

**29 Eylül 2014**

*Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee*

*Observation of the presidential election in Turkey (10 August 2014) (continued)*

Ms BİLGEHAN (Turkey)\* — Thank you, President.

Colleagues, I congratulate the chair and members of the ad hoc committee, who have done a very professional job with regard to Turkey. The report reflects their care. The election was particularly important. The tradition since the founding of the republic of Turkey, which celebrates its 91st anniversary soon, was for the president of the republic to be elected by the parliament, yet the Turkish election on 10 August allowed the electorate for the first time to elect their president through direct universal suffrage. That will perhaps give the new president a stronger legitimacy, morally speaking, but it does not confer any new powers or prerogatives on him as there is not yet a new constitution. Indeed, the law on the presidential election adopted in 2012 was not aligned to the rest of Turkish law, which leads to some ambiguity in practice.

Finally, the 10 August presidential election was conducted in a rather Turkish way. The processes on polling day were considered to be free and fair according to the values of the Council of Europe. Some 53 million Turks voted in a relatively calm, normal atmosphere, but as the ad hoc committee underlines in its report, an election process is not just about polling day. The members of the committee clearly realised that there was inequality between the three candidates. The prime minister was very much advantaged compared with his two rivals. The funding of the campaign, and the lack of ceiling for that funding, the misuse of administrative resources and the prime minister's job for electoral purposes, and unfair media coverage all lent grist to the mill of the prime minister, who conducted his campaign without having to leave his post. Whereas the media were supposed to be impartial and balanced in their coverage, the prime minister was omnipresent on all media. The air time given to the other candidates was most unfair. It is strange that the favourite never accepted an invitation to a live debate between the three candidates, despite the other candidates calling upon him to do so. Citizens who live abroad were entitled to vote for the first time, but because of problems that we have read about in the report, only about 10% of them did so. The election was also held right in the middle of the holiday, so the turnout, which is normally very high in Turkey, was lower than it was in many other years. Despite all the advantages that he had, and recognising the weakness of the opposition, the prime minister received only 52% of the vote and only just carried the day in the first round. Once again, I think that the result shows that the president needs to make a big effort to become the leader of all Turkey, which is now very polarised.

Mr DENEMEÇ (*Turkey*) – Dear colleagues, on 10 August 2014, a presidential election was held in Turkey. That was the first time that the president of the republic was elected by popular vote. Candidates were able to campaign freely and the election was held under well regulated conditions. Mr Erdoğan won the election with 51.8% of the vote.

I would like to shed light on some findings that criticised the media coverage, the campaigning period and financing, and the use of administrative resources. It is claimed that

media coverage of the campaign was biased in favour of Mr Erdoğan. Prime Minister Erdoğan pursued huge election rallies in more than 30 cities including Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, addressing millions of people. On the other hand, 14 opposition parties – including the main opposition parties and the second-biggest opposition party in Turkey – jointly declared support for one of the candidates. However, the report completely ignores the fact that none of those parties, even the main opposition party, organised a rally for their candidate. Neither does the report take the 14 party leaders' TV time into account. By the way, some private media organisations did not broadcast Mr Erdoğan's rallies, in line with their policies.

On another allegation, I want to clarify that Mr Erdoğan did not have to resign from his post, so he continued to carry out his responsibilities as Prime Minister, during which time he did not campaign. The meetings held as part of his presidential campaign were announced. It is crucial to point out that the report unfortunately contains a factual mistake. The report underlines the official start of the campaign as 31 July, as decided by the Supreme Board of Elections. However, according to all the decisions of that board, the campaign period officially started on 11 June. The 10-day period is to do with the restrictions of campaign regulations in which Mr Erdoğan did not use any administrative source, in accordance with the law.

In terms of campaign financing, every detail of the invoices and vouchers for all expenditure has been checked by the SBE, which further increases the accountability of election expenditures. I would also like to point out that the coalition candidate was not drawn from among politicians and nobody knows him. However, Mr Erdoğan is known, and the ruling party has 9.5 million registered voters. If every one of them paid €2, he might reach that kind of foundation.

**29 Eylül 2014**

***Free Debate***

Mr DİŞLİ (*Turkey*) – I want to talk about humanitarian assistance to Syria. The ongoing crisis in Syria and recent developments in Iraq have led to huge population movements from and within these countries. About 2.8 million Syrians took shelter in neighbouring countries, while almost 6.5 million have been internally displaced. In addition, the violence in Iraq opened a new chapter in the humanitarian tragedy in the region and caused further movements, which we will discuss on Thursday in an urgent debate.

We have opened our doors to Syrian people without discrimination. Turkey has been exerting great efforts to ease the sufferings of people fleeing the violence in Syria. There are more than 1.4 million Syrian guests in Turkey now, and we are working hard to provide them with better conditions and are maintaining an open border policy. There are more than 220 000 Syrians registered in 22 shelters in Turkey, and all their needs are being provided for by our government. The financial burden on the government has exceeded \$3.5 billion. We are also assisting the Syrians living in towns outside the shelters by providing basic services, such as free health care, but these people, especially the children, are in a very difficult situation. Many are begging on the streets, but we cannot do much for them. They need to be taken into shelters and returned to their families.

Also, we are trying to extend humanitarian relief to the northern parts of Syria, even though the Syrian regime is restricting humanitarian action across the border with Turkey. We are ensuring that humanitarian relief reaches the northern part of Syria through the zero point of the border in conformity with international obligations and in support of the UN campaign. The total value of the aid channelled to Syria through this operation is about \$300 million. The developments around the southern border of Turkey present great financial challenges. We remain committed to continuing our contributions, but this challenge entails solidarity and responsibility in burden sharing. Thank you.

**29 Eylül 2014**

***Free Debate (Addendum)***

Mr DENEMEÇ (*Turkey*) – The recent developments in Palestine, particularly the Gaza crisis, have shown once again that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the core problems in the Middle East. Human tragedy unfolded in Gaza before the eyes of the international community. Israel's attacks started on 7 July, and the later military operation on the ground resulted in the deaths of almost 2 000 Palestinians, with almost 11 000 people injured, including many women and children.

From the outset of the Israeli attacks, we have made collective efforts with our international partners to stop the Israeli aggression and achieve an agreed ceasefire in the region. At this point, we should all encourage and call the parties to respect this ceasefire; this could enable a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. It is also important that a sustainable ceasefire takes into account the legitimate demands and expectations of the Palestinian people. In this respect, ending the blockade and lifting all restrictions in Gaza should be the main priority. The Palestinian National Unity Government should assume its responsibilities on the whole Palestinian territory, supported by the international community. A lasting calm in the region can serve as a prelude for the revitalisation of efforts toward a just, comprehensive and permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While giving political support to the ceasefire efforts, we will continue with our intensive humanitarian aid operations to the benefit of Palestinians who live in extremely difficult circumstances. Turkey will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Gaza, including food, medicine and fuel. We are transferring the wounded from Gaza to Turkey for treatment and we are working on new assistance projects such as supplying electricity to Gaza and building field hospitals there. Turkey will resolutely continue its efforts, in cooperation with its international partners, to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian conflict.

**30 Eylül 2014**

***Counteraction to manifestations of neo-Nazism***

Ms ERKAL KARA (Turkey)\* – In order to combat neo-Nazism, you have to understand the root causes and take a hard look at the present state of European society. The economic crisis, unemployment, the material difficulties with which many Europeans are confronted – all this has no doubt contributed to the rise of neo-Nazism and other forms of intolerance.

It is against minorities that different forms of intolerance and extremist violence are aimed, yet in Norway we saw that such violence does not necessarily discriminate in that way: it can be directed against anyone. Europe must continue to combat any form of discrimination, intolerance or violence aimed against individuals or groups. We need to concentrate first and foremost on prevention by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices through education and awareness-raising. At the same time, it is also important to protect victims of violence and hatred and to ensure access to effective justice for them. If we do not protect individuals and minorities, especially immigrants, against such violence, it will increase. Victims will not turn to the police if they believe that the crimes committed against them will not be properly investigated, and that will have a negative impact on the integration process. Because of such impunity, the perpetrators of such crimes will not be afraid and will repeat their criminal activities. States therefore need to introduce more measures aimed at integration.

Because of the current economic and political atmosphere, States are turning away from such efforts, which is a grave mistake that can undermine social harmony in Europe. It should not be forgotten that immigrants are a primary source of wealth for Europe.

**30 Eylül 2014**

### **Women's rights and prospects for Euro-Mediterranean co-operation**

Ms ERKAL KARA (Turkey)\* – First, I would like to thank Ms Saïdi for the work she has put into producing this excellent report. One sometimes forgets this, but women were among the major actors in the Arab Spring. They started up this political wave and actively supported the ensuing democratic revolutions. The events that occurred in the countries of that region in 2011 showed that there is a new, very active model of female participation. Women of all categories and social conditions went down into the streets to combat not only tyranny and the injustices of States, but the conservative principles of the societies in which they live.

There is no doubt that certain States in the area must make further reforms at a legal level, but one should also totally rethink social relations in order to guarantee equality between the sexes in people's minds. Women have to shed this image as a particular minority that was placed upon them in order to re-integrate their full role within peoples. One should not think that women represent a separate social category without any connection with national concerns. When problems are defined as concerning women alone, many men thus conclude that they have no reason to show concern, or that they have nothing to contribute or to obtain.

Be they veiled or not, be they conservative or liberal, be they active women or women at home, all women went down into the streets showing that such questions are not limited to just one group, to just a single ideology or to just a single point of view. I hope that these actors will remain united and that the countries of the region will not be deprived of the ways and the people that created them.

Finally, when talking about women's rights, we should avoid adopting a language that associates Islam with retrograde ideas and with the submission of women.

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – I too begin by congratulating our dear colleague, Ms Saïdi, on her constructive and optimistic report and the Secretariat on its painstaking work.

Three years ago, women played a major role during the uprisings that subsequently led to the Arab Spring. They were actively involved in protest movements. They used social networks and even financially supported the rebellion. There is the touching example of the Libyan women who sold their jewellery in order to help defray the costs of the battle against the regime. However, three years after so many sacrifices, this crucial question lies at the heart of our concerns: have women's rights in the region gone backwards or have they been improved? According to Ms Saïdi's report, it is a mixed bag and the situation varies between countries. The example of countries such as Tunisia and Morocco, which co-operate closely with the Council of Europe, is heartening, but there is a long way to go.

Let us look first at the situation in legislative terms. There have been significant advances in Tunisia in respect of the principle of gender equality following the adoption of the new constitution. Women are no longer viewed as complementary to men. Article 46 compels the Tunisian State to make this principle of equality effective. Here we need to stress the contribution of the Venice Commission, which broadly supported the democratic aspirations of the country. In Morocco, people have been talking of Moudawana for 10 years. I was in the Council at the time, and I remember the long debates that took place then. The family code was a major step forward for women's rights, but enforcement leaves much to be desired. For example, there are a high number of child marriages. People can marry at the age of 13 or 15. None the less, the Moroccan constitution took an important step in enshrining the principle of gender equality in article 19. An authority was even set up for gender equality and combating all forms of discrimination.

We should recall, however, that Tunisia and Morocco have not yet withdrawn their reservations on CEDAW. In Algeria and in Libya, many changes have been made to the law, but inequalities persist. As in several countries in the region, polygamy is now legal in Libya whereas it was prohibited under the old regime. Moreover, the conditions for requesting divorce and parental authority are much more stringent for women than for men. In general terms, political participation of women is supported in the region. There are several systems of quotas. Likewise, it is interesting to note that many women pursue their studies, but paradoxically women's participation in economic life remains weak. Similarly, there is still a great deal of violence against women but there has also been a great deal of progress.

We made similar legislative amendments in Turkey a few years ago. However, we know that it is easy to adopt laws but still very difficult to change mindsets. Ms Saïdi rightly points out that it is always possible to backslide on human rights, and these countries are still in the throes of transition. We should understand that imported solutions are unsuccessful and these countries need to find their own way. The Council of Europe will be alongside them, and the sharing of experience will benefit all parties.

**30 Eylül 2014**

***Joint debate on Good governance and enhanced quality in education; and Raising the status of vocational education and training***

Mr GÜLPINAR (*Turkey*)\* – It cannot be denied that the challenges that we face today, such as the economic and financial problems, rising xenophobia and greater empathy for radical groups, remind us of the importance of quality education. It is a key factor in social cohesion and economic development. In that context, the quality of education and the status of professional training need to be examined in depth with a view to tackling those problems effectively. Consequently, I thank the rapporteurs for having addressed those crucial global themes in the report.

On improving the quality of education, I will mention a number of points covered in the report. I am convinced that education is one of the most important fields where discrimination should be entirely eliminated. Equality of opportunity should be granted to all segments of society, which would guarantee social cohesion. Educational programmes should be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all. Migrants and minorities should also be taken into consideration in the shaping of educational policies. Through that, global success in education could be achieved. It is fundamental that discriminatory expressions should be removed from textbooks, as such expressions contribute to xenophobic acts.

Apart from the content of educational programmes, we should undertake to ensure equality, which should be guaranteed through good governance. Teachers should perform their responsibilities in an egalitarian way and not discourage certain students, particularly migrant students, from pursuing and continuing their studies. The elimination of discrimination provides equality of opportunity for all children and is one of the most important dimensions in the quality of education. Discrimination deserves particular attention when one debates educational policies. As parliamentarians, it is our responsibility to look into these matters in our own processes of policy development, so as to create new generations to defend the principles of the Council of Europe.

**1 Ekim 2014**

***The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013-14 (enlarged debate)***

Mr DİŞLİ (*Turkey*) – Thank you, President.

This is a great opportunity to hear the assessments of Secretary-General Gurría on the OECD and the world economy.

Turkey is among the founding members of the OECD and we attach particular importance to the organisation. In order to support the OECD's policies, as well as the reform efforts of partners in various areas, we made a proposal to the Secretariat to establish an OECD competitiveness centre in Istanbul, for which we ask you for your support.

Today, when we examine the global economy, we can still feel the negative consequences of the biggest financial crisis of the last 50 years. But hopefully, as was stated, it is possible to

say that these negativities are declining, since the worst and deepest point of the crisis is over and globally a measurable recovery can be observed.

The main fear is the geopolitical situation in various parts of the Middle East and the tension between Russia and Ukraine.

Turkey's GDP has reached about \$820 billion and the growth was mainly export-oriented. Our exports increased from \$35 billion to \$135 billion. Since 2009 we were able to increase employment; our debt to GDP ratio decreased; much of the growth comes from exports; and our exports are increasing as European markets continue to recover. Turkey is playing a key role in Europe's energy supply security, and will continue to do so.

Finally, starting from 1 December this year, Turkey will have the presidency of the G20 and we are going to host many meetings in our country, including the G20 summit in Istanbul. I believe that this series of events will be an opportunity to share and obtain examples of good economic governance with member countries.

Thank you.

## **1 Ekim 2014**

### ***Current affairs debate***

Mr SELVI (*Turkey*) – Since the last part-session, the crisis in Ukraine has been reshaped by new developments. I stress first that we welcome the Minsk cease-fire agreement of 5 September and the signing of a memorandum regulating the cease-fire provisions on 19 September in Minsk. It is important to respect the cease-fire and comply with the provisions of the agreement, which can serve as a window of opportunity for reaching a lasting political solution to the crisis.

We also welcome the simultaneous ratification of the European Union -Ukraine association agreement on 16 September. We strongly support the reform process in Ukraine and Ukraine's choice to develop its relationships with European institutions at the pace and depth that it prefers.

We expect the parliamentary elections, to be held on 26 October in Ukraine, to help to create a long-serving, inclusive government that paves the way for lasting peace and internal stability by means of a sustainable reform process.

However, despite these positive developments, the indigenous Crimean Tatar people have continued to feel a growing pressure in their own homeland since the illegitimate and illegal annexation of the peninsula. The entry bans to Crimea imposed on the Crimean Tatar leadership and the recent raid by Russian security forces against the Crimean Tatar Mejlis building in Simferopol on 16 September are a clear manifestation of this pressure.

Respecting the rights and freedoms of the Tatar community and allowing the Crimean Tatar Mejlis to function freely is essential for the preservation of peace and stability on the peninsula. We will continue to follow the situation of the Crimean Tatar Turks closely. The international community, too, should work to secure their rights and welfare.

Within the context of this concerning pressure over the Crimean Tatars, I would like to emphasise that peace and stability in Crimea is highly linked to respecting the rights and freedoms of the Tatar community and allowing the Crimean Tatar Mejlis to function freely. Therefore, the isolation of the Crimean Tatars from Ukraine as well as the rest of the world should be rejected and efforts to maintain contact with Crimean Tatars should be made.

Thank you.

## **2 Ekim 2014**

### **The activities of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2013-2014**

Mr SELVİ (*Turkey*) – Dear colleagues, I thank the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy and Sir Suma Chakrabarti for his presentation and for the information he has provided.

As stated in the EBRD's agreement, successful transition of member countries to market-oriented economies is closely linked to parallel progress towards democracy and the rule of law. These two elements are the core values of the Council of Europe and we strongly support these values in every platform. For this reason, as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, we carefully observe the activities of the bank and we believe that our long-term cooperation with it has always been beneficial to both parties.

Since the last report on the bank's activities was presented in 2013, countries in which the EBRD is operating have witnessed political and economic changes. Negative effects of the crises are still felt. The transition countries have to struggle with problems of slow growth, unemployment, stagnation and inflation. This is not a surprise, since even leading economies have not reached their pre-crisis positions. I am confident that, with a global recovery and the sincere efforts of the EBRD, transition countries will be able to have positive developments.

The expansion of the EBRD's activities to countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean is widely welcomed by our group. Future operations that will be carried out in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia will be proof that these countries are capable of carrying out transitions to the open market economy. Their rapid transition could create a positive environment, from which neighbouring countries may benefit.

Finally, in the last report it was stated that there would be more focused political assessment. However, these assessments should be balanced, realistic and fact-based, rather than speculative. This is a crucial point we should care about if we want to help the EBRD with our comprehensive reports.

Thank you.

Mr A. TÜRKEŞ (*Turkey*) – I thank the rapporteur and Sir Suma Chakrabarti for enlightening us on the EBRD's activities. I also congratulate the EBRD on its sound financial results in



2013. The bank has displayed strong resilience to global financial volatility, as reflected in its annual investment of €3.5 billion and net profit level of €970 million.

Turkey's relationship with the EBRD goes beyond finance. Turkey is a founding member of the bank and is represented on its board at director level. Furthermore, in 2013 Turkey successfully hosted the EBRD's 22nd annual meeting of the board of governors in Istanbul. Additionally, the EBRD family in Turkey is growing larger. Alongside the regional office in Istanbul, the offices in Ankara and Gaziantep employ more than 60 staff. The recent opening of the Gaziantep office is an important indication of the EBRD's intention to deepen our engagement and to increase confidence in the future of the Turkish economy. It will also enable the EBRD better to serve the eastern part of our country.

Paragraph 30 of the report addresses the Gezi Park demonstrations from a narrow angle by only highlighting the government's reaction to the demonstrations that caused a wave of protests across the country due to alleged limitations on the freedom of expression and assembly. The protests, which began in the evening hours, clearly violated the scope of the Act on assembly and demonstrations. Certain provocative groups infiltrated peaceful groups with arms, knives and explosives to change the nature of events. Finally, the provocateurs manipulated social media to create false information and allegations.

On the other hand, there were no public protests after December 2013. The Turkish Government is determined to shed light on the accusations regarding ex-government Ministers, so a parliamentary investigation committee has been set up. In addition, the temporary limitations on social media platforms were due to the fact that they have repeatedly ignored numerous court decisions and official applications to remove content that jeopardises the privacy of Turkish citizens and national security.

## **2 Ekim 2014**

### ***The progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (October 2013 – September 2014)***

Mr SELVİ (*Turkey*) – The report contains several thought-provoking ideas and proposals. It is important to introduce a punctual overview of groups of countries by having issue-based, cross-country monitoring in close co-operation with the relevant committees. The monitoring process should be impartial, objective and constructive and should be applied routinely to all members of our Organisation. I welcome the idea of establishing guidelines for the monitoring procedure to eliminate any feeling of unfairness and to increase the transparency of the process. Nevertheless, we should avoid taking counterproductive steps that would undermine the whole spirit of monitoring. Instead of referring to such notions as “negative reports” and “deadlines”, we should adopt a language that encourages the countries concerned to fulfil their commitments and to comply with Council of Europe standards.

A monitoring procedure that proceeded on the basis of deadlines would first neglect the uniqueness of each member country. When completing a certain reform in a specific field, circumstances can differ from country to country. Secondly, it would pave the way for further politicisation of the process. Thirdly, since the Monitoring Committee could decide at any time to subject a country to the monitoring process, imposing deadlines for returning a

country to the monitoring process regardless of the committee's opinion is incomprehensible. That decision should be made by the committee.

So far as the countries under the post-monitoring dialogue process are concerned, assessing their democratic progress by examining each individual commitment separately, rather than as a whole, would contribute to the overall effectiveness of the post-monitoring dialogue process.