds' legal status, and actions against Harem Al-Sharif. Furthermore, we do not remain indifferent to the normalization processes with Israel that are conducted to the detriment of the interests of Palestine. We continue our efforts to make the Organization of Islamic Cooperation more effective and visible in the Palestinian cause.

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Our relations with our Northern neighbour **Russia** maintain their positive course on the basis of common interests and mutual respect. There is a strong mutual political will at the highest level for further cooperation in bilateral and regional matters. We launched the TurkStream pipeline on 8 January 2020. Our trade and tourism relations are also very strong.

Although there are regional matters that we do not agree upon with Russia, we attach importance to find common denominators by sustaining the dialogue.

Our relations with our other neighbour **Ukraine** continue to develop based on strategic partnership we established in 2011. We strongly support Ukraine's territorial integrity. We attach importance to the protection of the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatars. We are implementing projects in order to improve the living conditions of our brethren.

In the Balkans, in addition to our bilateral relations, we are playing an active role through platforms such as Trilateral Mechanisms and South East European Cooperation Process in which we have assumed the term Presidency. Last week, we have hosted Foreign Ministers from Balkan countries as part of this process. Our presence in the region expands further.

Our support to our brethren and kin communities in Balkans and the rest of the world is continuing increasingly. We feel the responsibility of each and every brethren wherever they may be in the world.

As I always note, diplomacy is a teamwork. We represent hope, first and foremost, for our brethren and the entire humanity together with our relevant organizations which enhance our presence and our soft power on the ground: like TİKA, Maarif Foundation, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, Yunus Emre Institute, Presidency of Religious Affairs, Directorate General of Foundations, AFAD, the Red Crescent and the Turkish Airlines. We know by heart that **Turkey is greater than Turkey.**

Distinguished Ambassadors,

We have common linguistic, historical and cultural ties with Central Asian Republics. Developing our cooperation in all areas with the countries of the region is among our priorities. We translate our special relations with each brotherly country in Central Asia into concrete results at the strategic level.

In this regard, we are pleased that the interest in the Turkic Council is growing as well as its organizational capacity.

Its position vis-à-vis Armenia's aggression in Nagorno-Karabag deserves admiration. Moreover, the Summit it organized during the pandemic and the facilitation of contacts and coordination at all levels among relevant institutions further reinforced the solidarity among our brotherly countries. A greater number of countries and institutions now seek a closer relationship with the Turkic Council.

Let me underline an issue, a good deal of institutions and countries demand a status at Turkic Council. As you know, Hungary holds an observer status. To begin with, we have granted a status to Hungary immediately after receiving its application. They are the only status holder for now but the number will rise. We must define the contours for the observer status first. Again, other statuses like that of dialogue or partnership might also be found as it is the case in other regional organizations. We must also limit the number of applicants and find an answer to the question whether it may exceed that of the members. The Secretariat works on the matter and we will subsequently discuss it within our Foreign Ministry once the final proposals are there. The decision will then be up to the leaders according to the criteria to be agreed upon.

Dear colleagues,

Last year in this forum, we launched our **Asia Anew** initiative which addresses this region that will shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a holistic view.

This year, **we took concrete steps to capitalize on the opportunities and the potential** brought about by the rise of Asia.

New institutional mechanisms were established to determine and apply our policies vis-à-vis the region with efficient coordination,

hence we made sure that it did not remain in only as a discourse. All our relevant institutions/organizations and our public opinion strongly supported the initiative, even more than we expected. The Asia Anew initiative became a source of motivation for the business world and academic circles to add content and momentum to their endeavours.

In this framework, our Embassies prepared biannual priority Action Plans covering 40 main fields of activity for 31 countries. **Each country of the region is valuable to us in its own right.**

As part of our Asia Anew initiative, we adopted a more dynamic approach in our relations with regional organizations that are more forthcoming in Asia. In South East Asia, we are deepening our cooperation with ASEAN through our Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status and we put the action plans in practice.

We continued our visits to and contacts with African and Latin American countries during the pandemic in order to **advance our outreach policies beyond our immediate neighbourhood.**

Even during the pandemic, we visited Haiti, Dominican Republic and Venezuela. Our efforts in Venezuela led to concrete results in terms of domestic reconciliation. We extend many thanks to our Ambassador; we maintained our contacts with both the government, opposition and everyone. We took steps for many people to get out of jail, we initiated attempts in view of the elections to facilitate important convergence and we supported the whole process.

Dear Colleagues,

In the last five years, there have been more than 500 high-level visits to Africa from Turkey. Recently, I have visited 6 African countries despite the pandemic.

We officially inaugurated our new Embassy chancery in Equatorial Guinea (Malabo). We will soon be opening new

Embassies in Togo and Guinea Bissau. As our President also stated yesterday, we continue our work to host the Third Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit the African Union, with which we established a “strategic partnership” in 2008. Today, our trade volume with the African continent exceeded 26 billion US Dollars, we have announced it as around 23 billion in the previous Conferences so there is a constant increase, and it is moving ahead towards the 50 billion US Dollars target.

My esteemed colleagues,

Dear Ambassadors,

The challenges testing peace and tranquillity of the world are not limited to geopolitics. We have been saying that **xenophobia and Islamophobia**, which have become a problem in Europe for a while, may gradually turn Europe into the “**Sick Man**” of the world.

We strongly regret the spread of racism like a cancer towards the centre of politics, its mixing with violence, and the recent addition of a severe psychological torture dimension.

There you see what they are doing to the children in France, we will be keeping a close eye on the matter. We keep track of those who dare to lecture us on freedoms, human rights, the rights of the children and women. We see how they become hypocrite and miserable.

Our President pointed out at the Alliance of Civilizations platform back in 2008 that in a period where “**easy access to information has facilitated the globalization of threats of hatred, fear and intolerance is a contradiction**”. The **deepening of prejudices and conflicts is as dangerous as geopolitical showdowns**.

Attempting to reengineer the religious beliefs of others rather than tolerating or learning to live together is blatant arrogance.



We will continue to advocate the culture of tolerance and coexistence.

Blaspheming our Prophet (PBUH), who holds a special place in the hearts of more than 1.5 billion people, and our sacred values cannot be presented as freedom of expression. Our position cannot be any clearer and rightful than this.

We are a standard-bearer on the matter in various fora like the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE among others. I hereby would like to announce that from now on we will be preparing annual reports on issues such as Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-immigration particularly in the West. Through these reports, we will expose the crimes that have been committed and follow-up on the legal proceedings.

On the other hand, perhaps the primary global issue ahead of us is to strengthen multilateralism. **Turkish culture contains multilateralism, in other words collective work, in its very essence and tradition. One hand washes the other and together they wash the face.**

**Effective multilateralism requires multilateral institutions to be effective.** This year, Ambassador Volkan Bozkır and Ambassador Altay Cengizer preside over the United Nations General Assembly and the UNESCO General Conference respectively. In such a year, we support the international organizations, especially the UN system, to work more effectively. At the same time, we continue our efforts to advance the presence of international organizations, especially the UN, in our country.

Currently, we are working on making Istanbul, a regional center and a prominent UN hub like New York, Geneva and Vienna. We received several rental alternatives for some buildings, negotiations are ongoing and we consider the buyout option in view of the prices. Thereby we are planning to move all the representations we host to the same centre.

Dear Colleagues,

Honourable Turkish Ambassadors,

I am now approaching the end of another address. Today we continue our journey as Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Presidency of Turkey. This journey began when Celalzade Mustafa Pasha -the Chief Registrar during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent- started to take over duties of former Ottoman bureaucrats (*Emin-i Ahkam*).

Over the centuries, change has kept the Turkish diplomacy under continuous pressure for adaptation. Today, as well, the world is experiencing a rapid process of change, and the profession of diplomacy must adapt to it.

Adapting to change requires gaining influence everywhere and at all fronts. Contacts with official authorities only in capital cities are not enough. Diplomacy is more polyphonic and has more instruments than ever. It is now a profession that is conducted in every continent, every country, every city and in all domains including the cyberspace.

It is written in Evliya Çelebi's travelogue: 355 years ago in November 1665, Ottoman Ambassador Kara Mehmed Pasha was entering the castle of Peç (in *Vienna*) on a steed, along with his Quartermaster, treasurer, servicemen and treasure wagons, accompanied by the sounds of kettledrums. The chief messenger, who came from the castle of Peç to meet him, had brought a horse sent by the King, and he kissed the breastplate of our Ambassador's robe and the King's other entourage kissed the hem of his robe. Then, riding the horse sent by the King, our Ambassador entered the castle of Peç and had a feast with all the foreign dignitaries in the mansion allocated to him.

Diplomacy is a field of public service with its own procedures, language, and traditions. Its primary interlocutors are foreigners.

In this story, you must have noticed various elements that are similar to but also very different from those of today.

The document we used to call “hümayunnâme” is called “letter of credence” today. Yet, we still present the letter signed by the President directly to the receiving Head of State – and not by e-mail.

At the same time, in addition to our diplomats who have full command of foreign languages and cultures, we are considering how to best use the machines equipped with artificial intelligence.

However, everything does not change and will not change.

The Turkish Foreign Service is comprised of representatives of a state and a nation that shines like the sun globally, with its civilisation, governance skills, leaders, bright history and future, enterprising spirit and human values.

This organization proudly waves in every corner of the world our glorious crescent-star flag.

This organization is the eyes, ears, arms, breath and voice of Turkey.

Turkish Ambassadors, from tradition to the future, do whatever is necessary for the profession in its best way. They acquire and use the skills of their time.

The inspiration of our strength are our martyrs, first and foremost martyr of democracy, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, whom we commemorate with gratitude.

Under the leadership of our President, we are running towards the goals of 2023 and 2053 as a nation. We will continue to diligently and enthusiastically practice our enterprising and humanitarian diplomacy, which contribute to our national goals, and to the peace and prosperity in all corners of the world.

You have all been meticulously chosen for this honourable mission. We have full faith and confidence in you, and our expectations are just as high.

I wish you continued success in your work.

Please do share my best wishes with your families and colleagues.

Hoping to organize our Ambassadors Conference physically again in Turkey next year, I salute you all once more with warmest regards and respect.

Stay healthy, thank you.