

Joint Statement
Turkey-GCC High Level Strategic Dialogue
4th Joint Ministerial Meeting
Istanbul – Turkey
(28 January 2012)

The 4th Joint Ministerial Meeting of the GCC-Turkey High Level Strategic Dialogue was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on Saturday, 28 January 2012, upon the kind invitation of the Republic of Turkey.

H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, headed the Turkish delegation and His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal Al-Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, President of the current session of the GCC Ministerial Council, headed the GCC delegation, with the participation of Their Excellencies Foreign Ministers of the GCC member states, and His Excellency Dr. Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The Meeting was held in a spirit of friendship, openness and cooperation, in light of the strong brotherly relations between the two sides, and in line with terms of the High Level Strategic Dialogue which was launched in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in September 2008. The Ministers reaffirmed their common desire to enhance and diversify these strong relations in every field.

The GCC Foreign Ministers expressed their utmost gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey for the warm hospitality and the efforts exerted by Turkey to make the meeting a success.

The Heads of Delegations were received by H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey. The GCC Foreign Ministers expressed their deep pleasure with this meeting and their appreciation for the speech delivered by Prime Minister Erdoğan who stressed the importance of further developing relations between Turkey and the GCC countries and its positive effects on peace and stability in the region.

The Ministers welcomed the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah regarding the transition of the GCC towards the union phase, as this move will benefit the countries and peoples of the region, and strengthen ties between the GCC and its neighbours.

Turkey-GCC Joint Action Plan:

The Ministers expressed satisfaction at the fast pace of implementation of the Joint Action Plan (2011-2012), which was adopted in the 3rd GCC-Turkey Ministerial Meeting, held in Kuwait in October 2010. They reviewed and approved the recommendations of

the Senior Officials Meeting, held in İstanbul on 26-27 January 2012, and expressed their shared desire to further enhance cooperation between GCC States and Turkey in all fields and towards this aim, the Ministers:

1. Endorsed the decisions of the 2nd Meeting of the GCC-Turkish Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation (JCEC) held on 29 June 2011 in Ankara, which reviewed the conclusions of the specialized Sub-Committees in the areas of trade and investment, energy, tourism, health, electricity and water, environment, and agriculture and food security and welcomed the Committee's recommendation to establish the GCC-Turkey Sub-Committee on Economic, Financial and Monetary issues,

2. Took note of the Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Transport and Communications in September 2011 and with this respect, expressed their determination to continue cooperation with a view to developing air, maritime and land transport including the study of the proposal to construct a railroad that connects the GCC States with Turkey, and explore mutually beneficial partnerships in this area.

3. Noted with satisfaction the five-fold increase in Turkey-GCC trade and the fast growth of private investment in both directions, reviewed the recommendation of the Joint Sub-committee on Trade and Investment and reiterated their determination of reaching a legal framework for enhancing trade and investment and removing trade and investment barriers, as soon as possible.

4. Agreed to actively support and encourage exchanges and cooperation between their business communities, thus working jointly towards raising the volume of trade and investments to higher levels, through the exchange of information and encouraging private sector partnerships to that end, according to the recommendations of the specialized sub-committees in this matter. They also commended the joint efforts of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Federation of GCC Chambers (FGCCC) for organizing the first Turkey-GCC Business Forum in İstanbul on 5-7 February 2012.

5. Reviewed the work of the specialized sub-committees in the areas of energy, water and electricity and affirmed their belief that investment in these sectors in Turkey and the GCC offers a great opportunity for cooperation between the GCC and Turkey and instructed the JCEC and the specialized sub-committees to continue working on the prospects of long term cooperation based on mutual benefit in these fields, including traditional and renewable energy, as well as mineral resources and water and electricity.

6. Welcomed the results of the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Education, held at the GCC Secretariat in February-March 2011 and the offer to hold second meeting of the Joint Working Group on 26-28 March 2012 and decided to enhance existing bilateral cooperation between the GCC Member States and Turkey, especially by developing student exchange programmes, encouraging academic and scientific cooperation and supporting creation of Turkish Studies Departments and Turkish

language centres in GCC States and creation of GCC studies departments and Arabic language centres in Turkey.

7. Welcomed the decision by GCC Ministers of Culture to organize GCC cultural days in Turkey in May 2012 and endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Working Group on Culture, in its meetings in Riyadh (April 2011) and Ankara (January 2012) in this area.

8. Building on the success of the GCC-Turkey Joint Action Plan (2011-2012), instructed the Senior Officials to prepare a new Joint Action Plan for the period (2013-2015), and submit it to the next Ministerial Meeting. GCC Secretariat will prepare the draft Joint Action Plan.

Regional and International Issues:

9. The Ministers reiterated that all relations between the countries in the region shall be based on principles of good neighbourliness, non-interference in internal affairs, resolution of disputes through peaceful means, respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries of the region, and refraining from the use or threat of force.

10. The Ministers discussed the latest developments in the Middle East, regional and international issues of common concern and emphasized the importance of the realization of the legitimate aspirations and demands of the peoples for reform, development, rule of law, good governance and justice.

11. The Ministers reaffirmed that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East could be achieved only by the establishment of a viable independent Palestinian State with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of 1967 borders. They called on the international community to oblige Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab lands in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Principle of Land for Peace, the Madrid Conference Terms of Reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

12. The Ministers condemned Israel for its continued settlement policy and reaffirmed that the resumption of direct Palestinian – Israeli negotiations requires a complete halt of the Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and a serious commitment from Israel to respect the existing final status parameters, particularly on the 1967 borders. The Ministers emphasized that the settlement activities obstruct the revitalization of the peace process, violate the UN Security Council resolutions and international law. The Ministers called upon the international community, in particular to the members of the Quartet Committee to exert all efforts for halting the Israeli settlement activities and implementing the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, 465 (1980) & 497 (1981), in particular.

13. The Ministers expressed their full support for the Palestinian application submitted by President Mahmoud Abbas to the United Nations Security Council for the recognition

of the Palestinian State as a full sovereign member state in the United Nations based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular UNGA resolution (181) of November 1947.

14. The Ministers stressed the national and legal rights of the Palestinian people to have their own free and sovereign state. The Ministers welcomed the success of Palestine in gaining full membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and called upon all sides, particularly the members of the UN Security Council, to take into account the meaningful message given by the international community through Palestine's UNESCO membership.

15. The Ministers expressed their gratitude to the Egyptian and the Palestinian efforts for advancing the Palestinian national reconciliation. They encouraged all Palestinian factions to continue acting with the spirit of unity and solidarity in order to translate the Reconciliation Agreement signed in last May in Cairo into action and ensure lasting unity in Palestine as soon as possible. Underlining the importance of the Palestinian reconciliation for a credible and viable peace process as well as for the stability of the Middle East region, the Ministers called upon the international community to adopt a constructive approach in support of the Palestinian unity.

16. The Ministers strongly condemned Israel for its continued failure to fulfil its obligations towards Turkey under international law, with regard to the brutal attack of Israel on the high seas to the International Humanitarian Convoy sailing to Gaza on May 31st 2010 which resulted in 9 civilian deaths and many other injuries. The Ministers rejected the claims with regard to the illegal status of the blockade imposed on Gaza Strip and reaffirmed the fact that the illegality of the blockade is unquestionable in view of the relevant OIC and the Arab League resolutions, as well as reports and resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

17. The Ministers expressed deep regret over the ongoing violence and the mounting civilian death toll in Syria.

The Ministers agreed, in this regard, that international efforts should be focused on bringing the bloodshed in Syria to an immediate end and paving the ground for the initiation of a political transition process in line with the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Syrian people.

The Ministers commended the tireless efforts of the Arab League for ending the crisis in Syria and expressed their strong support to the full implementation without delay of the Arab League peace initiative by the Syrian Administration as well as to the other decisions adopted by the Arab League on the situation in Syria, including the roadmap for a political transition in Syria, which should reflect the will of the Syrian people.

The Ministers expressed their disappointment in the face of the lack of significant progress in the implementation of the Arab League peace initiative mostly due to the

intransigent attitude displayed by the Syrian Administration. The Ministers strongly urged the Syrian Administration to fulfil without delay all of its commitments and obligations under the Arab League peace initiative. The Ministers also called upon the Syrian Administration to genuinely cooperate with the Arab League in implementing the steps foreseen in the roadmap proposed by the latter.

The GCC Foreign Ministers also expressed their appreciation to Turkey for providing temporary protection on its territories for Syrian citizens who fled to Turkey in search for refuge.

18. The Ministers affirmed their full commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq. They emphasized the importance of Iraq's undertaking its responsibilities to enhance its unity, stability and prosperity and activate its role in building trust with neighbouring countries on the basis of good neighbourliness and non-interference in internal affairs. They affirmed the importance of exerting efforts by all sides in Iraq in order to achieve a lasting and comprehensive political reconciliation that meets the aspirations of all Iraqi people. The Ministers emphasized the importance of eliminating all terrorist organizations from the territory of Iraq, improve security, public order and build a secure, stable and democratic country based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, in order that Iraq resumes its supportive role of Arab issues.

19. The Ministers reiterated the need for Iraq to complete the implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, including the maintenance of the physical representation of the boundary according to UNSC Resolution 833. They urged the UN and other relevant organisations to continue their welcomed efforts of the settlement of the issue of identification of the remaining captives and lost citizens of Kuwait and other countries, and the issue of regaining Kuwaiti property and national archive.

20. The Ministers welcomed the announcement of the report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. They expressed their wish that the conclusions and recommendations of the report provide an impetus to the national reconciliation efforts encompassing all segments of the Bahraini society.

The Ministers expressed their strong support to the continuation of the reform process spearheaded by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa King of Bahrain, and particularly the initiative of His Majesty the King to introduce fundamental amendments to the Kingdom's Constitution, in order to promote the democratic process and lay firm foundations for the rule of law, democracy and human rights, in addition to promoting economic and social prosperity, and strengthening cultural development. Accordingly, it will lead to the achievement of the aspirations of the Kingdom's people for progress, growth and development.

21. The Ministers hailed the signing by the Yemeni parties of the GCC-sponsored initiative and its protocol in Riyadh, and welcomed all steps towards its implementation, in particular the formation of National Reconciliation Government in Yemen. They called

on all sides in Yemen to fully fulfil their commitments, with a view to strengthening Yemen's unity, security and stability.

22. The Ministers welcomed the formation of a transitional government in brotherly Libya and reaffirmed the sovereignty, independence, political unity and territorial integrity of Libya. The Ministers expressed their full solidarity with the Libyan people in completing the transition period in a peaceful and orderly manner. The Ministers called upon the Security Council and the concerned countries to complete the required procedures for releasing all frozen Libyan assets in order to meet the needs of the Libyan people.

23. The Ministers welcomed the remarkable progress achieved in Tunisia with the completion of Constitutional Assembly elections and the election of the Interim President and the Prime Minister. They expressed their wishes for Tunisia and its brotherly people to complete the transition process in a spirit of national unity and conciliation.

24. The ministers welcomed the completion of the People's Assembly elections and reiterated their determination to stand by Egypt for the successful conclusion of its transition process.

25. The Ministers once again strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, irrespective of its motivations and advocated enhanced international cooperation in combating terrorism. The Ministers reiterated that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality or ethnic group. The Ministers also underlined their concern about radicalization that leads to violent extremism as a phenomenon that increasingly manifests itself in different places. The Ministers praised the establishment of the UN counter-terrorism center at United Nations headquarter and they welcomed the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to fund it for three years. They expressed their hope that this center would contribute to sustaining international peace and security.

26. In this context, the Ministers condemned the PKK terrorism targeting Turkey; and reaffirmed their full support to actions taken to counter such acts of terrorism.

27. The Ministers expressed their deep concern with the case regarding a plot to assassinate the Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to the United States of America, and called upon the relevant parties to cooperate on this matter in a transparent manner. They welcomed the UN General Assembly's resolution 66/12 November 2011, and condemned all acts of violence against diplomatic and consular missions as well as their representatives and officials in compliance with the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations.

28. The Ministers expressed their support of the international efforts aimed at combating maritime piracy, within the framework of international law and the efforts undertaken by countries of the region, as well as the role played by the GCC States and Turkey.

29. The Ministers expressed support for the Final Document of the 2010 Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which endorsed practical steps for the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and called for Israel's accession to the NPT as well as for the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. The Ministers stressed the importance of convening in 2012 the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East on time, with the participation of all countries in the region.

30. Recognizing the right of all countries, in compliance with their obligations under the NPT, to develop nuclear energy for peaceful uses under IAEA supervision, the Ministers reiterated the need for the continuation of negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 to reach a peaceful resolution on the nuclear issue.

31. The Ministers welcomed the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in enhancing dialogue among different religious affiliations, reflected in the initiative launched by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Mecca (June 2008) and continued in Madrid (July 2008) and finally in the United Nations General Assembly 63rd session and all the relevant resolutions entitled "Peace Culture". The Ministers also welcomed the efforts by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for establishing "The Global Center for the Followers of Religion and Cultures Dialogue" in Vienna.

32. Underlining the continued need to encourage greater dialogue, understanding and respect between different cultures, the Ministers reiterated their full support for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative co-sponsored by Turkey and Spain. The Ministers welcomed the results of the Fourth Forum of the Alliance held in Qatar in December 2011.

33. The Ministers reiterated their strong support to Turkey's accession to the EU, a historical project with global positive implications especially in intercultural dialogue, and thus urged the EU to give a new momentum to the accession negotiations by removing existing obstacles.

34. The Ministers expressed support for the aim of reaching a just and lasting comprehensive settlement in Cyprus in the first half of 2012 through the ongoing UN negotiations, in line with the expectation of the UN Secretary-General, so as to enable the establishment of a new partnership between the two peoples on the basis of UN parameters and the two leaders' joint statements. The Ministers underlined the need to bring an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot people through concrete steps, in line with the calls of the UN Secretary-General in his reports and the relevant OIC resolutions.

35. The Ministers reaffirmed their continued support for the Government and people of Afghanistan as they rebuild their country, assume full security responsibility and continue to strengthen the foundations of sustainable peace. The Ministers also reiterated that regional security and cooperation is essential for a secure and stable Afghanistan. The

Ministers welcomed “the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan”, adopted at the Istanbul Conference for Afghanistan on 2 November 2011 by the regional countries, as a regional initiative for enhancing cooperation.”

36. The Ministers expressed their support to the efforts of the Arab League and the African Union, and particularly to the negotiations which had taken place within the context of the Doha Peace Process initiated by Qatar, aiming to achieve a comprehensive solution to the situation in Darfur. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the conclusions of these comprehensive talks with the consensus of all components of the Darfuri people. The Ministers noted also with satisfaction the signing of the “Doha Document for Peace in Darfur” (DDPD) by the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) in Doha on July 14th 2011. In this context, the Ministers called all the Darfur armed movements to join the peace process without delay and to end the conflict.

37. The Ministers underlined the importance of preservation of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia and expressed their support to the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the implementation of the Road Map to end the transition period in Somalia until August 2012 and emphasized the importance of providing effective support and assistance to Somalia to carry out development and infrastructure projects in particular.

38. The two sides agreed to convene their next meeting of the High Level Strategic Dialogue at the Ministerial Level in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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