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ENGLISH only

STATEMENT BY TURKEY
In response to the Russian Federation under the agenda item “Current Issues”
(1096th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 14 April 2016)

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

I wish to respond to the statement just made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation. The statement was of a quite harsh tone, by any standard. Being pronounced by the same voice which called earlier today for a moderation of tone in our statements gave it an additional interesting dimension.

I suspect many colleagues found it as difficult as we did to navigate the confused tangle of misinformation that was the Russian statement. So, I will begin by getting a few facts straight.

The Russian delegation’s statement referred to national minorities in Turkey. Since we are using such legal terms, let me remind here that the only minorities in Turkey are the religious minorities defined as such in the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923.

The statement also referred to international humanitarian law, in other words, *ius in bello* or the law of war. It is more than obvious that international humanitarian law does not apply to the context of Turkey’s combat against terrorism.

Another very important distinction that needs to be made is the fact that, as I just mentioned, Turkey is combatting terrorism, and nothing else. We take utmost care to differentiate between PKK terrorism and our population of Kurdish origin. I would expect every State with a minimum of sense of responsibility to heed this distinction, particularly taking into account that the only circle which deliberately attempts to blur that distinction is the PKK terrorist organization itself.

Mr. Chairperson,

I moreover heard no mention in the Russian statement of the casualties sustained by our security forces in the struggle against the PKK, nor of the hundreds of innocent civilians murdered by the PKK in cold blood. We wouldn’t want to believe that the nearly 600 killed and 3,500 wounded by the terrorists in the last 9 months, half of whom civilians, have no

value from the Russian standpoint. That would also be in contradiction with the condolences expressed by the Russian delegation upon terrorist attacks in Turkey which we both welcomed and appreciated. The PKK has bombed crowded squares, dug trenches in the streets, blocked roads and used improvised explosive devices to prevent the provision of public services. It has killed teachers and doctors and damaged schools and hospitals to deprive the public of education and health services. It has used civilians, especially children, as human shields against law enforcement units. This is the kind of terrorism that Turkey is fighting and will continue to fight with resolve and in strict compliance with its international obligations and with international human rights law.

On a final note, let me also state how we enjoy a fully functioning democratic system in Turkey. All our citizens, regardless of ethnic origin or any other parameter, are able to freely express and put forth their needs, grievances and aspirations through the legitimate channels offered by this system. Resorting to violence, on the other hand, is not an option in democratic societies. Whomever resorts to violence will face sanction. I don't think any delegation would disagree.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite all its inaccuracies and its deficiencies, only some of which I highlighted, the statement made by the Russian Delegation went as far as to attempt at pitting allies and partners against us. This is sad at best. With the United States and the EU, mentioned in the Russian statement, we have exchanges on this floor from time to time, involving the expression of genuine concern and constructive criticism which receive equally constructive responses.

The overall picture displayed by the Russian statement, therefore, appears to be some attempt to distract attention from a whole gamut of issues which remain as constants on our agenda, for reasons that are self-explanatory.

I will nevertheless end my statement in our customary constructive tone, by underscoring once again that all participating States may rest assured that Turkey will continue its fight against terrorism in observance of all its obligations, and will continue to expect receiving support from the civilized world in this endeavour.

Thank you.

