



22.11.2021

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0830/2020 by Fotios Batzios (Greek) on Turkey being on the verge of declaring war against Greece
Petition No 0930/2020 by Antonios Konstantinou (Greek), on behalf of Ellines Dimokrates, calling for sanctions against Turkey for its aggressive actions

1. Summary of petition

Petition 0830/2020

The petitioner warns of the clear and present danger of an armed conflict triggered by the presence of the Turkish drilling vessel Oruc Reis, escorted by several Turkish military vessels, in Greek territorial waters, near the island of Kastellorizo. He deplores the absence of concrete action and solidarity with Greece from the EU and its Member States, with the notable exception of France, and states that the EU can no longer be deaf to the dangerous machinations of an authoritarian dictator. Accordingly, he calls on the EU to act swiftly and vigorously to call to order the Turkish regime. **Petition 0930/2020**

The petitioner refers to Turkey's involvement in several international conflicts and alleges that: (i) Turkey has been conducting ethnic cleansing in Northern Cyprus and against the Kurdish population in South-eastern Turkey; (ii) Turkey has provided support to different terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda and ISIS; (iii) Turkish-backed forces kidnap and rape women with impunity in the occupied Syrian territories and that Turkey protects ISIS veterans. Further, the petitioner claims that Turkey mismanages the migrant and refugee influx and that Turkey breaches the territorial sovereignty of Greece and its exclusive economic zone. In addition, the petitioner claims that President Erdogan is transforming Turkey into an authoritarian Islamic state and alleges that over 80,000 Turkish citizens were arrested after the attempted 2016 coup d'état and many of them are still imprisoned without a fair trial and that Turkey reinstated the Night Watchman of Female Ethics which sanctions the moral behaviour of women in Turkey. The petitioner requests the European Parliament to impose sanctions on Turkey and force it to immediately cease all activities that undermine international peace and

security.

2. Admissibility

Petition 0830/2020 declared admissible on 13 November 2020. Information requested from Commission under Rule 227(6).

Petition 0930/2020 declared admissible on 4 December 2020. Information requested from Commission under Rule 227(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 22 November 2021

Petitions 0830/2020 and 0930/2020

The Commission's observations

In light of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, in July 2019, the Council decided upon a number of measures, including a reduction in EU financial assistance to Turkey, the suspension of the negotiations on the Air Agreement, and not to hold for the time being the EU-Turkey Association Council as well as further meetings of the EU-Turkey high-level dialogues¹. The EU further adopted a framework regime for restrictive measures (sanctions) against Turkey in November 2019², and decided in February 2020³ to list two individuals under this sanctions regime. The sanctions consist of a travel ban to the EU, and an asset freeze for both persons and entities. In addition, EU persons and entities are forbidden from making funds available to those listed. The Council decided on 6 November 2020 to extend for one year the existing framework for restrictive measures⁴. The EU will therefore maintain its ability to impose additional targeted sanctions on persons and entities responsible for or involved in unauthorised drilling activities of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean.

At its meeting of 10-11 December 2020⁵, the European Council reverted to its conclusions of 1-2 October 2020 on the European Union's relations with Turkey in light of the situation in the

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/07/15/turkish-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-council-adopts-conclusions/>

² Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/1894 of 11 November 2019 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, OJ L 291 12.11.2019, p. 47, and Council Regulation (EU) 2019/1890 of 11 November 2019 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, OJ L 291 12.11.2019, p. 3.

³ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/275 of 27 February 2020 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/1894 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, OJ L 56I, 27.2.2020, p. 5; extended, amended and updated by Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1657 of 6 November 2020 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/1894 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, OJ L 372I, 9.11.2020, p. 16–17.

⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/11/06/sanctions-regime-against-illegal-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-extended-by-one-year/>

⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

Eastern Mediterranean. In the Council Conclusions of 1-2 October 2020, it was affirmed that, should renewed unilateral actions or provocations in breach of international law be continued, the European Council was ready to use all the instruments and the options at its disposal, including in accordance with Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in order to defend its interests and those of its Member States, as well as their sovereignty⁶.

Moreover, the European Council regretted that Turkey has engaged in unilateral actions and provocations and escalated its rhetoric against the EU, the Member States and European leaders. It noted that Turkish unilateral and provocative activities in the Eastern Mediterranean are still taking place, and insisted on sustained de-escalation so as to allow for the early resumption and smooth continuation of direct exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey.

It also invited the High Representative and the Commission to submit a report on the state of play concerning the EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations and on instruments and options on how to proceed, including on the extension of the listings under the above-mentioned sanctions regime. The ensuing Joint Communication on the State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations⁷ was welcomed and considered at the 25 March 2021 European Council⁸. At this meeting, the members of the European Council recalled the EU's strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey. Concomitantly, leaders welcomed the recent de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean through the discontinuation of illegal drilling activities, the resumption of bilateral talks between Greece and Turkey and the forthcoming talks on the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the United Nations.

The European Council of 25 March 2021 also asked the High Representative/Vice-President to take work forward on the Multilateral Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean. The Conference would offer an innovative platform for regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, which is missing and becoming an increasing necessity.

The EU has also repeatedly urged Turkey, including in its latest annual Turkey 2020 report⁹, to avoid any source of friction or action that would damage good neighbourly relations. The Commission will keep monitoring the situation and addressing these concerns in its bilateral contacts with the Turkish authorities.

With regard to Turkey's involvement in international conflicts, in light of Turkey's unilateral military action in north-east Syria, in its conclusions of 14 October 2019¹⁰, the European Council condemned Turkey's military action, which seriously undermined the stability and the security of the whole region, resulting in more civilians suffering and further displacement, and severely hindering access to humanitarian assistance. It also significantly undermined the

⁶ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45910/021020-euco-final-conclusions.pdf>

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0008&from=EN>

⁸ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf>.

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/10/14/council-conclusions-on-north-east-syria/>

progress achieved by the Global Coalition to Defeat Da'esh/ISIS. The Turkish government continued domestic and cross-border security and military operations in Iraq and Syria. However, most recently in the above-mentioned Turkey 2020 report, the EU underlined that, while Turkey has a legitimate right to fight terrorism, it is essential that this is done in accordance with international law and international human rights law, and in full respect of human rights standards and fundamental freedoms. Anti-terror measures need to be proportionate. Additionally, on 3 January 2020, the EU expressed its strong concern over Turkey's decision to authorise military deployments in Libya¹¹.

With reference to human rights violations committed by Turkey, the EU's latest annual Turkey 2020 report remarked the continued deterioration of human rights in Turkey. Human rights organisations and opposition parties continued to report serious violations of human rights by security forces, including instances of torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and unlawful arrest as well as procedural rights violations. The adverse impacts of the two-year long emergency ruling continued to significantly impact democracy and fundamental rights as certain legal provisions granting extraordinary powers to government authorities and retaining several restrictive elements of the emergency rule have been transposed into law. Access to justice remained limited, especially for the dismissed public servants and liquidated legal entities. In this respect, the EU stated numerous times, most recently on 29 August 2020¹², the urgent need for the Turkish authorities to credibly address the human rights situation in the country, which has severely deteriorated in recent years, as well as the serious shortcomings observed in the judiciary. Turkish authorities have yet to effectively investigate and prosecute the cases of at least two dozen people allegedly abducted by state agents¹³.

On the matter of migration, the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016¹⁴ remains valid and should continue to be implemented as the Union's key framework for cooperation on migration. Despite challenges, the swift and efficient mobilisation of the EU contribution equal to EUR 6 billion under the EU Facility for Refugees¹⁵ in Turkey has produced tangible results¹⁶. Millions of refugees are provided with basic needs support, protection, access to health care and education, leading to a significant decrease of loss of human lives, a reduction in irregular crossings and perilous migrant journeys from Turkey to the EU, and to improving the situation of refugees and migrants in Turkey.

While being mindful of the increased migratory burden and risks Turkey is facing on its territory, in its statement of 6 March 2020, the EU Foreign Affairs Council rejected Turkey's use of migratory pressure for political purposes¹⁷.

Conclusion

¹¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/72659/libya-statement-spokesperson-decision-turkish-parliament_en

¹² https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/84536/turkey-statement-spokesperson-death-ebru-timtik_en

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2487

¹⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2020/03/06/>

In response to the unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the European Council decided upon a number of measures and repeatedly urged Turkey to avoid any source of friction or action that would damage good neighbourly relations.

The EU also adopted a framework of restrictive measures against Turkey and listed two individuals under this framework.

The Joint Communication on the State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations¹⁸ outlined the instruments and options on how to proceed, including on the extension of the listings under the above-mentioned sanctions regime.

Following the positive Turkish reaction and de-escalation, the European Council recalled the EU's strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey. Concomitantly, leaders welcomed the recent de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean through the discontinuation of illegal drilling activities, the resumption of bilateral talks between Greece and Turkey and the forthcoming talks on the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the United Nations.

¹⁸ JOIN(2021) 8 final.