

H.E. MR. AHMET DAVUTOGLU,

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Our strategic partnership - a model for regional cooperation



to quickly finalize the structured framework and priorities of our strategic cooperation.

Itself located on the crossroads of the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, Romania is in an excellent position to understand that a proactive and multi-dimensional foreign policy is not a matter of choice but a necessity for Turkey. Turkish foreign policy is predicated on a unique historical experience and geography which brings with it a sense of responsibility which Turkish policy makers must acknowledge and wholeheartedly embrace. Such a historical responsibility motivates Turkey's interest in a neighborhood which spans the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Caspian basin, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, from the Gulf to North Africa.

Over the last seven years Turkey's policy has been to ensure "zero problems" in this neighborhood. Our approach aims to end disputes and increase stability in the region by seeking innovative mechanisms and channels to resolve conflicts, by encouraging positive change and by building cross-cultural bridges of dialogue and understanding. Our goal is to achieve maximum integration and full cooperation with all of our neighbors based on four principles: common security, high level political dialogue, economic interdependence and cultural coexistence.

Turkey does not have the luxury of waiting for crises to approach it.

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This is the reason we have embarked on proactive peace diplomacy in Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. We worked for peace in Lebanon and established a platform to support Iraq's territorial integrity and political reconciliation. We worked to reach a settlement in the Russian-Georgian war, proposed the founding of a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform to bring together all regional countries and gave our full support to speed up the Minsk Process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In the Middle East, Turkey mobilized its best efforts in order to achieve the common goal of a comprehensive and lasting peace. Israeli-Syrian indirect peace talks were held under Turkey's auspices after an eight year interval. We are mediating between Iraq and Syria to defuse the tensions in their relations. The trilateral Ankara Process initiated with Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2007 has been ongoing ever since. These are just a few examples of Turkey's foreign policy contributions at a regional level.

The two protocols signed with Armenia on October 10 must also be seen within the framework of this vision for peace. Our goal in the Southern Caucasus is to achieve peace and stability based on the principles of international law and in accordance with international norms. Turkey has clearly shown its sincere will to resolve all outstanding issues with its neighbor based on negotiations and dialogue. We hope that this step taken towards normalization of relations with Armenia will also make an important contribution to the resolution of the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict.

EU membership continues to be a strategic objective for Turkey. The road to the EU Turkey embarked upon in 1963 is a long and complex one. However, it is a road on which we continue to advance, despite the many obstacles and difficulties we encounter. Hence we must rise above the discussions of the past, to stop debating previous problems, to try to delineate the border of Europe that has never existed, but instead focus on our vision for a common future. For this is a dynamic process which is of crucial interest not just for the two parties, but

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for the region as a whole. It is fuelled by the common vision of Turkey and the EU. We share not just a common continent and a common history, but a common future as well. Therefore support of countries such as Romania, with their objective and encouraging stance, is essential for the Turkey's integration with the EU.

Today, in the face of challenges and problems on a global scale, regional cooperation carries ever more significance. Hence, it is most opportune that Turkey's Chairmanship-in-Office of the South East European Cooperation Initiative (SECEPI) and Romania's Presidency of the Central Europe Initiative (CEI) have coincided this year. Romania and Turkey share a common vision of "regional ownership" of achieving a region of permanent stability and prosperity through establishing and maintaining an effective regional cooperation. We believe this common vision should bring about greater regional economic integration on the basis of efficient, target-oriented collaboration in such vital areas as energy, infrastructure, trade liberalization and promotion of investments.

Turkey is located at the nexus of the East-West and North-South corridors for oil and natural gas. The signing of the Nabucco Intergovernmental Agreement in July was a big step towards securing new energy routes and sources of supply for our countries as well as whole Europe. Nabucco is a strategic priority for Turkey and we stand ready to collaborate with Romania and all our other partners to realize this project as soon as possible.

As two dynamic countries which look to the future with confidence and optimism, Turkey and Romania, through their active collaboration have much to contribute to stability, peace and prosperity in our region. In this respect, the decision to create a Turkish-Romanian strategic partnership not only opens new horizons in our relations by establishing a new framework and methodology for bilateral cooperation, but in our opinion also carries the real potential to evolve into an exemplary model for cooperation at the regional level. Thus, we look forward to working with our Romanian partners to realize this promise."