

ANKARA STATEMENT

On the Establishment of High Level Strategic Cooperation Council Between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia

On 19 July 2016, the First Meeting of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSC) between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia was held in Ankara, Republic of Turkey, co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Binali Yıldırım, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey and H.E. Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia.

Georgian Prime Minister, on behalf of the Georgian state and government, has strongly condemned the recent foiled coup attempt in Turkey and expressed his full support to the democratically elected Turkish government and democratic institutions. Turkish Prime Minister has expressed his sincere appreciation for the Georgian government's firm position in support of democracy and thanked his Georgian counterpart for his show of solidarity at this critical time. The two Prime Ministers stressed that democratic governance is the only way to maintain domestic, regional and international peace and security, and underlined that Georgia and Turkey as two democratic countries will continue to cooperate for the promotion of democracy in their countries and beyond.

The Prime Ministers;

-Expressed their satisfaction with the development of relations between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia since Georgia has regained its independence, on the basis of the Protocol on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations signed on 21 May 1992, as well as the Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborhood Agreement signed on 30 July 1992,

-Noted also that the relationship between the two countries is much more deep-rooted, taking its strength in particular from the historical ties between the Turkish and Georgian peoples and constitute a unique bridge between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia,

-Reaffirmed their adherence to the universally recognized principles of international law, in particular respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers, as well as cooperation and friendly relations among states,

-*Marked* with pleasure the 25th anniversary of regaining Georgia's independence and while recalling the impressive strides made by Georgia within this period in consolidating its independence and democracy, *underlined* that the achievements recorded in Turkish-Georgian relations is also part of this success story,

-*Stressed*, in this regard, that the strategic partnership between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia today stands out as an exemplary model of mutually beneficial bilateral and regional cooperation covering a wide range of issues and areas, and *reaffirmed* their strong commitment to uphold and further develop this partnership,

-*Welcomed*, to this end, the establishment of the HLSC between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia and *expressed* their full confidence that this mechanism will provide an additional impetus for the further deepening and diversifying of the already excellent bilateral relations, while opening up new avenues of cooperation,

-*Expressed* their pleasure with the signing of a number of agreements at the end of the first meeting of the HLSC and *reiterated* their firm belief that these agreements will build upon the already established strong legal framework between the two countries and further contribute to the enhancement of their cooperation,

-*Confirmed* their strong desire to further enhance political dialogue on issues of regional and global importance and deepen coordination and cooperation to this end, including within international organizations,

-*Reiterated* the importance of the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, and *underlined* that the ongoing occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia undermines the conflict resolution process,

-*Condemned* terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and *reconfirmed* their unwavering commitment to combat this common threat in full solidarity and cooperation,

-Stressed the importance of continuous cooperation and joint efforts in the fight against transnational organized crime and international crime. In this regard, for the purposes of further strengthening direct, secure and operational communication between the two countries, shared the commitment to support the development of legal mechanism for exchange and mutual protection of classified information between Turkey and Georgia,

-Underlined the importance of strengthening Euro-Atlantic security in a comprehensive way, for which Georgia's aspirations to fully integrate into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures, particularly NATO and the EU, is of paramount significance, and agreed to continue practical cooperation and political dialogue to this end,

-Expressed their particular willingness to further develop their collaboration in the field of defense and security, both bilaterally and within the framework of NATO-Georgia relations, with a view to building the defense capacity of Georgia, including through joint exercises and training programs,

-Agreed to share experience on issues related to the EU integration, while emphasizing the importance of completion of the visa liberalization processes of both countries with the EU at the earliest possible time in line with EU's commitments and countries' achievements,

-Stressed the positive actions taken by the Georgian authorities with regard to the issue of repatriation of the Meskhetian population in line with Georgia's commitment to the Council of Europe and welcomed ongoing cooperation on this issue,

-Reiterated their commitment to further develop and strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, investments, energy, transport, agriculture, customs, consular and judicial affairs, science, education, culture, tourism, sports, social security and health, environmental protection and other fields,

-Appreciated the liberal trade regime between the two countries, as a result of which Turkey has been number one trade partner of Georgia since 2007, and noting the slight decline in their trade volume in 2015 *agreed* to take all the necessary measures to go back to a growing trend again,

-*Affirmed* their commitment to extend the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by further liberalizing trade in agricultural goods and to include services, public procurements, and to make amendments on Protocol II of the FTA, in order to activate diagonal cumulation among Georgia, Turkey, the EU with a view of increasing the overall trade volume,

-In the view of the need to develop economic cooperation between the Republic of Turkey and Georgia, taking into account the mutual interest in the continuation of economic dialog and the intensification of bilateral context *decided* to establish a Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETCO),

-*Underlined* the importance of increasing mutual investments, and to this end, while welcoming the signing of the Agreement on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments, also expressed their confidence that the incentive programs recently launched by the Government of Georgia would provide additional opportunities for Turkish investors. The incentive schemes will provide additional support tools and mechanisms for facilitating access to finance and proper infrastructure, in the fields of tourism, agriculture and manufacturing, according to the Georgian legislation,

-*Underscored* the significant role of Turkey and Georgia, together with Azerbaijan and the Central Asian countries, forming the backbone of the East-West/Middle Transport Corridor at the heart of the Silk Road, connecting emerging economies of Asia with Europe by means of joint road, rail and sea projects and welcomed successful organization of the Tbilisi Silk Road Forum on 15-16 October 2015,

-*Emphasized* the importance of further cooperation within the framework of multilateral transportation projects such as “One Belt, One Road” initiated by China and “Transit Trade and Transport Cooperation Agreement (Lapis Lazuli Route Agreement) connecting Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey,

-*Welcomed* and further *encouraged* the significant efforts being undertaken by Turkish and Georgian authorities with a view to reducing regulatory, administrative, legislative and cost barriers to cross-border transportation and trade, including the launch of e-TIR pilot project on electronic exchange of customs data and opening of the third border gate (Çıldır/Aktaş-Kartsakhi/Kartsakhi-Çıldır/Aktaş) between Turkey and Georgia,

-Reconfirmed the strategic importance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway project which will provide for the missing link of the Rail Silk Road between Asia and Europe, making trade and transportation between the two continents more effective than ever and *reiterated* their determination to complete all the construction works of the BTK railway by the end of 2016,

-Welcomed, to this end, the fruitful consultations at the trilateral Ministerial Meeting of the BTK railway Coordination Council held in Tbilisi on 12 February 2016 and inspection visit paid by Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan to the Georgian section of the BTK during the 5th Trilateral Meeting on 19 February 2016,

-Expressed their willingness to proceed on possible implementation of joint water infrastructure projects at the border to the benefit of both countries,

-Reconfirmed their desire to further develop and enhance their bilateral and regional cooperation in the field of energy, in particular oil, natural gas, renewable resources and energy efficiency,

-Expressed their willingness to scale-up cross-border electricity trade via current and/or planned transmission lines,

-Underlined their full support for the implementation of the Southern Gas Corridor projects and highlighted the importance of the expansion of South Caucasus Pipeline (SCPX) and Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) as a strategic element of the Southern Gas Corridor, contributing to the regional energy security,

-Underscored the importance of trilateral cooperation among Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan as an important platform for political dialogue and overseeing the implementation of regional projects of strategic importance, particularly in the fields of transport and energy,

-Emphasized the importance of further deepening cooperation between the relevant authorities of the two countries in the field of agriculture,

-Decided to further develop and strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in the fields of consular and judicial affairs via regular meetings between relevant authorities,

-Agreed to further intensify the already existing cooperation in the field of culture and in the area of protection of joint cultural heritage and to finalize the legal framework to this end which would among other things allow for a common inventory work of cultural properties in both countries,

-Expressed their desire to further expand the scope of cooperation in the fields of culture and education between the two countries, including through cultural events, exchange programs, training activities,

-Appreciated the intention of establishing inter-institutional cooperation between the relevant authorities with a view to promoting collaboration in addressing cyber threats,

-Welcomed Georgia's participation in International Horticultural EXPO 2016 Antalya and *reconfirmed* their commitment to expand the scope of cooperation between the relevant authorities of the two countries in the field of environmental protection, including land degradation neutrality (LDN) and reforestation,

-Welcomed the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul on May 23-24, 2016 and the commitments made thereat,

-Expressed satisfaction with the ongoing cooperation in mutually supporting candidatures to international organizations and reiterated determination to continue fruitful cooperation in this regard,

-Agreed to hold the next meeting of the HLSC in Georgia in 2017,

Signed in Ankara, on 19 July 2016 in English language.

Giorgi Kvirikashvili
Prime Minister of Georgia

Binali Yıldırım
Prime Minister of the
Republic of Turkey