

Need to reduce tensions and build confidence in the North-Eastern Mediterranean

In the current geopolitical circumstances, with the war raging on the European continent creating global repercussions, escalating tensions and even risking an armed conflict opening another front in a volatile region would be utterly irresponsible, and destructive. The European Green Party is watching with grave concern and condemns the intensifying escalations, including verbal aggression and violations of national airspace and territorial waters in the Eastern Mediterranean. We remain firmly convinced that sustainable dispute resolution can only be achieved through dialogue, diplomacy, and respect for international law by all sides.

With deep concern we also see the continuing deterioration of human rights and press freedom in the region. We are particularly concerned about Turkey's backtrack in preventing and combating violence against women and its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention – the weakening of democratic institutions and its hostile actions, including airstrikes, against neighbouring states.

For peace, security, and good neighbourly relations in Europe's south-eastern region, it is necessary to intensify efforts to build trust and introduce a regional green cooperation framework. The energy transition should be a common priority, together with the goal of sustainable prosperity, for all countries in the region. There is no more scope for new fossil-fuel extractions, neither by confrontation nor by co-exploitation. And, of course, the use of nuclear energy cannot be considered as a solution, especially in earthquake-prone areas such as the Eastern Mediterranean. As the EGP clearly pronounced at its 35th European Green Party Council in Riga (June 2022) on the case of the Turkish nuclear power plant under construction with Russian funding at Akkuyu: "The impact of a failure in the safety systems at such a plant or an earthquake is a high risk with inevitably catastrophic consequences for the region... In case of a nuclear accident, not only the area of Akkuyu would be in danger, but also Cyprus, the Greek Dodecanese region and the whole of the south-east Mediterranean region."

We, as European Greens:

- **Stress the paramount importance of peaceful conflict resolution in the Eastern Mediterranean** and urge the governments of Turkey, Greece and Cyprus to engage in constructive dialogue, stepping up efforts to resolve disputes over land and maritime borders, to commit to good neighbourly relations, international agreements and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter with support of the EU if necessary, as a mediator within these dialogues and disputes;
- **Call on all countries in the region to agree to a mutual freeze of any plans for oil and gas exploration and extraction, as well as of nuclear energy use.** We urge the governments of the region to cease any plans for current extraction of fossil fuels in the region to prevent irrevocable harm to nature. Moreover, we urge the Turkish government to cease any form of extraction in border regions and territorial areas of their neighbours, such as drilling in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus and beyond, in order to stop the escalation of tensions. The future is in renewable energy sources and natural gas is not one of them. The governments of the region need to increase their efforts to make use



of the huge renewable energy potential available within the region together.

- **Call on Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus to seek out ways to utilise the blue and green economic potential of the Mediterranean together, integrating off-shore power generated into each-other's and the European interconnected grids.** At the same time, we acknowledge the unfair burden this places on the countries in the region and therefore call on the European Union and its Member States to further work towards an interconnected energy infrastructure and network for the EU and its neighbours, and to prioritise the sharing of sustainable energies between high-producing countries in the EU with the countries in the region.
- **Stress that bi and multilateral relations between countries in this region should be based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and peoples and on the deepening of social, economic and intercultural ties** such as via cultural exchanges, trade, and joint ventures in the economy but also in nature protection (coordinated management of protected areas on land and sea that cross state borders). Cultivating good neighbourly relations is the only viable long-term strategy for peace and prosperity for all in the region and for regional resilience in the face of interconnected crises, such as climate change, pandemics, food, water and energy insecurity. The first to benefit from friendly bilateral relations should be the inhabitants of the border regions.
- **Condemn the ongoing violations of human rights at the external borders of the European Union, including the ongoing illegal pushbacks.** There must be no involvement in, support or toleration of such activities by national authorities and the European Border and Coast Guard agency (Frontex).
- **Call for the establishment of an EU-wide fundamental rights monitoring mechanism at the external borders of the European Union.** We call on the EU and all its Member States to protect the human rights of refugees and migrants, regardless of how they arrive at the borders and which countries they travel through, in line with international and human rights law and the EU asylum acquis.
- **Urgently call on the EU and its Member States to step up solidarity efforts, to equally accept responsibility for the reception of asylum seekers and to stop pushing for the externalisation of border controls.** Finding sustainable solutions is also important for the local inhabitants in the border regions, in particular of the Aegean Islands who, apart from the normal challenges of island life, have demonstrated remarkable solidarity with asylum seekers over many years. Protecting human lives and the dignity of all individuals should be the first and foremost consideration in the treatment of refugees and migrants before and once they have entered EU territory.
- **Call for Turkey to end the destruction of civil infrastructure,** as well as the obstruction of water supply in autonomous regions in Syria and Iraq, settled mostly by Kurds.
- **Condemn the recurrent Human Rights' violation taking place internally in Turkey, and particularly the repression against the Kurdish community.**
- **Call for an immediate end to Turkish military operations in Syria and Iraq,** and for the



swift withdrawal of the Turkish armed forces from any territory outside the internationally recognised borders of the Turkish Republic.

- **Stand in solidarity with the people of all Mediterranean countries in their quest for peace, security, cooperation, and mutual respect anchored in international law.** The immediate neighbours of each country are de facto its primary partners. Nationalism, revisionism and intolerance harm everyone, especially and directly ethnic, cultural and national minorities, particularly those and instrumentalised as political pawns, and even harm those that promote them such practices in the long run. We support the integration into the European Union of candidate countries, but without concessions in terms of acceptance and implementation of the EU *acquis*. A cautious return to the baseline of the 2000s and early 2010s is still within our memory and grasp, but this requires, above all, that Turkey shows in practice its espousal of and commitment to EU norms and values. Moreover, bilateral and multilateral relations must be adapted to the new circumstances created by the ecological and climate crisis.
- **Oppose militaristic logics and support policies to prevent conflicts and crises instead.** We are seeking agreements for the de-escalation of increasing militarisation of border regions and disputed territories, including a mutual freeze or even a reduction in armaments, instead of a new arms race that would lead to deteriorating living standards, reduced social cohesion and greater instability in the region. Priority should be given to a pact for regions stability and mutual respect, the lifting of any threats and the definitive demarcation of maritime zones and boundaries, within the framework of international law and the EU *acquis*, prioritising first and foremost agreements made through peaceful dialogue between parties with EU assistance in mediation where necessary, and, as a last resort, possible recourse to the International Court of Justice in the Hague or to international arbitration in case a settlement cannot be reached through dialogue.
- **Reiterate that the withdrawal of the Turkish troops from the northern part of the Republic of Cyprus remains a priority.**