



Greek Turkish Forum (GTF) Statement

Greek-Turkish Relations: Consolidating the Positive Agenda

September 4, 2023

The Greek Turkish Forum (GTF) is reiterating its hope and conviction that following the elections in Greece and Türkiye, the *Positive Agenda* supported by the two leaders in their 12 July meeting on the sidelines of the NATO Summit in Vilnius will be consolidated further in the coming period.

Safeguarding a good climate in relations and defusing factors that increase tension is crucial for securing peace and stability between Greece and Türkiye. This is also of paramount importance for Europe and the broader periphery.

In this respect, the upcoming meeting between the two Foreign Ministers in Ankara, as well as a likely meeting between PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in New York during the UN General Assembly, can be instrumental in making progress in this direction.

As stated by Greek and Turkish officials, a prerequisite for a long-standing improvement in bilateral relations is the establishment of a climate of trust. The GTF, in previous statements, has observed that this can be built by a) establishing reliable lines of communication at various levels between decision-makers and officials of the two countries, b) avoiding destabilizing acts and inflammatory rhetoric, and c) encouraging the communication and cooperation between relevant civil society actors. In this context, GTF notes with satisfaction the decision to reactivate all the communication channels between the two countries.

Bilateral agreements that have been signed between Greece and Türkiye on different areas of cooperation are valuable tools for consolidating the positive trend and can provide encouragement for several initiatives that would be beneficial for trust building. Launching additional collaboration in uncontested areas such as archaeology, arts, youth, environment, fighting wildfires, education, and scientific research could be a way to build up trust and goodwill. The planned Greece-Türkiye High-Level Cooperation Council in Thessaloniki by the end of the year could provide an excellent opportunity for further elaboration in this respect.

As the geopolitical context changes dramatically, a long-term *Positive Agenda* must be substantiated by a process defining feasible common interests at regional and global levels. Undoubtedly, considering the evolving challenges our region is facing, a settlement of the Cyprus issue based on the *acquis* of the negotiations could constitute a significant turning point.



Finally, media, academic institutions, intellectuals, artists, entrepreneurs, local authorities, and think tanks are instrumental in relating any positive steps to the expectations of the Greek and Turkish societies.

It is our belief that the two societies will benefit on all levels moving from a ‘rapprochement’ approach to a ‘mutual and beneficial collaboration’ context. We, as the GTF, are ready to support this process in the coming months and years.

The GTF Members