

# INAUGURAL SUNA ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

THE MIDDLE EAST ON RISE:  
TURKEY AND THE EU

Bratislava | October 25, 2012

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## ABOUT THE MEETING

The Inaugural Suna Roundtable Discussion was jointly organized by Global Political Trends Center of Istanbul Kültür University and the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences (FSES) of the Comenius University with the aim to commemorate H.E. Suna Çokgür Ilıcak, who passed away while serving as the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Slovak Republic in 2006. The event entitled “The Middle East on Rise: Turkey and the EU” took place on the premises of the FSES in Bratislava on October 25, 2012, with the participation of representatives of diplomatic corps, academics, experts and students. The debate was followed by a ceremony, during which a birch tree in the memory of H.E. Suna Çokgür Ilıcak was planted in the garden of the FSES.



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## WELCOMING REMARKS

### **Prof. PhDr. Silvia Miháliková, PhD**

Dean, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the Comenius University

Dear distinguished guests, dear colleagues, dear students, it is an honor for our faculty, the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the Comenius University in Bratislava, to organize the Inaugural Suna Roundtable Discussion here on our premises. The event is held in the memory of Suna Çokgür Ilıcak, the former Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Slovak Republic. I am very pleased that the representatives of diplomatic corps in Slovakia accepted our invitation to this meeting.

Our warmest welcome to Your Excellences.

Let me take this opportunity to express our gratitude to experts, journalists, and academics, who found time to come. The idea to organize this event was first conveyed by my friend and colleague Sylvia Tiryaki from Istanbul. She proposed to start the tradition of holding the Suna Roundtable Discussions annually.

I am very pleased our guest speakers are here together with the students of our faculty enrolled in study programs such as European studies, applied economy and psychology. I believe we will be able to have a frank discussion and a fruitful exchange of ideas. In the course attended by students who are present here, we discuss the role of attitudes and values in the process of forming of political cultures in Europe. However, the forming of political cultures in our region is influenced by other cultures, too. We will be able to discuss this in further detail today.

### **Dr. Sylvia Tiryaki**

Deputy Director, Global Political Trend Center of Istanbul Kültür University

Good afternoon everybody. Let me shortly introduce myself and our Center. I am the Deputy Director of Global Political Trends Center (GPoT Center) on behalf of which I would like to welcome you to today's event. GPoT Center is an Istanbul-based think-tank with an international agenda and an

international team. Our research focuses primarily on the role of Turkey in the region and Turkey's position in the global context. This also brings us to today's topic, which is "The Middle East on Rise: Turkey and the EU".

However, the real reason why we are here today is a little bit different. We came here to remember our colleague, wife and friend Amb. Suna Ilıcak, who I am sure would be very happy to lead the discussion today if she could do so.

Welcome again to the inaugural session of the Suna Roundtable Discussions, which I hope will be repeated every year.

### **Amb. Lebibe Gülhan Ulutekin**

Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Slovak Republic

Dear Excellences, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and young friends from the Comenius University, let me extend a very warm welcome to you and thank you all for participating in today's event.

As Sylvia Hanım mentioned and as you may know from the program, we are gathered here today to commemorate our esteemed colleague Amb. Suna Çokgür Ilıcak, who passed away while serving here in Slovakia. I would like to share with you my impressions of her. I have been serving as the



Turkish Ambassador to the Slovak Republic for almost one year. During this period and through my encounters with my Slovak friends, the Slovak authorities, and members of the diplomatic corps, I have come to the realization of the great memory she left behind her. Even after six years she is remembered and recalled with great admiration

and respect. Needless to say, her sudden demise was a big loss not only for her family, but also for all of us – her colleagues at the Ministry. She was among the most successful and the most esteemed members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was considered very talented and a hard working diplomat, who was being entrusted with the most sensitive and demanding tasks. If she would have been able to complete her time here in Slovakia, I

***Even after six years Amb. Suna Çokgür Ilicak is remembered and recalled with great admiration and respect... It is a great honor for me to be one of her successors here in Slovakia.***

*~ Amb. Lebibe Gülhan Ulutekin*

am sure she would have made tremendous contributions to the relations between Turkey and Slovakia by generating new ideas and opening up new areas of cooperation. I am very proud to be part of this event organized by the Comenius University in Bratislava in collaboration with GPoT Center.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Amb. Haluk Ilicak, Undersecretary of the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and husband of the late Amb. Suna Çokgür Ilicak; Prof. PhDr. Silvia Miháliková, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the Comenius University; Prof. Dr. Mensur Akgün, Director of GPoT Center of Istanbul Kültür University, and his Deputy Dr. Sylvia Tiryaki for being the fathers and mothers of this event. I am very glad that we are going to organize this event in consecutive years as a tradition. It will be an honor for our Embassy to contribute to the success of this event. Thank you very much for coming.

### **Amb. Haluk Ilicak**

Undersecretary of the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

Dear friends, it is a great honor and privilege for me to speak at the first Suna Roundtable, which is organized in memory of my loved and late wife. Amb. Suna Ilicak, who served as Turkish Ambassador in this lovely and friendly country, dedicated

the very last year of her life to further strengthening of the relations between Turkey and Slovakia. I am pleased to see that Turkish-Slovak relations are steadily enhancing in every field.

Amb. Suna Ilicak initiated the establishment of the Turkish Culture and Language Lectureship at this University, the oldest and biggest one in Slovakia and very reputed in the world. One year later, in May 2007 her name was given to that Lectureship in time of Amb. Tunç Üğdül, a very good friend of mine. Therefore, I have very deep and emotional feelings towards Slovakia and towards the Comenius University in particular.

I would like to thank to Silvia Miháliková, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the Comenius University; and to GPoT Center of Istanbul Kültür University for organizing this meaningful event in the memory of my late wife. I would also like to express my gratitude to my dear friend Sylvia Tiryaki, who initiated this event with a great voluntary courtesy; and to Mensur Akgün, Director of GPoT Center. My thanks goes also to my friend Gülhan Ulutekin, the Ambassador of Turkey to Slovakia, who has supported this event from the very beginning. Thank you for coming, thank you for being with us today.





## MODERATOR'S INTRODUCTION

### Prof. Dr. Mensur Akgün

Director, Global Political Trend Center of Istanbul Kültür University

The main topic of our debate today is the Arab Spring, but we are also going to discuss whether Turkey and the EU complement each other when it comes to their respective actions and policies related to the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring has created enormous liabilities as well as assets for both parties, e.g. as you may know Turkey has received more than 100.000 refugees. This is an immense economic and political burden, the later being related to Turkey's foreign policy vis-à-vis Syria and its foreign policy vis-à-vis the Arab Spring. Even if Turkey had been having a passive approach to the Arab Spring and the developments in Syria, the country was ready to receive the Syrian refugees. The Arab Spring is thus not only a curse. The EU has also received refugees during the Libyan crisis, which caused many to flee the country.

Another part of the issue is related to geopolitics of the Middle East. Types of regime, which we have not been used to see till now, are on rise and it might not be possible for the "mighty ones" to control them. It might not be possible to do Camp David arrangements on the ground, and there

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~ Prof. Dr. Mensur Akgün

might be a major confrontation between the Arabs and the Israelis as in the early 1970s. These are some of the liabilities we would like to address today, not necessarily in terms of zero-sum mentality, but in terms of collaboration.

The Arab Spring has created opportunities for societies to transform themselves and become more democratic, liable and last but not least accountable to their constituencies. The societies in transition might be able to create an environment, in which all of us will be able to

collaborate. The membership of Turkey in the EU is also related to our debate about the Arab Spring. I am sure our distinguished speakers will address this issue, too.

## KEYNOTE SPEECHES

### Amb. Haluk Ilıcak

Undersecretary of the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

In parallel with the technologic development and expansion of various communication means such as Internet and social media, the interdependence between countries has increased dramatically in the 21st century, regardless of political regimes in countries or political positions held. The title of today's conference shows this phenomenon and explains very clearly that today's world involves common challenges and requires joint and coordinated responses. Let me touch briefly upon the recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and talk about their potential impacts on Turkey and the EU.

The self-immolation of a Tunisian street vendor, Mohammed Boazizi, on January 4, 2011 has unexpectedly for some but expectedly for others led to the emergence of a wave of changes in the MENA region and posed crucial challenges to the regional and global balance. Some have compared the changes with modern revolutions such as the revolutions of 1989 in the Eastern Europe experienced by, among others, the then Czechoslovak people; the Iranian revolution of 1979; the Bolshevik revolution of 1917; or the French revolution of 1789. However, I believe that we need to be aware of our limitations when making comparisons. Nobody can figure out the genuine nature of these changes and make the most accurate analogy until the dust settles. Whatever the root causes are and the consequences will be, every historical event has its own context and needs to be understood within its own dynamics. However, one thing is clear: the regional and global balances will not be what they used to be. We face new challenges and unless we respond accordingly we will be among the losers in the near future.

Some leading forces among the revolutionaries of the “Arab Spring” prefer to go back to the roots of Islamic identity and reinstate traditional virtues. However, it is clear that majority of people in the Arab countries have stood up for a better life, which they have long been watching as an outsider. They want to have a transparent political order based on democratic values, which by definition must respect the will of the people, freedom of speech, thought and conscience, and ensure the peaceful transition of power. Furthermore, they want to have public services such as clean cities, provision of affordable healthcare for everyone, better roads, better education for their kids etc.

While upholding democratic universal values and striving for a better life, the peoples in the MENA countries looked at the West and one example was obviously more important for them than the other. It was Turkey. Being a predominantly Muslim country, Turkey has a democratic, secular, multi-party regime, and a high standard of public services when compared with its neighbors. Turkey demonstrates clearly that Islam and democracy can live together and that having Muslim roots is not a hindrance of achieving modern standard of living and of public services like schools, hospitals, social security etc. Although we never asserted that we are a role model, we cannot ignore the fact that we have been a source of inspiration for these countries.

When the Arab Spring started, Turkey took a principled stance from the very beginning. We sided with the peoples of the region, instead of corrupt regimes. The Prime Minister Erdoğan was the first Muslim leader to call President Mubarak, Colonel Kaddafi and President Assad to step down. Actually, two out of three is not too bad of a score. We are waiting for the last one, Mr. Assad. Turkey’s principled stance received a warm response in the region. While some European leaders addressed hardly few hundred people, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan was greeted by tens of thousands of people at the airports in Egypt and Libya. Many European leaders can speak about the importance of the secular democracy. Many Muslim leaders can pray with the local peoples of these countries. However, there are not too many leaders who can do both. The soft power of Turkey

is coming from this aspect. The Turkish political leaders can do both.

From the EU angle, unfortunately the awakening in the Arab World has interestingly coincided with debates about the declining position of the West and of the EU especially in the global politics. The dominance of the Western hemisphere in global

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economy and politics has been challenged by the rise of new powers such as China, Russia, Brazil, Indonesia, etc. The United States and the EU have been struggling with the financial crisis for almost five years. Even though there are some positive indicators, the fear that the crisis will go deeper and wider is still a serious concern. The financial crisis and new geopolitical realities raise doubts about EU’s capability to respond to challenges, which have arisen from the unexpected developments in its immediate neighborhood. Only two years after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has been again engaged in endless debates about institutional problems. However, if we look at the very essence of the problem, we will see that the real problem goes beyond the financial regulations or institutional amendments. The real problem is related to the self-confidence and unity of the EU and its capabilities to respond to emerging challenges on time.

The system of the EU, which requires the EU to reach consensus on every important subject, creates delays in response to EU’s own problems. If the EU could have helped Greece immediately after the economic crisis evolved in the country the way they are helping them now, the crisis would not have been so deep and the EU would have actually saved money. It took almost two years for the EU to decide and to reach a consensus on how to help Greece. When they started helping Greece, the economic and financial credibility of the country was very low and that consequently did not allow Greece to borrow from international

monetary institutions. Therefore, the EU must now allocate a lot of money for Greece, but nobody knows whether the EU will actually be able to uphold stability in the country. This is true also for countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, and Ireland. The decision-making process of the EU must change. The EU does have a majority vote system, but up to 90 percent of its decisions are taken either unanimously or by consensus. The decision-making mechanism, which is essentially based on unanimity and “solidarity”, does not allow the EU to take immediate and right actions when necessary. It can be hardly said that the EU has already come out of the financial crisis. On the contrary, the financial indicators in certain member states get worse and unemployment is on the rise. The creation of the European External Action Service and the appointment of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy did not make it possible for the EU to pursue a coherent and common foreign policy. National interests still play the determining role.

Last but not least, the EU risks being trapped in another vicious circle, i.e. the rise of extreme right and xenophobia. During the time of economic crisis, both left and right extremists gain power. This might be particularly ironic now that the EU has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution to peace in Europe. I have doubts about it. The EU did safeguarded peace among the member states, but we cannot say that the EU has done a lot for the Balkans or that it has achieved



peace in the whole continent. The declaration of the Nobel Peace Institute shows it, too. In the declaration, it is indicated there that the prize was given to the EU to give it support in the time of crisis. Thus, the prize was awarded as a motivating

factor for the EU to do more for peace in the continent and the world.

The Turkish Minister for EU Affairs, Egemen Bağış, says that the membership of the Balkan countries in the EU is more important than Turkey’s membership. These countries cannot ensure their economic development and political stability because of being outside of the EU. The member states and candidates like Turkey should both do more to embrace the Balkan countries. If the EU wants to play a role in the world politics and economy, it has to be more objective vis-à-vis the problems that interest the world. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that by questioning the very essence of the EU, i.e. freedom of travel and common currency, EU’s credibility will be eroded and its capability to respond to the crisis further limited. Deserved or not, we sincerely hope that, encouraged by this prize, the EU will intensify its efforts to contribute to the conflict-resolutions in and around Europe with the most fair and correct approach.

When it comes to Turkey-EU relations, we have difficulties achieving the desired progress. The EU membership is a strategic priority for Turkey. We have been striving to become a member of the club since 1959. Although the EU launched the accession talks with Turkey in 2005, the progress achieved so far has remained limited due to the political obstacles created by some member states. We have been able to open only 13 out of 35 chapters and we cannot move on 17 chapters because they are politically blocked. We have not received the screening reports on 9 chapters yet. Among these there is chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), which are both very important as they cover democratic values, human rights, jurisdiction, and security, i.e. issues for which the EU criticizes Turkey a lot. Yet, we are unable to open these chapters because they are blocked by the Greek Cypriots. Before starting the negotiations with Montenegro, the European Council decided unanimously (thus including the Greek Cypriots too) that these two chapters would be the prerequisite for the opening of other chapters, thus any candidate country to start the accession negotiations with the EU must open these two chapters first and only then the rest. Turkey has already opened 13 chapters, but it cannot touch



the two chapters in question. This is an oxymoron. The 26 member states close their eyes before this unfair situation.

70 percent of the energy resources needed by the EU are located in the South, East or North of Turkey. Unless someone comes up with a wireless technology to transport energy resources from these regions to the EU, cooperation with Turkey will be a must. However, the Greek Cypriots blocked the opening of the energy chapter. They do not need energy for heating up their houses because the weather on the island is beautiful. They do not need energy for their industry, but they do prevent other countries from cooperating

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~ *Amb. Haluk Ilıcak*

in the energy field with Turkey. The energy chapter is not related to the drilling activities in the Mediterranean Sea. It is related to transport of energy resources and the alignment of the energy markets of the two sides.

Turkey is very determined to continue the negotiation process. The end product of the negotiations, i.e. the accession, is not of much interest to us today. We are interested in the negotiation process itself. After the negotiations are completed, the EU may refuse the membership of Turkey or the people in Turkey can say no to Turkey's membership in the EU. Depending on the wording of the question, the percentage of Turkish people who support the membership of Turkey in the EU varies between 17-35 percent. According to the latest survey, more than 92 percent do not think that EU has been fair to Turkey. This is a very high score. We have to find a solution for this. The EU needs to cooperate with Turkey if it wants to have a better neighborhood and stable democratic countries in the region.

Although the accession process has come to a standstill for political reasons, we are determined to continue with the reform process with a view of achieving the highest standards for our people. We

have carried out tremendous reforms in many areas, e.g. the civilian-military relations, freedom of religion and expression, rights of minorities etc. We have recently adopted the 3rd judicial reform package, and we are working on the 4th one. We are working on the draft of a civilian constitution. The EU membership has been the most important motivation behind these reforms. Although we cannot discuss anything that is falling short of the full membership at the moment, we consider the EU accession process much more valuable than the end-result itself. The decision about Turkey's membership might be left to the next generation. Even if so, the onus is on today's leaders and policy-makers to prepare necessary conditions for a deeper cooperation and dialogue between Turkey and the EU. They can be more constructive by facilitating Turkey's accession process. For instance, we expect that the reports prepared by the EU institutions, namely the Commission and the European Parliament, should reflect realities on the ground, appreciate the reforms we have made and encourage us to continue with the reform process. Nevertheless, the regular reports of the Commission as well as of the European Parliament usually turn out to be disappointment for us. The fact that the reports are written in an imbalanced way puts the credibility of reports and of the institutions at stake.

Unfortunately, some circles in the EU are still questioning Turkey's membership for various reasons. We are confident that Turkey will be an asset for the EU rather than being a burden. With its growing economy, young and dynamic



population as well as geopolitical importance, Turkey will be a crucial asset. The Turkish economy grew more than 8 percent in the last two years. This year, due to the global economic developments we expect a 4 percent growth, but the trend is clear: the Turkish economy is growing. Currently, Turkey is the 6th largest economy in Europe and the 17<sup>th</sup> in the world. According to the OECD's forecasts, Turkey will be the second largest economy in Europe by 2050 and it will become the "engine of growth" for the EU.

The economies of Turkey and the EU are already intertwined together. The EU is the biggest trade partner of Turkey and Turkey is the 7<sup>th</sup> biggest trade partner of the EU. Almost 45 percent of Turkey's export is destined to the EU countries.

Turkey's geopolitical importance is a significant asset for the EU in strengthening its role in the Middle East, in the Balkans and in the Caucasus. We are glad that we have already started some sort of cooperation in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. The EU Delegations in these countries are consulting the Turkish Embassies in these capitals and I am confident that they will come up with concrete joint projects soon. This will be of benefit not only for Turkey and the EU, but for other countries concerned as well. In short, this will not be a zero-sum game. Everybody will win. And with Turkey's membership in the EU we will maximize our profits.

### **Amb. Jozef Šesták**

Consul General of the Slovak Republic in Istanbul

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends, it is a great pleasure to share my personal views on these important issues with you. Having served as the Slovak Consul General in Istanbul for almost three years, I would especially like to address the relationship between Turkey and the EU and the Middle East region.

I fully understand the question of our Turkish friends. The rapprochement started 50 years ago and the accession process of Turkey to the EU has been going on since 2005. The picture of chapters is sad, but there is also good news. I believe in the balance of power between countries and states.

To describe the current state of affairs, let me quote Steve Jobs, the great designer and CEO of Apple. The biography by Karen Blumethal entitled "The Man Who Thought Different" features his extraordinary statement, which is also relevant to our topic today: "The journey is the reward... Getting the chance to participate in something really incredible." Steve Jobs believed the reward



was in the journey. The Turkish Minister for EU Affairs, Egemen Bağış, says something similar when he points out that the target is not the membership, but the course of political reforms, democratization, and the process of bringing Turkey closer to Europe and its values. The candidate countries have to cope with rather tough legal, economic and technical criteria, but the decision taken at the end of the accession process will be a political one. Let me share with you some of the facts, which lead me to believe that the final political decision on Turkey's accession to the EU will be positive.

Turkey is a great and successful country. Its achievements during the last decade have been remarkable. Turkey is a living example of secularism, democracy and economic development. Turkey has gone through a vast transformation, which has included specific democratic steps and political reforms. The current democratization process has been the major one after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The EU has played a major role in Turkey's rapid transformation and the membership remains as the main motivation for the continuation of the process. Turkey's democracy has inspired the democratic popular movements in the Arab world.

There is no doubt about whether Turkey goes West or East, because the facts speak for themselves. The military used to be the main decisive factor in Turkey. However, we have a new era of civilian-military relations in Turkey today. Turkey has adopted a number of democratic laws and the harmonization process with the EU legislation is in



full speed regardless of the stagnation in the accession talks in general. Egemen Bağış established a comprehensive system, which is meant to help Turkey prepare for the accession. The system is activated not only in Ankara and Istanbul, but also in Turkey's 81 provinces. The Deputy Governors in 81 provinces act as the permanent EU contact points and participate actively in the accession talks by giving feedback on reforms and also by proposing what is needed.

Economically speaking, according to Egemen Bağış Turkey is already in Europe. 50 percent of Turkey's trade is done with the EU and 80 percent of all direct foreign investments in Turkey come from the EU – the value is 50 billion Euro. This is large figure and it is estimated that by 2020 this figure will rise

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to 90 billion Euro. The economic potential of Turkey has tripled in the last decade. According to the OECD, Turkey will have the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest growth rate after China and India by 2017. Turkey is a young, dynamic country with the median age of its population being 28 years while EU's median age is 42. Turkey and the EU are already integrated in the automotive industry, aviation, textile industry and electronics.

Let me share with you interesting information from the recent Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Cohesion, which took place in Istanbul on October 11, 2012. There are free school buses for children in Turkey. The Turkish government supports mothers financially, so that they can send their daughters to school. This project aims to substantially improve the education of women in Turkey. Turkey adopted a law on disabled people and has been creating jobs for them. It adopted new social programs for senior citizens in order to have an active and

dynamic elderly population. In addition to this, it has family-focused social programs. This is remarkable.

Štefan Füle visits Turkey very often. He has done a great job in the era of stagnation (e.g. no chapter has been opened for two years). In order to keep the accession process running, he introduced the Positive Agenda, which is not meant to replace but to supplement the accession negotiations.

The 2012 Progress Report on Turkey, which was recently released, welcomed a number of improvements with regard to political criteria, e.g. improvements in the criminal justice system and works on the new Constitution. However, it listed also a number of critical observations, e.g. the lack of progress in meeting the political criteria, situation regarding the respect for fundamental rights like the right to a fair trial, freedom of expression etc. The EU considers the report balanced. On the other hand, in Turkey the report is viewed as unbalanced for being focused on negatives only. The Minister for EU Affairs, Egemen Bağış said that the European Commission was enthusiastic about criticism, but stingy about praising Turkey for its positive steps. There are both negatives and positives listed in the Report and we need to deal with them. As Štefan Füle in this connection said: "The EU was shooting itself into its foot by not allowing the accession process to go on. I am not blind and I am not deaf." The countries he was referring to were the ones, which have been unilaterally blocking the accession talks, i.e. Republic of Cyprus (6 chapters) and France (5 chapters). He further said that if the EU has been



unable to open any chapters in the last two years, it means that the EU is lacking in one of the most important engines of the accession negotiations,

i.e. the reform process. I am of the opinion that the accession process must continue. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

I am concerned with one factor though. The public support for the accession process has been dropping because of frustration. This is at the same time the public support for reforms. In just one year, the percentage of people who believed that Turkey would become an EU member state decreased from 35 percent to 17 percent. 78 percent do not believe that Turkey will become a member.

Now, I would like to address the geopolitical aspects of the issue and explain how are they related to the Arab Springs. When speaking about Turkey, people often forget that Turkey is an important NATO member with the 2<sup>nd</sup> strongest army in the Alliance. In this context, the British Prime Minister David Cameron said the following: "I believe it is just wrong to say Turkey can guard the camp, but not allowed to sit inside the tent." David Cameron believes that Turkey could be the

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European country, which could help build links with the Middle East. Turkey is a major regional power strategically placed between Europe and the Middle East, and Europe and Central Asia. It is a potential bridge between the Christian Europe and the Islamic world. This bridge can be wisely used to avoid the clash of civilizations. Taking Turkey as the source of inspiration, the Muslims in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf expressed a strong desire for more democracy, freedom and rights. Turkey demonstrates that democracy can exist and be deeply enrooted in a Muslim society.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Guido Westerwelle said that he believed that the linkage between Islam and democracy was indeed possible. With respect to the Arab Spring, he mentioned three possibly dangerous developments:



- 1) Restoration of ancient autocratic regimes
- 2) Economic collapse
- 3) Penetration of radical fundamental Islamic elements into the process of democratic transformation

Let us hope that this will not happen and that the ongoing and irreversible process, which will determine the development of the whole region, will continue in a positive way. We should judge the outcome by deeds – by adherence to democracy, rule of law, religions tolerance and preservation of domestic and international peace. Democracy is not a one-time affair, it is a culture. Necessary conditions need to be prepared for democracy to grow. This process is not easy and it is far from being accomplished in the region. Some say that the democratization process in the Arab world will be more difficult than previously anticipated. What is the approach of these new forces to economic development, jobs, education, and peace? Do they wish to strengthen peace and stability in the region and in the world? I would like to express gratitude to Turkey for accommodating as much as 100.000 refugees. It is a beautiful gesture of humanity, which was also commended by the UN.

## **GUEST ADDRESS**

### **David Cameron's Words on Turkey**

"Turkey is a NATO ally and shares our determination to fight terrorism, helped by Turkey's unique position at the meeting point of East and West.

When I think about what Turkey has done to defend Europe as a NATO ally and what Turkey has done in Afghanistan alongside our European allies, I feel it is unfair that your progress towards EU membership has been frustrated. My view is clear:

I believe it is just wrong to say that Turkey can guard the camp but not be allowed to sit inside the tent. Have you heard this quote: “Here is a country which is not European, its history, its geography, its economy, its agriculture and the character of its people – admirable people though they are – all point in a different direction. This is a country which cannot be a member”. Now that might

***I will remain your strongest advocate for EU membership. We do not want you to abandon your traditions or culture – we welcome a diverse EU. We want you to be Turkey, because as Turkey you can play a unique role.***

*~ Rt. Hon. David Cameron*

sound like some Europeans describing Turkey. Actually it was General de Gaulle describing the UK before he vetoed our accession to the EU. So we know what it is like when people seek to exclude you, but we also know that things can change.

So I will remain your strongest advocate for EU membership. We do not want you to abandon your traditions or culture – we welcome a diverse EU. We want you to be Turkey, because as Turkey you can play a unique role. We welcome the EU reforms you are taking forward. We welcome your work towards a solution in Cyprus. We would like to help you on the road towards Brussels, if that is what you want.

The UK is a major trading partner and a major investor in Turkey. Istanbul is the only city in Europe to match London in size. We have many people of Turkish origin resident in our country – including the Mayor of London.

Which country’s accession to the EU could make for a globally stronger EU? The answer I give is this: Tabii ki Türkiye. Çok tesekkür ederim.”

## ABOUT GPoT CENTER

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Our mission is to conduct high quality, independent and innovative research and education, acting as a link between policy-making institutions, academia, civil society and the media.

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