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**TÜRK DELEGASYONU ÜYELERİNİN YAPMIŞ OLDUĞU KONUŞMALAR**

***Free debate – 1 EKİM***

**Gülsün BİLGEHAN**

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*) said that her father had worked as a journalist and that two weeks before she was born he had been sentenced to two years in prison. The jail in which he was imprisoned was now a museum. However a sad tradition of imprisoning journalists still continued in her country.

The European Court of Human Rights had ruled that freedom of speech was a fundamental right. Journalists had a strong interest in upholding this right as they needed to disseminate information. Any restriction on freedom of speech should be extremely narrow.

In Turkey, as in some other countries, journalists were confronted with aggressive attacks and even murder. Thirty journalists had been murdered in Turkey in recent years and only one in 10 of these deaths had resulted in a satisfactory court case. The authorities had not launched any effective inquiries that might lead to the arrest and trial of the murderers. In May 2012 the International Federation of Journalists said that not enough was being done to protect free speech. It was important that governments respected their obligations in this area.

Turkey imprisoned more journalists than any other country. This was largely due to constraints arising from the fight against terrorism, the aftermath of a coup attempt and the situation of the Kurdish population. However many people had been arrested on unsatisfactory grounds and there had been reports of the use of fake fingerprints in such cases.

***Joint debate: (a) for more democratic elections; (b) political parties and women's representation – 2 EKİM***

**Nursuna MEMECAN**

Thank you, Mr President. I wish to congratulate all the rapporteurs and to thank Ms Stavrositu for a well-researched report on women's participation in political parties in member states. Women need to be represented more in decision-making structures but, even more importantly, they need to be heard and included when they make it into such structures. A woman's perspective is vital when taking decisions regarding the whole of society, the future of the next generations and sustainable development. I strongly agree with Ms Brasseur on the issue of quotas, as there are and should be ways of achieving what we want.

I wish to discuss women's political participation in leadership positions and at the grassroots level in Turkey. The level of women's participation as parliamentarians has been increasing in Turkey, from 4% in 2002, to 14% in 2011. That positive trend has been complemented by increased female participation in the country's business, cultural and social life. My Justice and Development party's women's branch is a good example of a grassroots democratisation agent. Some 2.5 million women members are registered, which makes it the biggest women's political organisation in the world. Through its institutionalised organisational structure, women in every

province, village and neighbourhood in Turkey are able to take part and reach out. Millions of traditional rural women and urban women work together to come up with policies to make Turkey a better place for their children. A mutual support system exists between the women.

Women in more senior positions are crucial in supporting women working at the grassroots level, who can be more vulnerable to the constraints of the patriarchal system and lack opportunities for professional growth. Women at the grassroots level who possess knowledge and experience of local dynamics are instrumental in supporting female parliamentarians' engagement in such places. I have benefited from this mutual working structure in my constituency. This solidarity is crucial in promoting the empowerment of women of different backgrounds and resources. Through their engagement, millions of women are exposed to political issues, form opinions, express their views on policy decisions and initiate collective action. They get a say in the governance of their society, they participate and they contribute, building a sustainable democratic process.

One important consequence of all this is the mental shift caused in men, who see women engaged in active political work and contributing to progress in the country. Many men have learned to support their wives through sharing housework and child-rearing duties. They have learned to be proud of the work that the women are doing. This is a true example of grassroots empowerment and democratisation, which can be an inspiration, especially for new democracies emerging in the Middle East. That is because women may face additional obstacles in conservative society.

#### Tülin ERKAL KARA

Ms ERKAL KARA (*Turkey*) paid tribute to the work carried out by Mr Gardetto. Turkey had experienced a number of different political situations before the year 2000, since when democracy had been largely established. However, events had threatened to derail Turkey from its path towards democracy. It was important to prevent Turkey from becoming a victim of an anti-democratic conspiracy.

Steps had recently been put in place to allow voters living outside the country to take part in the next elections. Turkey had a particularly large expatriate population so this would be a major step in increasing participation.

Turkey had been criticised for its 10% electoral threshold: she herself thought a lower threshold would be preferable.

A new constitution was currently being drawn up in order to develop democracy and all parties were involved in this process. She was very confident that Turkey could carry out any necessary changes. The freedom of the media was very important, as was the position of all Council of Europe members. Turkey, a founding member of the Council of Europe, had made significant progress in this area. All political parties were able to access free airtime on television and could now purchase additional airtime.

Some politicians had been accused of criminal activity, most notably of involvement in terrorism or preparation for a coup d'état. Some people had suggested these accusations were politically motivated.

***The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2011-12 (enlarged debate) – 3 EKİM***

Şaban DİŞLİ

I, too, thank Mr Bockel for his extensive report, which provides us with in-depth information on the activities of the OECD in 2011-12. As we all know, the global economy remains in a difficult phase and downside risks are still significant. Growth is slowing in both advanced and emerging economies. In the advanced economies, debt problems, financial systems stress and deleveraging pressures increase the tensions in the euro area.

As mentioned by the rapporteur, one of the most important results of the current economic crisis is the sharp rise in unemployment. In addition, austerity measures adopted by governments, based on further budgetary cuts in social expenditure such as pensions or health services or on a decrease in the number of public employees or on tax increases on consumption, have great potential to affect those members of society who are most vulnerable to its consequences, especially the young, the old, the disabled and lower-income earners.

Of course, the problem is that if people do not see the light at the end of the tunnel, they will not participate. We should understand the psychology of these people. Politics and economics are important, but so too is psychology.

With its immense capacity for objective analysis, the OECD is one of the most respected institutions of the global economic system. Turkey believes that the OECD has many comparative advantages over other international economic institutions. In this context we find meaningful the OECD's "new approaches to economic challenges" initiative, which should analyse the root causes of the crisis and draw lessons from it, and we support the initiative. We welcome the OECD's dialogue efforts with a view to promoting global economic growth, and not only with member states, but with non-member states that hold prominent positions in the world economy. We also welcome the OECD's strategy on development, which sets the basis for the OECD to define a common agenda for global development.

Finally, as we are benefiting from the presence of the OECD Secretary-General today, I ask him to inform us of the organisation's plans for further developing its relations with emerging economies and key partners. Thank you.

***The definition of political prisoner – 3 EKİM***

Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU

I think that everyone in this Chamber agrees that we do not want any political prisoners in the member states. That is why we have been working for that and why the Assembly needed a proper definition of political prisoners. We gave a mandate to our rapporteur and, as he said, he has been working on the report for three years. When we look at the resolution, we see that it is only five paragraphs long, and some of them are amendments from colleagues, especially our Spanish colleagues. He brought it to the committee and to this Assembly as a definition of political prisoners, but I would like to ask whether members see any such definition here.

Please do not connect this to any country. We are a standard-setting Organisation. When we set a standard, we set it not only for the 47 member states, but for the European Union, other international organisations, including the United Nations, the courts, academic circles and think

tanks. Suppose an academic, a judge or a student researcher tries to find a definition of political prisoners on this Organisation's website for their work or research. What they will see are references to previous definitions. Colleagues, we all know that some definitions and criteria were set out before, so why do we need another definition now? It is because we needed to update this one. We are not stupid; the rapporteur does not need to remind us of the previous definitions. We know how to find and access those.

In the three years, did the rapporteur organise any hearings in the committee? No. Did he bring the judges together? No. Did he work with experts or academics? No. Everyone accepts that he was supposed to bring the judges of the Court together to make the proper definition. In the end, he came to the Assembly with what I am sorry to say is nonsense. This is nonsense. This undermines the credibility of this Organisation. We cannot set standards like this. This is not the standard we should be setting. People say that if we do not accept the resolution, the Assembly will lose its credibility. I think that if we do accept it, the Assembly will lose its credibility. Therefore, until an appropriate definition is made after serious work, we should accept the decisions and the standard *acquis* of the European Court of Human Rights, whose judgments we always ask countries to implement. When we make the proper definition we can rely on it. This is not the definition.

### Ertuğrul KÜRKCÜ

First of all I regret to express that I am irritated by the fierceness of the reactions coming from the defenders of the resolution towards those who question their validity and relevance. I doubt these reactions are simply based on extreme concern about the urgency of arriving at a definition of a "political prisoner" and bringing those "political prisoners" under the protection – at least morally — of the Council of Europe.

If that were the case, we should have heard even a single concern in relation to Article 4 of the draft resolution which excludes "Those deprived of their personal liberty for terrorist crimes shall not be considered political prisoners if they have been prosecuted and sentenced for such crimes according to national legislation and the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5)" from the definition. But we have not.

Thus it is hard to believe that those who will vote for the proposed resolution will be bringing additional protection to "political prisoners" of Turkey, almost 99% of whom are jailed under charges of "terrorism." Who can show a human rights-based reason why the Assembly should refuse protection for the dissidents who arbitrarily and unlawfully are charged with "terrorism" in violation of a just trial?

According to official data, there are currently at least 9 000 "terrorists" in Turkish prisons. They are there "according to national legislation". Almost 90% of them are arrested, in the absence of evidence implicating their involvement in violent actions. In their homes and offices no weapons or similar objects are seized. They are trade union leaders, elected mayors, city council members, municipal council members, workers, teachers, nurses, housewives, students, farmers, journalists and workers and former and present deputies. According to the resolution and the report these people will be considered as political prisoners only under this condition: "Persons accused of terrorist crimes who were, for political motives - this time on the side of the authorities - convicted on the basis of an unfair trial using tainted evidence (such as confessions obtained under torture, or witnesses acting under duress) may well be presumed

political prisoners if there are sufficient indications that such violations have indeed taken place.”

This, given the long and painful operation of the Turkish judicial mechanism simply means these people could have been called only “former political prisoners” if their status was redefined by the European Court of Human Rights for they would have completed their sentences when their case would have been decided by the European Court of Human Rights.

I see no reason why a resolution, practically rewarding unlawful charges of a government which exploits the loopholes in national legislation, would deserve my support. Why should I support this resolution while the workers of my election campaign are now in jail under irrelevant charges of “terrorism”, but they are simply neglected by this resolution for “they have been prosecuted according to national legislation”? Those defenders of the resolution have no response to this question.

***Urgent debate: The European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria – 4 EKİM***

Ertuğrul KÜRKCÜ

I thank the rapporteur for the report and explanatory memorandum. The data in the memorandum show that since we last discussed the situation in Syria on 26 April, it has worsened. It seems highly likely that the whole of Syria will soon turn into ruins, leading to humanitarian disaster on the outskirts of Europe should events continue at their present pace. The draft resolution is correct to demand that the conflicting parties “arrive as rapidly as possible at a cease-fire, the necessary precondition for any political solution”. The Assembly should hear that call and bring about practical means for a cease-fire as soon as possible rather than making useless calls for foreign intervention to introduce regime change.

The second important point in the draft resolution is the appeal to the international community to make a generous and most urgent response to the calls to assist refugees. It should respond and should consider where the aid is going to establish whether it goes to the people or to the warlords. That should be done because the people of Syria are paying the price of a miscalculated US-backed proxy war to realign forces in the Middle East. Their plight stems not only from the Assad regime’s ruthlessness, but is an inevitable consequence of a revolt that was apparently encouraged by the United States in a miscalculated manner with no apparent political programme or reliable leadership, never mind any political calculation of a possible outcome.

The recommendation to establish an authorised zone is hardly compatible with the aforementioned measures, which could, I hope, point towards a possible solution and provide a step along the way to the restoration of stability. The declaration and protection of an authorised zone is a political and military action based on the use of military force that could be sustained only through sophisticated weapons systems and the co-operation of the land and air forces of several countries, which in turn implies the internationalisation of the conflict and poses the risk of turning the Syrian civil war into a regional and international conflict.

The recent exchange of gunfire across the Turkish-Syria border, which cost the lives of innocent civilians, only goes to show how volatile the situation could become if international intervention were encouraged. Measures to prevent the bombing of Syrian civilians, as the recommendation envisages, should thus be sought not through military means, but in the political, economic and

diplomatic force of the member countries of the Council of Europe as we pursue a truce between the parties in the conflict.

On the other hand, paragraph 23 of the report, if we look through Ankara's glasses, misses an opportunity to examine the functional model for the reunification of a secular, pluralistic, multi-ethnic and democratic Syria that is now emerging in western Kurdistan – or northern Syria, if you like. By repeating Ankara's baseless charges that labelled as terrorists some Kurdish bodies in that region, the report reflects the total ignorance of the ongoing transformation in the multi-ethnic Syrian social landscape. The democratic autonomy that now embraces that former region of Syria, notwithstanding the rapporteur's false claims that they are considered terrorist by the US although they are under the leadership of neither militarists nor politicians, poses a threat for the Turkish people and the region. Instead of stigmatising the sole peaceful and democratic side-effect of the ongoing Syrian crisis, the Assembly should recognise Rojavayê in western Kurdistan as a partner in a peaceful solution.

### Şaban DİŞLİ

Thank you, Mr President. Dear colleagues, yesterday at about 4.30 p.m., the town of Akçakale, near Turkey's border with Syria, was hit by artillery fire from Syrian regime forces. Five civilians were killed and nine were injured, with the dead said to include a woman and her three children. Turkish armed forces on the border responded immediately to this atrocious attack, doing so within the rules of engagement, and locations in Syria determined by radar were hit with artillery fire.

Following the incident, the Turkish Foreign Ministry immediately started to take diplomatic steps with international institutions. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu contacted UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Foreign Ministers of some UN Security Council members and the NATO Secretary General. NATO convened an urgent meeting last night to discuss the situation and made a statement strongly condemning the shelling. It expressed the organisation's readiness to stand by Turkey in this situation where there has been a flagrant breach of international law and where there is a clear and present danger to one of NATO's members. While we are having this debate, the Turkish Parliament is also convening an urgent meeting in Ankara.

In fact, Akçakale has been fired on several times in the past few weeks. As members will all recall, at the time of our June part-session an unarmed Turkish military aircraft was shot down by Syrian forces. As was stated to the international community following the downing of the military aircraft, Turkey will never leave unanswered such provocations aimed at our national security, but we will act within the confines of the rules of engagement and international law.

While we are looking for ways to alleviate the suffering of Syrian internally displaced persons and refugees, the Syrian regime has, once again, extended its aggression beyond its borders, threatening regional and international peace and stability. Today, as we would expect, not a single Council of Europe member state is showing any sign that might be interpreted as implicit support for this regime's atrocities. This is the third time that Turkey has been the target of Syrian aggression. If there is ever to be European solidarity and a stand taken against brutality, today is the day for it.

So we call on the Assembly's President, Mr Mignon, to condemn this latest attack in the strongest way possible – he has already done this but if there are other ways of doing it, I ask

him to use them. We also appeal to you, the representatives of the national parliaments, to act in full solidarity with Turkey and support all the suggestions that Mr Santini made in his speech. It is only with such an understanding that we can send a strong message to the Syrian regime and show that Europe is united against tyranny.

Nursuna MEMECAN

I thank the rapporteur and members of the Assembly for this debate; it is encouraging to hear members' willingness to take more responsibility in relation to humanitarian assistance for Syrians. Turkey has been among those most directly affected by the consequences of the ongoing civil war in Syria.

Turkey maintains an open border policy for Syrians fleeing the violence in their country – we have just heard some colleagues criticising Turkey for not lifting the geographical restriction on the relevant refugee convention. I remind members that Turkey accepts all people fleeing the Syrian regime, regardless of their status or whether they fall under the refugee convention. Therefore, I urge colleagues to support Amendment 6, which would delete paragraph 9 of the report.

Since the beginning of the events in Syria in March 2011, more than 133 000 Syrians have fled to Turkey and around 40 000 have returned of their own free will. As of 1 October 2012, 93 000 Syrians are being accommodated in 13 shelters in Turkey, where they are provided with three meals a day, schooling, health and sports services, and psychological assistance. Children have their own playgrounds and students are given the opportunity to attend university.

Those who have visited the camps so far – among them the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, UN special envoy Angelina Jolie and a four-member delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, headed by Christopher Chope – have praised the efforts of the Turkish authorities, the conditions in the camps and the services provided. Angelina Jolie said that the children were the happiest of those in the camps she had visited so far. In addition, about 30 000 Syrians are living outside the shelters but are also under temporary protection. Turkey has so far spent more than \$350 million on the temporary protection of Syrians.

I must say that I was annoyed and disappointed to hear our Swedish colleague, Ms Hägg, refer on Monday to the conditions in the camps as “unacceptable”. I have contacted our authorities and, contrary to her claim, found no record of her accessing the camps, and we have been informed of no official complaints transmitted by her, or by anyone else, to the local authorities in the region about any incidents of rape, sexual abuse or forced marriages. We would take immediate action if there were any such complaints. I repeat the call I made during the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, which was that those who wish to visit the camps would be welcome to do so, with the rules and regulations and the privacy of the Syrians being respected. The situation means that it is becoming more difficult for neighbouring countries to meet the growing challenge. It is now time to focus on steps to be taken with Syria without undermining international humanitarian law.

I will make one last remark about the security vacuum in northern Syria, which is being abused by the terrorist organisation the PKK and its affiliate, the so-called Kurdish Democratic Party. In recent months, Syrian-sponsored terrorist elements have murdered hundreds of innocent

civilians in Turkey, including women and children. We therefore expect the support of the international community in helping Turkey combat PKK terrorism.

Let us hope that Assad's violence against his people will end soon. I hope that the international community will take more responsibility in sharing the burden through financial means and by hosting refugees. Until then, Turkey will not hesitate to continue with humanitarian assistance to Syrians.

### ***The right to freedom of choice in education in Europe – 4 EKİM***

#### **Gülsün BİLGEHAN**

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*) was grateful to the rapporteur for the patience and kindness she had shown to her fellow members of the Committee, which had been supported by an excellent secretariat. The Committee had been virtually unanimous in its conclusions in respect of students, fairness, and fundamental values. One issue that had occupied her mind was when students would be able to learn autonomously and not necessarily follow the wishes of their parents. Safety nets provided by the state were necessary and possible. All states provided some support for education, and it was only a minority of 10 which did not give any funding to private schools. This was certainly an important report and she looked forward to what would be an interesting debate.

#### **Tülin ERKAL KARA**

Ms ERKAL KARA (*Turkey*) congratulated the rapporteur on her extremely objective work. She supported the freedom to choose education and it was incumbent upon governments to provide the legislative and practical framework needed to realise it. It was important to explore how value could be added to education for economic reasons. Turkey needed to make the most of its human capital for the sake of its economy. Currently, the country could not cope with structural change without wider reform. Young people were a greater proportion of the population in Turkey than in most of Europe, and this had an impact on the labour market. The advantages of the freedom to choose education included a broader potential choice of schools. Education was the bedrock of a democratic society. Private education if not properly managed could lead to indoctrination of views contrary to European values. The increase in the numbers of students in the private sector in Turkey was a source of concern; at present private schools had a 2% share. The resources of the state were insufficient to cater for the total need for education, and the private sector needed a more prominent role. Measures had been announced to boost the private sector, and she hoped this would happen quickly.

### ***Current affairs debate: the Safarov case – 4 EKİM***

#### **Ahmet Kutalmış TÜRKEŞ**

The relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia has been troubled for decades because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The escalation of that conflict to a full-scale war has always remained a real possibility. Despite the gravity of the situation between the two countries, peaceful resolution of the conflict has not been achieved.

The Safarov case has again put the region on a knife edge. The threat of aggression from Armenian officials and the recognition of the disputed region are reigniting the conflict. Despite



the legality of the extradition of Safarov by Hungarian and Azerbaijani officials pursuant to Article 12 of the European Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, the political repercussions of the extradition should be neither neglected nor exaggerated.

The peaceful resolution of the conflict needs restraint, particularly on the Armenian side. Seeing itself as the victor in the conflict, Armenia does not refrain from making threats of aggression. It should not be forgotten that resorting to aggression based on long years of hatred and grievances is very easy, whereas such hasty behaviour will only turn more Azerbaijanis and Armenians into statistics in the death tolls and reports on internally displaced peoples.

The murder committed by Ramil Safarov should not be used to draw attention away from the human tragedy that continues unabated in the region. It is evident that the conflict does not benefit anyone, particularly Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The international community should help those on both sides to solve this conflict, rather than freezing it again.

Let me remind members that from 1973 to 1987, Armenian terrorist organisations organised 170 attacks and as a result killed 31 Turkish diplomats. They also caused the death of 39 civilians and wounded more than 500. Even in France, Turkish diplomats and numerous French citizens were killed by Armenian terrorists.

My point is that we have never heard any Armenian official, parliamentarian or person condemn in any way the killings of Turkish diplomats at the hands of Armenian terrorists. On the contrary, they were glorified, awarded and respected like heroes. Now, I see that our Armenian colleagues are hurt. I see that they understand how painful it is. I therefore ask them to stop using this case as a political tool and to sit together with their Azerbaijani colleagues to overcome their differences.

### ***Restoring social justice through a tax on financial transactions – 5 EKİM***

#### **Burhan KAYATÜRK**

I thank the rapporteur and wish her success in her new role. I believe that a tax on financial transactions would be counterproductive in overcoming the economic crisis, and would therefore not bring social justice. First, the reasons for the European economic crisis should be accurately diagnosed. Unlike the 2007 US financial crisis, the European crisis is about lending money to some overrated borrowers. The same would have happened even if there was a tax on financial transactions.

Would levying such a tax solve that Europe-wide systemic error, or would it lead to unexpected results? It is a known fact that the European Central Bank's refinancing operation did not make the financial sector lend more money to the real sector. In fact, in this volatile environment of distrust, a tax imposed on financial transactions would sever the already weakened links between the financial and real sectors. That is why the ECB has already announced an outright monetary purchase programme.

I believe that Turkey's experiences can offer some valuable insight into how to tackle these problems. In 2001 the unregulated banking sector, coupled with high budget deficits, resulted in the worst economic crisis that Turkey has ever faced. The result was a loss of jobs and social chaos. Turkey decisively applied a reform programme focusing on the regulation of the banking sector and the reduction of inflation. Our banking system has been safe and sound due to these regulations for the past 10 years, surviving the global financial crisis. Today the Turkish

banking system and its economy are performing more successfully than many other national economies.

In conclusion, the solution to the economic crisis and the way to restore social justice is not levying taxes but establishing functional institutions that will prevent irrational exuberance from infecting the free market.

***Joint debate on the consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area, and governance of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area – 5 EKİM***

Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR

I was astonished to read in the addendum that in Turkey there are violations of academic freedom. As a full professor of structural mechanics who has carried out academic research and teaching in Turkish universities for 20 years, I want to declare that that allegation is incorrect. Academic freedom consists of scientific freedom, financial freedom, administrative freedom and teaching freedom, which have all become more broadly available in Turkey over the past 10 years. Higher education institutions in Turkey have complete freedom to conduct research freely and to determine who may teach, what may be taught and how it should be taught. Over the past 10 years, university scholarships have increased sixfold and universities' budgets have increased fivefold. In 1981, Turkey had only 28 universities. Today, we have 168. The scientific research council's budget has increased eight times in the past couple of years and I want proudly to underline the fact that 42% of all academics in Turkey are women. However, according to the European Commission, the proportion of female professors in EU member states is only 15%.

The allegation in the addendum that several scientists in Turkey are in prison on political grounds is not true. Those professors are in detention because of their possible involvement in the Ergenekon coup case linked to the deep state structure whose motive was to overthrow the government and establish an ultra-nationalist regime. The court ordered the continuation of their detention because other suspects in the case had previously absconded from Turkey to foreign countries and because the evidence could become obfuscated.

In my country, Turkey, there were military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997. In 1960, the military overthrew the Democrat Party government, which had obtained 57% of votes in the elections, and arrested all the ministers as well as the parliamentarians. Some 107 members of the parliament were tried and given the death penalty, one of whom was my uncle, Kamil Gündeş. Like me, he was the deputy of the province of Kayseri. In 1961, the prime minister and two cabinet ministers were executed by hanging. Only last month, several generals of the Turkish army were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for their involvement in the "sledgehammer" military coup plan.

Distinguished colleagues, I have told you this because I want to request you all to take the side of democracy in Turkey and support our sub-amendment, which would delete the word "Turkey" from paragraph 9 of the addendum. Thank you.

## Nursuna MEMECAN

Inventions, innovations and social and cultural advancements are majorly owed to higher education. I congratulate the rapporteur on his points in this report, which aims to ensure the independence and free spirit of higher education institutions. Unfortunately, however, he fell into the trap that is typical in many of the reports produced here, losing the focal point and damaging the credibility of the report. The addendum names and defames two countries, Turkey and Ukraine, with totally false and irrelevant information in the case of Turkey. The addendum is a product of domestic politics and unfortunately was inserted without paying due attention to its content and lays the ground for unfair accusations about Turkey.

I take this opportunity to briefly clarify the issues and ask my colleagues here to reject Amendment 1, in which Turkey and Ukraine are singled out and defamed. Turkey actually needs praise for investing enormously in higher education, as my colleague has just explained. As an additional note, the budget of TUBITAK, the scientific research institution, has been raised eightfold, the number of techno parks has increased to 32 from two and the R&D budget has tripled in 10 years. University tuition fees have been removed to accommodate more students. No student is detained for peaceful demonstrations; they are charged only when they resort to violence.

The addendum mentions the issue of the Turkish Academy of Sciences, TUBA, which was founded in 1993 as an autonomous institution. Since its establishment TUBA has remained inactive, with only 70 full members out of a possible 900 scientists. The necessary reform of TUBA in 2011 is in line with the government's ambitions to boost scientific research and technological innovation in Turkey. After the restructuring in 2011, TUBA now continues its activities with financial, administrative and scientific autonomy and is becoming more pluralistic and dynamic, with 150 full members and 150 associate members.

As my colleague has just explained, the addendum also mentions Professor Haberal, who has been charged over his involvement in the Ergenekon coup case. It is totally irrelevant to include this in a report entitled "Governance of Higher Education Institutions" while the court case is going on.

Turkey has aspirations and makes the necessary investments to be competitive in the higher education area in Europe. The unfair defamation in paragraph nine will only be totally counterproductive to science in Turkey and in Europe. Again, I ask my colleagues to reject Amendment 1.

## Gülsün BİLGEHAN

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*) said that these important reports asserted the principle of academic freedom, and particularly that of students. That the European Higher Education Area had been a success had been proved by Mr Flego's report. Exchanges were now possible on the basis of common values, although some obstacles remained. These obstacles included language problems, different academic calendars and, in particular, the difficulty of obtaining visas. Some Turkish students who had been accepted on Erasmus programmes had not been able to leave the country, and a visa facilitation scheme was needed. Mr Flego's report had drawn attention to violations of academic freedom and the independence of higher education institutions in Turkey. In 2011 the Turkish Academy of Sciences had been brought under the aegis of the Minister for Science, and was now appointed by him. This was as ridiculous as the

Minister appointing the national football team. As a result, top academics had left the academy to set up their own organisation. Academics should not be imprisoned because of their views, a development which had been observed in Turkey by NGOs. She was appalled by this situation. She had recently attended an award ceremony for diplomas in Ankara, where many of the most brilliant students had been women, which was a source of great hope for the future.