



THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Athens, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Ref.: E/392

Your Excellency,

*dear Josep*

I would like to draw your attention to the latest series of inflammatory statements made by the Turkish President, Mr R.T. Erdoğan, quoted as follows:

- "(Greece) Your occupation of the islands is not our concern. When the time comes, we will do what is necessary. As we say, all of a sudden, we can come overnight."
- "Greece, look at history, go back in time; if you go too far, the price will be heavy. We have one thing to say to Greece: Remember İzmir."

These statements were made during two of the Turkish President's recent speeches on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Greek-Turkish War of 1919-1922, in Kütahtya (29.8.2022) and Samsun (3.9.2022) before large audiences. It is to be noted that İzmir, a city with a large Greek population at the time, was destroyed by the Turkish forces in 1922, with very high civilian casualties.

Further to those quoted above, President Erdoğan, referring to the Turkish offensive of August 1922, remarked that the Greek people are as vile today, as they were then. Referring again to the 1922 offensive, he asked his audience: "Are we ready for the attack of 2023?"

These public statements by the Turkish President speak for themselves; they are unprovoked, unacceptable and an insult against Greece and the Greek people. Their openly threatening nature and tone are more than obvious, thus dispelling any doubts as to their intended purpose, as well as any allegations that they are only meant for domestic reasons in view of the next elections in the country. Besides, these statements escalate an extremely aggressive rhetoric by the Turkish President himself, followed by other high-ranking Turkish officials, and constitute the mainstream in Türkiye's official attitude towards my country during the last couple of years; this is the case at a moment our bilateral relations, not on Greece's responsibility, are currently witnessing one of their worst periods for years.

This rhetoric is coupled with a sharp rise of incidents of violation of my country's sovereignty in the Aegean and Southeastern Mediterranean. In fact, for the past few years, Türkiye has been building up its revisionist agenda through a propaganda putting in question the entire territorial status quo as established by Treaties and thus putting at risk regional security and stability.

**H.E. Josep Borrell**

**High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice President of the European Commission**

*In addition to the above, such statements polarize the situation even further and imbue the Turkish people with hatred, enmity and contempt towards their Greek neighbors, thus making the prospects of rapprochement even more elusive. Last but not least, the Turkish leadership has apparently chosen to present future aggression as already prepared and, more importantly, as a justified action on the part of Türkiye. Unless seen in its true dimensions and properly dealt with by the international community, this Turkish overall attitude risks destabilizing our wider region and causing consequences of which the gravity is hard to assess.*

*In this extremely volatile environment, we should not forget that President Erdoğan decided a few months ago to sever all channels of high-level communication with Greece. My country, on its part, always advocates the need for dialogue as the only way to resolve any dispute, especially with a neighboring state, which however, as is known to anyone, maintains a casus belli threat against my country.*

*Your Excellency,*

*This is just a brief account of the current state of play in Greek-Turkish relations. I am at your disposal for any further facts and evidence on the matter.*

*The truth is that Greece, and therefore the EU, is facing again Türkiye's aggressive behavior, expressed both in theory and in practice, something that can be hardly found in any other case of bilateral relations. This behavior should be strongly and unequivocally condemned by the EU, as has been done on several occasions in the past. The EU must demonstrate the appropriate unity, solidarity towards a member-state under threat and, at the end of the day, respect of the rules, principles and values it is guided and inspired by. Failing to do so in time or underestimating the seriousness of the matter, we risk witnessing again a situation similar to that currently unfolding in some other part of our Continent. This is something none of us would really wish to see.*

*Sincerely,*

*Nikos S. Dendias*