

EU-Turkey commitments to not just ‘stay on paper’

Hurriyet Daily News, 27.11.2015



The agreements reached at the recently held EU-Turkey summit will be implemented and not just “stay on paper,” Turkish EU Minister Bozkır has said. “Measures will be taken so that the summit agreements do not stay on paper,” Bozkır told, ahead of a working lunch with EU ambassadors.

Bozkır said he was going to Brussels to meet with various EU commissioners to discuss the outcome of the summit, including new policy area, or “chapter,” on economic and monetary policies in Turkey’s EU accession process, preparations for opening of other chapters in the accession negotiation visa liberalization and readmission agreements.

“Next week, the government will announce its plans for the first six months [of 2016], as well as which laws will be passed when,” Bozkır said, adding this would also include the adoption of a secondary legislation in regards to visa liberalization. Economic issues such as updating the Customs Union agreement and Turkey’s participation in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership will also be discussed, he added.

The EU and Turkey agreed to speed up the country’s EU accession process if Ankara takes steps to stem the flow of refugees coming into Europe. According to a draft agreement, the EU aims to implement visa-free travel for Turks as soon as October 2016 if Ankara meets certain criteria specified in an agreed roadmap. The EU will also give 3 billion euros in funding to meet the needs of more than two million Syrian refugees in Turkey, as part of the agreement.

NATO supports Turkey in downed Russian jet incident, Turkish PM says no apology

Hurriyet Daily News, 30.11.2015



NATO has pledged support to Turkey over the downing of the Russian fighter jet which violated Turkish airspace, while Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has said there will be no apology for the incident.

Speaking before members of the press NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the North Atlantic Alliance was pledging support to Turkey in its efforts to defend its borders. “Turkey has the right to defend itself and [its] airspace,” said Stoltenberg. Meanwhile, Davutoğlu said Turkey would not offer any apology to Russia as it was a national issue for the country, contrary to Russian President Putin’s demand.

“No country can ask us to apologize [for the incident] because [we were] doing our job,” said Davutoğlu. “Our action was a defensive action.” “This is more of an issue of dignity for us,” added Davutoğlu. “Our army did their job in protecting our border,” he said, stressing it was the border between Turkey and Syria.

Davutoğlu said Turkey’s rules of engagement were made clear to Russia three times, in Ankara, Antalya and Moscow, before the downing of the jet. “It was a defensive action. If there was no violation [of Turkish airspace] there would not be such a crisis,” he said, adding that Turkey had no intention of escalating the tension and was open to talks at every level and sharing information about the incident to make Turkey’s position clear.

Stoltenberg said what was important at the moment was easing relations and that they supported all talks between Turkey and Russia to de-escalate the tensions. He said the NATO Ministerial Meeting would discuss how NATO could produce mechanisms to de-escalate tensions and also avoid a similar incident in the future.

Commenting of the economic sanctions imposed by Russia on Turkey after the downing of the Russian jet, Davutoğlu said it contradicted Russia’s position when the country had sanctions imposed on it after the crisis with Ukraine over Crimea.

Davutoğlu said Russia had reacted to the sanctions in that incident and Turkey had also stood against any sanctions on Russia, but what they were doing currently towards Turkey was contradictory to their previous position. “We will not escalate tension,” repeated Davutoğlu. He added Russians were a friendly people to Turkish people and “for many [Russians], Antalya is a second home.” “We hope Russia will reconsider these measures, which will be against our common interests,” Davutoğlu said.

Lavrov: Russia halts visa-free regime for Turks from Jan 1

AFP, 27.11.2015



Russia said it would suspend its visa-free regime for Turkish nationals from Jan. 1 as it retaliates against Ankara for the downing of a Russian warplane.

Moscow has ruled out any military response against NATO member Turkey, but it has pledged broad retaliatory measures targeting entire sectors of the Turkish economy including tourism, agriculture and investments. “A decision has been made to halt the visa-free regime with Turkey,” Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters after talks with Syrian counterpart Walid Muallem in Moscow. “This decision will enter into force from January 1, 2016.”

President Vladimir Putin earlier warned citizens not to travel to Turkey, whose affordable beaches are hugely popular with Russian holidaymakers, and the foreign ministry urged Russians who are already in Turkey to come home, citing “existing terrorist threats.”

Lavrov denied that the decision to suspend the visa-free regime was an act of revenge. “Threats from this country are quite real,” he said, adding that “fighters” were passing through Turkey “in all directions.”

“Russia is quite concerned with increasing terrorist threats in the Republic of Turkey,” he said. “This is directly linked to the safety of Russia and our citizens.” He added that Turkey this year deported more than 200 Russian nationals, most often to third countries including those conducting “policies that are hostile towards Russia.”

The head of Russia’s state tourism agency Rostourism, Oleg Safonov, said that Russian tourists spend an estimated 10 billion rubles (\$151 million) in Turkey annually. “Now Turkey would not get this money, it will remain in Russia and will facilitate the development of internal tourism,” he said.

As of November 26, there were more than 9,900 Russian tourists in Turkey. “Not a single Russian tourist will remain in Turkey by December 26, 2015,” the tourism agency said. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev gave his ministers two days to work out a plan to curb cooperation with Turkish companies. Russia also said it would tighten checks on food imports over alleged safety standard violations.

Economy minister Alexei Ulyukayev said he did not rule out that the retaliatory measures could hit two major projects with Turkey -- the planned TurkStream gas pipeline and the Akkuyu nuclear power plant -- in a move that looked set to rattle cages in energy-poor Turkey.

EU, Turkey seal migrant deal on ‘historic day’ for ties

Hurriyet Daily News, 29.11.2015



Turkey will help stem the flow of migrants to Europe in return for cash, visa liberalization and renewed talks on joining the European Union in a deal that the Turkish prime minister called a “new beginning.”

Leaders of the 28 European Union states met Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoğlu in Brussels to give their collective political blessing to an agreement hammered out by diplomats over the past few weeks. Donald Tusk, the European Council president and the chairman of the summit, said a joint statement had been agreed, adding that the migration issue was the main reason of the summit.

“Our agreement sets out a clear plan for the timely re-establishment of order at our shared frontier,” said Tusk, adding that they expected a major step towards changing the rules of the game when it came to stemming the migration flow coming to the EU via Turkey.

“We will also step up our assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey through a new Refugee Facility of 3 billion euros,” Tusk said, to which Davutoğlu said that the money was going to be spent on Syrian migrants and not on Turkey.

“The EU is committed to provide an initial 3 billion euro of additional resources. The need for and nature of this funding will be reviewed in the light of the developing situation,” read a part of the document released by the European Council on its website after the meeting for which the parties had agreed upon.

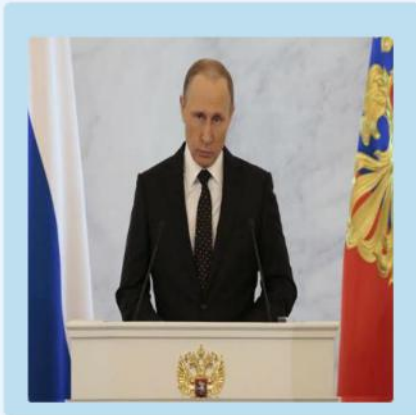
Stating that the heads of 28 member states and Turkey had agreed that the accession process need to be re-energized, Tusk announced an Intergovernmental Conference to be held for the opening of Chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy. Speaking after the summit together with Tusk and European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker, Davutoğlu said that a summit would be held twice every year and Turkey’s accession process to the EU would be accelerated.

“This is a historic day and a historic meeting. A summit has been held with Turkey after 11 years,” said Davutoğlu. He added that calendar for a visa liberalization had been put forth. The document released by the European Council on its website after the meeting stated that the European Commission would present the second progress report on the implementation by Turkey of the visa liberalization roadmap by early March 2016, so that the EU-Turkey readmission agreement would become fully applicable from June 2016 onwards.

The Commission would then be able to present its third progress report in autumn 2016 with a view to the lifting of visa requirements for Turkish citizens in the Schengen zone by October 2016.

Putin says Turkey ‘will regret’ shooting down of Russian bomber

Reuters, 03.12.2015



Turkey will regret “more than once” about its shooting down of a Russian bomber jet near the Syrian-Turkish border, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, accusing Ankara of “aiding of terrorists.”

President Putin said Turkey’s shooting down of a Russian military jet was a war crime and the Kremlin would punish Ankara with additional sanctions, signalling fallout from the incident would be long-lasting and serious. Putin, who made the comments during his annual state of the nation speech to his country’s political elite, said Russia would not forget the incident and he continued to regard it as a terrible betrayal.

“We are not planning to engage in military sabre-rattling (with Turkey),” said Putin, after asking for a moment’s silence for the two Russian servicemen killed in the immediate aftermath of the incident, and for Russian victims of terrorism.

“But if anyone thinks that having committed this awful war crime, the murder of our people, that they are going to get away with some measures concerning their tomatoes or some limits on construction and other sectors, they are sorely mistaken.”

Turkey would have cause to regret its actions “more than once,” he said, promising Russia’s retaliatory actions would be neither hysterical nor dangerous. The rhetoric Putin used will dash hopes of any early rapprochement and deepen a rift between the two countries. “It appears that Allah decided to punish the ruling clique of Turkey by depriving them of wisdom and judgment,” he said.

Repeating a call for a new broad international coalition against terrorism, Putin, in an overt reference to Turkey, called on countries to avoid “double standards, contacts with any terrorist organisations, and any attempts to use them for their own ends.” Turkey has strongly rejected Russian allegations it has any links with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants.

Turkish trucks to bypass Russia via alternative routes to Central Asia

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.12.2015



Turkish trucks will soon be able to travel to Central Asia using Ro-Ro ships from Baku after Russia banned transit in the wake of the downing of one of its jets last month, the International Transporters Association (UND) said.

Hundreds of Turkish trucks have been waiting at Russian customs after a Russian airplane was downed by Turkey. Amid the crisis, the UND has accelerated attempts to find alternative routes through Caucasus and to Central Asia for Turkish trucks, according to the statement. Transit passage fees for Turkish trucks will be slashed by 40 percent on their route through Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

The cost of Ro-Ro shipments via the Caspian Sea has also been cut by 20 percent. Costs have also been reduced on other matters, such as insurance costs, according to the statement. The price reductions emerged after UND Managing Director Fatih Şener visited Baku to discuss the issue with a committee.

The committee was established in October with the support of the transport, economy and foreign affairs ministries of both Turkey and Azerbaijan after an order by Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev and under the direction of Azeri Economy and Industry Minister Şahin Mustafayev, said the UND.

Some 50 percent of Turkey's exports to Russia go by land. The trucks are loaded onto ships in Istanbul or the Black Sea province of Zonguldak before sailing to Ukrainian ports, from whence travel to Russia. Alternatively, many trucks pass through the Sarp border in northeastern Turkey to travel to Russia via Georgia before heading to Central Asia.

Around 1,250 trucks carrying Turkish exports have been blocked from entering Russia and have been stranded at border posts since Turkey downed the Russian jet, Şener told Reuters. "Azerbaijan has allowed entry, and these trucks will go to Central Asia through this route," he was quoted as saying by Reuters at the time.

NATO to back Turkey with ships, jets against Russia

Hurriyet Daily News, 02.12.2015



NATO allies plan to send patrol aircraft and missiles to strengthen Ankara's air defenses on its border with Syria, officials said, while NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance was working on new support measures for Turkey.

Diplomats said measures were likely to include more ships from NATO members in the eastern Mediterranean, more NATO planes based at the Incirlik Air Base and more missile defense batteries in addition to that of Spain. "We will work on further measures to assure Turkey's security," Stoltenberg was quoted.

"I would like to underline... that this is something not related to the incident last week," Stoltenberg said in reference to Turkey downing a Russian jet on the grounds of an airspace violation.

"It has been going on for several years as part of our commitment to an ally," he said, adding that he expected a decision on a package "within weeks." The NATO chief did not specify what the new measures would involve but said the alliance had for many years helped Turkey with its air defenses.

As NATO countries seek to reassure Ankara over the fallout of Russia's incursions into its airspace, a decision by Germany and the United States to remove their Patriot missile batteries from Turkey led other allies to fill the gap. While the German and U.S. steps were announced weeks ago, Russia's surprise intervention in Syria's civil war in September galvanized NATO countries to offer additional help to Turkey's Air Force.

Spain is now the only NATO nation with Patriots in Turkey. "We must make full use of the capabilities we have to counter threats on NATO's southern flank," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius told Reuters in Brussels during meetings with other NATO foreign ministers, as offers of ships and aircraft began to trickle in from allies. "We must support our ally Turkey," he said.

NATO foreign ministers said in a statement that the situation on Turkey's border with Syria and Iraq was "highly unstable" and that the alliance was committed to increasing Turkey's air defenses, which they described as "assurance measures." "We remain determined ... to continue developing additional NATO assurance measures and allies are working to prepare other possible contributions," the ministers said.

Moscow, which denies violating Turkish air space, responded to the downing of its jet by announcing it would deploy its advanced S-400 missile defense system that can hit missiles and aircraft up to 400 kilometers away.

Russian news agencies also reported that Su-34 fighter bombers were in action in Syria for the first time, equipped with air-to-air missiles for self-defense. While the Turkish Air Force has shown it is capable of intercepting Russian jets on bombing raids in Syria that stray into Turkish airspace, ministers say sending military support to Turkey is also designed to reassure Ankara and calm tensions.

Some, including Germany and the Netherlands, want Turkey and NATO headquarters to discuss the air incursions with Russia. "There is a necessity to talk military and military between NATO and the Russian Federation to avoid these kinds of incidents, conflicts, because they are very risky," Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders told reporters.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called for NATO envoys to hold a special meeting with Russia. Such meetings were suspended by NATO foreign ministers in April last year after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.

Turkey gives the cold shoulder to US proposal to seal Syria border

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.12.2015



Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has underlined the difficulties and potential complications of a move by Turkey to close the border with Syria, as a report revealed Ankara's anger over U.S. leadership's insistence on using Turkish ground forces on the border to accomplish this goal.

"Keeping the entire border with Syria [closed] may come on the agenda as a project but then what will you do about transiting refugees? We have a moral responsibility along this 911-kilometer-long border and it is accepting refugees. We have a strategic responsibility and it is ensuring security of the border.

Not having terrorists transition and any negative developments on the Turkey-Syria border are in Turkey's interest. We have paid the highest price for Daesh's terrorist activities," Davutoğlu said in response to a question on border security, using the Arabic acronym Daesh to refer to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"There is nothing more difficult than protecting a border on the other side of which there is no political authority. There is no functioning state system or counterpart administration on the other side. At the moment, around 98 kilometers of our border seem under Daesh control. In the past months we had given orders to build physical barriers on the entire border and these physical barriers are being built. Control is maintained through signal systems but beyond that we are conducting all kinds of works to eradicate Daesh from these 98 kilometers," Davutoğlu said at a press conference ahead of his departure for an official visit to Baku.



“The characteristic of Russia’s operations [in Syria], which are not against Daesh, is one of the factors which obstructs the eradication of Daesh from our borders,” he added. The Wall Street Journal focused on the pressure U.S. President Barack Obama’s administration has put on Turkey to deploy thousands of additional troops along its border with Syria to cordon off a 98-kilometer frontier, by citing U.S. officials as saying it was used by ISIL to move foreign fighters in and out of the war zone.

“The U.S. hasn’t officially requested a specific number of soldiers. Pentagon officials estimated that it could take as many as 30,000 to seal the border on the Turkish side for a broader humanitarian mission. Cordoning off just one section alone could take 10,000 or more, one official estimated,” The Wall Street Journal reported.

According to an exclusive report by Deniz Zeyrek from daily Hürriyet, discussions over Turkey’s intense deployment of ground forces on the border came on the agenda during a meeting between Turkish and U.S. officials which took place in Ankara. Yet, according to the Hürriyet report, it was Turkish officials who “pronounced the specific number of 30,000 troops.”

When making an assessment of the U.S. proposal for Turkish troops to protect the border, Turkish officials said, “To keep the border [secure] through the method you mentioned, we need to pile up 30,000 troops along 98 kilometers and put a watchtower/soldier every three meters,” Hürriyet reported.

Ankara refused the U.S. proposal for two reasons; first, it is not applicable and second, the “opposing side” might adopt a hostile attitude by using the troop build-up as a justification, the daily said. Turkey has begun building walls on the border and increase the number of border patrols and watchtowers, Turkish officials speaking with Hürriyet said, adding these methods have however been insufficient thus far.

To reach 100 percent success, an integrated border system has to be implemented, the same officials told the daily, while noting Turkey would have difficulty meeting the huge expense of such a system. The border between Turkey and Syria is at the same time the border between NATO and Syria, the officials said, calling on both the European Union and the United States by saying, “Let’s share the cost and we would then rapidly implement it.”

Obama said he had spoken to his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in Paris on the sidelines of a climate change conference about the need to close the border between Turkey and Syria, while U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said Erdoğan is “completely committed and ready to proceed” to help guarantee that the remaining portion of the border is closed.

“With respect to Turkey, I have had repeated conversations with President Erdoğan about the need to close the border between Turkey and Syria,” Obama said during a speech delivered at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) headquarters in Paris.

“We’ve seen some serious progress on that front, but there are still some gaps. In particular, there’s about 98 kilometers that are still used as a transit point for foreign fighters and for ISIL to ship out fuel for sale that helps finance their terrorist activities,” he added.

Stating the Turkish and U.S. militaries were working together to determine how a combination of air and Turkish ground forces on the Turkish side of the border could do a better job of sealing the border, Obama said that he believed Erdoğan “recognizes that.”

Meanwhile, Kerry said in Brussels that the Turkish side was ready to cooperate in totally sealing its border with Syria. “President Erdoğan is completely committed and ready to proceed with Turkish forces, and in cooperation with others, to help guarantee that the remaining portion of the border is sealed,” Kerry said after a meeting of foreign ministers from the 28 NATO states in Brussels, according to Reuters.

Turkey gives France authorization to use Turkish airspace in anti-ISIL operations

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.12.2015



The Turkish government has granted France permission to use its airspace in the fight against ISIL, diplomatic sources have told. “France asked us for authorization to use our airspace in the context of the fight against ISIL in Syria. This authorization was given on condition the general principles outlined for the coalition countries are followed,” source said.

France is to “intensify Syria operations” after the Paris attacks, said French President Hollande, while police raided the homes of suspected Islamist militants, arresting 23 people, after French aircraft began intensifying bombing ISIL targets in the caliphate’s capital, Raqqa.

Meanwhile, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen will visit Turkey to conduct talks with her counterpart, İsmet Yılmaz. Although no official decision has been taken yet, German and Turkish officials have been working on finalizing a memorandum of understanding on the basis of Germany’s proposals, diplomatic sources told the Hürriyet Daily News.

Germany wants to send six Tornado reconnaissance jets, refueling aircraft to İncirlik Airbase in southern Turkey, a frigate to protect a French aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean Sea, and up to 1,200 military personnel to the region for one year, in response to a French appeal after the terrorist attacks in Paris that killed 130 people. Some 550 of the 1,200 German military personnel are set to be deployed on Turkish territory, the diplomatic sources said.

Obama tells Erdoğan 'to close Syrian border'

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.12.2015



U.S. President Barack Obama said he had spoken to his Turkish counterpart in Paris on the sidelines of a climate change conference about the need to close the border between Turkey and Syria, while Secretary of State John Kerry has said Erdoğan is “completely committed and ready to proceed” to help guarantee that the remaining portion of the border is closed.

“With respect to Turkey, I have had repeated conversations with President [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan about the need to close the border between Turkey and Syria,” Obama said during a speech delivered at the OECD HQ in Paris.

“We’ve seen some serious progress on that front, but there are still some gaps. In particular, there’s about 98 kilometers that are still used as a transit point for foreign fighters and for [the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] ISIL to ship out fuel for sale that helps finance their terrorist activities,” he added.

Stating that the Turkish and U.S. militaries were working together to determine how a combination of air and Turkish ground forces on the Turkish side of the border can do a better job of sealing the border, Obama said that he believed Erdoğan “recognizes that.” With more than 2 million displaced Syrians living throughout Turkey, Obama said he recognized that Turkey had made an enormous humanitarian effort regarding Syrian refugees.

“That puts enormous strains on their infrastructure, on their housing, on employment. And Turkey has continued to keep those borders open for people in real need,” he said, adding that he was “glad that the EU was looking to do more to help Turkey manage those refugee flows.” Meanwhile, Kerry said in Brussels that the Turkish side was ready to cooperate in totally sealing its border with Syria.

“President Erdoğan is completely committed and ready to proceed with Turkish forces, and in cooperation with others, to help guarantee that the remaining portion of the border is sealed,” Kerry said after a meeting of foreign ministers from the 28 NATO states in Brussels, according to Reuters.

The United States and Turkey hope that by sweeping ISIL from that border zone they can deprive it of a smuggling route which has seen its ranks swell with foreign fighters and its coffers boosted by illicit trade. Kerry urged NATO allies to intensify the fight against ISIL, while also saying that Russia could be an “extremely constructive player” in finding an eventual peace settlement in Syria, which has been consumed by civil war for more than four years.



“I called on every NATO ally to step up support in the fight against Daesh [ISIL], striking at the organization’s core in Syria and Iraq,” Kerry said, according to Agence France-Presse. “A number of allies are already bringing more to this battle or are planning to increase their contributions,” he said.

Kerry said that they “welcomed Russian’s engagement in the Syria process.” “As long as they’re focused on Daesh and as long they are genuine in wanting to be part of implementing the Geneva [accords], they can be an extremely constructive and important player in reaching a solution,” Kerry said.

Russia and NATO have been at loggerheads on a series of issues on their borders in recent years including the conflict in Ukraine and Moscow’s support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Kerry also said that the Iraqi government was fully briefed on U.S. plans to deploy American special forces to Iraq and the two governments would consult closely on where they will go and what they will do.

“The government of Iraq was of course briefed in advance of Secretary Carter’s announcement,” Kerry told reporters at NATO. U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter said that Washington would deploy a new force of special operations troops to Iraq to combat ISIL who have seized swathes of Iraq and neighboring Syria.

“We will continue to work very, very closely with our Iraqi partners on exactly who would be deployed, where they would be deployed, what kinds of missions people would undertake, how they would support Iraqi efforts to degrade and destroy ISIL,” Kerry added.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi’s office said it welcomed foreign assistance but Iraq’s government would need to approve any deployment of special operations forces anywhere in Iraq. He also said foreign ground combat troops were not needed in Iraq, although it was unclear whether Baghdad viewed these U.S. special operations forces in that role.

Turkey, EU meet on refugee crisis

Hurriyet Daily News, 29.11.2015



Leaders from the EU and Turkish PM Davutoğlu gathered at a summit with the goal of signing an agreement that will offer Ankara cash and closer ties with the EU in return for Turkish help in stemming the flow of migrants to Europe.

“The most important one is our responsibility and duty to protect our external borders,” European Council President Donald Tusk told in Brussels ahead of the EU-Turkey summit. “Without control at our external borders, Schengen will become history,” Tusk added. European Commission President Juncker said he expected the EU-Turkey summit to agree on stemming the influx of migrants to Europe.

The EU previously agreed on a 3 billion-euro (\$3.2 billion) aid package for Turkey to help it stop the flow of refugees to Europe from the conflict in Syria, 2.2 million of whose citizens are currently in Turkey. Turkish and European officials said the summit would agree to open Chapter 17 of Turkey’s accession process – covering economic and monetary policy – by mid-December.

Davutoğlu said the meeting with EU heads of government would “re-energize” the future of his country as a member of the European Union. “[Today is] very historic to re-energize our accession process as well as to discuss latest developments in Europe,” Davutoğlu told reporters in Brussels before the summit.

“Today we will be sharing the destiny of our continent, the global challenges in economic crisis, as well as regional geopolitical challenges, including the migration issue,” he added. “I am thankful to all European leaders for this new beginning.” Davutoğlu had previously announced that he and German Chancellor Angela Merkel have agreed to solve possible problems within a spirit of mutual understanding.

His remarks came following a question about Greek Cypriot’s objections to a draft declaration for a Turkey-EU refugee summit. Speaking at a press conference at Ankara’s Esenboğa airport, ahead of his flight to Brussels for the EU-Turkey Summit, the prime minister thanked Merkel, Tusk and Juncker for their “attitude open to cooperation.”

Turkey and EU have reached a consensus that takes into account the sensitivities of Ankara, he said. “This meeting will provide new momentum to relations. It’s important in so many aspects because it’s the first EU-Turkey summit in 11 years,” he said.

Turkey will help the EU handle the flow of migrants that has called into question the future of Europe’s passport-free travel in exchange for cash and restarting stalled talks on EU accession, said the draft conclusions of an EU-Turkey summit.

“Both sides will, as agreed and with immediate effect, step up their active cooperation on migrants who are not in need of international protection, preventing travel to Turkey and the EU, ensuring the application of the established bilateral readmission provisions and swiftly returning migrants who are not in need of international protection to their countries of origin,” the draft, seen by Reuters, said.

In exchange, Turkey will receive 3 billion euros of initial aid to handle the refugees on its territory. The amount might be adjusted later on depending on developments, the draft said. The EU would also open in December the next chapter of negotiations with Turkey in its accession talks to the EU, which have been dragging on since 2005, and prepare further chapters for discussion in the first three months of next year.

The EU also aims to lift the need for visas for Turks traveling to the EU in October 2016 if Ankara meets certain criteria specified in an agreed roadmap, said the draft, which may still be changed after the talks.

NATO invites Montenegro to join alliance as 29th member

AFP, 02.12.2015



NATO foreign ministers invited Montenegro to join the U.S.-led military alliance, a move Russia has repeatedly warned would be a provocation and a threat to stability in the western Balkans.

“NATO foreign ministers have just taken historic decision to start accession talks for Montenegro to become the 29th member,” alliance head Stoltenberg said. “This is a good day for Montenegro, for western Balkans and for the whole alliance,” Stoltenberg said to applause from the 28 NATO foreign ministers meeting to approve the decision.

“It makes clear NATO keeps its door open [and bolsters] ... our vision of a Europe whole and at peace.” Montenegro Foreign Minister Igor Luksic said NATO’s decision reflected the great efforts his country had made to modernize and meet western civil society norms.

“Today we open a new chapter ... it is a great day for my country and for the alliance,” Luksic said. “It is great news for the western Balkans, for its unity and security,” he said. Montenegro’s parliament in September passed a resolution by 50 votes out of 79 to support the country’s accession to NATO.

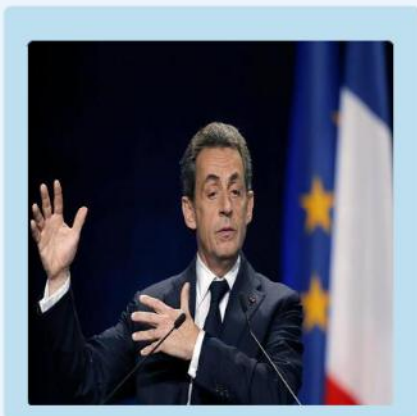
Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the continuing expansion of NATO to the east would lead to retaliatory measures from Russia. Viktor Ozerov, head of the Russian Federation Council’s defense and safety committee, said Russia will end joint projects with Montenegro if the ex-Communist country joins NATO, RIA news agency said.

Russia described the expected decision on Montenegro as a “serious blow by the euro-Atlantic bloc.” “This sort of initiative has the real potential to bring about confrontation. It will not promote peace and stability in the Balkans nor in Europe in general,” Moscow said. “It will only further complicate relations between Russia and NATO.”

The small Balkans country of just over 600,000 people won its independence in 2006 following the bloody break-up of what was Yugoslavia. It had been part of a federation with Serbia, a long-time Russian ally which Moscow has always regarded to be part of the same Slav family.

France’s Sarkozy: No deal with Socialists against far right

Reuters, 02.12.2015



France’s conservative party leader, Nicolas Sarkozy, ruled out making any alliance with Francois Hollande’s ruling Socialists to stop the increasingly popular far right from winning regional councils in elections this month.

The question of alliances has taken center stage in France after polls forecast the National Front would win at least two of 13 regions in the two-round election if the conservatives and Socialists both stand against it in the run-off. Socialist PM Manuel Valls has said “everything must be done” to keep the FN out of power, including alliances with Sarkozy’s The Republicans. But Sarkozy turned down the offer.

“I have nothing to do with the National Front, but I also fight the Socialists’ policies,” Sarkozy, who was president of France in 2007-2012 before losing an election to Hollande in 2012, told Europe 1 radio.

Alliances between France’s two biggest mainstream parties “would be doing a favour to (FN leader Marine) Le Pen. It would show that the FN is the only opposition party,” said Sarkozy, who is hoping the regional elections will help him in his bid to get his party’s nomination for the 2017 presidential elections.

A BVA poll showed Le Pen winning in the northern France’s Nord-Pas-de-Calais region by a comfortable margin if The Republicans and Socialists stay for the run-off. Both are forecast to qualify for the second round. Her niece, Marion Marechal-Le Pen, would also win the south-east Provence-Alpes-Cotes-d’Azur under the same scenario.

If the Socialists, seen coming third in the first round in both regions, pull out or strike an alliance with Sarkozy’s conservative party, the FN might still win but that would be less certain. Le Pen would have a much smaller head start and the run-off between her niece and the conservatives in the southeast would be too close to call, the BVA poll showed.

Both the chief of France's employers' group and a major regional newspaper warned voters against backing the far right, a measure of growing concern at the FN's rise. The anti-immigrant party has benefited from worries over Europe's migrant crisis and the Paris attacks.

A survey by Elabe pollsters showed that FN's number 2 official, Florian Philippot, would win in eastern France, again assuming the Socialists and Republicans don't strike alliances. Hollande has seen a huge boost to his approval ratings over his handling of the aftermath of the attacks that killed 130 people in Paris. That might help mitigate the Socialists' much-expected defeat in the regional elections somewhat, but they are still seen suffering heavily losses - they currently rule all but one region.

World leaders in Paris for climate-rescue summit

Anadolu Agency, 12.11.2015



World leaders launched a whirlwind day of talks aimed at forging an elusive agreement to stave off calamitous global warming. The summit kicks off nearly a fortnight of talks intended to end two decades of international bickering with a pact that would limit emissions of the greenhouse gases blamed for climate change.

About 150 world leaders, converged in a northern Paris venue bristling with security following terror attacks. Scientists warn, unless action is taken soon, mankind will endure ever-worsening events, such as droughts will lead to conflict and rising sea levels that will wipe out low-lying island nations.

Negotiators have also vowed to forge an ambitious deal to honour the 130 people killed in the Nov. 13 attacks that were claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group. "The fate of humanity is at stake in this conference. After the attacks in France, we have to deal with the urgent priorities and respond to the terrorist challenge but also act for the long term," French President Francois Hollande said.

In an interview with French daily newspaper "20 minutes", Hollande said leaders would meet in Paris "to reaffirm their solidarity with France" and to "assume their responsibilities in the face of the warming of the planet". "History will judge the heads of state and government harshly if, in December 2015, they miss this opportunity."

Hollande arrived at the venue to welcome the leaders, first meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The summit is scheduled to open at 1000 am (0900 GMT). The Paris attacks appeared to have galvanised many world leaders in their determination to stand up to terrorism and push on with the climate struggle.



US President Barack Obama's first act after touching down in Paris early was to visit the scene of the worst carnage at the Bataclan concert venue. The summit is "an opportunity to stand in solidarity with our oldest ally... and reaffirm our commitment to protect our people and our way of life from terrorist threats," Obama said in a Facebook post before flying to Paris.

The United Nations has hosted annual summits to tackle the vexed global warming issue since 1995, but all previous efforts have foundered, primarily due to deep divisions between rich and poor nations. Many poor nations insist rich countries bear the most responsibility for tackling the problem because they have burnt the most fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution on their way to prosperity.

But the United States and other developed nations insist more must be done by China, India and other emerging countries, which are burning increasing amounts of coal to power their fast-growing economies. Potential stumbling blocks in Paris range from providing finance for climate vulnerable and poor countries, to scrutiny of commitments to curb greenhouse gases and even the legal status of the accord.

Still, important progress has been made ahead of the meeting. One of the key successes has been a process in which 183 nations have submitted voluntary action plans on how they would tackle global warming. UN climate chief Christiana Figueres said these provide the architecture for more ambitious efforts that could eventually limit global warming to less than two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

Two degrees C is the threshold at which scientists say the worst impacts of global warming will be inevitable. To pressure world leaders into forging an agreement, more than half a million people participated in climate protests around the world over the weekend.

"There is no planet B" and "Our Children Need a Future" read placards held by some of the 50,000 people who turned out in London's Hyde Park, in scenes replicated across the world. "The charge from the streets for leaders to act on climate has been deafening, with record numbers turning out across the world," said Emma Ruby-Sachs, campaign director for Avaaz, one of the organisers.

French authorities had banned protests in Paris due to security fears following the terror attacks. But in a show of defiance and determination to have their voices heard on climate change, thousands of people in Paris gathered to create a two-kilometre (1.2-mile) human chain.

Their stand was disrupted, however, when a band of anti-capitalist militants infiltrated the protests, leading to clashes with riot police which saw hundreds of arrests. Some 317 people were in custody, police sources said. On a more artistic precursor to the talks, the Eiffel Tower was turned green as part of an art project that will see "virtual trees" grow on the landmark to support reforestation.



Announcements & Reports

► *Can A Global Climate Risk Pool Help The Most Vulnerable Countries?*

Source : Bruegel

Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2015/11/macprudential-supervision-from-theory-to-policy/>

► *Public Hearing on the EU's Future Trade and Investment Strategy*

Source : Bruegel

Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2015/11/public-hearing-on-the-eus-future-trade-and-investment-strategy/>

► *Southeast Asia From Scott Circle: Southeast Asian Nations Watch Paris For Deal To Cut Greenhouse Gases*

Source : CSIS

Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/southeast-asia-scott-circle-southeast-asian-nations-watch-paris-deal-cut-greenhouse-gase>

Upcoming Events

► *Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union*

Date : 23 December 2015

Place : Brussels - Belgium

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/534-competitive-gains-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union/>

► *The Future of Capitalist Democracy: UK-Japan Perspectives*

Date : 24 December 2015

Place : London - UK

Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

► *Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?*

Date : 26 December 2015

Place : Brussels - Belgium

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/524-emerging-markets-and-europe-time-for-different-relationships/>



► *What future for Europe's Social Models?*

Date : 27 December 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/526-what-future-for-europes-social-models/>

► *Challenges for Growth in Europe*

Date : 28 December 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/521-challenges-for-growth-in-europe/>

► *Global Governance of Public Goods: Asian and European Perspectives*

Date : 28 December 2015
Place : Paris - France
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/529-global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

► *The Future of the Welfare State*

Date : 29 December 2015
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>