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## RESTORING STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA:

### A New Opportunity for Turkish-German Cooperation

While the Middle East and North Africa have been in turmoil and partially in flames for the past three years, countries like Turkey and Germany, with a special interest in their strategic periphery, have developed a piecemeal policy instead of engineering a cohesive strategy for the medium and long term stability of the region. This is inadequate, given that instability in the region has direct consequences for the security and the prosperity of both countries. Horrible mass atrocities, the heavy influx of refugees as well as the potential spill over of violence and extremism are only three of the multifarious examples of such developments.

Hesitant and incoherent policies on the parts of both countries may be attributed to the fact that each country is currently more preoccupied with internal developments. Yet, that is no excuse for failing to take action in such a situation and await rescue by the American fire brigade. This is because the future of the young people of both nations and Europe could be jeopardized by the non-action of Turkey and Germany.

Obviously, reinstating stability to the region is too daunting a task to be shouldered by the two countries alone, for there are wider regional implications and global developmental repercussions. Nevertheless, we believe these two nations are particularly well suited to the task of launching a common initiative, as Turkey is a key player in the region and Germany could trigger a

joint European effort. Such an initiative has to be comprehensive in nature, encompassing not only the stability of the region, but the security of the economic, societal and security aspects as well. The fundamental elements of stability, namely, the political, economic and military security of the nation-state and the security of the individual are dependent on educational and economic opportunities as well as full human rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the rule of law.

In order to bring about stability and security, both a commonly agreed vision and a long term generational engagement with the region are needed. Long term visions, however, have to be implemented by short and middle term policies. The establishment of informal consultation mechanisms comprising countries both willing and capable of taking decisive actions, and see them through, is the most effective method of pursuing such a strategy. Germany and Turkey should take the initiative and invite the United States, France and Great Britain to join them in forming such a group. To prevent other countries from feeling sidelined or marginalized, this group has to operate in full transparency, and in close coordination and consultation with other states and multilateral institutions. Its success rests on two primary conditions. Internally, every member should enjoy the same rights in the deliberations. There is no primus inter pares. Externally, once group consensus has been achieved, the group has to be suffi-

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ciently flexible to accede to the views of the other concerned actors.

Turkey and Germany can only successfully launch this initiative when both countries are fully aware that their contribution to stability abroad is predicated on the restoration of societal and economic cohesion in Europe.

At this juncture, it is important to note that policies conceptualized by the consultation group have a proper balance of deterrence and coercion as well as engagement and cooperation in their implementation. While deterrence and coercion serve mainly to circumvent the spill over effects of instability, engagement and cooperation entail an active political, economic and social strategy vis-à-vis the societies in the region. The principle of comprehensive engagement necessitates the inclusion of all political and societal forces, save those that resort to violence to achieve their political ends. We strongly believe the key to success in this proposed engagement strategy lies in winning the hearts and minds of the young. If the youth can be persuaded through engagement, they will come to believe that they have a political, economic and an individual future in their respective countries. As an upshot, we would have established sustained stability in the Middle East and North Africa. Stability in the region would in turn minimize regional and global risks. Successful engagement with the Middle East and North Africa would also serve as an incentive for all nations involved in the peace process to foster bilateral and multilateral ties among themselves. Therefore, such an engagement is a true vision for the youth of Turkey, Germany and beyond.