NO PAUSE IN PATHOLOGICAL OBSESSION WITH TURKEY EVEN IN TIME OF THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

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Amid the spread of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) at unprecedented pace in Europe and especially in the European Union countries and fast rising deaths in most of them, not very surprisingly to us, the EU Council has found a time on 27th February of this year for adopting a decision concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorized drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean[1]. Through this biased decision, the EU has included the names of two Turkish Petroleum officials in the list of natural and legal persons, entities and bodies set out in the Annex of the Decision (CFSP) 2019/1894, dated 11 November 2019. The said decision of 11 November 2019 puts EU member states under the obligation to take the measures necessary to prevent the entry into, or transit through, their territories of natural persons who are responsible for or involved in, including by planning, preparing, participating in, directing, or assisting, drilling activities. It also urges the member states to freeze all funds and economic resources belonging to, owned, held or controlled by those persons [2].

It should be underlined that while the EU was adopting this decision, Italy was urgently waiting for medical aid like masks and ventilators from the EU and EU member states towards the end of February of this year. In fact, 27 February 2020 decision of the EU reminds us the Turkish proverb of "koyun can derdinde kasap et derdinde" of which its semantic English translation might be expressed as "sheep is in trouble for its life whereas the butcher is in pursuit of the meat. This decision also points us in some sense that the EU was considered suitable at that time to deal with drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean instead of searching ways to help EU countries like Italy. This can be considered as an example of contemporary black humor.

In the meantime, according to the declaration made by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the European Union on 31 March 2020, certain candidate countries of the EU and one EFTA country which is a member of the

European Economic Area aligned themselves with the above-mentioned EU Council Decision of 27 February 2020 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorized drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean[3]. It is quite attention-grabbing that one more country which does not have so much enthusiastic relations with the EU and a member of the Eurasian Economic Union jumped on the bandwagon by aligning herself to the said EU decision most probably because of her close ties with Greece and Greek Cypriot Administration. This country is Turkeys eastern neighbor, Armenia.

This alignment of Armenia with the EU decision was reported in the Armenian on line press with the titles Armenia Joins EU Sanctions on Turkey over Cyprus Drilling and Armenia joins EU sanctions mechanism against Turkey[4].

As is known, following Armenia's adhesion to the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, the negotiations process on an association agreement were suspended by the EU and the comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement with EU could only be signed two years later[5]. In fact, Armenia, institutionally does not have any requirement to join the EU decisions. By aligning herself to this EU decision, Armenia joins herself once again in Greek-Greek Cypriot anti-Turkey bloc with the expectation to inflict damage on Turkey.

The EU statement on this alignment in its last paragraph states that The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it. In contrast, there is no doubt that Turkish public opinion overwhelmingly takes note of this commitment and deeply regrets it.

In this general context, it is worthwhile to mention how the new president of the European Commission described Turkey in one of her very recent statements. It is reported in the international press that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, on a visit to the Greek-Turkish border alongside the other leaders of EU institutions and the Greek prime minister said that aid to Greece, but Ankara is not an enemy [6]. It is quite remarkable that a country which has been partner for the EU more than 57 years and a long time candidate for membership was described in oxymoronically as not an enemy. It is worth to think over whether this statement is an example of adding insult to injury.

**Photo: https://www.panorama.am/*

[1] European Union, COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2020/275 of 27 February 2020 Amending

Decision (CFSP) 2019/1894 Concerning Restrictive Measures in View of Turkeys Unauthorised Drilling Activities in the Eastern Mediterranean (Official Journal of the European Union, February 27, 2020), L 56 I/5, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020D0275&from=EN.

[2] European Union, COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2019/1894 of 11 November 2019 Concerning Restrictive Measures in View of Turkeys Unauthorised Drilling Activities in the Eastern Mediterranean (Official Journal of the European Union, November 11, 2019), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019D1894&from=GA.

[3] Declaration by the High Representative on Behalf of the EU on the Alignment of Certain Countries Concerning Restrictive Measures in View of Turkeys Unauthorised Drilling Activities in the Eastern Mediterranean (Council of the European Union, March 31, 2020), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/31/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-alignment-of-certain-countries-concerning-restrictive-measures-in-view-of-turkey-s-unauthorised-drilling-activities-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/.

[4] Armenia Joins EU Sanctions Mechanism against Turkey, *Panaroma*, April 1, 2020, sec. Politics, https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2020/04/01/Armenia-joins-EU-sanctions-mechanism-against-Turkey/2266808; Massispost, Armenia Joins EU Sanctions on Turkey Over Cyprus Drilling, *Massispost*, April 1, 2020, sec. Armenia, https://massispost.com/2020/04/armenia-joins-eu-sanctions-on-turkey-over-cyprus-drilling/.

[5] EU Relations with Armenia (Council of the European Union, March 11, 2020), https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/armenia/.

[6] Migrants at Turkeys Border with Greece: Von Der Leyen, Aid to Greece, but Ankara Is Not an Enemy. EU Leadership, Strategy for Unaccompanied Minors, *Agenzia Dinformazione* , March 3, 2020, sec. Politics, https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2020/3/3/migrants-at-turkeys-border-with-greece-von-der-leyen-aid-to-greece-but-ankara-is-not-an-enemy-eu-leadership-strategy-for-unaccompanied-minors/; Alastair Jamieson, Kirsten Ripper, and Alasdair Sandford, Greece Is 'Europes Shield in Migrant Crisis, Says EU Chief von Der Leyen on Visit to Turkey Border, *Euronews*, March 4, 2020, sec. World, https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/03/greece-migrant-crisis-is-an-attack-by-turkey-on-the-eu-austria.

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