



## TURKEY-EUROPEAN UNION REFUGEE AGREEMENT: EVALUATION OF THE FIRST YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS

Since 2011, civil war in Syria has forced more than 12 million Syrians to leave their homeland. Among them, 6.6 million Syrians were relocated within the country to safer regions while 5 million Syrians sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq. As of February 28, 2017, there are 2,992,762 refugees in Turkey, 2,880,000 of whom are Syrians. As for other neighboring countries, Lebanon hosts 1,011,366 migrants, Iraq - 236,772, Jordan - 659,246 and Egypt - 120,154. Moreover, more than 1 million Syrians have been trying to pass to the Western European countries through legal or illegal ways.

To regulate the uncontrolled migration influx to Europe, Turkey and the European Union (EU) started to work on a Joint Action Plan on November 29, 2015 and after three months of negotiations on March 18, 2016, Turkey and the EU signed the Turkey-EU Refugee Agreement. The main purpose of the agreement is to provide a safe and legal migration corridor for refugees who are in need of international protection. In order to regulate the irregular migration flow and separate economic migrants from refugees, Turkey and the EU launched mechanism aimed to break the business model of the human smugglers, reduce the number of arrivals through Turkey-Greece route and organize the readmission process of migrants under the "one for one" rule. According to the agreement, Turkey strengthened its coastal border security to deter migrants using the Eastern Mediterranean route to reach Greece. Moreover, the parties launched a mechanism, according to which for each returned refugee to Turkey whose asylum application has been rejected, one Syrian who lives in the Turkish refugee camps was permanently resettled in one of the EU countries. In order to improve the living conditions of refugees in Turkey, the EU agreed to allocate €3 billion for the period of 2016-2017 and another €3 billion assistance in 2018. Regarding humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees, the Turkish Government has already spent more than \$12.4 billion since 2011 and, together with the contribution of non-governmental organizations in Turkey, the total value of human-

itarian aid is estimated to surpass \$25 billion. Furthermore, another condition of the agreement was re-energizing Turkey's accession process to the EU.

Taking all the necessary measures, Turkey has shown great effort and reduced the number of daily arrivals of migrants to the EU by 98% from 1932 people in January 2016 to 45 in January 2017 closing one of the major routes of illegal migrant's flow to Europe within a year. Increased security of the border control has deterred most of the migrants using the Eastern Mediterranean route significantly reducing the death rates of illegal migrants. For instance, in January-April 2016 in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea 386 people were recorded as death or missing while this figure sharply reduced by 12-fold to 28 people in January-April 2017.

As for the resettlement process, since April 4, 2016, 4,618 Syrians have been resettled to the European countries according to Turkey- the EU Agreement. This number is well below the maximum quota on the number of Syrians, which the EU agreed in 2016. For instance, it was initially agreed that up to 72,000 refugees from Syria would be resettled to Europe and if the number exceeds the limit, both parties could either re-negotiate the limit or halt the process. However, despite the fact that all the EU members have signed the agreement, 13 out of 28 countries so far do not accept any refugees under Turkey-the EU Agreement. In addition, during the acceptance process, countries continue to stall the resettlement procedures by conducting extended security background checks on migrants.

Blocking the political rallies of the Turkish high-ranking officials in the European countries during the referendum campaign in March 2017 has strongly damaged the political relations between the EU and Turkey, which increased the possibility to withdraw from Turkey-the EU Agreement. Moreover, the political tension reignited the debates on the visa liberation issue. In fact, due to firm stand of both sides, no significant progress over the visa liberation dispute was achieved so far. The issue will be further discussed after the submission of Turkey's final offer on lifting visas for

Turkish citizens for consideration of the EU in June 2017. However, in order to minimize the risk of avoiding the agreement, the EU member states intensified the resettlement process. According to the latest report of the EU Commission on Resettlement and Relocation, in March-April 2017 1,053 people were resettled in the EU member states, which is two times higher than the number of refugees resettled in January-February 2017 and three times higher than the average resettlement number per month between April 2016-April 2017. Furthermore, Netherlands takes the lead among the EU members by accepting 307 Syrians in March-April 2017, which is three times more comparing with the previous month moving to the second place after Germany by accepting 980 refugees in total.

The first annual report of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey indicates that the EU allocated €2.2 billion and signed the contracts for 39 projects worth €1.5 billion. Half of this amount was disbursed mainly for covering the basic needs and educational programs for children. Moreover, the EU has disbursed €750 million out of €3 billion promise for the 2016-2017 period. €348 million out of disbursed €750 million were used to fund the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), a social card that should be distributed to 1 million refugees to cover their basic daily needs. By March 2017, 250,000 refugees received their cards with a monthly transfer of 100 Turkish Lira (\$28). This disbursed amount is below €3 billion agreed by EU to allocate for the period of 2016-2017.

To sum up, in its first year, Turkey and the EU cooperate on reducing the immigration flow via the Eastern Mediterranean route, gradually increasing their efforts on resettlement. However, the sides failed to find a common solution for the visa liberation issue. So far, the agreement has successfully passed many stress tests from border control to readmission process. However, the dispute over lifting visas for Turkish citizens could endanger the only working mechanism for controlling the irregular migration flow and damage other joint projects if the agreed issues on visa liberation have not been carried out.

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## Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During his official visit to Beijing, the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, discussed the issues of further strengthening of bilateral economic relations. As a result of the visit, the parties signed 105 agreements for over \$22 billion that would help to improve Uzbekistan-China cooperation in energy, agriculture, chemistry, transportation and industry.
- During his official visit to Kabul, the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, Rashid Meredov, and the President of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, discussed the issues of bilateral cooperation in security and providing stability in the border and construction safety of infrastructure projects between the two countries including Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.
- During his official visit to Washington, the Foreign Minister of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, met the President of the U.S., Donald Trump, and the U.S. State Secretary, Rex Tillerson. The parties discussed the issues of bilateral cooperation focusing on the struggle against terrorism and current developments in resolving Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan and Israel-Palestine conflicts.
- On the sidelines of the One Belt and One Road (OBOR) Forum in Beijing, the Presidents of Turkey, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and other Eurasian countries discussed further measures need to be achieved in order to expand the cooperation within the OBOR trade initiative. As a result of the forum, the Chinese President Xi Jinping announced an additional \$124 billion in funding for the OBOR initiative, including loans, grants and \$8.7 billion in assistance to developing countries.
- The European Commissioner for Migration, Dimitris Avramopoulos, stated that the EU Council approved the decision to liberalize visa rules for Ukrainian citizens. It was noted that the liberalization of visa rules envisages Ukrainians' right to make tourist trips to the EU countries for less than 90 days and only once in six months, but gives no right for employment or study opportunities.
- During the bilateral consultations held between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the sides discussed the current state of relation in consular sphere and practical aspects of protection of rights and freedoms of Uzbek and Kazakh citizens.
- The Foreign Ministry of Uzbekistan reported that a meeting of the working groups of the Joint Uzbek-Turkmen Intergovernmental Commission on delimitation and demarcation of the state borders was held in Tashkent. As a result of the meeting, the sides signed a Protocol and accepted a plan of field works for 2017.
- The Chairman of the State Committee for National Security (SCNS) of Tajikistan,

General-Lieutenant Saymumin Yatimov, reported that the handover ceremony of \$6 million in vehicles, communications equipment, and thermal cameras to the Main Border Guard Department under the SCNS provided by the U.S. Central Command Counter-Narcotics Program took place in Dushanbe. This assistance will be used to increase the ability of Tajikistan's Border Guards to identify and interdict narcotics crossing along the country's borders.

## Economy, Finance and Energy

- The Energy Ministry of Kazakhstan stated that the country resumed the transportation of oil via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Kazakhstan had not transported oil via the BTC pipeline since the second half of 2015. According to the Energy Ministry, 90,000 tons of Kazakh oil was exported through Azerbaijan via the BTC pipeline in 2017.
- The BP Azerbaijan reported that the company produced over 7 million tons of oil in the first quarter of 2017 as compared to 8 million tons at the same period of 2016. The company works on the development of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli block of oil and gas fields, where the Azeri Light oil is produced. It was noted that the BP Azerbaijan's production for the first quarter of 2017 was on average 581,000 barrels per day.
- The Government of Turkmenistan announced that a promising natural gas field was discovered in the Uzun-Ada area in the Balkan region. It was noted that Turkmenneft state concern, after drilling an ultra-deep well with a projected depth of 7,150 meters, received a commercial inflow of natural gas within the interval of 6,700 meters. The preliminary estimates show that the well productivity is 500,000 cubic meters of natural gas and 150 tons of gas condensate per day.
- According to the Director General of the Southern Gas Corridor, Afghan Isayev, Azerbaijan has invested \$799.3 million in the project since early 2017. It was noted that \$6.6 billion, or around 53% of \$12.4 billion worth funds required for the implementation of the project in 2014-2019, has already been spent. Moreover, it was noted that 92% of work on the Shah Deniz 2 project, 83.8% of the South Caucasus Pipeline Expansion project, 69% of Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline and 40.3% of Trans-Adriatic Pipeline is completed.
- According to the state-owned energy company of Uzbekistan, Uzbekenergo, the Japanese companies Kawasaki Heavy Industries and Marubeni Utilite Services started to conduct a project on the modernization of Ferghana thermal power station. It was noted that the implementation of the project would allow to create additional 24 MW of generating capacities and the station will produce additional 197.24 million kWh of electricity a year.
- According to the General Manager of the state-owned nuclear operator of China Gen-

eral Nuclear Power (CGN) Uranium Resources, Yu Zhiping, the company is searching to expand nuclear fuel supply deals with Kazakhstan, including uranium exploration, trade, nuclear fuel pellets and component processing. It was also noted that a joint venture between the state owned nuclear operator of Kazakhstan, KazAtomProm, and CGN Uranium Resources, is under construction and expected to be operational by 2019.

- The Head of Diplomatic Mission of the EU in Uzbekistan, Eduards Stiprais, reported that the trade turnover between Uzbekistan and the EU decreased from €1.873 billion in 2015 to €1.8 billion in 2016. It was noted that machines, equipment and tools (€711 million or 43.8% of total EU export to Uzbekistan), chemical and related products (€382 million or 23.5%) and industrial products (€148 million or 9.1%) were the most demanded European goods in Uzbekistan.
- The Government of Turkmenistan announced its plans to construct the Turkmenbashi-Garabogaz-Kazakhstan border highway with a length of 242 kilometers. The road will be a part of the Ashgabat-Turkmenbashi high-speed multimodal highway.
- The President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, signed the Decree on creation of new free economic zones, namely, Nukus-pharm, Zomin-pharm, Kosonsoy-pharm, Sirdaryo-pharm, Baisun-pharm, Bustonliq-pharm and Parkent-pharm. It was noted that Zones are created in Jizzakh, Namangan, Syrdarya, Surkhandarya and Tashkent regions, as well as Karakalpakstan. The decision was adopted to develop pharmaceutical industry of the country and support the producers of medicaments and medical products.

## Society and Culture

- The Iranian Seismological Centre reported about a strong magnitude 5.7 earthquake that took place in the North Khorasan province near Iran's border with Turkmenistan. The earthquake killed two people, left more than 370 people injured and damage nearly 40% of the houses in the area.
- According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the bank and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on a strategic program to significantly upgrade irrigation systems in Kazakhstan with a \$180 million financing package. It was noted that the Government of Kazakhstan transfers a \$21.4 million grant from the state budget to the project, which covers the regions of Aktobe, Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan.
- The 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games were officially opened by the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, during a spectacular ceremony in the Baku Olympic Stadium. The Islamic Solidarity Games is a multinational, multi-sport event held by the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation. The first event was held in 2005 in Saudi Arabia.