

PERCEPTIONS
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

March - May 1998

Volume III - Number 1

INFORMATION NOTE CONCERNING THE PROPOSALS MADE BY TURKEY TO GREECE ON 12 FEBRUARY 1998 ABOUT A PROCESS OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF PROBLEMS OVER THE AEGEAN BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

Turkey believes that the two neighbourly and allied countries should enjoy friendly and better relations in an environment of understanding which will be to the benefit of not only Turkey and Greece but also of the region as a whole.

Today, there are several interrelated problems between Turkey and Greece. Because of the existence of these unresolved questions over the Aegean, the two countries are facing tension in their relations which is liable to give rise to unintended and undesirable incidents that could escalate into a serious confrontation.

In order to avoid such a risk, Turkey believes that the two countries should jointly and promptly initiate a substantive process of conciliation while carefully refraining from any unilateral acts and respecting each others vital interests in the Aegean.

In view of this situation, Turkey presented a Note Verbale to the Greek Ambassador in Ankara on 12 February 1998 and conveyed officially to Greece certain proposals aiming at improving the relations between Turkey and Greece.

The Turkish Note Verbale contains the following proposals:

1. In the context of the process of conciliation, the two countries should first of all, make a sincere and good willed effort to clearly identify all the questions between them with regard to the Aegean. The first step would lead Turkey and Greece towards a peaceful settlement of the entire set of the Aegean problems to be so identified.

2. The two Governments simultaneously should take the following steps which would pave the way for resolving their bilateral issues:

a) Formalising the Madrid Declaration of 8 July 1997 which sets out important principles and commitments that should govern their relationship. As it will be recalled, the Madrid Declaration was approved by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Greece and concurred by the President of the Republic of Turkey and the Prime Minister of Greece.

b) Committing themselves to developing and mutually implementing in a full package of CBM's in collaboration with the Secretary General of NATO.

c) Agreeing to convene the Personalities Group without further delay and to help the Group fulfil its agreed mandate. The mandate of the Personalities Group is to jointly consider positions and submissions of both Governments in order to recommend procedural, non-binding and balanced solutions for dealing with these issues.

3. In order to discuss these proposals, Turkey has invited Greece to jointly convene a high-level meeting between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries before the end of March 1998, either in Ankara or Athens.

This Turkish initiative is a realistic and good willed step towards the resolution of the current issues between Turkey and Greece. This initiative aims at preserving peace and desires to promote good neighbourly relations and friendship between the two countries. We sincerely hope that Greece will

accept these proposals because in that case a serious and constructive process to settle the issues between the two countries shall be initiated.

The settlement of these disputes between the two countries will also pave the way for the development of other potential fields of co-operation to the benefit of Turkish and Greek people.

Turkey has always placed utmost importance on the resolution of disputes through peaceful means of settlement and to deal with these issues in accordance with the main principles of law. Within this understanding, Turkey stands ready to discuss with Greece the selection of various peaceful settlement methods for all these issues on mutual consent, once a realistic identification of the existing problems between Turkey and Greece could jointly be made.

Turkey sincerely believes that the success of such a process will constitute the most meaningful assurance that Turkish and Greek Governments could offer their future generations.