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One for All, All for One in Challenging Times

As the North Atlantic Treaty Organization marks its 70th anniversary, we all need a robust NATO more than ever. In an era of unpredictability and complexity, the world is fraught with risks and challenges which none of our countries can address alone.

Over the course of its remarkable history, this Alliance has done more than protect the territorial integrity and wellbeing of its member states. It has safeguarded and advanced the set of values and norms that became central to the rules-based international order. NATO has stood tall for just causes time and again, both politically and on the battlefield. It has been an invaluable forum for political and defence consultations among Allies.

The Foreign Ministers of the Alliance meet in Washington, DC this week at a juncture when we know for sure that the waters ahead will be choppy in many respects. Yet, despite significant challenges, we also have hardy assets, the biggest of which is our precious Alliance. All Allies are committed to Euro-Atlantic and European security. What we need is more mutual-understanding, empathy and display of solidarity when one of us feels threatened. We are all safer when we are sensitive to the threat perceptions of one another and ensure airtight solidarity.

Take the threat of terrorism. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, terrorism as a global threat requires our Alliance to speak power to truth in defence of our shared objectives and values. Political solidarity can be as vital as the support that NATO could materially extend to its members. As obvious as that sounds, it is markedly absent even as Turkey fights terrorists including against Daesh, the PKK and its Syrian arm, the PYD/YPG. Without Turkey's active measures Daesh could not have been defeated. Yet, some of our Allies have adopted a disjointed approach by insisting on partnering with a terrorist group (PYD/YPG) in an effort to defeat another (DAESH). That has to change.

NATO is an unmatched success story. For seven decades NATO has been contributing to peace and security, assuring the security of Allies, displaying forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance and ensuring standing presence at sea and in the air. Turkey is a leading contributor in all these efforts.

The emerging security environment around us will test our capabilities, cohesion, and ability to take joint action as never before. The US is right in underscoring the need for fair sharing of the defence burden. We must however also share the burden of risks by upholding the logic that what threatens one Ally threatens the entire Alliance, backed by genuine, sincere cooperation and solidarity among Allies. Supporting Turkey's enemies, and resorting to economic and other leverages would poison the well for all Allies.

NATO is and will continue to be central to Turkey's defense and security policy, as has been the case for the past 67 years. I can say with much confidence that if we didn't have NATO, the world would have been a much more dangerous place for all of us. Nonetheless, the biggest challenge that NATO faces is not this or that adversary. It's rather the unity and cohesion among us, which can only be attained by being sensitive to each other's interests and perceptions. The enduring basis of our unique and time honored Alliance remains the principle of one for all and all for one.

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