

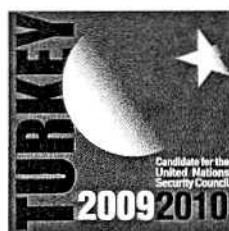


PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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ADDRESS
BY
H.E. MR. ABDULLAH GÜL
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
TO THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF
THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 23 SEPTEMBER 2008



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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I wish to extend our sincere congratulations to Mr. D'escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the 63rd General Assembly.

Taking this opportunity, I would also like to pay tribute to the President of the 62nd General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his able leadership during the past term.

Mr. President,

For Turkey, the United Nations Charter reflects the common aspirations and conscience of humanity.

United Nations provides a political and moral compass for our endeavors towards a just international order: A better order that will prevent new conflicts, ensure that human rights are upheld and make the distribution of prosperity more equitable and sustainable.

In this framework, we believe that the most pressing need before the international community is to bridge, as quickly as possible, the enormous gap between the wealthiest and the least fortunate.

We have certainly made considerable progress in this direction, including towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals. However, our common fight against poverty, illiteracy, epidemic diseases, child mortality and climate change is still far from over.

On the contrary, volatile fuel prices, the food crisis and the global economic slowdown have brought about an even more challenging development and security environment.

Under such circumstances, combating terrorism, racism, xenophobia, and all forms of religious discrimination and extremism takes on particular importance.

We must indeed exert maximum vigilance against the risk of further alienation between different cultures and religions. In that respect, we regard the Alliance of Civilizations initiative that we co-sponsor with Spain, under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General, as an important instrument that can help us avoid such a dangerous track.

Turkey will continue to be a leading country in further advancing the goals of this initiative which enjoys worldwide backing, including from the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Conference.

We hope that the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, which now consists of 14 international organizations and 76 countries representing different regions ranging from Latin America to Africa and Asia, will keep growing. In this vein, we look forward to hosting the second Forum meeting of the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul next April.

Mr. President,

As I said, a top-priority issue on our agenda is the need to address the problems of the developing world. There is no question that these countries should get all the assistance they need on their path to sustainable development.

They must be supported within the framework of a renewed global development agenda and through increased foreign investments and enhanced trade facilities.

On its part, Turkey is trying to contribute to this endeavor, first and foremost through increased development assistance. Turkey also provides special facilities for development, health, education and agricultural projects in various parts of the world.

As a result of those fast growing aid programs, Turkey is now recognized as an "emerging donor country" by the international community.

The UN Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries which Turkey hosted in Istanbul last year has clearly demonstrated our commitment to humanitarian and development assistance. We have now offered to host the LDC IV.

Similarly, the first ever Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit held in Istanbul last month provided an important opportunity to explore new avenues of cooperation with the Continent.

Mr. President,

Turkey is also committed to combating global warming which has serious implications for the entire world, but more so on the developing countries. With this conviction, we are taking active part in the negotiations which will shape up our new global climate change agreement that will replace the Kyoto Protocol.

Turkey also pays special attention to the water crisis in the world. In this regard, we hope that the 5th World Water Forum which we will host in Istanbul next March will inspire new thinking and concrete action on this important question.

Mr. President,

If I may now turn to the political issues besetting our region, I am pleased to say that Turkey has been actively contributing to the advancement of peace as a facilitator of dialogue.

We have also been working hard to build a sense of co-ownership of regional issues among our neighbors through a series of regional cooperation initiatives.

Encouraged by its strong regional ties, Turkey has launched another initiative designed to prevent further conflicts in the recently traumatized South Caucasus.

In this regard, I believe that the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform proposed by Turkey could be an instrumental framework for building a climate of confidence in the region that will allow discussion of our common problems in a democratic setting.

Based on our impressions from my visits to our neighbors Armenia and Azerbaijan and those of Prime Minister Erdoğan to the Russian Federation and Georgia, all parties concerned seem receptive to the idea and we hope they will give it a chance to work.

I sincerely believe that a positive perspective thus created will contribute to the resolution of the frozen conflicts, including the occupied Nagorno Karabakh, on the basis of respect for the principle of territorial integrity. No doubt, such a perspective will also help improve the bilateral ties between the countries of the region.

Mr. President,

It is also well past time to settle the conflicts of the Middle East, at the core of which lies the Palestinian question.

Turkey actively supports all endeavors to bring about a lasting solution to this central problem and alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people.

Turkey is also making every effort to help advance the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. One recent example is the indirect peace talks that Syria and Israel started under Turkey's auspices last May in Istanbul.

In Iraq, too, Turkey stands firmly with the Iraqi people and Government. Besides our bilateral efforts, I am particularly pleased to see that the Neighboring Countries Process, which I had initiated five years ago, is functioning well.

For the international community's efforts to succeed, Iraqi people need to settle their differences through dialogue and compromise on controversial issues, among them the final status of Kirkuk.

Afghanistan is another country where Turkey invests heavily on the future of a nation with which we have special historical ties. Turkey will continue to contribute to the security of the Afghan people and to their reconstruction efforts.

We will also continue our initiatives to create an atmosphere conducive to regional ownership and cooperation, in particular between Pakistan and Afghanistan. That is equally vital for the common struggle against terrorism and for the stability of the region.

Finally, an urgent and peaceful settlement of the question of Iran's nuclear program in conformity with IAEA norms and NPT obligations, respecting the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy, remains high on Turkey's active diplomatic agenda.

Mr. President,

I am convinced that would-be solutions to individual conflicts in the Middle East could be sustainable only if we adopt a comprehensive approach based on a positive vision for the future.

That is why I invite all the parties to give serious consideration to the long-standing idea of collective arrangements for conflict prevention and resolution which would promote regional security and stability by building confidence, facilitating political dialogue and encouraging economic and cultural cooperation in the Middle East.

Mr. President,

Turkey gives full backing to diplomatic efforts for a political settlement in Cyprus. The solution lies at the establishment of a new partnership state composed of two constituent states of equal status. The process towards this goal should be based on the UN parameters of bi-zonality and political equality of the two sides.

We welcome and firmly support the comprehensive settlement negotiations recently started between the two leaders under the good-offices of the UN Secretary General.

At the same time, I believe that it is long overdue to end the unfair isolation of the Turkish Cypriots who voted courageously in favor of the UN Comprehensive Settlement Plan in 2004; the Plan which was unfortunately rejected by the other side.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, I would like to stress the indispensable nature of the UN in resolving all these matters. Indeed, without an effective and functional world body, it is impossible to realize the hopes and expectations of our nations.

This is why we attach utmost importance to reforming and further strengthening the UN system as a whole. This is also why Turkey is constantly stepping up its engagement in and contributions to all aspects of the UN agenda ranging from development and peace-keeping to human rights.

It is also with this sense of responsibility that Turkey has decided to put forth its candidature for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council for 2009-2010. Turkey has not been represented in the Council for nearly half a century and we believe that the main tenets of our foreign policy, together with our economic, social and cultural attributes, will allow us to bring an added value to the work of the Council.

I hope that the General Assembly, with its valuable support, will do us the honor of granting Turkey the opportunity to do so.

Thank you.