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REMARKS BY MR. YUKSEL OZDEN

HEAD OF THE APA DELEGATION OF TURKEY

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**ASIAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
1-3 DECEMBER 2014, LAHORE, PAKISTAN**

**Chairman Organizing Committee
APA Secretary General
Chairman of Senate
Honorable Parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great privilege for me to address such a distinguished audience. Allow me to begin my intervention by thanking our Pakistani hosts for their warm hospitality.

The world is going through a rapid and vast transformation. With new players, rising powers and shifting balances, old rules are breaking or becoming irrelevant. Therefore, there is an irresistible need for a new global order that dovetails with the new dynamics at play in the world. Located in one of the important intersections of different foreign policy dynamics, this extraordinary process also shapes Turkey's basic foreign policy issues. The Afro-Eurasian geography where Turkey is situated at the epicenter is an area where such opportunities and risks interact in the most intensive way.

Under these circumstances, to follow a stable and constructive Turkish foreign policy has become all the more important. It is with this understanding that Turkey pursues a dynamic and visionary foreign policy with a view to steering the developments in a positive direction, in a region where the impact of global changes is greatest. In this context, Turkey's multi-dimensional, constructive, proactive, realistic and responsible foreign policy is one of the most important assets in realizing its national and international goals.

We see opportunities to foster stronger bilateral and multilateral ties and to contribute positively to the resolution of problems in different parts of the world. This is the basis of our policy of reaching out to distant geographies like Southeast Asia, Latin America as well as to Africa. Indeed, in so far as the number of established foreign missions is concerned, Turkey has one of the largest diplomatic representations in the world.

In today's world, power keeps flowing from the West to the East and South. The rise of Asia is one of the defining characteristics of the 21st century. As the

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biggest continent on Earth which contains some of the most populous countries worldwide and the majority of the fastest growing economies, cultures, religions, it is fair to say that Asia has a large role to make the world what it is today. Therefore, it should not be surprising for anyone to see eastern and southern nations, which represent ancient civilizations beginning to reassert themselves economically and politically, as well as in a cultural sense, and taking their rightful place on the international stage.

As Asia gets bigger and richer, it will have to play a much bigger role in global governance. Thus, identifying Asia's strengths and challenges is crucial. By promoting mutual understanding and economic cooperation among Asian countries and setting common goals for the achievement of Asian integration, APA could become an important platform in this regard. We should coordinate and combine our efforts for an effective and result-oriented engagement among the countries of the continent.

**Honorable Parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Turkey's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in Eurasia. We highly value our historic, linguistic and cultural ties with a wide range of countries along the ancient Silk Road. Our government has set a clear foreign policy goal, which is first and foremost the advancement of peace, prosperity and security in our neighborhood and beyond. We are determined to intensify our relations through effective multilateralism. As a result of this approach, Turkey today is forging closer ties with all countries and increasing its engagement with the region as a reliable partner.

We intend to enhance and institutionalize our cooperation with the countries in the region. Our main tools for such cooperation are effective usage of mechanisms like joint economic commissions and business councils. Turkey has also accelerated its efforts toward social-cultural exchanges and dialogue among civilizations. Moreover, Turkish Airlines has increased its destinations and flight frequencies in the region. TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) has enhanced its development projects, especially with regard to the Pacific Island countries and the Least Developed Countries of the region through our wider initiative to reach out to the LDC's worldwide.

Of course, expanding and deepening our outreach as such made us even more sensitive to the conflicts in those regions and propelled us to be more active in helping their resolution. At the heart of all the hotspots, spanning from Central

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Asia to the Caucasus, from the Middle East to the Balkans, Turkey feels the direct impact of every development in this wide area. Our two immediate neighbors, Syria and Iraq have been dragged into chaos and a deep instability over the last couple of years. We have been trying to warn the international community since the beginning that the prolongation of the conflict in Syria would have detrimental results for the security and stability of the entire region.

As for Iraq, sectarian politics and spillover effects of the Syrian crisis severed the political deadlock in the country and made it susceptible to the operations of extremist groups. Now these two countries have become a single theater for the operations of a terrorist group called DAESH. The rapid advance of DAESH in Iraq and Syria and the brutality of its actions showed us the extent to which these groups could exploit any power vacuum.

The conflicts in our two neighbors occupy our agenda not only from a security point of view, but equally from a humanitarian point of view. We have embraced an open-door policy towards Syrians who fled the violence and brutality of their regime and took shelter in Turkey. The number of Syrians that we have been hosting has reached 1,5 million as of today. We have spent more than 4 billion USD to meet their needs.

On the other hand, many Iraqis have also fled the violence of DAESH in the country. We sheltered on our soil more than 200 thousand of them. We would never let anyone regardless of their ethnicity or religion to suffer at our doorstep; however it should be noted that our resources are not limitless. We expect the international community to be more involved both politically and financially in addressing the humanitarian tragedy in this region.

Turkey is striving to instill in this troubled neighborhood, whatever positive influence on the side of lasting stability, prosperity and socio-economic development. While doing so, we are always cognizant of the wealth and inherent richness of the people that live in this wide geography. We believe that long-term peace and stability in the region can only be maintained through democracy. Highest contemporary standards of democracy, respect for the rule of law, fundamental rights, civil liberties, transparency and gender equality are all universal expectations. All nations deserve to have these expectations met. Indeed, these universal values are neither Western nor Eastern, but belong to the humanity as a whole.