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PRESS RELEASE OF ÜNAL ÇEVİKÖZ, SPOKESPERSON FOR REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (CHP) GROUP
TO THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TURKEY,
REGARDING THE 25 MARCH 2021 EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING3

Press Release of Ünal Çeviköz, Spokesperson for Republican People's Party (CHP) Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, regarding the 25 March 2021 European Council Meeting

The Statement issued by the members at the end of the first day of the European Council Meeting held in Brussels on 25 March 2021 has been carefully scrutinized. It is observed in the statement that European Union's relations with Turkey continue to be addressed as a foreign policy issue under the topic Eastern Mediterranean. We are deeply saddened by this situation which is created by the fact that the accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU have effectively stalled for a long time.

In terms of its strategic interests, the EU attaches importance to the stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as to the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial environment with Turkey. In that regard, the members of the European Council have stated that they welcome the de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean through the discontinuation of drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean by the government, the resumption of talks between Turkey and Greece, and the forthcoming talks on the Cyprus problem under the auspices of United Nations. On the other hand, referring to Turkey's drilling activities as illegal is a striking and unacceptable remark.

The statement stresses that provided that the current environment and Turkey's constructive attitude is sustained, the EU is ready to cooperate with Turkey in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner, and in that regard, the members invite the EU Commission to address the difficulties in the implementation of the Customs Union with Turkey and also invite the Council to work on a mandate for the modernization of the Customs Union. Likewise, it is stated that the EU stands ready for high-level dialogues with Turkey on issues such as public health, climate, counter-terrorism and on regional issues.

It is considered that the issues pointed out in the EU statement regarding the de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean actually indicate the fact that the recent backing down of the government in the field of foreign policy is appreciated by the EU. However, the characterization of these policies as "unilateral actions" and "in breach of international law" indicates that the government has failed to adequately defend and convincingly explain our country's rightful and lawful arguments in European capitals.

The statement indicates that the rule of law and fundamental rights are seen as a concern, that the targeting of political parties and media represent major setbacks for human rights and run counter to Turkey's obligations to

respect democracy, the rule of law and women's rights and that dialogue on such issues remains an integral part of the EU-Turkey relationship. It is clear that the policies of the government in recent years have led to negative perceptions in the relations with EU countries. As CHP, we attach importance to solving problems peacefully, through dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) Government is now worn-out and shows a great weakness in conducting our relations with the EU in a way to safeguard the interests of our country. Relations between Turkey and the EU need a transformation, including the revival of accession talks, based on mutual respect and shared interests. As CHP, we will take the necessary steps to achieve this transformation and continue to work to maintain our relations with the EU at a modern and civilized level, as our citizens deserve.