

Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini ahead of the Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the European Union with Turkey

 eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria/6422/remarks-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-ahead-meeting-heads-state-or_en

Check against delivery!

We have difficult times. All of us know very well that apart from the meeting of today, both us, Turkey, but also the region, Turkish people, the European people are all living in very difficult times. And I believe it is important to frame the day - that many describe as an important day - to frame the day of today in the broader picture. And it is a broader picture that sees us working closely with Turkey on many difficult issues, and very important for all of us.

From Syria, which is the most urgent one, also because we always say we have to tackle the root causes of the refugee crisis - that is number one, to the internal situation in Turkey. Turkey comes out of a long electoral transition, now we have a government that is there to stay for some years and it is important for us to have a full-fledged dialogue with them on all the relevant issues. Obviously migration and the refugee crisis is one, but also others, including the revitalisation of the accession talks - you know we have been working on opening Chapters.

This comes together with the new investment from the Turkish side on basic fundamental elements like human rights, media freedom, and I would like to stress in particular the need to re-start the Kurdish peace process. This was something that was on the table for two years after an initiative that President Erdoğan took at the time. It is important to revitalise it and the European Union will do this, will give all the support to restart the peace process with the Kurds.

Let me say especially in these hours, after the killing of Mr Tahir Elci - that I would like to stigmatise as a terrible thing and express my condolences and my sympathy to his family, the people that have suffered and are suffering because of his killing: It is important even more today to restart the peace process with the Kurds. It is important for Turkey, it is important for the region, and it is important for the European Union.

So after today we will obviously work on the refugee crisis. There is money that we intend to give to Turkey for the refugees. I would like to make this very clear - and we have done this, are doing the same with Lebanon and with Jordan: to show solidarity in this difficult task of welcoming and protecting refugees on our own territories. But from today onwards we will also - I will personally - work on High Level Dialogue with Turkey comprising all the different and sometimes difficult issues we have on the table with them. All of them, none excluded.

Questions and Answers

On Turkey – Russia tensions after downing of Russian jet.

You know that I called the very same day first of all my friend, the Secretary General of NATO, to make sure that we have same kind of approach - scaling down the risks of escalation and calming and trying to calm down the situation, which was something that NATO I believe did in the meeting held that day. And also I was in contact that very same day with the Turkish Foreign Minister, that I will be happy to see here again today, and with the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov that I will also meet later this week, to make sure that this doesn't affect the political perspectives we have finally found in Vienna with talks that see all of us sitting around the table.

Let me stress this very clearly. It would be a terrible mistake if, out of tensions on the ground that can be very high and very difficult to manage, we cancel or we downgrade the level of diplomatic and political engagement. The real way of defeating Da'esh in the long run is guaranteeing a political transition in Damascus, a ceasefire in Syria and unity of forces inside and outside Syria to fight against Dae'sh and al-Nusra. I believe we have to protect this political space we have finally created.

Does the EU need Turkey more than before?

No, we need each other. Turkey and Europe need each other. We are facing the same problems from the war in Syria, to terrorism to the stability or instability of the region. We need each other. We can be partners. We have to put all the issues we have on the table. All together.

Thanks!

Link to the video:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I113218>