



GREEK TURKISH FORUM (GTF)

STATEMENT

July 10, 2023

The Greek Turkish Forum (GTF), founded in 1997 after Turkey and Greece came to the brink of war, acts as a civil society initiative to ensure the continuation of dialogue between the two sides, even when this is difficult.

The work of the Forum is private in strategy but public in purpose. It has sought to stimulate public debate and influence policymaking on bilateral issues through agreed statements that have been submitted to political leaders and senior officials and, when useful, presented to the media in both countries.

Having met online and in person in recent months to discuss developments in Greek-Turkish relations, members of the Forum agreed that a window of opportunity has emerged to remove tensions in the Aegean and to make a conscious effort to resolve bilateral issues based on international law and in accordance with Article 33 of the UN Charter.

While the devastating earthquakes that struck 11 provinces in Turkey on Feb. 6, 2023, again defused tensions - as they did in 1999 - the re-election of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey on May 28 and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in Greece on June 25 has created a more favorable atmosphere for improving bilateral relations. The existence of strong governments in both countries, which know each other well and know the damage that a tense environment does to both countries, should allow them to take concrete steps to strengthen the current positive atmosphere.

In this regard, GTF members stress the importance of maintaining communication channels and adhering to existing confidence-building measures to prepare the ground for negotiated solutions that promote regional understanding and stability. Launching cooperation on uncontested areas such as archaeology, environment, fighting wildfires, academic collaboration, and scientific research could be a way to build up trust and goodwill. It is important to prepare the public in both countries for a peaceful settlement of disputes. Only through open dialogue can both sides create a positive bilateral and multilateral agenda to produce the results we all hope for.

GTF members emphasize their readiness to support the two governments in every possible way to meet the high expectations and not to lose precious time to start a period of friendship and solidarity between the two countries. GTF members are confident that a conscious and sincere effort by both sides at this time could achieve positive results and usher in a whole new era in bilateral relations.

The GTF Members