European External Action Service (EEAS)

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the EU-Turkey High Level Political Dialogue Meeting

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Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be back in Ankara for this High-Level Dialogue. I remember very well that in this very same room in December 2014, together with my friend Commissioner Hahn, we were saying that the relations between the European Union and Turkey with the new Commission on the European side coming into office needed to be revitalised and we had a lot of work ahead of us because regional, global and also local challenges needed a stronger cooperation between the European Union and Turkey that is not only an accession country, but also a very important global partner for the EU.

So, for me, for us this High-Level Dialogue is somehow a way of restarting from there, knowing that in between we had also a successful High-Level Dialogue last year in May in Brussels. And then obviously the summit in November, so Prime Minister Davutoğlu meeting all the Heads of State and Government of the European Union together with President Tusk and President Juncker.

This is to frame the fact that we are re-launching, re-energising and revitalising our strategic cooperation into a broader cooperation because the relations between the European Union and Turkey in these months have been seen mainly through the angle of our common concern for the refugees that we have to protect and host and also our concern about the management of the flow in an ordinated and coordinated way.

But the relations between the European Union and Turkey go far beyond this single very important, but still single point of the agenda and this is the perfect occasion to tackle all the issues we have to which I will come. But first let me say few words on migration and refugees:

The key point for us is that the Action Plan on Migration and Refugees that we agreed upon at the end of last year is fully implemented. On the European Union side this means that we have to better support Turkey in the incredible work it is doing to host and protect an

enormous number of refugees. On the Turkish side it means that the management of the flows of refugees but also of irregular migrants has to be done in a better way.

We agreed to strengthen our constant work in this respect, so that actions are coordinated, consistent, coherent - that what we have agreed upon delivers for the benefit of first the refugees and the migrants, because our first priority is always saving lives and preventing the smuggling organisations and the criminal networks to make profit out of people desperation, but also that we make this management of the flows sustainable both for Turkey and the European Union.

But let me say that again: This is not the only point on our agenda. On the contrary, we have very significant issues. We have to work on it together in a better coordinated way, starting from the regional dynamics that are probably the most dangerous, the most problematic and the most terrible dynamics that the world is facing today. We are right at the centre of the most complicated setting on the global stage.

Starting from Syria, where we sit together in the International Support Group, trying to have the intra-Syrian talks starting hopefully by the end of this month. It is extremely important for us to have the transition process started in parallel with better humanitarian conditions on the ground. We have to make sure that Syrian people face better situation on the ground. The humanitarian work that the European Union is doing together with the implementation of confidence building measures is going to be key to make the process credible and to protect the life of so many Syrians.

This is going to be also the only real way of defeating Da’esh on the ground, guaranteeing the unity of the regional and international actors, allowing the unity of Syrian forces - a transition that could be inclusive - to have cease fire and unite forces on the ground against Da’esh and al-Nusra.

We also discussed the situation in Iraq , with the need to support an inclusive approach by the government and to accompany the military operations against Da’esh in Iraq with a process that makes in particular the Sunnite communities but also the Christians and the Yazidis fully in the picture and feeling an ownership and safe conditions for living in their territories. This is extremely important also for us in Europe as the plurality and co-existence in the wider Middle East is, I think, one of the few signs of hope that we need to preserve also for the future generations.

We had also a long and very constructive discussion on Libya. We are also partners in trying to bring stability to the country, with the important process that the Libyans had started, forming a government of national accord. We both had the chance of meeting Prime Minister Designate Sarraj recently, in Ankara in your case, in Tunis in mine. And we are united, I think, in providing the government of national accord, once endorsed by the House of Representatives in Libya, all the support it needs to operate as a government in Libya, for the

sake of the Libyan citizens, for the sake of security in the region and also for the sake of the fight against Da'esh in that territory.

We also discuss about the Israel -Palestine conflict, normally we refer to this as the Middle East Peace Process. We actually discussed about the lack of Middle East Peace Process and the common efforts we can have to revitalise it. We also discussed our cooperation on counter terrorism, in particular when it comes to the fight against Da'esh that as recent attacks both in Istanbul, in Ankara, in Europe have clearly highlighted is a common priority, a common threat.

We also discussed our bilateral relations, starting from the opportunities we have, the opportunities for sure to advance on accession talks and negotiations. I will leave this to Commissioner Hahn more in details, but just to stress that in the European Union we value as extremely important the role of the talks on accession in particular on the issues of rule of law, human rights, including freedom of expression and freedom assembly, and the independence of judiciary. I know that the Turkish government has an ambitious reform agenda we value as extremely important that these issues are included and implemented on the way ahead.

We also discussed our economic cooperation. There is going to be a high level economic dialogue with a large presence of the Commission in the coming months. And our energy cooperation which is of strategic importance for both of us especially in these tense times, in this tense region. And an energy high level dialogue is going to happen later this week with Commissioner Cañete visiting the country.

We also touched upon the positive development that hopefully we could expect in the region, a positive development on the Cyprus settlement - I believe we share an interest to have a comprehensive settlement happening as soon as possible.

And we also shared our worries about the situation, the internal situation in the South East of Turkey; this is something on which we will discuss more during the continuation of our talks. The European Union strongly condemns all forms of terrorist attacks, including by the PKK, but at the same time we call for an immediate ceasefire and the return to the Kurdish peace process which was launched in the past years with a brave, courageous vision by the Turkish authorities and that we believe is and stays as the only way for peace and stability in the country and also most likely in the region. I thank you.

Link to the video: http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I115484

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