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Thank you Mr. Chairman/Madame Chair

Distinguished members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to extend my opinion on behalf of the Turkish community of Berlin, one of the biggest Turkish communities in the Federal Republic of Germany.

According to official statistics, permanent Turkish residents in Berlin have a number of 170 thousand. This amount alone obliges the local governments since then to take necessary steps for a cohesive co-existence of Turkish nationals and Germans and other nationalities in the federal capital.

Since the very beginning of the Turkish labor migration to Germany, but especially in the last twenty years, the responsible authorities tried to implement measures to integrate the migrant population in Berlin or elsewhere in the Federal Republic of Germany. I have to indicate that this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the bilateral recruitment agreement between Turkey and Germany. Today, after fifty years, the discussion on the very existence of migrants is still going on.

Most of the efforts of the policy makers and practitioners were in fact outcomes of a social engineering that based upon illusions and non-realistic approaches. Germany represented until the second half of the 2000s a political position that the country was not an immigration country and the immigrants were only on a temporary “visit” in the country.

Consequently, you do not necessarily have to designate profound policies in almost every sector if you think that the immigrants sometime would leave Germany and go back to their country of origin. But this sojourn never ends and the immigrants of the early sixties have now their grandchildren in the country, who are represented in every section of the “host” society. We have for example MP’s, university professors, doctors, engineers and nearly 90

thousand entrepreneurs of Turkish origin, employing 400 thousand employees, not only Turks but also different nationalities in the Federal Republic.

The policy makers have then recognized that Germany in fact was an immigration country and the policy of non-recognition was consequently revised with the new Immigration Law of 2005. Before that, in the year 2000, the Citizenship Law of 1913 with the principle of *ius sanguinis* (blood principle) was changed and entering German citizenship for foreign ethnic individuals was made simple. On the other hand, according to this law dual citizenship for Turkish nationals became almost impossible since 2000.

In spite of some rather affirmative steps, the major approach towards “migration problem”, which was perceived as a “Muslim-Turkish problem”, could not be changed. This major approach prescribes that cultural identities and differences between diverse national groups in the host society should be set on top of the agenda of the integration discussion. An integration policy that is based on a cultural perception of the migration issue undermines in fact the realistic and innovative measures that have to be taken for a cohesive existence of different cultural and national groups since not the social similarities between the groups but the distinctions are being emphasized. This policy, despite all good intentions, relies on an ideologically inapt basis and the debate on the integration of the persons with migration background is being driven beyond the realities and needs of the migrants, who should be more actively involved with their civil society organizations into the decision making process in Germany.

The outcomes of a cultural-difference-oriented integration approach still provokes emotions and xenophobic behaviors in the society. Continuous debating on the integration will and capacity causes for racist sentiments and the public opinion is heavily influenced by to some extent xenophobic media coverage of people with migration background, who are blamed as scapegoats in almost every social problem like unemployment etc.

It is true that the formation of different summits such as “Muslim Summit” and “Integration Summit” with the inclusion of migrants’ associations are good steps forward that have been neglected in the past. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned ideological approach seems to be a major hurdle on the way to success. It would be more appropriate to grant equal rights and opportunities in the social field than propagating a cultural cohesion paradigm, which never

ends and solves existing problems. A more human-rights based approach requires more fairness and welcome culture than the so-called cultural divergence-based policies in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Thank you very much for your attention.