



TURKEY-AFRICA: Solidarity and Partnership

On August 19, 2011, under the shining sun of Africa, the plane carrying Prime Minister Erdoğan, his family and a large delegation composed of the different segments of Turkish State and society landed in Mogadishu. This was one of the first international flights destined for Somalia after a very long interval. This flight turned the course of events in Somalia which had been in turmoil for so long with chronic instability and prolonged social strife creating, in turn, serious humanitarian crisis, coinciding with severe drought and famine.

That day, a new partnership was born out of the ashes of civil war and humanitarian disaster. From that time onwards, Turkish and Somali people have been striving intensively shoulder to shoulder to ease the effects of the persisting dire situation and to rebuild the country. The phoenix is now ready to sprout its wings: We are talking about the revival of social, economic and political life in Somalia. The work for a new and better future is in progress.

Turkey has already made a change and working for more change not only in Somalia, but in Africa.

"Africa belongs to Africans, we are not here for your gold" were the remarks of the then Prime Minister Erdoğan when he addressed the Parliament of Gabon in January 2013.

Turkey has never been in a colonial position or relationship with the Continent. On the contrary, African nations looked for help from Ottomans in their struggle against colonial oppressors. Furthermore, it is known that our War of Independence which we fought close to a century ago under the able leadership of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, has had a strong influence on the African peoples in their struggle for liberation and independence. Echoes of this past have been heard all along when the Turkish Navy was making port visits in 24 African nations.

Turkey has never been indifferent to the developments in Africa. History has brought Turkish and African peoples together, created an affinity among them and allowed them to establish strong ties. We have always been in solidarity with the African peoples in their righteous struggle for freedom from colonialism and national independence.

It is always a source of great joy for us to feel that the peoples of Africa have thought of Turkey as a close and friendly country.

Africa, with its centuries long distilled virtue and wisdom, its young and dynamic population and vast natural resources is, above all, a continent of opportunity for the countries and peoples of Africa.

With this fact in mind, Turkey sees Africa as the cradle of civilization and one of the epicenters of the future of humanity. Indeed, we rejoice at the political, democratic, economic social and cultural rejuvenation and process of transformation in so many African countries.

Turkey's first diplomatic representation in sub-Saharan Africa goes back to the very beginning of 20th century, the first Turkish Consulate was established in Harar, Ethiopia. Today, channels of interaction and communication are vastly expanded with around 39 Turkish Embassies across the Continent and Embassies of 32 African countries in Ankara. Yet, a large number of diplomatic representations is only one side of the coin. People to people contacts have also been gaining strength day by day. There are now thousands of people from Africa, studying, working and living in Turkey and vice versa. Turkish Airlines has become one of the major international carriers of the Continent flying directly to nearly 40 destinations. There are ever growing Turkish investments, many being exemplary of their kind in a number of African countries that employ local labor force, use home-produced resources and export final products to third countries. Turkish private businesses will be investing over 100 million USD in the coming 2-3 years in Mogadishu alone. In the last decade, our total trade with the sub-Saharan African countries have increased tenfold in volume.

Since 2005, the year of Africa in Turkey in conjunction with Turkey's Opening Policy towards Africa, there has been increased engagement with the African countries. Turkey has become an important partner for development, trade and investment in Africa.

Today, we undertake all that we can to support effectively the efforts of the African Union and African countries for lasting peace, genuine democracy, sustainable development and welfare for all.

In 2013, Turkey ranked the third in the world after the US and the UK in terms of total humanitarian assistance and the first in terms of the ratio of its development assistance vis-à-vis its GNP, becoming the host nation of the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. Solidarity with African countries plays an important role in this achievement. We have

accomplished almost all the goals we set out to realize following the Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit of 2008.

Turkey's opening policy towards Africa is now successfully completed. We embarked upon a new policy in 2013: Turkey-Africa Partnership which takes the motto of "African issues require African solutions" as the main principle. In the II. Africa-Turkey Partnership Summit to be held in Malabo on 19-21 November 2014, we will lay out the groundwork for the next four years. The theme of the Summit is "A New Model for Partnership for Strengthening of Sustainable Development and Integration of Africa". We will agree on new milestones and objectives in our common quest for further cooperation in the interests of both sides. We will adopt two documents during the Summit: the Declaration and the Joint Implementation Plan for 2015-2018.

As part and parcel of this new Partnership Policy, we pursue a multilayered approach in Africa. We establish close political relations by intensifying bilateral high level visits and, by acting as the voice of Africa, to advocate the rights and the positions of African nations both at bilateral and multilateral fora. We partner with African nations in the economic sphere to overcome their challenges through more trade, investment and humanitarian assistance. Moreover, whenever requested, we stand ready to play our role through diplomacy to contribute to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes. We do not consider ourselves as outsiders to the continent, rather a strategic partner working together to make further advances in the areas of democracy, good governance and prosperity.

Turkey will remain committed to fully supporting the African Union in achieving its goals on the priority areas which will further consolidate African ownership of African issues. That is why we feel that it is a privilege for Turkey to be a strategic partner of the rising Continent of Africa.

Our multifaceted activities and efforts throughout the Continent in the past decade are certainly a clear testimony to our continued determination to further develop our relations and build stronger ties with the African countries, the African Union and the African regional organizations.