

***Istanbul Statement
of the Sixth Meeting of the Black Sea Greens***

1. Black Sea: towards an area of Democracy, Peace and Stability

The Black Sea area still faces great problems concerning democratisation, frozen and open conflicts as well as periods of great political instability. Black Sea Greens point to several main and interrelated causes:

- Poverty and in some cases extreme poverty and continuous high levels of unemployment add to the feeling of deprivation and insecurity of the Black Sea peoples.
- Corruption in many fields of society has strong negative consequences for the economic, ecological, social and political development.
- The struggle for power over energy resources as gas and oil and the transport by pipelines over land is a direct contribution to instability.
- The Russian Federation seems to have turned into an authoritarian regime. The fact that the largest country in the area still has problems to overcome the disintegration of the former USSR, adds strongly to instability and hampers the search for peaceful solutions of still existing conflicts in the region.
- Ethnic and national tensions are another great source of instability and threatening peace.
- Bulgaria and Romania have become members of the European Union making the Black Sea also a border of the EU. The EU opened the talks with Turkey towards membership, other countries have developed partnerships. The future of these talks and partnerships is however unclear and adds to instability and a form of political vacuum.
- Last but not least crossborder pollution, environmental damage of industrial, energy, and building projects can give reason for tensions.

The Black Sea Greens, with the aim to contribute to strenghtening democracy, peace, stability, sustainablility, therefore

- call upon the respective governments and (international) institutions to develop and/or strengthen National Action Plans for Sustainable Development to address the needs of the people in a social and ecological just manner,
- call upon authorities and civil society to fight corruption in all sectors of our countries and to enable police and justice departments for sustained legal action,
- in many of the Black Sea countries a decentralisation of decision making is needed from the central national authorities to the regional and local level. People should decide upon the questions that concern them directly on the lowest possible level. Regional and local authorities therefore should be based upon an indiscriminatory framework of law be adequately financed.
- call upon the Russian Federation to return to full respect for the basic freedoms of individuals and organisations, to good governance, rule of law and good neighborhood. The Black Sea Greens protest the infringement, pressure and killings of journalists, closure of media, infringements of the rights of activists of NGO's as well as political parties. This is an alarming situation given the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.
- emphasise that there is an urgent need to defend the democratisation process in Turkey. Given existing tensions we stress the need for absolutely free and fair elections under rule of law – political parties and independent candidates, from whatever background or region should be able to compete freely and openly. Therefore we call upon the Turkish government to resume and accelerate the democratisation process.
- recognise that not only in the Russian Federation and Turkey but also in other former USSR republics democratic electoral procedures should be achieved.
- call upon all to overcome existing ethnic and national tensions first of all by respect for human rights and the rights of minorities. The Black Sea witnesses several armed conflicts such as in Nagorno-Karabach in which Armenia and Azerbaijan are involved, in Georgia (Abkhazia and Ossetia), in Moldova (Transnistria) etcetera. Next to help as well as pressure from international institutions (such as Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, United Nations) we call upon our governments to undertake unilateral action to deblock the situations, and actions of good will (for example to free still existing prisoners). The Black Sea region as well as the whole world cannot permit themselves to let these conflicts being unresolved.
- We call upon the European Union to contribute to deepening cooperation in the Black Sea region. It is of great importance for stability, for democratic, ecological, social and economic progress of the area that on the basis of existing EU membership criteria the ongoing processes of partnership as well as negotiations concerning membership are continued.
- We see the need to make the Black Sea an area free of nuclear weapons. The Black Sea witnesses huge military armament, we favor a contrary process of demilitarisation that would contribute hugely to more cooperation and security. International treaties concerning naval access to the Black Sea should be respected.

2. Climate and Energy in the context of the Black Sea area.

- We call upon our governments to end the addiction to fossil fuels and develop strategies towards new alternative energy sources. This as a contribution to fight the disastrous effects of climate change, but also because the ongoing struggles for control of and access to energy resources are a great factor of instability. Renewable energy is the only way to a real independent energy policy and by this to build peace and security in the region.
- Oil and gas transport, either with tankships or pipelines, cause ecological destruction and risks. In this we see a great need to upgrade and implement the Espoo convention on transboundary environmental consequences; international environmental impact assessments should be given a place from the earliest planning phase.
- We reject the option of nuclear energy, as part of a region which suffered the destructive effects of nuclear power plants most as it must not be needed to remind to the devastating consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe with the consequences the region still has to live for hundreds of years. They call for financial support from developed countries for the studies to eliminate sustaining effects of the accident.
- We reject the argument that nuclear energy could be a backdoor to reduce CO₂ emissions and as a tool to strengthen an independent energy policy. Uranium is extracted only in a few countries, nuclear technology is in the hands of a few industrial companies, the mining and production causes CO₂ emission on a great scale, the building and maintenance of NPP's needs state subsidy for more than half a century to recover all the costs, the safe storage of nuclear waste has not been solved. Concrete plans should be made to phase out of Nuclear Power for the Black Sea Region country by country as well as for the region as a whole.
- The speed of growth of CO₂ emissions in some of the Black Sea countries (for example in Turkey being a middle sized country) is alarming. There should be no hesitation for a quick signing and implementation of the Kyoto protocol. The statements of the G8 leaders concerning the reduction of CO₂ emissions in the recent summit in Heiligendamm in Germany must be considered insufficient to reach the needed goals.

3. Topical Ecological Struggles in the Black Sea

- Citizens of the Black Sea countries try in many different ways to take up action for a better environment. The plans for oil and gas pipelines give great concerns and lead to many actions in nearly all the countries. It is here that we want to stress once again the need for a full implementation of environmental impact assessments in the earliest planning phase especially for transboundary consequences.
- Greens in Armenia struggle for the closure of the NPP still in function with out of date Russian technology, Turkey until now free of NPP's thanks to massive and continuous protests now faces a new attempt by the current AK Party government. The Turkish Greens call for solidarity in their struggles to prevent this new plans, such as in Sinop. In Bulgaria the Greens have protested the building of a new plant in Belene. The Black Sea countries remember too well the dramatic catastrophe with the Chernobyl NPP, the

Greens call for support of those most affected areas.

- Romanian and Bulgarian Greens have great concerns about the continuing building pressure on the Black Sea coast with new holiday resorts and second homes constructed without care for and control on environmental consequences. Laws on spatial planning should be reviewed and controlling institutions should be given more means and powers.
- In Bulgaria the implementation law on Natura 2000 is a great step for preserving nature and is one of the beneficial aspects of joining the EU. The law met and still meets opposition of those who want to make infringements on the proposal having new construction in sensitive areas in mind.
- In Turkey as well big as well as small hydro-plants are planned without taking care of the environmental impact. The Ilusu dam (backed by f.e. British capital) is the largest plan and not only endangers the environment but also threatens that ancient remains will be lost for ever. The Black Sea Greens call for continued action on all international levels.

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The participants of the GEWD Meeting of Black Sea Greens