



Statement on the situation in Eastern Mediterranean

The Group of the Unified European Left in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in cooperation with GUE-NGL at the European Parliament, convened a remote conference on the increasing tension in Eastern Mediterranean, where the international security situation has recently severely deteriorated.

In that context, Turkey, in its attempts to become a hegemonic peripheral power, has been recently following a very dangerous road in the area, investing in nationalist rhetoric and aggressive unilateral actions, in breach of the international law. It has greatly increased the airspace violations in the Aegean, sent warships to support research of gas deposits near the island of Kastellorizo, and continues to carry out illegal drilling activities within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Republic of Cyprus. Through these illegal actions and unfounded claims over the continental shelf and exclusive economic zones, it dangerously aggravates and militarizes the dispute regarding the related sovereignty claims.

We believe that drilling, processing and consumption of hydrocarbons constitute a major danger with respect to global warming and the climate crisis. A new “Green Deal of sustainability in the Mediterranean” should be developed as a common goal by all progressive forces of the region. Nevertheless, until an anti-capitalistic and anti-nationalistic ecological approach to the issue is globally developed, the related dispute should be resolved through dialogue and on the basis of international law. In that context we urge Turkey to immediately stop unlawful unilateral actions, which, rather than doing any good for the peoples of the region, have fuelled up and militarized historically rooted tensions and furthered its violation of international law, hence isolating Turkey even more from her neighbors and the Mediterranean and EU countries.

The dispute on the economic maritime zones should be resolved by negotiations, based on the Law of Sea, and if these fail, then through the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Depending on Turkey’s choosing the path of respect for international law and peaceful negotiations, a concrete and positive Euro-Turkish agenda should be promoted, including economic cooperation, implementation and upgrading of previous agreements, as well as strategic dialogue on regional issues. As the described crisis reveals the comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem remains crucial for the future of the region and the prospects of a conclusive settlement among the states concerned regarding also the delimitation of maritime zones. Notwithstanding that the recent opening by Turkey of the coastal line of Varosha in violation of UNSC 550(1984) and 789(1992) and the declared intention for their illegal settlement also raise the tension and undermine the prospects of meaningful negotiations, we call upon Turkey to reverse this, refrain from further provocations and commit to the resumption of negotiations on the agreed basis and from where things were left off at Crans Montana (2017), to the benefit of the people of Cyprus as a whole, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. We reaffirm our commitment to the reunification of Cyprus based on a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation with political equality, as this is prescribed by the relevant UNSC Resolutions. Unfortunately, the increasingly aggressive position of the Turkish government and the new

Turkish Cypriot leader, who is now more for a two-state solution, poses a serious risk with respect to the reunification of Cyprus.

The responsibility of progressive parties is not only to promote these proposals, but also to mobilize all pro-peace forces in the countries of the region, as “diplomacy of the peoples” is for us as important as official diplomacy. Hence, we invite all progressive parties and peoples to not remain as silent spectators, but actively engage the issue to prevent nationalistic and right wing populist discourses to dominate the debate.